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MAD- 2020
Day - 25
HISTORY

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Question:

Explain how the Uprising of 1857 constitutes an important watershed in the evolution of British policies towards colonial India. (15 Marks, 250 words)

Answer:

The revolt of 1857 marks a turning point in the history of India. It led to far-reaching changes in the system of administration and the policies of the British government. The British Parliament, on August 2, 1858, passed an Act for the Better Government of India. The Act had the following provisions

- It abolished Company rule, and direct responsibility for the administration of the country was assumed by the British Crown.
- It declared Queen Victoria as the sovereign of British India, and provided for the appointment of a Secretary of State for India (a member of the British cabinet)

At a durbar organized by Lord Canning at Allahabad, on November 1, 1858, the 'Queen's Proclamation' was issued, which had the following provisions Princes and Princely States:

1. The British ended the era of annexations and expansion and promised to respect the dignity and rights of the native princes. The Indian states were henceforth to recognise the paramountcy of the British Crown

Rights and Freedoms:

2. It promised freedom of religion without interference from British officials.
3. It also promised equal and impartial protection under law to all Indians, besides equal opportunities in government services irrespective of race or creed.
4. Indian rights, customs and practices would be given due regard while framing and administering the law.

Army:

5. The Army, which was at the forefront of the outbreak, was thoroughly reorganised – separate units were created based on caste/community/region to counterbalance any future revolt.
6. All Indian artillery units, except a few mountain batteries, were made defunct.
7. All higher posts in the army and the artillery departments were reserved for the Europeans.

The policy of divide and rule started in earnest after the Revolt of 1857. The British used one class/community against another unscrupulously

The complete structure of the Indian government was remodeled and based on the notion of a master race—justifying the philosophy of the 'Whiteman's burden'.

This widened the gulf between the rulers and the ruled, besides causing eruptions of political controversies, demonstrations, and acts of violence in the coming period