

NCERT QUESTIONS WITH SOLUTIONS

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

Ans. Colonialism is the practice by which a powerful country controls and exploits another country or region, politically, economically, socially, and culturally, often using military force and economic pressure.

Three Different Definitions of Colonialism:

- (i) Definition from a historical perspective: "Colonialism is a system in which a foreign power establishes control over another country or territory and uses its resources to serve its own interests."
- (ii) Political Definition: "Colonialism is the formal or informal political rule of one country over another, often involving conquest, annexation, and the suppression of local governance."
- (iii) Economic and Social Definition: "Colonialism is a process where a dominant country exploits the economy, labor, and natural resources of the colonised land, while also trying to impose its language, education, and culture."

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?

Ans. No, this claim was not true in the case of India. The British claimed that they came to "civilise" Indians by introducing

modern education, law and order railways and so on but the real motive was economic exploitation and political control. The so-called civilising mission was a cover to justify colonisation.

Evidence from the Chapter:

1. Economic Exploitation:

- India's raw materials like cotton, indigo, and spices were taken to feed British industries.
- Indian industries, especially textiles, were destroyed to promote British imports and policies.

2. Heavy Taxation and Famines:

- The British imposed high taxes on peasants and landowners.
- During the Famine of 1770-72, millions died, but the British continued collecting revenue instead of providing food at minimum cost.

3. Destruction of Traditional Governance:

- The British dismantled India's indigenous ruling systems.
- Local rulers were defeated or forced into unfair treaties.

4. Biased Education Policies:

- Macaulay's English education aimed to create Indians who thought like the British.
- From the above evidences, we can conclude that colonialism deeply affected India's economy and culture, creating a social and religious division. The legacy of European colonialism in India is one of exploitation, brutal repression, violence and uprooting.

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

Ans. The British approach to colonising India was more systematic, organised, and long-lasting compared to the earlier European powers like the Portuguese and the French, who were mainly focused on trade and coastal control. Key Differences:

Aspect	Portuguese French	British
Main Aim	Trade (spices, textiles) and sea dominance	Long-term political control and economic exploitation
Territory Control	Limited to ports like Goa (Portuguese) and Pondicherry (French)	Took over vast territories across India through wars, treaties, and annexations
Approach	Violent but short term; mostly stayed coastal	Systematic, using diplomacy, military, and administration to expand rule
Military-Strategy	Relied on alliances and small armies	Built a large army (with Indian sepoys), defeated major Indian powers (like Bengal, Mysore, Marathas)

Adminis- tration	No strong administration; focus was commerce	Established strong British administrative structures like ICS, new laws, land systems
Cultural Impact	Minor influence, mainly in religion (Portuguese Christianity)	Deep cultural influence: English education, legal systems, railways, western customs

The British went beyond trading they built an empire, interfered in Indian politics, introduced new systems, and completely reshaped India's economy and society. In contrast, the Portuguese and French were mainly commercial powers with limited political ambitions and smaller territorial countries.

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?

Ans. During colonial rule, the British introduced major infrastructure projects such as the railway, telegraph, and postal networks. While these appeared modern and progressive, their main purpose was to serve British interests, not the welfare of Indians.

Aspect	Explanation
Indian Taxes	Indian peasants, farmers, and workers were heavily taxed. This money was used to finance infrastructure projects.
Railways	Built to transport raw materials (like cotton, coal, indigo) from the interiors to ports for British industries not to help Indian travel or trade.
Telegraph & Communication	Set up mainly to maintain fast communication between British officials and troops helping suppress Indian revolts quickly.
No Indian Benefit	Indians bore the costs through taxes, land revenue, and labour while getting very little in return. Education, health, and rural development were ignored.

The infrastructure may have modernized India physically, but it was funded by Indians to strengthen British economic and military control. So, Indians unknowingly paid in the form of heavy taxes and natural resources in India, for the very tools used to dominate and exploit them.

- What does the phrase 'divide and rule' mean? Give examples of how this was used by the British in India?

Ans. "Divide and Rule" refers to a strategy used by the British to maintain their control over India by creating or deepening divisions among Indians especially on the basis of religion, caste, region, and class so that Indians would not unite against British rule.

Examples of "Divide and Rule" Policy in India:

Strategy	Description
Hindu-Muslim Divide	The British often portrayed Hindus and Muslims as different and opposing communities. This led to growing mistrust and later the partition of Bengal in 1905
Princely States vs. British India	The British kept Indian princes loyal by giving them gifts, titles, or autonomy. This helped prevent a united Indian front.

The British mastered the art of "Divide and Rule", using religious, social, and political differences among Indians to keep them weak and disunited making it easier for a small foreign power to rule a vast country.

- Choose one area of Indian life, such as agriculture, education, trade, or Village life. How was it affected by colonial rule? Can you find any signs of those changes still with us today? Express your ideas through a short essay, a poem, a drawing, or a painting.

Ans. Colonialism and Indian Agriculture: A Lasting Impact Under British colonial rule, Indian agriculture underwent a massive transformation but not for the benefit of the farmers or the people. The British introduced cash crop farming like indigo, cotton, and opium, forcing farmers to grow crops that suited British industries instead of food for local consumption. The Permanent Settlement of 1793 made zamindars (landlords) responsible for collecting taxes, which led to the exploitation of peasants. These farmers had to pay heavy taxes regardless of their harvest, pushing many into debt and poverty. Famines became more frequent like the devastating famine of 1770,

where millions died, even while grains were exported to Britain. The British also introduced the railways, not to help farmers sell their produce, but to transport raw materials quickly to ports. Indian agriculture became heavily dependent on global markets controlled by the British.

Many farmers are trapped in debt. There's a continued focus on cash crops over food crops in some regions. The zamindari mindset still lingers in parts of India where landowners exploit laborers. Rural distress, poor irrigation, and lack of fair pricing can still be traced back to colonial-era policies.