



Paper Title: Colonial Impact on Indian Society and Economy.

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Abstract: The colonial period was a very unfortunate event in the history of India. It left a bitter feeling in the minds of every Indian. Colonialism led to a substantial outflow of financial resources. Our country 'Bharatvarsh' which was popularly known as the 'Golden Bird' in ancient time due to her enormous wealth, was then losing wealth to the imperial British, who arrived as traders and became rulers. The Indian society and economy suffered a serious setback during British rule. Thus, this study has been undertaken by me to deeply analyze the colonial impact on Indian society and economy.

Keywords: India as the Golden Bird, "India as the pivot of our empire", Battle of Plassey, Grant of Diwani Rights, Colonial impact on Indian society and economy.

INTRODUCTION:

"India is the pivot of our Empire.....If the Empire loses any other part of its Dominion we can survive but if we lose India, the sun of our Empire will have set." This line was quoted by Victor Alexander Vruce, the Viceroy of British India in 1894 and this quote is quite enough to prove the importance of India to the British as a colony. Swetha Munuswamy says that the sole purpose of the British colonial rule in India was to reduce the country to being a raw material supplier for Britain's own rapidly expanding modern industrial base.

NEED OF THE STUDY:

The British rule in India had been the darkest phase. Though there were some positive effects like the introduction of Western education, we need to keep in mind that it was done to make the Indians British slaves. To some extent, the British were successful but the game was changed when our social reformers and freedom fighters encouraged Western education to eradicate social evils and abolish British rule from India. Still now in India, it is a wrong mindset of many people that "British civilized Indians". To put an end to this childish thought, I undertook this study on "Colonial impact on Indian society and economy" to prove with evidence that the British did not civilize Indians, instead the former destroyed the latter.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research methodology includes how the plan and discussion of the study is conducted. It involves the presentation of my research work, sources I used and critical analysis of the study.

3.1.SOURCES OF DATA:

For this study, I have referred to the books of eminent historians like Dr. R. C. Majumdar, Amiya Kumar Bagchi, Dr. N. N. Bhattacharya. I have collected secondary information from these sources.

3.2. India on the eve of British Rule

India had an unbiased and sustainable economy earlier than the appearance of British rule. Prakash Kumar mentions that India gained worldwide fame for its handicraft industries inside the fields of cotton and silk textiles, metallic and precious stone- works and so on. The

British arrived in India in 17th century as a buying and selling organization and founded their fast manufacturing facilities on the banks of River Hugli in Bengal. Amiya Kumar Bagchi in his book "*Colonialism and Indian Economy*" writes that after the Battle of Plassey in 1757, the British gained full control of Bengal and the financial system, polity and handicraft perished slowly. The British intentionally smashed the assembled state's financial framework, abused India's riches and used the wealth for the benefit of Britain.

3.3 The impact of British rule on Indian Economy

In 1765, after the Battle of Buxar, Mughal emperor Shah Alam II granted English East India Company Diwani rights of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa and it was then when the black shadow of colonialism started hovering over India's head. According to R. C. Majumdar, the stagnation in the agricultural sector was caused mainly because of various systems of land settlement that were introduced by the colonial government. India could not develop a sound industrial base under colonial rule. Sekhar Bandhyopadhyay points out that there was hardly any capital goods industry to help promote further industrialization in India. The growth rate of the new industrial sector and its contribution to the Gross Domestic Product and Gross Value Added remained very small. Laxmi Iyer explains that India's foreign trade resulted in the generation of a large export surplus which came at a huge cost to the country's economy. Several essential commodities — food grains, clothes, kerosene etc. were scarcely available in the domestic market and the export surplus did not result in any flow of gold or silver into India. Dadabhai Naoroji in his book "*Poverty and Un-British Rule in India*" notes that the annual drain of £ 3,000,000 on British India has amounted to thirty years at 12% (the usual Indian rate). Lord Lawrence, Lord Cromer, Sir Auckland Colvin, Sir David Barbour and others declared the *extreme poverty of India*.

3.4 The impact of British rule on Indian Society

The utter exhaustion and destruction of the economic resources of India resulted in famines and epidemics like the bubonic plague in Poona by the end of the 19th century. G. R. Manjunath expresses that in 1897, when Maharashtra was hit with famine and plague, Bal Gangadhar Tilak set up relief camps and organized no-rent campaigns and the British officials had an indifferent attitude towards the plague victims. The British openly interfered with the social customs of the Indians. Ignoring the sentiments of the people, the government passed laws abolishing infanticide, sati (1829), legalizing widow remarriage (1856). However, these were progressive steps to reform Indian society but they failed to impress the orthodox sections of society. Dr. N. N. Bhattacharya proclaims that from 1859 to 1861, the Indigo Revolution in Bengal emerged in the Nadia district where the Indigo peasants attacked the indigo factories with spears and swords. They could no longer tolerate the inhuman torture of their indigo masters. Ashley Eden stated that from 1839 to 1859, 49 cases of murder, homicide, riot, arson, dacoity, plunder and kidnapping related to indigo cultivation were recorded in the district. According to H. N. Mukherjee, the introduction of Western education inculcated new ideas in the minds of Indians which had a positive impact on the society. Educated Indians learnt about the American and French Revolutions, the unification of Germany and Italy and the right of the people to overthrow an autocratic government. The rise of an educated middle class became conscious of the fact that British rule was a hindrance to social and political development and began to organize itself against imperial domination.

3.5 Conclusion

While concluding, I will like to say that colonization had harsh impacts on Indian society and economy. Almost all policies of the British were different ways to curb the freedom of Indians. In the case of preventing social evils, the most important fact to be noted here is that eminent social reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar fought for abolishing sati and introducing remarriage of widows and mobilized the British government to pass laws. The British aimed to make the Indians serve their cause by introducing English education in which case the Indians turned the game. Whatever the British did, they had only one motive — To consolidate their empire in India. If India would not lose her enormous wealth to the British, if in 1757, Mir Zafar wouldn't betray Siraj-ud-daulah in the Battle of Plassey, then that day the Sun would not set in India for long 190 years and India would still be called "**The Golden Bird.**"

3.6. ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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