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EFFECTS OF THE BRITISH RULE IN INDIA

Aroona was reading the newspaper in the morning while her daughter Poorva was sitting beside her and doing her homework. Aroona read loudly, “Revolution in Libya.” Hearing this, Poorva asked, “Why do people revolt?” Aroona answered, “When the needs of people are not satisfied and people face economic crisis, they revolt. In our country also, during the British rule, the condition of the people was very bad and resulted in a revolt. Let me tell you about the life of the Indians at that time.”

India was economically prosperous till the 18th century. The anarchy that followed the death of Aurangzeb too could not weaken it. It has been admitted by historians across the world that the industries, production techniques and the organization of trade in India were unmatched at that time. The same country, India, became poor and bankrupt during the nearly 200 years of the British rule. It became the country that supplied raw material to the factories in England and offered a large market for the finished products of the factories in England.

Think

- *What do you mean by raw material?*
- *Give some examples of raw material.*
- *Make a list of raw material supplied by your village.*
- *Make a list of products prepared from the raw materials and the places to which they are supplied.*

Condition of Peasants and Agriculture during the British Rule

The British got a new opportunity to increase their income after the acquisition of the Diwani Rights (rights to collect land revenue) of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. They started exploiting peasants to earn more revenue, and as a result the peasants became poorer. Many times the peasants had to sell their jewellery to pay the revenue. A large number of peasants had to borrow money from the moneylenders and consequently fell into a debt trap. Farmers lost their land and agriculture suffered in many regions of India. Moreover, Bengal witnessed a terrible famine in the year 1770 C.E. in which lakhs of people died of starvation.

Governor General Lord Cornwallis enforced Permanent Settlement Act in order to collect revenue. As per this Act, the Company fixed the revenue on an annual basis. The Zamindars (landlords) were given the permanent rights of land and revenue collection. This is how a class of landlords loyal to the Company was created. This Act also ensured the income of the Company. Against this, the peasants who worked hard in the hot sun to cultivate the land and grow crops were exploited.

Think

- *What do you mean by land revenue? Make a list of taxes paid by us.*
- *If famine occurs in modern times, the people suffer less. Why did they suffer more during the British rule in India?*



6.1 Impoverished peasants



6.2 Lord Cornwallis

Effects on Social Life

Warren Hastings, the person who was given the job of collecting revenue was known as a 'collector'. He also performed the function of a judge. The British system of administration destroyed our ancient system of self-rule. In the ancient times, every village was like a small republic. Gram Panchayats handled the administration of the entire village. These Panchayats were like the backbone of the self rule in our country. These institutions of local self rule stood their ground even during the times of foreign invasions and the Sultanate Period but were destroyed due to the administrative policies of the British.

The Policy of Social Reforms by the Company made people feel insecure and suspicious. They felt that the government was trying to convert them to Christianity and destroy the Indian culture and religion forever. People believed that the Indian social system was deliberately undermined in the railways and military. An order was passed in Agra that every Indian had to salute the British. If it was not done, it was considered a crime and was liable for punishment. As a result, there was a widespread sentiment of anger and hatred for the British among the Indians.

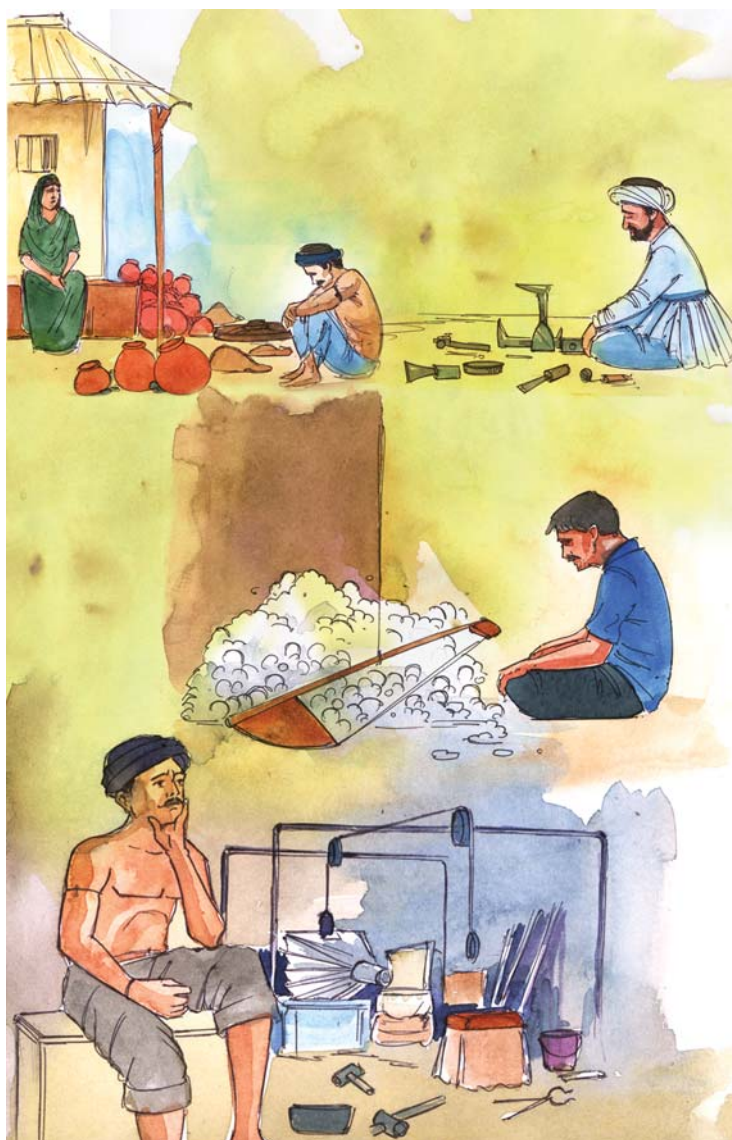
Destruction of Indian Trade and Industries

The handlooms of India supplied textile to the markets of Asia and Europe. The traders from the European countries used to come to India to purchase commodities. The Indian-made jute, silk, woolen and cotton textiles were in high demand in the European markets. The soft and delicate muslin of Dhaka was world-famous. Apart from textiles, commodities such as salt, saltpetre, sugar, etc. were exported in exchange of tremendous amount of bullion (gold and silver).

The whole scenario changed as the British rule was implemented. The flow of bullion (gold and silver) got reversed. In the beginning of the Industrial Revolution, the British took 500 crore rupees as per today's standard only from Bengal during their rule. Just imagine, the wealth the British would have accumulated from the whole country.

Things to know

- *It is not surprising today to talk about lakhs and crores of rupees. Find out from your grandparents about the value of a thousand rupees fifty years ago. Why were coins larger in size in those days?*



With the help of the raw materials produced in India and the money collected from India, the business and industries in England prospered. Their mills started progressing. The cloth manufactured in England was imported in India without levying any duty on it whereas there were taxes up to 80% on the cloth manufactured in India. As a result, textile made in India became costlier in the Indian market itself. The Indian handicraft and cottage industries could not withstand the competition and they could not sustain themselves. Many skill-based industries of our country like textile industries, glass, paper, mineral, ship-building, etc. got ruined due to the policies of the British. Lakhs of skilled workers became unemployed. Gradually, the poor workers of the rural areas of India became poorer.

6.3 Plight of cottage industries in India

Think

- *What cottage industries can be seen at the village level in the present times?*

Suspicion about the reforms

When William Bentinck came to India liberal thinking was getting its stronghold in England. This way of thinking slowly reached India. The British rulers started taking interest in the lives of people of India. Lord William Bentinck became quite popular in India by introducing few beneficial reforms. During his time, Indians started getting jobs in Company administration. Indians were allowed to use their mother tongue in the court of law. Raja Ram Mohan Roy and other social reformers were constantly making efforts to stop the evil practice of Sati. Bentinck agreed to these efforts and passed a law in 1829 to ban the practice of Sati.

During the time of William Bentinck, the English rulers tried to eradicate the social evils as per the will of the social reformers. The orthodox class witnessed these reforms with suspicion.

The Company had passed a resolution to spend one lakh rupees every year on education but it was not implemented. Finally, an education committee was formed during the time of Bentinck. In the year 1834, Lord Macaulay thought of introducing English education in India. However, the educational method advocated by Macaulay could not benefit the youth. Indians lost the advantage of acquiring the ancient knowledge and skills developed by their ancestors. The method of British education system was opposed by a number of intellectuals and Mahatma Gandhi called it as “to give millions a knowledge of English is to enslave them ... that, by receiving English education, we have enslaved the nation”. Later, three universities were established in 1857. The Britishers could get educated workforce due to the introduction of English education. Alongside, it also developed nationalistic thinking among the educated Indians.



6.4 William Bentinck

Think

- *Why did Macaulay start English education in India?*

Many machines were invented to facilitate the industries, transport and communication. Considering the convenience in running administration and strategic importance for the military, the Britishers introduced the railways in India.

Things to know

- *The first railway in India started between Bombay (Mumbai) and Thane in the year 1853 C.E.*

In order to maintain an effective control on the country and to exchange messages with the neighbouring territories, modern methods of post and telegraph were introduced in India in 1854 C.E. Printing press and circulation of newspapers grew alongside.

These reforms were actually for the convenience of the British rule in India but it turned out to be a blessing in disguise for the growth of nationalism in India. The class that acquired the English education spearheaded the social reforms and nationalism in India since they were more familiar with the contemporary developments in the world around. The post and telegraph brought people closer.

Activity

- *Make a list of leaders who helped in arousing nationalism after acquiring English education.*

Discuss

1. What is the difference between the present peasants and those of the British time?
2. What reforms were introduced by William Bentinck in India?

EXERCISE

Answer the following

1. What commodities were exported from India?
2. What reforms were done by William Bentinck in India?
3. Why did the British Government start the facility of railway, post and telegraph?
4. Who appointed the collector to collect the revenue?
5. Who banned the practice of Sati?