

## British Colonial Domination's Effects on Indian Cultural Values

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### Abstract:

The effects of colonial control on Indians' lives and perspectives are often forgotten. We no longer saw ourselves the way we did when British colonialism took hold. It took away from us the confidence that makes up the majority of people who believe in a glorious past. Our identity as self-sufficient and self-reliant was assailed by the British, striking to the heart of our ideology. This dissertation seeks to explain the methodical way in which British Raj delegates such as Thomas Babington Macaulay executed their plan of erasing Indian knowledge and customs in order to project an image of British superiority via the creation of an augmented reality. In this article, we as Indians want to highlight the need of reviving and establishing a sense of cultural and national self-worth.

**Keywords:** Indian culture, Indian legacy, Indian values, and British colonial design in India.

### INTRODUCTION: THE MAGNIFICENT INDIAN LEGACY

India's elegance and refinement, which date back five thousand years, are the source of its cultural inheritance. It should go without saying that the worldwide cultural landscape has been significantly impacted by this cultural legacy. In India, people from many cultures coexist peacefully, speaking different languages, eating a wide range of foods, and performing various rituals. This coexistence is embodied in the Indian concept of the "Sanskriti." As a result, India's wide range of religions, traditions, customs, and beliefs characterise its cultural legacy. Furthermore, India has developed a wide range of artistic, architectural, and intellectual expressions throughout the years; this diversity has made Indian culture unparalleled, and almost everyone continues to be fascinated by it. Consequently, India's cultural legacy endures, maintaining its unique qualities while adjusting to the times—a quality that continues to be the major foundation of its adaptability.

The result of the interplay and complex blending of historical mores, colonial stimuli throughout time, and inculcation of Western culture is the prevalent Indian ethos. Important aspects of the diversity and character of Indian rituals are often overlooked by Western authors. The deeply ingrained amalgamation of Indian customs in various regions of India is lost in their standardised depictions of the country. Heritage may take many forms besides monuments and collections of artwork. Toned customs, performing arts, religious and cultural celebrations, and traditional artistic expressions are examples of dynamic expressions passed down from forebears to future generations. This incomprehensible cultural legacy is delicate and demands knowledge and preservation since it is essential to preserving cultural variety in the face of increasing globalisation. Because it encourages social cohesion, a feeling of belonging, and the preservation of group identities, it has shown to be dynamic and inclusive. Its interconnectivity forms the foundation of its cultural plurality. It is

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impossible for one faith or civilization to exist alone. India is a huge, important country today, with a big industrial economy and geopolitical importance. India's traditional rural areas and cosmopolitan cities work together to create a promising future.

Everyone is aware of the close connection between India's remarkable history and its geographical location. Its natural isolation and seductive faiths notwithstanding, it has long been an aggressor's paradise. Its rocky topography and passes have allowed a large number of people to infiltrate and adapt to it as a result of these invasions. Despite the devastation caused by many raids like as Persians, Greeks, Arabs, Portuguese, French, British, and others, the local monarchs and kingdoms always endured, chronicling their stories of conquest and ruin. These regional kingdoms were constructing throughout this period on top of a culture that predates the origins of Indian civilization. Swami Vivekanand once said, "History itself bears testimony to the fact. All the soul-elevating ideas and the different branches of knowledge that exist in the world are found on a proper investigation to have their roots in India."

#### **British Colonization of India before 1857**

The East India Company was founded by England in 1600 to regulate commerce with India. In Surat, the East India Company founded a factory in 1610. The beginning of an odd presence that would last more than three centuries and finally rule the whole subcontinent was signalled by this little base. The American historian Will Durant claims that: The British conquest of India was the invasion and destruction of a high civilization by a trading company [the British East India Company] utterly without scruple or principle, careless of art and greedy of gain, over-running with fire and sword a country temporarily disordered and helpless, bribing or murdering, annexing and stealing, and beginning that career of illegal and 'legal' plunder which has now [1930] gone on ruthlessly for one hundred and seventy-three years.

The British conquest of India was made possible by their victories at Plassey (1757) and Buxar (1764). British position was reinforced by victories in a number of conflicts. However, the Subsidiary Alliance and Doctrine of Lapse regimes brought many indigenous governments under British authority. The British Empire was founded in India by Lord Wellesley, the Governor-General (1798–1805), who used the Subsidiary Alliance System as a "Non-Intervention Policy." To support the British army, all Indian rulers were obligated to provide a subsidy to the British. In return, the British offered them the chance for significant development and pledged to defend them against their adversaries.

Likewise, Lord Dalhousie formulated and instituted the Doctrine of Lapse to tackle the issue of Hindu state succession. As per the policy, in the event of a monarch's death without a successor, the land would be forfeited by the sovereign if they had allied or embraced the British. It also stated that if the monarch was deemed incompetent by British officials, his kingdom would be annexed. The 'hereditary' succession policy that India had long maintained as the exclusive standard for royal succession was superseded by these measures. In light of this, the Doctrine of Lapse was a crucial and implicit issue that sparked the 1857 uprising.

People from many class, religious, and ethnic origins came together during the Indian Revolt of 1857 to rebel against British authority. The East India Company's dominion was ended by the uprising.

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Between 1757 and 1857, British rule had a major effect on Indian society, economics, and culture. The British government's missions in India included those of a trader, a ruler, and a Christian missionary. Originally, the British East India Company had a policy of not meddling in Indian religious or educational affairs because of the possibility of a mutiny. Junior officer Charles Grant of the British East India Company thought the British could show India how the West's higher ethical standards, rooted in Christian tradition, might be achieved. He claimed that the propagation of Christian customs may alter the religious beliefs that were solidifying people's ignorance in India. That's why, before to starting his missionary effort, he requested formal clearance from the Company. Finally, the British Parliament passed the Charter Act of 1813. It said that missionaries wishing to preach in India would be allowed authorization. Provisions for missionaries' ongoing presence in India were included in the 1833 Charter. From that time on, missionaries and colonial authorities have been fervently defending and advancing one another.

The missionaries had a conducive environment and facilities to operate in thanks to British control. They stimulated social and legal changes in India. William Bentick responded by passing a resolution in 1835 to support European studies and provide funding for English instruction. The futility of studying Indian and Oriental texts was acknowledged. It was believed that religious beliefs, customs, and traditions were meaningless. The only thing that could be done was to introduce English instruction. The missionary from Scotland, Alexander Duff, was sent to eradicate obscurantism and idolatry. Due to widespread movements among the social and economic groups most impacted by the current social and economic order, it garnered a greater number of adherents. Their conviction in the superiority of European Civilization prevented them from understanding other civilizations and faiths. However, the social movements they spurred on the back of their presence resulted in societal improvements in India. Indian culture declined as a consequence of the widespread Hindu conversions that destroyed the souls and self-respect of Native Americans. The result was the creation of an education programme for India that would encourage Indians to work as low-paid clerks and foster a class of Indians who supported British culture, were devoted to the British, and collaborated to grow the market for British products.

The so-called modern rational education was propagated via educational institutions designed to brainwash youngsters and inculcate a sense of submission and superior British presence on the Indian subcontinent. The goal of the colonists was to provide the Indians with just enough education to meet their needs. They promoted no process of analysis in mind. While India was a great civilization with the ideals of peaceful coexistence and cultural plurality, Indians were led to think that they were primitive and ignorant. Because of cruel economic exploitation, India—a country known for its great accomplishments in education, architecture, and the arts—became a poor importer. The English were using firearms to rule us. Wearing Indian clothing and purchasing Indian fabrics was the norm. The fact is, the strength of the Europeans controlled us. Indian textiles accounted for sixty percent of the Europeans' pre-colonial riches. As they ruled India, the British deliberately attempted to destroy Indian textiles. They enacted legislation stating that the East India Company was the only buyer. India's clothing exports decreased. The majority of the Indian populace had to rely on agriculture for sustenance when all industry was destroyed.

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Self-criticism, which started with contemporary schooling, has hurt us as a nation. The British-designed educational system needs more significant adjustments. The idea of schooling has to be completely redesigned. Future value will be placed more on intellectual prowess and astute interpretation than on recall power. Therefore, the goal of education shouldn't be to create elites. The goal of the British educational system was not to foster brilliance but to instill the virtue of obedience. This famous remark from Winston Churchill captures the colonial mentality:

I hate Indians. They are a beastly people with a beastly religion . . . Let the Viceroy sit on the back of a giant elephant and trample Gandhi into the dirt.

India became independent in 1947, but it did it at a high cost that resulted in the division of the nation. Additionally, Britain contributed to the maintenance and strengthening of the injustices associated with India's caste system. Furthermore, religion was used as a tool of control and division, encouraging the two-nation idea that ultimately split the nation and made partition unavoidable. During the partition, one million people lost their lives and seventeen million were forced to flee their homes. (Bacchetta 566). However, Indian youth must admit that their decades-long self-abnegation has not facilitated advancement. Therefore, maybe now is the moment to boost our self-esteem.

### **Efforts to subjugate Indian Culture and Values**

#### **(i) Thomas Babington Macaulay, Lord (1800–1859)**

The British had a policy of racial superiority towards its colonies starting in the early 1800s. Furthermore, the counsellor to the British Governor-General in India, Lord Thomas Babington Macaulay (1800–1859), was certain that it was the British government's sincere responsibility to enlighten the people who were living in constant darkness outside of Europe. In June 1834, Lord Macaulay landed in India. He served as the President of the Committee of Public Instruction in addition to being a member of the Governor General's Executive Council by law (Ghosh 17). He was tasked with mediating conflicts between Anglicists and Orientalists in 1835. His renowned Minutes were presented to the Council in February 1835, and Lord Bentinck approved them in March of the same year.

Macaulay so put forward his Minutes on Education. This essay explained the benefits of English language instruction and the promotion of European learning in India for the East India Company and the British government. The Minutes said that Sanskrit and Arabic literature had limits even if they recognised their historical significance in the Subcontinent (Kumar). "A single shelf of a good European library was worth the entire native literature of India and Arabia," Macaulay wrote in the Minutes (Diamond 75). He also underlined the following:

1. The promotion of European science and literature among Indians should be the main objectives of the British government, and "all funds appropriated for education would be best employed on English education alone." ("Minutes of Macaulay")
2. Printing oriental works was not to be done with government funds.
3. The Government would use all of its resources going forward to teach science and English literature to Indians. ("Minutes of Macaulay")

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A month after the resolution was filed, William Bentinck, the Governor-General of India, approved it, making the Minutes official policy (Kumar). Thomas Macaulay triumphed as a result. He had vanquished his enemies, chief among them the Orientalists, a group of academics, translators, collectors, and representatives of the East India Company who promoted the study and instruction of Sanskrit, Arabic, and Persian in India.

Anglicists like Macaulay zealously promoted English while pushing for "filtration" of education. It implied that only the upper classes would get an education in English, and that they would also be required to instruct native speakers at the bottom end of the social scale. Macaulay's Minutes state that the goal of education was to "form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern; a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, opinions, morals, and intellect." Kaiwar 32. The Governor-General of India, Lord Hardinge, issued a decree in October 1844 mandating that English-speaking people be given priority for all government jobs in India. This circumstance greatly increased English education in India while also having an influence on Indian culture.

The Governor-General of India approved a resolution mandating that English-speaking individuals be given preference for all government posts in India. In addition to hindering Indian culture, this situation greatly aided English instruction in India. A more successful concentration of education and the implementation of British politician Charles Wood's 1854 dispatch were the outcomes of the 1857 uprising. The dispatch led to the creation of the current three-tiered educational system, which places more of an emphasis on English at the higher levels—especially in universities—and offers teaching in local languages at the elementary levels. As a result, the current three-tier educational structure came into existence. Each and every Indian has to study these papers to understand how the educational system was purposefully designed to accomplish a certain goal.

#### **(ii) Williams, Monier (1819–1899)**

The Oriental Scholar Monier Williams (1819–1899) taught Native languages at the East India Company College from 1844 until 1858, when the company's control over India came to an abrupt end with the uprising in 1857. Monier Williams said that converting India to Christianity should be one of the objectives of orientalist studies after being nominated to the Boden Chair of Sanskrit at Oxford University. Monier Williams goes into detail on the need of comprehending the Indian mind and everything associated with Indian culture in the Preface to the Second Edition of *Indian Wisdom* (1875).

Imbued with the conciliatory spirit which a study must impart, all Englishmen—whether resident in England or India, whether clergymen or laymen—may aid the cause of Christianity and good government ...A great Eastern empire has been entrusted to our rule, not to be the *Corpus vile* of political and social experiments, nor yet for the sole purpose of extending our commerce, flattering our pride, or increasing our prestige, but that a benighted population may be enlightened, and every man, woman, and child ... hear the glad tidings of the Gospel.

Monier Williams was adamant about bringing Christianity to India, and he considered studying Sanskrit as a means of achieving this goal. A comprehensive examination of Hindu and Indian culture

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was included in this plan. In order to help aspiring missionaries convert local Indians to Christianity and those who planned to operate in India, he regarded his role as one of teaching Sanskrit (Thomas 74). Among his notable contributions is a Sanskrit dictionary. In his 1877 book *Hinduism*, he prophesied the end of the Hindu faith and argued that the Christian gospel should be used to counter and restrain the rise of Islam. Among the well-known translations by Monier-Williams are *Sakuntala* (1853) and *Vikramorvasi* (1849) by Kalidas.

(iii) Max Muller (1823-1900)

In addition to all the other 19th-century European Indologists, Max Muller deserves credit for translating and bringing the Hindu holy texts to the West. With these words, he made clear what his goals were: "India has been conquered once, but it must be conquered again, and that second conquest should be a conquest by education." Muller's letter to his wife said that he was specifically hired to transcribe the Vedas so that Hindus would no longer believe in them. Max Müller developed his dates of Vedic origin in accordance with the contentious Aryan invasion idea. Before the British recruited him, he lived in poverty. He was certain that Hindu changes were necessary to balance Christian perceptions of Hinduism.

This is a passage from a letter Max Müller sent to his wife:

...I feel convinced, though I shall not live to see it, that this edition of mine and the translation of the Veda will hereafter tell to a great extent on the fate of India and on the growth of millions of souls in that country. It is the root of their religion, and to show them what that root is, I feel sure, the only way of uprooting all that has sprung from it during the last 3,000 years.

### **Conclusion**

The colonists pierced our pride, confidence, and independence as well as our belief in the system that was in place. Economically, the native industries were devastated. Rather, India became a centre for the import and export of completed commodities and raw materials. It gave British manufacturers cheap access to raw materials and a market for their final goods. But the true cause of the cultural shift was misinformation spread by the colonists. To further their own interests, they started to rewrite and falsify history. James Mill, for instance, did not visit India or acquire any knowledge of the Indian languages before writing *History of British India* (1917). In his work, James criticises India's laws, literature, arts, religion, history, and people. The British made an effort to discredit Indians' competence in all fields. They consistently presented Europe and Britain as being better to India in every manner.

India, on the other hand, has made enormous advancements in its socioeconomic status recently. India has changed much since then, enough for all Indians to feel proud of their country today. The National Education Policy 2020 includes funding for scholarships to study Indian languages, arts, and culture for individuals of all ages. The policy's vision entails:

To cultivate knowledge, skills, values, and dispositions that support a responsible commitment to human rights, sustainable development and living, and global wellbeing; to instill a deep-rooted pride in being Indian, not only in thought but also in spirit, intellect, and deeds; and to reflect a truly global

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citizen. (2020 National Education Policy).

The moment has come to put the cruelties of the past behind us. A remarkable equilibrium and a well-balanced fusion of classic and modern elements are required. Historically, our traditional values have been lost as a consequence of industrialization and urbanisation. These days, success is primarily defined by financial gain. We place no importance on intelligence, beauty, or spiritual accomplishments. Wealth and power are now the top priorities for both people and countries. We lost many cultural values and drifted away from our origins in the chase of money and financial well-being. Youngsters are starting to wonder why we still adhere to so many antiquated conventions and traditions. The younger generations have begun to doubt our customs and culture and label us as superstitious if we are not provided with sound logic. Indian medicinal plants, such as turmeric and tulsi, have long been a part of our everyday lives. In a similar vein, many old Indian practises persisted in Indian culture because they were important to human well-being.

India is a multicultural nation with a multicultural populace. What is it that unites this disparate bunch of individuals? The cultural fabric of this nation binds it together as a whole. The cultural ties that unite Indians as a people. What actions are necessary to bring this culture back to life? Culture is an organic phenomenon. We are compelled by contemporary social tendencies to imitate Western culture, which is seen as superior. However, we have to acknowledge the significance of our culture. There are many different cultures in the globe. Indian culture has always been oriented on assisting individuals in their spiritual journey. Every activity was designed to support spiritual development. A select few fundamental disciplines, like yoga, have become deeply embedded in peoples' everyday lives. It is imperative that people understand the importance of customs like stroking our elders' feet, which have been a part of our culture for thousands of years. It's time to bring back our customs and principles in day-to-day activities. It's time to explore our history and educate the next generation about this information. The false notion that Indians are less intelligent, inferior people who must emulate the West has to be dispelled. The finest elements of both cultures must be merged. There are benefits and drawbacks to each lifestyle, so we need to figure out how to balance them. The purpose of restoring our traditions with sound logic is to improve our lives and make us become better people.

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