

10.4 Imperialism: India

Historical Background: British rule and industrialization practices influenced the Indian environment, culture and economy in both beneficial and detrimental ways.

British built railroads allowed for transportation of large groups of people and helped to relieve famines by quickly distributing food and relief. The British expanded educational opportunities for many upper-class Indians by allowing them to travel to Britain for study at elite universities. British rule also stimulated the Indian economy and provided the industrialization necessary for successful competition in the world market.

In contrast, imperial rule disrupted the traditional way of life for the majority of Indians- the farmers. While new irrigation canals allowed for use of more land, the British converted much of Indian agriculture to cash crops for export. Because Indian farmers were no longer growing crops to feed their families, food became scarce. Despite the expansive British rail system, the drought of 1896-1897 was so large that over five million Indians died of starvation. Historians believe another million may have died from food shortages between 1899-1900. Finally, with the development of irrigation canals, colonial officials inadvertently created an environment capable of sustaining the Anopheles mosquito, the cause for malaria. In addition to malaria, Indians suffered from epidemics of cholera, plague, influenza and tuberculosis during the colonial era due to the increased movement of people into cities and through out the country on the British railroads.

Directions: Read each source and complete the 6Cs.

Prompt: Based on your analysis of the documents, identify positive and negative consequences of British Imperialism in India.

1 Source: *The London Times* "British Control Over India" May 24, 1911

Article adapted from the *London Times* May 24, 1911.

Source: *The London Times* "British Control Over India"

Many criticize British rule in India because its aims are not clear. That is to say, the British government and the British public have never sat down and decided exactly what they want to do with India. One reason for this is that British goals were unorganized from the beginning.

No one who has studied history would dream of arguing that the British went to India intent on helping the Indians. The British took direct control of India because the development of their trade depended on it. They drove out their European competitors and destroyed inefficient local administrations for the same reason. They extended their rule because every new conquest led to new dangers upon their frontiers.

Nothing was more disorganized, or more inevitable, than the British conquest of India. The British began a system of education but not because they wanted to educate their new subjects. Instead, they needed educated Indians to work in their administration. The British trained many to be colonial officials, but not because they wanted to teach Indians how to govern themselves. Instead, they knew that without Indian aid they could not develop their own rule. They taught Indians how to fight like them, only so the Indians could uphold British control. No, Britain never established clear goals for imperialism. The one thing the British public should know for sure is that British rule in India will never be abandoned or weakened.

2 Source: *Photograph, Victoria Terminus, Bombay 1888*

Source: *The British Library*

"The most magnificent railway station in the world."
Stereographic image of Victoria Terminus, Bombay.



3 Source: *The London Times "Foreign Trade of British India"* July 9, 1881

Criteria	1878-79	1879-80	1880-81
Cotton, raw	£7,913,046	£11,145,453	£13,241,734
Jute, raw	£3,600,425	£4,370,032	£3,934,030
Rice, clean	£8,810,121	£8,341,685	£8,971,661
Wheat	£613,778	£1,121,015	£3,272,004
Sugar, refined	£69,679	£59,165	£32,456
Twist and Yarn		£2,743,806	£3,669,500
Priced goods		£16,723,352	£22,637,428
Silk		£837,890	£1,350,384
Salt		£762,532	£ 665,517
Tea		£3,050,000	£3,050,000

The value of tea exports was about the same as in the preceding year.

Adapted from the London Times. The year was remarkable for a very great increase of both imports and exports of merchandise. The following changes in the value of Indian exports were the most noteworthy:

Source:
The London Times
"Foreign Trade of British India"
July 9, 1881

4 Source: *The London Times "The Forests of the Empire"* July 9, 1881

Adapted from the London Times

Source: *The London Times "The Forests of the Empire" 1881*

Many countries are taking an interest in forest conservation. This shows a growth of wisdom in the use of the world's resources. For centuries, people had regarded forests as places to destroy. The forests were, as the Siberian peasants still say, "the gift of GOD," to be used or wasted without second thought. Nobody understood their effect upon rainfall and temperature. Nobody paid attention to the role forests play in controlling rivers and preserving moisture. Fortunately, most governments now recognize that forests are valuable assets. As a result, they are putting a stop to the reckless exploitation of forests.

"In India, British officials began controlling forests by accident. They began supervising forest use when they wanted timber for constructing warships. They did not understand

that the health of India's forests had a direct relation to water supply or agriculture. Even today in India, only a few experts fully recognized the scientific aspects of forestry.

"About one-fourth of India is under forest. However, all land labeled "forest reserve" is not necessarily covered with timber. The forests are useful for the maintenance of perennial streams and the storing of moisture. As a result, they have a very direct connection with irrigation. Yet, it is on record that at one time the British government in India actually tried to sell the forests of the Central Provinces. Large areas of land in India cannot be used today because of the ruthless destruction of trees in past years.*

*These lands are now protected for recovery.

Works Cited:

The British Library. *Victoria Terminus*, Bombay, 1888.

The London Times. 1881, 1910, 1911.