State in Indian History –II

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Contradiction addressed in the Mughal period 16th-18th century:

- Mughal state more centralised and efficient in appropriation (increased Khalisa, Todar Mal reforms)
- linkages of nodal centres and towns with rural hinterland
- therefore increasing urbanization, which is at once cause and effect of trade (%of urban population more in 17th century than 19th century)
- Administratively a proto-bureaucratic structure, assisted by an integration of the local elites (Rajputs and Marathas). More broad based in its ethnic composition
State in the times of Mughals:

- More Indian in nature (elite born in India, speaking Indian languages, literature local, theme local, no need for religious sanction)
- It helped sustain the empire for nearly 200 years
- The decline of Mughul empire understood more in terms of its inability to integrate provinces
- ..... which were growing in their right and developing linkages with the regional social and economic formations
- Emergence of new institutions in trade and commerce along the coast
Transition to British Rule

The decline of Mughal empire:

• can understood more in terms of its inability to integrate provinces

• which were growing in their own right and developing linkages with the regional social and economic formations eg: Bengal, Maratha state, Hyderabad, Avadh

• New states too: outmoded political edifice
Indian Political scene in the 18\textsuperscript{th} century

• Emergence of patrimonial segmented state formations bound by ethno-religious affiliations: Jats, Sikhs and Marathas

• These states were at once the cause and effect of the decline of a centralised state formation: Mughal state

• Mughal state: beset with institutional failures, lack of modern army, inability to adapt to change to newer administrative and financial edifice

• Exacerbated by foreign invasions

• These weaknesses beset other Indian state formations too

• Same story: strong society, economy but weak state
Dominant political trends in the 18th century

- Growing trade, urbanisation and the increasing centrifugal forces (in Bengal, Deccan and the Maratha areas) led to the formation of new political power centres
- North west decline post Abdali due to decline in trade (overland trade lost out to maritime trade), weakening of Persia and Central Asian states
- In these turbulent times, emergence of new powerful institutions like the East India Company altered the power equations
- Expansion via the East coast and the South towards the north
Driving force behind expansion

- Commercial: Trade
- Opportunism (to deny other European powers)
- and later Strategic: to safeguard the commercial interests
- East India Company’s drive assisted by a case-to-case handholding by British govt
- British government bailed out East India Company financially and militarily on a number of occasions
- Wars were inevitably the last resort
- Main adversaries: Mysore, Marathas, Avadh and the Sikhs
British Supremacy over India established through:

• Institutional superiority of the Europeans (Joint stock company, better Accounting and sound finance principles)
• Standing army: better trained
• better leadership
• Better use of alliances and dissensions

BUT BASICALLY A FAILURE OF WEAK AND OUTMODED STATE INSTITUTIONS
British Indian Empire 1909
Nature of British Indian State

- Despotic and Racist
- Predominance of commercial and mercantile interests and strategic considerations
- Evident from the fact that British India constituted only 65% of the total territory (areas of agrarian surplus, deltaic areas, markets and areas with industrial potential) of the sub-continent was under direct rule
- Led to impoverishment, rural and urban
- Drain of Wealth: Phases of imperialism
Ideological Justification/legitimacy for conquest and rule provided by:

- Enlightenment and Utilitarian values: therefore lot of social legislation (Bentinck, James Mill)
- Manifestation of British Nationalism softened by the “Roman Syndrome”
- inspired by the ideals of renaissance and enlightenment-these steps sought to mitigate the perfidy of the Company and;
- emancipation of the downtrodden-end of tyranny and misrule
The Modern State

However, the importance of British rule is that it ushered in the era of modern state.

The ‘modern state’ characterised by:

• **Impersonal institutions of governance**: as opposed to person-centric

• **Civil Services based on merit**: the ICS, IP

• **Government penetration vertically and horizontally**

• **Territorial Integrity**

• **Introduction of the concept of private property**

• **Rule of law**

• **Western Education**

• **Greater economic role of the state**: New forms of taxes (Income tax, wealth tax etc)
Structure of the government

Three tier structure:

• **Secretary of State for India** (responsible to the British Govt): had overriding powers

• **Viceroy** (as opposed to Governor General, i.e the king’s deputy) who was the real executive (executive council: like the cabinet portfolios)

• **Provincial government** (under Governor/Lt Governor/Chief Commissioner)

• Underlying idea was to ensure a more direct control of the British Government
Constitutional reforms:

- From 1858-1947 there were a series of Acts passed
- The trend was to broad base governance with checks and balances (Secretary of State vs the Viceroy; Nationalists vs Imperialists; nationalists vs the princes)
- Idea to devolve more powers to the Indians (but delegation with a view to Divide and Rule: as Britain has been doing to all its colonies): progression from 1909, 1919 and 1935
- Culminating in 1947 Independence Act
- Greater autonomy also (ostensibly) to the Indian government viz-a-viz the British Parliament and the office of the Secretary of State.
- Reforms were initiated in response to political pressure (Nationalist)
- Reforms only political in nature not social
Such Political changes went hand in hand with the institutional changes in the economy:

- Growth of modern capitalism: including home-grown business
- Investment in infrastructure: Growth and Improvement
- Joint Stock companies, Managing agencies (box-wallahs)
- Greater monetisation and cash crops with land becoming a commodity
- modern industries
- participation in global trade

Growth in the economy was nevertheless designed to fit in the imperial scheme of things
Consequently, the society also underwent rapid changes as an outcome of the British Raj:

- Greater mobility: social and geographical
  - brought about by territorial integrity,
  - rule of law
  - western education
  - integration of the village societies with the market

- Social and religious reform movements

- Challenges to the traditional social order: caste and anti-brahmanical movements; growing religious movements
Social Impact of the British Raj contd:

• Change in the patterns of dominance: certain castes and communities growing as opposed to other

• Uneven pattern of regional growth: between provinces and within the provinces

• Policy of seeing everything in black and white & policy of divide and rule led to:
  - Crystallization of identities- Seeds of communalism
  - Increase in regional/caste identities
Nature of Modern Indian State

• Outcome of colonial experience, freedom struggle, partition and a reaction to Colonialism

• Ideals and the mission articulated beautifully in the Constitution

• Bold experiment in democracy (Universal adult franchise, parliamentary democracy)

• Civilian control

• Federal & Secular

• Acknowledgement of diversities

• State as guarantor of rights & liberty;
Modern (post independence) Indian State:

- Agent of democratisation and modernisation
- Articulator of nationalism
- Directional and Interventionist
- “Welfare State”
- Bureaucracy’s role even more important: - agent of change
  - politically neutral
  - Selection based on merit
  - protection from political arbitrariness.
New themes in state discourse

• Theme of centre vs state still dominant
• Role of pressure groups and interest groups: caste, regional, ideology, now civil society
• Political parties: nature: major players in the polity
• Primordial loyalties still relevant: Spirit of Nationalism still nascent
• Impact of globalisation and wired world
• Externalities: Energy, geo-strategic concerns
• Demographic bulge: need for economic growth imperative than ever
Challenges before the Modern Indian State:

• Governance deficit:
  ▪ Leading to erosion of credibility of institutions
  ▪ Judicial Activism

• Growth of aspirations of a burgeoning middle class

• Aspirations of the marginalized and the peripheral populations

• Crux of the problem: no rule of law
Challenges before Indian State:

- Parliamentary Democracy and crisis of legitimacy of politics:
  How representative is our polity? Can it be said to be a leader and articulator of aspirations
- Interplay of centre-state issues
- Civil Society, NGOs and media
- Role of Civil Services as agents of change
- “Soft State”: for whatever compulsions
- In global context: “A Reluctant Power”
Indian State in the next 50 years:

• More representative
• Therefore more inclusive and therefore stronger
• Demographic dividends will continue till 2040
• Environmental issues and energy and water crisis
• Top leadership would always be an issue
• What if ..... strong society and economy but a weak polity and state syndrome stays?
QUESTIONS ???
THANK YOU