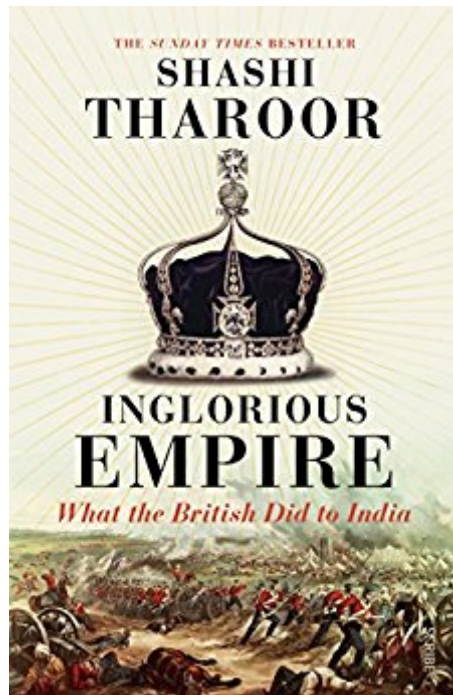




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Inglorious Empire: What The British Did To India



Synopsis

Inglorious Empire tells the real story of the British in India – from the arrival of the East India Company to the end of the Raj – and reveals how Britain's rise was built upon its plunder of India. In the eighteenth century, India's share of the world economy was as large as Europe's. By 1947, after two centuries of British rule, it had decreased six-fold. Beyond conquest and deception, the Empire blew rebels from cannon, massacred unarmed protesters, entrenched institutionalised racism, and caused millions to die from starvation. British imperialism justified itself as enlightened despotism for the benefit of the governed, but Shashi Tharoor takes on and demolishes this position, demonstrating how every supposed imperial 'gift' – from the railways to the rule of law – was designed in Britain's interests alone. He goes on to show how Britain's Industrial Revolution was founded on India's deindustrialisation, and the destruction of its textile industry. In this bold and incisive reassessment of colonialism, Tharoor exposes to devastating effect the inglorious reality of Britain's stained Indian legacy.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Shashi Tharoor (ÀÁÂÄÅ ÆÇÈÉÊË Æ™) is an award-winning writer who was also a former cabinet minister in India. This book is his lengthy account of the conduct of the conqueror over the

conquered; but it is a relevant and useful account of the British conduct and control of her empire in India. Strictly speaking, the conquest here was not by a nation but by its commercial and trading company known as The British East India company. ST provides an expansive account of how India was plundered, impoverished as she already was. One example is the textile industry, which used to be a nation-wide cottage industry. The British refused to buy in British pound but from forced revenue extracted from Bengal, and largely paid with forced revenues extracted from Bengal, and pushing [textile] prices even lower. The British drove Indians to agriculture beyond levels the land could sustain. Indian rulers were compelled to pay for British protection at inflated costs much like paying protection money to mobsters. Although it has often been said that the British brought stability and a fine administrative structure to India, ST provides a different perspective. For example, ST says, the Indian social structure was vastly different from that of British society, and he explains how the British gave Indians position but not power; and transformed their agrarian society into one of tenants, employees, and bondsmen. The method chosen to maintain control was the famous divide and rule. In the breath-taking account in the chapter entitled Divide et Impera ST examines the sinister motives of the British census, aimed not at the proper study of demographics but to enable the colonialist masters to divide and rule. The British, ST says, exploited religion and was the cause of Hindu-Muslim animosity. The decision in 1905 to partition Bengal into a Muslim sector is a prime example. In the long shadow of the British Raj, resistance appeared, and naturally, the British did not take it kindly. ST quotes Winston Churchill on Mahatma Gandhi: "It is alarming and nauseating to see Mr Gandhi, a seditious Middle Temple lawyer, now posing as a fakir of a type well known in the east, striding half naked up the steps of the viceregal palace, while he is still conducting a campaign of civil disobedience, to parlay on equal terms with the representatives of the Emperor-King." India in the 21st century is rising. Some of the harm done in colonial times may take a while to be undone, but India at least has its fate in its own hands. ST tells the story from an unknown source, in which the Prince of Wales in 1921, pointing to buildings and cars, said to an Indian, "We have given you everything here in India! What is it you don't have?" The Indian replied, "Self-respect, sir."

Awesome book to read

"Inglorious empire" is the British version of "Era of darkness". They are exactly the same books.

Yes, Empires are terrible for indigenous cultures and India's indigenous cultures were no different, sorry to say. I come from a family that suffered not just the British empire but the partition as well. I would like Mr. Tharoor's next book to be about the plan by which we will give up all things inherited from the empire - Chai, Cricket, the English Language, other Indians as "Servants", structures around train stations, Democracy, etc. Mr. Tharoor is being hypocritical here because he himself has benefitted TREMENDOUSLY disproportionately from all things related to the Empire. It is entirely unethical for him to write something like this. Love some of the other writing by Mr. Tharoor, but cannot condone this hypocrisy.

What the British did to India? Well, for starters, it created India out of a polyglot collection of perpetually warring states. It threw out the Moghuls and so ended the domination of the Hindus, Sikhs & Jains. It built an infrastructure still in use today. It provided physical security for the sub-continent by guarding the NW frontier, the normal route of both invaders and raiders. It established a language that could be understood by all Indians. It ended Sati and Thuggery and established justice under a universal judicial code and systems of law. Last, but most important, it educated and Westernized those Indians with the aptitude for it. These educated Indians came back (Gandhi, Nehru et al), organized resistance against the Raj and were granted it with only an infinitesimal amount of bloodshed. I challenge anyone to name me a comparative example where a colonial power with total control of a colony that enriched them enormously simply transferred authority to that colony. Don't bother looking, there are no parallels. Why 2 stars instead of one? I was fascinated by the author's willful ignorance or, perhaps, cherry picked information. I wonder if he truly believes it. PS: What would India look like today had there been no British Raj? Can't know for sure, but my guess is that it would resemble sub-Saharan Africa where a plethora of tiny states are involved in perpetual war over religion, territorial disputes and etc. The fighting would be as 'dirty' as you can imagine, with ethnic cleansing running rampant. So thank the nearest Briton (not that anyone alive today had anything to do with it. For the record, I am 3rd generation Gaeltacht Irish (with Castilian and German in the mix) and so am not predisposed to Anglophilia.

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