

# The Great Famine Of India 1876-78: Unveiling the Dark Era of the British Raj

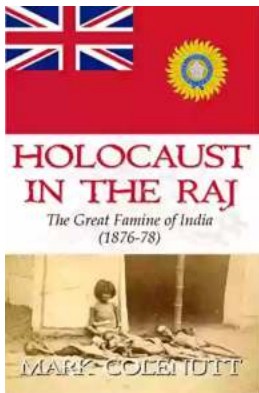


The Great Famine of India that occurred between 1876 and 1878 remains one of the most devastating episodes in the country's history. It exposed the cruel realities of the British Raj and left an indelible mark on both the land and its people. In this article, we delve into the heart-wrenching details of this

catastrophic event, shedding light on its causes, aftermath, and the complicity of the British rulers.

## The Genesis of the Great Famine

The famine of 1876-78 had its roots in a series of calamitous events that plagued the Indian subcontinent. The failure of the southwest monsoon for two consecutive years resulted in a severe drought, leading to the destruction of crops and decimation of livestock. Agricultural yields plummeted, and the already impoverished population faced acute food shortages.



### Holocaust in the Raj: The Great Famine of India (1876-78) (The British Raj Series Book 2)

by Mark Colenutt (Kindle Edition)

★★★★☆ 4.8 out of 5

Language : English  
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Screen Reader : Supported  
Enhanced typesetting : Enabled  
Word Wise : Enabled  
Print length : 230 pages  
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## The Relentless Greed of the British Raj

While droughts and crop failures are considered natural disasters, the extent of devastation caused by the famine was largely due to the policies and actions of the British rulers. The land under cash crops such as indigo and opium was prioritized over food crops, exacerbating the already dire situation.

The exploitative land revenue system implemented by the British Raj added to the misery. Peasants were taxed relentlessly, and even during times of extreme hardship, collection targets were enforced without mercy. This left the farmers with no choice but to sell whatever little grain they had at exorbitantly low prices, further enriching the British masters.

## **The Role of Ignorance and Indifference**

Despite clear indications of an impending disaster, the British administration turned a blind eye to the suffering of the Indian population. The Viceroy of India at the time, Lord Lytton, chose to focus on his grand Durbar celebrations in Delhi while millions starved to death in the countryside.

Moreover, relief efforts were delayed, inadequate, and often mismanaged. The authorities often argued that providing free food and assistance would discourage self-reliance and create dependency on the state. This callous approach led to countless deaths and unimaginable suffering.

## **The Human Cost of the Famine**

The Great Famine of 1876-78 took an immense toll on human life. It is estimated that between 5.5 and 12 million people perished during this period, making it one of the deadliest famines in history. Villages turned into ghost towns, as malnourishment and diseases claimed the lives of men, women, and children.

The hunger-stricken masses resorted to desperate measures, including eating grass, tree bark, and even human flesh. The disturbing images of skeletal bodies and haunted eyes remain a haunting reminder of the horrors endured during those dark years.

## **The Legacy of the Great Famine**

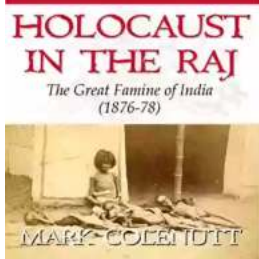
The Great Famine of 1876-78 left an indelible mark on India's collective memory. It shattered any illusions of benevolence or paternalism associated with the British Raj, exposing the true nature of colonial rule. The event became a catalyst for the Indian independence movement, fueling a growing discontent and demands for self-governance.

The famine also sparked a wave of social and economic reforms. It paved the way for organizations such as the Indian National Congress and various philanthropic movements that sought to uplift the marginalized and mitigate the impact of future disasters.

## The Call for Recognition and Reconciliation

As we reflect upon the Great Famine of 1876-78, it becomes evident that this tragedy deserves greater recognition worldwide. The lives lost and the suffering endured must serve as a constant reminder of the atrocities committed during the British Raj.

Thus, it is imperative to acknowledge the collective responsibility for this dark chapter in history and strive for reconciliation. By learning from the mistakes of the past, we can ensure a more compassionate and just future for all.



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"A most excellent piece of work for anyone that wants to learn more about a time in Britain's history that is sadly air-brushed from British history."

The Raj is considered the jewel in the crown of British colonial achievement. Startlingly, this rose-tinted view is not shared by the Indian subcontinent.

The national archives of India tell of a very different history under British control; a history which is well documented in its public records and similarly well covered by the nation's historians.

When the Great Famine swept across India, the population perished in their millions. But to what extent were the British accountable for one of the greatest losses of life in history? Few famines, however, are the sole making of an unreasonable Mother Nature. Did the British administration then, do anything to exacerbate the catastrophe or did they, as alleged, do all in their power to save life?

No event in Britain's colonial venture more completely answers the debate over our nation's ulterior motives of Empire than the Great Famine in India. The Famine of 1876-78 has faded from the pages of British history but not from the memory of the nation devastated by it.

Was the British Empire then, different from other Colonial powers or equally flawed?



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