



**THE STUDY**  
An Institute for IAS

# *World* **HISTORY**



**Manikant Singh**

# INDEX

## **Part I- Rise of Modern West**

Chapter 1	World History - An Inward Journey.....	01
Chapter 2	Renaissance.....	08
Chapter 3	European State System.....	17

## **Part II- Liberalisation & Nationalism, Nation-State & Disintegration of Old Empires**

Chapter 4	Enlightenment & Modern Thinkers.....	21
Chapter 5	American Revolution, American Constitution & American Civil War.....	33
Chapter 6	French Revolution.....	53
Chapter 7	Europe after 1815.....	74
Chapter 8	Disintegration of Old Empires .....	100

## **Part III- Industrialisation, Imperialism & World War-I**

Chapter 9	Industrial Revolution in Britain & Parliamentary Reforms.. ..	104
Chapter 10	Spread of Industrial Revolution in Rest of the World.....	114
Chapter 11	Socialism and Liberalism.....	124
Chapter 12	Imperialism and Colonialism.....	133
Chapter 13	World War-I.....	150

## **Part IV- World between Two World Wars**

Chapter 14	Paris Peace Conference.....	158
Chapter 15	First Crisis in Capitalism and Russian revolution.....	169
Chapter 16	Second Crisis in Capitalism and Great Depression.....	178
Chapter 17	Fascism and Nazism.....	183
Chapter 18	World War-II.....	192

### **Part V- Cold War & New International System**

Chapter 19	Cold War.....	199
Chapter 20	United Nations Organization.....	221.
Chapter 21	Non Aligned Movement.....	224
Chapter 22	Arab Nationalism and Oil Imperialism.....	227
Chapter 23	Evolution of European Union and NATO.....	231
Chapter 24	Globalization.....	237

### **Part VI- Decolonisation & The Rise of Third World**

Chapter 25	Decolonisation in Asia-African Countries (Capitalist Model).....	242
Chapter 26	South Africa- Journey from Apartheid Rule to Democracy.....	248
Chapter 27	Egypt.....	253
Chapter 28	Nationalism in China & Communism (socialist model) .....	255
Chapter 29	Indochina or Vietnam.....	266
Chapter 30	Rise of Third World.....	268

### **Part VII- Challenges of Development**

Chapter 31	Challenges in the Development of Africa.....	270
Chapter 32	Challenges in the Development of Latin America.....	272

### **Part VIII- End of Cold War & Disintegration of Old Order**

Chapter 33	Disintegration of Russia.....	274
Chapter 34	Changes in Eastern Europe after 1991.....	279

### **Part IX- Contemporary World**

Chapter 35	Contemporary World: A cursory Look.....	283
Chapter 36	World History-An Analysis .....	303

## **American Revolution, American Constitution & American Civil War**

“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable right, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.”

**-The Declaration of American Independence, 4 July 1776**

The American Revolution is considered to be a significant event in the history of the world. John Adams, the second President of the United States, declared that the history of the American Revolution dated back to 1620 when the British had for the first time introduced system of Permanent Settlement in James Town. But on a minute observation, we find that the differences between Britain and American colonies emerged in real sense in 1763 only.

Constantly, the number and size of American settlements continued to increase. These 13 settlements, which later developed into the United States, included **New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Continent, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia**. These settlements differed in size. Moreover a large scale cultural diversity was also prevalent among them. However, these settlements were under the control of British Crown and Parliament. But, they also enjoyed a greater autonomy in their internal matters. Each colony was headed by a governor who worked closely with the legislature. So they had enjoyed an autonomous rule for a long period of time. But soon, some contradictions began to surface between these settlements and Britain. On one hand, while they had enjoyed a greater autonomy in the political sphere, but on the other hand, as a part of British mercantilist policy strict control were put on them in the economic field.



The American Revolution is a significant event in the history of the world. Similar to the French Revolution and the Industrial Revolution, it also left deeper imprints during the course of world history. This revolution gave a serious blow to the mercantilist policy. In fact, the year 1776 marked an end of mercantilism because on the one hand, a famous work 'Wealth of Nations' was published in this year which had strongly criticised the policy of mercantilism and on the other hand occurred the American Revolution. The American Revolution was essentially a middle-class revolution because it was not simply a struggle between America and Britain, rather it was a struggle between British monarchy one side and the middle class of America on the other. This was the reason that, even middle class of Europe celebrated the success of this revolution. Then, this revolution even left a legacy of republicanism as well as anti-imperialism, which in future marked their influence in both Europe as well as the colonial world.

However, it is still a matter of dispute whether the American War of Independence was merely a movement for independence or was also a revolution. One view in this context is that, this revolution was not having the voices of social radicalism which were clearly heard during the course of the French Revolution. But, during the course of the American War of Independence, certain fundamental changes in the prevailing economic and social structure were remarkable in nature. Therefore, along with the American war of independence, it was also considered as the American Revolution.

### **Causes of the American Revolution**

## **Socialism and Marxism**

Socialism is an ideology which emphasises on the control of society over the means of production and distribution rather than the control by an individual or group of individuals. In other words, we can say that Socialism, as an ideology, emphasizes on the community control over the means of production and that of distribution. Generally, it is believed that, the socialism has been present since very long. It is traced in the ideology of Rousseau, the French Revolution and the approach of Jacobin leaders. However, socialism as a modern ideology is essentially an outcome of the Industrial Revolution.

Though, in its basic philosophy or the life style it promoted, socialism was not new. It was present since the early stages of society whereby everyone was considered as equal. During early stages, people worked together and had equal share in the production. However, during those stages, there was no scope for any surplus production in the society. But, as an economic and social philosophy, socialism emerged only in the later phases of society. In fact, Socialism as an ideology finds its origin the industrialization of the modern period. Moreover, the term 'socialism' could not come into common use before the 1830s. Like liberalism, the word 'socialism' has also been used with different meanings. In Later period, any form of government which intervened in economic affairs, came to be known as socialist government, whether it was the communist system of Russia or the welfare state of the United States.

However, definitely there lies a common ground in some of the basic principles of different philosophies of socialism. All socialists considered that, the prevailing system of wealth distribution was unjust because only few of the people had control over the surplus money and majority of the people were deprived of basic amenities. Therefore, in order to reduce economic inequality, the socialist thinkers favoured the collective ownership of the means of production and distribution. They also believe that the surplus, which is a by-product of human labour, should be distributed in a fair way.

### **Factors behind the Genesis of Socialist ideology**

- i) The concept of equality had been a central idea of many ideologies. Then, thinkers like Rousseau also emphasised on establishing equality for all during the 18th century itself.
- ii) **Influence of the French Revolution-** During the French Revolution, equality and fraternity became popular slogans. Babeuf, a French thinker and revolutionary, demanded rights for the workers. Even during the Jacobin rule the demand for equality was quite strong.
- iii) **The Role of the Industrial Revolution-** Finally, Socialism emerged as an ideology, in a reaction against the Industrial Revolution. In fact, during the first Industrial Revolution, there started an inhuman exploitation of labourers who were not considered anything more than a commodity. These issues of workers were raised for the first time by the middle class. Thus, Socialism evolved through such developments.

Historically, modern socialism is divided into two phases- Pre- Marxian phase or Early Socialism and Post-Marxian phase. Marxist thinkers have named the early phases as Utopian Socialism and Post-Marxian phase as Scientific Socialism. Some were called utopians because their approach was idealistic and their programs were impractical. Most of the utopian thinkers were French and they came either from the middle class or from the upper class. These thinkers believed in peaceful transformations instead of revolution, because they had learnt from French Revolution that method of revolution was a failure. In fact, they had seen, how the Revolution, through Jacobin Terror, destroyed its own ideals. Some of prominent utopian socialist thinkers have been mentioned below.

### **Saint Simon**

He was active during the French Revolution. His followers were active during the Revolution of 1830. He believed that rather than fighting for resources (rights) it would be better to exploit the natural resources collectively as nature was having abundant resources for the mankind.

[Not only capitalist, even socialist thinkers could not understand the fact that nature doesn't have unlimited natural resources. The current environmental problems are a consequence of such thinking]

Saint Simon gave the famous slogan **“From each according to his capacity, To each according to his work.”**

### **Charles Fourier**

## Colonialism and Imperialism

'Colonialism' is a policy or practice of acquiring full or partial political control over other country, occupying it with settlers, and exploiting it economically. The term 'Colonialism' was used much earlier than 'Imperialism'. Karl Marx did not use term 'Imperialism'. This term was prevalent during late 19<sup>th</sup> century. There is contradiction and debate about the relation between colonialism and imperialism. Generally, it is considered that, if a nation establishes its political and economic control over another nation, then it is called imperialism. But, if the mother country formulates an economic policy for the exploitation of the colony, it is called colonialism. In other words, imperialism is considered as a materialistic reality and colonialism is considered as an approach.

European colonialism is divided into two phases- **first**, between 15<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century and **second**, since 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards. However, some scholars also talk about neo-colonialism which began since 1980s. In this chapter, we will go through these different phases of colonialism and evaluate their nature and impact.

A number of factors contributed to the colonisation of different parts of the world by European countries between the late 15<sup>th</sup> century and 18th century.

- 1. Decline of Constantinople and new-geographical discoveries-** The initial form of colonialism began to emerge only after the 15th century. It was necessarily related to the discovery of the new world. Fall of Constantinople made disruption in the spice trade of the eastern world and it forced the European countries for the discovery of the new world with new routes. Portugal and Spain were the first European countries to take initiatives in this direction. Prince Henry, a Portuguese ruler known as Henry the Navigator, encouraged geographical exploration and discovery. Bartholomew Diaz explored the Cape of Good Hope. Vasco da Gama discovered India. Spanish sailor Columbus discovered America. However, the credit for the discovery of America is given to the Italian explorer **Amerigo Vespucci**. Then Cortez and Pizarro further discovered Latin America. This resulted in the colonization of Latin America by Spain. Similarly, Magellan, a citizen of Portugal, circumnavigated the Pacific



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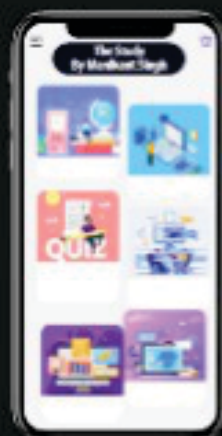


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✉ : info@thestudias.net • thestudias@gmail.com