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**Colonial Rule in India from the Perspective of Theory of Governmentality**

Governmentality, the ideology developed by Michel Foucault, is the concept to govern people through positive means, the exercise of organized political power with the willingness and active consent of the governed. It is contrary to the disciplinarian form of government where sovereign power is used to formulate law. (Huff, 2013)

Looking into the history of the British colonization of the subcontinent, we find out that the British traders, who first entered India in the early seventeenth century in the name of the British East India Company, later ruled here for over two hundred years. These traders lured the Mughal emperors to develop trading relations with them and acquired more and more opportunities with time, as a result establishing their control in the region and later became the sole reason of the British dominance in India.

After facing some hurdles initially, the company started to become a competitive part of Indian market. The company’s main investment or public trade was based on purchasing valuable goods with ‘ready money’ obtained by contracts made with *dadni* merchants (brokers), who were later replaced by *gomasta*s, paid Indian agents of the Company, who made their purchases under the direct supervision of the Company’s European servants. The company paid abominably low salaries to its servants in India and, as compensation, recognized their rights to private trade in goods that did not involve the company’s monopoly. Along with the gain of money and trade control, the British also started strengthening military power in India, apparently to provide security and support their position in the subcontinent. (Bayly, 1988)

The Company became the dominant military power in eastern India after the Battle of Plassey and the decisive victory of the British over the Nawab of Bengal and his French allies in 1757, but they lost their financial strength. In 1765, Lord Clive signed the Treaty of Allahabad with the Mughal emperor, by which the East India Company was appointed as *diwan* (the receiver-general of the Imperial revenues)for the provinces of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. the Company’s new role as a tax collector got priority over its role as a merchant and its trade came to be viewed as little more than the means of transferring revenue surpluses as ‘tribute’ to Britain. (Marshall, 2005).

The Company’s virtual sovereignty did not put an end to the tension with the nawabs over the control of trade and commerce as they wanted a zone of trade ‘free’ from all earlier customs and duties, and hence, through the force of arms and vigilant policing, the Company succeeded in making a unified economic territory, under efficient European ‘management’ with standardized and exclusive duty on all goods and common ruling codes, emerged in place of what was referred to as the ‘despotic’ divergent and ‘oppressive’ policies of the nawabs (Sen, 1998)

When the East India Company acquired power and control, the British government installed the first Governor General of India, Warren Hastings, who laid the administrative foundation for subsequent British consolidation. The East India Act of 1784 was passed to dissolve the monopoly of the East India Company and put the British government in charge. After the Indian Sepoy Mutiny of 1857, the British government assumed full control, dissolving the trading company.

The increasing interest of the post-1857 colonial state in the customs of the land was governed by its need to face ‘more prudently the vexed question of social reform’. It also wanted precise knowledge of the internal divisions in Indian society in order to mark out the ally from the enemy, and develop an administrative system ‘capable of exerting greater social control’ (Bandyopadhyay, 1985).

By 1881, the British government had worked out a set of practices that would allow it to list not just the names of ‘every person in India’ but also to gather information about age, sex, occupation, caste, religion, literacy, place of birth and current residence (Cohn 1996: 8). Apparently, all the data collecting by the British was to understand Indian society as it was, not to change it (Lelyveld, 1978). Moreover, the initial idea behind the census, as it has been pointed out, was nothing more than a ‘statistical survey’ (Samarendra, 2008).

The published census reports did not only summarize the statistical information compiled but they also included ‘extensive narratives about the caste system, the religions of India, fertility and morbidity, domestic organization, and the economic structure of India’ (Cohn, 1996). What is more significant is the fact that census takers were given ‘special keys’ for converting unsuitable responses into officially formulated census categories (Plowden, 1873)

It is therefore, not surprising that census reports recorded minorities that were uncooperative towards British law and order, like Ramoshis, as thugs and other ‘criminal tribes’ (Pant, 1987). The last chapter traced British moves to control and subdue the wandering population of *sanyasis*, *fakirs*, *sadhus*, dacoits, thugs, *goondas*, pastoralists and entertainers.

The use of caste to classify the population in accordance with occupation and social structure was soon applied to all of India (Bates, 1995) The assumptions of ‘inborn criminality’, also related to the more obdurate and recalcitrant ‘tribes’, and a large number of coercive measures were introduced from the beginning to tame them. All such measures, of different chronologies and dispersed locations, overlapped each other to eventually aid the formulation of the Criminal Tribes Act, a general method of surveillance and control (Nigam, 1990).

The British colonial rule, apparently and supposedly based principally on the idea of having Indians administered by Indians and not common laws, failed to follow this concept in reality. The British, in no effective way, benefited India. Their government was, in no way willingly supported or consented by the governed Indians.

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