



DOI:10.5948/2454-2326/nairjc/00009.03

AN IN-DEPTH ANALYSIS OF THE BRITISH EAST INDIA COMPANY'S ACQUISITION OF INDIA AND ITS VARYING PERSPECTIVES.

***SHREYES SHRIKANT PARBAT**

**Research scholar SGB Amravati University*

ABSTRACT

This critical study explores the colonial view and Nationalist view of the conquest of India by the East India Company. The establishment of British rule in India can be analyzed by considering various factors related to the East India Company's trade and the prevailing conditions in India. This should be examined within the context of the nature of trade and the challenges faced by the company due to multiple weaknesses in Indian political, administrative, and socio-economic structures.

INTRODUCTION

The establishment of British control in India during the mid-18th century signaled the commencement of a new era in modern Indian history. The nature of British rule was exploitative and extractive, as exemplified by the East India Company's corrupt practices and failure to create institutions that would promote economic development and good governance it was colonial. The British East India Company came as a trading company and they became conquerors and rulers of India through various military campaigns and strategic alliances. The colonial view of the conquest of India by the East India Company was characterized by a perspective that justified and celebrated British imperialism.

This perspective saw the British as bringing civilization, modernity, and progress to a backward and uncivilized India. The establishment of British rule in India has been subject to various interpretations by scholars and

different schools of thought. Colonial historians rationalized the presence of British rule as an unintended outcome, while Indian nationalist historians refuted this perspective, considering it a deliberate and strategically planned endeavor.

COLONIAL INTERPRETATION

" Our acquisition of India was made blindly, nothing great was ever done by Englishmen, if done was done so unintentionally and so accidentally as the conquest of India"

- John Seeley

According to the perspective of colonial scholars, British colonization in India was perceived as an unplanned and unintentional occurrence. Originally arriving as traders at the beginning of the 17th century, the British were primarily engaged in commercial endeavors. However, through a series of unforeseen circumstances, they eventually found themselves assuming political control over India.

The controversy surrounding the nature and establishment of British rule in India was triggered by John Seeley, an English scholar who expressed his views in his book "Expansion of England." In this work, Seeley argues that the British conquest of India was accidental and unintentional, leading to a sense of absent-mindedness on their part.

Ramsay Muir also contributes to this discussion in his book "History of India," stating that, unlike other European companies at the time, the British did not initially have aspirations for political domination in India. Instead, they focused primarily on trade and commerce activities through the British East India Company. Muir further contends that although they became rulers against their will, it is important to recognize the significant contributions made by the British towards improving conditions for Indians during their reign.

INDIAN NATIONALIST INTERPRETATION

In contrast to the colonial perspective, Indian nationalist historians argue that the establishment of British rule in India was a deliberate and strategically planned endeavor.

According to this interpretation, it is to be noted that throughout the world, European Imperial powers. reached as Traders and when they got the opportunity to establish their political Domination they carved out colonial empires in Asia and Africa the same was the case for India

According to this view, The Mughal Empire of India was too powerful to Challenge when the British company arrived in India. In the opening decade of the 17th Century, In fact, the English East India Company waited for

the right opportunity and when they got it they grabbed it. This happened in the 18th Century when the mighty Mughal empire started disintegrating

According to R.C. Majumdar³ and H.C.Rai Choudhary, Company was a Trading Company From 1600 to 1700 and even after that. But, the Battle of Plassey 1757 was a game changer and Thereafter, Company began to dream of an empire in India

Historians like Ram Gopal too made an elaborate study and as per his research put forward a similar view. (How British controlled Bengal)

BEIC used different strategies and plans and that was seen in the case of the Battle of Plassey when they hatched a conspiracy against the Nawab.

Battle of Plassey 1757, Battle of Bauxar 1764 and abolition of Nawabship are suggestive of their plan. The Process that began in Bengal continued unabated beyond and extended to Mysore, Marathas and other native powers eventually

Their specific strategies and plans are to be conceived in the light of certain specific policies like - Policy of Ring Fence

- Policy of Subsidiary Alliance
- Policy of War and Conquest
- Policy Of Doctrine Lapse

are good examples in this context.

ANALYSIS

The closer examination of circumstances leading to the establishment of British rule in India reveals that the truth lies between the two extreme interpretations.

In its initial stages, the British operations in India lacked any planning or design elements. However, as time progressed, the British East India Company's ambitions were driven by political motives. In the early 17th century, English traders arrived in India and established their first factory in Surat, subsequently setting up many other factories across the country. For over a century, their singular focus was on trade and commercial activities, with no involvement in politico-military affairs. The company purchased Zamindari rights to establish their factories, fortifying some of them for safety reasons. They sought concessions and privileges from Indian rulers, receiving various Farmans from rulers such as Jehangir, Shah Shuja, and Farrukhsiyar. These actions were undertaken to maximize commercial profits and lacked any political motives.

During the second half of the 18th century, the British aggressively pursued politico-military activities in India. The British East India Company instigated three Carnatic wars, with two of these wars originating from Europe. Additionally, the Company participated in two battles in Bengal - the Battle of Plassey in 1757 and the Battle of Buxar in 1764. It is important to note that the Battle of Plassey was a personal pursuit of Clive's and was not sanctioned by the British East India Company. Conversely, the Battle of Buxar was a conflict that arose from circumstances rather than intentions, with neither Nawab Mir Qasim nor British East India Company seeking a confrontation at that time. The wars waged against Mysore and Maratha were largely situational and unplanned.

During the time of Wellesly, the subsidiary alliance system was implemented to disarm Indian native states, eradicate French threats, and prevent any native alliances against the company. However, when Lord Hasting became the Governor General of Bengal from 1813-1823, British policies in India drastically changed. At this point, the British had already captured vast territories in India, and were now focused on expanding their empire. Hasting strongly emphasized British paramountcy and aggressively pursued territorial expansion. Defensive battles were no longer the priority, as an aggressive imperialistic stance was taken. This policy continued with rulers like William Bentick, Lord Auckland, Lord Ellenborough, and Lord Dalhousie. In 1858, the British Crown took over the East India Company, ultimately revealing their true imperialistic intentions.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- [1].Anderson, George. A General View of the Variations Which Have Been Made in the Affairs of the East-India Company, since the Conclusion of the War, in India, in 1784. London: John Stockdale, 1792
- [2].Banerjee, Abhijit, and Lakshimi Iyer. "History, Institutions, and Economic Performance: The Legacy of Colonial Land Tenure Systems in India." *The American Economic Review* 95, no. 4 (September 2005): 1190-1213.
- [3].Banerjee, Tarasankar. *History of Internal Trade Barriers in British India. Bengal Presidency (1765-1836)*. Calcutta: Asiatic Society, 1972.
- [4].Bayly, Christopher Alan. *Indian Society and the Making of the British Empire. The New Cambridge History of India (Vol II, Part 1)*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1988.
- [5].Bowen, Huw V. *Revenue and Reform: The Indian Problem in British Politics, 1757-1773*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1991.
- [6].Broadberry, Stephen, and Bishnupriya Gupta. "Indian Economic Performance and Living Standards, 1600-2000." In *A New Economic History of Colonial India*, edited by Latika Chaudhary, Bishnupriya Gupta, Tirthankar Roy and Anand V. Swamy, 15–32. London: Routledge, 2016.

- [7].Chaudhuri, Kirti N. The Trading World of Asia and the English East India Company, 1660-1760, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1978.
- [8].Dutt, Romesh Chunder. The Economic History of India under Early British Rule: From the Rise of the British Power in 1757, to the Accession of Queen Victoria in 1837. London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, 1906.