Introduction

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Chapter 6 Structural Changes

Chapter 6 Structural Changes

Chapter at Glance

English is not only widely used in India but we now have an impressive body of literary writings by Indians in English.

Colonialism brought into being new political, economic and social structural changes.

All these structural changes were accompanied by cultural changes.

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Understanding Colonialism

Colonialism simply means the establishment of rule by one country over another. In the modern period western colonialism has had the greatest impact. The impact of colonial rule is distinguishable from all other earlier rules because the changes it brought in were far-reaching and deep.

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Understanding Colonialism

Nevertheless, there is a vital difference between the empire building of pre-capitalist times and that of capitalist times.

The pre-capitalist conquerors benefited from their domination by exacting a continuous flow of tribute. British colonialism which was based on a capitalist system directly interfered to ensure greatest profit and benefit to British capitalism.

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Understanding Colonialism

It changed not just land ownership laws but decided even what crops ought to be grown and what ought not to be.

It altered the way production and distribution of goods took place. It entered into the forests. It cleared trees and started tea plantations.

It brought in Forest Acts that changed the lives of pastoralists.

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Understanding Colonialism

Colonialism also led to considerable movement of people. It led to movement of people from one part to another within India.

For instance people from present day Jharkhand moved to Assam to work on the tea plantations.

A newly emerging middle class particularly from the British Presidency regions of Bengal and Madras moved as government employees and professionals like doctors and lawyers moved to different parts of the country.

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Understanding Colonialism

People were carted in ships from India to work on other colonised lands in distant Asia, Africa and Americas.

Many died on their way. Most could never return. Today many of their descendents are known as people of Indian origin.

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Depth of Structural Changes:

This magnitude and depth of the structural changes that colonialism unleashed can be better grasped if we try and understand some basic features of capitalism.

Capitalism is an economic system in which the means of production are privately owned and organised to accumulate profits within a market system.

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Depth of Structural Changes:

Capitalism in the west emerged out of a complex process of European exploration of the rest of the world, its plunder of wealth and resources, an unprecedented growth of science and technology, its harnessing to industries and agriculture.

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Depth of Structural Changes:

Western colonialism was inextricably connected to the growth of western capitalism.

If capitalism became the dominant economic system, nation states became the dominant political form.

Nationalism implied that the people of India or of any colonised society have an equal right to be sovereign.

Indian nationalist leaders were quick to grasp this irony. They declared that freedom or swaraj was their birth- right and fought for both political and economic freedom.

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Urbanisation And Industrialisation:

Industrialisation refers to the emergence of machine production, based on the use of inanimate power resources like steam or electricity.

The relatively low level of technological development did not permit more than a small minority to be freed from the chores of agricultural production.

In India the impact of the very same British industrialisation led to deindustrialisation in some sectors.

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Urbanisation And Industrialisation:

Just as manufacturing boomed in Britain, traditional exports of cotton and silk manufactures from India declined in the face of Manchester competition.

This period also saw the further decline of cities such as Surat and Masulipatnam while Bombay and Madras grew.

When the British took over Indian states, towns like Thanjavur, Dhaka, and Murshidabad lost their courts and, therefore, some of their artisans and court gentry.

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Urbanisation And Industrialisation:

From the end of the 19th century, with the installation of mechanised factory industries, some towns became much more heavily populated.

Unlike Britain where the impact of industrialisation led to more people moving into urban areas, in India the initial impact of the same British industrialisation led to more people moving into agriculture. The Census of India Report shows this clearly.

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Development of Cities:

Cities had a key role in the economic system of empires, Coastal cities such as Mumbai, Kolkata and Chennai were favoured.

From here primary commodities could be easily exported and manufactured goods could be cheaply imported.

Colonial cities were the prime link between the economic centre or core in Britain and periphery or margins in colonised India.

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Development of Cities:

Cities in this sense were the concrete expression of global capitalism.

In British India for example Bombay was planned and re-developed so that by 1900 over three- quarters of India's raw cotton were shipped through the city.

Calcutta exported jute to Dundee while Madras sent coffee, sugar, indigo dyes and cotton to Britain.

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Development of Cities:

Urbanisation in the colonial period saw the decline of some earlier urban centres and the emergence of new colonial cities.

Kolkata was one of the first of such cities. In 1690, an English merchant named Job Chamock arranged to lease three villages (named Kolikata, Gobindapur, and Sutanuti) by the river Hugli in order to set up a trading post.

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Development of Cities:

In 1698, Fort William was established by the river for defensive purposes, and a large open area was cleared around the fort for military engagements. The fort and the open area (called Maidan) formed the core of the city that emerged rather rapidly. Industrialisation In Independent India.

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Development of Cities:

For Indian nationalists the issue of economic exploitation under colonial rule was a central issue. Images of pre-colonial fabled riches of India contrasted with the poverty of British India. The Swadeshi movement strengthened the loyalty to the national economy.

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Development of Cities:

Indian nationalists saw rapid industrialisation of the economy as the path towards both growth and social equity.

Development of heavy and machine-making industries, expansion of the public sector and holding of a large cooperative sector were considered very important.

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Urbanisation In Independent India:

Writing on the different kinds of urbanisation witnesses in the first two decades after independence sociologist M.S.A. Rao argued that in India many villages all over India are becoming increasingly subject to the impact of urban influences.

But the nature of urban impact varies according to the kind of relations a village has with a city or town.

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Urbanisation In Independent India:

He describes three different situations of urban impact:

Firstly, there are villages in which a sizeable number of people have sought employment in far-off cities. They live there leaving behind the members of their families in their natal villages.

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Urbanisation In Independent India:

The second kind of urban impact is to be seen in villages which are situated near an industrial town. When an industrial town like Bhilai comes up in the midst of villages, some villages are totally uprooted while the lands of others are partially acquired.

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Urbanisation In Independent India:

The growth of metropolitan cities accounts for the third type of urban impact on the surrounding villages. While a few villages are totally absorbed in the process of expansion, only the land of many others, excluding the inhabited area, is used for urban development.

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Rise in Urban Population:

In 1951, 17.29% of India's population i.e., 62.44 million people, were living in 2,843 towns. In 2011, 31,16% of India's population i.e., 377,10 million people, were living in 7,935 towns,

This shows a steady increase in terms of absolute numbers, number of UA/towns and the per cent share of the urban population.

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Rise in Urban Population:

However, the decennial growth rate of the urban population showed a declining trend during 1981- 2001, reversed the trend and showed marginal increase in 2011.

The decennial growth rate of the urban population in 1951 was 41.42% and in 2011, it was 31.80%. For the first time since Independence, the absolute increase in population is more in urban areas than in rural areas.

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Rise in Urban Population:

This is due to a sharp decline in the growth rate in rural areas, while the growth rate in urban areas remains almost the same.

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