

Acharya Prafulla Chandra Ray and the Mutiny of 1857

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The Mutiny of 1857 is often designated as the First Indian War of Independence against the British rule in India. Though beginning primarily as a revolt of the Indian sepoys, working under the British East India Company, the rebellion ultimately took shape of a national struggle, a powerful insurrection, a widespread revolution of the Indian people against the oppressive British governance in India. This article will focus on Acharya Prafulla Chandra Ray's critique of the Mutiny, who, in his essay, *India Before and After the Mutiny*, made a detailed critical assessment of the political, historical and economic conditions of India under the British Raj, and conceived of the Mutiny as the First Anti-colonial Liberation Struggle of the Indians.

Writing, when he was a student at the University of Edinburgh, Ray's essay was originally written for an entry to a competition, which eventually reveals a strong nationalist sentiment of the young author and his diatribe against the British colonial domination in India. Giving a penetrating analysis of the colonial polity and economy and its adverse implications upon contemporary India, Ray, through this essay, intended to make his fellow Englishmen aware of the British atrocities to Indians and appealed to the former to adopt a more generous and humane policy, which could bring a closer union between the two countries and could bridge the gulf between the two races; an utopian dream, which Ray could only realize later. In his autobiography, Ray stated:

I was a believer in those days in the doctrine of mendicancy and with child-like simplicity held that if the wrongs and the grievances under which our country groaned could be brought home to the British people, they would be remedied. The disillusionment was not long in coming. There is not in the history of the world a single instance of a dominant race granting concession to a subject people of its own freewill and accord. (*Life and Experiences*, Vol. I, 63)