

Contemporary India ----

Each nation has its own political system and each political system essentially carries the legacy of its past. Historical legacy always influences its structures, functions and behaviour. It also bears the influence of the values, traditions and institutions of the past. Continuity of tradition, modernisation of tradition, traditionalisation of modernity, and continuity and change are simultaneously present in every political system. The political system of independent India is no exception to this generalization. It stands positively as well as negatively influenced by its past. As we know that the modern India is the product of centuries of evolution and the experiences of many racial groups that have either got amalgamated or coexisted in the subcontinent. Its contemporary form clearly reflects the influence of its historical legacies. In its social, political, cultural, economic and administrative set up and governmental structure, it still maintains several features of the British age. In its political aspect, Modern India is a product of two important factors. (1) the British impact of rational legal authority wielded by a central power that managed to consolidate the whole sub-continent under it. Although operating mainly in the legal and administrative spheres, the British Raj also affected fundamental life of the Indians, Indian political beliefs and relationships. (2) the reconstructive nationalism of the pre-independence generated in response to the impact of a new world order as transmitted through the colonial power and developed as a means to political independence and social reforms in the context a slowly expanding framework of democratic institutions. As such, legacies can be discussed in two parts-

(1) Legacy of the Colonialism

(2) Legacy of the Indian National Movement.

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.

Meaning of 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.

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