# Missionaries and Empire: British Imperialism through the Lens of Indian Christian Experiences

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## Abstract
This study examines the subtle differences between imperialism and colonialism, with a specific emphasis on the British rule in India and how it affected the Christian population in the region. Imperialism involves a wider plan to assert dominance in different ways, whereas colonialism involves direct control and settlement in foreign lands. During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, British imperialism in India, based on economic interests and cultural superiority, had a profound impact on the country's social, economic, and political structures. The research focuses on Jaye Ali Bakhsh's travel narrative, "Safar-e-Dakan," showcasing how cultural hegemony and foreign beliefs are enforced, especially through missionary work. It shows how British actions worsened famines and restricted opportunities for Indians, including Christians, in the colonial administration. In conclusion, the study highlights the enduring impacts of British imperialism, demonstrating the intricacies of cultural assimilation and the social and political obstacles encountered by the indigenous Christian population in post-colonial India.

The concept of "imperialism" has always been filled with ambiguity. Typically, imperialism and colonialism are regarded as interchangeable terms, although they have separate definitions. Imperialism is the overarching belief or strategy in which a nation aims to increase its control and authority over different countries. This power can appear in different ways, such as military interference, economic control, political influence, and cultural integration. Imperialism, in contrast to colonialism, may not always involve the establishment of permanent settlements or direct control over the territory. Its usual goal is to ensure strategic benefits, manage resources, and create economic interdependencies. During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the United States practiced imperialism in Latin America through economic and military actions, exerting influence without directly colonizing the countries.

"Imperialism is a policy or ideology that seeks to expand a nation's power and influence through diplomacy or military force, while colonialism refers specifically to the establishment of settlements and direct control over a foreign territory." (1)

On the contrary, colonialism is a particular form of imperialism that entails creating colonies and exerting direct authority over a foreign land. This frequently involves settlers moving from the colonizing country, resulting in notable shifts in the population makeup of the colonized area. Colonialism is defined by the utilization of the native population and natural assets, with the settlers usually enforcing their own administration, judicial structures, and cultural customs. The era of colonialism is frequently linked with European nations extending their territories in the Americas, Africa, and Asia, especially between the 15th and 20th centuries. For instance, the British colonial administration in India implemented a bureaucratic structure to control the native inhabitants and utilize their resources for the benefit of Britain. The reasons for these two concepts also vary. Imperialism is commonly motivated by the ambition for power, riches, and global impact, whereas colonialism often includes a belief in the supremacy of the colonizers, which rationalizes the dominance of the native inhabitants. This belief frequently stems from racial or cultural ideologies that strip the humanity of the colonized individuals.

British imperialism denotes the era in which Great Britain extended its power and dominance over extensive territories globally, greatly affecting both the colonies and the British Empire. This growth started in the late 16th century and peaked in the 19th and early 20th centuries. The reasons behind British imperialism were diverse, encompassing economic goals, the need for strategic benefits, national pride, and a belief in the superiority of British customs and administration.

Economically, Britain looked for fresh markets for its products and entry to vital raw materials for its industries. The colonization of regions abundant in cotton, rubber, and minerals was driven by the demand for these resources created by the Industrial Revolution starting in Britain. Furthermore, British business people and financiers looked for lucrative opportunities overseas, leading to the creation of plantations, mines, and trading firms.

  "The British Empire was built on the back of exploitation—of resources, of labor, and of markets—where the colonizer sought to maximize profit at the expense of the colonized." (2) In terms of strategy, British imperialism sought to acquire crucial territories to strengthen Britain's influence worldwide. Maintaining control over areas like the Suez Canal was essential for safeguarding sea trade routes, with strategic naval bases being set up globally to defend British interests. The search for strategic dominance frequently resulted in clashes with rival colonial empires such as France, Spain, and eventually, Germany.

Culturally, the foundation of British imperialism rested on the belief in the supremacy of Western civilization. Several British imperialists saw it as their responsibility to "civilize" the colonies, frequently enforcing their language, religion, and cultural traditions on native inhabitants. This cultural dominance allowed colonizers to oppress and take advantage of

native          populations,          viewing          them          as          lesser          beings.

The effects of British colonialism were deep and had multiple aspects. In the colonies, it resulted in noteworthy alterations in social systems, economies, and cultures. Conventional systems of governance were frequently taken apart or reorganized to align with British models, causing social disruption. From an economic perspective, certain areas saw growth through advancements in infrastructure such as railways and telegraphs, while others faced hardships because    of    resource    extraction    and    exploitation    of    local    workers.

The impact of British colonialism still affects ex-colonies in the present day. Numerous countries struggle with matters concerning identity, government, and economic reliance due to the impacts of colonial domination. Moreover, the impacts of British imperialism, both cultural and linguistic, can still be seen in various regions globally, where English is commonly used and local traditions have assimilated British customs.

British historians use this term to denote the establishment of the British Empire. British imperialism involves entering different areas with the purpose of meeting its goals and gaining control. Although imperial colonies may seem self-governing, British colonies were still responsible to the central government. Their foreign policy was frequently depicted as that of merchants or explorers, ultimately resulting in the rise of regional power. Imperialism involves not just exploiting the vulnerable, but also the collision of two different cultures. In this scenario, developed nations see developing nations as lower in status because of their cultural supremacy. When the British arrived in India for trade, they used Christian missionaries to enforce their cultural dominance over the Indians. The missionaries were invited to India in order to spread their religion and change the way of life of the Indians simultaneously. They viewed European culture and the English language as essential for their advancement.

the Christian population in India was varied and firmly established, with origins dating back to St. Thomas the Apostle's arrival in the 1st century. At the time of India gaining independence, Christians accounted for approximately 2-3% of the population, with notable presence in regions such as Kerala, Goa, and Tamil Nadu. The society was famous for its support of education, as numerous missionaries founded educational institutions that were crucial in fostering literacy and societal progress. Establishments like St. Stephen's College in Delhi have gained a reputation as esteemed educational hubs, mirroring the community's dedication to learning. Apart from teaching, Christians were also playing an active role in providing social services by establishing hospitals, orphanages, and charitable institutions to help those who were being left out. This commitment to serving has made a long-lasting difference in Indian society, especially in regions where they collaborated closely with community members.The political environment in 1947 presented notable difficulties, particularly due to the partition of India that led to communal tensions. Although many

Christians attempted to stay impartial, some encountered challenges during the violence and displacement of this era.
In terms of culture, the Christian community made a significant contribution to the diverse fabric of Indian society, impacting traditional customs and festivities. Nevertheless, they faced difficulties associated with religious intolerance and identity politics in the period after gaining independence.

We will analyze Jaye Ali Bakhsh's missionary travel account about his "safar e dakan "and the impact of british imperial on the local Christian community.In 1904, Jaye Ali Bakhsh started his trip from Lahore to Hyderabad Deccan. While traveling, he went through Bhopal and talked about the sturdy walls of Gwalior Fort, pointing out that their durability is no match for British cannons.

"Bhopal par nazar marty hoy Gwalior  ka qilah nzar aya. Rawayat hai kay k zamana qadeem mai dawoon nay yeh bnaya tha . kabhi yeh mazboot qilah ho ga.lekin topon k samny is ki kuch wuqhat                                                                nai"(3)

In historical accounts, King Surajpal granted the title "Ar" (meaning corner) to the sage "Gawali" who cured his leprosy in the fifth century AD. The area was called "Gwali ar", but over time it was pronounced as Gwalior.

The British clergy arrived in India with a clear goal: to make the local population feel inferior about their culture and religion, while at the same time highlighting the superiority of British culture and religion. For this purpose, they banned indigenous alcohol in Christianity and allowed English alcohol. The purpose behind this position was to boost British alcohol trade.
In this aspect, Jaye Ali Bakhsh, the writer of travelogues, states: "Chunancha baaz lecturer ke baray mein jo may nooshi ke khilaf lecture dete hain suna hai ke woh pi kar lecture dete hain. Baazon ka khayal hai ke aisi anjuman ki zaroorat wahan Deccan mein is liye hai ke angrezi sharab ki bikri wahan bohat kam hai. Is liye desi sharab ki mukhalifat aur mamnaat is tarah ki jati hai ke woh band ho aur angrezi sharab khanah ki taraqqi ho"(4)

In the beginning, most top positions in the British government were mainly allocated for British citizens. Indians were mostly left out of important positions, which restricted their chances for moving up in society. The creation of the Indian Civil Service (ICS) provided a pathway for some Indians to occupy prestigious administrative positions. Nevertheless, the hiring process was rigorous and frequently unfair, showing a preference for individuals with British academic credentials. Although some Indians managed to get into the ICS, most were still left out of the top positions in government. While setting up in Deccan, the travel writer learned about the sad death of a prominent Deccan official, Imad Jang. The cause of his death was linked to the appointment of a British person to a significant position in the Deccan region instead of his nephew, a usual occurrence in the British colonial period:

"Yeh fareeq is baat par zor deta hai ke Hyderabad mein jitne bhi aala ohde hon, woh mulkiyon yani wahan ke maqami bashindon ko milne chahiye, bahar ke logon ko nahi milne chahiye. Unki raye mein European aur Madrasi is se mustasna hain. Khaaskar bandish hindustaniyon ke liye pesh karte hain ke unko aala ohde nahi milne chahiye. Unhoon ne apne ek bhatije Nizamuddin Sahab ko ek ohde ke liye namzad kiya tha. Lekin bandagan aala se ek ghair mulki naam ka hukam aa gaya aur woh maqarrar ho gaye."(5)

The British imperial policies and inadequate management greatly influenced the severe famine in India in 1904, especially affecting the Madras Presidency. British agricultural policies mainly emphasized on promoting cash crops for export, leading to a decline in local food production. This strategy made certain areas especially at risk of experiencing food shortages in times of droughts or crop failures. The writer also brings up the difficulties faced by Christians in 1904 due to British rule policies, causing suffering for the Indian middle class.

"Is school mein chaar so se zyada talaba the. Is ilaqe mein paanch hazaar se zyada Maseeh hain. Khushkaali se yahan logon ko bohat takleef hui."(6) High taxes on farmers caused many to sell their food stocks, leading to increased food insecurity in times of scarcity. The British government's reaction to the famine was notably sluggish, with insufficient support efforts hindered by administrative inefficiencies and a lack of awareness of community needs, delaying aid to those who required it.

In addition, the British focused on building railways for transporting goods to ports, but they largely ignored developing rural infrastructure, resulting in restricted access to food supplies for people in these areas. This mix of elements worsened the famine and underscored the harmful effects of colonial policies on indigenous populations.

**Referance**

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