Loyola History Association (2025-26)

Department of History - Loyola College, Chennai – 34.

Special Talk on the "Critical Enquiry of British Rule in India"

by Mr. Abdul Khadar

The Department of History hosted a special talk titled "Critical Enquiry of British Rule in India," which explored the complex political and economic strategies used by the British to colonise India.

Discussions began by tracing the arrival of the British through the East India Company. What started as a commercial interest quickly evolved into a calculated takeover, using diplomacy, warfare, and manipulative policies like the Doctrine of Lapse and Subsidiary Alliances. Trade relationships were twisted into political dependencies, and eventually into direct rule.

A major part of the session focused on how India's economy was strategically dismantled to serve British interests. It was discussed that during the Mughal era, India accounted for nearly 42% of the global GDP, being one of the richest and most self-sufficient economies. However, by the end of British rule, India's economy had been reduced to poverty, with GDP falling drastically, and industries like textiles left in ruins.

The talk also covered how railways were constructed primarily to transport goods—not people. Infrastructure projects like the Red Hills railway were set up to move materials like granite and laterite from resource-rich areas to port cities for export, facilitating Britain's industrial expansion rather than India's development.

Policies such as the Permanent Settlement and Ryotwari system were also critically examined. These systems were designed to ensure a steady flow of revenue to the British, often at the cost of local farmers and communities, leading to frequent famines and debt traps.

The session closed with a reflection on the importance of viewing colonial history through an Indian lens—acknowledging not only the impact of imperial exploitation but also the resilience and resistance of the Indian people.

Convenor: Mr. J. J. Ahilan Joe Woutres