

Q1 .Examine the factors that led to the deterioration of agrarian life during British rule in India.

Approach

Students are expected to write about agrarian life in the British era. And examine the factors that led to the deterioration of agrarian life during British rule in the India.

Introduction

A major characteristic of British rule in India, and the net result of British economic policies, was the prevalence of extreme poverty among its people. The drain of wealth to Britain and a backward agrarian structure leading to the stagnation of agriculture and the exploitation of the poor peasants by the zamindars, landlords, princes, moneylenders, merchants and the state gradually reduced the Indian people to extreme poverty and prevented them from progressing.

Body

Factors that led to the deterioration of the agrarian life during British rule in India:

- **Land tenure system:** This system strengthened feudalism in upper sections and slavery in lower sections of society. Due to fixation of land revenue, the income of government through land revenue could not increase even if the cost of agricultural land and production increased. Most of the zamindars had their focus on collection of maximum revenue rather than focusing on betterment of agricultural land which degraded the condition of farmers.
- **Overcrowding in agriculture:** The loss and overcrowding of land caused by de-industrialisation and lack of modern industry compelled the landless peasants and ruined artisans and handicraftsmen to become either tenants of the moneylenders and zamindars by paying rack-rent or agricultural labourers at starvation wages. The overcrowding in agriculture and increase in subinfeudation led to subdivision and fragmentation of land into small holdings most of which could not maintain their cultivators.
- **Impoverishment of the Peasantry:** Permanently and the Temporarily Settled Zamindari areas, the lot of the peasants remained unenviable. They were left to the mercies of the zamindars who raised rents to unbearable limits, compelled them to pay illegal dues and to perform forced labour or beggar and oppressed them in diverse other ways.
- **Development of New Agrarian Relations:** The new agrarian relationships stabilized the government revenues but, however, reduced the farmers to miserable poverty. Now, land became saleable, alienable and mortgageable which weaken the framework of the rustic society. Due increase in number of intermediaries i.e. Government, creditors and zamindar, the farmers turned out to be the ultimate victim.

- Exploitation by moneylenders: More often the inability to pay revenue drove the peasant to borrow money at high rates of interest from the moneylender. He preferred getting into debt by mortgaging his land to a moneylender or to a rich peasant neighbour to losing it outright. He was also forced to go to the moneylender whenever he found it impossible to make both ends meet.
- Spread of landlordism: A remarkable feature of the spread of landlordism was the growth of subinfeudation or intermediaries. Since the cultivating tenants were generally unprotected and the overcrowding of land led the tenants to compete with one another to acquire land, the rent of land went on increasing.
- Growth of plantation industries: This led to commercialisations of agriculture in India. Apart from machine-based industries, the nineteenth century also witnessed the growth of plantation industries such as indigo, tea and coffee. Indigo planters gained notoriety for their oppression over the peasants who were compelled by them to cultivate indigo. This oppression was vividly portrayed by the famous Bengali writer Dinbandhu Mitra in his play Neel Darpan in 1860. Moreover, conditions of near-slavery prevailed in the plantations.
- Indebtedness and Alienation of Land: There was an increase in cultivation of cash crops such as indigo, opium and jute, during British rule. However, it contributed to the growth of rural indebtedness. Indebtedness of the peasants resulted in distress sale of land holdings and such sales increased in number over the years. Indebtedness and certain other factors converted the peasants into agricultural labourers.

Conclusion

Thus, the British rule in India proved harmful to the Indian agriculture and to peasantry in different spheres. In-fact whatever harm the British had done to India was to safeguard their own interest and whatever advantage the Indians received from the British rule was the outcome of the efforts made by various agrarian and peasant movements, which later helped the leaders to form larger consensus and transform it into national movement.

Q2. Discuss evolution of British policies on education in India. How did it affect society and politics? Examine.

Approach

As the directive is to examine it is necessary to cover various angles of the issue. In the beginning evolution of education policies can be discussed and in later half effects it had on the societal and political spectrum can be highlighted.

Introduction

British came as traders with intention of increasing profit of their trade. After establishing their rule in various provinces they were successful in introduction of modern education. In this effort not just government but Christian missionaries and large number of enlightened Indians played role.

Body

Evolution of education –

- In 1781 Warren Hastings set up the Calcutta madrasa for the teaching of Muslim law and related subjects. In 1791, Jonathan Duncan started Sanskrit college at Varanasi, where he was resident for study of Hindu law and philosophy.
- Both these institutions were designed to supply of qualified Indians to help administration of law in the court of company.
- Missionaries and their supporters began to exert their pressure to promote modern education in India. Many Indians also believed that modern education would be remedy for the social and economic ills of the country.
- A humble beginning was made in 1813 when charter act incorporated principle of encouraging learned Indians and promoting knowledge of modern science. Act directed company to spend sum of one lakh rupees but this amount was made available only in 1823.
- In later years controversy over medium of direction in education raged. Vernaculars advocated use of Indian languages while anglicist recommended use of English.
- Controversy was settled in 1835 when government decided to devote resources to the teaching of western sciences and literature through medium of English only. Lord Macaulay who was a law member of governor general's council argued in a famous minute that Indian languages are not sufficiently developed for the purpose
- Government acted quickly on this policy but opened very few schools and colleges instead of large elementary school. It was decided to spend money educating few Indians from upper and middle class who were expected to assume task of educating masses. This "downward filtration theory" failed to a large extent.

- In 1854 the wood's dispatch named after Charles wood, was another important step in development of education. Dispatch asked the government to assume responsibility for education of masses, repudiated downward filtration theory. As a result universities were set up in 1857 at Calcutta, Bombay and madras.
- East India company and later under the crown did not take any serious interest in spreading western learning or any learning at all in India. Sole intention was to get cheap supply of educated Indians to man large number of increasing administration.

Effect on society and politics –

- Bethune College was set up for the education of girls, it proved to be impacting lives of women. Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay became first graduate from Calcutta University, and with it new batch of Indian scholars emerged.
- With knowledge of English literature and new ideas generation, of Indians became aware of exploitation administration was doing. From pamphlets to active political efforts of congress party masses became aware of the evil nature of raj.
- Another motive behind education policy was Indians will help expand the market for British goods in India. Education policy glorified rule but Indian leaders turned the table by exposing truth.
- Mahatma Gandhi came up with alternative education policy of Wardha scheme on principle of learning through activity.
- Education policy made Indians aware of ill practices of tradition and opened new doors for global ideas, also on the other hand new literature of glorified past created a space for debate.

Conclusion

Education policies of British raj came with its own limitations and prejudices but it did helped to Indians understand the poor state of traditional form of education. Education created new minds with modern ideas and gave new vigour to fight injustice and suppression. Mass education enlightened our social discourse and made fabric of India more robust.

Q3. What contribution did Swami Vivekananda make in awakening the spirit of nationalism in India? Discuss.

Approach

As the derivative is discuss so it typically requires an in-depth answer that takes into account all aspects of the debate concerning the topic. You must demonstrate reasoning skills with this type of question, by using evidence to make a case for or against a research topic/argument.

Introduction

Swami Vivekananda was a Hindu monk from Calcutta who dedicated his life to awaken in the people of this country the spirit of nationalism along with the sense of human dignity and worth. Something that was missing after centuries of oppression. He was a nationalist who, through his speeches ignited the spark of nationalism that was flickering within everyone that time.

Body

Contribution of Swami Vivekananda in awakening the spirit of nationalism in India

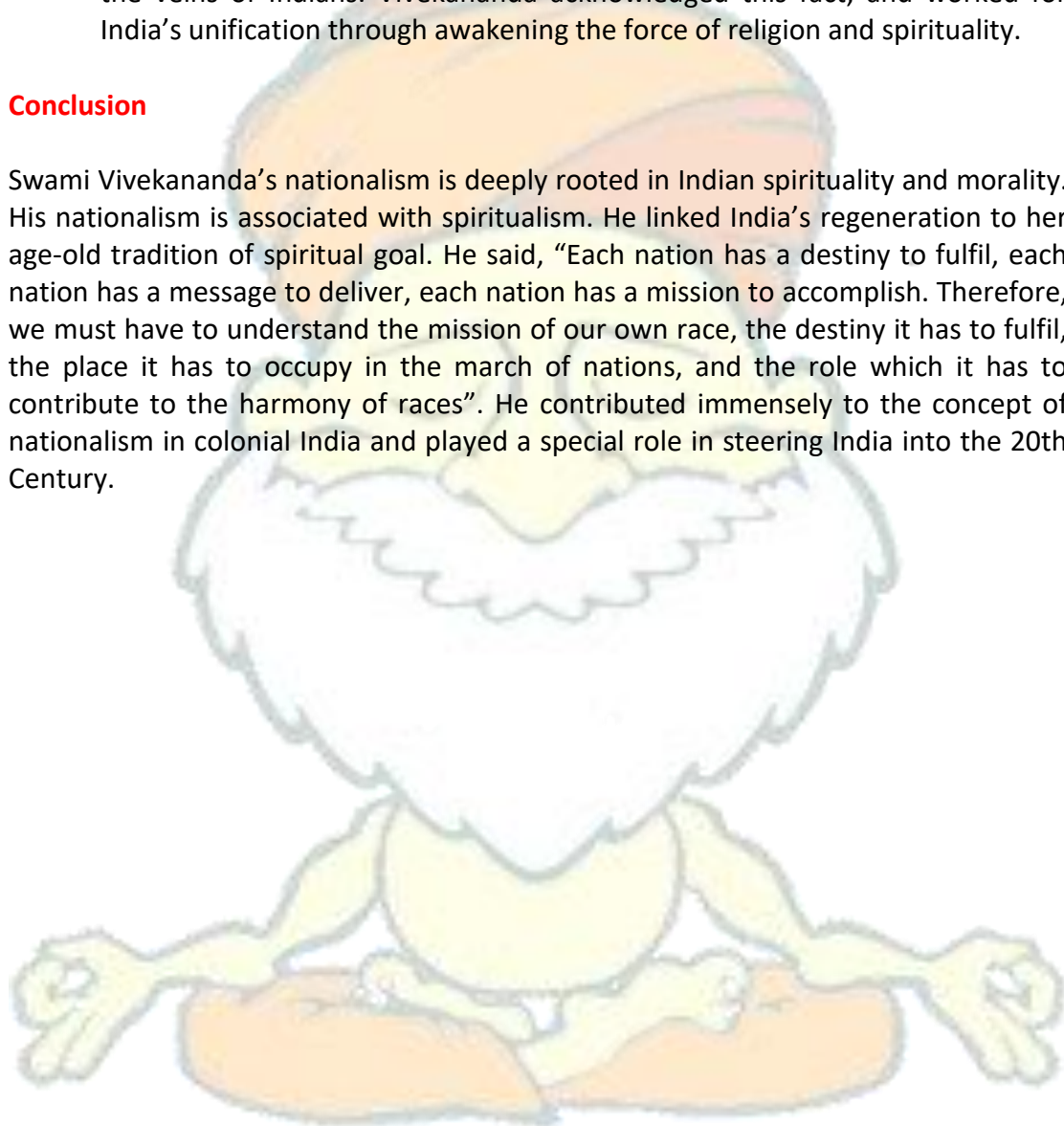
In Rabindranath Tagore's words, "If you want to know India, study Vivekananda. In him everything is positive and nothing negative". His contribution in awakening the spirit of nationalism includes:

- He was the greatest architect of modern nationalism in India, without any parallel. He did not visualize India as merely a geographical entity or a heaven of opportunity for the elite.
- His life-long mission was: Upliftment of the masses, development of their physical and moral strength, and creating in them a consciousness of the pride in the ancient glory and greatness of India. Patriotism means love of the country and country means its masses. Only Vivekananda arrived at this road through religion.
- He emphasized that a nation is composed of individuals. And individuals must be spiritually, mentally, physically strong. Only then, we could dream of India being a strong nation.
- Vivekananda stressed that noble virtues like manliness, a sense of human dignity and honour should be cultivated by all individuals. These individualistic qualities had to be supplemented with a positive sense of love for the neighbour.
- Without deep sense of selfless services, it was mere prattle to talk about national cohesion and fraternity. It was essential to identify one's ego with the ego of country and the nation. As a theorist and teacher Vivekananda has given to the country the idea of fearlessness and strength.

- His nationalism is based on Humanism and Universalism, the two cardinal features of Indian spiritual culture. He taught people to get rid first of self-inflicted bondages and resultant miseries.
- The nature of his nationalism is not materialistic but purely spiritual, which is considered to be the source of all strength of Indian life. Unlike western nationalism which is secular in nature, Swami Vivekananda's nationalism is based on religion which is life blood of the Indian people.
- What many failed to realize was the fact that religion and spirituality are in the veins of Indians. Vivekananda acknowledged this fact, and worked for India's unification through awakening the force of religion and spirituality.

Conclusion

Swami Vivekananda's nationalism is deeply rooted in Indian spirituality and morality. His nationalism is associated with spiritualism. He linked India's regeneration to her age-old tradition of spiritual goal. He said, "Each nation has a destiny to fulfil, each nation has a message to deliver, each nation has a mission to accomplish. Therefore, we must have to understand the mission of our own race, the destiny it has to fulfil, the place it has to occupy in the march of nations, and the role which it has to contribute to the harmony of races". He contributed immensely to the concept of nationalism in colonial India and played a special role in steering India into the 20th Century.



Q4. How did British policies lead to severe famines in different parts of India? What was the response of Indian nationalists to these policies? Discuss.

Approach

A straight forward question where in you need to mention about the policies of British which lead to famines and how did Indian nationalists responded, also give a brief account of the response of British to the demands of Indian nationalists, mention the severity of the famines and how they impacted Indian society at large.

Introduction

Prior to the mid-18th century, famine was seen as a natural calamity from which many European countries suffered. Only after the expansion of commercial and industrial activities was the problem of famines gradually removed in Europe and since the second half of the 19th century, Europe has not witnessed any major famine. However, in a number of Asian and African countries, especially under colonialism, famines have frequently taken place with great intensity. This was the direct result of colonial policy, which led to increased misery and a rise in the incidence of famines.

Notable famines in India-

- Bengal Famine of 1943
- Chalisa Famine of 1783
- Great Bengal Famine of 1770
- Skull Famine of 1791
- Orissa Famine of 1866
- Deccan Famine of 1630
- Bihar Famine of 1873
- Agra Famine of 1837

Body

- Famine, while no stranger to the subcontinent, increased in frequency and deadliness with the advent of British colonial rule. The East India Company helped kill off India's once-robust textile industries, pushing more and more people into agriculture. This, in turn, made the Indian economy much more dependent on the whims of seasonal monsoons.
- Under British pressure, the government in India allowed unrestricted exports of foodgrains even during times of famine. The government made sure that food grain prices were determined by the market forces of supply and demand.
- The British government abandoned pre-colonial policies to combat natural calamities and food scarcity in India. They were more interested in the implementation of non-interference in the market. Adam Smith's laissez-

faire approach, i.e., the principle of non-intervention, was firmly laid down as a part of state policy and therefore was strictly implemented in all subsequent famines.

- As a result of high revenue demand, the peasants were not left with any surplus to help them or to provide any insurance in the lean harvest years. Therefore, the land revenue policy of the government was the root cause of poverty, indebtedness, famines and mass deaths in India.
- Inadequate transportation and the government's inaction regarding taking concrete policy measures to end it. The money and resources required to combat famines in the second half of the 19th century were being diverted towards activities like paying for the British imperial war efforts in Afghanistan and in East Asia.

Response of Indian nationalists to these policies-

- The nationalists in the first half of 19th century supported British rule under the impression that it would modernise the country based on latest technology and capitalist economic organization.
- After 1860s disillusionment started to set in among the politically conscious and they began to probe into the reality of British rule and their policies which created conditions of famine in India. The foremost among these were Dadabhai Naoroji, Romesh Chandra Dutt, Gopal Krishna Gokhale exposed the policies of British and highlighted issues among the masses.
- The nationalist agitation on economic issues served to undermine the ideological hegemony of alien rulers over Indian minds that the foreign rule was in the interest of Indians, thus exposing the myth of its moral foundations.
- Nationalist response reached its peak during Bengal famine in 1943 which led rise of large-scale response against British through Quit India movement. It was felt that rather than the policies it is the colonial structure as a whole responsible for the deaths of millions during the famines.

Colonial response to the famines in India-

- While the British authorities devoted significant effort and money to their attempts to relieve famines in India, the relief efforts were often insufficient, and frequently faced obstacles from natural or cultural systems on the ground.
- With rising resentment of the Indian nationalists towards the British various Famine commissions were constituted to find the causes and measure to deal with them also a Famine code in 1880s was established which provided general guidelines as a response to the famines in India.

Conclusion

Famine had been perennial feature of Indian sub-continent during British Raj. The agrarian system as evolved from the British had a built-in system of destruction of agriculture. Apart from the traditional reasons of famine like a monsoon failure, natural calamities etc. the Economic Policy of British created a situation so that scarcity of food and recurrent famines became very frequent in India. The magnitude of famines that struck India during the colonial rule throws sufficient light on the fact that these famines were a man-made phenomenon.



Q5. Do you agree with the assertion that the development of railways by the British brought economic prosperity in India? Critically examine.

Approach

A straightforward question where in you need to critically examine the assertion that development of railways by the British brought economic prosperity in India while also giving your view with regards to it i.e. whether you agree to the assertion or do not agree to it.

Introduction

Starting its career on 16 April 1853, when the first railway passenger train was opened, India's railway system expanded rapidly to become, by 1910, the fourth largest in the world. This huge railway network altered India's transport system resulting in increase in interconnectedness in all aspects of Indian society.

Body

Railways were the most important infrastructure development in India from 1850 to 1947. In terms of the economy, railways played a major role in integrating markets and increasing trade. The development of railways by the British did bring economic prosperity in India, which is evident from the following points:

- Railways united the entire Indian economy as one part of India depended on movement of goods and services of other parts.
- It helped in movement of Indian goods and provided market for Indian producers. It integrated the markets and increased the trade. As an example, before the construction of railways, India exported no wheat at all, but, by 1886, she was supplying 23 p.c. of Britain's imports of wheat.
- The railway system in India became the forerunner of limited industrial development. This, in its turn, brought about a social revolution. It brought "social advancement of the people" of India.
- The necessity of fuel for railways made coal industry a growing industry. Railways not only created demand for Indian coal (by 1900 roughly 30% of the coal produced was used by railways) but also made coal available in the far-flung areas of the country.
- Railways made possible the establishment of a well-knit market. Railways, by establishing these links, had an impact throughout the economy. Karl Marx observed that the railway system in India would become "truly the forerunner of modern industry".
- It provided employment and helped several subsectors like mining, construction and so on. For example, market position of handloom cloth was actually strengthened by the railways due to the availability of low-priced factory-made yarns and that the number of weavers did not decline.

- Not only did the railway network lead to a rise in income levels and a decline in the uncertainty in income, recent evidence suggests that the intensity of famines lessened as the railway network increased.

Domestic and international economic trends shaped the pace of railway construction where it can be seen that the development of railways by the British did not necessarily bring economic prosperity in India, which is evident from the following points –

- Railways had never been thought of as a promoter of industries by the British authorities. Rather, its expansion would ease supply of raw materials to England and help the marketing of British manufactures in India.
- The expansion of Indian railways undoubtedly created demand for steel, engines and wagons, etc. But since these were in the country's import list there were very little or no linkage effects in India. Thus the rapid explosion of Indian railways failed to create an environment for 'take-off of the Indian economy'.
- One of the injurious effects of railway expansion was the destruction of local indigenous industries. Many argue that railways led to the flooding of the Indian market with foreign machine-made goods at prices lower than local weavers charged. This forced many to crowd into the agricultural sector.
- The occupational pattern did show almost a stationary growth despite expansion in railways and India remained predominantly an agricultural country. Thus one sees the absence of basic structural changes of the Indian economy partly due to the lack of linkages—both forward and backward—that resulted from the way the railways were built and operated.
- The Government of India had a strong influence on railways from the beginning, but the Government's role increased over time. Fares and freight charges exhibit similar patterns, declining from 1850 to 1919 and then rising somewhat until 1940 as government's role increased.
- Nationalists pointed out that the spread effects of railway expansion or the benefits of railway construction in terms of encouragement to the iron and steel industry and to capital investment—or the so-called backward and forward linkages—had been garnered by Britain and not India.
- Railway expansion helped increase in the drain of wealth from India since Indian railways were built with foreign capital and administered by foreign employees. Thus, the potential benefits of railways were far from actual benefits due to increased drain of wealth.

Conclusion

The economic legacy of the British Raj is far more complex than what many would have us believe where though railways had its drawbacks as illustrated above but with the advent of railways – regional specialization began to occur and trade flourished which varied from region to region thus leading to the skewed regional growth, whose effects can still be felt.