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## India Shining and the British Media

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**Guest Column- by Hari Sud**

India Shining campaign is not sitting well with the Western media. British press in particular has again taken the lead to negate this assertion. The Americans have also followed the suit a bit more cautiously. The “Economist” of London did not like the new slogan of progress and prosperity in India and wrote a major article on “ **India Not Shinning**”. It would appear that this conservative British weekly has taken the role of the opposition in the upcoming Indian elections. The opposition parties (more specifically the Congress) has lost the propaganda war ahead of elections, hence have come out critically against the India Shinning campaign. The Economist just reflected their views. The US weekly “Time” also wrote a similar article in its last issue, but was less critical as compared to the Economist. If you read the two articles together, they appear to be the pen work of two people sitting side by side and using same notes to pooh-pooh the India shining assertion.

Let us examine the roots of these unpleasant British feelings. The mentality of the British Raj never left British public psyche. They wish, they were the rulers and had taken the credit for India Shinning. Since India is independent, they just cannot believe that India can shine without them. The Economist has discovered other malaise with the Indian economy, even though the economy is doing very well. The new British mantra about the state of Indian economy is, *widening fiscal deficit and unemployment*. These have always been there with India and have wreaked havoc with most of the Western Economies including British from time to time. Still the nations prosper. So why target India to highlight this issue?

The point is that in-spite of weaknesses, India is moving ahead faster and smarter. Then, why can the British media report the reports as they are and not editorialize them? The fact is that it is difficult for them to digest the facts. British opinion of India is very low. India’s culture,

its intellectuals its achievements are regarded as inferior. The media has bred the public opinion with negative stereotypes. Ask an average Englishman or woman on the streets of London about India. They will say, India is a nation of Snake Charmers, Sadhus, Rajas, and Beggars etc. You have to remind them that the person who runs their computer system in their office is an Indian and that too a highly qualified person from India!

### **Why do they hold these views?**

These views have their origin in British rule of India. A sense of superiority engulfed the British mindset during this period. They wished to be treated next to the Gods. Viceroys, who arrived in India to rule for 100 years, drilled in Indian mindset a sense of slavery. The Viceroys and their cohorts, whenever they had time from transferring money from India to Britain, joined in a few activities like hunting tigers or entertaining Rajas or throwing state banquets to the visiting royalty or just ride their gilded buggy through, the Mall in Shimla. All this was done to imbibe a spirit of master over the slave. This they continued for 100 years.

Subverting the culture was left to the scholars and missionaries. The latter made a failed attempt to make India dump its cultural heritage of 8,000 years and become Christian. This attempt failed in 1857. The new British administration, which took over from the East India Company, removed the missionaries from India but invited a fresh horde of scholars. The new scholars came to India to subvert the culture from within. One such scholar was Friedrich Max Muller. He was German by birth and a missionary by training. His main objective was to encircle the mighty fortress of the religion & culture in India and undermine it and then storm it with the soldiers of the cross for a complete victory. To this affect he became a Sanskrit scholar and translated Vedas and other ancient Indian treatise into English, not for study and appreciation but to find faults. The main damage of his scholarly pursuits was not the translations but what he told his Oxford audience about India as a professor of Indian philosophy. Scholars like him poured like never before. Rudyard Kipling could not find anything better other than creating stories of Jungle Boy or rare custom of Sati. Monier Williams held, a Max Muller type views and committed himself to denigrate India's cultural heritage. They all succeeded in one thing - to strengthen master – slave relationship and permanently alter the British mindset.

### **Likes of Max Muller had a Profound affect on How British Think Today.**

Max Muller was a German Born missionary. He went to Oxford very early in life and studied Sanskrit to translate Vedas into English. To a poor German student at Oxford this was a way to make money and get a scholarship from East Indian Company. This scholarship was his stepping-stone to fame. He side stepped the available evidence and authored the thesis that "Aryans" came from outside. He has dated Aryan culture much later than what Indian scholars believe, because he could not predate the Indian culture before the commonly held Christian belief of creation of world around 4000BC.

The greatest effect on the British mindset, he exercised, was during his lengthy stay at Oxford. He instructed for 30 years the graduating

class of Indian Civil Service (Imperial Civil Service at that time) on India and Indian culture. What he taught them was what he believed in i.e. Indian cultural fortress is to be undermined. All his graduating class went to rule India with that mind set. They could never like India and could never consider Indian an equal. They stayed aloof and became self-centered. In turn developed the habits of over-lordship. A parade of Viceroys like Ripon and Curzon followed. The latter were masters of divide and rule. Irwin and Mountbatten came later. They talked softly but carried their prejudged prejudices. On return, they spread stories and gossip of strange customs and practices they have seen in India. They could never bring themselves to believe that they may have had dealings with a superior culture. To put crudely “ Indians were writing philosophy when the British were swinging from trees”.

Successive scholars, viceroys, civil servants maintained this differentiation. Army officers were no exception. This policy ultimately started the end of British occupation of India. Within fifty years, after the rule began, resentment grew high and next fifty years were spent in ejecting them out peacefully.

The returned overlords from India became business leaders, politicians, media moghuls, historians, intellectuals, civil servants, and intelligence agents and set in motion their opinions, which are resonating today.

India's miserable performance on the economic front for the first 40 years after independence made them much bolder. They could say anything, write anything or support anything they liked. The present crop of reporters in India and their masters in England have grown up with this mind set hence cannot truly report anything the way they found it. They must introduce their pre-judged opinions. Sensationalizing trivia has become their hobby.

### **Conducting Business With Britain**

In the late 20<sup>th</sup> century and in this century, colonizing distant lands is no longer possible. Hence, national prosperity is assured by avoiding war, encouraging international trade, servicing each other's economy, technology etc. Britain has a pre-eminent position in technology, service and trade. Its products are much valued in India and elsewhere. In return, Britain imports from India only basic products. The trade is unbalanced in favor of Britain. Only in a last little while technological servicing from India has become a staple item for Britons. This is assuring prosperity for young men and women of India who provide IT and other services to Corporate Briton. As Indians collect money in hard currencies, they tend to spend it. Guess, where will they spend it and what will they buy. Possibly, purchasing British products. In this scenario prosperity is assured for both the nations. Is it not wonderful, that British businesses have additional outlet for its goods and Indian young men and women have jobs providing them services inexpensively? Then how come media does not catch on to this environment of mutual prosperity and change its ways?

### **Why is Media failing its readers by Mis-reporting?**

Question need to be asked is, how is media getting the win-win scenario wrong. Are the journalists truly exercising their judgments or official cues are behind them. If the latter is true then the scientific journalism is taking a back seat to the politicians. Is the current crop of British politicians descendants of the British Raj rulers of India? Is the government manipulating the media? Then it begs a new question i.e. why is the British establishment hell bent on misleading its public. Even if the establishment puts out its version of events, scientific journalistic reporting requires that the story be weighed in with other requirements of the day including asking themselves that – what if the facts are on both sides of the equation? Should it be given a positive slant or negative slant? In case of India Shinning, it was definitely a negative slant.

### **What British Gave to India Is Still Valued**

Yes, there are a lot, which the British left behind in India, which are positive. We must compliment them for leaving their language behind, which is going to propel India in this technological age ahead of China in next 20 years. Then the civil service, parliamentary system of democracy etc. are all gifts of British Raj to India. The greatest of all gifts is ejecting the Muslim rule out of India. Muslim had made a home in India for 800 years and would still be around had the British not defeated them. With all these good things, why is the British establishment and its media hell bent on spoiling the party? Every negative report about India published or broadcast in the British media does not sit well with any self respecting Indians. They fume every time but are unable to do anything. This is a pitiful situation.

### **Steps needed to Remedy the present Situation**

To the West and Britain in particular:

Do not send, India haters as reporters to India. Also remove India haters from your editorial boards. Treat India as a great business opportunity. Do whatever a salesman does to promote its goods and services. Try not to mess with politicians in opposition. The latter have one simple motive i.e. malign the current government. If the local press is not helping their cause they turn to the Western press to get their message across. For western reporter posted for a short duration, it is important to check the story for its positives and negatives. Stay away from national politics. The latter is the business of the locals. Save your pen from stereotyping with pre-judged notions.

In return, India's gratitude for all the economic opportunities Britain and the West is offering is to be appreciated. If British are prepared to amend their ways then India should lay the past to rest. Corrective steps could begin by recalling the errand reporters. Alternatively a positive outlook in future issues of the media could play the same role of peacemaker.

In concluding remarks, I should say that in this environment of peace and prosperity, room for stereotype does not exist. It has to be finally laid to rest. What better time than now?

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