History of India c. 1700-1950 PYQ 2021

Q1. Do you agree with the view that the eighteenth century in India was a 'Dark age'? Elucidate.

Ans1. The view that the eighteenth century in India was a "Dark Age" is a matter of historical interpretation and perspective. Some historians argue that the eighteenth century was a period of decline and stagnation in various aspects of Indian society, economy, and governance, while others may have a different view. Let's examine some arguments for and against this perspective:

Arguments in favor of the view that the eighteenth century in India was a "Dark Age":

Political instability: The eighteenth century witnessed a series of invasions, wars, and conflicts in India, resulting in political instability and fragmentation. The decline of the Mughal Empire, which had been a major political power in India, and the rise of regional powers led to internal conflicts, power struggles, and lack of effective governance in many parts of the country.

Economic challenges: The eighteenth century was marked by economic challenges, including agrarian crisis, declining trade, and declining industries. Agricultural productivity declined due to factors such as frequent famines, changes in land revenue policies, and increased taxation. Trade and industries were affected by foreign invasions, disruptions in the transportation network, and decline in manufacturing activities.

Social issues: There were social issues in the eighteenth century, including caste discrimination, social unrest, and declining social institutions. The rigid caste system continued to prevail, limiting social mobility and perpetuating social inequalities. Social unrest, including peasant uprisings and social conflicts, was also reported in various regions.

Cultural disruptions: The eighteenth century witnessed cultural disruptions in India, including the decline of traditional arts, literature, and architecture. The decline of the Mughal Empire, which had been a patron of arts and architecture, and the rise of regional powers led to changes in cultural patronage, resulting in the decline of traditional artistic and literary traditions.

Arguments against the view that the eighteenth century in India was a "Dark Age":

Localized prosperity: Despite the decline of the Mughal Empire, there were pockets of localized prosperity in various parts of India. Some regional powers, such as the Marathas in western India and the Sikhs in Punjab, emerged as strong political entities and promoted economic and social development in their respective regions.

Continuity of cultural and intellectual traditions: While there were disruptions in some aspects of culture and literature, many traditional cultural and intellectual traditions continued to thrive during the eighteenth century. Scholars, poets, and artists continued to produce significant works, and traditional forms of art, music, and literature were preserved and continued to evolve.

Resistance and resilience: Despite political instability and economic challenges, there were instances of resistance and resilience among various communities. Peasants and local communities often

resisted oppressive policies, and local-level governance mechanisms were developed to cope with the changing circumstances.

Regional and local initiatives: In the absence of a strong central authority, regional and local initiatives emerged to address the economic, social, and political challenges. Many local rulers and administrators took measures to promote trade, industries, and agriculture in their regions, leading to localized development.

External influences: The eighteenth century also saw the arrival of European powers, such as the British, French, and Dutch, who established trading posts and later expanded their presence in India. These European powers brought new ideas, technologies, and economic opportunities, which had both positive and negative impacts on various aspects of Indian society and economy.

Q2. Explain features of various Land revenue settlements introduced by the British in the 18th Century.

Ans2. The British colonial rule in India during the 18th century saw the introduction of various land revenue settlements, which were aimed at establishing revenue collection systems to generate revenue for the British East India Company. These settlements brought significant changes in land ownership, cultivation practices, and revenue collection methods. Here are some features of the major land revenue settlements introduced by the British in the 18th century:

Permanent Settlement: The Permanent Settlement was introduced in 1793 by Lord Cornwallis in Bengal, Bihar, and Orissa. It established the principle of fixed revenue collection, where a fixed amount of revenue was to be collected from the landlords or Zamindars, who were considered as intermediaries between the British and the peasants. The Zamindars were given hereditary rights to collect revenue in perpetuity in exchange for a fixed percentage of the total revenue collected. However, the Permanent Settlement led to the concentration of land in the hands of Zamindars, who often exploited the peasants and failed to invest in land development.

Ryotwari Settlement: The Ryotwari Settlement was introduced by Thomas Munro in the Madras Presidency in the early 19th century. It directly dealt with the peasants or Ryots, bypassing the intermediaries. Under the Ryotwari Settlement, individual peasants were recognized as independent owners of land, and they were required to pay revenue directly to the British government based on the assessment of the land's fertility and productivity. This system aimed at promoting individual landownership, but it often resulted in high revenue demands, and peasants faced the risk of losing their land in case of failure to pay.

Mahalwari Settlement: The Mahalwari Settlement was introduced in the North-Western Provinces (present-day Uttar Pradesh and parts of Bihar) and Punjab by Lord William Bentinck in the mid-19th century. It recognized village communities or Mahals as the unit of revenue collection. The revenue was assessed and collected from the entire village community, which was collectively responsible for the payment. This system aimed at maintaining the existing village community structure and promoting cooperative landownership, but it also had issues of revenue collection and disputes among the village communities.

Zamindari Abolition: The Zamindari Abolition was introduced in some regions of India, such as Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and West Bengal, after India gained independence in 1947. It aimed at abolishing the intermediary Zamindari system and transferring the landownership rights directly to the tenants or peasants. This system aimed at empowering the peasants and reducing the exploitation by

intermediaries, but it also faced challenges of land consolidation, tenancy disputes, and issues related to compensation for the Zamindars.

These land revenue settlements introduced by the British in the 18th and 19th centuries had significant impacts on the agrarian economy, landownership patterns, and social structure in India. While some of these settlements aimed at promoting individual landownership and revenue collection efficiency, they also had flaws and challenges, including exploitation of peasants, concentration of land in the hands of intermediaries, and issues related to revenue collection and land disputes.

Q3. Explain various reasons for Drain of wealth.

Ans3. The "Drain of Wealth" is a term commonly used to describe the economic exploitation of colonies by the colonial powers during the colonial period. It refers to the transfer of wealth and resources from the colonies to the colonial powers, resulting in economic inequality and impoverishment of the colonies. Here are some of the main reasons for the Drain of Wealth during colonial rule:

Economic Exploitation: The primary reason for the Drain of Wealth was the economic exploitation of the colonies by the colonial powers. The colonies were often treated as a source of raw materials and cheap labor for the industries of the colonial powers. The colonies were forced to export their resources and goods to the colonial powers at low prices, while the finished products were sold back to the colonies at much higher prices. This led to a significant transfer of wealth from the colonies to the colonial powers, as the colonies did not receive fair value for their resources and goods.

Imposition of Colonial Taxes: The colonial powers often imposed heavy taxes on the colonies to generate revenue for their own benefit. These taxes were often arbitrary and exploitative, and they burdened the local population. The revenue collected from these taxes was used to fund the colonial administration and to enrich the colonial powers, rather than being invested in the development of the colonies.

Exploitative Trade Policies: The colonial powers imposed unfair trade policies on the colonies, such as monopoly control over trade, discriminatory tariffs, and restrictions on local industries. These policies favored the interests of the colonial powers and hindered the growth of local industries and trade in the colonies. As a result, the colonies were forced to rely heavily on the colonial powers for finished products, while their own industries suffered, leading to economic dependency and wealth transfer.

Forced Labor and Exploitation of Resources: The colonial powers often forced the local population in the colonies to provide cheap labor and to work in harsh conditions in plantations, mines, and other industries owned by the colonial powers. The profits generated from the exploitation of local labor and resources were largely repatriated to the colonial powers, further contributing to the Drain of Wealth.

Diversion of Resources: The colonial powers often diverted the resources of the colonies for their own benefit, such as using fertile land for cash crop cultivation or extracting minerals and other resources without adequate compensation or benefit for the local population. This resulted in the loss of local resources that could have been used for the development of the colonies, contributing to the Drain of Wealth.

Exploitation of Banking and Financial Systems: The colonial powers often controlled the banking and financial systems in the colonies, using them to their advantage. This included extracting interest and profits from loans and financial transactions, as well as manipulating currency exchange rates and trade policies to favor the colonial powers.

These are some of the main reasons for the Drain of Wealth during colonial rule, which resulted in the economic exploitation and impoverishment of the colonies by the colonial powers. The effects of the Drain of Wealth are still felt in many former colonies today, as it had long-lasting impacts on their economies, societies, and development prospects.

Q4. Elaborate the cause and nature of the revolt of 1857.

Ans4 The Revolt of 1857, also known as the First War of Indian Independence or the Sepoy Mutiny, was a significant uprising against British colonial rule in India. It was a watershed moment in Indian history and had profound socio-political, economic, and cultural impacts. The causes of the revolt were multifaceted and can be broadly categorized into political, economic, social, and cultural factors.

Political Causes:

a. Discontent among Indian rulers: The annexation of princely states, the Doctrine of Lapse policy, and interference in the internal affairs of Indian states by the British East India Company created resentment among Indian rulers who lost their territories and power.

b. Disruption of traditional power structures: The introduction of the New Land Revenue Policy, which affected landowners and zamindars, and the abolition of pensions and titles by the British, eroded the authority and status of traditional Indian elites.

c. Political grievances of Indian soldiers (sepoys): The Indian sepoys, who formed the backbone of the British Indian Army, were subjected to discriminatory treatment, low pay, and harsh working conditions. The introduction of the new Enfield rifle with cartridges greased with animal fat (cow and pig fat) offended the religious sensibilities of Hindu and Muslim sepoys, leading to widespread discontent.

Economic Causes:

a. Economic exploitation: The British colonial rule in India led to the drain of wealth, where India's resources and wealth were systematically exploited and transferred to Britain. Heavy taxation, high revenue demands, and the introduction of the new land revenue system further burdened the Indian population.

b. Destruction of traditional industries: British economic policies, such as the imposition of high tariffs on Indian goods, the destruction of local industries, and the promotion of British manufactured goods, resulted in the decline of traditional Indian industries and widespread unemployment.

Social Causes:

a. Cultural and religious grievances: The British policy of Christian missionary activities, the introduction of Western education, and the general disrespect towards Indian culture and religion hurt the sentiments of the Indian population, leading to resentment and anger.

b. Caste discrimination and social reforms: The British policy of promoting social reforms, such as abolition of sati, widow remarriage, and women's education, was seen as interference in Indian social customs and traditions, leading to opposition from conservative sections of society.

Immediate Triggers:

a. The use of Indian soldiers in foreign wars: The deployment of Indian sepoys in various wars, such as the Anglo-Afghan War and the Anglo-Persian War, resulted in the sepoys being exposed to foreign lands and cultures, leading to disillusionment and discontent.

b. The incident of the greased cartridges: The introduction of the new Enfield rifle and the use of cartridges greased with animal fat, as mentioned earlier, was the immediate trigger that led to the widespread anger and rebellion among the Indian sepoys.

The nature of the revolt was widespread and diverse, involving people from different regions, religions, castes, and social groups. It started as a sepoy mutiny in Meerut in May 1857 and soon spread to other parts of northern, central, and eastern India. The revolt involved both rural and urban populations, including sepoys, peasants, zamindars, nobles, artisans, laborers, and common people. The rebels aimed to overthrow the British rule and restore Indian sovereignty, and their actions included uprisings, battles, sieges, and acts of sabotage against the British authorities and their symbols of power.

The revolt was characterized by the brutality and violence of both sides, with atrocities committed by both the rebels and the British forces. The rebels faced severe repression from the British, including mass executions, hangings, and confiscation of properties of those suspected of rebellion. The revolt ultimately failed in achieving its immediate goal of overthrowing British rule, but it had far-reaching consequences.

The British responded to the revolt with harsh measures, including widespread repression, political and administrative reforms, and the end of the rule of the East India Company. The British Crown assumed direct control over India, and policies were introduced to address some of the grievances that had led to the revolt, such as the recruitment of more Indian soldiers, assurance of religious freedom, and attempts to improve governance and administration. However, these reforms were limited and did not fully address the underlying causes of the revolt.

The Revolt of 1857 had a profound impact on Indian society and the freedom struggle against British rule that followed. It led to the emergence of Indian nationalism, a sense of national pride, and a collective consciousness among Indians against foreign domination. It also highlighted the need for social, economic, and political reforms in Indian society. The revolt served as a precursor to the larger freedom movement that ultimately led to India gaining independence in 1947.

In conclusion, the causes of the Revolt of 1857 were complex and multifaceted, encompassing political, economic, social, and cultural factors. The nature of the revolt was diverse, involving various sections of Indian society. Though it did not achieve its immediate goal of overthrowing British rule, it had far-reaching consequences and played a significant role in shaping India's freedom struggle against colonialism.

Q5. Discuss the role of Mahatma Gandhi in the Indian National Movement.

Ans5. Mahatma Gandhi, also known as Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, was one of the most prominent leaders of the Indian National Movement, which aimed at achieving independence from British colonial rule. His role in India's struggle for freedom was significant and influential, and he is often referred to as the "Father of the Nation" in India. Here are some key aspects of Mahatma Gandhi's role in the Indian National Movement:

Nonviolent Resistance: Mahatma Gandhi was a strong advocate of nonviolent resistance, also known as satyagraha, as a means to fight against British oppression. He believed in the power of truth and nonviolence and used these principles to mobilize the masses and protest against various unjust British policies such as the salt tax, the Rowlatt Act, and the oppressive land revenue system.

Mass Mobilization: Gandhi believed in the power of the masses and emphasized the importance of mass mobilization in the fight for independence. He used methods such as peaceful protests, civil disobedience, strikes, and boycotts to mobilize Indians across all sections of society, including peasants, workers, students, and women, to join the freedom movement.

Emphasis on Swadeshi and Self-Reliance: Gandhi advocated for swadeshi, which meant using locally made goods and promoting self-reliance as a means to boycott British goods and weaken the colonial economy. He encouraged Indians to spin their own cloth (khadi) and engage in other cottage industries to promote self-sufficiency and economic independence.

Championing Social Reforms: Mahatma Gandhi was deeply committed to social reforms and fought against social evils such as untouchability, caste discrimination, and gender inequality. He believed that social reforms were integral to the overall upliftment of Indian society and played a critical role in building a just and inclusive independent India.

Leadership in Mass Campaigns: Gandhi led several mass campaigns and movements during the Indian National Movement, including the Non-Cooperation Movement (1920-1922), the Civil Disobedience Movement (1930), and the Quit India Movement (1942). These campaigns aimed at challenging British rule and asserting the rights and dignity of Indians.

Negotiations and Compromise: Despite his unwavering commitment to the cause of Indian independence, Gandhi also believed in negotiations and compromise as means to achieve the larger goal of freedom. He engaged in dialogue with British officials and participated in various negotiations, including the famous Round Table Conferences, to represent the demands and aspirations of the Indian people.

Mahatma Gandhi's leadership and principles of nonviolence, mass mobilization, self-reliance, social reforms, and negotiations played a significant role in the Indian National Movement. His unwavering commitment to the cause of Indian independence and his ability to galvanize millions of Indians across the country made him a revered leader and an iconic figure in India's struggle for freedom. His legacy continues to inspire people around the world in the pursuit of justice, equality, and peace.

Q6. Was Partition of India inevitable? Elucidate.

Ans6. The partition of India in 1947, which led to the creation of the independent nations of India and Pakistan, is a complex and multifaceted event with a multitude of historical, political, social, and religious factors at play. Whether the partition of India was inevitable or not is a subject of debate among historians and scholars.

Here are some key points to consider in the discussion:

Historical Factors: The historical context of British colonial rule in India, along with its policies of divide and rule, played a significant role in shaping the circumstances that led to the partition. The British implemented policies that accentuated religious and communal differences between Hindus and Muslims, creating tensions and divisions along religious lines.

Political Factors: The political landscape of India during the independence movement also contributed to the partition. The demand for a separate nation for Muslims, called Pakistan, was championed by the All India Muslim League, led by Muhammad Ali Jinnah, who sought to safeguard the rights and interests of Muslims in a Hindu-majority India. This demand for a separate nation for Muslims was accepted by the British and eventually led to the creation of Pakistan.

Communal Tensions: The communal tensions between Hindus and Muslims, fueled by religious differences, political aspirations, and historical grievances, also played a role in the partition. The long-standing animosity between the two communities, exacerbated by communal riots and violence, created an environment of fear and mistrust, which further complicated the situation.

British Role: The British colonial rulers played a significant role in shaping the events that led to the partition. The haste with which the British decided to transfer power and the lack of adequate planning and preparation for the partition process resulted in widespread violence, mass migrations, and communal clashes that further deepened the divide between Hindus and Muslims.

Role of Leadership: The leadership of Indian political leaders, including Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, and Muhammad Ali Jinnah, also had an impact on the partition. The failure of political leaders to reach a consensus on issues such as the distribution of power, representation, and safeguards for minority communities contributed to the eventual partition of India.

Considering the above factors, it can be argued that while the partition of India may not have been inevitable, it was influenced by a complex interplay of historical, political, social, and religious factors. The legacy of partition continues to shape the political, social, and cultural dynamics of South Asia to this day, with long-lasting impacts on the region's history, society, and people.