

seek to exterminate some of the Arabs by means of sword and fire, and others by means of quarrels and dissensions, following the maxim "divide and rule"? . . .

Every tyrannical government is an enemy and a foe to Islam; how more so, then, if the government destroys Islam, considers it lawful to shed the blood of the people of the Prophet of Islam, and seeks to kill the language of Islam in the name of Islamic government and the Islamic caliphate? . . . Therefore, he who supports these unionists⁸ because he considers them Muslims is in clear error, for none of them have done a good deed for Islam. . . . Fanatic in its cause, they fight the Quran and the tradition of the Arabic Prophet. Is this the Islam which it is incumbent on them to respect? It is not notorious that they seek to kill the Arabic language? Did they not write books to show that it must be abandoned, and that prayers and the call to prayers should be made in Turkish? And if Arabic dies, how can the Quran and the traditions live? And if the Book and the traditions cease to be known, what remains of Islam?

And O ye Christian and Jewish Arabs, combine with your brethren the Muslim Arabs, and do not follow in the footsteps of him who says to you, whether he be one of you or not: The Arab Muslims are sunk in religious fanaticism, therefore we prefer the irreligious Turks. This is nonsensical speech which proceeds from an ignorant man who knows neither his own nor his people's interest. . . . Our ancestors were not fanatical in

this sense, for Jews and Christians used to study in the mosques of Baghdad and the Andalus like brethren. Let them, both sides, aim at tolerance and at the removal of these ugly fanaticisms. For you must know that those who do not speak your tongue are more harmful to you than the ignorant fanatics among the Arabs, since you can reach understanding with the Arabs who are your brethren in patriotism and race, while it is difficult for you to reach agreement with these contemptible creatures who are at the same time your enemies and the enemies of the Muslim Arabs. See how, when you are friendly to them, they maltreat you, look down on you, and withhold your rights. Combine with your fellow countrymen and your kin, and know that ugly fanaticism will inevitably disappear. A day will come when fanaticism will disappear from our country, leaving no trace, and that day shall be when our affairs will be in our own hands, and when our affairs, our learning, and the verdicts of our courts will be conducted in our own language. If we are united, such a day is not far off. . . .

The reform of which we speak is not on the principle of decentralization coupled with allegiance to the minions of Constantinople, but on the principle of complete independence and the formation of a decentralized Arab state which will revive our ancient glories and rule the country on autonomous lines, according to the needs of each province.

⁸Refers to the Committee of Union and Progress, the political party of the Young Turks.

India under British Domination

As Great Britain took control of India during the nineteenth century, British administrators, policymakers, and the general public all agreed that this new colony should serve the economic interests of the mother country. It would be a source of raw materials, an area for investment, and a market for British manufactured goods.

Other issues, however, sparked lively debate. Most of the British assumed that at some point they would leave India, and their colony would become a self-governing, independent state. They had no timetable for leaving, however, and they disagreed about how to prepare their subjects for that day of independence. They would bring some Indians into the colonial administration, but how many and at what levels? They would provide India with schools and colleges, but would they offer Western or traditional Indian learning? They would attempt to “civilize” the Indians, but in doing so, how much traditional Indian culture were they willing to suppress?

The debate among the British was complicated by sharp disagreements among Indians about their relationship with their colonial masters. Many Indians at first believed that British rule was a blessing that would enable them to benefit from Western science, constitutional government, and economic development. Such views persisted into the twentieth century, but by the late 1800s only a minority embraced them. Many Indians came to resent the British assumption that Western ways were superior to centuries-old Indian beliefs and practices. They also were offended by Britain’s one-sided economic policies, which drained India’s resources, stifled development, and damaged traditional industries. Finally, they were angered by Great Britain’s reluctance to consider seriously Indian self-rule.

As the following documents reveal, an evaluation of the benefits and harm of British rule in India is no simple matter. Historians continue to debate the issue down to the present day.

A Plea for Western Schools



77 ▼ *Rammohun Roy,*

LETTER TO LORD AMHERST

Rammohun Roy, the father of modern India, was born into a devout high-caste Hindu family in 1772. He showed an early genius for languages and a keen interest in religions. By the age of twenty he had learned Arabic, Persian, Greek, and Sanskrit (the ancient language of India) and had spent five years wandering through India seeking religious enlightenment. He then learned English and entered the service of the British East India Company, ultimately attaining the highest administrative rank possible for an Indian. In 1814, at the age of forty-two, he retired to Calcutta, where he founded several newspapers and a number of schools, and campaigned to abolish the practice of widow burning, or *sati*. He also established the Society of God, dedicated to combining Christian ethical teaching with certain Hindu beliefs. He spent his final years in England, where he died in 1833.

Roy wrote the following letter in 1823 to the British governor-general of India, Lord Amherst (1773–1857), to oppose a British plan to sponsor a school in Calcutta to teach Sanskrit and Hindu literature. Roy believed that Indians should study English and receive a Western education.

In 1835 the debate over Indian education was settled when a British government committee decided that Indian schools should offer an English-style education. In

the words of the committee's chair, Thomas B. Macaulay (1800–1859), the goal was to produce young men who were “Indian in blood and color, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect.”

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. How would you characterize Roy's attitude toward the British? Does he seem comfortable offering the British advice? Explain your answer.
2. What does he especially admire in Western civilization?
3. What does he consider to be the weaknesses of an education based on traditional Indian learning?
4. According to Roy, what implications would a Hindu-based educational system have for India's political future?

To His Excellency the Right Honorable Lord Amherst, Governor-General in Council

My Lord,

Humbly reluctant as the natives of India are to obtrude upon the notice of government the sentiments they entertain on any public measure, there are circumstances when silence would be carrying this respectful feeling to culpable excess. The present rulers of India, coming from a distance of many thousand miles to govern a people whose language, literature, manners, customs, and ideas, are almost entirely new and strange to them, cannot easily become so intimately acquainted with their real circumstances as the natives of the country are themselves. We should therefore be guilty of a gross dereliction of duty to ourselves and afford our rulers just grounds of complaint at our apathy did we omit, on occasions of importance like the present, to supply them with such accurate information as might enable them to devise and adopt measures calculated to be beneficial to the country, and thus second by our local knowledge and experience their declared benevolent intentions for its improvement.

The establishment of a new Sanskrit School in Calcutta evinces the laudable desire of govern-

ment to improve the natives of India by education — a blessing for which they must ever be grateful, and every well-wisher of the human race must be desirous that the efforts made to promote it should be guided by the most enlightened principles, so that the stream of intelligence may flow in the most useful channels.

When this seminary of learning was proposed, we understood that the government in England had ordered a considerable sum of money to be annually devoted to the instruction of its Indian subjects. We were filled with sanguine hopes that this sum would be laid out in employing European gentlemen of talent and education to instruct the natives of India in mathematics, natural philosophy, chemistry, anatomy, and other useful sciences, which the natives of Europe have carried to a degree of perfection that has raised them above the inhabitants of other parts of the world.

While we looked forward with pleasing hope to the dawn of knowledge thus promised to the rising generation, our hearts were filled with mingled feelings of delight and gratitude, we already offered up thanks to Providence for inspiring the most generous and enlightened nations of the West with the glorious ambition of planting in Asia the arts and sciences of modern Europe.

We find that the government are establishing a Sanskrit school under Hindu pandits¹ to impart such knowledge as is already current in India. This seminary (similar in character to those which existed in Europe before the time of Lord Bacon)² can only be expected to load the minds of youth with grammatical niceties and metaphysical distinctions of little or no practical use to the possessors or to society. The pupils will there acquire what was known two thousand years ago with the addition of vain and empty subtleties since then produced by speculative men such as is already commonly taught in all parts of India.

The Sanskrit language, so difficult that almost a lifetime is necessary for its acquisition, is well known to have been for ages a lamentable check to the diffusion of knowledge, and the learning concealed under this almost impervious veil is far from sufficient to reward the labor of acquiring it. But if it were thought necessary to perpetuate this language for the sake of the portion of valuable information it contains, this might be much more easily accomplished by other means than the establishment of a new Sanskrit College; for there have been always and are now numerous professors of Sanskrit in the different parts of the country engaged in teaching this language, as well as the other branches of literature which are to be the object of the new seminary. Therefore their more diligent cultivation, if desirable, would be effectually promoted, by holding out premiums and granting certain allowances to their most eminent professors, who have already undertaken on their own account to teach them, and would by such rewards be stimulated to still greater exertion. . . .

Neither can much improvement arise from such speculations as the following which are the themes suggested by the Vedanta.³ In what man-

ner is the soul absorbed in the Deity? What relation does it bear to the Divine Essence? Nor will youths be fitted to be better members of society by the Vedantic doctrines which teach them to believe that all visible things have no real existence, that as father, brother, etc., have no real entity, they consequently deserve no real affection, and therefore the sooner we escape from them and leave the world the better. . . .

If it had been intended to keep the British nation in ignorance of real knowledge, the Baconian philosophy would not have been allowed to displace the system of the schoolmen which was the best calculated to perpetuate ignorance. In the same manner the Sanskrit system of education would be the best calculated to keep this country in darkness, if such had been the policy of the British legislature. But as the improvement of the native population is the object of the government, it will consequently promote a more liberal and enlightened system of instruction, embracing mathematics, natural philosophy, chemistry, anatomy, with other useful sciences, which may be accomplished with the sums proposed by employing a few gentlemen of talent and learning educated in Europe and providing a college furnished with necessary books, instruments, and other apparatus.

In presenting this subject to your Lordship, I conceive myself discharging a solemn duty which I owe to my countrymen, and also to that enlightened sovereign and legislature which have extended their benevolent care to this distant land, actuated by a desire to improve the inhabitants, and therefore humbly trust you will excuse the liberty I have taken in thus expressing my sentiments to your Lordship.

I have the honor, etc.,
Rammohun Roy

¹Wise and learned men of Hindu India.

²A reference to the English philosopher and prophet of science, Francis Bacon (1561–1626). Excerpts from his *New Organon* are included in source 25.

³A major school of Hindu philosophy based on the study and analysis of three ancient texts, the *Upanishads*, the

Vedanta-sutras, and the *Bhagavad Gita*. The various schools of Vedanta have different views concerning the nature of Brahman, the relationship of the individual to Brahman, and the nature and means of liberation from the cycle of reincarnation.

A Call to Expel the British



78 ▼ THE AZAMGARH PROCLAMATION

On May 10, 1857, in Meerut in northern India, soldiers from three Indian infantry regiments that were part of the army maintained by the British East India Company shot their British officers, released all prisoners from jail, and marched on the nearby city of Delhi, which fell on May 11. In June and July similar mutinies occurred across northern India, and with scattered support from peasants, landowners, and a few native princes, for a time the rebellion appeared to threaten the very basis of British authority in India. In the following months, however, British forces regrouped, and with the help of loyal Indian troops, crushed the rebels in 1858. Though brief, the Indian Mutiny, or as it is also known, the Sepoy Rebellion, was bitterly fought, with atrocities committed by both sides. Two months after it ended, Parliament passed the India Act, which stripped the East India Company of its political authority and placed India directly under the Crown.

The significance of the Indian Mutiny continues to be widely debated. To some historians it represents the first true expression of Indian nationalism; to others, it was simply a series of army mutinies that never garnered much support outside the north. There is more unanimity about its causes. It was triggered by growing discontent among the Indian troops (sepoys) in the East India Company's Bengal army, discontent that boiled over into rebellion when the British introduced new cartridges greased with cow fat, which made them obnoxious to Hindu soldiers, and pig fat, which made them obnoxious to Muslims. This was only the spark, however. The rebellion gained support from many different groups, some with specific grievances over British rule, and some with vague fears about British intentions. Some of these grievances and concerns are revealed in the following document.

The document, known as the Azamgarh Proclamation, was issued in the summer of 1857, supposedly by one of the grandsons of the eighty-two-year-old king of Delhi, Bahadur Shah. Although the king had little authority, even in Delhi itself, he was a descendant of the great Mughal rulers of previous centuries and still was considered "emperor of India," since the Mughal Empire had never been officially abolished. Some of the rebels, including the author of the Azamgarh Proclamation, harbored the unrealistic dream of restoring Mughal authority once the British had been expelled. Primarily for this reason, the Indian Act, which stripped the East India Company of its political authority, also abolished the Mughal Empire.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. What incentives does the author of the proclamation offer to those who would join the rebellion?
2. For each of the groups discussed (zamindars, merchants, artisans) what, according to the proclamation, have been the detrimental effects of British rule?
3. What role does religion play in the proclamation?

4. How do the views of the author of the proclamation differ from those of Rammohun Roy (source 77)?
5. What solutions for India's problems does the proclamation suggest?

It is well known to all that in this age the people of Hindustan,¹ both Hindus and Muslims, are being ruined under the tyranny and oppression of the infidel and treacherous English. It is therefore the bounden duty of those who have any sort of connection with any of the Muslim royal families, and are considered the pastors and masters of the people, to stake their lives and property for the well-being of the public. With the view of effecting this general good, several princes belonging to the royal family of Delhi have dispersed themselves in the different parts of India, Iran, Turan [Turkestan], and Afghanistan, and have been long since taking measures to compass their favorite end; and it is to accomplish this charitable object that one of the aforesaid princes has, at the head of an army of Afghanistan, etc., made his appearance in India; and I, who am the grandson of Abul Muzuffer Sarajuddin Bahadur Shah Ghazee, emperor of India,² having . . . come here to extirpate the infidels residing in the eastern part of the country, and to liberate and protect the poor helpless people now groaning under their iron rule, have, by the aid of the Mujahidins [fighters for Islam against infidels] . . . raised the standard of Mohammad, and persuaded the orthodox Hindus who had been subject to my ancestors, and have been and are still accessories in the destruction of the English, to raise the standard of Mahavir.³

Several of the Hindu and Muslim chiefs, who have long since left their homes for the preservation of their religion, and have been trying their best to root out the English in India, have presented themselves to me, and taken part in the reigning Indian crusade, and it is more than probable that I shall very shortly receive more help from the west. Therefore, for the information of the public, the present proclamation, con-

sisting of several sections, is put in circulation, and it is the imperative duty of all to take it into their careful consideration, and abide by it. Parties anxious to participate in the common cause, but having no means to provide for themselves, shall receive their daily subsistence from me; and be it known to all, that the ancient works, both of the Hindus and Muslims, the writings of the miracle-workers, and the calculations of the astrologers, pundits, and fortune-tellers, all agree in asserting that the English will no longer have any footing in India or elsewhere. . . .

No person, at the misrepresentation of the well-wishers of the British government, ought to conclude from the present slight inconveniences usually attendant on revolutions, that similar inconveniences and troubles should continue when the royal government is established on a firm basis; and parties badly dealt with by any sepoy (soldier) or plunderer, should come up and represent their grievances to me, and receive redress at my hands; and for whatever property they may lose in the reigning disorder, they will be recompensed from the public treasury when the royal government is well fixed.

Section I. — Regarding Zamindars [landholders]. — It is evident that the British government, in making settlements with zamindars, have imposed exorbitant jummas (taxes), and have disgraced and ruined several zamindars by putting up their estates to public auction for arrears of rent, insomuch that on the institution of a suit by a common farmer, a maidservant, or a slave, the respectable zamindars are summoned into court, arrested, put in jail, and disgraced. In litigations regarding zamindars, the immense value of stamps, and other unnecessary expenses of the civil courts, which are pregnant with all sorts of crooked dealings, and the practice of allowing, a

¹A term used at the time to refer to northern India.

²Also the King of Delhi, Bahadur Shah.

³Great Hero. In this context a name for the Hindu god Vishnu.

case to hang on for years, are all calculated to impoverish the litigants. Besides this, the coffers of the zamindars are annually taxed with subscriptions for schools, hospitals, roads, etc. Such extortions will have no manner of existence in the royal government; but, on the contrary, the taxes will be light, the dignity and honour of the zamindars safe, and every zamindar will have absolute rule in his own territory.

Section II. — Regarding Merchants. — It is plain that the infidel and treacherous British government have monopolised the trade of all the fine and valuable merchandise, such as indigo, cloth, and other articles of shipping, leaving only the trade of trifles to the people, and even in this they are not without their share of the profits, which they secure by means of customs and stamp fees, etc., in money suits, so that the people have merely a trade in name. . . . When the royal government is established, all these aforesaid fraudulent practices shall be dispensed with, and the trade of every article, without exception, both by land and water, shall be open to the native merchants of India, who will have the benefit of the government steam-vessels and steam carriages for the conveyance of the merchandise gratis; and merchants having no capital of their own shall be assisted from the public treasury. . . .

Section III. — Regarding Public Servants. — It is not a secret thing, that under the British government, natives employed in the civil and military services, have little respect, low pay, and no manner of influence; and all the posts of dignity and emolument [reward] in both the departments, are exclusively bestowed on Englishmen. . . . But under the royal government, . . . the posts . . . which the English enjoy at present . . . will be given to the natives . . . together with landed estates, ceremonial dress, tax-free lands, and influence. Natives, whether Hindus or Muslims, who fall fighting against the English, are

sure to go to heaven; and those killed fighting for the English, will, doubtless, go to hell. Therefore, all the natives in the British service ought to be alive to their religion and interest, and, abjuring their loyalty to the English, side with the royal government and obtain salaries of 200 or 300 rupees per month for the present, and be entitled to high posts in future.

Section IV. — Regarding Artisans. — It is evident that the Europeans, by the introduction of English articles into India, have thrown the weavers, the cotton-dressers, the carpenters, the blacksmiths, and the shoemakers, &c., out of employ, and have engrossed [taken over] their occupations, so that every description of native artisan has been reduced to beggary. But under the royal government the native artisans will exclusively be employed in the services of the kings, the rajahs, and the rich; and this will no doubt insure their prosperity. Therefore the artisans ought to renounce the English services, and assist the Mujahidins . . . engaged in the war, and thus be entitled both to secular and eternal happiness.

Section V. — Regarding Pundits, Fakirs,⁴ and other learned persons. — The pundits and fakirs being the guardians of the Hindu and Muslim religions respectively, and the Europeans being the enemies of both religions, and as at present a war is raging against the English on account of religion, the pundits and fakirs are bound to present themselves to me, and take their share in this holy war, otherwise they will stand condemned. . . .

Lastly, be it known to all, that whoever, out of the above-named classes, shall, after the circulation of this Ishtahar, still cling to the British government, all his estates shall be confiscated, and his property plundered, and he himself, with his whole family, shall be imprisoned, and ultimately put to death.

⁴*Pundit* and *fakir* are both vague terms. Pundits were learned men; fakirs were mystics.