

Quotes & Notes on Inglorious Empire by Shashi Tharoor

- Pg. xxx. ... Indian princes who, once British rule was well established, accepted a Faustian bargain to protect their wealth and their comforts in exchange for mortgaging their integrity to the British.
- Pg. 1. In 1930 Will Durant, in his book 'The Course of Indian History' writes: "The British conquest of India was the invasion and destruction of a high civilization by a trading co. ..."
- Pg. 2. Read J.T. Sunderland's description of how industrious and prosperous, highly civilized India was when the British found when they came.
- Pg. 3. 'India was governed for the benefit of Britain. Britain's rise for 200 years was financed by its depredations in India.' -- 'A commercial business (of EIC co.) quickly became a business of conquest, trading posts were reinforced by forts, merchants supplanted by armies.'
- Pg. 3. In 1739 Persian Nadir Shah looted Delhi, 50,000 corpses in street.
- Pg. 6. Britain's cloth manufacturers, unable to compete (with Indian textiles), wanted them eliminated. The soldiers of the EIC obliged, systematically smashing the looms of some Bengali weavers and ... breaking their thumbs so they could not ply their craft.
- Pg. 7. Indians could hardly impose retaliatory tariffs on British goods, since the British controlled the ports and the government, and decided the terms of trade to their own advantage. [There is an old saying in Gujarati: *ઠાણે રાજા અધીર, તોયે યાદ મીઠી*, which means: If the king of a country is trader, then its people are beggars.]
- Pg. 9. The British extracted from India approximately £ 18,000,000 each year ^{between} 1765 and 1815. 'There are few (i.e. hardly any) kings in Europe richer than the

Directors of the English E A Co.'

- Pg. 9. 'The E A Co. created, for the first time in Indian history, the landless peasants, deprived of his traditional source of sustenance - ^{substantial personal} wage war against the bribe-givers.'
- Pg. 15. 'He (Burke) described in -- detail the violation of Bengali women by the British-assigned tax collectors - 'they were dragged out, naked and exposed to the public view, and scourged before all the people.. they put the nipples of the women into the sharp edges of split bamboos and tore them from their bodies' - leading Sheridan's wife to swoon in horror in Parliament, from where she had to be carried out --'
- Pg. 15. Preacher William Howitt in 1839 lamented that '... the highest officers in the govt had the strongest motives to corruption, and therefore could by no possibility attempt to check the same corruption in those below them...'
- Pg. 16. 'The servants of the Co. forced the natives to buy dear and sell cheap.. Enormous fortunes were thus rapidly accumulated at Calcutta, while 30% human beings were reduced to the extremity of wretchedness.'
- Pg. 17. '(The British) installed rulers of 'princely states' who were circumstantially allied with their cause.. These potentates were charged copious 'fees' in exchange for installing them on their thrones and for security from enemy states - an imperial version of the 'protection money' racket since practiced by the Mafia.'
- Pg. 17. 'The aim of the new (revenue collection) system was to secure the Co's collection of revenue w/o the need to negotiate with India's local elites.. The idea was to replace face-to-face conversation with written rules.'
- Pg. 19. 'A ~~at~~ committee of the House of Commons declared 'that the whole revenue system resolved itself, on the part of public officers, into habitual extortion and injustice, whilst what was left to the ryot (peasant) was little more than what he was enabled to procure by evasion and concealment.'

Pg. 19 (due to) Revolt of 1857 the Crown took over the admin of the 'Jewel in the Crown' of Her Britannic Majesty's vast empire. But it paid the Co for the privilege, adding the handsome purchase price to the public debt of India, to be redeemed (both principal and generous rates of interest) by taxing the victims, the Indian people.

Pg. 20, 'The Bengali novelist Bankim Chandra Chatterjee wrote of the English 'who could not control their greed and from whose vocabulary the word morality had disappeared.'

Pg. 20. 'Indians literally paid for their own oppression.'

Pg. 21. In 1922 64% of the total revenue of the Govt of India was devoted to paying for British Indian troops dispatched abroad.

Pg. 22, [Indian troops were used for British expansion ~~and only~~.]

Pg. 23. There were significant disparities in the rank, pay, promotion, amenities and actions between European and Indian soldiers.

Pg. 25. Kingdom after kingdom was annexed for the simple expedient of offering its ruler a choice between annihilation in war and a comfortable life in subjugation. When war was waged, the costs were paid by taxes and tributes exacted from Indians. Indians paid for the privilege of being conquered by the British.

Pg. 28. 'the British authorities cynically and deliberately exploited Indian industries in their time of need and otherwise suppressed ^{them}.

Pg. 31. A currency (Rupee) which had once been among the strongest in the world in the 17th century was reduced to a fraction of its former value by the end of the 19th. [Political economy ^{by govt} mean economy manipulated for to serve self interest only.]

Pg. 32. The British learned as much of the technology as possible and then shut down India's metallurgical industries by the end of the 18th century.

Pg. 35. Though Scots constituted barely 9% of Britain's people, they accounted for 25% of those employed by the British in India. Their earning in India pulled Scotland out of poverty and helped make it prosperous.

Pg. 39. '... to suggest that Indian political unity would not have happened w/o the British is absurd and unsupported by the evidence

Pg. 45. The freelance warriors and mercenaries associated with the Co enjoyed the licence to loot everything they could lay their hands on: (which is) hardly a British contribution to good governance in India.

Pg. 50. In 1857, F.J. Shore, the colonial administrator in Bengal testified before the House of Commons, confessed that 'the Indians have been excluded from every honor, dignity, or office which the lowest Englishman could be prevailed upon to accept

Pg. 51. The British in India were never more than 0.05% of the population. The Empire, in Hobsbawm's evocative words, was 'so easily won, so narrowly based, so absurdly easily ruled thanks to the ~~dev~~ devotion of a few and the passivity of the many (Indians).

Pg. 52. One viceroy, Lord Mayo, declared, 'we are all British gentlemen engaged in the magnificent work of governing an inferior race.'

Pg. 54. Indian rulers in the past negotiated with their local subjects because they had to live with them now the Co kept a distance from its subjects and only cared for one thing - a network that delivered cash to directors in faraway London as quickly and efficiently as possible.

Pg. 55. 'Decisions were ~~made~~ based on rules rather than facts.'

Pg. 57. The ICS, peculiarly, insisted that all ICS men remain bachelors until after the age of thirty. -

Pg. 58. The whites in India would never accept an Indian in a position of real authority.

Pg. 59. 'Socially, Chetty, an ICS officer, belonged to no world. He had left his own and cannot enter the other (the English). And you cannot divorce social life from official life. They are not two things, but one.' 'In the end Chetty shot himself.' - Racial discrimination was pervasive in ICS.

Pg. 60. [The first two ICS officers were Satyendranath Tagore and Surendranath Banerjee.] The WWI drove thousands of young men to officer duty in trenches, - the number of Indians in ICS slowly inched upward in the last 3 decades of the Raj.

Pg. 61. But till then Indians may have had portions, but no real authority.

Pg. 63. Sir John Malcolm, later Governor of Bombay, wrote in 1832: 'our Eastern empire -- has been acquired, and must be maintained, by the sword.'

Pg. 64. Gandhi began Quit India movement in Aug. 1942.

Pg. 68. '... every ~~reformation~~ that the British Govt brought into India's governance, up to the Govt of India Act of 1935, protect the absolute authority of the governor-general and the Parliament of Britain.' '... The objective was a gradual increase in representative govt, not the establishment of full-fledged democracy.'

Pg. 74. 'As many as 74,187 Indian soldiers died during WWI and a far higher number were wounded - their stories, and their heroism, were largely omitted from British popular histories, or relegated to the footnotes.'

Pg. 75. 'Soldiering was profession of the Indian soldiers. They served the very British empire that was oppressing their people back home.'

Pg. 76. When the WWI ended in triumph for Britain, India was denied its promised reward - self-governance. - Instead of offering more democracy, Britain went further in the opposite direction -

Pg. 81. Lord Wellesley introduced the Censorship of the Press Act, 1799, which brought all newspapers in India under the scrutiny of the Govt of India prior to publication. This act was later extended in 1807 to cover all kinds of publications - newspapers, magazines, books, and pamphlets.

Pg. 84. The revised Press Act of 1910 was designed to limit the influence of editors on the public opinion; it became a key instrument of British control of the Indian press.

Pg. 91. When an Indian boy was shot dead by -- Neave in Bangalore and Indian villagers forcibly confiscated Neave's gun, it was two of the villagers who were sentenced to six months' imprisonment for the crime of misappropriating the white man's weapon, whereas the murderers went unpunished.

Pg. 86. 'Personally, I (Shashi Tharoor) am far from convinced that the British system is suited to India. The parliamentary democracy we have adopted involves the British perversity of electing a legislature to form an executive: this has created a unique breed of legislator, largely unqualified to legislate, who has sought election only in order to wield (or influence) executive powers. It has produced govts obliged to focus more on politics than on policy or performance. It has distorted the voting preferences of an electorate that knows which individual it wants but not necessarily which policies. It has spawned parties that are shifting alliances of individual interests rather than vehicles of coherent sets of ideas. It has forced govts to concentrate less on governing than on staying in office, and obliged them to cater to the lowest common denominator of their coalitions. It is time for a change.'

Pg. 88. When former British PM Clement Attlee, as a member of a British constitutional commission, suggested the US presidential system as a model to Indian leaders, he recalls, 'they rejected it with great emphasis. [Sad.] -- Indian MPs still thump their desks in a probation, rather than applauding their hands. When the bills are put to vote, an affirmative call is still 'aye' rather than 'yes.'

Pg. 89. Macaulay sat for three years behind high walls, completely disconnected from the people he was ostensibly working for, and created a code of criminal law ... (Pg. 90) Finally enacted in 1861, it is still largely in force in India today, in all its Victorian glory. ... Justice in British India was far from blind: it was highly attentive to the skin color of the defendant.

Pg. 93. The impartial system of laws was created by a foreign race and imposed upon a ~~con~~ conquered people who had never been consulted in its creation -- Indians and dogs were not allowed in British hotels. When Jamsetji Tata was expelled from Watson hotel, he built Taj Mahal hotel for Indians.

Pg. 95. "our religion (Christianity) is sublime, pure and beneficent. - theirs (the Hindus) is mean, licentious, and cruel." - William Wilberforce, Britain's most famous evangelized Xian.

Pg. 97. (Even in 2018) Under Sec. 124A of the Indian Penal Code, any person who uses 'words, signs or visible representation to excite disaffection against the Govt' can be charged with sedition and potentially sentenced to life - -- In other words, no free speech for Indians -

Pg. 99. The Indian Penal Code (Sec. 497) criminalizing adultery, punishes extramarital relationships involving married women but not married men. (The British, however, have revised their laws.) - President Pranab Mukherjee, chose the 155th anniversary of the Indian Penal Code to underscore the need for its through revision.

Pg. 102. Indians were always subjects, never citizens.

Pg. 103. 'Colonialism was itself a cultural project of control. - - - A complicated, often chaotic and always fluid society like India was 'redefined' by the British to be a place of rules and orders; once the British had defined to their own satisfaction what they construed as Indian rules and customs, then the Indians had to conform to these constructions.'

Pg. 108. Whereas prior to British rule the Shudra had only to leave his village and try his fortunes in a different princely state in India where his caste would not have followed him, colonialism made him a Shudra for life, wherever he was.

Pg. 109. - - 'the census commissioners discovered that boundary lines among Hindus, Sikhs and Jains barely existed.' - All the (et caste) classifications (used in census) served the interests of the colonizers by providing them with a tool to create perception of difference between groups to prevent unity amongst them, and justifying British overlordship.'

Pg. 111. The Theological Society co-founder Col. H.S. Olcott was the first - to argue that the Aryans were indigenous to India and took civilization from India to the West.

Pg. 112. 'Stories abound of (Hindus & Muslims) habitually working together in pre colonial times on issues that benefited principally one.' [Not true, except Muslims might have employed Hindus and vice versa.]

Pg. 115. St. Thomas made converts among the high-born elite, the Nambudiri Brahmins. [probably not by free will.]

Pg. 116. The British pronounced Congress a Hindu-dominated org, and instigated a Muslim nobleman, Nawab Khwaja Salimullah of Dacca, to start a rival org. in 1906 for his co-religionists alone, the Muslim League.

Pg. 117. Newinson goes on: 'I have almost invariably found English officers on the side of Mohammedans where there is any rivalry of race or religion at all. And in Eastern Bengal this national inclination is now encouraged by the Govt's open resolve to retain the Mohammedan support of the Partition by any means in its power.'

Pg. 119. In the British Indian Army Muslims accounted for 50% of the Indians serving in uniform despite being only 20% of the population.

Pg. 120. The Englishmen arranged separate electorates for the Muslims of India, where Muslim voters could only vote for Muslim candidates, Sikhs for Sikhs and Christians for Christians. The practice prompted W. D. Durrant to observe that the British approach 'intensifies and encourages the racial and religious divisions which statesmanship would seek to heal.'

Pg. 121. 'When the British authorities assumed responsibility for banning or approving commemorations, arbitrating disputes, and regulating procession routes. H. J. Ortshøj has explained, 'they transformed religious differences into public, political, and legal issues. And so they have remained.'

Pg. 125. 'Jinnah had retreated to his law practice in England, only to return, after a long political sulk, as the leader determined to take the Muslim League towards separatism.'

Pg. 128. Germany's invasion of Poland on 9/1/1939 led Britain to declare war upon Germany. -- So Britain would fight Germany for doing to Poland what Britain had been doing to India for nearly 200 years. -- [Nehru argued] How could a subject India be ordered to fight for a free Poland? A free and democratic India, on the other hand, would gladly fight for freedom and democracy.

Pg. 133. Both the resignations of the Congress ministries in 1939 and the Quit India movement of 1942 turned out to be futile gestures of demonstrative rather than far-sighted politics. They paved the way for the triumph for the Muslim League.

Pg. 136. 'London, under the labor party, exhausted by war, was determined to rid itself of the burden of its Indian empire.'

Pg. 137. [In 1946] 'Talbot felt that Nehru had simply not realized that Britain was exhausted, near bankrupt, unwilling and unable to dispatch the 60k British troops the govt of London estimated would be required to reassert its control in India.'

Pg. 138. Jinnah's biographer M.J. Akbar put it, 'Pakistan was created by Jinnah's will and Britain's willingness - not by Nehru's willfulness.' -- Jinnah declared 16 Aug 1946 as 'Direct Action Day' to drive home this demand [for Pakistan].

Pg. 141. Jinnah declared on 14 Nov 1946 that the killing would not stop unless Pakistan was created.

Pg. 142. By early March [1947], as communal rioting continued across northern India -- both Sardar Patel and Nehru agreed that, despite Gandhi's refusal to contemplate such a prospect, the congress had no alternative but to agree to partitioning Punjab and Bengal.

Pg. 143. Reluctantly Nehru agreed to Dominion status ^{for} India within the British commonwealth, rather than full independence. -- Gandhi went to Mountbatten and suggested that India could be kept united if Jinnah were offered the leadership of the whole country.

Pg. 143. - Mountbatten chose 15 Aug 1947 on a whim - Nehru was convinced that Jinnah was capable of setting the country ablaze and destroying all the nationalist movement had worked for; a division of India was preferable to its destruction. [Violence paid]

Pg. 144. [Mountbatten] was brusquely told by Jinnah that the League leader himself would hold that office in Pakistan.

Pg. 145. Nehru dropped the formal lowering of the Union Jack from the independence ceremony in order not to hurt

British sensibilities

Pg. 146. - '...bleed, bombed and battered for six years [in WW2], Britain could divide but it could no longer rule.'

Pg. 150. - From 1770 to 1900, 25M Indians are estimated to have died in famines -- William Dwyer pointed out that in the entire 107 years from 1793 to 1900, only an estimated 5M people had died in all the wars around the world combined, whereas in just 10 years 1891-1900, 19M had died in India in famines alone.'

Pg. 153. - 'American charity has often paid for the relief of famine in India while the Govt was collecting taxes from the dying.' - a
- 'there has never been a year when the food-supply of the country was sufficient for the people.' - Romesh Chander Dutt

Pg. 153. In other words, the British cannot be accused of 'doing nothing' during the 1876-77 famine, but rather of doing much to worsen its impact -- When some Englishmen of conscience objected and mounted relief operations of their own, the British Govt threatened them with punishment'

Pg. 166. 'When Vellore mutiny occurred in 1806, the British put it down with ruthless ferocity. Three hundred... of the mutineers were tied together, lined up against the wall of fire court and shot at a range of 30 yards; this happened w/o even a summary of trial or an opportunity to explain themselves.'

Pg. 167. Though the family of Moghal Emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar surrendered peacefully to the British forces that captured Delhi;

they were treated abominably. Most of the 16 sons were tried and hanged, while several were shot in cold blood, after first being stripped off of their arms and their jewels. — In 1872, in Malerkotla, Punjab some 65 Namdhari Sikhs were blown to bits from the mouths of cannons; in Peshawar's ~~Qissa~~ Qissa Khwani Bazaar in 1930, 40 Indians were butchered. Pg. 167. 'Many rape by the police was not uncommon: 73 women were violated by police in a bid to terrorize the Satyagrahis.'

Pg. 168 Description of Jalliwala Bagh massacre.

Pg. 173. 'It was no longer possible to claim that Dyer did not represent the British ~~in~~ in India: they had claimed him as one of their own — their saviour.'

-- Pg. 178. All the losses of Indian Railway were borne by the Indian people, all the gains pocketed by the British traders — even as he penetrated by rail deep into the Indian economy.'

Pg. 179. Nor were Indians employed in Railway.

Pg. 181. The railway workshops in Jamalpur in Bengal and Ajmer in Rajasthan were established in 1862 to maintain the trains, but their Indian mechanics became so adept that in 1878 they started designing and building their own locomotives. -- In 1912, therefore, the British passed an act of Parliament, explicitly making it impossible for Indian workshops to design and manufacture locomotives.'

Pg. 194. '... propagating English literature thru the English language were not based on any scientific notion but on the simple Macaulayan prejudice that European knowledge was axiomatically 'superior' to oriental knowledge.'

Pg. 199. 'Colonialism misappropriated and reshaped the ways in which a subject people saw its history and even its cultural self-definition. -- The task of Indian nationalists is to find new ways (and revive old ones) of expressing his culture, just as his society strives, with the end of colonialism, to find new ways of being and becoming.'

Pg. 219. 'The trinkets he (Vasco de Gama) he offered were deemed unworthy gifts for the Indian Monarch he offered them to, the Zamorin of Calicut; de Gama's goods were openly mocked and scorned by merchants and courtiers accustomed to far higher quality items.' -- The annual revenues of Moghal Emperor Aurangzeb (1618-1707) were vast. Indeed, tax revenues aside, his total income at the time is said to have amounted to \$450M, more than 10-times that of (his counterpart) Louis XIV.'

-- This was the country impoverished by British conquest.'

Pg. 222. Victorian Britain's ideological opposition to 'indiscriminate' charity denied many millions of Indians the relief that would have saved their lives.'

Pg. 224. 'The Indian Soldier was merely an obedient instrument: the Indian sepoy was described by a contemporary as 'temperate, respectful, patient, subordinate, and faithful.'

Pg. 225. -- how a few thousand British troops held down a subcontinent of 200M people, comes from Phillip Mason, who quotes a Victorian administrator: 'Our force does not operate so much by its actual strength as by the impression which it produces.'

Pg. 229. 'Three impressive women presided over the INC during an era in which not a single governor, secretary, or other British high official was female, and the very notion of a female authority figure, let alone a female viceroy, would have been a fantasy.'

Pg. 230. '[In contrast to the Moghuls]' the British maintained racial exclusivity, practiced discrimination against Indians and sneered at miscegenation.'

Pg. 231. In 1CE, India accounted for 33% of global GDP, -- In 1950, India stood at 4%.

Pg. 233. 'despite all the wrongs and injustices, Indians readily forgave the British when they left, retaining with them a 'special connection'.

Pg. 243. ' - the staying-power of organized violence is almost always greater than that of non-violence.' - It was when the soldiers who sworn their loyalty to the British Crown rebelled during WW2, and when the sailors of Royal Indian Navy mutinied in 1945 and fired their own cannons at British port installations, that the British realized the game was up. - Gandhi won the moral case, the 'soft-power' battle, but even w/o a military victory, the rebels and mutineers in uniform won the 'hard-power' war.

Pg. 246. with 21% of India's population and
17% of its revenue, Pakistan got
30% of Indian army
40% of " Navy
20% of " Air Force, obliged its govt

to devote 75% of the country's first budget to cover the costs of maintaining this oversized force. The disproportionately large military establishment had a vested interest ~~in~~ in its own perpetuation, ~~as~~ since it needed to invent a military threat in order to justify its continuance.