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## INDIA'S DEVELOPMENT *Since* INDEPENDENCE



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# INDIA'S UNSUNG HEROES

History is about facts, narratives, story-telling, inferring causality and drawing correlations, but never devoid of the **"perspective"** from which events have been put into words intended to connect our past with our present. Whenever a historian attempts to achieve the same, it struggles to bring justice to many unsung heroes from the past. **"Heroes"** can be considered as a **"gender-neutral"** noun while discussing the unsaid contributions made by numerous personalities from the past.

It takes a while when people become aware and assertive enough to peek into the annals of history to explore unsung stories and scrutinise mainstream narratives. This year we are entering into 75<sup>th</sup> year of our independence and it is long enough to add a new perspective to the manner how we know our past and bring the unsung heroes to light.

## Who are those Heroes?

- The moment this question arises, there emerges a pool contributor from thousands of unsung heroes across India, including those from the farmers, labourers, students, teachers, poets, Dalits, tribals and sometimes affluents too, with a special mention of women.
- From Northern and North-eastern mountains to its Coastal Plains, from Thar deserts to Indo-Gangetic alluvial plains, one can find folk songs, shrines, folklore in praise of these heroes which has kept them alive in memories, who are waiting for their turn to break into mainstream history, after being overlooked for centuries.

## Reasons for Unsung Heroes going Unnoticed:

- Narratives about individuals have largely glorified the Indian freedom movement and the historiography is inundated with life and times of great leaders. This kind of history writing privileges a few as the shaper of history and portrays a handful of personalities as representative of larger nationalistic aspirations.
- This approach undermines the aspirations and struggles of dispersed masses who were, equally contributing to the common cause of gaining independence but with different ideas or aspirations than the one that endorsed the homogenous idea of independence that was constructed.
- During the 1970s, the **"Subaltern School of History"** in the Indian context came into existence. They have attempted to rewrite the history of freedom struggle through the lens of marginalised and tried to bring out smaller stories, regional struggles to mainstream narratives.

- **Subalternity:** It emerges in relation to subordinate social groups and individuals whose historical activity is repressed, neglected, misinterpreted or 'at the margins' of hegemonic histories, discourses and social formations. In particular, subalternity represents the common theme circulating among interconnected intellectual endeavours that have offered different interpretations of the same issue.
- The term **subaltern** designates and identifies the colonial populations who are socially, politically and geographically excluded from the hierarchy of power of an imperial colony and the metropolitan homeland of an empire.

- During the 1980s, a subaltern studies project was developed, aiming to rewrite Indian history between colonialism and decolonisation from the perspective of rural subaltern masses. It criticises elitist approaches to the history of India because it has downplayed the role that subaltern groups had played in the context of India freedom struggle and the construction of the Indian nation.

## Role of Marginalised Communities in Freedom Movement:

- They get mentioned from the 1857 uprising, which is synonymous with the "First War of Independence" who were from the Balmiki Community (they have historically faced exclusion and oppression in society, and are frequently affected by anti-scheduled caste violence and repression by members of other castes).
- To name a few, Banke Beer(Jatav), Matadin Bhangji and many of these Dalit icons were women which including **Jhalkari Bai** from koree community, was not only a member of the women's army organised by Rani Lakshmi Bai but was a chief strategist and her close ally. As she closely resembled the queen, she helped the queen of Jhansi to escape with her son and foxed the British soldiers by pretending to be queen. **Uda Devi** is another such personality from the 1857 revolt, from the women's battalion of Begum Hazrat Mahal, queen of then Avadh who gave a valiant fight against the British soldiers in the battle of Sikandar Bagh.
- During the various stages of the Gandhian movement, such as the Khilafat Movement (1919), Non-Cooperation Movement (1920), Civil Disobedience Movement (1930), we can take notice of many Dalit icons like Baba Saheb Ambedkar, Palwankar Baloo of Maharashtra, Babu Masuria Deen of Uttar Pradesh, Karu Paswan, Babu Jagjivan Ram, Sukhari Paswan, Nandan Paswan and Yashoda Devi. These are heroes of the national movement but are on the periphery of freedom struggle and must be moved to the centre, only then we can become a more inclusive democracy.

## Role of Students in Freedom Movement:

- Student participation can be traced back to 1903, with the establishment of the **Abhinav Bharat Society**, which is also known as '**Young India**'. The main aim behind the establishment of this society was to initiate a platform for student to raise their voice against the corrupt British Indian government. **Vinayak Damodar Savarkar** who was the founder of 'Young India' drew the idea of Abhinav Bharat Society from Garibaldi's 'Young Italy', which was an organization established to fight against the corrupt government in Italy and their main aim was to unification of Italy.

## During Swadeshi Movement:

- The Swadeshi movement was to avoid British Raj in all aspects of society whether it is in education or administration or trade or politics. This ideology attracted thousands of young generation people from all over India. Students came out in huge numbers for the first time in the Indian freedom struggle. Another important issue of the Swadeshi Movement was National Education.
- Manjappa was a prominent educationist and a national leader who criticised national leaders whenever the occasion demanded. But he was not just a critic of national leaders, he also tried to implement those views of these leaders which appealed to him. For instance, he was very much influenced by the Swadeshi movement of Tilak, particularly his four-fold program: Swadeshi, boycott, Swaraj and National Education. That is why he exhorted his people to implement the ideas of Tilak over his as he liked Tilak's views on national education. That is why Manjappa said, "education which is not conducive to

self-reliance and comfortable living among the people, does not deserve to be called by that name. He believed that we should not remain content with the existing system of education which makes us fit only for subordination and servitude. Therefore, he laid stress upon technical and religious education. By technical education, he meant that education should provide a sense of self-security.

- Closely analysing his idea about education blows one's mind, that how ahead was he from his time. Presently, we talk about the India-centric education system, decolonised education that can help us to foster entrepreneurship among youth, with digital advancement India is becoming a centre of evolution and New Education Policy 2020 makes a mention of the National Educational Technology Forum (NETF), to encourage the free exchange of ideas on the use of technology. It's important to have a broader outlook while imparting education, but at the same time, it is equally important to have an India-centric education policy, which can reflect the history and spiritual diversity of India.

### During Civil Disobedience:

- It had a special appeal to the students of schools and colleges. Soon after the summer vacation of 1930, the educational institutions became the strongholds of youth agitation. The King Edward Memorial College at Amravati was closed indefinitely. The students in the hostel were asked to sign a pledge that they would not participate in the movement. They refused to do so. At Hoshangabad, students of the Government High School hoisted the national flag on the school building. Even in the second phase of the Civil Disobedience Movement students, young boys took an active part in it. In Raipur, Balbhadra Azad formed the **Vanar Sena**. The young members proudly called themselves soldiers. They led Prabhat Pheris and took out processions. They also worked as messengers, distributed literature and pasted posters on walls.
- For the first time in India in 1936, the **All-India Students Federation** was established under the guidance Indian National Congress. A huge number of students from each corner of the nation showed the growth of student's activities in the country and the success of the Indian National Congress in the objective of bringing students into the freedom struggle. It was a milestone for Indian National Congress (INC) to gain such huge support from students. This helped Indian National Congress a lot to carry on their freedom struggle and demonstration against the British in various ways.

### During Quit India Movement:

- In 1942, in the Bombay session of INC, Gandhi gave the clarion call of '**Do or Die**' in the backdrop of the 'Quit India Movement' and attracted a huge number of students from different parts of the country. Irrespective of any organization in this movement students directly joined the movement and supported Gandhi. Schools and Colleges were closed and students organized mass demonstrations with patriotic zeal. As a result of these activities, numerous students suffered massively in terms of **loss in their educational careers**. The zeal and enthusiasm shown by the students and the industrial workers were unparalleled in the chronicles of our country.
- It is important to mention the remarkable role of students in Assam during the Quit India movement. **Golok Saikia**, a fifteen-year student of Sootea High school hoisted the Congress flag in the compound of Sootea police station at 5 A.M. despite the presence of armed police. It is worth mentioning that a group of students and youths also participated in the Quit-India movement following the path of violence and revolution were known as '**Agusteers**'. Students played a very effective and vital role in the overall freedom struggle of India and without their contribution it would very difficult to get independence from the British.

### Role of Women in Freedom Movement:

- We rarely talk about the women leading the march during the freedom struggle. These legendary women and their roles must be brought to focus. The women had led the charge and lit the flame of protest and rebellion throughout the country. They have dedicated and even laid down their lives for the cause of the motherland. If we go through Indian history, we find that the Indian culture was the one that celebrated women and there was no place for gender discrimination. This is evident from the fact that women had the courage and physical strength to fight like soldiers on the battlefield. Personalities

like Gulab Kaur, who had abandoned her dreams of living abroad to mobilise Indians against the British Raj, Padmaja Naidu, the daughter of Sarojini Naidu and a freedom fighter in her own right, who later became Governor of West Bengal.

- We as a nation are still striving to at par treatment and equal access to opportunity in every sphere of life. The Supreme court in its recent judgement has paved the path for women into National Defence Academy (NDA). Armed forces which are primarily a male-dominated establishment had limited scope for women in occupational and bureaucratic structures. But such rulings, in a way, contemplates and acknowledges the combative spirit that women had shown during the freedom movement and even before that.

## Role of Tribal communities in Freedom Struggle:

- The fight against the British-imposed system by the Paharia, Chuar, Kol, Bhil, Ho, Munda, Santhal, Khond, Koya, Koli, Ramosi, Kuki, Khasi, Singpho, among other movements was led by people from the tribal community with indomitable spirit, who encouraged the masses to revolt.
- The **Mangarh hill massacre**, which is sometimes also known as the "**Jallianwala Bagh massacre of the Vagad region**" was led by Bhil social reformer and spiritual leader, **Govind Guru**. He united the community, spread awareness about their identity, established schools, and addressed the spiritual hunger of the masses. He initiated the **Bhagat Sampradaya (sect)** in 1908 to socially and morally uplift the Bhil community. On November 17, 1913, on the hillock at Mangarh, a congregation was called by Govind Guru. British forces surrounded the gathering from three sides and fired indiscriminately. The sacrifice of the **Bhils** became a beacon of strength for others, inspiring them to achieve freedom.
- We have been unfair in recognising the role of tribal people in every sphere of the freedom movement. They had given mighty blows to the British and had challenged the legitimacy of action that led to the destruction of natural resources, which directly affected the economic and social framework of tribal communities.

### There is much to learn from tribal communities and bring those learning to reality:

- Preserving indigenous art
- Preserving culture, environment and forests
- They have a better sex ratio (990) than the national average (940)
- Relatively less dowry in the tribal community
- Sense of togetherness ensures that the girl child is welcomed

- In the present scenario when our prime minister has committed, that India will achieve **net-zero emission by 2070**, it is worth appreciating the integrity of the Tribal Community in preserving the environment.
- India has been glorified by the luminaries like Marry Kom, Bhaichung Bhutia, Deepika Kumari and Lalremsiami from the sports fraternity. The decision of celebrating the birth anniversary of Birsa Munda as '**Janjatiya Gaurav Divas**' is a significant milestone in recognising the contribution of the tribal fraternity. Though there are laid down provisions for the upliftment of tribal society in the fifth and sixth schedules a lot is need to be done.

## Role of Poets in Freedom Movement:

- Most poets are unsung heroes of the freedom struggle as they work behind the scenes inspiring people through their writings. Remarkable personalities like Rabindranath Tagore (penned "**Jana Gana Mana**"), Shyamlal Gupta (penned **Jhanda Uncha Rahe Humara**), Hasrat Mohani (penned slogan "**Inquilab Zindabad**"), Mahadevi Verma, Sarojini Naidu, and Ramdhari Singh Dinkar needs to be celebrated for their behind scene work that inspired many.

**Their contribution can be summarised briefly as follows:**

- **Evoking emotions:** It helped to increase the sensitivity of elites and others towards the suffering of the common man.
  - **Raising nationalist sentiments:** Their writings portraying atrocities of British soldiers created a nationalist discourse.
  - **Spread of Patriotic feelings:** It highlighted the patriotic acts and sacrifices through words. A National song, *Bande Mataram*, was first published as a poem in this novel as the rallying cry of the characters who used it to give themselves the courage and to urge people to fight against the British.
  - **Spreading awareness:** It provoked and encouraged Indians to fight for the country.
  - **Overcoming linguistic barriers:** As the writing was in local languages, it helped people to overcome linguistic differences across the country and take part in India's freedom struggle.
- It must be noted that poets across India used different languages to convey the idea of freedom. The use of languages like Urdu, Bangla, Hindi, Assamese, Punjabi and English dominated the writings that instilled patriotism and amplified freedom struggle throughout. It highlights how vivid ideas in different languages engaged and influenced the masses from different geographies, caste, cultures and helped them to play a pivotal role in the Indian freedom movement. It is still relevant how the usage of different languages exemplifies the coexistence of peaceful linguistic diversity in our country and has helped in maintaining harmony among its subjects.

**Conclusion:**

- History is the "narrative of what happened", but it is not fixed, it continuously evolves. **Many times, we do not realise how a leader impacts the masses or how the masses inspired their journeys. These unsung heroes from the past are like treasures that have not been given enough attention.** We are a country of diversity but that should not be seen as synonymous with the difference. Our history is not just a picture showcasing time, that has passed. It's a living entity that is still evolving and spreading spiritual oneness. Acknowledging the unsung heroes will result in an informed and inspired new generation which will go a long way in helping them to appreciate the contribution made by them towards freedom struggle in a better way.

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# INDIA'S GAINS FROM BRITISH RULE

## The debate about British rule in India

- The rule of the British in India is possibly the most controversial and the most hotly debated aspect of the history of the British empire.
- Admirers of British rule point to the **economic developments**, the **legal and administrative system**, and the fact that India became the center of world politics.
- Critics of British rule generally point out that all of these **benefits went to a tiny British ruling class and the majority of Indians gained little**.
- Recent research by economic historians suggests that the **British Raj was not an unmitigated disaster** for India, as it was thought to be by earlier historians and economists.
- While colonial rule in India had harmful aspects, such as the low provision of public goods, it also helped galvanize Indian industry, making the country a vital part of global supply chains.
- In this article we shall focus more and identify the gains from British raj in India.



## Gains from British rule in India:

- The biggest gain from British rule was the **economic, political and social integration of India** and the **rise of Nationalism** in the country.
- British rule also **highlighted the deep rooted social evils** in the Indian subcontinent.
- The gains from British rule can be divided into Social and Cultural gains, Economic Gains, Legal and Administrative gains and lastly gains in Modern Infrastructure.

## Social and Cultural gains

- Till early 19th century, the British followed a policy of non-interference in the social and cultural life of the Indians.



- But the influence of British rule in economy and polity did have an impact on the social fabric of India in fields like - Education, Status of Women, and various social practices.

### ■ Education:

- ▶ Initially, the East India Company did not think that it was its duty to impart education to Indians..
- ▶ Around the beginning of the 19th century, the Company became aware of the need for introducing **Western education in India**.
- ▶ The Charter Act of 1813 directed the Company to spend one lakh rupees on the education of Indians.
- ▶ Gradually, western education in the English medium was introduced and propagated throughout the country.
- ▶ Though access to Education was very limited, British education policy did create a cadre of well educated youth.
- ▶ These educated personalities later became the flag bearers of India's independence movement and nation building after independence

### ■ 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.
- ▶ In 1829, **Sati** or the practice of burning a widow with her dead husband was made illegal or punishable by law. Earlier, female infanticide was banned.
- ▶ With Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar's assistance, the **Widow Remarriage** Act was passed by Lord Dalhousie in 1856.

### ■ Rediscovery of India's past by the British:

- ▶ In order to rule India effectively, an understanding of her past traditions and culture was required.
- ▶ Many European scholars and government employees became increasingly interested in Indian languages.
- ▶ William Jones founded the **Asiatic Society** in Bengal. Jones himself was a great scholar of Sanskrit.
- ▶ The **Archaeological Survey of India** was set up due to the efforts of Alexander Cunningham and John Marshall.
- ▶ James Princep 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.

## Economic gains

### ■ Commercialization of agriculture

- ▶ Till the end of the first half of the 19th century, the Indian **village was essentially self-sufficient**.
- ▶ It had hardly any contact with the world outside except for the occasional visits of the grain or cloth merchant who carried the surplus of one village to make good the deficiency of another.
- ▶ Commercialization of agriculture in India became prominent around 1860 A.D. The **first wave** of commercial agriculture was **driven largely by Indigo and Opium**.
- ▶ However, after 1860, their importance fell and the next, major wave of commercialization came from **cotton, wheat, sugarcane, tobacco, and oilseeds**.

- ▶ **Cash transactions** became the basis of exchange and largely **replaced the barter system**, thereby disturbing the traditional self-sufficient village economy of India.
- ▶ **Development of Irrigation:** From the late nineteenth century, major new constructions were undertaken by the British, which consisted of canals taken out of perennial rivers (in Punjab, Sind, and United Provinces), and weirs constructed on major rivers in South India.
- ▶ While commercialization of agriculture had positive impact on agricultural productivity in India, it also had great negative effects - like increased frequency of famines, worsening condition of peasants and agriculture labourers etc.

### ■ Development of Modern Industry

- ▶ India had never been an industrial country in the modern sense of the term.
- ▶ A history of modern Indian large scale private industry between 1850 and 1914 is associated with the developments in mainly plantations like jute, cotton, and steel. There was also a limited development of mining, especially coal.
- ▶ The foundations of the cotton textile industry were laid also during the early 1850s. Though the **jute industry** was dominated by the foreigners, the **cotton industry** was shaped and cared for by the natives, mainly the Parsee entrepreneurs.
- ▶ Some abortive attempts were made by the East India Company in the 19th century to develop the iron **and steel industry**.
- ▶ Between 1880 and 1914 **large scale industrial output grew** at the rate of 4%-5% Per annum. — a rate of growth that is comparable to other contemporary countries of the world.
- ▶ In spite of inadequacy of domestic demand and high production costs, industries like **woollen mills, breweries, and paper making industries** made significant progress during this time.
- ▶ Although India had begun to modernise her industries, it can hardly be said that she was as yet being industrialised.

### ■ Development of new cities

- ▶ British planning for Indian cities laboured under serious internal contradictions.
- ▶ As a colonial power, Britain ruled India primarily for its own benefit; at the same time, it had to address all the usual issues of urban governance, such as control of space, provision of water, sewerage, roads, street lighting and police.
- ▶ British planning bequeathed to India enduring legacies in urban architecture, physical planning, and the administrative mechanisms of governance.
- ▶ Cities of **Bombay, Calcutta, and Madras** are an enduring evidence of the gains.

#### Excerpt from Dadabhai Naoroji's *The Benefits of British Rule, 1871*

- In the Cause of Humanity: Abolition of suttee and infanticide. Destruction of Dacoits, Thugs, Pindarees, and other such pests of Indian society. Allowing remarriage of Hindu widows, and charitable aid in times of famine. Glorious work all this, of which any nation may well be proud, and such as has not fallen to a lot of any people in the history of mankind.
- In the Cause of Civilization: Education, both male and female. Though yet only partial, an inestimable blessing as far as it has gone, and leading gradually to the destruction of superstition, and many moral and social evils. Resuscitation of India's own noble literature, modified and refined by the enlightenment of the West.
- Politically: Peace and order. Freedom of speech and liberty of the press. Higher political knowledge and aspirations. Improvement of government in the native states. Security of life and property. Freedom from oppression caused by the caprice or greed of despotic rulers, and from devastation by war. Equal justice between man and man (sometimes vitiated by partiality to Europeans). Services of highly educated administrators, who have achieved the above-mentioned results.

- Materially: Loans for railways and irrigation. Development of a few valuable products, such as indigo, tea, coffee, silk, etc. Increase in exports. Telegraphs.
- Generally: A slowly growing desire of late to treat India equitably, and as a country held in trust. Good intentions. No nation on the face of the earth has ever had the opportunity of achieving such a glorious work as this. I hope in the credit side of the account I have done no injustice, and if I have omitted any item which anyone may think of importance, I shall have the greatest pleasure in inserting it. I appreciate, and so do my countrymen, what England has done for India, and I know that it is only in British hands that her regeneration can be accomplished. Now for the debit side.

### ■ 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.

### Legal and Administrative machinery

- Britishers introduced the system of **judiciary, supreme court** and **Criminal Procedure Code** and **Indian Penal code**. Our modern judiciary is dependent on these statutes and the framework. In fact many nationalists of the independence era used to be lawyers.
- Introduced **bureaucracy** and **competitive exams** for entrance with age limits. By 1947, many Indians had entered the covenanted Indian Civil Services and the structure was retained. Even today it is the steel frame of administration.
- The **system of file, noting, drafting** and the Official Secrets Act exist today. They however focused on revenue collection and maintenance of law and order but not welfare.
- We borrowed the idea of **parliamentary democracy, legislative sovereignty** and other features from their Westminster model. But during the British period, Indian participation was limited in legislatures due to limited franchise.
- Introduction of **modern financial institutions** of **banking** and **life insurance** were largely based on foreign capital, though gradually Indian capital also made its way.
- **Census**, training and maintenance of a well-disciplined **army, income tax**, etc. are some other contributions.

### Modern infrastructure

- At independence in 1947, the most tangible legacy of British rule in India was the modern infrastructure that the regime had left behind, built to a large extent with British expertise.
- Up to the middle of the 19th century, the means of transport in India were backward. They were confined to bullock-cart, camel, and packhorse.

- The British rulers soon realized that a cheap and easy system of transport was a necessity if British manufactures were to flow into India on a large scale and her raw materials secured for British industries.
- The British rulers introduced **steamships on the rivers** and set about improving the roads.

### ■ Development of Railways:

- ▶ The first railway line running from Bombay to Thane was opened to traffic in 1853. By the end of 1869, more than 4,000 miles of railways had been built.
- ▶ The economic effects of the railways can be classified into two types.
- ▶ First, the railways had significant forward and backward linkages with other sectors of the economy.
- ▶ Second, there was a great reduction in average transportation costs measured in money and time.
- ▶ **Reduced food price fluctuation:** Railways also facilitated the integration of markets. This is evident from declining regional variability in prices of food grains.
- ▶ Recent research, on the other hand, has attributed the remarkable **reduction in the incidence of famine** after 1900 to easier interregional crop movements that the railways had made possible.
- ▶ In 1947, the Indian railways were the **single largest employer** in the organized sector, a distinction maintained today.

### ■ Roads and Inland Waterways

- ▶ Good and safe roads were scarce in pre-colonial and early colonial India mainly due to limited engineering capability in bridging the numerous rivers.
- ▶ The **East India Company restored and constructed** some major roads for military purposes
- ▶ Work on the **Grand Trunk Road** from Calcutta to Delhi began in 1839 and completed in the 1850's. Efforts were also made to link by road the major cities, ports, and markets of the country
- ▶ Even thereafter, roads were a low priority area of government investment. Road length grew at a much slower pace than the railways.

### ■ Ports

- ▶ India had a **long and rich tradition** in mercantile marine and shipbuilding.
- ▶ The advent of the Europeans in the Indian Ocean created competition for the Indians in coastal shipping.
- ▶ However, it also **stimulated the business** of some of the ancient ports like Masulipatnam or Cambay.
- ▶ The final blow to **Indian traditional enterprise** in ocean shipping came with the displacement of sailing vessels by steamships in the early to mid-nineteenth century.
- ▶ The major ports that carried the bulk of foreign trade in the colonial period were new sites where railways and modern harbors converged, for example, **Bombay, Madras, Calcutta**, Karachi, and Rangoon.

### ■ Posts and Telegraph:

- ▶ The British also introduced telegraph and improved postal service.
- ▶ The **foundations** for a government postal system were in place before 1858, but it became a widely used utility only in the late nineteenth century.
- ▶ This **expansion** was largely driven by the demand for the services of the post office.
- ▶ **Money orders:** Migration and money orders had become synonymous. In safety, cost, and wide reach, the postal money order was unprecedented in the history of internal remittance in India.
- ▶ In 1849 the East India Company had decided to construct **a telegraph system along the railway lines**.

- ▶ From then onward, the commercial uses of the telegraphs began to overwhelm strategic needs, leading to extremely rapid growth in the use of the system.

## ■ 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 **Sivasamudram** 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 **1.7 million kilowatts**.

## Conclusion

- 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.

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# THE BRITISH RAJ AND THE ROAD TO INDEPENDENCE

## Preface

India, often known as "THE GOLDEN BIRD" or "QUEEN'S NECKLACE," was one of the most important colonies of British Empire. As India was politically, socially, and economically distinct from the rest of the British empire's colonies, British policies in India differed from those in other colonies. When British settlers arrived in India in the early 17th century, they surprisingly discovered that India was economically prosperous and self-sufficient, unlike the British colonies of Australia and Canada.

Although the British came to India arguably as traders, the disintegration of the Mughal Empire and the fragmentation of politics changed the very nature of the British presence in India. The British Conquest and Treaty of Subsidiary Alliance helped the British to consolidate their authority, and by the second decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, British power in India was well established.

Indians, on the other hand, were dissatisfied with the British's exploitative policies. Initially, they protested against British policies in a disorganized manner through the Peasant, Tribal, and Civilian Movement. However, the failure of the unorganized method persuaded Indians of the effectiveness of Organized Resistance. As a result, in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, India witnessed a number of organized violent as well as non-violent movements for liberating the mother India from the clutches of colonialism. In 1947 the British withdrew from the India and British India was partitioned into two independent countries –

- India
- Pakistan

Partition, colonial hand that wrought Partition, left an indelible mark in hearts and memories across the subcontinent. Around 2 million people left their ancestral home and fled to areas of Pakistan or India. It resulted in emotional outburst with about two million killed in the most brutal ways, an estimated 1,00,000 women kidnapped and raped, and more than 15 million men, women and children displaced.

"THE ROAD THROUGH HISTORY is the theme of the document. It aims to concentrate on historical events ranging from the British conquest of India to Indian resistance and final independence from the British Empire."

## Political Structure Prior To Mid-18th Century

The mid-18<sup>th</sup> century India witnessed transformation from Centralized to Fragmented political structure. After Aurangzeb's death in 1707 AD and that of his weak successor, **Bahadur Shah**, five years later, the empire of the Great Mughals began to crumble. The devastating raid by **Nadir Shah** in 1739 prove to be last nail in coffins of Imperial Mughals.

In the 1740s the ambitious **Subadars of Bengal, Awadh, Hyderabad and Carnatic** had become to all intents and purposes, independent rulers." Besides, the Maratha, Jats and Sikhs had also set up their own states as challenger to weakened Mughal Empire.

The most important power to rise on the debris of the Mughal empire was that of the **Marathas** who occupied huge tracts of **Mughal territory by 1730**, besides holding large areas in central India and the Deccan and forcibly collecting taxes from as far as Orissa.

When **Ahmad Shah Abdali** invaded India, it was the **Marathas** and not the forces of the **Mughal emperor** who opposed him in the **third battle of Panipat in 1761**. **Nevertheless**, their defeat dealt a severe blow to their power around the time when victory over **Nawab Siraj-ud-daulla of Bengal** in the **Battle of Plassey in 1757**, had given the British their first foothold on power in India.

- **Mahadaji Scindia**, an outstanding ruler, briefly revived Maratha power in the 1770s and 1780s and was even acknowledged as the protector of the Mughal emperor.
- The British had to defeat, in a series of difficult campaigns during which they also suffered serious reverses, not only the **Marathas** but also the **rulers of Carnatic, Haidar Ali and his son Tipu Sultan**, before they could establish their power on a secure basis.
- The process of expansion, however, continued till the 1850s when, among other kingdoms, **Awadh** was annexed by **Lord Dalhousie**.

## Administrative Unity under British

India had been united under the Mauryas and the Great Mughals. However, the unity established by the British was, however, qualitatively different. This was due not only to their extremely efficient and centralized administration, but also to the development of modern infrastructure, which became the foundation of a modern state. Though modern infrastructure was built to meet colonial needs, it also contributed to Indian unity and the emergence of nationalism.

The magnitude of the differences can be easily perceived.

- **Maurya and Mughal:** Different parts of the Maurya and Mughal empires were connected by waterways and highways.
- **British:** The British established a countrywide network of railways which provided for unprecedentedly rapid communication, and the telegraph, enabling almost instantaneous transmission of messages.
  - ▶ Meant to facilitate the movement of troops and commerce, both also helped education and ideas to travel to the intellectually stagnant hinterland areas.

## The British Bequest

### What led to Revolt of 1857?

- As British power transformed to political power, its exploitative economic policies, expansionary political policy, administrative discriminatory and racist policies, social reformative policies and Military policies increasingly led to discontentment, resistance and Revolt by Indians.
- Discontent was also growing among the Indian Sepoys of the British Army over overseas service, pay and other issues.
- What proved to be the last straw was the introduction of **new Enfield rifles and its** greased cartridges of which had to be bitten off before loading.
- The word spread that its grease was made of the fat of cows and pigs the consumption of which were forbidden to Hindus and Muslims respectively by their religions.
- The result was the great uprising of the **Sepoys in 1857**, which also had considerable popular support, and which has been described as 'the most dramatic instance of traditional India's struggle against foreign rule'.
- It was the powerful jolt, which shook British power to its foundations and somehow, they saved their British Empire in India

## Establishment of the sovereign nation of India (a timeline of events)

- **1857** – India's First War of Independence, termed Sepoy Riots by the British was an attempt to unite India against the invading British.
- **1885** – The Indian National Congress (also known as the Congress Party/INC) was created and became India's major political party. The party became the Nation's leader in the Independence Movement in its struggle against the British Empire. On January 26, 1930, the INC declared the independence of India which the British did not recognize.
- **1915** – Gandhi Ji returned to India and joined the Indian National Congress.
- **1916** – Lucknow Pact was an agreement reached between the Indian National Congress and the Muslim League.
- **1919** – The tragic Jallianwala Bagh massacre took place on April 13.
- **1920** – The Non-Cooperation Movement was a significant phase of the Indian struggle for freedom.
- Protestors would refuse to buy British goods, adopt the use of local handicrafts, picket liquor shops, and try to uphold the Indian values of honor and integrity.
- **1935** – The Government of India Act and the creation of a new constitution laid the foundations for the events that would follow in the next decade and thereafter.
- **1940** – England's involvement in the Second World War weakened the British Empire.
- After shaking off the effects of the First World War this war caused the thinning of the British resources and would be significant in deciding India's future.
- **1942** – The Quit India movement called for the immediate withdrawal of the British from India and the British responded by putting most of the INC leadership in jail.
- **1947** – End of British rule and partition of sub-continent into mainly Hindu India and Muslim-majority state of Pakistan.

## British System of Education

The system of education the British established during the **governor-generalship** of **Lord William Bentinck (1828-35)** and the far-reaching consequences on Indian society, political structure, economy and Nationalism.

The purpose of the system in the words of **Thomas Babington Macaulay**, Law member in Bentinck's Council, was 'to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions we govern; a class of persons Indian in blood and colour but English in taste, in opinions, in morals and in intelligence.

However, some unintended results followed.

Exposure to the critical methods, rationalism and liberal ideas of the West triggered an **intellectual turmoil** in the minds of the young, educated class of Indians particularly Bengalis. Simultaneously, the rediscovery of India's glorious ancient history and rich civilization legacy by European orientalist like **James Princep, William Jones, Monnier Williams, Max Muller** and others, greatly boosted their self-esteem and confidence in their ability.

Two important results followed from this.

### Newspapers that created impact on Indian mind

The Indian Mirror, Bengalee, The Hindu, The Tribune, Amrita Bazar Patrika, Bande Mataram and The Mahratta, Kesari, Swadesamitran, Jugantar, Akhbar-i-am, Sandhya, Swaraj, and Ananda Bazar Patrika, Bangadarshan



## Nationalist sentiments:

The first was the emergence of one of the main prerequisites of nationalist sentiments.

**Ernest Renan** identified it when he said, 'A nation is a soul, a spiritual principle. Only two things, actually, constitute this soul, this spiritual principle.'

- One is in the past, the other is in the present.
- One is the possession in common of a rich legacy of remembrances, the other is the actual consent, the drive to live together, the will to continue to value the heritage which all hold in common.

## Intellectual ferment

The second outcome of the intellectual ferment created by the introduction of Western education was the **Bengal Renaissance** of the 19th century characterized by-

- a brilliant burst of creativity in literature, historical studies, scientific investigations, social criticism and journalism
- a quickening of intellectual life in some other parts of India

It enhanced the confidence of the Indians and encouraged them to examine the causes of the country's decline into colonial servitude as well as of the stagnation, degradation and intellectual barrenness of their ritual/superstition-plagued life.

It led to the birth of reformist movements like the **Brahmo Samaj in Bengal** and **Arya Samaj in North India**.

### Brahmo Samaj

- Established by **Raja Rammohun Roy** (the founder of modern India), the Brahmo Samaj, which based its creed on the universalist, monist, theist humanism of the Upanishads, was assimilative and inclusive. S
- Most of the outstanding personalities of the nineteenth-century Bengal Renaissance, including Rabindranath Tagore, came from its fold.

### Arya Samaj

- Unlike the Brahmo Samaj, the Arya Samaj totally rejected the West.
- Essentially a revivalist movement founded by **Swami Dayananda**, who was born as Mula Shankar, it believed in the infallibility of the Vedas and was bitterly critical of Islam.
- It was, however, socially reformist like the Brahmo\_ Samaj and opposed the caste system and stood for the emancipation of women.

### Other reformist movements

- There were a number of other reformist movements including the
  - ▶ the Prarthana Samaj (a kindred body to the Brahmo Samaj)
  - ▶ the Satya Sodhak Sanaaj, established by Jyotirao Phule in Maharashtra
  - ▶ the Singh Sabha among the Sikhs
  - ▶ the Aligarh movement among Muslims
  - ▶ the Rehnumai Mazdeyasana Sabha among the Parsis

### Important organizations

The 1870s and 1880s were critical decades. The former saw the emergence of the following important organizations —

- the Pune Sarvajanik Sabha (1870)
- the Indian Association (1876) in Calcutta
- the Madras Mahajan Sabha (1884)
- the Bombay Presidency Association (1885)
- Indian National Congress (1885)

## Organized Resistance to British Rule

### Formation of Political Association

The Revolt of 1857 led to beginning of nationalism in modern sense. It manifested itself in the shape of political associations, culminating in the establishment of India's first all-India political organization, the Indian National Congress, in 1885.

British Rule was contested in the moderate phase (1885-1905) by the ideology of 3P (Prayer, Petition, and Protest), which was further advanced by extremists through the concept of passive resistance and boycott of British goods.

During Gandhian Phase, Mahatma Gandhi challenged the might of British Government through the Ideology of Satyagraha and in the form of Non-Cooperation Movement, Civil Disobedient Movement and Quit India Movement.

### Contribution of British Rule

- British rule contributed to the modernization of India far more fundamentally than the French Revolution and Napoleon did to that of Europe.
- It also unified the country on a more durable basis than ever before.
- And it did all this in the 190 years between the Battle of Plassey in 1757, which gave British power its first foothold in India, and Indian Independence in 1947.

## Transfer of Power

British began the transfer of power in 1940 via august offer which was further carried forward Crips Mission, Shimla Conference and Cabinet Mission.

On August 15, 1947, the Indian Independence Bill took effect as per the recommendation of Mountbatten plan. It provided for the end of the British rule in India, on August 15, 1947, and India became a free nation with the bifurcation of India and Pakistan.

### Partition Horrors

The decision of partition was a painful as India lost its territory and its people to the west and the east and spoiled much of the euphoria of independence. The violence that was released by the decision put Indians against Indians, Hindus and Sikhs against Muslims, with the worst of the horrors seen in Punjab and Bengal — States that were partitioned in the most mindless display of colonial insensitivity.

The scar of partition was not forgotten, but borne with fortitude and a desire to move on from them. Along the way, the two-nation theory based on religion alone that Pakistan's founder Muhammad Ali Jinnah fought for so bitterly, disintegrated with the creation of Bangladesh in 1971. Other developments have also helped heal the wounds of Partition, not the least, India's successes over the past three-quarters of a century, including a growing economy, its technological prowess, and as a respected voice on the global stage.