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When will there be a film on Winston Churchill, the barbaric monster with the blood of millions on his hands?

Imperialistic pop culture has enshrined Churchill only as a military great, a fun drunk, a loyal monarchist with a penchant for fine speech and a flair for loquacious prose. But the British PM lacerated the world with tragedies, profiting from plunders and mass murders, writes Shree Paradkar.



Gary Oldman as Winston Churchill in Darkest Hour. In his Oscar acceptance speech for playing the role, Oldman said, “I would just like to salute Sir Winston Churchill.” He might as well have danced on 3 million dead bodies, writes Shree Paradkar. (JACK ENGLISH / FOCUS FEATURES)

By **SHREE PARADKAR** Race & Gender Columnist
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By the time I came across the ledger at the Bangalore Club with Winston Churchill’s name on it in the late 1990s, British rule in India had been sanitized; airbrushed to present a picture of overall benevolence with a few violent splotches.

The [entry](#) in the ledger is dated June 1, 1899, and names one Lt W.L.S. Churchill as one of 17 bill defaulters. He owes the club 13 rupees from a time when a whisky cost less than half a rupee.

Had we then heard that Churchill once described our beloved city as a “third rate watering place ... without society or good sport,” we would have probably laughed it off as the irascibility ever only indulged in the great. Jolly good, old chap.

Colonialism of the mind lingers long after the land is free.

And if we had heard that he once said, “I hate Indians. They are a beastly people with a beastly religion,” meh. He was dead. We were thriving.

There are flawed heroes. Lincoln, MLK and Gandhi to name a few — men who inflicted injustices on individuals.

Then there are monsters.

Powerful men who lacerate the world with tragedies. Adolf Hitler, certainly, but his nemesis Churchill, too.

It was only in 2014 that I first got a glimpse of genocidal mania in the man so lionized for leading his nation through its finest hour.

It was a piece titled [Remembering India’s forgotten holocaust](#), in Tehelka magazine that detailed the ghastly origins of the Bengal famine of 1943 that killed an estimated 3 million people in one year.

Historians have easily traced it back to Churchill who had diverted the bountiful harvest from Bengal to Britain and other parts of Europe. When the locals began starving, he steadfastly refused to send them food. He said no to rerouting food that was being shipped from Australia to the Middle East via India. No to the 10,000 tons of food Canada offered to send to India, no to the 100,000 tons of food America offered. The famine was the Indians' fault, he told a war-cabinet meeting, "for breeding like rabbits."

In his Revisionist History podcast, Malcolm Gladwell delves into how the historian Madhusree Mukerjee, author of *Churchill's Secret War*, dug into Britain's shipping archives to uncover evidence that Britain had so much food at the time that the U.S. had become suspicious they were stockpiling it to sell it after the war.

In India, she wrote, "parents dumped their starving children into rivers and wells. Many took their lives by throwing themselves in front of trains." Meanwhile, hundreds of thousands of Indian soldiers were fighting alongside the Allied forces.

Yet, what did the actor Gary Oldman who portrayed Churchill in *Darkest Hour* say last Sunday when he received an Oscar for Best Actor? "I would just like to salute Sir Winston Churchill who has been marvellous company on what can be described as an incredible journey."

Salute. Sir. Marvellous. Incredible.

Oldman might as well have danced on 3 million dead bodies, many of whose loved ones were too weak to cremate or bury them.

Such tributes for a heinous white supremacist who once declared that "Aryan tribes were bound to triumph."

Words as hollow as the tunnel-visioned ideals on which people fashion this man, but they can't stem the drip, drip of blood from his hands.

They can't hide tens of thousands of Kenyans who were rounded up in concentration camps called "[Britain's Gulags](#)" under his orders, where thousands were tortured and killed for rebelling against British rule.

They can't hide the [bodies of the Greek civilians](#) who were celebrating German withdrawal in 1944, but were killed by the British army because Churchill thought the communist influence on the Nazi resisters — who had allied with Britain — was too strong. And we haven't even got into his treatment of Iraqis or his views on the wiping out of entire Indigenous populations of Tasmania.

Churchill was not the first Western leader to profit from plunders and mass murders. Remember John A. Macdonald? But imperialistic popular culture continues to enshrine him, [despite the Gallipoli disaster](#), only as a military great, a fun drunk, a loyal monarch with a penchant for fine speech and a flair for loquacious prose.

Churchill tried to manipulate history with the six volumes of his memoirs. Indeed he succeeded so well that even today the Bangalore Club thumps its chest about his membership there. “Many a past great ... including Sir Winston Churchill” have been members, says its website.

This compounds the tragedy. Erasing his crimes pronounces his victims worthless, deems their lives undeserving of acknowledgement, and leaves their deaths but a footnote in history.

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