

Social and Economic Impact of British Period on Indian Society and Culture

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Abstract – British rule in India have deep impact whether it was on social culture or the economic culture of the country. The colonial period brought an end to the social evils prevailing among Indians. Modern education was being brought by the British rule in the India, because of which the modern scientific knowledge is prevailing in the country. Modern industrial unit were being setup under the colonial rule itself. British rule has positive as well as negative impact on the country. During the British rule extreme poverty prevailed among Indians. The colonial rule ruined the artisans and handicraft handlooms of rural India. Agriculture under the colonial rule is stagnant and did not able to perform well. This paper is totally based on secondary data such as: government reports, books, newspaper, official website etc.

Keywords: British Rule, Impact, Social and Economic, Modern Education, Industrialisation, Poverty

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INTRODUCTION

India is one of the biggest democracies in the world. Social and Economic condition of India in the present time is not the same in the past also. British period plays an effective role in bringing the social and economic change in the Indian society as a whole. British period brought the modern education, western culture and scientific technologies, change in social structure as well as bringing a lot of modernisation in industrial setup and others things. But as the positive side of the British period, there was a negative side also in the society, as the British period ruins the Indian handicraft and artisans by their policy of one way free trade on India. The economic policies followed by the Britisher were in favour their own and transformed the Indian economy into a colonial one. The British period brought some positive gains and some of the negative gains in the Indian social and economic culture which was prevailed at that time and even the impact of that can be felt in the present Indian society as a whole.

SOCIAL REFORMS AND ITS IMPACT UNDER THE BRITISH

Education

Initially the East India Company did not take any initiative in bringing modern education to the Indians. As they allowed the old system of education to continue, but in the beginning of 19th century the Britishers felt the need to bring modern education to the Indians as it became the requirement of the time. Because of which in the Charter Act 1813 for the first time one lakh rupees for bringing the scientific

education to Indian was allotted. This was the starting point of getting modern education to the Indians. Thomas Macaulay, the first law member of Governor General Council, promoted the English language as the tool for promoting western education to the Indians and bringing modernisation to the society. In 1844, English language became the official language of the government at that time and even that was declared that people with knowledge of English language will be preferred in the government services. This helped the spread of English language as the language of modern education which is still continuing in the present time also. Wood's Despatch on education by the East Indian Company also plays an important role in bringing proper modern education to the Indians as Wood's Despatch articulated a system of education from primary school to the university level. Because of which universities were established in Calcutta, Bombay and Madras.

Social Reforms

The Britishers never wanted to interfere in the social system which was prevailing in India at that time, but when modern education was start spreading in the country the social evils also coming the light as modern educated Indians start making voices against these evils which were present in the society. The demand for social reform started in the early decades of the 19th century due to the response of Western modern education spreading in India. Spreading of modern education and contact with the West made educated Indians realise that socio-religious reform

were the first step required for bringing all-round development of the country. Educated Indians like Raja Rammohan Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Jyotirao Phule, Vinoba Bhave etc were some names who worked systematically to eradicate social evils. Social reforms in India started from 1829 when the practice of sati was banned by the then Governor General William Bentinck, because of the efforts of the modern educationist Raja Rammohan Roy. Sati or the practice of burning a widow alive with her dead husband was made illegal and even punishable by law.

Some other social evils which were prevailing in the Indian society like Female Infanticide, Slavery, Child Marriage, Polygamy and widow Remarriage was allowed etc. Modern Educationist like Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar played an important role in bringing the Widow Remarriage Act in 1856 with him there was one other named Dr. Karve who played an extraordinary part in bringing widow remarriage in Indian society, as he himself married to a widow.

In 1870 the Female Infanticide Act was passed by the Viceroy Council to check the menace of the female Infanticide as a social evil prevailing in India. Even in the present time the Female Infanticide problem still prevailing in backward areas of country on which the Britisher tried to make control even get successful in controlling it little bit.

Child marriage is also one of the biggest problems faced by the country during the British period educated Indians like Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar does a lot of efforts to control the prevailing child marriage and opened a lot of school for the education of the women and empowerment of the women. The Britisher tries to control polygamy which was prevailing in the country by bringing laws. The customs like offering little child as sacrifice to please God, practised on certain places, was banned by Governor General Lord Hardinge. Slavery was also banned during that period. So the British period bring a lot of changes and reforms in the society and tried to control the social evils prevailing in the society. The reforms done during the East India Company time are still have an impact on the society like widow remarriage is legal, polygamy is crime according the laws made by the government after independence. So the British period still have impact on Indian society.

ECONOMIC IMPACT OF BRITISH PERIOD

British period has deep impact on different sectors which were prevailed during that time. The policies made by the East India Company were made for benefitting their own business because of which the Indian economy became a colonial economy under the Britishers. The theory of 'Drain of Wealth' as prescribed by a Great Economist and Freedom fighter Dada Bhai Naoroji define the true nature of British colonial period. There were different impact

on sectors like industrial sector flourish under policies of Britishers and sectors like rural handicraft felt the atrocities impact of these policies.

RUIN OF ARTISANS AND CRAFTSMEN

The negative impact of the Britishers policies was felt by the rural artisans and craftsmen. Artisans and craftsmen were small rural business holders, because of the modern industrial factories market was fluxed with the clothes made by the factories and the rural artisans and weavers lost their livelihood. Modern industries ruined the cotton weaver and spinning industries of India. The artisans were dependent on their business because of the modern industries their works has been lost and they became unemployed. The artisans and the craftsmen were the ones who faced the atrocities of the coming of modern industries. Indian rural economy was changed according to the requirement of the British Industrial policy.

Impact on Agriculture

Agriculture in India flourished from ancient times. Agriculture is the main work of the country in the past. India has flourished agriculture with exporting a lot of product to other countries like cotton, silk, woollen textiles etc. In India the agriculture is the livelihood job of 80 percent of the people under British regime. British period changed the Indian agriculture to a commercial agriculture not in the way which is beneficial for India but in a way which is harmful to the country. The British colonial rule changed Indian agriculture into a raw material producing country in place of an exporter of agricultural products. The colonial rule changed the entire production system in the country. A new class of landlords emerged that rented the land to farmers. Farmers began a cycle of debt that led to poverty as they were expected to give a majority of their crops to the landlord. The landlord, in turn was expected to forward the profits to the British government. The commercialization of the agriculture had a direct adverse impact on the farmers, as they have to grow cash crops like cotton and indigo in place of the food crops like wheat and rice which also destroyed the Indian agriculture. For Britisher Indian agriculture became a place for the extracting raw material for the industries set up in England. So the agriculture did not flourish under the British period and severally faces bad condition.

Modern industries

Under the colonial rule the modern industries came in India in the second half of the 19th century. First cotton industry was set up in India in 1850s. It is the beginning of the modern industrial setup in India, as before that India was never considered as modern industrial state as England and other industrial countries. Even today India is not

considered as developed in industrial sector as these countries. The credit for large scale industrial setup in India goes to Jamshedji Tata and his son Dorabji, who set up first steel manufacturing industry in 1907 at Jamshedpur. This is the beginning of the modern industrial setup in India. There were other industries having small-scale character operating in the country like tanning, vegetable oil processing, glass-making, leather goods manufacturing, etc. Despite this India's modern manufacturing industry could not develop on a sound footing until India got independence.

Modern Transport and Communication System

Industrialization at a rapid pace brought the modern transport and communication system to develop at an effective pace in the country. Modern means of transport was started under the reign of Lord William Bentinck, when the highway building activities were carried on. In 1839, the Old Grand Trunk road to connect Kolkata to Delhi was built and latter connected with Lahore and Peshawar. During Lord Dalhousie tenure as Governor General First railway line was built and train was ran from Bombay to Thane in 1853.

Lord Dalhousie also started the activity of the Postal Department by introducing penny postage system in India. Further Lord Dalhousie was instrumental in bringing telegraph system in the country. All these development in the field of modern transport and communication impacted on the economy in a big way. As these transport and communication system help in bringing connectivity to the far areas and brought industrial areas near to the areas where raw material is available for the industries. Modern transport system like trains still plays an effective role in the economy of the country even in the present time.

Poverty and famines

The impact of British rule and its economic policies can be found in the prevalence of extreme poverty among the people at that time. The economic policies followed by the Britisher exploits the cultivators by land settlement like Permanent settlement in Bengal, Mahalwari system in north India and Ryotwari in south India. All these system makes the cultivator more dependent on the Zamindars, because of which poverty prevails as pity cultivator not able to save for themselves from what they were producing. High taxation, drain of wealth to Britain and backward agrarian structure all are the reasons for poverty which was increasing day by day under the colonial rule. Famine is also one of the reasons for the extreme poverty under the colonial rule. Some of the famines were natural but other ones were manmade due to the economic exploitation by the British rule. This exploitation by the colonial rule still has effect in the country as poverty still exists.

CONCLUSION

The British rule in India produced a lot of changes in the social and economic character of the country. The British period brought some effective changes in the society and culture of the country like bringing modern education system, western thinking and scientific knowledge which affects the overall structure of the country and make way for the development of country in the right direction. The British rule brought an end to the social evils which are prevailing in the society like Sati partha, Slavery, Child Marriage and Widow Remarriage for which the colonial rule brought laws to make India free from these evils. With the positive impact British rule brought the negative impact also in the economic condition of the country like Extreme Poverty, Drain of Wealth to England etc. But the colonial rules brought a lot of positives also like big industrial setup, modern means of transport and communication system etc. So overall, we can say that the colonial rule has certain advantages but there were a lot of disadvantages also in the system with which the country is still trying to tackle.

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