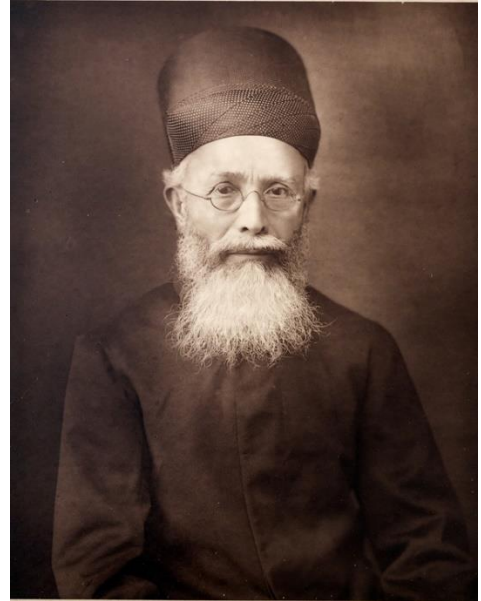


# Dadabhai Naoroji: The Benefits of British Rule, 1871

*Dadabhai Naoroji, nicknamed "The Grand Old Man of India," was a founding member of the Indian National Congress and the first Asian to serve as a Member of Parliament of the United Kingdom, 1892-1895.*



## **The Benefits of British Rule for India:**

In the Cause of Humanity: Abolition of *suttee*<sup>1</sup> and infanticide.<sup>2</sup> Destruction of *Dacoits*,<sup>3</sup> *Thugs*,<sup>4</sup> *Pindarees*,<sup>5</sup> and other such pests of Indian society. Allowing remarriage of Hindu widows, and charitable aid in time of famine<sup>6</sup>. Glorious work all this, of which any nation may well be proud, and such as has not fallen to the lot of any people in the history of mankind.

In the Cause of Civilization: Education, both male and female. Though yet only partial, an inestimable blessing as far as it has gone, and leading gradually to the destruction of superstition, and many moral and social evils. Resuscitation of India's own noble literature, modified and refined by the Enlightenment of the West.

Politically: Peace and order. Freedom of speech and liberty of the press. Higher political knowledge and aspirations. Improvement of government in the native states. Security of life and property. Freedom from oppression caused by the caprice or greed of despotic rulers, and from devastation by war. Equal justice between man and man (sometimes [favoring] Europeans)...

Materially: Loans for railways and irrigation. Development of a few valuable products, such as indigo, tea, coffee, silk, etc. Increase of exports. Telegraphs.

Generally: A slowly growing desire of late to treat India equitably, and as a country held in trust. Good intentions. No nation on the face of the earth has ever had the opportunity of achieving such a glorious work as this. I hope in the credit side of the account I have done no injustice, and if I have omitted any item which anyone may think of importance, I shall have the greatest pleasure in inserting it. I appreciate, and so do my countrymen, what England has done for India, and I know that it is only in British hands that her regeneration can be accomplished...

## **The Detriments<sup>7</sup> of British Rule:**

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<sup>1</sup> Suttee: The practice of a widow self-immolating (lighting herself on fire) on her husband's funeral pyre (fire)

<sup>2</sup> Infanticide: Abortion, usually killing of female babies because a dowry cannot be paid

<sup>3</sup> Dacoits: Robbers

<sup>4</sup> Thugs (also known as Thuggee): Small roaming tribes who would murder travelers and steal their belongings as a way of life

<sup>5</sup> Pindarees: Adventurer-robbers

<sup>6</sup> Famine: Widespread shortage of food

<sup>7</sup> Detriment: Negative or bad side

Politically: Repeated breach of pledges to give the natives a fair and reasonable share in the higher administration of their own country, which has much shaken confidence in the good faith of the British word. Political aspirations and the legitimate claim to have a reasonable voice in the legislation and the imposition and disbursement of taxes, met to a very slight degree, thus treating the natives of India not as British subjects, in whom representation is a birthright. Consequent on the above, an utter disregard of the feelings and views of the natives. The great moral evil of the drain of wisdom and practical administration, leaving none to guide the rising generation.

Financially: All attention is engrossed in devising new modes of taxation, without any adequate effort to increase the means of the people to pay; and the consequent vexation and oppressiveness of the taxes imposed, imperial and local. Inequitable financial relations between England and India, *i.e.*, the political debt of 100,000,000 clapped on India's shoulders...

Materially: [The] continuous impoverishment and exhaustion of the country, except so far as it has been very partially relieved and replenished by the railway and irrigation loans, and the windfall of the consequences of the American war, since 1850. Even with this relief, the material condition of India is such that the great mass of the poor have hardly [change in their pockets each day] and a few rags, or a scanty subsistence. The famines that were in their power to prevent, if they had done their duty, as a good and intelligent government. The policy adopted during the last fifteen years of building railways, irrigation works, etc., is hopeful, has already resulted in much good to your credit, and if persevered in, gratitude and contentment will follow. An increase of exports without adequate compensation; loss of manufacturing industry and skill...

Summary: To sum up the whole, the British rule has been: morally, a great blessing; politically, peace and order on one hand, blunders on the other; materially, impoverishment, relieved as far as the railway and other loans go. The natives call the British system "Sakar ki Churi," the knife of sugar. That is to say, there is no oppression, it is all smooth and sweet, but it is the knife, notwithstanding. I mention this that you should know these feelings. Our great misfortune is that you do not know our wants. When you will know our real wishes, I have not the least doubt that you would do justice. The genius and spirit of the British people is fair play and justice.

