

# If the British had not colonized India

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## POINTS TO DEVELOP

History cannot be altered, but one can just imagine a case.

if the British had not come to India, we might have been free of suffering oppression and exploitation on political and economic fronts.

India's economic history may have been bright.

Growth of communalism may have been thwarted.

The positive aspects of British rule.

History cannot be altered and its myriad paths would follow their own destined course. However, it would not be entirely futile to indulge our imagination in picturing the course of history if such and such an event had not taken place. One such occurrence is the British colonization of India. The British colonized India gradually and established their rule over the country for more than a century. If the British colonization had not happened at all, where would we be today?

To begin with, we would not have suffered all that we did under the British in the process of winning freedom from them. Today, India's history bears the scars of British colonialism and exploitation that the memory finds hard to erase. The country was forced to undergo humiliation in terms of its pride besides suffering political, economic and social exploitation. In colonized India, the people were stripped of their rights in every sense. They could not participate in the political and economic development of their own country. They were denied the right to form their own government and run the administration of their country. The country's primary institutions including those related to judiciary, defense and law were run by outsiders who did not care about the welfare of the nation and its people. The people's attempt to win their rights only brought about suffering and death. It was not only loss of wealth and prosperity that the masses had to endure; thousands of people lost their lives in the fight for freedom from the British yoke. The country's nationalist leaders paid a heavy price in their attempt to secure freedom for India. All this would not have happened if the British had not come to reign in India.

Surely, India would have been one of the most economically prosperous nations in the world today if the British had not exploited the Indian economy to their

advantage. The British drained the wealth and economic resources of India. The British economic policy was such as to help the growth of the British home industry at the cost of the Indian economy. As a result, the economy of our country acquired the basic features of an underdeveloped economy. Thus India, once it became free, was left to undo the wrongs of others and set right its economy by whatever means was available to it. Many of the economic problems that India currently faces, including poverty and unemployment, can be traced to the mismanagement of the Indian economy under British rule.

Socially, the Indians were made to feel that they were an inferior people by the British. On basis of racial, sociocultural and economic reasons, the Indians were discriminated against in the society. This kind of exploitation of one people by another without any concern for the values of equality between men strongly distressed the Indian psyche. On a wider sense maybe the most harmful impact of the British rule in Indian society was the growth of communal forces. Problems of unemployment and other economic ills in the colonial society resulted in bitter competition in which natural pockets of solidarity developed on casteist and religious lines. The various socio-religious reform movements tended to stress the importance of one or the other religious community. The early nationalists also used communal methods to mobilise the masses against the British rule. Most importantly, it was the British policy of divide and rule that alienated the masses on communal lines. It ultimately resulted in the partition of India and creation of Bangladesh and Pakistan. Even today, communalism is a major evil in the Indian society not least owing to the British efforts to strengthen it in our country.

On the other hand, the British presence in India did result in some achievements which may not have happened if the British had not ruled over India. It is just that an event has both positive and negative results all of which are not always intentional on the part of man. For instance, the British unified India into one political unit, generating a feeling of oneness among the people and awakening the national consciousness. History is a witness to the extent to which the people of the country united to fight against the British. Geographically, the British created an India larger than that over which the Mauryans and the Mughals had ruled.

One of the most beneficial results of the British rule was the modernisation of India. The English developed transport and communication on modern lines. The spread of western thought and education modernized the society by fueling reform movements which aimed at purging the Indian society of its traditional ills. They established the first printing press and newspaper in India. The Press

further developed later to inform and educate the masses about the British exploitation of India.

The British rule gave rise to a cultural and spiritual awakening in India that inspired millions to take pride in the traditions and achievements of their nation. Rediscovery of India's past by nationalist and other leaders infused self-confidence and revealed to the people that they were in no way inferior to the British. Most of all, it was the British rule in India that produced nationalist leaders brilliant in their strength of self-sacrifice and perseverance aimed at achieving freedom for India. They inspire us to this day with their patriotism, courage and highly-valued ideals.