



Question 1. What was the focus of the economic policies pursued by the colonial government in India? What were the impacts of these policies?

Answer. The economic policies pursued by the colonial government in India were concerned more with the protection and promotion of the economic interests of their home country rather than with the development of the Indian economy.

Thus, at the time of independence in 1947, India was a poor and underdeveloped country. At that time, agriculture was in a poor condition and mineral resources were not fully used. There were only a few industries and many of the cottage and small-scale industries had declined under the British rule. Millions of people were unemployed, not because they were unwilling to work but because there were no jobs to be found. The per capita income of Indians was one of the lowest in the world, indicating that the average Indian was extremely poor and could not afford even the basic necessities of life. For instance, the staple food of average Indian consisted of rice, wheat and millets (like jowar and bajra). Most Indians could not afford to buy nutritious and balanced diet. The vast majority of people in India led a miserable life.

Question 2. Name some notable economists who estimated India's per capita income during the colonial period.

Answer. Dadabhai Naoroji, V.K.R.V. Rao, William Digby, Findlay Shirras and R.C. Desai.

Question 3. What were the main causes of India's agricultural stagnation during the colonial period?

Answer. Indian agriculture was primitive and stagnant. The main causes of stagnation of agriculture sector were as follows:

1. Land Tenure System. There were three forms of Land tenure system introduced by the British rulers in India. These were:

- (a) Zamindari system
- (b) Mahalwari system
- (c) Ryotwari system

In the Zamindari system, Zamindars or landlords were the owners of land. The actual collections by Zamindars was much higher than what they had to pay to the Government. Zamindari system led to multiplication of middlemen between cultivators and Government, absentee landlordism, exploitation of peasants by unsympathetic agents and enmity between landlords and tenants. Under the system, intermediaries benefited at the cost of both actual cultivators and the state.

2. Commercialisation of Agriculture. Commercialisation of agriculture means production of crops for sale in the market rather than for self consumption. Farmers were forced to cultivate commercial crops like Indigo. Indigo was required by the textile industry in Britain for dyeing of the textile. As a result, there was fall in the production of food crops. The farmers had to suffer from frequent occurrence of famine. Indian agriculture was transformed into a raw material exporting sector for England.

3. Partition of the Country. Partition of the country in 1947 also adversely affected India's agricultural production. The rich

food producing areas of West Punjab and Sindh went to Pakistan. It created food crisis in the country. Also, the whole of fertile land under jute production went to East Pakistan. The jute industry was most severely affected due to partition. Thus, Indian agriculture became backward, stagnant and non-vibrant under the British rule. Indian Economy on the Eve of Independence .

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