

SOCIO-RELIGIOUS CAUSES

BY

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- **Interference with Social Customs**
- **Apprehensions about Modern Innovations**
- **Policy of Racial Discrimination**
- **Corruption in Administration**
- **Oppression of the Poor**
- **Activities of Missionaries**
- **Fears Regarding Western Education**
- **Taxing Religious Places**
- **Law of Property**

Interference with Social Customs:

- Some of the social reforms introduced by the British in India were aimed at improving the conditions of the people. However, while introducing such reforms the feelings of the people were not taken into consideration. The result was that the reforms like **the abolition of *Sati* (1829), the introduction of the Widow Remarriage Act (1856) and the opening of Western education to girls** were not welcomed by the masses.

Apprehensions about Modern Innovations

- The introduction of modern innovations such as **railways and telegraphs** was misunderstood by the people. There were **rumours that the telegraph poles were erected to hang people who were against the British rule.**
- Similarly, the orthodox Indians noted that in the **railway compartments the higher castes and the lower castes were made to sit side by side.** They believed that the British had introduced such practices to defy their caste and religion.

Policy of Racial Discrimination

- The British officers were **rude and arrogant towards the Indians**. They **believed that they were superior to Indians** and followed a policy of contempt towards the Indians. They dubbed the Muslims as cruel and unfaithful. Some European officers ill-treated and insulted Indians. Such acts of **unjust discrimination alienated the British from the Indian masses**.

Corruption in Administration

- The police and petty officials were corrupt.
- The rich got away with crime but the common man was looted, oppressed and tortured.

Oppression of the Poor

- The complex judicial system enabled the rich to oppress the poor.
- **Flogging, torture and imprisonment of the cultivators for their inability to pay arrears of rent, land revenue and interest on debt were quite common.**
- Thus, the growing poverty made the poor desperate and led them to join a general uprising in the hope of improving their lot.

Activities of Missionaries

- The British were different from Indians in race, religion and sentiments.
- In the 18th century, the British showed a friendly attitude towards Indian religions. They had no particular zeal for their own religion and the Company even acted as a trustee of some Hindu temples.

Activities of Missionaries

- However, in the 19th century, this attitude underwent a change. The British began to interfere with the local religious and social customs. They denounced idol worship and dubbed local beliefs as ignorance.
- After 1813, there was an increase both in the numbers and activities of the Christian missionaries. The Indians thought that the Government was supporting missionaries who would convert them to Christianity.

Fears Regarding Western Education

- The **Western system of education** was introduced in a number of schools.
- In 1829, the Bengal Government established an English class in the **Calcutta Madrasa**, which was a Muslim institution. Later, English classes were introduced in **Benaras Sanskrit College**.
- The shifting of emphasis from **oriental learning to Western education** was not received well by the people, especially the *Pandits* and the *Maulvis*.
- They saw in it **an attempt to discourage traditional Islamic and Hindu studies**.
- People started suspecting that the aim of **Western education was not to promote literature and sciences but to encourage their children to become Christians**

Taxing Religious Places

- Religious sentiments of the Indians were hurt by the official policy of taxing lands belonging to temples and mosques.
- Such lands had been exempted from taxation by previous Indian rulers.
- The families dependent on these lands, began to propagate that the British were trying to undermine the religions of India.

Law of Property

- The Religious Disabilities Act of 1850 changed the *Hindu Law of Property*.
- It enabled a convert from Hinduism to other religions to inherit the property of his father.
- The Hindus regarded this as an incentive to give up one's religious faith.

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