

The legacy of the British Empire is a complicated one, disguised by events not brought about by Empire but by men inside it. To understand its legacy we must first ask ourselves what is Empire- is it the people that live in it? No, Empire was built through colonies, land seized or bargained from others. People that owe their first allegiance to their country and family that then "belonged" to another country. So maybe Empire isn't made from those in it but instead it's made of the landmass it "owns". And if Empire is just a landmass then what is its purpose? Its purpose was trade- if the Empire was built to spark racial feuds and subjugate people then making beneficiary trade agreements is, well, a great place to start. It's not Empire that is to blame for racial tension or subjugation- it's the fault of men, humans that make mistakes, that caused such violence and hatred not imperialism or the Empire.

Race and gender played important roles in Empire, but instead of being a critical issue it was a part of life. It was ingrained in the wholly white British society of Britain- where almost everyone had never seen a black man- did the roots of racism gain hold. Fear stimulated racism, or rather, fear stimulated their version of what we call racism. It is entirely possible that they did not even realise the atrocities they indifferently caused in the name of the British Empire. Many people thought that imperialism and the Empire was a way for them to civilize the "semi-civilized" people of the Middle East. When people resisted the RAF flew over their homes and farms frightening livestock and people- who had never seen such machines. Ironically, that act shows just how civilised Empire was.

As history repeats itself Imperialism repeated itself. The Roman Empire. The Egyptian Empire. The British Empire. All repetitions of each other. And so Empire followed the path of its predecessors, allying and occasionally seizing land for their own benefit. And, to put yourself in their shoes, why not? It was a widely accepted maneuver. Darwin's survival of the fittest in another, twisted, scale. In a country eat country world was it not inevitable that events led to what we now call racism?

Mary Curzon, wife of George Curzon, former Viceroy to India made bold statements with her dress- for at that time a woman's opinion counted very little. When she was pregnant and expecting visitors she wore a modified Indian sari, to show support to her husband and the Raj. It was a statement to how India had influenced them in positive ways as opposed to racial tension that also simmered in India.

Empire left behind many a legacy, and not only that but a legacy changes in different perspectives. So I am left to conclude that Empire was neither good nor bad- it was just as it was- but that does not mean its members are. And as we often forget, those members do not speak for Empire, do not hold the same values and opinions as the rest of the members of Empire- after all, Britain is a democracy.