



## 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.*

## Discussion Questions

### Clarifying

1. According to this letter, why were the English a threat to Indians?
2. What course of action did Moulavy Syad Shah believe Indians should take against the English?
3. **Analyzing Causes and Recognizing Effects**  
What connections, if any, do you perceive between the attitudes expressed in this letter and the outbreak of the Sepoy Mutiny?

**CHAPTER**  
**11****Section 2****PRIMARY SOURCE** Letter from Menelik II

*From 1889 to 1913, Emperor Menelik II ruled Ethiopia, the only African nation to resist colonization. He wrote the following letter to the caliph of the Sudan to express his opposition to European expansion and his desire to strengthen his alliance with the Sudan. How did Menelik II intend to resist European attempts to colonize his country?*

This is to inform you that the Europeans who are present round the White Nile with the English have come out from both the east and the west, and intended to enter between my country and yours and to separate and divide us. And I, when I heard of their plan, dispatched an expedition, sending detachments in five directions. The group [of Europeans] who are near are the English and the French, who are located in the direction from which the Belgians came. And do you remember when I sent to you Kantiba Jiru, you wrote to me by him that you have men in the direction from which the Belgians came?; and I ordered the chiefs of [my] troops that if they met with them, they were to parley with them and explain [my] intention. And now I have ordered my troops to advance towards the White Nile. And perhaps [if] you heard the news from merchants or from others you might misunderstand my action, [so now] I have written to you so that you would understand the object [of this expedition].

And you look to yourself, and do not let the Europeans enter between us. Be strong, lest if the

Europeans enter our midst a great disaster befall us and our children have no rest. And if one of the Europeans comes to you as a traveler, do your utmost to send him away in peace; and do not listen to rumors against me. All my intention is to increase my friendship with you, and that our countries may be protected from [their] enemies.

*from G.N. Sanderson, "The Foreign Policy of Negus Menelik" in the *Journal of African History*, Vol. 5, 1964. Reprinted in Alvin M. Josephy, Jr., ed., *The Horizon History of Africa* (New York: American Heritage, 1971), 429.*

**Discussion Questions****Summarizing**

1. According to Menelik II, what was the Europeans' plan?
2. What steps did Menelik II take in response to the Europeans' plan?
3. **Making Inferences** Based on your reading of this letter, what can you infer about the methods some European countries used to control African land and peoples?