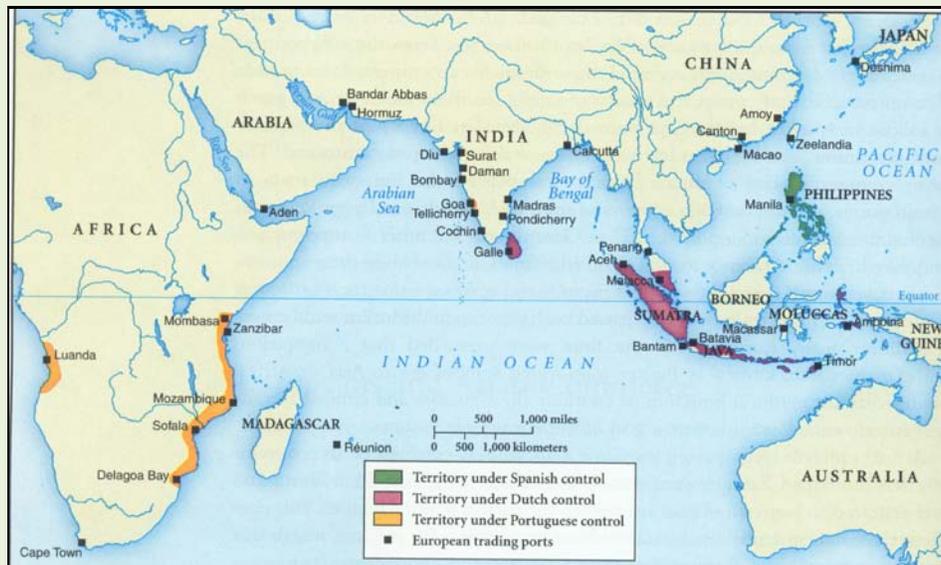


India – The Jewel in the Crown

At the end of the 18th century, most of India was technically ruled by the Mughal Empire. The once mighty **Mughals** has slowly declined in power, many areas had become independent kingdoms or city-states, other sections had fallen to European powers.

In the early 1700s the Portuguese and Dutch maintained small settlements along India's coasts. However the two European countries most intent on gaining control over India were Britain and France. The British interests were run by the **British East India Company**. This corporation was run by **Sir Robert Clive**, a shrewd businessperson who insisted that his company recruit its own army so that they did not have to rely on the British national forces.

The French had settlements in the southeast ports of **Pondicherry** and **Madras**. These were captured from the British in 1746 and ruled as colonies. However, the colonial administrator, Joseph François Dupleix was constantly worried about take over by the British East India Company. He received little or no support from his home government in France.



The geographic importance of India

The power of the British East India Company grew through military successes over the Mughals. The British and French fought several wars in the mid-eighteenth century. Warfare began in 1744 and then again during the Seven Years' War. During this war both sides recruited Indian princes and troops as allies.

In 1756 an Indian ruler in Bengal attacked and captured the British base in Calcutta. In the aftermath of the battle, English prisoners were placed in their own jail, where the humidity and overcrowding killed 120 civilians before the Indian authorities became aware of the situation and released the hostages. The English used this incident, which they called the “**black hole**” of Calcutta, to rally their troops. The British East India Company recaptured Calcutta and then seized additional French and Indian territories. The British did most of this by bribing regional princes. In **1757**, at the crucial **Battle of Plassey**, Sir Robert Clive’s army defeated a Mughal army more than ten times his size. The Mughal government was forced to grant the British extensive and military concessions.

The end result was that the French power in India was destroyed; the British East India Company took over the region of **Bengal** (the inland area by Calcutta) as well as the island of **Ceylon** (present day Sri Lanka) from the Dutch.

Britain did not control all of India but its empire grew rapidly. By **1805** it ruled about a quarter of India. However, the areas it did control were **Bombay** (present day Mumbai and the gateway port on the west coast), **Madras** (the cloth-making center on the southwest coast) and **Fort William**, near Calcutta (which controlled the trade for the Bengal region).

Controlled was gained by the use of both military and economic powers. The independent army of the British East India Company was backed by the British navy, at this time the most powerful in the world. The ever-present military forces compelled the Mughals to grant the British East India Company **tax-collecting rights** and **administrative powers** over an ever-widening area.

Gradually the British moved inland, especially along the **Ganges River** in the north. In many cases, local rulers would rise up against the British. They were quickly crushed by Clive’s army and their territories would be taken over.

In certain regions the British company governed directly but in some areas, they ruled through the authority of local Mughal officials or friendly natives.

Between 1760 and 1810 the British East India Company fought several campaigns. They faced enemies such as **Haidar Ali** who led guerilla armies in the south; **Tipu Sultan** who fought battles on the Deccan Plateau in central India; and the **Mahratta princes** who attacked in several regions. Out of these battles came famous British generals: - **Charles Cornwallis**, the commander-in-chief who would lose to the Americans at Yorktown; **Arthur Wellesly, Duke of Wellington**, who later defeated Napoleon at Waterloo.

The British Approach to Colonial Rule.

The method of imperialism in India was similar to that of Asia and Africa. **The British truly believed that they were a “superior race” and that they were civilizing a “lesser” race.**

They fully utilized the **divide-and-conquer policy** by taking over a large region then having local rulers govern for the British. In many cases there was favoritism over one local ruler compared to another and the British allowed these locals to exploit their given powers when necessary. The British were relatively humane in their colonial practices but economically they were the cause for many outbreaks of violence.

The British East India Company was a corrupt company, and often greed took over when it came to the colonization of India. The initial goal of the company was to set up a local textile industry in India. The British would process locally grown cotton into light cloth, then sell it to markets in the East Indies in exchange for spices. These, in turn, would be brought back to Great Britain.

There were several problems with this system:-

- Any profits made from the Indian raw materials were sent back to England and not reinvested in the local economies in India
- The size of the British home-textile industry was so large that their textile mills put the local Indian mills out of business
- British tax laws also applied to the colonies. Under British law the authorities could confiscate land from peasants unable to pay their taxes. This created a great resentment toward the British from poor Indians.

The British thought that they had a fair taxation system. They left the tax collecting to local native officials called **Zamindars**. Unfortunately the zamindars lost no time in over-taxing their own people and forcing them deeper into debt. Then they would make themselves rich by seizing their lands for non-payment.

These land confiscations were so common that in the 1770s a **famine** took place in India killing **one-third** of the population. So much land was seized that what lands were left could not grow enough food for the nation. The majority of those who died during this famine were mostly peasants, living in lands under British control.

Over time the British economic rule improved and their goals became more diverse. However, there was always tension between the British and the Indian natives.

The Indian Mutiny (The Sepoy Rebellion).

The British East India Company could not fully cover the growing lands in India. To assist in their effort they used **Sepoys** – Indian native soldiers trained by the British military to serve under the British commanders. The Sepoys were led by the **Raj** – the British run Indian government that consisted of princes or leaders (**rajas or maharajas**) who also acted as the local government and military leaders over the natives. The Sepoy regiments were split by religion as some were of the Hindu faith while others were of the Muslim faith. They did however share one common cause, which was to keep their religions sacred.

In 1857 rumors were circulated within the Sepoy regiments that the British were deliberately trying to undermine Hindu and Muslim religious practices. Legally, the Raj was allowed to require Sepoys to serve overseas and fight for the British Empire if needed. In the case of the Hindu soldiers, crossing large bodies of water would break their caste.

Hindu soldiers were not sent overseas, but fear that they might start trouble within the ranks. The real rebellion started later in the year, this time over the violation of dietary restrictions for the Hindu and Muslim soldiers. Rumors were circulated that along with the new rifles for the Sepoy army there would be **greased cartridges** and that the grease was made from **pig or cow fat**. The soldiers had to bite the cartridges before using them in their rifles. The fact that the cartridges would touch their lips was unclean to devout Muslims and Hindus respectively.

Between 1857 and 1857, with lightning speed, military disturbances over these rumors became a nationwide revolt. The Indian Mutiny, also known as the Sepoy Rebellion took place and tens of thousands of people were killed: British soldiers, British civilians, loyal Indian troops, rebels and innocent Indian civilians.

Fortunately for the British, the Indians did not have a clear plan for their take-over nor did they have a single leader. In some cases Hindu and Muslim rebels would fight against each other, and not against the British as planned.

By 1858, after great effort and anxiety that India would be lost, the British troops, along with natives who stayed loyal to the Raj. However British policy drastically changed after the rebellion.

Afraid of losing a valuable gem in her empire, Britain's **Queen Victoria** took from the British East India Company all authority over the subcontinent. It was now the British government that oversaw the politics and economics of India. The regular British army moved into India replacing that of the British East India Company. In addition, Victoria, queen of England, gave herself the title **Empress of India**.

Positive and Negative Effects of British Colonial Rule

Positive	Negative
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • British genuinely felt their rule would be better for the native Indians • Modernization of India Roads, Railways, Telegraph System, Postal Service • Educational System, especially to raise the level of scientific and technological advancement • Civil Service examination for those who wanted to work in the Indian government. • Elimination of certain cultural and religious practices (mostly Hindu) that were inhumane <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Sati (or suttee) – where widows burned alive at their husband’s funeral 2. Thuggee – the ritual of assassination of travelers in the name of the goddess Kali 3. The end of the Caste System 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The British were culturally and racially superior the Indian was “The White Man’s Burden” [Rudyard Kipling] • To create a native elite that was “Indian in blood and color, but English in taste, in opinion, in morals, and in intellect.” [Thomas Macauley] • Forced conversions to Christianity • Widespread bribery of local officials to be loyal to the Queen • Revolutions from Indian elite against British authority and civil liberties. The creation of the Indian National Congress.

In 1885 The Indian National Congress was formed. Most members were English-speaking, educated members of the native upper class. This party strived for **Nationalism**, the desire for one’s own country and self-rule. The most famous and most influential member of the congress was **Mohandas K. Gandhi**. He was born in 1869 and was educated in London and became a lawyer. He then went to South Africa from 1893 to 1915, defending the rights of Indian workers living there under the system of apartheid. He returned to India in 1915 and began a campaign for independence using **nonviolent resistance to British rule [Civil Disobedience]**.

Over the next 30 years Gandhi was to be the central figure in India’s independence moving attempting to be free from British rule.