



POL SC HELP
FYUGP Series

Ideology of the British Rule

(Utilitarians and Missionaries)

NEW FYUGP SYLLABUS

BA HONS. POLITICAL SCIENCE 1ST SEMESTER-2022-23



DSC 3: Colonialism and Nationalism in India

Unit 1. Colonialism and Nationalism:

- Main perspectives on colonialism: Liberalism, Marxism, Postcolonialism
- Approaches to the study of nationalism in India: Nationalist, Imperialist, Marxist, and Subaltern

Unit 2. Colonial Rule in India and its impact:

- Constitutional developments and the colonial state
- Colonial ideology of civilizing mission: Utilitarians and Missionaries
- Impact on agriculture, land relations, industry and ecology

Unit 3. Reform and Resistance:

- The 1857 war of Independence
- Major social and religious movements
- Education and the rise of the new middle class

Unit 4. Nationalist Politics and Expansion of its Social Base

- Phases of the Nationalist Movement: Liberal constitutionalist, Swadeshi and the Radicals, Formation of the Muslim League



The Colonial Rule: An Ideological Project

- British rule in India was not only an military economic an administrative venture, it was also an ideological project
- Few lakhs of Britishers were able to rule over hundreds of millions of Indians not only on the basis of their military might; the ideology played an important role in creating the hegemony of the British rule
- The ideology of the British Raj was not monolithic. It had multiple current and was intimately linked to the ideological currents flowing at that time back home.
- First ideology visible on part of the British Raj was Orientalism. later on, in late 1820s, the utilitarianism which was becoming popular in Britain became prime ideology.
- later on the Whig philosophy and classical liberalism took over. In between the role of Christian missionary, guided by Evangelical ideology, also became important
- In this video we will discuss only the utilitarian ideology of the British Raj and role of the Christian missionaries



Utilitarianism

- Utilitarianism is a philosophy of judging actions on the basis of utility generated by them. The utility is generally equated as pleasure or happiness.
- In utilitarianism, actions which generate net pleasure, that is, the pleasure is more than the pain across all affected by that action, is considered a good, virtuous, and moral action
- Utilitarianism is based on the ancient philosophy of hedonism which assert that only thing which matters in human life is pleasure and suppression of pain.
- In modern time Jeremy Bentham was the greatest proponent of the utilitarianism. His friend James Mill and his son John Stuart Mill, both prominent philosophers, also supported different versions of utilitarianism. Their utilitarian thoughts and writings were important in guiding the British Raj in India in the mid 19th century.
- Utilitarianism generally focuses on actions based on rationality, Logic, and brute calculation of utility. In practical terms, it stresses importance of legislation, laws, and efficient governance. It also give primacy to property in land and education as part of government's priority. Thus, in nutshell the utilitarianism focuses on laws, land, and education in governance.
- utilitarianism ignored individual freedom, the fulfilment or violation of natural rights and other non-utility concerns such as quality of life. They stressed the sum total of utilities and showed no sensitivity to the ' actual distribution and difference of utilities across individuals. the emphasis was on the aggregate utilities or the happiness of everyone taken together
- Hence, the utilitarianism is guided by the maxim '**Greatest happiness of the Greatest number(GHP).**'
- In Governance, the Utilitarian believed that happiness and not liberty was the end of government



How Utilitarianism Guided the British Raj-1/2

- James Mill's 'The History of British India(1817)', was the Indian history from the Utilitarian perspective
- Lord William Bentick was an ardent follower of Bentham's Utilitarian principles
- Following few decades, focus of the British Raj was efficient governance through reforming laws, property rights in land, and education
- Company Rulers believed that Indian society/culture could be reformed through reforms in laws, landed property, and education
- Law commission, chairman Macauley, set up in 1834; on its recommendation, Indian penal code was enacted in 1862
- Ryotwari System for land revenue was introduced; detailed recording of landholdings and rights in the form of 'records of rights' as part of the settlement procedure was done
- The security of this private property in land was to be achieved through laws, scientifically designed, and embodied in a written form of codes
- Ricardo's theory of rent was used to fix variable land revenue based on elaborate survey
- Through positive reformist laws, social evils- Sati Pratah, female infanticide, human sacrifice, Child Marriage, etc. was abolished
- Law member got place in Governor-General's council



How Utilitarianism Guided the British Raj-2/2

- Legislature became supreme, executive and judiciary (was merged together, became subordinate to Legislature)
- Utilitarian supported self govt but in Indian context, they favoured centralised align rule as it was more useful(more utility) for the natives
- Educational reforms was guided by Lord Macauley's Utilitarian idea
- The Lord Macaulay's Minute, 1835: the New British Educational Policy
 - *'We must at present do our best to form a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals and in intellect'*
 - *Thorough English education form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern*
- The 1833 Charter opened the lower order Civil Service jobs to English educated Indians
- This Act also removed discrimination based on caste, religion, creed, decent, race/colour in public employment
- Salaries in civil & military services rationalized
- Reforms in Judiciary: use of vernacular language, codification of laws, Indian Judges, etc.



Role of the Christian Missionaries-1/2

- Christian missionaries were guided by the Evangelical ideology which was part of strong Protestant Christian movement in England emphasizing improvement in the moral values of the communities.
- Evangelicalism became the moral agency that disciplined rampant individualism and stressed on personal experience and individual reading of the teachings of Jesus(Gospel)
- Evangelicalism emphasized on work, education, frugality, and perseverance as means of furthering the kingdom of God on earth
- Evangelicalism and related sects opposed slavery, dogmatic rituals, superstitions, and supported social reforms
- St. Francis Xavier was the first Jesuit missionary to arrive in India. But under the Evangelicalism, first missionary organisation in India was the Serampore mission founded by William Carey, Joshua Marshman, and William Warddas in 1800
- The Serampore mission established Press and school & Colleges
- The Evangelical missionaries demanded legal protection for Christian converts, the abolition of Sati and female - infanticide. They also demanded that British government in India should not support Hindu and Muslim shrines.
- The Evangelicals were generally hostile to Indian religions and culture



Role of the Christian Missionaries-2/2

- A large measure of freedom for missionary activity was provided in the Charter Act of 1813. The charter act of 1833 permitted Christian missionaries to propagate English and preach their religion in Company's territories
- The declared policy of British Raj was secularism but it provided liberal grants in aid, government support, and many other kinds of indirect help to the Christian missionaries in India
- The Christian missionaries focused on 4 group of people- is students, Dalits, tribals, and prisoners
- It worked for social reforms, helping people in distress, prisoners, exploited & marginalised
- But they also spread teachings of Bible, Christian religion and values through their schools, press, and missions. They were also doing religious conversions.
- During 1860s and 1870s there en masse conversion of Dalit caste into Christianity. Religious conversion was also went uninterrupted in tribal areas.
- **Two strategies**
 - Religious conversion (Evangelicalising or proselytising through education), interventionist in religious matter hard tactics disregarding Indian culture; for example: Charles Grant
 - Non interventionist, doing its work quietly with due regard to local culture and customs; For example: The Serampore mission



In sum

- Apart from a military and economic venture, British rule in India was also an ideological project
- Colonial rule was part of the civilising mission and as stated by Rudyard Kipling was 'The White Man's Burden'
- Both the Utilitarianism and Evangelicalism were part of the overall project of the civilising mission
- Utilitarian attempted to do it through reforms in laws, landed property, education, and efficient governance
- The evangelical Christian missionaries did it through spread of Christian religion and values, social service & reforms, and education. They also indulged in religious conversions



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- Multiple online resources such as Encyclopaedia Britannica, Wikipedia



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