BHIM 161: HISTORY OF INDIA
FROM 1707-1950
(TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENT)

Course code: BHIM-163

Assignment Code: BHIM-163/ASST/TMA/2026-2027

Marks: 100

Note: There are three Sections in the Assignment. You have to answer all questions in the Sections.

Assignment - I

Answer the following in about 500 words each.

1) Discuss the role of Utilitarianism in shaping the British policy. 20

2) Briefly discuss the ideas of Raja Ram Mohan Roy. 20

Assignment - II

Answer the following questions in about 250 words each.

3) What was the economic impact of the British rule?. 10

4) Discuss the role of Gandhiji in building the Non Cooperation movement. 10

5) Write a note on the rise of communalism in India. 10

Assignment - III

Answer the following questions in about 100 words each.

6) The Permanent Settlement 6

7) The 18th century debate 6

8) The Moderates in the National Movement 6

9) Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar 6

10) Orientalism 6

1) Discuss the role of Utilitarianism in shaping the British policy. 20

Answer

Utilitarianism became an influential language of British administration in India during the nineteenth century. Associated especially with Jeremy Bentham and James Mill, it judged institutions by their consequences for human welfare rather than by antiquity or inherited privilege. Bentham's idea that policy should promote the greatest happiness of the greatest number encouraged reformers to favour codified laws, uniform procedures and an active state. In India, however, the ideal of general welfare operated inside an empire whose rulers were not answerable to the Indian population. Its impact must therefore be understood both as a programme of reform and as a justification for colonial authority.

Intellectual origins and attitudes towards India

Bentham criticised unnecessary legal complexities, arbitrary punishment and established interests. James Mill gave these views an Indian application in his History of British India (1817). He attacked romantic accounts of India's past and argued that Indian society and government required rational improvement. From 1819, Mill served in the East India Company's London administration, where he could influence official thinking. John Stuart Mill later worked for the Company too, although his opinions were not identical with those of his father. These men did not single-handedly determine policy: evangelical reformers, liberal politicians, commercial interests and Indian critics also shaped decisions.

Utilitarians distrusted the Orientalist belief that the Company's main duty was to preserve Indian institutions merely because they were traditional. They portrayed existing laws, customs and political arrangements as subjects for critical examination. This claim to superior rational judgment could expose injustice, but it could also underestimate India's social complexity and exclude Indians from deciding what counted as improvement.

Administrative centralisation and legal reform

A lasting effect was the drive for systematic administration. Uniform rules, more regular record keeping and increasingly centralised legislative authority promised predictability and fewer differences between districts. The Charter Act of 1833 concentrated lawmaking power in the Governor-General in Council and created a framework for wider legislative reform. The first Law Commission, appointed in 1834 under Thomas Babington Macaulay, worked towards codification. Macaulay prepared the draft of what later became the Indian Penal Code, enacted in 1860. The Code's eventual adoption was not the achievement of utilitarianism alone, but its emphasis on clear and general rules fitted the reformist outlook.