

Maize	-0.17
Bajra	-0.11
Barley	-0.55
Gram	-0.34
Ragi	-0.23
Non-Food Grains	+1.2
Population	+0.11

Source: Blyn G, "Output, Availability & Productivity ..." , Pennsylvania University Press, USA

Data reveal that conditions were created for frequent occurrence of famines in India. Acreage was diverted from food grains to commercial crops with growing population. No technological progress ensured stagnant agriculture favoring cultivation of commercial crops exported to B. Industry

Madison's Estimates on World GDP

Angus Maddison, the famed British economic historian who passed away recently, is best known for his estimates of world gross domestic product (GDP) that go back all the way to the year 1 AD. In recent times, his charts have been used to tell the fascinating story of how the share of India and China in world GDP used to be very high till about 1600 AD, but started declining thereafter as they missed the industrial revolution. With their current rapid growth, their share in the world economy is now rising once again.

In 1000 AD, according to Maddison's calculations, China and India together contributed 50.5% of world GDP (GDP being computed in 1990 dollars and in purchasing power parity (PPP) terms).

By 1600, that share had gone up to 51.4%, with China accounting for 29% and India 22.4% of world GDP. A hundred years later, China's GDP had fallen but India's went up to 24.4% of world output.

By 1820, however, India's share had fallen to 16.1%. By 1870, it went down to 12.2%. International Monetary Fund (IMF) projections indicate that India's share of world GDP would be 6.1% in 2015.

Was colonialism to blame? Did the drain of wealth to Britain impoverish a once wealthy country? Or was the decline in importance merely the result of the rise in productivity in Europe?

Well, the growth of India's GDP between 1500 and 1600 was 22.7%, between 1600 and 1700 it was 22.2% and between 1700 and 1820 it logged 21%. So it's not as if there was any huge decline in the rate of growth. Of course, that doesn't preclude the possibility that Indian growth, too, may have taken off if the country was not under the thumb of the British.

But China continued to be an independent country, albeit one much plagued by the Western powers, and its rate of growth too during the period was nothing to be proud of.

What the data seem to be saying is that the coming of the British did not, at least in the first 100 years of colonial rule, make much of a difference to the growth rate of the Indian economy.