



Section 4

PRIMARY SOURCE

Letter Opposing the English

by Moulavy Syad Kutb Shah Sahib

During British imperial rule in the 19th century, many Indians believed that the British were trying to force them to convert to Christianity. In a letter, Muslim leader Moulavy Syad Kutb Shah Sahib issued a warning to Hindus and Muslims in order to protect them from the British. The following excerpt from his letter reflects Indians' resentment toward the British because of religious differences. What course of action did Moulavy Syad Shah recommend Indians should take?

The English are people who overthrow all religions. You should understand well the object of destroying the religions of Hindustan; they have for a long time been causing books to be written and circulated throughout the country by the hands of their priests, and, exercising their authority, have brought out numbers of preachers to spread their own tenets: this has been learned from one of their own trusted agents. . . . [The English] ordered the Brahmans and others of their army to bite cartridges, in the making up of which fat had been used. The Mussulman [Muslim] soldiers perceived that by this expedient the religion of the Brahmans and Hindus only was in danger, but nevertheless they also refused to bite them. On this the English now resolved on ruining the faith of both. . . . It is now my firm conviction that if these English continue in Hindustan they will kill every one in the country, and will utterly overthrow our religions. . . . Under these circumstances, I would ask, what course have you decided on to protect your lives and faith? Were your views and mine the same, we might destroy them entirely with a very little trouble; and if we do so, we shall protect our religions and save the country. . . . All you Hindus are hereby solemnly adjured, by your faith in Ganges, Tulsi, and Saligram; and all you Mussulmans, by your belief in God and the Koran, as these English are the common enemy of both, to unite in considering their slaughter extremely expedient, for by this alone will the lives and faith of both be saved. It is expedient, then, that you should coalesce and slay them. The slaughter of kine [cows] is regarded by the Hindus as a great insult to their religion. To prevent this a solemn compact and agreement has been entered into by all the Mahomedan chiefs of Hindustan, binding themselves, that if the Hindus will come forward to slay the English, the Mahomedans will from that very day put a stop to the slaughter of cows, . . . but if the Hindus will not

gird their loins to kill the English, but will try to save them, they will be as guilty in the sight of God as though they had committed the sins of killing cows and eating flesh. Perhaps the English may, for their own ends, try to assure the Hindus that as the Mussulmans have consented to give up killing cows from respect for the Hindu religion, they will solemnly engage to do the same, and will ask the Hindus to join them against the Mussulmans; but no sensible man will be gulled by such deceit, for the solemn promises and professions of the English are always deceitful and interested. Once their ends are gained they will infringe their engagements, for deception has ever been habitual with them, and the treachery they have always practised on the people of Hindustan is known to rich and poor. Do not therefore give heed to what they may say. . . . I trust you will all write answers approving of what has been proposed herein. This letter has been printed under the direction of Moulavy Syad Kutb Shah Sahib, at the Bahaduri press, in the city of Bareilly.

from Selections from the Records of the Government of Punjab and its Dependencies, New Series, No. VII (Lahore: Punjab Printing Company, Ltd., 1870), 173-175. Reprinted in Peter N. Stearns, ed., Documents in World History, Vol. II (New York: Harper Collins, 1988), 70-72.

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1. According to the letter, what is the author's premise regarding the English?
 - a. The English will agree to give up killing cows out of respect for the Hindu religion
 - b. The English are working to put the Mussulmans in political control of India
 - c. The English will work to overthrow the religions of Hindustan
 - d. The English will protect the Hindus and Mussulmans with their armies and should therefore be trusted

2. According to this letter, why were the English a threat to the Indians? Cite 2 examples from the text to support your answer.

3. Read the sentence from the text:
"All you Hindus are hereby solemnly adjured, by your faith in Ganges, Tulsj, and Saligram; and all you Mussulmans, by your belief in God and the Koran, as these English are the common enemy of both, to unite in considering their slaughter extremely expedient..."

Based on its use in the text, what is the best definition of the word adjured?

- a. committed
 - b. excused
 - c. silenced
 - d. requested

4. What course of action did Moulavy Syad Shah believe Indians should take against the English?
 - a. slaughter the English
 - b. work with the English
 - c. ignore the English
 - d. expel the English from India

5. What is the main obstacle for the Hindus and Mussulmans in achieving Moulavy Syad Shah's goal/course of action?

6. Identify ALL of the words used to describe the author's feelings toward the English:

- a. fearful
- b. sympathetic
- c. distrustful
- d. compliant
- e. deceitful
- f. ambivalent
- g. treacherous
- h. self-serving

7. What outcome may result from this letter? What obstacles may the Indians face?