



## A Biggest Contributions And Perspective View Of British To India.

**Imran Hussain.\***

\*Assist. Prof. (Part-time), Nabajyoti college, Kalgachia., Barpeta (Assam). India.

**\*Corresponding Author:**

\*Assist. Prof. (Part-time), Nabajyoti college, Kalgachia., Barpeta (Assam). India

### **Abstract:**

The paper seeks to analyze the British Rule in India with the various reforms carried out by them. This paper is based on a qualitative study of the influence of the British Colonial government on the construction and development of British India. The period of British rule on the Indian subcontinent between 1757 and 1947, for around 200 years of British occupation. The system of governance was instituted in 1858 when the rule of the East India Company was transferred to the Crown in the person of Queen Victoria.

The British India in many terms and its policies rule centralised for the benefit of its own country but some of its policies had positive impact on India. The positive contributions made by the British policies in various sectors. With the advent of British rule in India, there had come several changes in the socio-economic and political spheres to the Indian society. Amid social issues like Sati, Child Marriages, Infanticides; ideas like Liberty, Equality, Freedom, and Human Rights were brought by the British. To improve the condition of women in society, various legal measures were introduced. British showed keenness in introducing the English language in Indian society. The British Parliament issued the Charter Act of 1813 by which a sum of Rupees One lakh was sanctioned for promoting western sciences in India. The British introduce new job opportunities that were especially beneficial to the members of the lower caste. With these opportunities, there was a better chance of upward social mobility for them. Rise of the modern middle class in India: British rule led to the rise of an influential middle-class who would become pioneers of Indian industrialization in the post-independent era.

**Keyword:** British, Contributions, development, Education, Economic exploitation, drain of wealth.

### **Introduction:**

The period of British rule on the Indian subcontinent between 1757 and 1947, for around 200 years of British occupation. The system of governance was instituted in 1858 when the rule of the East India Company was transferred to the Crown in the person of Queen Victoria. The British rule in India for about 200 years left behind it some permanent imprint in the socio-economic, political and cultural life of Indians. Whatever developments political, administrative economic, social or intellectual-India witnessed during two centuries of British rule here were not planned by the colonial rulers out of any philanthropic mission for the

welfare of Indians but were merely outcomes of the imperial rulers' larger aim of keeping their hold over India and for promoting the political, economic or material interests of their own country. Scholars expressed divergent views about the legacy of the British Rule to India which was started in 19th century and is still continuing.

### **OBJECTIVES:**

The main objective of my studies are as follows:

1. To highlight the Education system of the British to India.
2. To highlight the British impact on Indian society and culture.

3. To highlight the economic impact during the British rule.
4. Identify the perspective view of British to India.

The British scholars and the Indian scholars hold different views relating to the contribution and legacy of the English to India. The English scholars like Alfred Loyal, J.F. Stephen, and W.W. Hunter opined that the modernization of India, growth of nationalism, efficient administration, modern education, Law and order was the Legacy of the English to the Indians. They even showered lavish praise on the British for converting India into a civilized nation. They did not pay any head to the economic exploitation of the British.

But the Indian Scholars like Dadabhai Nauroji, R.C. Dutta and many others do not accept the views of the British Scholars. They evaluated the Legacy of the British from the nationalistic point of view. They criticized the English as they disturbed the economic life of India. They destroyed the flourishing handicraft, trade and commerce. They put obstacles in the way of modernization by exploiting the rich economic resources of the country. They also spread the feeling of communalism among the Hindus and Muslims which ultimately led to the partition of India.

In fact, without the British rule, the modernization would have been impossible. So the contribution of the British towards the modernization of the country cannot be ignored. The Indian scholars do not accept this theory only because of the economic policy of British, their encouragement to the feeling of communalism and regionalism among the people. So we shall have to pick out some reliable solid facts to trace out the truth. No doubt, India achieved her political unification under the British rule. Prior to the rule of the British, India was divided into a number of states and there was no unity among the rulers of different states. The rulers always fight against one another in order to establish their power. They lacked political

unity which was the chief reason of their defeat against the British.

#### **Administration:**

The British had introduced a uniform system of administration throughout the country. Furthermore, introduction of the railways, telegraphs and unified postal system promoted mutual contact among the people. Undoubtedly, the British Liberated India from the medieval traditions and laid the foundations of modern administrative system in the country. Credit goes to the British Government for the establishment of popular institutions. The Legislative Council was set up in 1853 and later enlarged in 1861 to induct some nominated members. With the Morley Minto reforms the provincial legislative councils began to reflect popular opinion. The principle of direct election for democracy was introduced in the Montague Chelmsford Act, The Government of India Act of 1935 made Provinces autonomous. Besides this, the local-self Government of Lord Ripon provided training for democratic and self governing institutions in higher level.

#### **Education:**

Initially, the East India Company did not think that it was its duty to impart education to Indians. It allowed the old system of education to continue. Pathshalas, which imparted a special type of education geared towards meeting the requirements of a rural society, were open to all. Sanskrit education was imparted in tols. Muslims attended Madrasas. Higher education was confined primarily to upper castes. This system of education was eventually changed by the British.

Around the beginning of the 19th century, the Company became aware of the need for introducing Western education in India. However, Christian missionaries, who were interested in spreading Christianity through education, had already established several educational institutions which were attached to their churches.

**Charter Act of 1813:**

The Charter Act of 1813 directed the Company to spend one lakh rupees on the education of Indians. But even this meagre amount could not be utilised because of a raging debate over the medium of instruction. Orientalists advocated the traditional Indian learning through the medium of the classical languages of Sanskrit and Persian. The Anglicists, on the other hand, argued that Western education should be imparted through the medium of English.

Thomas Macaulay, the first law member in the Governor General's Council, promoted the English language as a tool for educating the people in Western thought and ideals (Macaulay's Minute of 1835). William Bentinck supported Macaulay's views. In 1835, the government passed an Act declaring that educational funds would be utilised for imparting Western education through the medium of English.

In 1844, English became the official language and it was declared that people having knowledge of English would be preferred for public employment. This helped the spread of English education in India. In 1854, Charles Wood, the President of the Company's Board of Control, worked out a plan for educational reorganisation. Through the Wood's Despatch the Government declared its intention of "creating a properly articulated system of education from the primary school to the university". In accordance with the Wood's Despatch universities were established in Calcutta, Bombay and Madras (1857). In 1858 Charles Wood Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, the famous Bengali writer became one of the first two graduates of Calcutta University.

The Government's educational policies educated a limited number of people. English education was promoted in keeping with Macaulay's Minute though, eventually, vernacular education and mass education were both given importance. The traditional Pathshalas withered away as a new system of elementary education was put in its place. However, the emphasis was on higher

education. English education, too, continued to flourish. Western education influenced Indian society in a way that the British could never have imagined. Theories of philosophers like John Locke, Jeremy Bentham, Adam Smith and Voltaire instilled in the Indian mind notions of freedom, liberty, equality and democracy. As a result of the exposure to such ideas, Indians began to recognise the need for change.

The imposition of English in the education system was a blessing in disguise. Indians from diverse regions speaking different languages could now communicate with each other through the medium of English. English thus united the educated Indians and brought about a feeling of oneness among them. A spirit of nationalism gradually emerged.

**Rise of Middle Class and free Press:**

The Western Education introduced by Britishers led to the formation of a new, learned middle class in India. The Middle class gave India its greatest leaders like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Dadabhai Naroji, Gopal Krishna Gokhale, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Subhash Chandra Bose and Jawahar Lal Nehru. They worked to eliminate social evils in the country, establishing better economic and political systems and providing citizens of India the rights that they deserved. The rise of the press in India also came from this Middle class.

Despite various restrictions by colonial rulers like the Vernacular press Act, 1878, India Press act 1910, the native press grew and played a crucial role in generating awareness among the masses about British policies and their impact. The first newspaper in India was started by James Augustus Hickey in 1780, named 'The Bengal Gazette' or Calcutta General Adviser.

**Construction of ancient Indian culture:**

In order to rule India effectively, an understanding of her past traditions and culture was required. Sanskrit was promoted and several educational institutions were set up for that purpose. Many European scholars

and government employees became increasingly interested in Indian languages. William Jones founded the Asiatic Society. Jones himself was a great scholar of Sanskrit. He translated some ancient Indian works like the Manu Smriti. Many of Jones' scholarly articles on Sanskrit and Indian past were published in the Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal.

Charles Wilkins translated the Bhagavad Gita into English. Max Mueller translated the Rig Veda. The Archaeological Survey of India was set up due to the efforts of Alexander Cunningham and John Marshall. James Prinsep deciphered the Ashokan inscriptions which were written in Brahmi. India's rich and glorious history, as revealed by Western scholars, helped Indians to regain their lost pride and confidence and contributed to the development of nationalism.

***Social reforms:***

The demand for social and religious reform that manifested itself in the early decades of the 19th century partly arose as a response to Western education and culture. India's contact with the West made educated Indians realise that socio-religious reform was a prerequisite for the all-round development of the country. Educated Indians like Raja Rammohan Roy worked systematically to eradicate social evils. A period of social reforms began in India during the time of Governor General Lord William Bentinck (1828-35) who was helped by Rammohan Roy. In 1829, Sati or the practice of burning a widow with her dead husband was made illegal or punishable by law. Female infanticide was banned. However, even today, infanticide is practised in backward areas in India.

Slavery was declared illegal. With Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar's assistance, the Widow Remarriage Act was passed by Lord Dalhousie in 1856. Vidyasagar also campaigned against child marriage and polygamy. The cruel custom of offering little children as sacrifice to please God, practised by certain tribes, was banned by Governor General Lord Hardinge. It is important to note that since the reform movement started in

Bengal, its impact was first felt here. It took time to spread it all over India.

***Transport and communication:***

The means of transport in India were backward up to the middle of the 19th century,. Goods were transported by road mainly by bullock-carts, mules and camels. Riverine transport by boats was also prevalent. Due to poor communication and slow transport the volume of trade was restricted. The British rulers soon realised that a cheaper, faster and more efficient system of transport was necessary if British manufactured goods were to flow into India on a large scale and her raw materials were to be secured for British industries.

They introduced steamships on the rivers and set about improving roads. Work on the Grand Trunk Road from Calcutta to Delhi was started in 1839 and completed in the 1850s. Important commercial centres and areas rich in raw materials were connected by a network of roads and canals. But the most dramatic improvement in transport came with the introduction of the railways. A railway system had rapidly developed in England during the 1830s and 1840s. Pressure soon mounted for its introduction in India. British manufacturers hoped to open up the vast and hitherto untapped market in the hinterlands for their finished goods and to facilitate the import of Indian raw materials to feed their ever hungry machines.

British bankers and investors also looked upon the development of the railways in India as a channel for the safe investment of their surplus capital. British steel manufacturers regarded it as an outlet for their products like rails, engines, wagons etc. The first railway line from Bombay to Thana was opened to traffic in 1853. Lord Dalhousie, in particular, stressed the importance of railways for trade and for the maintenance of law and order. The railways would enable the government to administer the country more effectively. The railways would also enable the government to mobilize military troops. In 1853, Lord Dalhousie outlined an extensive programme of railway development. The interiors were to

be linked with big ports and the ports were to be connected. By the end of 1869, over 4000 miles of railway track had been laid.

### ***The telegraph and postal systems:***

The introduction of the railways, telegraph and postal system linked different parts of India and promoted an exchange of ideas among the people, especially among her leaders. The first telegraph line from Calcutta to Agra was opened in 1853. The Post and Telegraph Department was also established in the same year. A half-anna postage stamp would carry a letter from one part of the country to another.

The improvement in communications eventually helped to foster a sense of unity among Indians. The concept of the country as a whole now took precedence over regional and provincial isolationism. Books, journals and newspapers circulated widely and were now easily available to educated Indians all over the country.

### ***Land Revenue Policy and Land Settlements:***

Since ancient times, the main source of livelihood for the people were agriculture. Hence, land tax had formed a principal source of revenue for all the emperors all over the world. In the 18th century, the main occupation of the Indian people were agriculture. During British rule, revenue from land kept on increasing, and the reasons for this were many. Earlier the British had come to trade with India. Gradually they wanted to conquer the vast territory of India for which they needed a lot of money. They also needed money for trade, projects of the company as well as for the cost of running the administration. The British carried out a number of land revenue experiments which caused hardship to cultivators. They extracted taxes from the farmers to finance their policies and war efforts. Direct and indirect means were carried out to bring about this collection of revenue for the British. This affected the lives of the people who could not meet their daily needs because they had to provide the landowners and the collectors their share in the produce. Local

administration failed to provide relief and natural justice to the rural poor.

Lord Cornwallis introduced the Permanent Settlement in Bengal and Bihar in 1793. It made the landlord or zamindar deposit a fixed amount of money in the state treasury. In return they were recognised as hereditary owners of land. This made the zamindar the owner of the land. The amount of revenue to be paid to the Company was fixed for a period of time which made the British financially secured. Now they knew in advance as to how much revenue was coming in from the State. The zamindar also knew how much revenue was to be paid. So to get surplus revenue for themselves they asked the peasants to increase production. But, if the zamindar failed to pay the fixed revenue on time his land was sold off to another zamindar. The British stood to benefit from this settlement as the new class of zamindars that emerged became their political allies. They supported the British in times of need and acted as a buffer between them and the peasants. This class, in fact, supported the British against the freedom movement.

In 1822, the British introduced the Mahalwari Settlement in the North Western Provinces, Punjab, the Ganga Valley and parts of Central India. Here the basis of assessment was the product of a mahal or estate, which may be a village or a group of villages. Here all the proprietors of mahal were jointly responsible for paying the sum of revenue assessed by the government. Unfortunately it brought no benefit to the peasants as the British demands were very high.

The Ryotwari Settlement was introduced in the beginning of the 19th century in many parts of Bombay and Madras Presidencies. Here the land revenue was imposed directly on the ryots, the individual cultivators, who actually worked on the land. The peasant was recognized as the owner of the land as long as he was able to pay the revenue but the exploitation continued with the high revenue demands.

### ***Infrastructure development:***

During the regime of British government the India communication and transport facility was developed. The government established India's first railway's service in the year of 1853-54 in the region of Bombay and Calcutta by the two railways companies i.e. Great Indian Peninsula Railway (GIPR) and East Indian Railway (EIR). After 5 years in the year of 1859, the first passenger railway line opened in North India between Allahabad and Kanpur

### ***Monuments:***

Monuments, Legal Tenders, Heritage Site: The government had also introduced the legal tender as an official medium of exchange at the time trading. Also they had built many heritage sites and monuments among them Victoria Memorial Hall in Kolkata, Victoria Terminus (now termed as Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus), The Gateway Of India, Viceroy's House (now called as Rashtrapati Bhavan), Asiatic Society of India in order to preserve the Indian monuments, literary script and many more.

### ***Power:***

Electricity generation in colonial India saw significant private-public coexistence and cooperation. Electricity was first introduced in 1897 by a small firm in the Darjeeling Municipality utilizing a mountain stream. Two other large hydroelectric projects came up before World War I: the Siva samudram on the Cauvery, erected by the Mysore government, and the Khopoli plant of Tata Electric Power. In the interwar period a large number of hydroelectric and thermal power units were started, many of these in the territories of the princely states. In 1947 the installed capacity stood at 7 million kilowatts.

### ***Socio-religious movements:***

The Indian Renaissance and several socio-religious movements of 19th century were the outcome of the reactions against the British rule and their atrocities. Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Dayananda Saraswati, Swami Rama Krishna Paramahansa, Swami Vivekananda worked a lot for the progress of Hindu religion, culture and society. Similarly, the

Aligarh movement started by Sir Saiyad Ahmand Khan worked for the good of the Muslims and their progress. All these movements paved the way for the modernisation of India. Many social evils were eradicated because of these movements. European scholars like Max Muller William Jones, James prince and Indian scholars like R.G. Bhandarkar, Haraprasad Shastri, Rajendra Lal Mitra made the Indians conscious about the rich cultural heritage of India and their efforts injected new life and vigour into the benumbed limbs of the Indians thus their efforts also led the nation towards modernisation.

### ***Perspective view***

The impact of British rule was not uniform, and it depended greatly on the nature of institutional arrangements that the British fostered in different areas. Though British rule established various institutions and developed infrastructure, it was mainly for their economic advantage. And with the rise in Indian Nationalism, this faultline in British rule was recognised and protests against the rule began. While the British took a lot from India materially, it left India with a functioning democracy and great leaders who could guide India to a new future.

Dadabhai Naroji, in his book *The Benefits of British Rule*, 1871 wrote: To sum up the whole, the British rule has been: morally, a great blessing; politically, peace and order on one hand, blunders on the other; materially, impoverishment, relieved as far as the railway and other loans go. The natives call the British system "Sakar ki Churi," the knife of sugar. That is to say, there is no oppression, it is all smooth and sweet, but it is the knife, notwithstanding. I mention this that you should know these feelings. Our great misfortune is that you do not know our wants. When you will know our real wishes, I have not the least doubt that you would do justice. The genius and spirit of the British people is fair play and justice. When Britain took over, they forced the governments to import goods from the British Isles rather than create their own products. This led to the local cloth, metal and carpentry industries to fall into

disarray. It made India a virtual hostage of Britains economic machinations which meant breaking away from it would destroy India's economy.

***British mismanagement led to famines:***

The British rule placed more emphasis on the cultivation of cash crops rather than growing crops that would feed India's huge population. They imported food from other parts of the empire to feed its citizens. This policy, combined with the unequal distribution of food, led to 24 famines killing millions between 1850 and 1899 alone. The first and if not the worst of this lot was the Bengal Famine of 1770.

***The Divide and Rule Policy:***

The British realised that they could never rule a vast territory like India without breaking up strong kingdoms into small easily conquerable segments. The British Empire also made it a policy to pay religious leaders to speak out against each other, slowly poisoning relations between different faiths. The hostile relationship between India and Pakistan can be attributed as a direct result of this policy.

***Britain plundered the Indian Economy:***

Due in no small part to the unethical business practices of the East India Company it can be estimated that trillions were siphoned off by Britain. Such practices even destroyed the Indian industries and ensured that money flowing through the Indian economy ended up in the hands of London.

***Drain of Wealth:***

The greatest impact of British policies was the drain of wealth from India. The Indian economy, no doubt, was primarily a rural economy, but Indian artisans produced goods in bulk to meet the demands of Indian and European buyers. Several towns had flourished as centres of trade. There had been a great demand for muslin from Bengal and silk from Bengal and Benaras. British merchants bought these Indian products in large quantities. But, at the beginning of the 18th century, Britain and other European countries passed laws prohibiting the entry of cotton and silk textiles from India although

there was a demand for it. After the advent of the Industrial Revolution, India was forced to produce cotton, indigo and other products which British industries required.

Indian markets were flooded with cheap, machine-made textiles manufactured in England. Indian hand-made textiles could not compete with the cheap machine-made textiles. India was transformed into a supplier of raw materials and a market for British manufactured goods. While British goods were exempted from duties while entering Indian markets, Indian goods entering England were burdened with heavy customs duties. Thus, the self-sufficient economy of India collapsed under the impact of British colonial policies. With the decline of the cotton industry, the towns that had flourished as centres of trade or industry also declined.

***Economic exploitation towards India:***

However, the people of India suffered a great loss in economic field. The economic policies adopted by the British transformed India's economy into a colonial economy whose nature and structure were determined by the needs of the British economy. They totally disrupted the basic economic pattern of India, i.e. self sufficient village economy. The economic policy of the British was subservient to their mother land, England. They followed the policy of economic exploitation towards India. With the outbreak of Industrial Revolution in England, the economic exploitation reached its climax. Different kinds of raw materials were supplied from India to England. Ultimately India became a supplier of raw materials to England and the buyer of manufactured goods of England. It adversely affected the trade and commerce of the country.

The condition of the peasants became miserable. The ruin of rural artisan industries proceeded more rapidly once the railways were built. As D.H. Buchanan writes, "The armour of the isolated self sufficient village was pierced by the steel rail, and its life blood ebbed away." Agriculture, trade, and industry of India were ruined badly and India became a poor country as it had never been.

Moreover, the British rule created the feeling of communalism, regionalism among the people of India, which led to the partition of the country. Partition of India is one of the worst results of the policy of the English. There is still tug of war between India and Pakistan for supremacy.

Thus, the British rule in India proved both beneficial and harmful in different spheres. In-fact whatever harm the British had done to India was only to safeguard their own interest and whatever advantage the Indians received from the British rule was the outcome of the efforts made by the leaders of national movement.

**Conclusion**

On the surface, it may seem that the British rule in India that transformed its society for the better. But upon closer examination, these benefits were purely coincidental, if not self-serving. Economic improvements were only enacted in order to better plunder the Indian economy. Even societal changes would have come out on their own without the need for British intervention. In the end, the negative effects of British Imperialism far outweigh the benefits.

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