

Question 1:

What was the demand of Rani Lakshmibai of Jhansi that was refused by the British?

Solution:

Rani Lakshmibai of Jhansi demanded the company to recognize her adopted son as the heir of the kingdom after the death of her husband. But the British refused to accept her adopted son as the ruler of Jhansi. By ‘Doctrine of Lapse’ introduced by Lord Dalhousie, if an Indian ruler died without a male heir his kingdom would ‘lapse’ and such kingdom would be annexed by the British Empire.

Question 2:

What did the British do to protect the interests of those who converted to Christianity ?

Solution:

In 1850, a new law was passed to make conversion to Christianity easier. This law allowed an Indian who had converted to Christianity to inherit the property of his ancestors.

Question 3:

What objections did the sepoys have to the new cartridges that they were asked to use?

Solution:

The new cartridges were suspected of being coated with the fat of cows and pigs. Both Hindus and Muslim sepoys were offended by the introduction of these cartridges. Before loading these cartridges in the rifles a sepoy had to bite it to open the wrapper. This affected the religious sentiments of the Hindus and the Muslims as the Hindus consider cows as Holy and the Muslims consider the pigs as the dirty animals. Therefore, the sepoys refused to use these new cartridges. They felt that the British were trying to insult their religions.

Question 4:

How did the last Mughal emperor live the last years of his life?

Solution:

After the death of Aurangzeb, Mughal emperors held only symbolic value.

Bahadur Shah Zafar was the last Emperor of the Mughal dynasty. Although after Aurangzeb, there was no powerful Mughal ruler but Mughal Emperors continued to be symbolically important.

In fact, when a massive rebellion against broke out in 1857, Bahadur Shah Zafar, the Mughal Emperor at that time, was persuaded and declared as the leader by the rebellions.

He played an important role in the revolt of 1857 against the British. Once the revolt was suppressed Bahadur Shah Zafar was tried in court, blinded and sentenced to life imprisonment.

His sons were shot dead in cold blood before him.

At last he and his wife were sent to prison in Rangoon in October, 1858. Bahadur shah Zafar died in Rangoon jail in November, 1862.

Question 5:

What could be the reasons for the confidence of the British rulers about their position in India before May 1857?

Solution:

Since the mid-eighteenth century, the power of the nawabs and rajas was on its decline. The presence of British Residents in the courts further eroded their authority and curtailed their freedom to administer their kingdoms.

From 1757 to 1857, the Company successfully annexed various Indian states, virtually unopposed, by using a variety of political, economic and diplomatic methods. It rarely had to use military power.

There were several riots, rebellion and revolts which occurred before May, 1857. But all these were localized and were suppressed by the British then and there.

In the mid 18th century, the powers of Nawabs, rajas, zamindars etc. were eroded. The freedom of the Indian rulers was reduced, their armed forces were disbanded, and their revenue and territories were taken by stages.

Another reason for the confidence of the British was the decline of the Mughal dynasty. The Company, through various measures, ensured that the dynasty came to an end. The name of the Mughal king was removed from the coins minted by the Company. It was also decided upon that Bahadur Shah would be the last Mughal king and after his death, none of his descendents would be recognised as kings.

The fact that apart from the Company there was no other dominant authority in the Indian subcontinent and the belief that there was absolutely no threat to its authority together contributed to its confidence about its position in India before May 1857. This is the reason why the revolt and the threatening form it took came as a shock to the British.

Question 6:

What impact did Bahadur Shah Zafar's support to the rebellion have on the people and the ruling families?

Solution:

Though the rebels were determined to bring the East India Company's rule in country to an end, they were faced with the question as to who would rule the land once the space of power fell vacant.

There was a wide spread impact on the people of this country and its ruling families since Bahadur Shah Zafar accepted leadership and extended his support to the rebellion. He asked all the chiefs and rulers of the country to come forward and organize a confederacy of Indian states to fight the British.

This single step taken by Bahadur Shah had great implications. All small and big kingdoms, kings, Nawabs, Rajas, princes, zamindars, chiefs and even many Hindu and Muslim religious leaders welcomed this and joined hands to rebel against the British. Regiment after regiment mutinied and started to join other troops at nodal points like- Delhi, Kanpur and Lucknow.

When the rebel forces reached Red Fort, Bahadur Shah was reluctant at first to take on the

might of the British. However, he had to give in, and was thus proclaimed their leader. Having this symbolic head inspired the rebels to fight the British with renewed confidence, hope and courage. The leadership of the Mughal emperor seemed to provide legitimacy to it. Regiment after regiment mutinied, and joined the rebel troops at Delhi, Kanpur and Lucknow. After them, the people of various Indian towns and villages also rose up in rebellion and rallied around local leaders, zamindars and chiefs. This not only strengthened the rebel forces, but also gave a national character to the rebellion.

Question 7:

How did the British succeed in securing the submission of the rebel landowners of Awadh?

Solution:

During the revolt, the defeat of the British forces in a number of battles caused a number of uprisings against the British in various Indian states.

A widespread popular rebellion developed in the region of Awadh in particular. The villages took to arms and the landlords led them.

After the defeat of the rebel forces, the British had a two-pronged strategy to suppress the rebels and the rebellion.

On the one hand, they tried and hanged a number of rebel leaders who had challenged their authority and could do so again in the future. On the other hand, they tried their best to win back the loyalty of the people.

They announced reward for loyal landowners. They were assured that they would be allowed to continue to enjoy traditional rights over their lands. Those who had rebelled were told that if they submitted to the British, and if they had not killed any white people, they would remain safe and their rights and claims to land would not be denied.

Question 8:

In what ways did the British change their policies as a result of the rebellion of 1857?

Solution:

Changes in the policies of the British after the suppression of the rebellion of 1857:

British Crown took over the control of administration – The British Parliament passed an Act in 1859, under which, the powers of the East India Company were transferred to the British Crown. The Doctrine of Lapse was abolished, the right to adoption was recognized and the adopted son would be treated as the heir to the throne.

The proportion of Indians in the English army was reduced. All important posts were given to the Europeans only.

Policies were made to protect and safeguard the landlords and zamindars and give them security of rights over their lands and other properties.

Promised non-interference in the sphere of religion – The British assured the people of India that their religious customs and social practises would be respected and not interfered with.