

## UPSC 2020

### Impact of British Rule in India

With the advent of British rule in India, there had come several changes in the socio-economic-political spheres of the Indian society. It is important to know the impact of British Rule in India for the [IAS Exam](#) aspirants and it will help them in both Prelims (History) and Mains (GS-I, Essay.)

### Impact of British Rule in India

#### Economic Impact:

1. India became an economic colony of industrial England.
2. Indian handloom weaving industry was hit by the industrialization in England and eventually collapsed.
  - o Indian handicrafts lost both domestic and foreign market.
3. Land revenue experiments mentioned below caused hardship to cultivators:
  - o [Lord Cornwallis's Permanent Settle System](#)
  - o [Ryotwari & Mahalwari Systems](#)
4. Commercialization of agriculture hard hit the labourers where numbers of landless labourers increased.
  - o This led to the birth of new money-lending class where peasants were exploited as they had to lend money from the money-lenders

#### Social and Cultural Impact:

1. Amid social issues like Sati, Child Marriages, Infanticides; ideas like Liberty, Equality, Freedom, and Human Rights were brought by the British.
2. To improve the condition of the women in society, various legal measures were introduced.
3. British showed keenness in introducing the English language in Indian society.
  - o The vernacular languages were ignored
4. The British Parliament issued the [Charter Act of 1813](#) by which a sum of Rupees One lakh was sanctioned for promoting western sciences in India.

### Positive and Negative Impacts of British Rule in India

Broadly, the impact of British rule can be divided into negative and positive aspects.

#### Impact of British Rule - Positive Aspects

- **New Job Opportunities:** The British introduce new job opportunities that were especially beneficial to the members of the lower caste. With these opportunities, there was a better chance of upward social mobility for them

- Rise of the modern middle class in India: British rule led to the rise of an influential middle-class who would become pioneers of Indian industrialization in the post-independent era.
- Development of Infrastructure: The British authorities built many important infrastructures such as hospital schools and the most important of all, railways. Of course, this was done not to enhance the lives of the local Indians but rather to facilitate their exploitation. Regardless these infrastructures laid the foundation of India becoming a major economic powerhouse
- Introduction of new technology and ideas: The introduction of new technology like steamships, telegraphs and trains completely changed the economic landscape of the Indian subcontinent. Culturally, the British put an end to social evils such as Sati (with the passing of the Bengal Sati Regulation Act on [December 4](#), 1829) and weakened the caste system to an extent.
- Protection from external enemies: India was known as the “jewel in the crown of the British Empire”. Thus the British provided protection against like Persia and Afghanistan. Even other western nations like France were deterred from being too involved with India. Though a boon, it turned out to be a bane in the long run as it made India too heavily dependent on the British.

You can find out more about the [Legislations in British India](#), by visiting the linked article.

### **Impact of British Rule - Negative Aspects**

- Destruction of Indian Industry: When Britain took over, they forced the governments to import goods from the British Isles rather than create their own products. This led to the local cloth, metal and carpentry industries to fall into disarray. It made India a virtual hostage of Britains economic machinations which meant breaking away from it would destroy India’s economy.
- British mismanagement led to famines: The British rule placed more emphasis on the cultivation of cash crops rather than growing crops that would feed India’s huge population. They imported food from other parts of the empire to feed its citizens. This policy, combined with the unequal distribution of food, led to 24 famines killing millions between 1850 and 1899 alone. The first and if not the worst of this lot was the [Bengal Famine of 1770](#).
- The Divide and Rule Policy: The British realised that they could never rule a vast territory like India without breaking up strong kingdoms into small easily conquerable segments. The British Empire also made it a policy to pay religious leaders to speak out against each other, slowly poisoning relations between different faiths. The hostile relationship between India and Pakistan can be attributed as a direct result of this policy.
- Britain plundered the Indian Economy: Due in no small part to the unethical business practices of the East India Company it can be estimated that trillions were siphoned off by Britain. Such practices even destroyed the Indian industries and ensured that money flowing through the [Indian economy](#) ended up in the hands of London.

### **Impact of British Rule - Conclusion**

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

