



# The Birth of Modern India



In this chapter you will learn about :

- ➊ Transition in European Society
- ➋ Rise of Capitalism
- ➌ Growth of Imperialism
- ➍ Presidencies and Provinces of British India
- ➎ Changes During Colonial Rule
- ➏ Modern India and Colonial Perspective
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Historians have roughly divided history into three periods—ancient, medieval and modern.

The Modern Period or the Colonial Period is said to have started in the 18th century. It is called the colonial period because India became a colony of the British. Some of the prominent features of the modern period are industrialisation, urbanisation and colonisation. These trends were first visible in Europe, but gradually left a significant impact on India in the course of time. Colonisation, swift transport and communication, democratic political systems, widespread literacy and large-scale migration of people in search of new occupations also marked the modern period.

While the period of five decades between 1707 CE and 1757 CE marks the formative years of the British rule in India; it also saw the decline and disintegration of the Mughal Empire, characterised by the emergence of regional powers such as Bengal, Hyderabad, Awadh and the Marathas. Apart from the trade wars that occasionally brought the European trading companies into conflict over the issues of their mercantile interests and aspirations, a number of

politically important events that took place during this period did not directly relate to the rise and expansion of the British power.

## Transition in European Society

From the 17th century many new ideas, philosophies and institutions started gaining popularity. These ideas, philosophies and institutions also inspired people to look for new means and technologies of production and undertake expeditions to distant lands. The term 'modern' was originally used for the period of European history that encompassed all these developments starting with the collapse of the medieval feudal system and culminating in the Industrial Revolution. In world history, the modern period includes a number of other important events such as the [American War of Independence](#) (1783), the [French Revolution](#) (1789), Formation of Italy and Germany, the two World Wars, etc.

The [Industrial Revolution](#) in Europe clearly relates to the British rule in India.



## Industrial Revolution

Industrial Revolution in Europe was a series of great changes which influenced the growth of the modern European society. These changes were caused by the introduction of new technologies and inventions of new mechanical devices in Europe between the 18th and the 19th centuries. They increased the quantity as well as the quality of industrial production while reducing the production cost. Manufacturing, agriculture, mining, transport and technology were some of the key areas that were influenced by the Industrial Revolution.

England was the first European country where the Industrial Revolution started. Subsequently, it spread throughout Europe, North America, and the rest of the world.

It was due to three specific reasons that the Industrial Revolution found its roots in England :

1. England had an abundant supply of natural resources, especially coal and iron.
2. England had a stable government which gave traders and merchants the liberty to trade as per their choices.
3. England got cheap raw materials from the countries it colonised. These colonies also served as markets where the English could dump their finished products for sale.

As a result of the Industrial Revolution, England's industrial production increased manifold within a very short span of time.

## Rise of Capitalism

After the arrival of the factory system, a new class of people arose who were the owners of the factories. These people controlled the production and sale of their goods or, in other words, they controlled capital.



Goods being produced in factories

Thus, they came to be known as **capitalists** and thus **capitalism** found its roots. They paid very less wages to their workers and exploited them in numerous ways. This raised two distinct groups of people—the capitalists and the workers.

## Renaissance and Reformation

The medieval period in Europe is considered uncivilised, uncultured and barbaric. The word **renaissance** means **rebirth**. It is related to the rebirth of art and culture.

The believers of Renaissance held the view that knowledge does not exist only in religious scriptures, but one can gather it by experimentation as well. They questioned the beliefs of the Church about the world, society, universe and God. Thus, advanced scientific instruments and machines were born.

This paved the way for a movement that aimed at reforming the church. This movement was called the **Reformation**.

## New Inventions

The invention of the printing press helped in spreading new ideas through printed materials. People took interest in different aspects of human life. Painting, literature, sculpture, theatre and music captured their interests.

## Voyages

The invention of the mariner's compass and the quadrant and improvement in shipbuilding and cartography improved the prospects of long sea voyages. Explorers like **Christopher Columbus**, **Vasco-da-Gama** and **Ferdinand Magellan** discovered new sea routes to the West and the East.

## Colonisation

As a result of the Industrial Revolution, the production capacity of England increased at an unprecedented scale within a short span of time. The need to control territories that would serve as markets for their products resulted in the



colonisation of many non-European countries by England. That was how, India became a colony to England. Several European countries managed to establish their political control over large areas around their trade settlements in different countries all over the world. These areas came to be known as **colonies** and process of acquiring colonies was known as **colonisation**.

Colonisation signifies the subjugation of a country by a more powerful country. It accounts for many political, economic, social and cultural changes in the country that is ruled. This country is called a 'colony' while the country that rules is called the **imperialist country**. The fundamental goal of the imperialist country is to exploit the economy of its colony and derive the maximum benefit out of it.

### Growth of Imperialism

As industries grew, the industrialised nations of Europe had to face two crucial challenges. The first was the need for cheap raw materials to manufacture goods and the other was to find markets for the finished goods.

**Imperialism** is the creation of an unequal relationship between countries, based on **domination** and **subordination**. The Europeans concentrated all kinds of powers in their hands and thus, imperialism was born.

### Colonisation in India

In 1600, a group of English traders founded the English East India Company (EEIC) in London. About a century later, Farrukhsiyar, a later Mughal ruler, granted important trading rights to English merchants through a royal **farmaan**.

Following its victory in the **Battle of Plassey** in **1757**, the EEIC became



Headquarters of the East India Company in London

the dominant political power in the Indian subcontinent and gradually most of the Indian subcontinent became a part of the British colony. Thus, the company that came to India as a trading organisation became the master of the Indian subcontinent.

### Presidencies and Provinces of British India

**Provinces** or **Presidencies** of British India were the administrative divisions of British governance. Collectively, they were called **British India**. In one form or the other, they existed between 1612 to 1947, which can be divided into three historical periods.

- ❖ The Mughal Period virtually ended with the death of the Mughal emperor, Aurangzeb in 1707.

It was at this time that the later Mughals, the Marathas and the East India Company fought for supremacy in India. With the consent of the Mughals and local rulers, the East India Company set up 'factories' in several locations during 1612-1757. By the mid-18th century, three 'Presidency towns'—the Madras Presidency (or the Presidency of St George), the Bombay Presidency and the Bengal Presidency (or the Presidency of Fort William) were each administered by a Governor.

- ❖ During the period 1757-1858, the Company rule in India gradually acquired sovereignty over large parts of India, now called 'Presidencies.' The Mughal Empire collapsed completely after the Great Revolt against the Company in 1857 under the last Mughal Emperor, Bahadur Shah Zafar.
- ❖ Following the Indian Rebellion of 1857, the Company's remaining powers were transferred to the British Crown. The company was dissolved and the British Crown took direct control over India which continued till India's Independence in 1947.





## Changes During Colonial Rule



### Geographical Changes

In 1757, the Indian subcontinent was divided into a number of kingdoms and provinces. Large provinces like Hyderabad, Bengal, Awadh, accepted the nominal rule of the decaying Mughals. There were also some independent kingdoms such as those ruled by the Marathas, the Rajputs and the Jats. Over the next 190 years, the British came to establish their direct rule over large parts of India and maintain their strong indirect rule over all other local kingdoms which came to be known as **princely states**. In 1947, when India became independent, it comprised over 500 princely states and the directly administered territories of Britain.

### Political Changes

The British rule in India was first established under the EEIC. However, after 1857, the British Crown or the British Government took direct control over India and ruled the country till 1947.

Another striking political development was the emergence of a coherent and organised opposition to the British rule by people across the Indian subcontinent. Initially, this opposition came from local zamindars, peasants, sepoys and tribal people. Subsequently, it became more organised, under English-educated people drawing people from different sections of the Indian society. They were collectively called **nationalists**.

The another major political development during this period was the establishment of an administrative, legal, military and political structure that formed the backbone of the British rule in India.

### Indian Nationalism

In the context of a country under the rule of some other country, nationalism reflects a strong desire to get independence from foreign rule. The Revolt of 1857 was the first great expression of Indian nationalism. Though the Revolt was suppressed, it made the people living in different regions of India realise that if they stood united, it was possible to overthrow the British. So the concept of India as one nation and Indians as one people—a united country and not just a collection of smaller provinces and local identities—took shape.

### Economic Changes

The most striking economic change during the British period came in the **land revenue system**. During the British rule, British officials went around surveying the countryside and fixing the land revenue. Though the land revenue arrangements made by the British differed in



Indian subcontinent in 1947





different parts of the country and was fixed at very high rates.

When the British traders came to India, they bought spices, calicoes and fine cotton clothes and sold them in England. These were usually paid for in bullion or silver. Later, many peasants were forced to cultivate opium which the British sent to China in lieu of tea.

When India became a full-fledged colony, she exported raw materials like jute and cotton to England which fed the British factories in Scotland and Manchester. These finished goods were then sold back to India at much higher prices. Overall, trade which was in favour of India in the beginning of the period became very unfavourable for the country.

The traditional industries such as weaving, pottery, iron smelting, brassworks, etc. were destroyed since they often posed a challenge to British trade and manufacturing. This phenomenon came to be known as **deindustrialisation**. Gradually, the industrialisation of India began in the latter half of the 19th century following a slew of efforts made by the likes of JRD Tata and others.

### **Cultural Changes**

Art, architecture, language, literature and in fact even the way Indians dressed, changed considerably during this period. In the field of architecture, the city of New Delhi or Lutyens Delhi, is a good example of colonial architecture which was a mixture of Indian and European styles. Similarly in the area of art, the Bengal School is a good example where Indian themes were expressed through western styles. In the area of literature, Indian writings in English, which is now very popular around the world, began during this period.



Rashtrapati Bhawan  
in New Delhi

### **Social Changes**

Some of the important social changes that took

place during this period were around the issues of caste system, tribal societies and treatment of women. Caste barriers among the Hindus began to grow weak during the colonial period due to a widespread reform movement led by Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Dayanand Saraswati, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar etc. and some significant legislations by the government that extended support to it. The banning of sati, the encouragement of widow remarriage, framing of legislations to prevent child marriage and regulations to educate the girl child were some important developments in this area. Tribal societies witnessed dramatic changes during this period. The most important change was an effort to integrate them into mainstream society.



Raja Ram Mohan Roy

The British required a large number of people who could run different levels of administration. They, therefore, made a serious effort to overhaul the traditional system of education. Eventually, it led to the birth of the English-educated middle class of India which not only produced bureaucrats and administrators at the service of the British rulers but also some of the outstanding leaders of the Indian National Movement.

### **Modern India and Colonial Perspective**



As rulers, the British showed little appreciation for the society, economy and polity of India and regarded these as backward-looking, stagnant and oppressive. Western-style urbanisation, development of swift means of transport and communication, introduction of new industrial techniques, initiation of a centralised government powered by a comprehensive legislative system, etc. were credited with having kick-started the process of all-round progress and modernisation.

In his book, 'The History of British India', James



Mill (1817) set the trend for denouncing the pre-British period and glorifying the British rule in India. Mill divided Indian history into three periods—Hindu, Muslim and British. While ‘Hindu’ and ‘Muslim’ periods were identified with everything that obstructed the growth of the Indian society, ‘British’ period was seen as the dawn of modern civilisation characterised by egalitarian-progressive values that alone could liberate the people from the age-old shackles of exploitation, tyrannical misrule, corruption and oppressive discrimination. Mill’s view drew wholehearted support from a dominant section of British administrators and historians called the **Anglicists**.

## Sources of Modern Indian History

The history of the modern period is derived from both primary and secondary source materials.

Primary source materials include the archaeological remains and original documents, photographs, videotapes, etc.

Secondary source materials include reports, reviews, articles and books based on the primary source materials.

## Archaeological Sources

Whatever buildings and monuments were constructed during this period are mostly standing today and are in good condition too. The Parliament House, the Red Fort, the Rashtrapati Bhawan in Delhi, the Gateway of India in Mumbai, the Victoria Memorial and the Fort William in Kolkata, etc. are some archaeological sources.



Gateway of India



Victoria Memorial

## Literary Sources

Literary sources for this period are also available in large quantity. These are original documents which are carefully preserved in archives and museums.

## Administrative Records

Administrative records such as government orders and official correspondence are significant sources of historical information. British officials believed that every official proceeding should be properly recorded to enable clarity of and also to be available for future reference in case of disputes. The British also felt it necessary to preserve these records. All branches of administration started the practice of communicating with each other in the form of letters, **notings**, reports, **memos**, etc. All these are preserved till this day in the Archives.

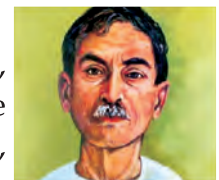


## You must know

The National Archives of India, based in New Delhi, houses old government documents, diaries, letters, papers, notes, farmaans and rare books or yore. It was set up during the British rule. The purpose of setting up the National Archives of India was to keep and maintain records of the government.

## Books

With the arrival of the British, there was huge growth in the production of books, magazines, newspapers and journals.



Munshi Premchand

Books that contain a collection of speeches like those delivered by Nehru or the hundred volumes of Gandhiji’s collected works, are still extremely important as they place the events in correct perspective. Similarly, Dadabhai Naoroji’s ‘**Poverty and Un-British Rule in India**’ is an important source for the economic history of this period. Premchand wrote about the peasants and the downtrodden. The play ‘**Neel Darpan**’ by Dinabandhu Mitra highlighted the exploitation of workers at indigo plantations.



Autobiographies and biographies of prominent personalities are also extremely important as a source of historical information for this period.

Books proved very helpful, as they highlighted the exploitation of Indians by the British, whereas the government records tell us only what the British government officials thought or what they were interested in, and what they wished to preserve for posterity. These books helped in the spread of nationalist spirit among the masses.

### Newspapers, Magazines, Letters and Pamphlets

A large number of newspapers, magazines and pamphlets were printed throughout India in different languages. Some of these are still in publication with a record of their old editions systematically kept in their libraries. Bal Gangadhar Tilak's 'Kesari' in Marathi is one of the most notable examples. Reading these papers re-creates before us an atmosphere which prevailed a hundred years ago or so. Letters are especially important as they help us understand the prevailing situation from a personal point of view.



Kesari

### Photographs, Paintings and Statues

Photography was a new art medium and extremely valuable, as it captured historical moments for posterity and facilitated an almost perfect historical representation.

Various statues and rare paintings are not only important as works of art but they also tell us something about the physical features and achievements of the national leaders and great historical personalities.

### Films

Documentary as well as feature films also help in the study of this period. The impression left after watching such films is of more permanent nature. Sir Richard Attenborough's film 'Gandhi' includes an actual news reel of Gandhiji's visit to Manchester, another film 'Achhut Kanya', the love story of an untouchable girl and a Brahmin boy, was a commercial success. Many of such films are stored with the Films Divisions.



Achhut Kanya

### Some Newspapers, Magazines and Periodicals

Newspapers/Periodicals	Founder/Editor	Language	Year of launch
Hickey's Bengal Gazette (India's first newspaper)	James Augustus Hickey	English	1780
Sambad Kaumudi	Raja Ram Mohan Roy	Bengali	1821
Mirat-ul-Akhbar	Raja Ram Mohan Roy	Persian	1822
Amrit Bazaar Patrika	Shishir Kumar Ghosh and Motilal Ghosh	English	1868
Kesari	Bal Gangadhar Tilak	Marathi	1880
Maharatta	Bal Gangadhar Tilak	English	1880
Harijan	Mahatma Gandhi	English	1933
Young India	Mahatma Gandhi	English	1919
New India	Annie Besant	English	1914
Prabuddha Bharat	Swami Vivekananda	English	1896





Bande Mataram	Bipin Chandra Pal/Aurobindo Ghosh	English	1906
Sudharak	G G Agarkar/G K Gokhale	English	1887
Al-Hilal	Maulana Abul Kalam Azad	Urdu	1912
Hindustan Times	Sunder Singh Lyallpuri/K M Panikkar	English	1924
The Statesman	Robert Knight	English	1875

## Monuments

A number of famous monuments and buildings belonging to this period have many stories and episodes linked with them. Some of these are the India Gate, the Parliament House, the Rashtrapati Bhawan and Birla House where Gandhiji was assassinated. All these buildings tell us much about our near past, and the different aspects of the architecture of India of that time.

## Surveys and Mapping

The Survey of India was set up in Dehradun, which made detailed maps of towns, villages, mountains and coasts. The first Surveyor General of Bengal was appointed in 1767 and the first Surveyor General of India in 1815. George Everest became the Surveyor General in 1830. In 1849, the height of the Mount Everest was calculated and it was named after him for his exemplary contribution.

The map of the Hyderabad region made by Dr Henry Wesley Voysey in 1821 was the first proper geological map made in India. Maps of towns, cities, villages and roads etc. were made. These maps help us today to know about the kind of rural and urban patterns of settlements.

In villages, revenue surveys were conducted. From the end of the 19th century, Censuses operations were held every ten years to prepare detailed records of the number of people in India.



### You must know

The British started a number of surveys which are still conducted by the government. Some of these are zoological, botanical, archaeological, anthropological and forest surveys.

## Terminology

- Farmaan** : a royal order or authoritative grant investing someone with certain powers or rights
- Princely states** : semi-independent states of India, ruled by Indians but subject to varying degrees of British authority. These 562 states were merged with the Indian Union after Independence. Largest of these states were Hyderabad, Gwalior, Baroda, Mysore, Cochin, Jammu and Kashmir, Travancore, Sikkim and Indore.
- Notings** : brief remarks, notes or comments written down and documented for official purpose.
- Memos** : messages related to business transactions; memoranda

## Recap

- ❖ The term 'modern' was originally used for the period of European history.
- ❖ Colonisation signifies the subjugation of a country by a more powerful country.
- ❖ Farrukhsiyar granted important trading rights to English merchants through a royal farmaan.
- ❖ We can know about the modern Indian history through administrative records, books, newspapers, magazines, letters, pamphlets, films, etc.



 Objective Type Questions

**A. Tick (✓) the correct option :**

- Primary source materials of the modern period are :  
(a) documents  (b) videotapes  (c) photographs  (d) all of these
- Secondary source materials of the modern period are :  
(a) reports  (b) articles  (c) both (a) and (b)  (d) none of these
- The English East India Company was founded in :  
(a) 1600 CE  (b) 1700 CE  (c) 1800 CE  (d) 1900 CE
- 'Poverty and Un-British Rule in India' is written by :  
(a) Dada Naoroji  (b) Dada Navroj  (c) Dadabhai Naoroji  (d) none of these
- 'Sambad Kaumudi' was printed in :  
(a) Hindi  (b) English  (c) Bengali  (d) Urdu

**B. Fill in the blanks :**

- Some of the prominent features of the modern period are \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_.
- From the 17th century, many new \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ started gaining popularity.
- Large provinces like \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, accepted the nominal rule of the decaying Mughals.
- \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ and in fact even the way \_\_\_\_\_, changed considerably during this period.
- The play Neel Darpan by \_\_\_\_\_ highlighted the exploitation of workers at indigo plantations.

**C. State True or False :**

- The fundamental goal of the imperialist country is to exploit the economy of its colony.
- India became a colony of the British who ruled the country till 1957.
- The land revenue arrangements made by the British differed in different parts of the country.
- In the area of literature, Indian writings in Hindi which is now very popular around the world, began during this period.
- A large number of newspapers, magazines and pamphlets were printed throughout India in different languages.



**D. Match the following :**

- |                            |          |
|----------------------------|----------|
| 1. Hickey's Bengal Gazette | (a) 1875 |
| 2. Kesari                  | (b) 1924 |
| 3. New India               | (c) 1780 |
| 4. Hindustan Times         | (d) 1880 |
| 5. The Statesman           | (e) 1914 |

 **Subjective Type Questions**

**E. Very short answer type questions :**

1. Which British historian divided Indian history into Hindu, Muslim and British periods?
2. Name the European country where the Industrial Revolution started.
3. Name some social reformers.
4. What are literary sources?
5. Who wrote the play Neel Darpan?

**F. Short answer type questions :**

1. What are the features of the modern period?
2. What are the indigenous records? Explain.
3. What political changes occurred during this period?
4. What was the effect of the invention of the printing press?
5. Explain the cultural changes during colonisation.

**G. Long answer type questions :**

1. Explain the industrial revolution.
2. How did colonisation affect India?
3. What do you mean by Indian Nationalism?
4. What changes were made in the society during this period?



**To Do Hour**

Make a report on the colonial India and present India.



**Net Check**

Browse the internet and know more about colonisation in India.

[https://www.encyclopedia.com>BritishcolonialisminIndia](https://www.encyclopedia.com/BritishcolonialisminIndia)



**Think and Answer**

Should India be grateful for colonisation?

