



## Mains Practice Questions

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**Q.**The partition of India in 1947 was the culmination of long drawn process which started with the suppression of the Revolt of 1857 by the British. Comment

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### **Approach:**

- Provide brief introduction of Revolt of 1857.
- Describe the policy of divide and rule which British government followed for suppression of revolt and how this policy was continuous feature till partition of India took place.
- Give conclusion.

### **Answer**

#### **Introduction:**

- Revolt of 1857 was the first great struggle of Indians to overthrow British rule.
- It led to changes in administration and the policies of the British government which had far reaching consequences for India.

#### **Body:**

#### **Policies immediately after revolt of 1857:**

- The Army, which was at the forefront of the outbreak, was thoroughly reorganised and British military policy came to be dominated by the idea of “division and counterpoise”.
- The concept of divide and rule was adopted with separate units being created on the basis of caste/community/region.
- Muslims were generally looked upon with suspicion after the Wahabi and 1857 revolts and subjected to repression and discrimination by the British government.

### **British policies after 1870's**

- After the 1870s, with signs of the emergence of Indian nationalism, the government reversed its policy of repression of Muslims.
- British Government decided to rally them behind the government through policies of concessions, favours and reservations, and used them against nationalist forces. The government used persons like Sir Syed Ahmed Khan to counter the growing influence of the Congress.
- Sir Syed Ahmed Khan had a broadminded and reformist outlook initially but later he started supporting the colonial government, exhorting the Muslim masses to stay away from the Congress and not to get politicised.
- He also started talking of separate interests of Hindus and Muslims.

### **Separate Electorates**

- In 1906 Agha Khan led a Muslim delegation (called the Shimla delegation) to the viceroy, Lord Minto, to demand separate electorates for Muslims at all levels and that the Muslim representation should be commensurate not only with their numerical strength but also with their “political importance and their contribution to the British Empire”.
- The demand for separate electorates for Muslims was awarded under Morley- Minto Reforms in 1909.
- In 1919 the separate electorates were further expanded for Sikhs, Christians and Anglo-Indians by Montague- Chelmsford reforms.
- The principles of ‘communal electorates’ and ‘weightage’ were further extended to depressed classes by 1940's Constitutional reforms

### **Wavell Plan**

- Wavell Plan convened to agree for Indian self-government was permitted to start negotiations with Indian leaders. British gave Muslim League the power of Veto to any constitutional proposal which was not in its interest, which it used for unreasonable demands like no muslim representatives on executive council that were not members of of the League.
- Wavell announced a breakdown of talks thus giving the League a virtual veto. This strengthened the League's position, as was evident from the elections in 1945-46.

## **Cabinet Mission-1946**

- The Cabinet Mission reached Delhi on March 24, 1946 to decide on interim government; and principles and procedures for framing a new constitution giving freedom to India. As the Congress and the League could not come to any agreement the mission put forward its own plan for the solution of the constitutional problem.
- League rejected Mission proposal of interim government but Wavell quietly brought the Muslim League into the Interim Government on October 26, 1946.
- The League was allowed to join without giving up the 'direct action'; despite its rejection of the Cabinet Mission's long term and short-term plans; and despite insistence on compulsory grouping.

## **Mountbatten Plan, June 3, 1947**

Mountbatten suggested the freedom-with-partition formula. League's demand was conceded to the extent that Pakistan would be created and the Congress' position on unity was taken into account to make Pakistan as small as possible. Mountbatten's formula was to divide India but retain maximum unity.

## **Conclusion:**

Thus the partition of India was consequence number of reasons and a prime factor being the 'divide and rule' policy of British Government to prolong their colonial rule in India which began as offshoots of Indian nationalism beginning to appear in 1857.