



The Case for India

Will Durant

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Author : Will Durant

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Riku Sayuj says

Shashi Tharoor mentioning this raised my regard for Durant immediately:

In 1930, a young American historian and philosopher, Will Durant, stepped onto the shores of India for the first time. He had embarked on a journey around the world to write what became the magnificent eleven-volume *The Story of Civilization*. But he was, in his own words, so 'filled with astonishment and indignation' at what he saw and read of Britain's 'conscious and deliberate bleeding of India' that he set aside his research into the past to write a passionate denunciation of this 'greatest crime in all history'. His short book, *The Case for India*, remains a classic, a profoundly empathetic work of compassion and outrage that tore apart the self-serving justifications of the British for their long and shameless record of rapacity in India.

As Durant wrote:

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 and 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.

???? ????? says

I want this book.

Rsraob says

On reading this, I just realized as an Indian how ignorant I and all my generation has been. No history book prescribed by our school system covered the depth of plunder of India, distinguishing the plunder by the British and the plunder by previous conquerors. The reading itself is easy. The major point here is the author does not try to make his own calculations but tries to repeat what some conscious British have already published or printed.

Vishal Kale says

The book describes in graphic detail the atrocities of the so-called "civilized" Britishers (refer definition below!!!!) in the chapter "The rape of a continent". The difference is that he has quoted numbers and figures; unassailable facts and laws that graphically illustrate the systematic destruction of all kinds of local enterprise. For example, produce was taxed at 50%; the documented fact that tax rates were the highest in India across the world; Sample this:

"The fundamental principle of the british has been to make the whole indian nation subservient... they have been taxed to the utmost limit; the indians have been denied every honor, dignity or office".... F J Shore testifying to the house of commons in 1857

"Under their dependence on the british - Oudh and Karnatic, 2 of the noblest provinces in India, were plunged into a state of wretchedness with which no part of the Earth has anything to compare" - Lt Col Brigs, 1830

"The Governments' assessment does not even leave enough food for the cultivator to feed his family" - Sir William Hunter, 1875

"The Rajahs had taxed the people much less severely than the british.... "

"The national debt of India rose from \$35,000,000 in 1792 to \$3,500,000,000 in 1929. These figures tell the tale"

The book is littered with such graphic details - all taken from western, and primarily british sources. It examines how the economic fabric of the country was destroyed, how for example its textile trade was wrecked; its impact on the prosperity of the nation. It also examines the specious claims of education improvement - there were more schools in India before the advent of the civilized british; how the number of schools diminished and were discouraged; It looks at the now-famous example of the british gift of railways - in the USA, railways were used largely for goods transport, whereas in India their function was for the imperial class travels; It examines how every activity of the british - right down to the bullets used to suppress revolts were exacted from Indians;

It looks at the wages paid to Indians; It details tariffs of 80% on Indian products as opposed to zero tariffs on british imports; "The result was that Manchester and Paisley flourished and Indian industries declined. India was transformed into a purely agricultural country, and her mineral wealth was not explored; artisans etc were forced to live off the land; no competition was to be allowed to English industries- Kohn".

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Shahenshah says

I concede I am biased towards Will Durant; but that ought not to take away from the inscient and impavid candour of the Truth which lays bare naked the very edifice of Empire. The opaque and pernicious digressions of Empire's utility are brought to the Court of Reason and, dare I say, morality. For though the Peoples have discredited Empire, albeit historians of certain shades surreptitiously strive to concoct digestible *raison d'être*s, our Generation should do well to read this 'Case'. Mr Durant spoke the Truth not in retrospective convenience; for then he was conveniently dead. He spoke the Truth at the height of the British Empire. They banned his book throughout the Empire, which comprehended a quarter of the Globe. They pursued the American publishers, and so to-day we have but a few copies left.

Though, for I quote Churchill, 'a lie gets half-way around the world before the Truth has time to put its pants on', I pray you chance with the clumsy hare. [Ergo, read it.]

Aparna Dubey says

Written in 1930, this is a brief yet poignant and masterful narrative of the British rule in India by the renowned American historian and Pulitzer Prize winner, Will Durant. A rich and objective perspective on the life, times and opinions of varied stakeholders of British ruled India. There are little factoids embedded in the book; which I was not aware of, despite being an avid reader; and born and studied in India. The book is unique, in that it gives a perspective of what the Britishers thought of India; and their contributions to India; with a counter perspective on the same from the Indian freedom fighters. His perspective of Mahatma Gandhi's belief, contribution and opinion of 'Free India' is also quite unique and objective.

An extract from his book's foreword on why the historian, hitherto known for his books on study of global civilizations and philosophy authors a book on India - 'I began to feel that I had come upon the greatest crime in all history...For I know of nothing in the world that I would rather do today than to be of help to India'.

Jayesh Shah says

Will Durant wrote this book in 1930. It was three years after Katherine Mayo's book, Mother India, was published. Mother India is not a balanced book. It sees only negative aspect of India and the Hindus. Durant calls it the unfairest book ever written.

Mr. Durant explains in his book that England has bled India year after year to the point of death. Before 1757 (when Britain started occupying India), there were no major famines in India. Since then, during almost 200 years of British rule, millions of people died every year from famine. Thousands of miles of railways could have helped in managing famines by transporting food, but it never happened. The railways were built only for British army and British trade. It was well-known that there was no shortage of food, but it was not distributed properly.

Britain waged 111 wars in India during the nineteenth century. These wars were waged to steal lands from the princely states. Riots between Hindus and Muslims were rare in Native States but were common in the British Provinces. British increased the rift between Hindus and Muslims.

Mr. Durant argues that the English are the best gentlemen on earth; the British are the worst of all imperialists. Not one Englishman was convicted of murder in India in 150 years in spite of many instances where they committed murders of their servants and other people of India. Court verdicts always favored Englishmen against Indians.

They argued that India needed British protection otherwise France, Spain or Portugal would attack and occupy India. Their protection basically meant keeping other poachers out of the field, allowing only them to rob India.

England argued that her industrial revolution was dependent on their rule over India. A sudden severance of this arrangement will be politically dangerous for India and economically ruinous for England. A German professor explained in 1911 that, "...If the Asiatics were to succeed in destroying English mastery there, then the position of the whole white race throughout the world would be fatally undermined." India had become an economic necessity to British merchants. To justify India's subjugation for that reason was like worrying about the inconvenience experienced by the robber at the cost of the victim's rights. It is ironic that Kipling

claimed the world is a white man's burden! Arrogance should have limits.

Looking at the British treatment of India and her people, it is natural to have animosity toward them and a strong desire to avenge the injustices caused by them. Luckily, India and the Indian people have risen above it. They have not wasted time on insisting that Britain must pay for her sins against India. If India had gone that road, she would be like what Pakistan is today. The very existence of Pakistan depends on her hatred for India. In the last 70 years, India did not take the road but Pakistan did. The world can see the difference in the way these two countries function.

During British occupation it was frequently argued that Indians are not capable of ruling themselves. Last 70 years of independent India have proved them wrong.

Frequently, Britain is given credit for unifying India. History shows it is not true. Since the time of Buddha and even before him, Indian subcontinent was culturally and politically a single unit. The epics, Ramayana and Mahabharat, (even if they are considered fiction) show clearly that the characters in these epics roam freely throughout the land, marry women of different regions, and followed same religion. Authors would not have described the characters this way if India was not treated as one unit in those days.

Lastly, Indians were considered incompetent by Britain and other western countries. If the word competence is defined by what western countries are capable of then I am glad that India and Indians are incompetent. In its ten thousand years of history, India has never behaved like this with any nation. India has respected other nations and other religions, always. West has never been able to show that strength.

SANTOSH REDDY says

an unbiased view of how India became impoverished under the british

Shivam Agarwal says

An excellent book whose narration was the most beautiful I have ever witnessed. Will Durant is undoubtedly epitome in telling a case with a fresh perspective and does not fear to do so. In this book he presented what changes India went through during British rule. He has put forward from a neutral mindset, that what effects were witnessed during that rule.

I have never read a conclusion so beautifully written and thought provoking. I would suggest at least every Indian to read the book to know from both points of view what happened to India and why?

What I liked the most in the book is it does not decide whether the British rule in India was good or bad. It presents the events as it happened. It is upto the reader to decide or choose not to decide the same.

Looking forward to read other books by Will Durant.

Madhurya Yadunath says

Reading about the British exploitation of India from a contemporary of that era is enlightening. Coming from an American, we can be rest assured that it is as impartial as it can get. British, worse than a vulture fed on a living civilization. Figures and numbers of the British loot of India will shock anyone. A long chapter is written on Gandhi, giving a glimpse of his life, philosophy, writings. Gandhi has done more damage to India than help. Will Durant's book is a valuable account and record of the British exploitation of India. A must read.

Arun says

Every now and then, one comes across some people who try to say that the British rule was very helpful to India. This book dispels this view. Written in 1930, it presents a very good view of the British rule in India. The chapter dealing with Gandhi is good as one rarely comes across a realistic depiction of the failings of 'The Mahatma' in Indian books.

Thirumal Rao says

It is a wonderfully written argument by an American author who had seen India first hand and studied deeply about the country. The book provides a perspective on the state of India around 1930 (when the book was first published) and the prognosis suffered due to an extended subjection by foreign rule. The author has given some very interesting and informative information regarding the extent of brutality that was practiced by the British. I believe this book should be a part of curriculum in all schools at the collegiate level. I have not read a better document that is more comprehensive, cogent, objective argument in favour of India. I salute the courage of this author and his noble spirit to not just make a case, but publish a book that supports a country that was yet to be born and was almost 2 decades away from gaining Independence.

Ashwin says

It is excellent that this important yet forgotten book has been brought back into print. But the quality of editing is extremely poor. I cannot escape the sense of anger against the British Empire that this book has given birth to with in me. To date, I had looked upon the freedom movement through the haze of romanticism, Will Durant has put the extent of British terrorism and greed into perspective. No Indian must forget the injustices he has suffered at the hands of the Raj and must forever be grateful to the men and women who shed their cynicism and gave us our freedom.

Ashish Iyer says

One of the most comprehensive and an unbiased account of british atrocity rule from the eyes of an american historian. The author Will Durant presents before us unflinching. unwavering and powerful account of the atrocities committed by British rule on Indian economy, politics and culture.

The author has split the task of narrating Indian story into 4 sections. The first introductory chapter is laden with accurate proofs and statistics on how British intelligently impoverished the Indian subcontinent. A later chapter follows his views and positive opinions about M.K. Gandhi. Third chapter passionately pictures the revolutions of 1921 and 1930. While the last section of the book talks about arguments of British makes to stand his case.

The fact that many Indian institutions were destroyed by the British and how they introduced their education system is well presented. The case of the famines that the British caused by diverting grain from India is well written. Industrial Revolution was built on Indian money, while destroying India's economy is again well explained. The Hindu-Muslim divide was created by the British, and India was messily carved into two nations (this happened 17 years after the book was written). The author has written from both perspective India and British.

Read the book once then you will understand why this book was banned by the British parliament. The Case For India' has now provided India and the world a means to know the true Indian history. This kind of books should be added in schools and colleges.

Highly recommended.

Jeevan Basavaraju says

All Indians should read this book to know truth about:

- How was India before British rule.
 - How Britishers treated Indians.
 - How Britishers looted Indians and killed Indian's body & mind.
 - And many more details!
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