



History 7042

Additional Specimen Question Paper 1J (A-level)

Question 02 Student 3

Specimen Answer and Commentary

V1.0

Specimen answer plus commentary

The following student response is intended to illustrate approaches to assessment. This response has not been completed under timed examination conditions. It is not intended to be viewed as a 'model' answer and the marking has not been subject to the usual standardisation process.

Paper 1J (A-level): Additional specimen question paper

02 'British rule in India combined self-interest with an arrogant attitude of racial superiority towards the native population.'

Assess the validity of this view with reference to the years 1857 to c1900.

[25 marks]

Student response

After the 1857 Indian Revolt, the way in which Britain ruled India was re-examined. The British government realised that the coercion and brute force would not be enough to retain control of Britain's 'Jewel in the crown'. Reforms were undoubtedly needed and these were introduced under the 1858 'Government of India Act'. Whilst the educational and infrastructure reforms were beneficial to India and helped to reduce the risk of further uprising, some historians might argue that they were introduced merely to solidify British hegemony over India and to satisfy self-interest. British attitudes towards the native population was characterised by an air of arrogance which was integrated into Anglo-Indian society. There were attempts to promote racial equality, nevertheless, it would be hard to argue that an equilibrium was ever reached. It is clear that there were multiple facets to British rule in India; whilst there is evidence to suggest that reforms were introduced to improve India, self-interest and self-proclaimed racial superiority played major roles in the running of the subcontinent.

The idea of racial superiority and an interest-led empire is evident in the way India was governed. The victory who held the most senior role in the government was always of British origin and all the highest government positions were also held by British elites. Whilst the Indian Civil Service did accept Indian applicants after 1858, they only made up 5% of the civil service by 1900. Some might argue that the British population did not believe Indians to be intelligent or reliable enough to run the country and felt an India ruled by Britain was much more efficient. One third of the country was ruled by Indian princes suggesting that certain Indians were deemed to be acceptable rulers by the British state. However some historians, such as S'all Forgwton would argue that this was just a strategic decision made by Britain a bid to run an 'Empire on the cheap'. The Princes were given civil service advisors so as to force loyalty to Britain, showing that the princes' powers were somewhat false in light of the overarching British Rule. In other words, whilst the Princes were respected, they would be forced to conform to what Britain believed was a superior foreign government. The native population were clearly thought to be radically inferior to the foreign rulers. This is further supported by Evelyn Baring's derogatory labelling of Indian Civil Servants as 'baboons'. It is clear from the Anglo-Indian system of government at the time that there was a sense of arrogance involved in the British Raj. Very few Indians were placed in prominent positions and these who held any significant power were forced to conform to the British way of government. Ultimately, the British cities posted in India did not trust the indigenous people to be in charge of their own country. There was an undeniable feeling of superiority to the natives who were possibly deemed to be untrustworthy of self-rule by the British government in India.

Another example of this self-proclaimed superiority can be seen in the way the British officials separated themselves from Indian society. Many high ranking British Civil Servants migrated to high altitude hill stations to find refuge from both the summer heat and what they thought to be an 'unclean' native population. The British inhabitants made attempts not to associate themselves with Indian culture or 'go native'. Instead they introduced British culture into these areas, building cricket pitches, churches and sanatoria. At Darjeeling, a tunnel was dug underneath the botanical gardens so the British would not have to lay their eyes on the natives in this area. The British inhabitants refused to allow 'unclean' Indians to buy houses in these hill stations, leading to a high concentration of British nationals living in these areas. Natives were able to rent houses however, much to the disdain of the British officials (as we read in Dane Kennedy's 'Magic Mountains'). The annual hill station migration was incontrovertibly driven by a sense of racial superiority and a desire for an isolated British community. The inhabitants felt that the natives were merely savages who would dirty a pure and clean British culture.

Self-interest certainly played a significant role in British occupation of India. By 1900, Britain was the third largest industrial power and used India as a marketplace for its goods. Cotton goods were sold in India, undercutting local equivalents. In addition, railway tracks were made in England and exported to India which greatly benefited British manufacturing companies. Indentured labourers from India were also exploited by Britain, working as unofficial slaves in Africa until they were freed after five years of service. There was an economic imbalance between Britain and India (known as the 'Drain Theory') in which Indian resources and markets were exploited by Britain. Companies from Britain saw India as a 'cash-cow' (25% of all British investment was targeted at India), and were able to make huge profits from the sub-continent. Furthermore, an arrogant attitude of racial superiority led to low wages being paid to Indian workers, which of course meant improved profits for British companies. British rule in India could also be seen as a way for the British government to save money. The Indian Army was made up of around 140,000 soldiers and could be sent to British war zones for a lower cost due to reduced journey times (such as in south Africa during the Boer Wars). The army was seen as expendable because it was made up of mostly Sepoys (Indian soldiers) and therefore made it an extremely effective tool for Britain; Lord Salisbury (Prime Minister from 1895-1902) stated that India was simply an 'army barrack'. Ultimately, Britain used India for its own economic benefit, swamping India markets with British goods and saving money with low paid workers and a effective Sepoy army. Economic interests in India undoubtedly played a role in the way they country was governed.

Whilst there is strong evidence to suggest that self-interest and arrogance did play that parts in British rule, there is an argument for benevolent government in India. Notable efforts were made to moderate India; Briton had laid down 20,000 miles of railway track by 1900. The railway lines helped to reduce the effects of famine as food could be more easily distributed across India. Implementing and maintaining this infrastructure required labourers, leading to an increase in the number of Job opportunities for local workers. Irrigation systems were also introduced which greatly assisted Indian farmers; an area of 80,000 square miles had been irrigated by 1900. Britain invested time and money into improving India's infrastructure suggesting that there was an intention to ameliorate India. Farmers and peasants were the main Beneficiaries of these infrastructure improvements which highlighted the selfless aspect of British rule. Whilst some historians might argue that British rule in India was purely selfish, there is clearly evidence to suggest that the British government was keen to improve India and the lives of its native population. These infrastructure schemes helped to provide Indians with Jobs but also reduced famine and aided farmers.

Although the Indian Civil Service appointed very few Indians, the European members were educated in Indian cultures and languages meaning that they could rule with understanding of native attitudes and psychology. Civil servants were often overworked and underpaid. Gopal Krishna Gohale (an Indian moderate) stated that many civil servants possessed 'a high level of ability', 'a keen sense of duty' and a 'conscientious desire' to do good to those with restricted opportunities. This suggests that this aspect of Indian government was not driven by self-interest but rather, benevolence. Many historians believe the civil servants' work was criticised to the amelioration of India. In 1886, the Indian National Congress was formed which was essentially a political debating organisation for Indian nationals, and thereby increased the native population's involvement in government. The victory enabled the rise of this organisation and some historians might suggest that the British government was integrating Indians into the upper sections of the Indian government to prepare them for self-rule. It is clear that British civil servants and governors were keen to promote the Indian middle-class and improve India as a whole. Not only did the civil servants work hard to increase the efficiency of the country, but they also encouraged respect towards the native population. The formation of the Indian National Congress is also understandable evidence to suggest that British rule was not completely driven by self-interest and arrogance.

The introduction of an education system in India further supports the idea that benevolence played a part in the British Raj. By 1901 there were 191 arts/professional colleges in India and 5,124 secondary schools. Although some Indians opposed the English education system, feeling that it was an attempt to nurture a conformist attitude in young Indians, it did help to educate over half a million Indians by the turn of the century. Sixty-thousand potential doctors, lawyers, teachers and other skilled workers had been trained by 1900. By educating these individuals, Britain was able to provide India with a foundation of Middle-class natives who would be instrumental in the future development of the country. The education system also promoted the English Language, which would improve relations between Indian communities and help to unify India. A common language would also strengthen Anglo-Indian relations, ultimately leading to a more effective governing system. Again, this is evidence to show the British involvement in India did benefit the country, suggesting that the British Raj was not solely driven by selfish motives. The education system helped to improve the opportunities for thousands of Indians, whilst providing the country with more skilled workers. A unifying language would also help to improve community cohesion and lead to a more effective governing of India.

Altogether, British rule in India was certainly fuelled to some extent by self-interest and arrogance. Very few Indians were given positions of power due to the widespread British belief that the native population were incompetent of 'self-rule'. The creation of hill stations enforces this idea of racial superiority and highlights the way in which the British inhabitants viewed the locals. Partly because the natives were treated with such low regard, Britain saw India as exploitable and used its resources for economic benefit. Low wages and an army based in India also helped the British government to save money. It can, however, be argued that the British Raj was driven by benevolence as well as self-interest. Farmers, peasants and middle-class workers all benefited from Britain's efforts to modernise India. New infrastructure helped to provide work for many locals and also improved the quality of life for many individuals. The efforts of the Indian Civil Service and the creation of education institutes also led to what many would view as a more civilised India. In conclusion, there is no doubt that British interests and a belief of racial superiority played major roles in the government of India. However, there was an

aspect of kindness and desire for improvement with which reforms were put in place for the betterment of the country.

Commentary – Level 5

This is a well-controlled, balanced and relevant assessment with very impressive detail which rarely turns into narrative description. The terms of the question are both corroborated and challenged and this is a Level 5 response.