

# Glimpses of British Culture on India

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## Abstract

The shape of our present life has greatly influenced by our immediate past. Some cultural and legal changes arising from British rule, still affect our lives. Cultural development is a historical process in which our ancestors learned many things from their predecessors. With the passage of time they linked it to their experience and left those things they did not consider useful. In the same way culture is passed from one generation to another. And this culture we inherit from our predecessor is called our cultural heritage. In modern India, Indian culture assimilated foreign culture due to which Indian culture has become more diverse. A relation between two societies leaves a mark on each other. A conquered society exaggerated its influence on a defeated society. However, it cannot be denied that the winning society benefits more from imposing its values on the defeated society. Therefore its impact becomes more important. The two hundred years of British rule in India brought unprecedented changes in India. This paper is an attempt to study the impact of British rule on Indian culture.

**Keywords:** Education, Language, Cuisine, Architecture, Art, Clothing, Etiquette.

### Introduction

The British regained naval supremacy after a naval victory on the Spanish Armada in 1588. This encouraged some of London's business adventures to form a company for trading in the East.<sup>1</sup> Europeans lived in India for a long time and among them, the British ruled India for a long time. The British raj refers to the British period ruled the Indian subcontinent between 1858 and 1947.<sup>2</sup> The British ruled the major portion of the India, and hence their impact on Indian culture is still visible today.<sup>3</sup> In the period after the rebellion, when the rule of the East India Company was replaced by the direct rule of the British Crown and Parliament, so the expansion of the British power all over India created tremendous impact on the socio-religious conditions of the people.<sup>4</sup> Due to the spread of English education in India, the situation for India's redevelopment was created, due to which there could be made possible renaissance in India and it contributed to the development of Indian people. The western concepts of liberty, equality and fraternity changed the outlook of Indians; they became aware not only about the greatness of their culture, but also about their shortcomings. Then Indians tried to remove the defects in their social and religious fabric to face the challenges of western culture and to review the glory of their ancient society and culture.<sup>5</sup> Railways, club life, the buildings like Parliament, costumes like Trousers, Coats and ties, foods like Bread, Tea and Cake are reminder of British rule. Language is the medium of Cultural assimilation, English language played a crucial role in influencing cultural life of Indians.

In the present paper we will be discussing how the British influenced our Social and Cultural life.

### Objectives of the Study

The present paper will focus on the following two objectives

1. To analyse the socio-cultural impact of British rule on the Indian lifestyle.
2. To study the British impression in aesthetic life.
3. To analyse the socio-cultural impact five areas ( language, cuisine, science and technology, education, etiquettes) and to study the British impression in three areas ( architecture, art works, clothing) have been selected.



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**Research Methodology**

For this Study, mainly the Secondary Source has been chosen as Sources. In which the study of Culture, Advent of Europeans, British History, Census, Books, Reports, Journals, Articles, Newspapers etc. were collected through information. In short, the Secondary Sources of this Study are mainly Books, Government Records, Newspapers and Internet etc. Qualitative information has been collected from them.

**Review of Literature**

Rajan, M. S. The impact of British rule in India, *Journal of Contemporary History* 1969. 4(1): 89-102.

This article mentions the long heritage of India's culture which was influenced by the Mauryas, the Guptas and the British. Initially, the British did not make an impact on Indian society but gradually they started leaving their mark on Indian Culture. In this, some intellectuals of Hinduism learned from the West and tried to remove evil practice in Indian Society. But the 1857 rebellion occurred due to the exploitation of the Society by the British. After the rebellion, the pace of Social Reforms increased in India. This article also highlights the withdrawal of funds from India. The author believes that the main influence of the British was to make India a nation. But the British broke this Country into two parts on the go. It has been told in the article that, now Academics had started speaking one language. English had a major impact on Indian Journalism. The Author believes that the British have a significant contribution to Indian Law. In this article, Indian Education system, Indian Administrative Service has been called British Heritage. This Article gives brief information about Science and Technology in India and External Affairs of India. This Article does not reflect the British influence at the regional level.

Sen, S. History of Modern India (1765-1950), *Wiley Eastern Limited, New Delhi*. June 1979.

This book observes British rule in India, and covers chronology of important events. This book covers the establishment of the British in India through Bengal. This book provides information about Justice, Police and Law. It also contains the impact of Company's rule on Indian People. The author also mentions the reaction of Indians to British Policy, Foreign and Frontier Policy, Cultural and Religious Revival in India. This book is useful to know the Educational Institution Established by the British. This book lacks the Art, Architecture and Music of colonial India. But overall this is a very informative and concise book to read.

Suryawanshi, D. British Rule and Its Impact on India, *Atharva Publications Jalgaon M.H.* 2018

This book provides information about the Establishment of the British in India and it's becoming a significant power. This book mentions the work done by the British to establish Colony in India and its usefulness in the present scenario. This book provides information about the British influenced judicial system, Language, Railways, Village tribal, Communalism, and Partition of India, Health Service, Social changes, Culture and Farmers. The Author states that the number of English Speakers in India increased after the arrival of the British, leading to the rise of the English Language. English became a medium in the change of Culture in India; this led to the study of new subjects such as Science and Technology in English. The Author has mentioned how the British changed the Indian education system by setting up a new committee and evaluated the Development of Education in India. From this book, the information of the Indian Press, under which a brief view of the Newspaper of all the Languages printed in India is given, and information about the Law brought by the British to regulate them is obtained. This book presents the significant contribution of Indian Reformists who have done a lot for Women and Dalits in India. What effect did the British have on the Art and Architecture of India is not mentioned.

**Socio-cultural impact**

The primary objective of the British was to make economic profit from India, but due to this purpose they had to make changes in the social sector in India. Due to this some socio-cultural changes took place in India which were as follows-

**English language and British contribution**

British rule had a greatest impact on Indian culture in the form of language; 'language is the medium of cultural invasion'. The English language played a crucial role in influencing the cultural life of Indians.<sup>6</sup> According to the 2011 census, 129 million (10.6%) Indians spoke English.<sup>7</sup> Now English is an official language of seven states and five union territories. According to the Indian constitution, English is the language of the Supreme Court and all the High court's of India.<sup>8</sup> In 1835, English replaced Persian as the official language of the Company. Lord Macaulay played a major role in introducing English and western concepts to education in India.<sup>9</sup> English is still spoken by elite Indian society and taken as the scale of modernity.

**Cuisine**

Among the food habits, prominence needs to be given to two main items, bread and oats, potatoes, tomatoes, cauliflower, etc., were introduced by the Europeans and subsequently popularised by the British.<sup>10</sup> In south India, these vegetables are still called English vegetables. The Bakery Industries have developed in India during British rule. They introduced bread, butter, cheese, biscuits and cake that have become a substitute for Indian traditional food like roti, ghee and sweets. A wide range of foods which are marinated in spices and chillies, soups and salads became the part of the Indian menu as incorporated by the British. Indian cooking style in cities by rich people mostly depended on the British pattern. The concept of knives and forks was introduced as western utensils.<sup>11</sup>

**Science and technology**

The British rule contributed a lot for the growth of scientific spirit of research in the country. The archaeological department of India helped a lot in adding new dimensions to historical research in the country. The first astronomical observatory was established in Madras by the British in 1790. India was the best place for further study of the Sun, because of its climate, whereas Britain had a cloudy environment thus in the field of solar physics India got valuable knowledge and Solar Observatory in Kodaikanal in 1899. The hypothesis related with Continental Drift theory came in light from India with the help of Geological Survey of India and the SuperContinent 'Gondwana' name was given by a professor Henry Benedict Medlicott in 1872, he was a Professor of Geology at Roorkee and later the last Chairman of Geological Survey of India.<sup>12</sup> The first Chemistry laboratory was established in Presidency College of Calcutta in 1874. Professor Jagadis Chunder Bose from Presidency College Calcutta had done an experiment in the field of Short Radio Waves in 1895. Mining was a part of Geology and the British saw it as a profitable business but owing to some circumstances the British allowed Indians to establish an Iron mill. In the field of Mining, the notable works were done by Jamsetji Tata who established an Iron and Steel mill in Sakchi (Jamshedpur). The discovery of Ramanujan in the field of Mathematics, contribution of S.N. Bose, C.V. Raman and Meghnad Saha in the field of Physics; P.C. Ray, J.C. Bose and S.S. Bhatnagar in the Sphere of Chemical Science were notable.<sup>13</sup> British provided Drugs in the treatment of diseases, and the Drug Manufacturing sector was regulated by Drugs and Cosmetic act (1940) and rules (1945) for Ayurvedic sector.<sup>14</sup> The discovery of Steam Engine began the operation of trains. The operation of Telegraph and Telephone service in India has also been started by the British. The British

setup Textile Industries, Iron Industries, Printing machines and builds many bridges in India.<sup>15</sup>

### **Education**

The beginning of modern education was made by Warren Hastings in 1781, when he started the Calcutta Madrasa. His endeavour was primarily due to administrative reasons. Eleven years later, in 1792 Jonathan Duncan, a resident of Varanasi started a Sanskrit college to educate native Hindus to assist the Europeans.<sup>16</sup>The historic decision taken by Lord Macaulay in 1835 was a turning point in Indian history which opened the floodgates of European thoughts and literature for Indian intellectuals. Three Universities of Calcutta, Bombay and Madras established in 1857 by proclamation of the Wood's Despatch of 1854. These universities resembled the University of London. Each university had its own separate jurisdiction. Later as per demand from North-West Punjab university was established in 1882 and Allahabad University in 1887. In 1902, Lord Curzon appointed a University Commission to check the conditions and prospects of Indian universities and to recommend measures to improve teachings and learning in university. After the recommendation of this commission the act of 1904 was framed. This aimed to tighten control over the universities. This act also provided that each university could themselves operate the post graduate course of study. Sir Asutosh Mukherjee, then Vice-Chancellor of Calcutta University started the Post Graduate course there. So the act of 1904 was truly the Charter of Education in India, which shows its significance in present day also.<sup>17</sup>Madan Mohan Malaviya established Banaras Hindu University in 1916. The University of Mysore, Patna and Osmania at Hyderabad were instituted in 1917. The Sadler Commission was appointed to find out the working of other Universities. There are other major universities which were established during the British period like, Aligarh, Lucknow, Dacca and Rangoon Universities which were founded in 1920. Visva Bharati University at Shantiniketan, Delhi University were founded in 1922. Nagpur University in 1923, Andhra University in 1926, Agra University in 1927 and Annamalai University were established in 1927. Hartog Commission was constituted to analyse the Research and Teaching in the universities. This committee advised a three years Honours course with emphasis on the tutorial system in university. In 1944, Sir John Sargeant, the Educational Adviser to the Government of India formed a Report on Educational Development in India. This report shows that the universities did not match the satisfaction. The report advised the establishment of a University Grants Commission which would help to improve the condition of universities, colleges, teachers, and research. Thus UGC was established in 1953, which is still working and providing recognition and affiliation to the universities and colleges. There were 25 universities at the time of India's independence. This was really a lasting impact of the West on Indian culture.<sup>18</sup>

### **Étiquettes**

The modern etiquettes like showing gestures in the form of Good Morning, Good afternoon, Good Night, Good bye, See you, Thank You, Sorry and Bye-Bye etc., were the contributions of the British to Indian culture. Apart from this we learned the practice of shaking hands from the British, whereas before that we used to greet and hug in the manner of greeting.

### **British impression on aesthetic life**

Aesthetic things were also introduced in India during the British rule, which established a new culture in India, which can be seen in the following context.

**Architecture**

The British followed various architectural styles, Gothic, Imperial and Christian. The main features of Gothic styles are Pointed Arch, Aisle, Flying Buttress and Nave Roof. Churches have been built mainly in India in Gothic style, there are some important Churches that are present till now like St. Paul's cathedral in Kolkata dedicated to Paul the apostle. The building was completed in 1847.<sup>19</sup> it is the first Anglican cathedral in Asia and the largest church in Kolkata.<sup>20</sup> The church has a central spire of 201 feet, has five clocks weighing three tonnes, and has intricate detailing that is done with tinted glass and plastic art forms in the interior. St. Martin's church in New Delhi; the architect of this building was Arthur Gordon Shoosmith, the construction was started in 1929, and this building was constructed with three and half million bricks, thus it looks like a fort, with its buttress, parapets straight lines and few windows.<sup>21</sup> British developed architectural building in Kolkata in Indo-Saracenic revivalist, renaissance style, where white marble was used.<sup>22</sup> The Victoria Memorial in Kolkata is a White Makrana marble building constructed between 1906 and 1921. The architect of this building was William Emerson.<sup>23</sup> in Mumbai Indo Gothic and Neo Gothic styles were used to construct buildings, the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus was a best example of this style, formerly it was known as Victoria Terminus, it was designed by British architect Frederick William Stevens and built between 1878 and 1888.<sup>24</sup> The building has ornamental work like, Skyline, Bastions, Pointed Arches and externally the Wood carving, Tiles, Ornamental Iron and Brass Railings, Grills for the windows and the Balustrades for the grand staircases. Sir Edwin Lutyens, Edward Frere and Le Corbusier were the famous Architects who established modern Indian cities and buildings.<sup>25</sup> Delhi Durbar was organised one year before Delhi was made the capital, in which George V participated. In 1912, the British government selected an architect Edward Lutyens to build the buildings in the new capital, Later Herbert Baker joined him. Edward Lutyens was sent to visit Fatehpur Sikri and Datia in M.P. for the knowledge of Indian architecture. For this reason, Indian style has been given importance in the architecture of Delhi. It is the synthesis of India and the West. The best qualities of Light yellow and Red stones have been used in the architecture of New Delhi. In Lutyens Delhi, in these buildings, importance has been given to the Mughal style, Buddhist style as well as European style. In this the Mughal element Chajja, Small Chatri has been used, while the Buddhist style which is taken from the Railing of the Stupa of Sanchi has been used in the Dome especially in Rashtrapati Bhavan.<sup>26</sup> Sir Lutyens, designed four bungalows in the Rashtrapati Bhavan and sir Herbert Baker designed the Secretariat buildings.

**Art Works**

The British established Art schools in Calcutta and Madras in 1854 and in Bombay in 1857 respectively.<sup>27</sup> after 1857, John Griffith and John Lockwood Kipling came to India together and headed the Sir JJ School of Art. Griffith was considered one of the finest Victorian Painters to come to India, and Kipling went on to head the Mayo School of Arts in 1878.<sup>28</sup> the British style was mainly romanticized with watercolor, oil and easel paintings. Raja Ravi Varma was among the first Painters to use western techniques to illustrate Indian themes and traditions.<sup>29</sup> Ravi Varma is particularly known for his paintings depicting the story of dushyant and Shakuntala and episodes of the story of Nala and Damayanti from the Mahabharata. the British administrator Edgar Thurston played a major role in promoting the careers of Ravi Varma.<sup>30</sup> later Indian style of painting (the Bengal School) was started by Abanindranath Tagore in the

repercussion of British art. He established the Indian society of Indian Art. Tagore modernised Mughal and Rajput styles of arts to counter British art, and he was successful in promoting Indian style and Swadeshi values in arts. His famous paintings were Bharat Mata, Ashoka's queen and Ganesh-Janani. Amrita Sher-Gil was a Hungarian-Indian painter and pioneer in Indian Modern Art. She was best in Oil Paintings. Her famous Paintings were of young girls, sleep etc. She was influenced by Bengal school of art and paintings of Tagore Brothers.

### **Clothing**

Under British rule, there was a considerable change in the dressing sense of Indians. Many new garments were invented and different clothes were given importance for different work. Army dress was also changed a lot. The British wore different clothes to differentiate themselves from the Indians. The culture of wearing blouses came from the British, where the torso of the gown was imitated and the blouse were made.<sup>31</sup> The hat was also worn by people of many religions for sign of respect. The Sherwani evolved as a fusion of the British frock, coat and Indian achkan.<sup>32</sup> Various Indian Kings and constituencies' now had a Chief to report to the King or Queen of England, and become part of the larger British Empire. As a result, the entire generation who grew up in post-colonial India looked to the West for inspiration. Due to industrialization, Europe looked more modern and thus the younger generation of India changed their dress habits to imitate the mighty West. British fashion was emulated to reflect modernity and reject the traditional past.<sup>33</sup> British also introduced Trousers, Full Pants, Shirts, Shoes, Coats and Tie, etc.

### **Conclusion**

It can be concluded from the result of the present paper that the Western impact brought out the best in Indian society but it also damaged its traditional culture. The English language was not given to India for the benefit of the country; The British only taught English to a narrow section of Indian society, So that they could increase their control over India and produce "Babus" for their Governance. They educated only a few Indians to become their puppets, however, education started a new revolution among Indians, due to which Indians came to know about the true policies of the British and moreover it opened a larger area of knowledge for educated Indians. The role of Christian missionaries was to spread religious thought and convert Indians to Christianity. Because they believed that trade and capitalist support kept them in the hope that Christian converts would be better customers of their goods. The British introduced sophistication in food, dress and manners which buried Indianans to a great extent. But despite all, due to the British, Indian society flourished and Indian culture prospered. There are always two sides of the coin, if India lost something in culture, it also gained.

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