



'The British Empire was responsible for reducing India, one of the world's richest countries in the 17th century, to one of the poorest in the 20th century', writes bestselling author Shashi Tharoor in his explosive new book, *A Long Darkness: The British Empire in India*.

ABOUT THE BOOK

In 1930, the American historian and philosopher Will Durant wrote that Britain's 'conscious and deliberate bleeding of India... [was the] greatest crime in all history'. He was not the only one to denounce the rapacity and cruelty of British rule, and his assessment was not exaggerated. Almost thirty-five million Indians died of acts of commission and omission by the British in famines, in addition to epidemics and communal riots and massacres like the reprisal killings after the 1857 War of Independence and the Amritsar massacre of 1919 in which the psychopathic Brigadier-General Reginald Dyer, without provocation, murdered several hundred men, women and children, and injured over a thousand more. Besides the deaths of Indians, British rule impoverished India in a manner that beggars belief. When the East India Company took control of the country, in the chaos that ensued after the collapse of the Mughal Empire, India's share of world GDP was 23 per cent. When the British left it was just above 3 per cent.

In his brilliant new book, *A Long Darkness: The British Empire in India*, bestselling author Shashi Tharoor writes with great insight and scholarship about the iniquities attendant on Britain's colonization of India. There are numerous books about aspects of the British Raj, there are several that extol the virtues of Empire, there are other books that touch upon the excesses of the East India Company, but there isn't a single comprehensive study of the amorality and rapaciousness of British rule in the Indian subcontinent. By 1940, after nearly two centuries of the Raj, Britain accounted for nearly 10 per cent of world GDP, while India had been reduced to a poor 'Third World' country. Writes Dr Tharoor, 'Britain's rise for 200 years was financed by its depredations in India.' In short, India's resources enriched England, fuelled its Industrial Revolution and fattened its 'nabobs'. He does not consider it feasible for Britain to make repatriations to India, since no sum of restitution would be adequate; instead he argues for a historical accounting and a moral admission of responsibility.

This book was inspired by a debate at the Oxford Union in May 2015, where Dr Tharoor's speech helped carry the motion 'Britain Owes Reparations to Her Former Colonies'. Building on the points he made during that speech (the YouTube video of the debate went viral, gaining nearly 3.5 million views and being downloaded many thousands of times more), Dr Tharoor says he decided to write *A Long Darkness* because he was seeking to understand the wrongs that were done yesterday 'both to grasp what has brought us to our present reality and to understand the past for itself.'

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

SHASHI THAROOR is the bestselling author of fifteen previous books, both fiction and non-fiction, besides being a noted critic and columnist. His books include the path-breaking satire *The Great Indian Novel* (1989), the classic *India: From Midnight to the Millennium* (1997) and most recently, *India Shastra: Reflections on the Nation in Our Time* (2015). He was a former Under Secretary-General of the United Nations and a former Minister of State for Human Resource Development and Minister of State for External Affairs in the Government of India. He is a two-time member of the Lok Sabha from Thiruvananthapuram. He chairs Parliament's External Affairs Committee. He has won numerous literary awards, including a Commonwealth Writers' Prize, and was honoured as New Age Politician of the Year (2010) by NDTV. He was awarded the Pravasi Bharatiya Samman, India's highest honour for overseas Indians. [For more on Shashi Tharoor, please see www.shashitharoor.in. Follow him on Twitter @ShashiTharoor and Facebook at www.facebook.com/ShashiTharoor].

Aleph Book Company will publish *A Long Darkness: The British Empire in India* by Shashi Tharoor on 1 November 2016. To receive an advance copy of the book for review, or to request an interview with Shashi Tharoor please get in touch with Vasundhara Raj Baigra at vasundhara@alephbookcompany.com