

Impact of colonial rule on indian economy society and culture



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During the 18th century, a large number of events took place in the world. one such significant event was the industrial revolution which took place in England and spread to other countries. East India company came to India for trading purposes. Increased demands for raw materials arising out of industrial revolution and need for a market to sell their machine made goods was the reason behind their entrance in India. By the time, British managed to apply their administrative policies to control the Indian society and almost all other sphere of the state.

This project will focus on the impact of British rule on Indian Economy (Textile industry, Land Settlements, Agriculture and Transport), Society and Culture (Social Policy, Education Policy and Reforms.)

England succeeded in controlling trade with India and established the east India company in 1600 ad backed up by British government. The east India company came to India in the 17th century with the motive of trading. They set up their first factory in Surat in 1613. The 18th century was a period of internal ups and downs concerning the power of the Mughal Empire. The British got the perfect opportunity to control the Indian territory as an administrator. Their new administrative policies and ideas helped them to control the country from the top. The charter act of 1813 resulted into free access to Indian territory by other companies and ended the upper hand enjoyed by the east India company. Now, with very little tariff cutoffs, Indian market was opened for the cheap machine made goods and Indian sources were used as a source of raw material for the industrial world of Europe.

Also, English education was introduced to produce a class of English speaking Indians who would probably assist the British officers and add a glue to their political structure. By that time, the company was well positioned in India. They also succeeded in overcoming the competition brought in by other European trading companies.

The wealth generated by the English merchants from the industrial revolution was invested in setting up industries and trade with India. The industrial revolution resulted in the mass production of goods in the 18th and 19th century which was supposed to be sold in the world markets. During that time, there was a class of traders in England who benefitted more from manufacturing than trading. They were interested in buying raw materials from India and selling their manufactured goods in India. Ultimately, the manufacturers succeeded in abolishing the monopoly of east India company. With this, India became an economic colony of industrial England.

Earlier, Indian handicrafts had a huge market in Europe. Indian textiles such as cotton, linen, silk and woollen goods already had demands in the market. With the industrialisation in England, the textile industry there took a turnaround. There was a massive export of machine made goods in Indian markets. This import of large amount of products led to increase threat for handicraft industries in Indian market as the machine goods were much cheaper than the handmade Indian goods. Therefore, within a few years, India being an exporter of clothes became an exporter of raw materials and an importer of clothes. The main idea of the British was to transform India into a consumer of machine goods exported from Britain. Consequently, textile, metal works, glass and paper industries were soon out of work. As a <https://assignbuster.com/impact-of-colonial-rule-on-indian-economy-society-and-culture/>

result unemployment grew in India . Many of the workers migrated to rural areas to work on their fields as farmer. From an exporter, India became an importer. British collected money from the Indian rulers, merchants and even the common people. The British traders served the interests of east India company and later the British empire.

Since the ancient times, main livelihood of Indian people is agriculture. Hence, the land revenue constituted a major portion of the taxes collected. Earlier, the British had come to India to trade. Gradually, they became interested in ruling the Indian territory for which money was needed. They imposed a number of taxes on the cultivators. This effected the peasants badly as even those people who were not able to manage their livelihood was forced to participate in the revenue share. The system of revenue collection became quite complicated, as a result, a number of systems to collect revenues were introduced i. e. Permanent Settlement, Mahalwari Settlement, Ryotwari System, etc. But none of these systems enhanced the condition of cultivators and rather deteriorated peasant's life more or less.

A major impact of the British policies in India at ground level was the introduction of large number of commercial crops such as tea, coffee, indigo, opium, cotton, jute and oilseeds.

The market of opium was strictly looked into by the British traders which left no scope for Indian producers to make profit. Indigo was forcefully cultivated in India and sent to England to be used as a dyeing agent for clothes. The aftermaths of indigo farming left the land infertile for a few years, which

effected the peasant's livelihood. The workers worked under a lot of hardships.

Commercialisation of agriculture increased the number of landless labourers. It also increased the number of mediators and middlemen who exploited the situation even more. Since, the peasants now shifted to commercial crops, food grain production went down which resulted into famines. There was an enormous drain of wealth from India to Britain. Thus, the peasants revolted.

Initially, the introduction of transport and communication systems in India was done during the colonial rule of British. Though, these facilities were provided for the business purpose of company but these facilities helped the common people to connect to each other. The nation came to know about its existence.

Earlier, the main means of transport in India were bullock carts and pack animals. Englishmen felt the need of railway tracks and better communication throughout India. As a result, the vast network of railway networks that we witness today was more or less pioneered during the later part of 19th century. During the colonial rule, because of westernisation, India absorbed various ideas trending throughout the globe. For example, liberty, equality, human rights, science and technology.

Indian society passed through many changes since the British came to India. During the 19th century, certain social practices like female infanticide, child marriage, sati, polygamy and a tough caste system was in practice. These practices were against the humanity. Women faced harsh discrimination throughout their life. Education was limited to only a few upper class men.

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British brought the idea of equality, liberty, fraternity, renaissance and various other ideas growing in the west world. All these movements led to the criticism of the prevailing caste system and untouchability in the Indian society.

The British actually came to India to make maximum profit which was achieved by buying raw materials at very low prices and selling their finished products at high prices. The British educated Indians up to a extent so that they could help them in their administrative work and could not oppose the government. British believed India to be old and inferior. This was, of course, not true. Indian beliefs and traditions were still relevant. They wanted India to be a part of the progressive world of western science. They wanted to impose a rule on the Indians without getting any reaction from the people.

The British wanted to introduce English language as a medium of instruction. Imparting education in the English language was one of the strategy of British. They wanted to make their administrative works without spending much money which was possible by recruiting little educated Indians. It was also expected to create a class of Indians who could relate to British officials and the Indian traditions. The British offered jobs to those who knew English thus many Indians went in to learn English. Though, the British followed a half-hearted policy in India, western ideas had some positive impacts on Indian society.

Initially, the east India company did not realised their duty of educating Indians because of which the old system of education continued for a few years even after their arrival. As soon as they realised the importance of

education in India, they opened colleges for higher education and schools at ground level and the system of educating only upper class individuals was discarded. The Charter Act of 1813 directed the company officials to introduce higher education in India. As a result, there grew two types of education policy; The Orientalists argued that the education should be imparted in the traditional way i. e. in the medium of Sanskrit and Persian, on the other hand, Anglicists argued that western education should be imparted only through English as a medium. Anglicists such as Thomas Macaulay and William Bentick promoted English and believed that India is a state of illiterate people and it needs to be westernised. Thomas Macaulay said that a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia.

In 1844, English was made the official language and the people with the knowledge of English was preferred for public employment. In 1854, in accordance with Wood's Despatch, universities were established in Calcutta, Madras and Bombay. Western education, however, influenced Indian society in a way that the British could never have imagined. As a result of exposure to western ideas, Indians started analysing the situation and began to develop the feeling of nationalism.

The socio-religious movement led to the national movement. The continuous effort of the revolutionaries resulted into wide awakening of the society. Although, Christian missionaries worked actively throughout the nation but because of the western ideas , various reform movements took place in the country. The religious ideas and beliefs prevailing in the minds of Indians had greater self respect, self confidence and pride. The reformers wanted to <https://assignbuster.com/impact-of-colonial-rule-on-indian-economy-society-and-culture/>

integrate the western ideas with Indian cultural beliefs. The introduction of western guided the Indians towards a scientific approach to life. People became aware about their nationality which was the main reason behind the united struggle against the British.

Educated Indians such as Raja Rammohan Roy worked systematically to eradicate the evils of the society. In 1829, sati was made illegal or punishable under the law. Female Infanticide was banned a few years later. Slavery was declared illegal. Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar also worked against child marriage and polygamy.

By the time, the impact of all these reforms was felt all over the country.

Colonial rule of British affected every respect of Indian society. A large number of British and Europeans stayed in India during their rule which brought cultural transfusion. The most prominent change that occurred during that period was the rise in population from about 170 million to 420 million from 1757 to 1947. Even our present life is shaped to a great extent by our past. The rails, the clubs, buildings like the Rashtrapati Bhavan and the Parliament are few of the gifts given to us by the British. Food items that we consume today proudly like bread, tea, cake, etc. were also adopted by us during this period. the Indian armed forces still have many aspects of European training and combat. The medium of our instruction is English, even the higher courts pronounces its judgements in English.

Although, they introduced transport and communication systems in India but they destroyed the basic structure of India. Socially, the British impact was positive. They prohibited the practice of sati, polygamy, female infanticide, <https://assignbuster.com/impact-of-colonial-rule-on-indian-economy-society-and-culture/>

child marriage and eradicated many other social evils going on in the country.