

HS132: Final-Assignment

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Having studied the history of modern India from the advent of British rule to the Gandhian struggle for independence, discuss how events and processes that occurred during that period continues to have a bearing on India's present.

Introduction

In this course I learnt about the various events that occurred since the arrival of the British in the form of a mere trading company; and how they gradually consolidated their power on the divided India. We studied how EIC ruined economy, we studied mutiny of 1857, we studied British government took India's control in their hand, how Congress formed, how Gandhi struggled and how we got independence. At the very end of the course, this is the best time, that we discuss how British rule's era still has impact on India's present. Studying how events passed in history and where we are now, better paths for our bright future can be found. So, in this assignment we will discuss about all major events that happened since arrival of EIC until India's Independence and how these events set base for India's present.

Incidents happened in British Era which still has impact on India's present:

The British first came to India in the 17th Century in the form of a trading company known as the British East India Company. Slowly the company began to consolidate their power on Indian soil, and began to establish their own trade laws, and ultimately set their own empire, which completely changed the nature of Indian colony.

They ruled India for almost 200 years. A lot of things happened in those 200 years. So, it is essential that even after nearly 75 years of independence, many of those incidents still effects our society. So, we will try to discuss what were the major incidents of that period that still impacting India's present. **We will group incidents with similar impacts together to get a better understanding:**

- **Incidents which have Economic Impacts:**

As discussed British came in India as traders. But, with time they got political power also. Time they came to India, India was largest economy in world (with share of nearly 25 percentage in world G.D.P. in early 18th century). Indian handicraft and textile industries were at their peak. Indian textiles such as cotton, linen, silk and woollen goods had huge markets in Asia, Africa as well as in Europe. In late 18th century and early 19th century Britain was being industrialized. When British got power in rich areas like Bengal they, started to exploit Indian resources by having more raw materials and flooding Indian market with cheap British products. This policy adversely affected Indian Economy, it completely destroyed Indian domestic market and local craftsmen. The free trade policy reversed the direction of textile trade between India and Britain. The import of machine made cloths from England at cheaper price increased the competition for Indian textile industry. Within a short span of time India became an exporter of raw cotton and importer of clothes due to British government policy of imposing protective tariff on Indian textiles. An almost similar thing happened with the handicraft industry as well. Free duty entry of British goods in Indian market and heavy taxes on Indian handicrafts, when they

were exported completely destroyed the industry.

India also suffered a huge blow in the agriculture sector, wherein heavy commercialization was imposed. Also, they started new settlements for land like **permanent settlement, Mahalwari settlement and reytwari settlement**. They also imposed heavy taxes on peasants.

These things combined with many famines and epidemics led to downfall of Indian economy. People in many regions died because of hunger. As a consequence of everything that I mentioned above, India suffered a major blow in its share of the world manufacturing output. India changed from a net exporter country to a net importer one-this led to a huge decline in percentage of world trade output from 24.5 percent in 1750 to 2.4 percent in 1938.

Now, it is time to discuss how these events are impacting present of India. We can easily see India still has not been able to recover from loss in that period. India had not much chances to industrialize herself in British era. Hence, our global trade output is still 2.6%, which is far less then nearly 25 % of Mughal empire in early 18th century. Although there are some other reasons also for less G.D.P. share of India. But, British era is still one of the major reason behind this.

- **Social Reforms:**

When British came to India, they came up with new culture, new social-values and new thinking and lifestyle. It was the British who tried to introduce the concepts of human rights, equality etc.

For example, the British tried to improve the condition of Indian women. In India, women were discriminated at all stages of life. Practices of female infanticide, child marriage, sati and polygamy etc prevailed in Indian society. The British tried to introduce several reforms in different parts of the country to improve the conditions of Indian women. Many legal measures to improve the status of Indian women were introduced. For example sati was banned in 1829, and laws were passed which allowed for widow remarriage and education of women. Also, they banned child-marriage in 1872 and banned slavery in 1860. Apart from that they also introduced English education which we will discuss in next part.

In today's context we can see that life of women is much better then what it was in Mughal era. They have equal rights. All these things were not possible if all those evil customs were still there. We will also see in further discussion how caste system also got reformed, also slavery got banned. Hence, we can say that those acts to reform our society indeed has positive impact on our society.

- **Impact of Britishers on Infrastructure and Education:**

Up to the middle of the 19th century, means of transport in India were pretty backward and slow means of transportation like bullockcart, elephants, horse-carriage and camels were used. The British rulers soon realized that a cheap and easy system of transport was a necessity if British manufactures were to flow into India on a large scale and her raw materials secured for British industries. This led to the British rulers in introducing steamships on the rivers, train system and set about improving the roads. By the time they left, Indian railway was world's 4th largest railway system. Efforts were also made to link by road the major cities, ports, and markets of the country. The British also established an efficient and modern postal system and introduced printing presses and telegraph.

The British took interest in educating Indians as educated Indians could serve as good educated labour force also, they thought it will help Indians to learn western culture and their respect and loyalty for Britishers will rise. They started English education in 1830s. To do this they opened schools and colleges in important cities of the country. Though the intention of the British was not the intellectual development of Indians, but in large way it did exactly that. Indians could now read about the more modern and liberal societies of the West. Their introduction of Western culture and education therefore led to massive social-religious, reform movements and had great impact on the society. It brought a more scientific, rational and modern approach to life among Indians.

In today's context also we can easily see benefits of infrastructure of transportation. Indian railways is back-bone of Indian economy. Although postal services are getting of less use by the time in today's technical era, but still until end of last century, it was major way for communication and Indian postal services are world's largest postal services. Other impact is that, many coastal cities like Mumbai, Kolkata and Madras are major economical hubs now. All these cities were major capitals of British colonies and most of the international trade in that era happened from these cities and they were well connected from other parts of country. Hence, they have become major economical hubs. Apart from that, English education is also very much beneficial in present. As, we all know English has become global language and to get and share knowledge globally, English knowledge is really handy. Also, as British came to India, we are now able to get benefit from field of science and other developments of west. Hence, these things are also having positive impact on present time.



Image: Darjiling Himalayan Railways (A Unesco world heritage site) started in 1881.

- **1857 Mutiny and start of Nationalism:**

India was not much united, there were many independent states at that time across India. But, as a result of EIC's impact on economy and Indian society, people started to unite, they had a common enemy. In 1857, for very first time, we saw people

protesting across very large region. This was starting of realisation of a bigger nation. In last part of assignment we will also discuss how religious nationalism started.

With spread of education and English, middle class started to rise in Indian society. A rising political consciousness among the native Indian social elite (including lawyers, doctors, university graduates, government officials and similar groups) spawned an Indian identity and fed a growing nationalist sentiment in India in the **last decades of the nineteenth century**. So, we can say that 1857 mutiny has great impact, because it founded sense of united nation and patriotism, which turned to nationalism and independence movement, which ultimately led us to independence.

In today's context there are both positive and negative impacts of nationalism on our society. Positive part is that it motivates us to do something good about society. Nationalism leads us to feel proud about our culture. It is good for unity of our country. But, on other hand many political parties are using this concept to get votes. There are many misconceptions about nationalism among people. Many of those parties connected it to religion and about securing our borders from Pakistan and China. Hence, main topics like development, corruption etc leaves behind. So, in this way it is impacting us in negative way also.

- **Congress, Gandhi and India's Independence Movement:**

The creation in 1885 of the Indian National Congress in India by the political reformer A.O. Hume was a revolutionary event. Congress contributed very much in freedom movement. Most of the great leaders of freedom movement were part of congress in some way. It has huge impact on constitution also. There were many congress leaders in constitution assembly. Apart from that after India's independence party governed India for nearly 60 years and in current time also, it is one of the major party and ruling many states. **So, it has great impact on India's present.** Also, we will see it's other impact in next part of assignment.

Gandhi is called "Father of Nation". He led India's Independence movement. His character and non violent way of protest encouraged ordinary people to do extraordinary things. Gandhi has inspired and will continue to inspire many political, social and religious groups and leaders not only in India but, all over the world.

Other impact of Gandhi is on caste system. In that era caste system was major evil of Hindu community. Low caste people were highly discriminated, they were poor and spoiled. He fought against it. His effort was in keeping with his philosophy of nonviolence and bringing societal transformation without creating animosity or hatred between groups. Now we see much better conditions about caste system. Although there are exceptions, but we are able to get rid of it. There are many people in our country, who hate him, because of low knowledge and rapid spread of rumors about his religious tolerance. Still we can say that Gandhi has great impact on today's era and **his thoughts are still representing India on world stage.**

India's Independence movement has its' impact on our constitution, the events led India to be a democratic and secular country. Hence, it also has deep impact on present.

- **Religious Impacts and Partition of India:**

The British were somewhat responsible for the growing tension between the two

communities because of their policy of "divide and conquer". In late 19th century and in earlier 20th century, religious nationalism started. Many writers and leaders like Bankim Chandra, Budhdeb Mukhopadhyay and Tilak started to write and think about Hindu nation. Apart from that some religious groups like "Arya Samaj" also did same type of things. Apart from that, many minorities, which included the Muslims, did not consider the Congress to be their representative. There were only 6% Muslims in Congress in 1895. They conflicted with the secular views of the majority of the Congress leaders, and one of them, Sir Syed Ahmed Khan questioned low representation of Muslims in the Congress. He thought that the Congress was favouring Hindus. Sir Syed wanted a separate political identity for Muslims. In 1906 All India Muslim League was established. They got chance in the form of 1909 reforms, which granted them a separate electorate. The Congress decided to act along the lines of compromise, and recognised their demands. However formation of radical militant organizations like "Khilafat Andolan" and "RSS" rapidly helped in deteriorating existing conditions. In 1920s and 1930s religious nationalism was at peak. Hence, the secularists within the Congress got sidelined, and the Muslims soon realised that the demand for a separate Muslim state had to be recognized. In 1930 Muhammad Iqbal proposed idea of separate Muslim-self governed state. Leaders like Nehru constantly advocated that there were only two parties in the nation- the British Raj and the Congress, and said any demand to further divide India into separate electorates was unpatriotic and was totally against it.

On the other hand, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the most prominent spokesperson of the Muslims back then, tried to show need for two separate territories for Hindus and Muslims was recognized the first acknowledgement of the "two nation theory". Later on, the 1940 session of the Muslim League, the formation of a separate Muslim nation was mentioned- formation of a new nation from the Muslim majority provinces. What followed after this was a brutal partition and rise of two nations, followed by riots and killing of millions of both Hindus and Muslims.

We can definitely see that how much impact these incidents have on today's society. First of all partition led us to border issues in Kashmir and other places. Terrorism was promoted by both countries in each others' territories (like attack on Mumbai in 2008 and India's promotion of freedom and terrorist activities in Balochistan). Multiple wars have already been there between these countries. These fights also have huge impact on foreign policies of both nations. Apart from that we also can see continuous riots between Hindus and Muslims. Other impact that many political parties started politics based on religion, With help of this some political parties are getting huge success. So, in this way we can say that these incidents have huge negative impacts on present.

- **Impact on constitution and administration:**

The other major impact of Britishers is on Indian constitution. Indian constitution was majorly based on **Government of India act, 1935**. Apart from that Indian Independence movement also has great impact on structure of constitution. Most of the constitution makers were part of freedom fight. Indian administration is also inspired by British administration (like police, civil services etc.). Constitution and administration has vital role in effectively running a country. In this sense also that era is impacting us.

Conclusion:

In this assignment we discussed about some of the events that continues to have a bearing on India's present. We saw, that era have both positive and negative impacts. We discussed, our economy is suffering because of policies of Britishers. Poverty in our society is reason behind other major problems like crime, corruption, terrorism, unemployment etc. Apart from that, Hindu-Muslim unity also affected because of some events of that timeline. We discussed how events led us to partition. Apart from these negative impacts we also discussed some of the positive impacts. Most of these positive impacts are not result of Britishers' effort to develop India, but they are unintentional or are result of fight against Britishers. We discussed how social evils are ruled out of our society. We discussed how modern education system and knowledge of English, along with western knowledge of science, philosophy and other subjects is benefiting us. We discussed how Britishers gave railways and other infrastructure to us. Apart from that fighting against Britishers led us to nationalism, which led to sense of a unity and finally we got united nation with democracy.

Many people debate on whether overall impact of those 200 years is positive or negative. Although intentions and actions of Britishers in overall can be concluded as negative. But, as we see both positive and negative type of impacts are huge. So, we can not conclude overall impact. But, What we can do after looking into history is to not repeat mistakes that happened earlier. And, it is indeed major reason to study history to learn from it and find path for better future. Freedom fighters and our ancestors worked hard for our present. We need to utilize positive outcomes of that era and need to fight against negative ones. Now, it is our duty to work hard for bright future of country.