Modern History · GS - I

Explain how the upraising of 1857 constitutes an important watershed in the evolution of British policies towards colonial India.

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
2016	GS - I	Modern History

MARKS	WORD LIMIT
10	~150 words

Answer Hint

Revolt of 1857; end of Company rule; Crown administration; princely states; military restructuring; divide-and-rule; colonial governance

Model Answer

Introduction

The uprising of 1857 was a major turning point in colonial India. Although suppressed, it transformed the political and administrative framework of British rule.

Major Changes in British Policies

1. End of East India Company Rule

The Government of India Act, 1858 transferred authority from the East India Company to the British Crown. A Secretary of State for India, assisted by a council, was appointed to oversee Indian affairs.

2. Changed Policy towards Princely States

- The British abandoned the aggressive expansionist approach associated with the Doctrine of Lapse.
- Princes were assured that their territories would generally be respected if they remained loyal.

- Princes increasingly became pillars of colonial stability.

3. Military Reorganisation

- The proportion of European soldiers was increased.
- Artillery and strategically important military positions were largely retained under British control.
- Recruitment was reorganised, with greater reliance on selected communities considered loyal by colonial authorities.

4. Religious and Social Policy

The Crown promised non-interference in religious beliefs and customs, although discriminatory and exploitative colonial practices continued.

5. Divide-and-Rule

The British increasingly exploited differences of caste, religion and community to prevent united opposition.

Conclusion

The uprising ended Company rule and reshaped British governance. However, the changes primarily aimed to strengthen colonial control rather than promote Indian political rights.

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