

Question: Define colonialism? Discuss the features of colonialism.

Answer:

Introduction

Colonialism is a very popular term in the dictionary of international politics. Up to 1945 foreign policy of colonialism projected, used and defended by almost every European state for justifying its rule over the people of several colonies and dependent states. There was a time when colonialism was as legal and moral instruments of fulfilling the goals of national interests of powerful states. These were described as policies for helping the development of backward nations. But, in reality, these acted as instrument of war, oppression, exploitation, expansionism, misery, hatred and degradation.

Meaning

In a narrow sense, colonialism refers to the process of control of supplies of raw materials, mineral resources, and markets in underdeveloped and pre-capitalist regions. Such narrow definition of colonialism overlooks a vital aspect of colonialism relating to political activity and the drive for dominance over the daily lives of the people of colonies.

In a modern sense, colonialism is a general description of the state of subjection—political, economic, and intellectual—of a non-European society as a result of the process of colonial organization. Colonialism deprives a society of its freedom and its earth and, above all, it leaves its people intellectually and morally disoriented.

Definitions

1. *“Colonialism is the occupation of virgin territories in which conflict is incidental, or even unnecessary and subordinate to the desire of Europeans to find a new place to live”* -- E.M. Winslow
2. *“Colonialism is a natural overflow of nationality; it is the power of the colonialists to translate the civilization they represent to the new natural and social environment in which they find development.”*
– J. A. Hobson

Thus, in summary, economic policies of colonies conform to the interests of the rulers and not of the subjects. Obviously, this unequal relationship between these countries results in a state of underdevelopment of the colony. India was the largest colonial possession of Britain. She was able to exploit India for nearly 200 years—1757 to 1947.

Features

- Colonialism is system of domination by an alien minority by asserting racial and cultural superiority over the materially inferior native majority.
- In colonialism the local industries are destroyed by the colonial masters through systematic process. Handicrafts and weaving industries no longer suitable due to new machine made clothes. High taxes are levied on the products of colonial.

- It involves a system of contact between a machine oriented, better developed, economically powerful civilization with backward, underdeveloped and poor civilization.
- It is imposition of rule of the superior and better developed civilization over the weaker and poor civilization.
- The colonial states are used purely as an origin for raw materials to be used for making products in western countries. These products are then dumped in colonial states for high profits. The money generated colonies is invested for colonial masters.
- There is no rights for colonial people in political administration. Laws and regulations made for colonial welfare colonial masters.
- The colonial people are treated as inferior compared to people of western states. Interest and tradition of former are not respected. In India people forced to follow British social order and Indians not given due respect. Equality between Indians and British non-existent.

In short, the basic features of colonialism can be summarized as the political and legal domination over an alien society, relations of economic and political dependence, exploitation between imperial and the colony and racial and cultural inequality.