POST-COLONIAL INDIA:
RETHINKING POLITICS, ECONOMY AND CULTURE

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Summary

Analysis of post-colonial practices of modern India, which are based on critical re-evaluation of the colonial heritage and formation of an independent, authentic national identity. The rationale for the research article is dictated by the need to conceptualize the experience of decolonization of India, which is a unique example of the confluence of traditions and modernization.

General scientific methods of analysis, synthesis, comparison and description, as well as historical, sociological and political science tools were applied to analyze how the confluence of the revival of traditions and modernization reforms helped India create a unique model of post-colonial development.

The post-colonial practices of India encompass decolonization of political institutions, economic strategies, and cultural narratives. The main achievements were adoption of legislative instruments that promoted social equality, development of democratic principles adapted to a multicultural society, and support of the idea of "unity in diversity". In the cultural sphere, the revival of traditions is complemented by the struggle for cultural autonomy and overcoming of colonial ideologies. The creation of a civil national identity has become an important tool for overcoming interethnic and religious cleavages. The experience of India demonstrates how combining the modernization reforms with the revival of national traditions can contribute to successful post-colonial transformation.

Key words: post-colonial practices, national identity, decolonization of India, post-colonial identity.

1. Introduction

The post-colonial practices of modern India are based on a critical re-evaluation of the colonial heritage and an attempt to form an independent, authentic national identity that builds on the cultural, social and political specifics of the country. The decolonization of political institutions, public consciousness, cultural narratives and economic strategies represents the key directions in this system.

Purpose of the study is to analyze how the confluence of the revival of traditions and modernization reforms helped India create a unique model of post-colonial development. Therefore, the objectives of the research article are to study the mechanisms for eliminating colonial heritage in legislation and political institutions, development and decolonization of the economy, cultural initiatives and their role in the formation of national identity.

2. Materials and methods of research

General scientific methods of analysis, synthesis, comparison, and description have been applied to trace the evolution of political, economic, and cultural post-colonial practices in India. Historical, sociological, and political science tools were also used within the framework of post-colonial research. The use of these methods ensures a comprehensive study of the issue and allows for an insightful analysis of the Indian experience of decolonization. The research is based on a variety of sources that provide an in-depth analysis of key aspects of India's post-colonial transformation. Each category has its own reasoned approaches and sources. Government documents and resources are the foundation for understanding the legal and social changes that have taken place since independence. Legislative acts such as the Constitution of 1976 and the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act of 1989 demonstrate India's commitment to social equality and decolonization of social structures. The works of Leela Gandhi and Koenraad Elst provide a theoretical basis for understanding a post-colonial identity. They consider the key ideas of decolonization: the struggle for cultural autonomy, overcoming the effects of colonial ideologies, and reviving traditional knowledge. Bipan Chandra's research helps to understand the background that shaped modern India, and Gareth Price's work specifies political challenges in the context of democracy. This historical and political analysis affords opportunity to assess how India has adapted democratic principles to its social and cultural specifics. Thus, the combination of official documents, theoretical works, analysis of historical events and the experience of individual public figures forms an integral basis for studying the post-colonial model of India.

3. The main text

Criticism of colonialism for its absolute impact on all social structures did not appear immediately after India declared independence. These ideas were already in the philosophical and political discourse, they launched the process of national liberation movements in India and determined their specifics. The emergence of a new state on the political map of the world is the result of many years of searching for the fundamental principles that provide a basis for a new identity, and often everything not "new" is viewed as the "well-forgotten old".

Post-colonialism arises when society demands not only pretentious political freedom, but when citizens change understanding of their own identity (political, religious, social, etc.).

In her "Postcolonial Theory", Leela Gandhi argues that it is after the formation of a new independent state that criticism of the previous period mostly gives way to the desire to forget, to erase previous historical pages. The reason is not only painful memories, but also the need for that fresh start. *(Gandhi, 2019)*

Such a fresh start involves a range of decolonization measures in various spheres.

In politics, this is the creation or reform of existing political institutions and new legislation. In 1950, India adopted one of the most detailed constitutions in the world, which enshrined the basic principles of democracy, including universal suffrage, separation of branches of government, and guarantees of human rights. The Constitution, developed under the leadership of Bhimrao Ambedkar, became the basis for the country's democratic development. It was aimed at creating a new political system that would ensure social equality, freedom and justice, eliminating discriminatory practices of the colonial era.

The democratic political regime was chosen for a variety of causes. Some of them are the very manifestation of a new post-colonial identity based on the ideas of the leaders of the

national liberation movements. Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru and others were supporters of democratic ideas. They believed that the future of India should be built on the principles of equality, freedom and justice for all citizens, regardless of religion, varna or social status. "India occupies a central position in post-colonial theory, not merely as a former colony but as a site of cultural and intellectual production that critiques the West's hegemonic power" *(Gandhi, 2019)*.

Another reason was the long-term impact of the previous rule. For more than 200 years of British colonial rule, certain elements of democratic governance were introduced in India. In particular, local legislative councils were established, and elections were held on a limited basis. This was a kind of preparation of Indian society for a democratic model of governance. However, the new government of independent India actively reformed the administrative system inherited from the British, adapting it to national needs. Moreover, criticism and rejection of what was dictated by the colonialists began in the period of national liberation movements and continues nowadays in philosophical and social discourse.

Koenraad Elst seems to maintain the most radical position in the book "Decolonizing the Hindu Mind". He considers that democracy in India was implemented according to the Western model ignoring local traditional governance systems. Therefore, there was no political decolonization, which requires the removal of colonial ideologies from political and educational institutions. After attaining independence, the political structures in India remained substantially colonial, and the local elite came into power instead of foreign rulers. Elst quite radically comments on the possibility of implementing democracy as a political order: "You cannot invest "democracy" with all possible virtues. So, "tyranny by the majority" is and remains an inherent danger of democracy. And this would bring us to an old debate: in order not to lapse into barbarism, democracy needs the basis of a strong ethical culture in the population. Generally speaking, democracy has certain cultural prerequisites which fall outside the institutional democracy concept itself" (*Elst, 2005, p.60*).

From this perspective, the question arises whether the post-colonial identity is denial and replacement of everything that was artificially introduced by the colonialists or return to oneself, back to "the roots"? Is it possible to combine these two points?

It is beyond argument that formulation of the question in this way began during the Indian cultural renaissance. For example, Ram Mohan Roy and Dayananda Saraswati present two different approaches to reforms in India: modernization and restoration. Their ideas together formed the basis for the further development of social, cultural and political thought in India. However, the views of these philosophers show the polarization of Indian society, which began long before Satyagraha. R. M. Roy founded the Brahmo Samaj in 1830. Its purpose was defined as "the worship and adoration of the eternal, immense and permanent substance that is the creator and guardian of the world". However, although this goal can clearly be seen as an indication of Brahman, i.e., the Hindu ideological framework, and as Priya Soman notes: "The Brahmo Samaj was the earliest movement of the modern type in India which was greatly influenced by modern western ideas" *(Soman, 2016, p.78)*. The ideology of the Brahmo Samaj was based on the establishment of intercultural and interreligious dialogue, the search for commonalities in various religions (including Christianity, Islam and Hinduism).

R. M. Roy advocated reforming Hinduism through rationality and morality. He was open to changes and borrowings from Western culture and believed that traditions should be adapted to present-day developments. He also introduced a Western style of education, supported the study of English, science and rational thinking. And although R. M. Roy actively criticized some aspects of British rule, he cooperated with the colonial authorities, considering their presence an opportunity to modernize India. *(Chandra, 2020)*.

It means that back in the XIX century R. M. Roy plotted one of the vectors for the development of sociopolitical thought in India, which was aimed at finding a compromise with the British authorities and the moderate westernization of India.

When its own bodies of state power and public administration were created in the independent India, the experience of being part of the British Empire was very influential. Describing the history of the creation of Indian democracy, Gareth Price states: "India's government is loosely modelled on the British Westminster system. It consists of a president as head of state; an executive headed by the prime minister; a legislature consisting of a parliament with an upper and lower house (the Rajya Sabha and Lok Sabha); and a judiciary with a supreme court at its head" *(Price, 2024)*.

If R. M. Roy is a representative of the modernization approach, Dayananda Saraswati seeks to restore the Indian tradition. This approach is opposed to the Westernizers. It was popular during the Indian renaissance, remaining relevant for today's India. Its extreme manifestation is Hindu nationalism and Hindutva ideology. In addition to Dayananda Saraswati, modern representatives of nationalist movements were inspired by the philosophy of Vivekananda and Aurobindo Ghosh.

Dayananda Saraswati is interesting, in this context, because he was also the founder of the Arya Samaj movement. He supported the idea of Swaraj, advocating India's independence from British rule. He stood for return to Vedic ideals as the basis of political and social life. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan described his views on social and political reforms as follows: "We can strengthen our nation only if we are able to abolish all man-made distinctions, and if we coalesce into a homogeneous community and stand together as one nation" (*Radhakrishnan, 2006, p. 37*).

Within the framework of our research, these two philosophers, Ram Mohan Roy and Dayananda Saraswati, illustrate the social attitudes of Indian society that began with the cultural renaissance and have continued until today. Following the post-colonial practices of India, we see how the ideas of these thinkers became the basis for modern reforms that affect politics, culture and social life of India. Ram Mohan Roy symbolizes the desire to modernize and integrate Western values, while Dayananda Saraswati embodies a return to traditional Vedic culture. Ideas of R. M. Roy encouraged critical rethinking of Indian culture, adapting Western education, science, and equality ideals to address social injustice (such as abolishing Sati or ensuring women's rights). Dayananda Saraswati advocated the preservation of India's cultural identity through the restoration of Vedic principles, rejecting religious distortions and calling for independence from foreign influence.

These approaches not only reflect different responses to the colonial challenge, but also lay the foundation for modern India, which combines a desire for progress with a deep respect for traditions. In the post-colonial period, such ideas were updated through a range of political reforms in education, introduction of new educational trends and systems, but with an emphasis on regional features, such as learning regional languages.

In the social sphere it was the fight against Varna/ caste and religious discrimination, which all governments of independent India were actively working on. In addition to articles in the Constitution, a variety of laws were adopted.

For example, "The Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes Act" was adopted in 1989 (*Government of India. Ministry of Social Justice and Empowermentб 1989*), which has become a tool for protecting the rights of lower castes. In addition, political parties such as the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) have emerged, representing the interests of the Dalits and tribes.

Post-colonial practices in the field of economy are related to the policy of state control over key industries, industrialization and the rejection of dependence on foreign capital. After

attaining independence, India set a course for economic independence. Socialism was the constitutional and economic course of India. In the Constitution of India of 1976, thanks to the 42nd Amendment, the word "socialist" was officially added to the preamble, which emphasized the country's desire to build a socially just society: "It is, therefore, proposed to change the Constitution to spell out expressly the high ideals of socialism, secularism and the integrity of the nation, to make the directive principles more comprehensive and give them precedence over those fundamental rights which have been allowed to be relied upon to frustrate socio-economic reforms for implementing the directive principles". *(Government of India, 1976)*.

Indian socialism was adapted to the specific conditions of the country, combining state control with private entrepreneurship. This period was marked by the nationalization of banks, energy companies, heavy industry and the introduction of five-year economic development plans.

License Raj is a term that describes the economic system of India between 1947 and 1991, in which the state exercised strict control over business and economic activities through a system of licenses, permits and regulations. Such a system required obtaining government permits for business operations, quotas to produce goods, while heavy industry, banks, transport, and energy were under complete state control. The state also significantly restricted imports and set a high customs threshold. The main disadvantage of such a system was excessive bureaucratization, which gave rise to corruption. *(Economic reforms in India: Achievements and challenges, 2015)*.

The system began to decline in the late 1980s due to the economic crisis. The balance of payments deficit forced India to seek financial assistance. In 1991, the government, led by Prime Minister Narasimha Rao and the Minister of Finance Manmohan Singh, implemented sweeping economic reforms that included reducing state control over businesses and liberalizing the economy to attract foreign investment.

India's current economy is growing rapidly. The main direction is the service sector (IT companies, call centers, etc.). The advantage of India is a large portion of young people and knowledge of English. This makes it easy to enter the global service market.

The "Made in India" policy and the modern "Atmanirbhar Bharat" (self-reliant India) program continue this trend. They are aimed at stimulating local production and reducing imports. Launched in 2014, the "Made in India" initiative aims to transform India into a global manufacturing hub. This reflects post-colonial pragmatism – economic development based on the country's inner potential. Launched in 2020, "Atmanirbhar Bharat" aims to make India self-reliant in terms of the production of goods and reduce its dependence on imports. It covers the development of local production, support for small businesses, and investment in technology.

However, there remain several problems:
– inefficient infrastructure and excessive bureaucracy;
– non-transparent trading environment (monopolies and conglomerates);
– a large portion of very poor people. The gap between the social strata of the poor and the rich is quite large.

The next sphere is cultural decolonization. One of the most important post-colonial practices is the attempt to restore national culture and identity.

Post-colonial cultural practices are aimed at actualizing traditional crafts and arts, popularizing spiritual practices and Indian philosophy. Post-colonial themes are also present in films and literature.

Governments and civil society organizations support the revival of traditional crafts that were marginalized during the colonial rule. This direction is supported by government and public initiatives at the regional and national levels.

The Ministry of Textiles of India has the Office of the Development Commissioner (Handicrafts), which launched the extensive initiative titled Handicrafts Mega Clusters Mission. It provides financial and marketing support for regional authentic crafts. The initiative is also aimed at expanding the export of manufactured goods. The task of Handicrafts Mega Clusters Mission is the following: it "...assists in the development, marketing and export of handicrafts, and the promotion of craft forms and skills. The assistance is in the form of technical and financial support, including in the form of schematic interventions implemented through its field offices" (*Ministry of Textiles. (n.d.)*). Varanasi (production of silk sarees), Moradabad (brass products), Jaipur (block printing of fabrics) – this is an incomplete list of traditional crafts supported by the initiative of the Government of India.

Another initiative from the Ministry of Textiles – Indian Handloom Brand – aims to promote high-quality handmade products such as sarees, pashmina and other fabrics made using traditional methods. The program certifies products to ensure their authenticity and promote export.

An important step in protecting authentic crafts and goods linked to a specific area was introduction of the Geographical Indications (GI) system. It was officially launched in 2003 after the adoption of the Geographical Indication of Goods Act *(Government of India, 2002)*.

The first product registered under GI was Darjeeling tea in 2004. The Act is designed to protect the rights of producers of goods that have specific qualities, reputation or origin associated with a particular geographical region.

Public initiatives are represented by organizations and foundations. Here are some examples. Founded in 1960, Fabindia collaborates with local artisans and is a platform for selling products throughout the country and beyond. This gives artisans a stable income and promotes traditional techniques. Dastkar has been operating since 1981 to provide artisans with training, market access and exhibition organization. Its projects include, among others, supporting the craft of block printing in Rajasthan and basket weaving in Tamil Nadu. Since 1999, the Craft Revival Trust has been working to document and promote ancient crafts such as wood carving in Kashmir or indigo dyeing in Gujarat.

We should also mention Kalakshetra Foundation. This foundation was established in 1936 by Rukmini Devi Arundale as a private initiative to preserve and promote classical Indian art, in particular Bharatanatyam dance and traditional weaving. In 1993, the Government of India granted it the status of an autonomous body under the Ministry of Culture, thereby turning it into a state institution. The foundation is engaged in reviving traditional weaving techniques. They also hold festivals to showcase artisan products.

In addition to the revival of crafts and the popularization of authentic techniques for weaving, pottery, drawing, dancing, and protecting property rights through GI reference, post-colonial practices in the field of culture are also associated with the revival of spiritual, religious, and philosophical traditions.

The revival of traditional knowledge means exploring and popularizing ancient Indian texts, medical systems such as Ayurveda, and philosophical schools.

Post-colonial Indian practices are associated with the revival of tradition and refer to the period of formation and flourishing of Indian culture and are represented by a variety of initiatives.

The Government of India actively supported the study of Sanskrit through institutions such as Rashtriya Sanskrit Sansthan. It was founded in 1970 as an autonomous organization, with the aim of developing and popularizing Sanskrit both nationally and internationally. Funding was provided by the Government of India. Santgan functioned as the highest body for the spread and

development of Sanskrit. In 2002, it was officially granted the status of a university. On the official website of the organization, relevance of the functioning of such a structure is defined as follows: "...Sanskrit serves as a repository of the unique cultural heritage of ancient India. Not only this, Sanskrit has been the strongest and the most enduring force ensuring the unity of this great land of immense social, geographical and cultural diversity. Sanskrit is the most prominent source of soft power that India wields in the world today. Sanskrit also provides the theoretical foundation of ancient sciences. Hence, preservation and propagation of Sanskrit language and literature assumes paramount importance for all-round development of India" (*National Institute of Sanskrit. (n. d.*).

The revival of traditional Indian medicine – Ayurveda – is also supported at the state level. This is one of focus areas of the Ministry of Ayush, which has been operating since 2014 and was established at the Department of Indian Systems of Medicine and Homeopathy. The next important point in reviving traditional Indian knowledge is the popularization of yoga. For example, Swami Satyananda Saraswati and his organization Bihar School of Yoga (founded in 1964) in the 1980s and 1990s promoted yoga not only in India, but also abroad. During these decades, yoga has been actively integrated into the modern lifestyle through seminars, books, and international tours by Indian gurus. Founded in 1995 by Swami Ramdev, Patanjali Yogpeeth is continuing its work. This institute is one of the largest centers of yoga and Ayurveda in India, dedicated to research, education and popularization of traditional Indian medical systems. Many Indian universities, such as Banares Hindu University (BHU) and Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), have faculties and research centers dedicated to the study of Sanskrit, Ayurveda, and Indian philosophy.

The success of various programs to revive traditional yoga techniques and a whole range of related philosophical knowledge is evidenced by the launch of the International Yoga Day in 2015 initiated by India and supported by the United Nations. This day is celebrated on June 21 and contributes to the global dissemination of knowledge about yoga and related practices.

Another element of the revival of traditional knowledge is the study of ancient philosophical and religious texts. The initiative – National Mission for Manuscripts – was founded in 2003 by the Ministry of Culture of India and aims to preserve and study manuscripts containing traditional knowledge. The mission collects, catalogues, preserves and disseminates information about manuscripts. The main aspects of the Mission's activities were identified at its opening by the Prime Minister Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee: "...since 70 per cent of the manuscripts are in Sanskrit, the teaching and learning of the language will have to be further promoted, several institutions that are already working in the field will have to be associated with the Mission and finally, a huge awareness campaign has to be undertaken to encourage individual custodians of manuscripts to come forward and give them to the Mission" (*National Mission for Clean Ganga. (n.d.)*.

Decolonization in the field of culture is also associated with the post-colonial theme of art. This area is quite extensive therefore the article will be limited to a range of examples from literature and cinema. However, a closer look at what post-colonial practices were and still are present in India's artistic environment is a promising area for further research.

Many contemporary Indian films and books address issues of colonial heritage, such as caste discrimination, cultural identity, and the influence of Western culture. For example, Arundhati Roy's novels "The God of Small Things" and Salman Rushdie's "Midnight's Children" explore the effects of colonialism on Indian society.

"The God of Small Things" raises such important social and political issues as:

– injustice of the Varna and caste system, i.e., social inequality, which, although prohibited at the level of federal legislation, is typical of the life of Hindus, especially in small settlements;

– political tension in society is shown through the description of events taking place in Kerala, a state known for its progressive political trends. The novel mentions the rise of communists to power and their influence on society. Roy depicts how the communist movement tried to fight for the rights of the underprivileged and lower castes, but often went through contradictions due to corruption, internal conflicts, and inconsistencies between ideals and practices *(Roy, 1997)*.

The novel reflects the confrontation between the traditional system (based on caste and patriarchy) and new political ideas (in particular, equality, progress and the struggle for the rights of the oppressed) that have just begun to function in the sociopolitical discourse of India. It means that the political context of the novel is a symbolic space that demonstrates large-scale contradictions of society: between the old and the new, between rights and oppression, between the aspirations for freedom and cultural taboos.

Another artwork that demonstrates the complexity of the decolonization process in India and serves as an example of how literature not only describes this process but is directly involved in it is "Midnight's Children" by Salman Rushdie. The novel was written in 1981 and depicts the events since the declaration of independence in 1947. Rushdie portrays this moment of history not only as an act of independence, but also as a source of societal polarization. The stories of characters show the problems of nationalism, the controversy between Muslims and Hindus, and cultural contradictions in multinational India. India's identity appears as a combination of traditional and modern, local and colonial, creating tension between the past and the present. *(Rushdie, 2010)*

Thus, India's post-colonial literature often explores the issues of identity, power, and colonial heritage.

Indian cinema has also played an important role in highlighting post-colonial themes, particularly social, cultural and political changes after attaining independence in 1947. Through the films, the filmmakers explore identity, the legacy of colonialism, inequality, and the struggle for a new national consciousness. Let us consider a few examples.

Understanding the new status of the country required a new look at the leaders of the national liberation movement. In particular, the film "Gandhi" (1982) shows how independence was acquired, what philosophical ideas became its foundation. Mahatma Gandhi is not only a leader, but also a symbol of Satyagraha and the Indian way of gaining freedom. That is, biographies in Indian cinema are gaining a new relevance.

Films are being made that explore the fusion of Indian traditions with Western influence resulted from the colonial rule. Moreover, these problems arise both for migrants who have changed their country of residence for various reasons, and for residents of India. After all, the years of being in the status of a colony left a significant imprint on the consciousness of Indians. English-language education, literature, the British way of life represent things that have been positioned as something elite for a long period of time. At that time, Indian traditions were classified as "rustic" or "superstitious".

The theme of migrants and the problems they face in western society is raised in the film "The Namesake" (2006) that shows the life of an Indian family trying to integrate into American society while maintaining their own identity.

The tension between tradition and modernity is shown in "Monsoon Wedding" (2001) revolving around weddings that the newlyweds plan to celebrate in the European style. And a discussion unfolds between relatives who have a completely different vision of life and cultural values. Although this film was made in the XXI century, it is noticeable that the process of decolonization has not been completed.

4. The results and discussion

India is legally independent, but the process of forming a new political nation is still ongoing. Traditionalism is often criticized for being overly superstitious. This cliche is a direct consequence of colonialism. Therefore, India's post-colonial practices in politics, culture, and economy are aimed at rethinking national identity. Post-colonial India is trying to create an identity that is not limited to the period of the colonial past or the imitation of Western models.

There are two main ideas in this process. The idea of unity in diversity, where the emphasis is placed on multiculturalism, diversity of religions, languages and customs as the basis of Indian statehood. And the idea of forming a civil national identity. Unlike ethnic or religious nationalism, India offers a model in which the basis of a nation is citizenship, rather than belonging to a particular religion or ethnic group.

It is of interest to note that both Ukraine and India had the experience of fighting for national identity after long periods of colonial and imperial rule. As in Ukraine after the Soviet era, in India after colonialism, there was a need to revive national culture and traditions. This is a prospect for further in-depth research of India's post-colonial practices with the possibility of extrapolating this experience into the social and political Ukrainian discourse.

5. Conclusion

In summary, post-colonial practices in modern India are an attempt to overcome the consequences of colonialism in all spheres of life: from politics and economy to culture and public consciousness. This approach is also aimed at creating a unique model of development that combines democratic values, social justice and multiculturalism, while maintaining its historical and cultural identity.

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