



Government of Tamilnadu

Department of Employment and Training

Course : TNPSC Group I Mains Material
Subject : Modern History of India and Indian Culture
Topic : Effects of British rule on socio-economic factors

© Copyright

The Department of Employment and Training has prepared the TNPSC Group-I Preliminary and Main Exam study material in the form of e-content for the benefit of Competitive Exam aspirants and it is being uploaded in this Virtual Learning Portal. This e-content study material is the sole property of the Department of Employment and Training. No one (either an individual or an institution) is allowed to make copy or reproduce the matter in any form. The trespassers will be prosecuted under the Indian Copyright Act.

It is a cost-free service provided to the job seekers who are preparing for the Competitive Exams.

Commissioner,

Department of Employment and Training.

EFFECT OF BRITISH RULE ON SOCIO-ECONOMIC FACTORS

Reforms in Civil and Judicial Administration

- Cornwallis organized company administration securing the services of William Jones, a judge and an Orientalist. He set up a machinery for the detection and punishment of crime, thereby ending the dual system of government established by Clive. The collection of revenue was separated from administration and justice.
- He deprived the collectors of their judicial function and confined them to revenue collection. Civil and criminal courts were thoroughly reorganized. At the top of the judicial system was the Sadar Diwani Adalat and the Sadar Nizamat Adalat. These two highest civil and criminal courts of appeal at Calcutta were presided over by the Governor General and his Council.
- Under them were four provincial courts of appeal at Calcutta, Deccan, Murshidabad and Patna. Each was to function under three European judges, aided by Indian advisers. Next came the District and City courts, each presided over by a European judge assisted by Indians. Every district and important city were provided with a court. At the bottom of the judicial system were courts under Indian judges, called munsifs.
- In civil cases, Muslim law was imposed and followed. In criminal cases, Hindu and Muslim laws were applied according to the religion of the litigants. The biggest contribution of Cornwallis was the reform of the civil services. Cornwallis provided scope for employing capable and honest public servants. He put an end to the old tradition of the civil service wherein the Company's servants were given a small salary but were permitted to trade. Cornwallis appointed people solely on merit but considered that efficiency required the exclusion of Indians from the Company's service.
- Every district was divided into *thanas* (police circles). Each thana was under a *daroga*, an Indian officer. Cornwallis' police system was further improved under Warren Hastings. The rigid separation of judicial and revenue powers was given

up. The Collector began to function as Magistrate as well. Cornwallis, who toned up the civil and criminal administration, however, did not pay adequate attention to the education of Company servants.

- It was Wellesley who emphasized the need for educating and training them. Wellesley thought the civilians should have a knowledge of the languages, laws, customs and manners and history of India, in addition to their liberal education in England. With this object, the College of Fort William was founded at Calcutta in 1800.
- A three-year course of study was provided for the Company's civil servants. The college was staffed by European professors and eighty Indian pundits. This became the Oriental School for Bengal civilians. In 1806 the East India College was established in England. In Madras, the College of Fort St George was set up by F.W. Ellis in 1812 on the lines of College of Fort William. It was here that the theory that the South Indian languages belonged to a separate family of languages independent of Sanskrit was formulated.

Education

Under Company Rule

- The establishment of a *Madrassa* by a learned maulvi with the support of Warren Hastings was the beginning of initiatives of British government to promote education. This Madrasa started with forty stipendiary students. What Warren Hastings had done for the Muslims; his successor was prepared to do for the Hindus. Cornwallis established a Sanskrit college (1791) in Benares. The successive governors in the next twenty years, however, did nothing to follow it up.
- The Company held the view that it was not desirable in its own interests to encourage education in India. In 1813, when the Company Charter was renewed, it contained a clause intended to force on the Company the initiative for a regular educational policy. Hastings encouraged the foundation of vernacular schools by missionaries. He was the patron of the Hindu College, established at Calcutta in 1817, supported by the Indian public for the teaching of English and of Western science.
- The cause of education was further promoted by missionaries like Alexander Duff. Thanks to Hastings' liberal outlook, press censorship instituted in 1799 was

abolished. It was in such an atmosphere that the Bengali Weekly, the *Samachar Darpan* was started in 1818.

- The Charter of 1833 emphasized the development of the country primarily in the interest of its inhabitants. William Bentinck, appointed the first Governor General of united India reformed the society by suppressing thuggee (robbery and murder committed by the thugs in accordance with their ritual), abolishing sati and introducing English as the medium of instruction in schools and colleges.
- This he thought would facilitate Indianisation of the services. Bentinck founded the Calcutta Medical College in March 1835. The students of this college were sent to London in 1844 to complete their studies. Then years after the establishment of the Calcutta Medical College, the Grant Medical College in Bombay was founded in 1845.
- In 1847 the Thomason Engineering College at Roorkee (now IIT Roorkee) came into existence. In 1849 a school for girls was founded in Calcutta. Macaulay came to India as a law member in 1835. He was appointed President of the Board of Education. He had a poor opinion of indigenous learning. Macaulay recommended and government accepted to make English the literary and official language of India.
- Dalhousie showed keen interest in education. He approved of the system of vernacular education designed by James Thomason, Lieutenant Governor of the North-Western Provinces (1843- 53). The Educational Dispatch of Charles Wood (1854) outlined a comprehensive scheme of education-primary, secondary, collegiate. Departments of Public Instruction and a university for each of the three Presidencies were organized for the purpose.
- University of Madras was established under this plan (1857), along with universities in Bombay and Calcutta. Dalhousie modified the policy of Macaulay by encouraging educational institutions in vernaculars too. He also agreed to the principle of grants-in-aid to private effort, irrespective of caste or creed.

Under British Rule:

- Lord Ripon was a champion of education of the Indians. Ripon wanted to review the working of the educational system on the basis of the recommendations of the

◆.....◆
Wood's Despatch. For further improvement of the system Ripon appointed a Commission in 1882 under the chairmanship of Sir William Hunter. The Commission came to be known as the Hunter Commission. The Commission recommended for the expansion and improvement of the elementary education of the masses.

- The Commission suggested two channels for the secondary education-one was literary education leading up to the Entrance Examination of the university and the other preparing the students for a vocational career. The Commission noted the poor status of women education. It encouraged the local bodies in the villages and towns to manage the elementary education. This had resulted in the extraordinary rise in the number of educational institutions in India.
- Curzon took a serious view of the fall in the standard of education and discipline in the educational institutions. In his view the universities had degenerated into factories for producing political revolutionaries. To set the educational system in order, he instituted in **1902, a Universities Commission** to go into the entire question of university education in the country. On the basis of the findings and recommendations of the Commission, Curzon brought in the Indian Universities Act of 1904, which brought all the universities in India under the control of the government.

British Agrarian Policy

- It is a well-known fact that India is primarily an agricultural country. The overwhelming majority of its people depend on agriculture for sustenance. If the crop is good, prosperity prevails otherwise it leads to famine and starvation. Till the 18th century, there was a strong relation between agriculture and cottage industries in India. India was not only ahead in the field of agriculture than most other countries but it also held a prominent place in the world in the field of handicraft production.
- The British destroyed handicraft industry in the country while unleashing far-reaching changes in the country's agrarian structure by introducing new systems of land tenures and policies of revenue administration.



- India's national income, foreign trade, industrial expansion and almost every other dominion of economic activity, depended on the country's agriculture. The British policies revolved around getting maximum income from land without caring much about Indian interests of the cultivators. They abandoned the age -old system of revenue administration and adopted in their place a ruthless policy of revenue collection.
- After their advent, the British principally adopted three types of land tenures. Roughly 19 per cent of the total area under the British rule, i.e., Bengal, Bihar, Banaras, division of the Northern Western Provinces and northern Karnataka, were brought under the **Zamindari System** or the **Permanent Settlement**. The second revenue system, called the **Mahalwari Settlement**, was introduced in about 30 per cent of the total area under British rule i.e., in major parts of the North Western Provinces, Central Provinces and the Punjab with some variations. **The Ryotwari System** covered about 51 per cent of the area under British rule comprising part of the Bombay and Madras Presidencies, Assam and certain other parts of British India.

The Permanent Settlement

- Lord Cornwallis' most conspicuous administrative measure was the Permanent Land Revenue Settlement of Bengal, which was extended to the provinces of Bihar and Orissa. It is appropriate to recall that Warren Hastings introduced the annual lease system of auctioning the land to the highest bidder. It created chaos in the revenue administration.
- Cornwallis at the time of his appointment was instructed by the Directors to find a satisfactory and permanent solution to the problems of the land revenue system in order to protect the interests of both the Company and the cultivators. It obliged the Governor- General to make a thorough enquiry into the usages, tenures and rents prevalent in Bengal.
- The whole problem occupied Lord Cornwallis for over three years and after a prolonged discussion with his colleagues like Sir John Shore and James Grant he decided to abolish the annual lease system and introduce a decennial (Ten years) settlement which was subsequently declared to be continuous.

◆.....◆
The main features of the Permanent Settlement were as follows:

1. The zamindars of Bengal were recognised as the owners of land as long as they paid the revenue to the East India Company regularly.
 2. The amount of revenue that the zamindars had to pay to the Company was firmly fixed and would not be raised under any circumstances. In other words the Government of the East India Company got 89% leaving the rest to the zamindars.
 3. The ryots became tenants since they were considered the tillers of the soil.
 4. This settlement took away the administrative and judicial functions of the zamindars.
- The Permanent Settlement of Cornwallis was bitterly criticised on the point that it was adopted with 'undue haste'. The flagrant defect of this arrangement was that no attempt was made ever either to survey the lands or to assess their value. The assessment was made roughly on the basis of accounts of previous collections and it was done in an irregular manner. The effects of this system both on the zamindars and ryots were disastrous.
 - As the revenue fixed by the system was too high, many zamindars defaulted on payments. Their property was seized and distress sales were conducted leading to their ruin. The rich zamindars who led luxurious lives left their villages and migrated into towns. They entrusted their rent collection to agents who exacted all kinds of illegal taxes besides the legal ones from the ryots.
 - This had resulted in a great deal of misery amongst the peasants and farmers. Therefore, Lord Cornwallis' idea of building a system of benevolent landlordism failed. Baden Powell remarks, "The zamindars as a class did nothing for the tenants". Though initially the Company gained financially, in the long run the Company suffered financial loss because land productivity was high, income from it was meagre since it was a fixed sum. It should be noted that in pre- British period a share on the crop was fixed as land tax. Nevertheless, this system proved to be a great boon to the zamindars and to the government of Bengal. It formed a regular income and stabilised the government of the Company. The zamindars prospered at the cost of the welfare of the tenants.

Ryotwari Settlement

- The Ryotwari settlement was introduced mainly in Madras, Berar, Bombay and Assam. Sir Thomas Munro introduced this system in the Madras Presidency. Under this settlement, the peasant was recognised as the proprietor of land. There was no intermediary like a Zamindar between the peasant and the government.
- So long as he paid the revenue in time, the peasant was not evicted from the land. Besides, the land revenue was fixed for a period from 20 to 40 years at a time. Every peasant was held personally responsible for direct payment of land revenue to the government. However, in the end, this system also failed. Under this settlement it was certainly not possible to collect revenue in a systematic manner. The revenue officials indulged in harsh measures for non payment or delayed payment.

Mahalwari Settlement

- In 1833, the Mahalwari settlement was introduced in the Punjab, the Central Provinces and parts of North Western Provinces. Under this system the basic unit of revenue settlement was the village or the Mahal. As the village lands belonged jointly to the village community, the responsibility of paying the revenue rested with the entire Mahal or the village community. So, the entire land of the village was measured at the time of fixing the revenue.
- Though the Mahalwari system eliminated middlemen between the government and the village community and brought about improvement in irrigation facility, yet its benefit was largely enjoyed by the government.

Local Self-Government (1882)

Ripon believed that self-government is the highest and noblest principles of politics. Therefore, Ripon helped the growth of local bodies like the Municipal Committees in towns and the local boards in taluks and villages. The powers of municipalities were increased. Their chairmen were to be non-officials. They were entrusted the care of local amenities, sanitation, drainage and water-supply and also primary education. District and taluk boards were created. It was insisted that the majority of the members of these boards should be elected non-officials. The local bodies were given executive

◆.....◆
powers with financial resources of their own. It was perhaps the desire of Ripon that power in India should be gradually transferred to the educated Indians. He also insisted on the election of local bodies as against selection by the government. In all these measures, Ripon's concern was not so much for efficiency in administration. Instead, Ripon diffused the administration and brought the government closer to the people. This was his most important achievement. It was Ripon who laid the foundations of the system which functions today.

Calcutta Corporation Act (1899)

The Viceroy brought in a new legislative measure namely the Calcutta Corporation Act in 1899 by which the strength of the elected members was reduced and that of the official members increased. Curzon gave more representations to the English people as against the Indians in the Calcutta Corporation. There was strong resentment by the Indian members against Curzon's anti-people measures.

Police and Military Reforms

Curzon believed in efficiency and discipline. He instituted a Police Commission in 1902 under the chairmanship of **Sir Andrew Frazer**. Curzon accepted all the recommendations and implemented them. He set up training schools for both the officers and the constables and introduced provincial police service. As for the remodeling of the army, it was by and large done by Lord Kitchener, the Commander-in-Chief in India in Curzon's time.

British Policy towards Indian Handicrafts

- The European companies began arriving on the Indian soil from 16th century. During this period, they were constantly engaged in fierce competition to establish their supremacy and monopoly over Indian trade. Not surprisingly, therefore, initial objective of the English East India Company was to have flourishing trade with India. Later, this objective was enlarged to acquire a monopoly over this trade and obtain its entire profit. Although the trade monopoly thus acquired by the Company in India was ended by the Charter Act of 1833, yet the British Policy of exploiting the resources of India continued unabated. In this respect, the nature of the British rule was different from the earlier rulers. As far as the traditional

◆.....◆

handicraft industry and the production of objects of art were concerned, India was already far ahead of other countries in the world. The textiles were the most important among the Indian industries. Its cotton, silk and woollen products were sought after all over the world. Particularly, the muslin of Dacca, carpets of Lahore, shawls of Kashmir, and the embroidery works of Banaras were very famous. Ivory goods, wood works and jewellery were other widely sought-after Indian commodities.

- Apart from Dacca, which was highly famous for its muslins, the other important centres of textile production were Krishnanagar, Chanderi, Arni and Banaras. *Dhotis* and *dupattas* of Ahmedabad, Chikan of Lucknow, and silk borders of Nagpur had earned a worldwide fame. For their silk products some small towns of Bengal besides, Malda and Murshidabad were very famous.
- Similarly, Kashmir, Punjab and western Rajasthan were famous for their woollen garments. Besides textiles, India was also known widely for its shipping, leather and metal industries. Indian fame as an industrial economy rested on cutting and polishing of marble and other precious stones and carving of ivory and sandalwood.
- Moradabad and Banaras were famous for brass, copper, bronze utensils. Nasik, Poona, Hyderabad and Tanjore were famous for other metal works. Kutch, Sind and Punjab were known for manufacturing arms. Kolhapur, Satara, Gorakhpur, Agra, Chittor and Palaghat had likewise earned a reputation for their glass industries.
- Making of gold, silver and diamond jewellery was another important industrial activity in which many places in India specialized. These entire handicrafts industry indicated a vibrant economy in India.
- Despite enjoying such fame in the world, the Indian handicraft industry had begun to decline by the beginning of the 18th century. There were many reasons for it. First, the policies followed by the English East India Company proved to be highly detrimental to the Indian handicrafts industry. The Indian market was flooded with the cheap finished goods from Britain. It resulted in a steep decline in the sale of Indian products both within and outside of the country.
- In 1769, the Company encouraged the cultivation of raw silk in Bengal while imposing service restrictions on the sale of its finished products. In 1813 strategies

◆.....◆
were devised by the Company to enhance the consumption of finished goods from Britain. In this respect the tariff and octroi policies were suitably modified to suit the British commercial interests. To cite an example, in 1835 only a minimal import of British duty of 2.5 per cent was imposed on the import of British manufactured cotton cloth whereas a very high 15 per cent export duty was charged on Indian cotton textiles as per the new maritime regulations.

- Moreover, goods from England could only be brought by the English cargo ships. As a result of all these policies, the Indian textiles could not enter the British market, whereas the Indian market was flooded with British goods.
- Thus, with the rise of British paramountcy in India, the process of decline in the power and status of Indian rulers had set in. Thus, the demands for the domestic luxury goods like royal attires, armoury and objects of art by the Indian royalty also reduced drastically.
- So, with the disappearance of the traditional dynasties, their nobility also passed into oblivion. This led to a sharp decline in the demand for traditional luxury goods. Besides, the Industrial revolution led to the invention of new machinery in Europe. Power looms replaced handlooms. In India also the advent of machines led to the decline of handicraft as now the machine-made products were available at cheaper rate and more goods could be produced in much lesser time.
- Finally, the new communication and transport facilities brought about a revolution in public life. Earlier, goods used to be transported either by bullock carts or by ships. Thus, during the rainy season, it was not always convenient to carry on with the normal transportation. But now conditions were changed with the introduction of railways and steamer services. Concrete roads were laid to connect the country's agricultural hinterland. The import of goods from England also increased with the simultaneous increase in exports of raw materials from India, leading to massive loss of jobs among Indian artisans and craftsman who lost their only means to livelihood.

Social Laws Concerning Women

- The condition of women, by the time the British established their rule, was not encouraging. Several evil practices such as the practice of *Sati*, the Purdah system,

◆.....◆

child marriage, female infanticide, bride price and polygamy had made their life quite miserable. The place of women had come to be confined to the four walls of her home. The doors of education had been shut for them. From economic point of view also her status was miserable. There was no social and economic equality between a man and woman.

- A Hindu woman was not entitled to inherit any property. Thus, by and large, she was completely dependent on men. During the 19th and 20th centuries some laws were enacted with the sincere efforts of social reformers, humanists and some British administrators to improve the condition of women in Indian society. The first effort in this direction was the enactment of law against the practice of Sati during the administration of Lord William Bentinck.

Female Infanticide

- Female infanticide was another inhuman practice afflicting the 19th century Indian society. It was particularly in vogue in Rajputana, Punjab and the North Western Provinces. Colonel Todd, Johnson Duncan, Malcolm and other British administrators have discussed about this evil custom in detail.
- Factors such as family pride, the fear of not finding a suitable match for the girl child and the hesitation to bend before the prospective in-laws were some of the major reasons responsible for this practice. Therefore, immediately after birth, the female infants were being killed either by feeding them with opium or by strangulating or by purposely neglecting them. Some laws were enacted against this practice in 1795, 1802 and 1804 and then in 1870. However, the practice could not be completely eradicated only through legal measures. Gradually, this evil practice came to be done away through education and public opinion.

Widow Remarriage

- There are many historical evidences to suggest that widow remarriage enjoyed social sanction during ancient period in India. In course of time the practice ceased to prevail increasing the number of widows to lakhs during the 19th century.
- Therefore, it became incumbent on the part of the social reformers to make sincere efforts to popularize widow remarriage by writing in newspapers and contemporary

◆.....◆
journals. Prominent among these reformers were Raja Rammohan Roy and Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar. They carried out large scale campaigns in this regard mainly through books, pamphlets and petitions with scores of signatures. In July 1856, J.P. Grant, a member of the Governor-General's Council finally tabled a bill in support of the widow remarriage, which was passed on 13 July 1856 and came to be called the **Widow Remarriage Act, 1856**.

Child Marriage

- The practice of child marriage was another social stigma for the women. In November 1870, the Indian Reforms Association was started with the efforts of Keshav Chandra Sen. A journal called *Mahapap Bal Vivah (Child marriage: The Cardinal Sin)* was also launched with the efforts of B.M. Malabari to fight against child marriage. In 1846, the minimum marriageable age for a girl was only 10 years.
- In 1891, through the enactment of the Age of Consent Act, this was raised to 12 years. In **1930**, through the **Sharda Act**, the minimum age was raised to 14 years. After independence, the limit was raised to 18 years in 1978.

Purdah System

Similarly, voices were raised against the practice of Purdah during the 19th and 20th century. The condition of women among the peasantry was relatively better in this respect. Purdah was not so much prevalent in Southern India. Through the large scale participation of women in the national freedom movement, the system disappeared without any specific legislative measure taken against it.

Questions:

1. Discuss the reforms in civil and Judicial administration in British Rule.
2. Describe the main features of the permanent settlement.
3. Examine the British Policy towards Indian Handicrafts.