



CLASS - 8

SOCIAL SCIENCE



Chapter 4: The Colonial Era in India

Questions and Activities

Que 1. What is colonialism? Give three different definitions based on the chapter or on your knowledge.

Answer: Definitions of Colonialism:

1. When a powerful country rules another country, it is called colonialism.
2. The control of a foreign power over the resources, trade and people of a country is called colonialism.
3. When foreign rulers control the politics, economy and society of a country for their own benefit, it is called colonialism.

Que 2. Colonial rulers often claimed that their mission was to 'civilise' the people they ruled. Based on the evidence in this chapter, do you think this was true in the case of India? Why or why not?

Answer:

- In the context of India, this claim was not entirely true.
- The main objective of the British was not to civilize India, but to make economic gains.
- They took raw materials from India and sold their products here.
- Farmers, artisans and traders were exploited.
- Systems like education, railways and law were also mainly meant to strengthen British rule.
- So the claim to 'civilise' was only a façade.

Que 3. How was the British approach to colonising India different from earlier European powers like the Portuguese or the French?

Answer:

- The Portuguese and French were mainly confined to the trade and maritime sectors.
- The British gradually established political control over the whole of India.
- He pursued war, treaty and the policy of 'divide and rule'.
- The British took over the administration, the army, the law, education and the economy.
- British colonialism was therefore more organised and widespread.

Que 4. “Indians funded their own subjugation.” What does this mean in the context of British infrastructure projects in India like the railway and telegraph networks?

Answer:

- The railway and the telegraph were spent with India's money.
- These were used by the British to strengthen their rule.
- Raw materials were transported to the ports by rail.
- Rebellions and movements were quickly controlled by telegraphs.
- Thus, the facilities made by the money of the Indians were used to rule them.
- That is why it was said that the Indians bore the cost of their own oppression.

Que 5. What does the phrase ‘divide and rule’ mean? Give examples of how this was used by the British in India?

Answer: Divide and rule people on the basis of religion, caste, region or class is called 'divide and rule'.

British Experiment:

- The British tried to undermine Hindu-Muslim unity.
- Different communities were given different political rights.
- The princely states and the Indian rulers were at war with each other.
- After the revolt of 1857, the British adopted a policy of preventing Indians from uniting.

Example: The separate electoral system increased the distance between the communities.

Q6. Choose one area of Indian life, such as agriculture, education, business or rural life. How did the colonial rule affect him? Are there any signs of those changes even today? Express your thoughts in the form of a short essay, poem or picture.

Answer:

Sector: Agriculture

The British rule greatly affected Indian agriculture. Heavy taxes were collected from the farmers. They were forced to grow cash crops such as indigo, cotton and opium in place of food crops. This weakened the economic condition of the farmers. Many times farmers had to take loans. Rent had to be paid even if the crop was bad. This led to poverty in rural life. Even today, in some areas, the debt problem of farmers and dependence on the market is visible. So the effects of the colonial agrarian policy persisted for a long time.

Que 7. Imagine you are a reporter in 1857. Write a brief news report on Rani Lakshmibai’s resistance at Jhansi. Include a timeline or storyboard showing how the rebellion began, spread, and ended, highlighting key events and leaders.

Answer:

Description:

News has been received from Jhansi that Rani Laxmibai has made a courageous resistance against the British. The British attempted to annex the state of Jhansi, which the Rani strongly opposed. The queen organized her army and fought valiantly. The revolt of 1857 started from Meerut and spread to Delhi, Kanpur, Lucknow and Jhansi. Leaders like Rani Laxmibai, Nana Saheb, Taty Tope and Bahadur Shah Zafar opposed the British.

Timeline:

- 1857: Revolt begins in Meerut.
- 1857: Bahadur Shah Zafar was considered the leader in Delhi.
- 1857-58: Resistance of Rani Laxmibai in Jhansi.
- 1858: The British suppressed the rebellion.

Result: Company rule ended and India came directly under the British government.

Que 8. Imagine an alternate history where India was never colonised by European powers. Write a short story of about 300 words exploring how India might have developed on its own path.

Answer:

Short Story: A Different Path to Independent India

If India had never become a colony of European powers, it would have developed according to its traditions and needs. The states of India are strengthened by mutual trade and cooperation. Indian artisans, weavers and merchants carried forward their industries.

Ports like Surat, Masulipatnam and Calicut would have become major centres of world trade. The demand for Indian textiles, spices, metals and handicrafts would have remained all over the world. Farmers farmed according to their needs and were not pressured by foreign rule.

Education would have developed science and mathematics along with Sanskrit, Persian, Arabic and local languages. The Indian knowledge tradition would have taken a new direction by connecting with modern ideas.

Politically, there were many powerful states in India, which could also form a federation-like form by mutual agreements over time. The status of caste, education and women would gradually improve through reform movements in the society.

Thus, India would have developed independently on the basis of its culture, trade, agriculture and education. His development would probably have been slower, but he would have been closer to the needs and traditions of his people.

Que 9. Role-play: Enact a historical discussion between a British official and an Indian personality like Dadabhai Naoroji on the British colonial rule in India.

Answer:

British Officer: We have brought law, railways and education to India. We have modernized India.

Dadabhai Naoroji: If that is the case, why is India becoming poorer? India's money is going to England.

British Officer: Rail and telegraph are built for the development of India.

Dadabhai Naoroji: Their main use has been to strengthen English trade and governance.

British Officer: We are civilizing the Indians.

Dadabhai Naoroji: India has its own ancient civilization. We want self-governance, not exploitation.

British officer: What do you want?

Dadabhai Naoroji: We want justice, equality and the right of Indians to India's wealth.

Que 10. Explore a local resistance movement (tribal, peasant, or princely) from your state or region during the colonial period. Prepare a report or poster describing:

- **What was the specific trigger, if any?**
- **Who led the movement?**
- **What were their demands?**
- **How did the British respond?**
- **How is this event remembered today (e.g., local festivals, songs, monuments)?**

Answer:

Local Resistance Movement: Santhal Rebellion

Causes:

- Exploitation of Santhals by British rule, zamindars and moneylenders.
- Land grabbing and imposing heavy taxes.
- Tribal life being affected by debt and injustice.

Leadership:

- The movement was led by Sidhu and Kanhu Murmu.

Demands:

- Freedom from exploitation and injustice.
- Protect your land and rights.
- End of the tyranny of moneylenders and landlords.

British Response:

- The British suppressed the revolt harshly.
- Many Santhal warriors were killed.
- Later, separate administrative arrangements were made for the Santhal region.

Recall today:

- Sidhu-Kanhu is remembered as a hero.
- Monuments, institutions and events are held in his name.

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