

## Queen not responsible for England's past imperialist excesses?



### **N. Mani**

The recent World Bank report on the world inequalities has warned of dire consequences if the growing inequalities in the world are not curbed. The British royal family was the starting point of all inequalities plaguing the world. The basis of the total capital wealth concentrated in the western countries was trading in humans as commodities. Slave trade, colonization, looting of natural resources, genocide, military domination and division of labour were the factors behind the solid manufacturing sector in today's European capitalist countries.

### **Royal family and slaves**

Slave trade and investments made in the sector have led to the segregation of the world into developed capitalist countries and the developing Third World. Back in 1660s it was slave trade which was the main occupation of the British royal family that carried on the trading in the name of The Company of Royal

Adventurers of England. Later, the name of the company was changed to the Royal African Company in 1672.

It is noteworthy that today's 'liberal trade' proclamations have originated from the clarion calls of the British traders who launched agitations back in the day against the British royal family. In the olden days, the Blacks were exported as slaves to the estates in American and Caribbean countries. Consequently, Columbus, Vasco da Gama and McClen went on expeditions and discovered new countries - America, Africa, Australia and India. This led to the emergence of the Industrial Revolution. The slave trade that flourished in the 16th and 17th centuries obliterated the African societies and aborigines of the Americas, paving the way for prosperous estate industries. Sugar, tobacco, coffee, coco and cotton estates flourished on lakhs of acres. The world's first big markets for these products emerged.

England, France, Netherlands, Spain and Portugal were engaged in slave trade. But the origin of the trade was the British royal family. From the early 18th century onwards, laws abolishing slavery and slave trade were gradually implemented in several European countries.

As a result, the slaves refused to obey their masters and work. As an alternative, labourers from colony countries such as India were lured and brought in to work as slaves. The British royal family had a big role in this matter. Eighty per cent of the people living in the islands colonized by England were slaves.

### **Historical blunder**

The slavery abolition law was enacted in England in 1833. But the slaves released from the bonded labour then were not given any compensation. But about 4,000 owners of slaves were granted 20 million sterling pounds by way of compensation – an amount that was five percent of the total national income of England then.

Today out of England's total wealth, the royal family's share stands at 28 billion pounds (one billion = 100 crore; 1 pound = Rs.91). The royal monarchy's astronomical properties attract no taxes. In the past 300 years, all atrocities perpetrated by the British imperialism – wars, genocides, slave trade, looting of natural resources and usurpation of national income – were done in the name of the British royal family. Particularly, after the Industrial Revolution, it was ordered that “not even a single nail should be brought from the colony countries; instead, from there raw materials should be brought to England.” Thus, the British colony countries were converted into markets for the British products, enriching the British exchequer.

It was also ordered that the colony countries' commodity transactions be taxed and routed through England. Even the unconnected commodities were heavily taxed. In all this the British royal family had a big hand. Now the colony era is a thing of the past. The 70-year rule of Queen Elizabeth-II, who recently passed away, had nothing to do with all imperialist atrocities perpetrated under the past dispensation. But the Queen lived in the world of republics and democracies. So, she should have publicly issued a statement regretting England's past deeds of cruel imperialism. But she did not. In the past 70 years of her rule, had she ever openly regretted and apologized for the past slave trade and genocides?

### **Queen has no responsibility?**

The argument posing the question what she could do for the past misdeeds of her country is untenable and wrong. As she led the continuation of a long traditional monarchy, she too had a moral responsibility on this count.

Kenya, which had been a British colony since 1920, got its freedom only in 1963. The imperialist British crushed with an iron hand the Kenyan uprising known as 'Mau Mau' during which about one-and-half lakh people were murdered. During this

period (1952 to 1962), Queen Elizabeth - II was at the helm of affairs in England.

The colony era was long, diabolical and macabre. But the consequences and impact of the past era have now taken on cruel forms more diabolical than the bad era itself.

But in decades putting behind them all these nightmarish memories, the people all over the world, the remaining monarchs and representatives of republics made a beeline for the venue of the Queen's mortal remains and paid tributes, bidding a farewell to the royal personage.

Seeing the mournfully deep visuals, one cannot help but remember the nagging historical fact that she hailed from a big royal family that perpetrated lots of atrocities including slave trade on humanity.

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