Discover India

East India Company
&
The Great Revolution of 1857
Europeans in India
Portuguese, French & Dutch

**Portuguese:** Vasco da Gama docked at Calicut, India in 1498. Over the objections of Arab merchants, Gama managed to secure a letter of concession for trading rights from Calicut's local ruler. They shifted their base to Kochi and Kollam, where they ruled and had their major presence for nearly 160 years, changing the course of history in regard to politics, religion and trade in Kerala. From their base in Northern Kerala, they were able to defeat the Bijapur sultan. They finally shifted their capital to Goa in 1530.

**Dutch:** In the early 17th century Steven van der Hagen and Pieter van den Broecke were the first Dutch traders in India. In 1658, The Dutch conquered Negapatnam and in 1663 Cochin. Since then Cochin, was the main trading post for the Dutch, but never succeeded to get a monopoly on the Indian pepper trade.

**French:** In 1667 the French India Company sent out an expedition, which reached Surat in 1668 and established the first French factory in India. In 1669, Marcara succeeded in establishing another French factory at Masulipatam. Chandannagar was established in 1673, with the permission of Nawab Shaista Khan, the Mughal governor of Bengal. In 1674, the French acquired Valikondapuram from the Sultan of Bijapur and thus the foundation of Pondichéry was laid. By 1720, the French had lost their factories at Surat, Masulipatam and Bantam to the British.
Europeans in India
Portuguese, French & Dutch

European settlements in India (1498 - 1739)

LEGENDS
- European settlement (with date of establishment / take-over)
- Portuguese settlements
- English settlements
- French settlements
- Dutch settlements
- Danish settlements
Soon after the defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588, a group of London merchants presented a petition to Queen Elizabeth I for permission to sail to the Indian Ocean.

The Company was formed on December 31, 1600.

Voyage sailed in command of Sir James Lancaster.

First destination – Java, Indonesia.

Started trading in spices, but struggled in competition with already well established Dutch East India Company.

Later operating ports – Surat & Machilipatnam.

Huge profit led King James in 1609 to extend the exclusive trading charter indefinitely.

Traded mainly in cotton, silk, indigo dye, saltpetre, tea, and opium.
East India Company
Growth & Exclusive Rights to Trade

- In 1612, Sir Thomas Roe was instructed by King James I to visit the Mughal Emperor Jahangir to arrange for a commercial treaty which would give the Company exclusive rights to reside and build factories in Surat and other areas.
- In return, the Company offered to provide the Emperor with goods and rarities from the European market. This mission was highly successful.
- The imperial patronage enabled its commercial trading operations to expand fast, eclipsing the Portuguese Estado da India, which had established bases in Goa, Chittagong and Bombay. The Company created trading posts in Surat, Madras, Bombay and Calcutta.
East India Company
Political Ambition Becomes Reality

- 1670, King Charles II provided Company the rights to autonomous territorial acquisitions, to mint money, to command fortresses and troops and form alliances, to make war and peace, and to exercise both civil and criminal jurisdiction over the acquired areas.

- The Company developed a lobby in the English parliament. By 1720, 15% of British imports were from India, almost all passing through the Company, which reasserted the influence of the Company lobby.

- In 1730s, Britain and France became bitter rivals. Frequent skirmishes between them took place for control of colonial possessions in three continents.

- The Seven Years' War (1756–1763) resulted in the defeat of the French forces, limited French imperial ambitions.

- As home to the Industrial Revolution, Britain experienced higher standards of living. Its spiraling cycle of prosperity, demand, and production had a profound influence on overseas trade. The East India Company became the single largest player in the British global market.
East India Company
Political Ambition Becomes Reality

- In the Indian subcontinent, the East India Company got started on its imperialistic ambitions by supporting the enemies of its enemy France.
- In the Second Carnatic War (1748-1754) the British allied themselves with Nisar Jung to take over as Nizam in Hyderabad and the Nawab of Arcot and were able to support both to victories and defeat the French.
- In the Third Carnatic War (1757-1763), the East India Company forces led by Robert Clive defeated Siraj Ud Daulah, the last independent Nawab of Bengal at the Battle of Plassey in 1757. The British also captured Chandannagar from the French. The Nawab was an ally of the French and this resulted in a double blow for French ambitions in India. In the south, the British defeated the French at the Battle of Wandiwash and overran French territories and captured their capital Pondicherry.
- This British victory in Plassey estranged the British and the Mughals, since Siraj Ud Daulah was a Mughal feudatory ally. In 1764 Shah Alam II, the Nawab of Oudh and Mir Qasim united to face the British, but were soundly defeated at the Battle of Buxar, Mughal emperor Shah Alam II gave up the administrative rights over Bengal and Bihar. Clive became the first British Governor of Bengal, with capital at Calcutta.
East India Company
Political Foot Print Growth
Haidar Ali and Tipu Sultan, the rulers of the Kingdom of Mysore, offered much resistance to the British forces. Having sided with the French during the war, the rulers of Mysore continued their struggle against the Company with the four Anglo-Mysore Wars. Mysore finally fell to the Company forces in 1799, with the death of Tipu Sultan.

With the gradual weakening of the Maratha empire in the aftermath of the three Anglo-Maratha wars, the British also secured Bombay and the surrounding areas, by defeating the Scindia of Gwalior, Holkar of Indore, and Bhonsle of Nagpur, the chief Maratha clans. Thus by 1818, the British had secured the entire region of Southern, Western and Eastern India.

The last vestiges of local administration were restricted to the northern regions of Rajputana, and Punjab, where the Company's presence was ever increasing amidst infighting and offers of protection among the remaining princes. Coercive action, threats, and diplomacy aided the Company in preventing the local rulers from putting up a united struggle, and by the end of the Anglo-Sikh wars in 1849, the British also controlled Punjab.

The hundred years from the Battle of Plassey in 1757 to the Indian Revolution of 1857 were a period of consolidation for the Company, which began to function more as a nation and less as a trading concern.
East India Company
East India Company
The Peak & the Start of Downfall

- By the East India Company Act 1773, the Parliament of Great Britain imposed a series of administrative and economic reforms, clearly establishing its sovereignty and ultimate control over the Company.
- By the middle of the 19th century, the Company's rule extended across most of India, Burma, Malaya, Singapore, and Hong Kong, and a fifth of the world's population was under its trading influence.
- Then came the Indian Revolution of 1857, which resulted in widespread devastation in India and condemnation of the East India Company for permitting the events to occur.
- A major consequence of the Indian Mutiny was that the British Government nationalized the Company. The Company lost all its administrative powers; its Indian possessions, including its armed forces, were taken over by the Crown pursuant to the provisions of the Government of India Act 1858.
- The Company continued to manage the tea trade on behalf of the British Government until the East India Stock Dividend Redemption Act came into effect, on 1 January 1874, under the terms of which the Company was dissolved.
The great revolution of 1857 began as a mutiny of sepoys of the British East India Company’s army in early 1857 and soon erupted into other mutinies and civilian rebellions largely in the upper Gangetic plain and central India.

Discontent among soldiers was due to many reasons:

- Resentment due to changes in the terms of their professional service (denial of perks & pension) and deployment for overseas service.
- Concern that Company was masterminding mass conversions of Hindus and Muslims to Christianity.
- Controversy started over the ammunition for new Rifle wherein the sepoys had to bite the cartridge open. The cartridges were greased with pork fat which was regarded as unclean by Muslims, or beef fat, regarded as anathema to Hindus. Soldiers refused to use them.
- The Governor General Dalhousie espoused the "doctrine of lapse" and annexed outright the estates of deceased princes of Satara (1848), Udaipur (1852), Jhansi (1853), Tanjore (1853), Nagpur (1854), and Oudh (1856).
- The rebellion was triggered by a soldier Mangal Pandey on March 29, 1857 at the Barrackpore. He declared that he would rebel against his commanders and asked his colleagues to support him. They opened fire, but captured and hanged.
East India Company
Flaring of the Great Revolution of 1857

- **Meerut**: 85 soldiers were court marshaled for refusing to perform fire drills. The soldiers revolted, looted the armory, killed British officers and then marched to Delhi.
- **Delhi**: The soldiers from Meerut were joined by soldiers stationed at Delhi. The armory was looted and then destroyed. The Mughal king Bahadur Shah accepted to lead the soldiers.
- The news of the events at Delhi spread rapidly, provoking uprisings among soldiers and disturbances in large parts of northern India.
- Bahadur Shah Zafar proclaimed himself the Emperor of the whole of India. The Indian soldiers were able to significantly push back Company forces, and captured several important towns in Haryana, Bihar, Central Provinces and the United Provinces.
- **Kanpur**: Sepoys under General Wheeler in Kanpur rebelled under the leadership of Tantya Tope and besieged the European entrenchment. All the officers were killed.
Jhansi was a Maratha-ruled princely state in Bundelkhand. When the Raja of Jhansi died without a biological male heir in 1853, it was annexed to the British Raj by the Governor-General of India under the doctrine of lapse. His widow, Rani Lakshmi Bai, protested against the denial of rights of their adopted son.

When war broke out, Jhansi quickly became the centre of the revolution. By the end of June 1857, the Company had lost control of much of Bundelkhand and eastern Rajasthhan. In March 1858, the Company forces, led by Sir Hugh Rose, advanced on and laid siege to Jhansi. The Company forces captured the city, but the Rani fled in disguise.

After being driven from Jhansi and Kalpi, on June 1, 1858 Rani Lakshmi Bai and a group of Maratha rebels captured the fortress city of Gwalior from the Scindia rulers, who were British allies.

She ended up sacrificing her life, fighting for the cause of India’s independence.

However, the revolution continued to spread to other parts of India.
The British were slow to strike back at first as it took time for troops stationed in Britain to make their way to India by sea.

Meanwhile, European troops already stationed in India organized at Meerut and Simla. They proceeded slowly towards Delhi and fought, killed, and hung numerous Indians along the way. Two months after the first outbreak of rebellion at Meerut, the two forces met near Karnal. The combined force fought the main army of the rebels and drove them back to Delhi.

After 3 months of siege of Red fort and artillery reinforcement arrival, the battle quickly turned into street fight. The troops of the besieging force proceeded to loot and pillage the city. A large number of the citizens were killed in retaliation. The British soon arrested Bahadur Shah, and the next day shot his sons and grandson. After that the Brits marched to Kanpur, Meerut, Lucknow and crushed the revolution ruthlessly.

Edward Vibart, a 19-year-old officer, also recorded his experience: “It was literally murder... I have seen many bloody and awful sights lately but such a one as I witnessed yesterday I pray I never see again. The women were all spared but their screams on seeing their husbands and sons butchered, were most painful... Heaven knows I feel no pity, but when some old grey bearded man is brought and shot before your very eyes, hard must be that man's heart I think who can look on with indifference... “
East India Company
The Great Revolution of 1857 – The End

- Why was Revolution not successful:
  - There was no big plan
  - Other regions of Company controlled India—Bengal province, the Bombay Presidency, and the Madras Presidency—remained largely calm.
  - In Punjab, the Sikh princes backed the Company by providing both soldiers and support.
  - The princely states, Hyderabad, Mysore, Travancore, and Kashmir, as well as Rajputana did not join the Revolution.
  - Rebel leaders generated no coherent ideology for a new order.

- Bahadur Shah was tried for treason by a military commission assembled at Delhi, and exiled to Rangoon where he died in 1862, bringing the Mughal dynasty to an end.

- The revolution led to the dissolution of the East India Company in 1858, and forced the British to reorganize the army, the financial system, and the administration in India. India was thereafter directly governed by the Crown in the new British Raj. Queen Victoria took over the title of Empress of India.
Contributions to India

- Revenue Collection System
- Army and Civil Service
- Judicial System
- Education System
  - Establishing a Department of Public Instruction
  - Establishing universities modeled on the University of London
  - Establishing teachers-training schools for all levels of instruction
  - Vastly increasing vernacular schools for elementary education.
  - Introducing a system of grants-in-aid for private schools.
- Social Reforms
  - Abolishment of Sati
- Post and Telegraph System
- Transport Systems
Useful Links

- History of British Empire
- East India Company
- The Revolt of 1857
- When India Rebelled
- Looking back at the revolt of 1857