

POVERTY AND FAMINE IN THE BUREAUCRATIC DISCOURSES OF COLONIAL STATE IN INDIA, 1870 - 1900

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ABSTRACT

The paper investigates the series of famines which occurred during the last quarter of the nineteenth century in Colonial India, their specificities and relations vis-à-vis colonial administration and its logic of governance. While dwelling upon the causes of these great famines and the treatment meted out to their occurrence by the colonial administration, the paper shows that how the colonial handling of famines was symptomatic of a new colonial governmental rationality. Governmental rationality which was based upon the strict adherence of principles of Classical Political Economy such as laissez-faire, free market, Malthusian population theory et cetera. New governmental rationality which allowed the modernization in colonial India to proceed hand in hand with immiseration. The paper argues that the occurrences of these famines played an important role by providing colonial power with an occasion to reshape the Indian subcontinent in the light of new categories, ideas and governmental rationality introduced by Victorian Imperialism. The paper also argues that the interpretations of famines as a natural disaster expose colonial biases. It states that the colonial famines were a direct byproduct of the increasing impoverishment of India at the hand of colonial exploitation and the drain of resources from India to Great Britain.

KEYWORDS: *Famine, Poverty, Immiseration, Classical Political Economy, Colonial State, Modernity, Mortality, Poor, Governance, Discourses*