

## **Emireland- How Imperialism Has Shaped Modern Britain**

Sathnam Sanghera

Our group's feedback on this book was overwhelmingly positive. The writing style was straightforward, with just enough humour to aid understanding of a complicated subject. Without trivialising the subject matter, the author often raised a smile, e.g., when he describes seeing an item originally stolen from Tibet on an episode of 'Flog It'. By easily acknowledging his own initial lack of understanding of the subject, the author lets the reader off the hook for our own ignorance - partly the result, in both our cases, of a Western-focused education.

It's evident that this ignorance of Empire is widely shared and negatively shapes the views of many of the British public, as evidenced by the recent polls he quotes - 30% of respondents in the 2020 one believing former colonies were better off as part of the Empire (tell that to the indigenous people of Tasmania!). He explodes some myths behind these kind of views e.g., that the British left India with a wonderful railway system.

Sanghera tackles the controversial nature of the issues head on, offering unsensational accounts of the dreadful cruelties and systematic pillaging undertaken in the name of 'Empire'. Some might consider it reductive but his description of the language of Brexiteers as that of 'coloniser' or 'colonised', and his comment that the Government's response to Covid reflected an attitude of British exceptionalism made sense. Today's multicultural Britain exists because "We are here because you were there", and he highlights a reluctance to examine this history.

The author manages to end on a positive note, suggesting that we move away the idea of tearing down the legacies of Empire and focus instead on creating, building, and widening people's knowledge base. With a very impressive bibliography, it is clear that Sanghera has researched the subject thoroughly.