

Key Question 3 : What were the causes and consequences of the War of Independence 1857 ?

In 1857 British faced a serious challenge to their rule in India. This war is called war of Independence. There are many causes for this war which are:

Political

As British extended their control they introduced many ways of grabbing land like the use of Doctrine of Lapse was introduced by Lord Dalhousie was very unpopular. The mistreatment of Mughal Emperor was also another cause and when Lord Dalhousie moved the capital from Delhi. It angered many people. English was replaced by Persian as an Official language.

Religious and Social

As the rule of British grew so did its culture. The British thought that they were Superior Culture and Disrespected the Indian culture they also did not get mixed with the Indians as they thought that Indians are uneducated and uncivilized people. This arrogant attitude and the introduction of new ways of life with railways, roads and telegraph were not accepted to many Indians. Indians thought that their religion was ay threat by foreigners was sent Christian monks to spread their religion. These monks insulted the religion of the Indians. This angered many Indians.

Economic

We have learnt that how British merchants traded with India which was very profitable for them. The British imposed high taxes on Indians and the tax collectors were corrupt and kept some money for themselves the resentment grew when the British filled Indian market with cheap mass produced goods and many families were unable to sell their goods thus this made most of the Indians poor. British also made the salary of their army (Infantry) low.

Military

There were many Indian soldiers in the British army but not even a single one of Indian was made an officer. The British used their army to fight other countries and this was not accepted to Indians who wanted to leave their mother land. They were also rumors that The Indians were forced to convert into Christianity before they could be made the Officers.

The Events Of 1857

- In January 1857 the British announced that they would introduce a new rifle with a paper cartridge covered with grease to keep the powder dry and before the cartridge would be loaded the end had to be bitten off. However a rumor spread that the grease was made up of Cow and pigs fat. The Sepoys were so angry that they refused to use the new rifle.
- In March a Sepoy named Mangal Pandey defied his British officer and was executed.
- In May Sepoys of Meerut refused to touch the new cartridge so they were put to prison but their fellow Sepoys freed them and killed all the British then the soldiers marched to Delhi and captured it. The Mughal emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar II won the support of Hindus and Muslims. The War spread and British lost control of Mathura, Kanpur, Jhansi and Allahabad as well as Delhi and Lucknow. This area is now known as Uttar pardesh. However British proved to be too powerful and quickly regained the areas they had lost.
- In September Delhi was regained and Bahdur Shah was put into life time prison. In August 1858 the war was officially over.

Reasons For Failure Of War of Independence 1857

1.Lack of Unity

Although the whole Indian nation faced resentment against the British but the aims were different. The Muslim wanted to regain control and again set up the Mughal Empire. There was no general plan or a Leader. The princes did not want the Imperial power once again. There was no sense of patriotism and India was too divided for such a feeling. The only uniting force was Islam but the other groups opposed them which were Hindus and Sikhs as they did not want the rule of Muslim once again on the India. These were the reasons as British considered this as "Muslim Revolt".

2. British Strength:

The most powerful country of that time and because of Industrial Revolution they had High tech weapons. The British army was well trained and was much disciplined and they were provided with large weapons and Funds by the British government. The Perhaps the major reason for the failure of this uprising was the strength of the British. The Britain was Indians were still fighting with each other and in the mean time the British use it clever techniques and weapons to crush the rebellion furthermore it had the support. of some loyal states like Kashmir who sent 2000 troops to support the British win the war.

The Effects of the War

The failure of the war conformed the British masters of India. The war did not loosen control but rather tightened it. The East India Company was abolished and the Britain took full control of the Indians affairs. In 1877 the Queen Victoria was given the title as Empress of India and the Mughal royal family decade away. There were very cruel acts in the war as in the town of Cawnpore the Indians had murdered several British women and children to avenge their deaths the British killed anyone who was sympathetic to Indians. They also introduced Viceroy who was known responsible for all the acts in the country. He had over thousand civil servants to help him administer the country. These ranged from highly paid judge to lowly paid junior administer. After the War the British stopped funding Muslim schools and because Muslims still were not ready to accept the British rule so they did not go in the British schools and became uneducated. This was not the case with Sikhs and Hindus and they became friendly with the British and very quickly learned to speak English. After 1857 British did not trust the Indians and thus they were not taken in the army and the British did not allow Indians to have their own weapons and thus making the further rebellions less effective. The Control of the British in India was now unchallenged.