

**A short course on
Political Economy of India**

Lecture 1

Indian State – Characteristics and Historical Context

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Indian State – Characteristics and Historical Context

Ancient and Medieval State

- Large number of kingdoms through most of history
- Personalized, arbitrary despotism at all levels
- Even when empires (Maurya, Gupta, Harsha and Mughals) existed, there was loose structure with provincial autonomy
- Villages largely insulated from political changes at the top
- Social controls and caste panchayats – not rule of law from the top

Colonial State

Basic functions

- Law and Order
- Land administration
- Infrastructure
- Education

- Essentially law and order state
- Varied land tenure patterns
 - Ryotwari in Madras
 - Zamindari in Bengal and UP

Colonial State

- All India Services
- Partial separation of judiciary from executive
- Rail and road network linking all India – mostly for military purpose
- Irrigation and land revenue
- District as unit of administration and politics

Princely states

- Own models
- Enlightened states emulated British India, eg: Mysore, Travancore, Baroda

Post 1947

Great Successes :

- Integration of princely states
- Zamindari abolition
- Deft handling of linguistic diversity
- Evolution of federal state
- Green revolution

Administration and Law – largely continued from colonial model

Politics : universal franchise and liberty – ambitious adventure

Institutional Crisis

1

Exercise of Power

Positive power to promote public good is severely restricted by structural rigidities
Negative power to plunder and loot is virtually unrestricted

2

Rigid Uniformity

Structural rigidity and one-shoe-fits-all model has deepened crisis

3

Vicious Cycles

A series of vicious cycles is aggravating governance crisis. Politics, which ought to be the solution has become the problem!

Governance Crisis – Vicious Cycle



Three Reconciliations – Mixed Record

Conflicting Interests in a Diverse Polity

Limited Resources and Unlimited Wants

Short Term political gains vs Long Term Public Good

Thank You