

CW-19-10

British colonial policy . . . went through two policy phases, or at least there were two strategies between which its policies actually oscillated, sometimes to its great advantage. At first, the new colonial apparatus exercised caution, and occupied India by a mix of military power and subtle diplomacy, the high ground in the middle of the circle of circles. This, however, pushed them into contradictions. For, whatever their sense of the strangeness of the country and the thinness of colonial presence, the British colonial state represented the great conquering discourse of Enlightenment rationalism, entering India precisely at the moment of its greatest unchecked arrogance. As inheritors and representatives of this discourse, which carried everything before it, this colonial state could hardly adopt for long such a self-denying attitude. It had restructured everything in Europe—the productive system, the political regimes, the moral and cognitive orders—and would do the same in India, particularly as some empirically inclined theorists of that generation considered the colonies a massive laboratory of utilitarian or other theoretical experiments. Consequently, the colonial state could not settle simply for eminence at the cost of its marginality; it began to take initiatives to introduce the logic of modernity into Indian society. But this modernity did not enter a passive society. Sometimes, its initiatives were resisted by pre-existing structural forms. At times, there was a more direct form of collective resistance. Therefore the map of continuity and discontinuity that this state left behind at the time of independence was rather complex and has to be traced with care.

Most significantly, of course, initiatives for . . . modernity came to assume an external character. The acceptance of modernity came to be connected, ineradicably, with subjection. This again points to two different problems, one theoretical, the other political. Theoretically, because modernity was externally introduced, it is explanatorily unhelpful to apply the logical format of the ‘transition process’ to this pattern of change. Such a logical format would be wrong on two counts. First, however subtly, it would imply that what was proposed to be built was something like European capitalism. (And, in any case, historians have forcefully argued that what it was to replace was not like feudalism, with or without modificatory adjectives.) But, more fundamentally, the logical structure of endogenous change does not apply here. Here transformation agendas attack as an external force. This externality is not something that can be casually mentioned and forgotten. It is inscribed on every move, every object, every proposal, every legislative act, each line of causality. It comes to be marked on the epoch itself. This repetitive emphasis on externality should not be seen as a nationalist initiative that is so well rehearsed in Indian social science. . . .

Quite apart from the externality of the entire historical proposal of modernity, some of its contents were remarkable. . . . Economic reforms, or rather alterations . . . did not foreshadow the construction of a classical capitalist economy, with its necessary emphasis on extractive and transport sectors. What happened was the creation of a degenerate version of capitalism—what early dependency theorists called the ‘development of underdevelopment’.

All of the following statements about British colonialism can be inferred from the first paragraph, EXCEPT that it:

1. was at least partly an outcome of Enlightenment rationalism.
2. faced resistance from existing structural forms of Indian modernity.
3. was at least partly shaped by the project of European modernity.
4. allowed the treatment of colonies as experimental sites.

All of the following statements, if true, could be seen as supporting the arguments in the passage, EXCEPT:

1. the introduction of capitalism in India was not through the transformation of feudalism, as happened in Europe.
2. modernity was imposed upon India by the British and, therefore, led to underdevelopment.
3. throughout the history of colonial conquest, natives have often been experimented on by the colonisers.
4. the change in British colonial policy was induced by resistance to modernity in Indian society.

“Consequently, the colonial state could not settle simply for eminence at the cost of its marginality; it began to take initiatives to introduce the logic of modernity into Indian society.” Which of the following best captures the sense of this statement?

1. The colonial state’s eminence was unsettled by its marginal position; therefore, it developed Indian society by modernising it.
2. The colonial enterprise was a costly one; so to justify the cost it began to take initiatives to introduce the logic of modernity into Indian society.
3. The colonial state felt marginalised from Indian society because of its own modernity; therefore, it sought to address that marginalisation by bringing its modernity to change Indian society.
4. The cost of the colonial state’s eminence was not settled; therefore, it took the initiative of introducing modernity into Indian society.

Which one of the following 5-word sequences best captures the flow of the arguments in the passage?

1. Military power—arrogance—laboratory—modernity—capitalism.
2. Colonial policy—Enlightenment—external modernity—subjection—underdevelopment.
3. Colonial policy—arrogant rationality—resistance—independence—development.
4. Military power—colonialism—restructuring—feudalism—capitalism.

Which of the following observations is a valid conclusion to draw from the author’s statement that “the logical structure of endogenous change does not apply here. Here transformation agendas attack as an external force”?

1. The endogenous logic of colonialism can only bring change if it attacks and transforms external forces.
2. Indian society is not endogamous; it is more accurately characterised as aggressively exogamous.

3. Colonised societies cannot be changed through logic; they need to be transformed with external force.
4. The transformation of Indian society did not happen organically, but was forced by colonial agendas.

Ans key

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