

Cont...

Contemporary India

Meaning of Legacy

Legacy means those traditions, customs, practices, patterns of beliefs, rules, etc which are inherited by a political system from the past and which make a enduring impact upon the working of the political system for years to come.

The Legacy of Colonialism

The system handed over by the British to the Indians and followed by the Indian system is known as the legacy of colonialism. The history of India's immediate past has been the period of the British rule of near about 200 years (1757- 1947). The British started coming to India formally after the establishment of the British East India Company, in 1600. They took 157 years to establish their 'rule' in India. Primarily they had come to India as traders, but later got involved in power struggle in the environment created by the downfall of the Mughal empire and the presence of rival French and Dutch trading companies in India. The emergence of the control of the East India Company over

India can be traced from (1) the foundation of the British rule in India with the defeat of Nawab Siraj-udDaulah in the Battle of Plassey (1757), (2) the victory over the French in 1763, and (3) the the Battle of Buxar (1764) and (4) grant of Diwani rights over Bengal, Bihar and Orissa (1765) etc.

Thereafter, from 1765 to 1857, the East India Company ruled India. The unsuccessful First War of Independence (1857) waged by the Indians against the British Company's rule paved the way for the imposition of the direct rule of the British Crown over the Indian possessions by the Government of India Act 1858. This phase of the British rule continued up to 1947 when the Indians got independence, which, however, was disfigured by the partition of the country into India and Pakistan. During this period, there developed a massive anti-British and antiimperialist national liberation movement in India through which India emerged as a sovereign independent state free from British imperialism. Nearly 200 years of the British rule, there took place several changes- social, economic, political and administrative etc. which have contributed to the emergence of contemporary India.

Political legacy of Colonialism

As we know that a new political process of struggle began in 1947 for the newly born country who had just freed itself from the shackles of British rule. To make the process of transition easier, the architect of the nascent country decided to maintain most of the administrative and political measures of the British Raj. Let us discuss some of the important legacies in the form of political legacy of British Colonialism in India can be discussed as follows :

Unnatural partition of the country and the subsequent problems The introduction of British policy of divide and rule and, on its basis the introduction of communal electorates in 1909 gradually led to a sharp division and conflict between the Congress and the Muslim League. Out of this conflict, there resulted the demand for a separate homeland for the Muslims as advocated by the Muslim League established in 1906 at Dhaka.

The attempts to secure it through direct action, the opposition that it invited from the Congress

and the non-Muslim sections of the Indian society, the administrative apathy, inefficiency and the biased divisive British policies resulted in the emergence of Muslim-non-Muslim communalism in India, which ultimately led to the

partition of the country on communal basis.

The independence of India was granted along with the partition of India in the form of the creation of Pakistan. Since 1947, the Indian political system has been living with communalism and the problems created by the partition (the Kashmir Problem, the border Problem, the ever present chances of an Indo- Pak War etc.) as the legacies of the British rule in India.

The unwanted Communalism

The communalism in India can be legitimately described as the most harmful legacy of the British rule. The Britishers, through their policy of divide and rule and through such instruments as patronisation of the Muslims and communal electorates, were successful in driving a block between the Muslims and the non-Muslims, particularly between the Hindus and the Muslims. The British Government in order to face the increasing challenges of nationalism followed the policy of divide and rule and actively encouraged communalism and casteism in India. The spread of communalism and the communal riots which accompanied it made the partition of India inevitable. After independence, India decided to liquidate communalism in favour of secularism but the attempts, so far, have not been fully successful. Communalism has

reappeared in several forms and continues to characterise the Indian polity.