
BRITISH RULE AFTER THE 1857 REVOLT

POST-REBELLION DEVELOPMENTS

The revolt was an important turning point in the history of modern India. In the month of May 1858, the British banished the last Mughal Emperor Bahadur Shah II (1837-1857) to Burma.

In the same year, the British government abolished the British East India Company. They placed direct rule under the British crown. In announcing the new direct-rule policy to 'the Princes, Chiefs, and Peoples of India', Queen Victoria assured them of equal treatment under British law. However, Indian mistrust of the British rule had become a legacy of the 1857 rebellion. Most of the prevailing economic and revenue policies were left unchanged in the period following 1857. However, many administrative changes were introduced. To begin with, they created a cabinet post in London, the Secretary of State for India. The Governor-General (the not Viceroy, the direct representative of the British crown) ran the administration in India from his headquarters at Kolkata. He was assisted by executive and legislative councils. Under the Governor-General were placed the provincial governors. They held power over the district officials, who constituted the lower levels of the Civil Service in India. For many decades, the Indian Civil Service remained exclusively reserved for the British-born. The British administrators had a sense of responsibility of running the administration of India, for which they were handsomely paid. They enjoyed high status and had good opportunities for promotion. During 1910s, when the number of Indians educated in English education system began to rise, the British reluctantly allowed a few of them into their cadre.

In the year 1858, the viceroy declared that the government would respect previous treaties with princely states. They also gave up the Doctrine of Lapse, through which the company had annexed kingdoms of rulers who died without male heirs. Nearly 40 per cent of Indian Territory and 20-25 per cent of the population was under the control of 562 princes, who were religiously (Islamic, Sikh, Hindu

and other) and ethnically diverse. Their tendency for pomp and ceremony became well known. However their domains lagged behind the socio-political change that took place elsewhere in the British ruled regions. A complete reorganization was done in the constitution of the army and government finances. Surprised at the solidarity among the Indian soldiers during the rebellion, the government bifurcated the army into the three presidencies. The approach of the British towards Indians moved from relative openness to insularity, even towards those who had remained loyal to them in the past. British kept their families in cantonments situated at a distance from Indian habitations. Private clubs where the British assembled for social interaction turned into symbols of exclusivity and snobbery. Even after the end of the British rule in India, the sense of superiority associated with private clubs did not die in the year 1883, the Government tried to introduce race equality in criminal jurisdictions by introducing a bill which Empowered Indian judges to adjudicate offenses committed by Europeans. However, the Viceroy, George Robinson. Marquess of Ripen had to reconsider and to modify the bill in wake of protests and criticism in English press. The Bengali Hindu educated people learned an important political lesson from this 'white mutiny': the success of a well-planned protest through demonstrations on the roads and publicity in the media.



India Under Common Administration for the First Time

With the Government of India Act, the entire country came directly under the British crown, politically unifying in a country that was always divided into small regions fighting among themselves. The centralized administration started planning for the infrastructure, education and the other administrative works for India as a Union. This resulted in developing a feeling of nationalism among the masses across the country. Many administrative changes were brought about during this period.

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