

## REVISTING COLONIAL STATE IN INDIA.

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Colonialism has remained a dominant theme in India. In Post-colonial India heated debates, conferences and seminars were organized around theme of colonialism. Not only in post-colonial India but heat of colonial domination reached apex with the Dada Bhai Naoroji publication of Poverty and Un-British rule in India. (Naoroji, 1901). RC Dutt, in his pioneer work The Economic History of India published in two volumes followed by R.P Dutt magnum opus India Today offered a detailed critique to colonialism. How colonial state has exploited economy of India has been explained from various perspectives. Colonialism has not only led to transformation of economy but arrival of colonial state also led to divergence of Indian culture. This paper not only studies nature and economic impact of colonialism but also takes into account how colonialism has brought about hardships in life of Indian peasantry and Agricultural labourers.

Colonialism in simplistic term can be defined as system of domination by the dominant state of the colony. Who is this dominant state and why domination is necessary? To answer this question it is essential to look into developments in Britain and transformation of Britain towards capitalist state. Developments corresponding to Renaissance and further developments in Technologies as like that of marine compass, discovery of sea routes etc. resulted in facilitation of Trade between east and west. As a result of these developments there started taking place transformation of economy from Feudalism to Mercantilism. Rosa Luxemburg (2015) argues that period from 14<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> century should be seen as transformative period characterized by mercantile economy, paving way for emergence of capitalist state. Trade initiated during this period has led to accumulation of capital in hands

of merchants. This capital continually went on expanding as a result of continuous trade between east and west. Land which is another necessary factor for rise of industries was facilitated as a result of Enclosure movement. Supply of labour was ensued as a resultant factor of enclosure movement, as unemployed labour who earlier was working on land but now as a result of enclosure movement started migrating towards cities where Industries were emerging. This is how factors of production were ensued giving rise to Industries in Great-Britain leading to emergence of capitalist state.

It is in this context Britain emerged as dominant capitalist state. Now need was felt to sell Industrial products and with it begun search for markets where Industrial products can be sold. Markets were not only required to sell finished goods but also these markets were acting as source of raw-material for Industries of Great Britain. This necessitated the system of dominance by capitalist state and this is how led to development of colonial system. Understanding from this position Colonialism is inextricably linked with capitalism and should not be seen in isolation. Inextricable link can be argued as while Britain was experiencing Industrialization at same time India was experiencing De-Industrialization. According to Hamza Alavi, two specific feature of colonialism are the internal disarticulation and external integration of rural economy and the realization of the extended reproduction of capital not in the colony but in the imperialist metropolis. **(Alavi, 1982:63)**. From this perspective it can be stated since colonialism is linked with capitalist mode of production it should not be taken as distinct mode of production but it is based on appropriation of surplus by following varied systems of mode of production.

Since Colonialism is inextricably linked with capitalism, so it controls aspect of colonial economy and society transforming them into subservient position. Subordination of the colony's economy and society is the crucial or determining aspect, and not mere linkage or integration with world capitalism or world market **(Chandra, 1999:10)**. Second feature is characterized by Unequal exchanges as argued by Arghiri Emanuel leading to what S.Amin called as Development of Underdevelopment. From here follows one of the peculiar feature of colonialism is the drain of wealth or unrequited transfer of wealth from India to Great Britain and this is facilitated on account of being dominated by foreign state.

Colonial state is characterized by foreign power and none of the indigenous upper classes share state power in the colony. **(Chandra, 1999: 13).**

Colonial Economy throughout cannot be seen in linear equation, but changes were there as per need and necessity of dominant capitalist state. In India first phase of colonialism marked its appearance in 1757 after battle of Plassey. First stage of colonialism is characterized by Monopoly trade and revenue appropriation. From second half of eighteenth century Indian economy started witnessing declining as Indian economy was geared to needs and conditions of Capitalist State. Acquisition of Diwani right after Treaty of Allahabad in 1765, brought about important changes in context of Indian economy and society. Now Indian revenue was used for purchase of raw material called as 'investments'. This had led to serious repercussion as now India entered into reverse trade, as raw material for ex cotton, silk etc. was supplied to British Industries where it was processed and finished goods which were cheaper in cost as comparable to Indian goods started entering into Indian markets. Repercussions upon Indian economy manifested in forms of De-Industrialization and De-urbanization.

India as a result of these developments started experiencing De-industrialization as number of Textile merchants and artisans of Bengal were drastically affected. De-urbanization too was an outcome of De-industrialization which economy was experiencing. It was during this phase that major Indian cities were experiencing decline. Second stage of colonialism is characterized as era of Free-Trade .Thus the essence of the second stage of colonialism was the making of the colony into a subordinate trading partner which could export raw materials and import manufactures, social surplus was to be appropriated through trade on the basis of selling cheap and buying cheap. **(Chandra, 1999: 65).** Under this system free entry was given to the capitalist and agrarian structure of country was too restructured.

Third stage characterized by Finance –Capitalism, to what Lenin called Imperialism as highest stage of capitalism. During this phase more acute restructuring of economy was seen. It was during this phase witnessed introduction and development of railways under guaranteed system of 5% interest. Agriculture was too transformed leading to commercialization of Agriculture. Emphasis got shifted towards cash crops rather from cultivation of food grains. Its role in inducing trade was increasingly taken over by the need

to pay rent or the direct pull of the large markets that the railways opened up. Rural-indebtedness consistently increase during this period witnessing heavy dependence of peasantry upon money lenders.

Dada Bhai Naoroji, in 1873 has forwarded estimates of per –capita income for the year 1867-68 and as per his calculation per capita income of India to be estimated at Rs 20 for a population of 170 million. Naoroji has also worked out minimum subsistence cost by working out the lowest absolute scale of necessities of a common agricultural labourer in the Bombay Presidency, by Mr. Kazee Shahabuddin -

FOOD	Rs	As
1.5lbs rice per day at Rs 2-2.8 per maund of 40lbs	28	8
Salt including waste	1	-
1/4 <sup>th</sup> lb. daal	9	-
Vegetables	0	0
Food oil	5	-
Condiments, chillies	0	0
Tobacco	5	0
	48	8

**(Table 1A, Source- Dadabhai Naoroji Poverty and Un-British Rule in India, pp 25-26)**

Estimates of Clothing worked out at 8Rs 2As for male and 7Rs 10As for females, calculating estimates of Lodging including hut repair cost, oil for lamp per day, barber per month and domestic utensils per annum and taking one quarter less due to wastage cost per head of family calculated at Rs 45. **(Naoroji, 1901:pp25-26)**. India is suffering seriously in several ways and is sinking in poverty. In my humble opinion this is the question or most serious question of the day. **(Naoroji, 1901 :p1)** According to Naoroji it was primarily due to underproduction rather than being so called increasing population of India as between 1881-1911 there was meagre increase in population rate.

Decade	Annual Births Per1000	Annual Deaths Per1000	Natural Increase %	Actual Increase %
1881-91	48.9	41.3	0.76	0.92
1891-1901	45.8	44.4	0.14	0.11
1901-11	49.2	47.2	0.09	0.09

(Table 1B, Source Kingsley Davis)

Dada Bhai Naoroji estimates has brought “The attention of the Government of India having been called to the frequency with which the assertion has been repeated that greater population of India suffer from daily insufficiency of food” (**Dufferin Report, 1890**). I would like to confirm argument of Dada Bhai Naoroji that India is sinking under poverty by looking into conditions of peasants and agricultural labourers.

“Naina, son of Heta, caste gadaria is a labourer (Agra Division, Mauza Kharot, and Pargana Kosi). He has a family of Six – he himself about 25 years old, his wife his brother 20 years old his brother’s wife, a boy eight years old, his mother. Both brothers earned by labour about 3 annas a day and with this they bought 3 seers of grain which gave their meal once a day. The day they could not get labour, they subsisted on sag and gular. Such was the case with them, till middle of March when the harvest began and they now earn sufficient to provide the family with 2 meals a day. In other seasons they used to eat three times a day. Each of the two brothers had a blanket and the women had nothing but their usual dress which answered them for quilts at night. The whole family used to sit and sleep by fire side at night”. (**Dufferin Report, 1890: pp 51**).

“Nanhe, son of JasRam (Division Agra, Mauza Sirthala, Pargana Kosi), Chamar is a labourer, and has a wife with a boy about two years old. The husband sells grass and firewood which he brings from the jungle, and the wife earns a little by grinding corn. Both of them thus earn one Anna and sometimes 2 Annas a day, as the number of meals depended entirely on the amount of their daily earnings. The husband had a dohra (double fold cloth), which served him for a quilt in the winter but the wife was quite unprovided for. She made her dress, therefore to serve her for a quilt at

night. When hard pressed by winter, they took themselves to the fireside at night”. (**Dufferin Report, 1890: pp 45**).

“Aberam cultivator caste –Thakur, (Region Mathura, Mauza Navgaun, and Pargana- Chhata) who cultivates 18 bighas or 10.69 acres of land on which he paid Rs 44 and 12 annas as rent, so state of Aberams yearly accounts stands thus-Income-Rs103and40Annas.Expenditure Rs 129 and 15 Annas thereby net deficit Rs 26and 11 Annas”. (**Dufferin Report, 1890: pp 54-56**).

Colonial policies of maximization of revenue, had put Indians under miserable conditions. Indians were not able to produce and sustain their families. These two estimates brings us in confirmation as what argued by Dada Bhai Naoroji that day by day India is sinking under poverty. Problems for Agricultural labourer and Peasants has been further crippled owing to their dependency on money lending institution. “Ram lal (Region Agra, Mauza Kharot, Pargana Kosi) their banker, gave them five seers of grain daily for 4 months viz from September up to the end of December. He then reduced the quantity to 4 seers, which he continued giving them daily up to the middle of March. As the grain given to them by the banker was not sufficient to give them the meals.....raised a loan of Rs40 from the banker for the purpose of putting seed in his Rabi land”. (**Dufferin Report, 1890: pp 52**).

Under such ruthless colonial taxation policies it was not at all possible for peasants and agricultural labour to meet out even daily cost of living. Further their dependence on money lending institutions and in case of failure to pay loan mortgaged land was taken up by moneylenders. In such scenario size of land holding too started diminishing as peasants started loosening their land to money lenders and rural indebtedness became characteristic feature of colonial economy. Due to middleman institution peasants were not able to realize full value of crops as Crooks stated “The cultivator is not only crippled with the heavy interest he has to pay, but also by the low prices he is compelled to receive for his produce” (**Dufferin Report, 1890**).

In the light of above, I would like to counter estimates of Atkinson whose per capita calculation for year 1875 is to the tune of Rs 30.5 at current prices and Rs 39.5 for year 1895 at current prices. Evidence from Dufferin report confirms estimates of Moni Mukherjee who sees increment in per capita income to the tune of 2.97%. Claim of Allan Heston can too be contested on the ground who shows an increment of 37% between 1868 and 1920. If these estimates are corroborated with

the findings contained in Dufferin Report, it can be easily argued that India was experiencing miserable situation .Conditions of Peasants and Agricultural labour was worsening due to multiple factors in which prime factor was colonial policy of maximization of revenue which had ultimately sinked India into vicious circle of Poverty.

It was this bleeding poverty of India that had provided the impetus for resistance against colonial rule. According to RC Dutt, Indian nationalism was largely economic nationalism. Resistance to colonial rule was outcome of the state in which subjects were living. Continuous Drain of wealth for centuries has brought miseries to the life of people, hence resistance to colonialism according to scholars like R.P Dutt was in true sense peasant and working class resistance. However it needs to be taken into account that as per Dutt, Chandra that there were two inherent contradictions first is characterized as resistance to colonial rule and second resistance against indigenous capitalists and zamindars. However key role played by Gandhi during course of movement or in resistance to British rule by eliminating secondary contradiction for time being during course of movement which will be resolved only after entering into realms of superstructure.

Publication of Edward Said, Orientalism (1978) has opened new dimension to the studies of Colonialism. Said applied the Foucauldian notion of Power-Knowledge paradigm to make an assessment of Colonial rule. According to Said, colonial rule was not only manifested through power but colonial rule justifies itself through use of Knowledge. Employing notion of essentialism, Said argues every civilization has an essence. Colonialism was based on essence of superiority of European culture. As European culture was based on notion of rationality and science so they are superior to Orientals i.e. to the subjects of East. While Indians are religious and irrational. Said states that every civilization works on system of hierarchy. Since, British are rational and so they are superior and it is upon this notion justifies colonial rule, As Indians being religious are incompetent to govern. Ultimately justifying notion of civilizing mission and Kipling theory of Whiteman's Burden. Thus, there was on one hand, the discourse of the coercion which was the natural character of imperial rule and on the other, the discourse of reason of law which had a whole tradition of enlightenment behind it. **(Bhattacharya, 2016: pp73)**

Said directly challenged, what Euro-American scholars traditionally referred to as Orientalism. As per Said, Orientalism is an entrenched structure of thought, a pattern of making generalization about the part of the world known as the east. Said argues, Orientalism was ultimately a political

vision of reality whose structure promoted the difference between the east and the west. Systems of colonial knowledge operated through construction of east, by assigning them with certain stereo types. Orientals are despotic and clannish, despotic when placed in position of power and sly, obsequious when placed in subservient position. The best summary of the Orientalist mindset would be as argued by Kipling that east is east and west is west and never the twain shall meet.

However this, Orientalism is a myth produced by Europeans under impetus of Modernity. Said has dismantled this myth thereby challenging model of western intellectual hegemony. Said has also put forth conception of idea as for the enterprise of an empire depends on the set of ideas. Idea was based on aspect that Orientals are despotic, backward who cannot govern themselves but needs to be governed. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century Oriental studies was an area of academic study, but the west had to create the east in order for this study takes place. According to Occidentals, Orientals had no history or culture independent of their colonial masters. It is more an indicator of power the west holds over the Orient and body of knowledge about Orient subjecting it to systematic study.

Colonialism operating through modern institution which came into being as result of modernity was based on notion of Divide and Rule. Colonialism has played considerable role in transforming social relations between the communities Colonial policies of Introduction of census in 1871, introduction of separate electorate 1909, communal award 1932 marked the beginning of identity politics in India. Under this colonial system of knowledge Caste and religious identities started making their appearance in public sphere. It is in this context Gyanendra Pandey (1990) locates development of communalism as colonial construct. Emergence of Religious identities in public sphere geared up as a result of colonial policies. It was under colonial system of knowledge's despite efforts of leaders like Gandhi, India fall into trap of partition in which colonial policy of divide and rule has a definite role to play, a part from other factor.

Colonialism should not always be seen as system of economic exploitation, but to make an assessment of Colonial state, dimensions of knowledge are equally important. As colonial state is inextricably linked with capitalist state it not only manifests through economic domination, but for the same purpose of economic exploitation it employs system of knowledge to dominate subjects. Functioning of colonial state, I would like to argue operates through a combo of economy and culture. It is not always that base will determine superstructure, but elements of knowledge or apt to say ideology also sustains base.

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