

British Raj-Riding a High Horse!

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Abstract

A unique genre has been created as a part of English Literature by the deep impact of the British Raj in India. Writers like E.M.Foster, Ruyard Kipling, Shashi Tharoor all have written about the good and bad side of the British Raj in their novels. Thus, this paper discusses the historical, social, economic events of the British Raj.

Keywords: *mutiny, fascination, inglorious, romanticized, institutionalized, massacred*

A unique genre has been created as a part of English Literature by the deep impact of British Raj in India. The Indians remained loyal subjects to Queen Victoria and the British continued to love the pageantry the mysteries and the fairy tales of India. The historical events of the British Raj deeply affected the novels written, the social hierarchy of the British in India, their social events and seasonal activities also found a place in Literature of those days. Novels like Valerie Fitzgerald's "zemindar" Paul Scott's magnificent "Raj Quartet" and G. Farrell's "The siege of Krishnapur" all deal with the Mutiny (as the British called it)

Some writers were inspired by unpublished letters written by survivors of the Mutiny while others were fascinated with exotic settings and wanted to cater to the British people's deep interest in romantic novels. The writers like Paul Scott and M.M Kaye attempted to recapture the atmosphere and excitement of the British Raj in India and their works also reflected the uncertainties and animosities of both Indians and the British just before India gained freedom.

Several of these novels have been filmed and released as full-time movie while quite a few have been released on the television as serials running into several parts. All these have been runaway hits among the people both in India and Britain clearly manifesting the unsatiated interest the British Raj period has among the public

Both communities had to eventually settled down post-Independence. Several Anglo-Indians left Indian shores to settle in England and made it their home. On the other hand, many like Ruskin Bond made India their home

and he has continued to be a successful writer.

The fascination of India and the deep bond between the two nations lingers on. It may as they say someday fade away but for now it exists. Many British nationals come to India in search of their roots, visit places like Cawnpore (Kannpur) Calcutta (Kolkata) looking for the graves of their ancestors. They visit the local churches and try to find out from the local community the role played by their family members during the British Raj. The graves are repaired and kept well maintained and some wish to take away the remains from here back to England. But the quest for roots continuous. The fascination and the charm of India continues unabated. Thus, this paper brings about the good and bad side of the British Raj in the novels discussed here.

Many writers have written about British Raj showcasing the good and bad side both of the British rule in India, Shashi Tharoor's "Inglorious Empire", E.M.Foster's "Passage to India". Rudyard Kipling's "Jungle Book" and "Kim", George Franklin "Curry and Rice", Philip Mason's "A Matter of Honour", Emily Eden's "Up the Country", William Dalrymple's "White Mughals", M.Kaye's "The Far Pavillion", Paul Scott's "Staying On", "The Raj Quartet", Christopher Hibbert's "The Great Mutiny", Jim Corbett's "Man Eater of kumaon" and many more.

Shashi Tharoor's 'Inglorious Empire is a timely reminder of the need to start teaching unromanticised colonial history in British schools. A welcome antidote to the nauseating righteousness and condescension pedaled by Niall Ferguson in his 2003 book Empire.' - The Irish Times .It is a timely reminder of the need to start teaching unromanticised colonial history in British schools. A welcome antidote to the nauseating righteousness and condescension pedaled by Niall Ferguson in his 2003 book Empire. ' - The Irish Times

In the eighteenth century, India's share of the world economy was as large as Europe's. By 1947, after two centuries of British rule, it had decreased six-fold. Beyond conquest and deception, the Empire blew rebels from cannon, massacred unarmed protesters, entrenched institutionalised racism, and caused millions to die from

starvation. British imperialism justified itself as enlightened despotism for the benefit of the governed, but Shashi Tharoor takes on and demolishes this position, demonstrating how every supposed imperial 'gift' - from the railways to the rule of law - was designed in Britain's interests alone. He goes on to show how Britain's Industrial Revolution was founded on India's deindustrialisation, and the destruction of its textile industry. In this bold and incisive reassessment of colonialism, Tharoor exposes to devastating effect the inglorious reality of Britain's stained Indian legacy.

The Far Pavilions is a real tome of story of an English man - Ashton Pelham-Martyn - brought up as a Hindu. It is the story of his passionate, but dangerous love for Juli, an Indian princess. It is the story of divided loyalties, of friendship that endures till death, of high adventure and of the clash between East and West. To the burning plains and snow-capped mountains of this great, humming continent, M M Kaye brings her exceptional gifts of storytelling and meticulous historical accuracy, plus her insight into the human heart.

A Passage to India by E M Forster Said to be based on Bankipur, a suburb of Patna. When Adela Quested and her elderly companion Mrs. Moore arrive in the Indian town of Chandrapore, they quickly feel trapped by its insular and prejudiced 'Anglo-Indian' community. Determined to escape the parochial English enclave and explore the 'real India', they seek the guidance of the charming and mercurial Dr Aziz, a cultivated Indian Muslim. But a mysterious incident occurs while they are exploring the Marabar caves with Aziz, and the well-respected doctor soon finds himself at the centre of a scandal that rouses violent passions among both the British and their Indian subjects. A masterly portrait of a society in the grip of imperialism,

Whatever their theme or setting, most novels about British India deal ultimately with the relationship between Englishmen and Indians, between ruler and ruled. With Independence, that relationship ceased to exist, and it might seem that any genre that takes that relationship as its primary subject can, at best, serve only as a retrospective mirror, and is doomed to ultimate sterility.

Whilst it is a palpable fact that the Raj is long gone, its legacy survives. It survives in the currency of English as

one of the languages of educated Indians, and it survives in the large numbers of Indian immigrants that have made their homes in England, and have transformed such unlikely places as Southall, Leicester, and Loughborough into veritable Indian townships.

A new generation of writers such as Salman Rushdie and Ruth Praver Jhabvala has emerged to record, in English, the realities of contemporary Indian society, both at home and in self-imposed exile. Both these writers have managed to gain early literary recognition and encouragement, and there is every reason to believe that English novels about India and Indian life will be with us for a very long time to come.

The good things the Britishers did for India and Indians-introduced and taught English language to us to have an ease of administration, which opened the doors of the world, Indian railways, irrigation, communication, education system. Army which today also practices the culture, discipline which the Britishers taught, vaccination to check the diseases, social reforms like sati, child marriage, dowry, caste system were abolished by them, Indian census, surveys-surveying India and created maps.

The Britishers were fascinated by the royalty in India, their kingdom and its riches, jewels, forts, thieves, saints, spirituality, Ganges river, Himalayan mountains, Bengal Tigers, Indian lions, Elephants as they loved hunting. All these find a mention in their novels, Indian poverty, misery is all glorified in the novels. Thus, to conclude one can say that the fascination with India continues with the writers till today. The romance with the British Raj is unfading and keeps its fascination alive among the new generation of readers.

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