

BRITISH INDIA 1526 TO 1914

BABER FOUNDS MOGUL EMPIRE TO FIRST WORLD WAR

ERA SUMMARY – BRITISH INDIA

The East India Company, which originally set up British trading centers in Asia, was first chartered by [Elizabeth I](#) in 1600. It was not uncommon for European governments to charter private companies to establish colonies—many of the thirteen American colonies had started out as such. These quasi-governmental institutions had the right to make autonomous decisions and to defend their interests in far flung regions, but were required to make a report to their sovereign and have their charter extended every twenty to thirty years.

Carnatic Wars and British Conquest of Bengal—During the first 150 years of its existence, the British East India Company established several trading posts in India, first at Surat; then at Bombay, Calcutta, and Madras. During most of this time, much of India was ruled by the [Great Mogul Jehanjiir](#), who was on good terms with the traders, but the Mughal empire was in decline, there was [strife between Hindus and Moslems](#), and other trading companies, from Portugal, Holland and France, competed with the British for trade in India. After the death of [Aurangzeb](#), much of the power of the Mughal Empire devolved to local princes, and these princes, who were often at war with each other, were aware of the advantages of western military power. The French, under [Dupleix](#), governor at Pondicherry, were particularly astute at making alliances with the Indian Princes (Nawabs), and in a short time the French were the predominant power in Bengal. When the [War of the Austrian Succession](#) broke out in Europe, the French used the opportunity to attempt to drive England from India altogether, and thus began the [Carnatic Wars](#).

At this point, there appeared on the scene, [Robert Clive](#), a lowly and miserable company clerk, stationed at Madras, with no military experience. When the French besieged *Ft. David*, he distinguished himself with such valor, that a few years later the Company entrusted him to embark on a nearly hopeless quest, to take the enemy capital of *Arcot*. In spite of tremendous odds, Clive took and held Arcot, and greatly improved Britain's standing among the local princes, whose main concern was to make alliances with the predominant European power. Although Dupleix was a



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brilliant statesman, his generals were no match for the youthful and fearless Clive. Six years, and many battles later, he had greatly improved Britain's reputation with the local princes. Finally, in 1757, at the *Battle of Plassey*, Clive won a brilliant victory over a combined French and native force fifty thousand strong, with only 800 British, and 2000 Native troops. From this point on, Britain controlled Bengal, the richest province of India, and was the most influential foreign power in the entire region.

The first few years of the British rule in Bengal, however, were utterly miserable. The East India Company was accustomed to trade and to fight, but not to govern or bring justice to a foreign country. These duties were neglected, to the near ruin of the country, until [Warren Hastings](#) was appointed the first Governor of all British Provinces in India, but only after a terrible famine had brought the problems to a crisis point. Hastings was a very controversial governor, and though he did much to improve the situation, many problems were left unresolved, and he made powerful enemies. He ruled for twelve years, but upon his return home was tried for corruption and acquitted after a contentious trial. Whether or not he deserved to be condemned, his highly publicized trial raised many of the problems of the British rule in India to the public eye.

Expansion of British Territory in India—Several well-known Indian governors followed, including [General Cornwallis](#), of American Revolutionary fame, and [Marquess Wellesley](#), an elder Brother of the [Duke of Wellington](#). Britain continued to bring more of India under its sway. In some case, as in the [Mysore Wars](#) against [Tipu Sultan](#), they conquered a Nawab and annexed his region. In other cases, they simply made a "mutual defense" treaty with a local prince that gave Britain great advantages. Finally, a policy was established that in cases when no direct heir was left to a region, Britain annexed the area, and appointed its own governor. Yet expansion did not bring peace, nor did it bring good government. The British government continued to put more constraints on the East India Company to curb abuses, but there was not a clear consensus about what the ruling policy should be—only a consensus that more money should be raised. Yet the goals of ruling India well, and at the same time extracting money from her, were at cross purposes.

After numerous missteps, years of misrule, several rebellions and mutinies, and numerous wars against the [Marathas](#), [Gurkhas](#), and [Burmah](#), the British government reformed the East India Company to such an extent that it was no longer allowed to carry on trade at all, and was to focus only on more effective government of the provinces. Indian ports were thrown open to merchants of every country so in this way, the native Indians were not cheated by traders who held a monopoly. This reform occurred in 1833 and was part of the "free trade" movement that was being gradually implemented throughout the growing empire. Soon after, [Lord Dalhousie](#) became was appointed Governor and was one of the best rulers of India. He expanded British territory, adding the Punjab to British domains, but accomplished it in such a way that the [Sikhs](#), or native Punjabis, became loyal British subjects, instead of seething rebels. He also built many roads, railways, and telegraphs, which greatly improved communication in the region.

Indian Mutiny—Yet just when conditions had begun to improve in India, disasters struck. First, in 1841, due to some foolish statesmanship, the British forced an unpopular ruler on [Afghanistan](#), and stationed thousands of British soldiers along with their families in Kabul. In the middle of winter, the garrison was surrounded and forced to retreat from through Khyber Pass on its way back to India. Of the entire garrison of ten thousand, only one man survived to tell the tale. It was the worst massacre in British Imperial History. Fifteen years later, the [Indian Mutiny](#) broke out in *Cawnpore*, *Lucknow*, and *Delhi*. It was an enormous disaster that cost thousands of lives, and nearly succeeded in driving Britain from Indian soil. But after many atrocities and heroics, the British forces with their loyal Indian allies prevailed, and after consolidating their power, embarked on several important reforms, with the hope of preventing future outbreaks. It was at this time that the East India Company was completely dissolved, and the British Government took full responsibility for development of the Indian colonies.

CHARACTERS – BRITISH INDIA

EARLY INDIA

- Mahmud of Ghazni** 971–1030 Moslem general who invaded India in the 11th century. Destroyed temples, collected tribute, then left.
- Mohammed Ghori** 1162–1206 Moslem general who invaded India in the late 12th century. Massacred thousands of Hindus.

PORTUGUESE INDIA: 1497-1580

- Vasco da Gama** 1460–1524 Sailed from Europe to the Orient by sailing around the Cape of Good Hope.
- Francisco de Almeida** 1450–1510 Distinguished himself in the wars against Granada, and was appointed first governor of Portuguese India.
- Alfonso de Albuquerque** 1453–1515 Naval officer who helped establish a Portuguese colony in India at Goa.

MUGHAL EMPIRE: 1526-1739

- Baber** 1483–1530 Founder of the Moghul empire in India.
- Humayun** 1508–1556 Second of the Indian Mogul dynasty, and father of Akbar. Lost his kingdom but regained it with Persian help.
- Akbar the Great** 1542–1605 Reconquered, unified and expanded the Mughal Empire.
- Jehanjir** 1569–1627 Son of Akbar, and Great Mogul of India when the British first tried to establish trading posts in the region.
- Nur Jehan** 1577–1645 Favorite wife of Emperor Jahangir. Engaged in much legendary palace intrigue.
- Aurangzeb** 1618–1707 Moslem ruler of largely Hindu India. Consolidated the Mughal empire, but oppressed Hindus.
- Shivaji** 1630–1689 Founder of the Maratha emperor. Resisted the Moghul ruler under Aurangzeb.
- Nadir Shuh** 1688–1747 Great Persian General who attacked the Moghuls in India, and massacred civilians.
- Muhammad Shah** 1702–1748 Ruler of the Moghul Empire in India, when it was over-run by Nadir Shah of Persia.
- Connaji Angria** d. 1729 Pirate prince who controlled the Malabar coast of India. His base at Geriah was attacked by Popock in 1756
- Baji Rao I** 1699–1740 Most famous Peshwa of the Maratha Confederacy. Extended the Maratha kingdom to its greatest range.

EARLY BRITISH ERA: 1740-1814

- Dupleix** 1697–1763 Governor of the French trading company in India; rival of Clive for control of Bengal;
- Mir Jafar** 1691–1765 Succeeded to the position of Nawab of Bengal after Clive won the *Battle of Plassey*.
- Robert Clive** 1725–1774 British soldier, who rose to be a hero in the Carnatic Wars and delivered Bengal to Britain at the *Battle of Plassey*.
- Siraj Ud Daulah** 1733–1757 Last independent Nawab of Bengal. Lost his kingdom to Clive at Plassey.
- Tipu Sultan** 1750–1799 Took over the Mysore Kingdom on the death of his father Hyder Ali. Fought the British in a series of Anglo-Mysore wars.
- Warren Hastings** 1732–1818 Early Governor of India. Was tried for corruption, but acquitted after a lengthy trial.
- Mir Cossim** d. 1777 Son-in-law of Mir Jafar, who was raised to the Nawabship by the British, but rebelled against them.
- Mahadaji Sindhia** 1730–1794 Leader of the Sindhias of Gwalior. Fought at Panipat. Exceptional General who defeated British at Wargaom.
- Hyder Ali** 1722–1782 Muslim Ruler of the Kingdom of Mysore in Southern India. Allied with the French

against the British.

Tipu Sultan 1750–1799 Took over the Mysore Kingdom on the death of his father Hyder Ali. Fought the British in a series of Anglo-Mysore wars.

BRITISH RAJ: 1814-19??

Jeswunt Rao Hoklar d. 1811 Leader of the Holkars of Idore. Fought Britain in the First and Second Maratha Wars.
Sindhia of Gwalior 1779–1827 Leader of the Sindhias of Gwalior. Fought Britain in the Second and Third Maratha Wars.
Lord Amherst 1773–1857 British ambassador to China, and then governor of India. Fought first Burmese War.
William Brydon 1811–1873 Surgeon in the Bengal army; sole survivor of the massacre at Khyber pass in Afghanistan.
Henry Havelock 1795–1857 Led a division to relieve Lucknow during the Sepoy Rebellion. Died during the siege.
Lord Dalhousie 1812–1860 Made major reforms and increased British holding in India, shortly before the mutiny.
Colin Campbell 1792–1863 Commanded the Highland Brigade during the Crimean War. Also served in India.
James Outram 1803–1863 Hero of the sieges of Cawnpore and Lucknow during the Sepoy Rebellion.
Lord Roberts 1832–1914 Career officer, saw service in Indian Mutiny, Afghanistan, Abyssinia, India and South Africa.
Marquess Wellesley 1760–1842 Governor-general of India, fought Second Maratha and Mysore wars. Later, promoted Catholic emancipation.
Nana Sahib 1824–1859 Adopted son of the Marthi Peshwar. Leader of the Indian Mutiny.
Baji Rao II d. 1851 Peshwa who fled to Britain for protection after loss to one of his enemies
Ranjit Singh 1780–1839 Sikh emperor of the Punjab. Ruled the Punjab well, as an independent state until his death.

AFGHANS, BURMESE, GURKHAS, ETC.

Alombra the Hunter 1714–1760 Burmese King. Founder of the Konbaung dynasty which bordered on Bengal.
Dost Muhammed 1793–1863 Afghan ruler during the first Anglo-Afghan War
Siddhartha Gautama 563–483 BC Nepalese prince who left his throne to meditate and became the Buddha.

TIMELINE – BRITISH INDIA

- 1497 [Vasco da Gama](#) establishes a trade-route by sea between Portugal and India.
- 1510 [Alfonso de Albuquerque](#) Conquers Goa and establishes a permanent Portuguese colony.

MUGHAL EMPIRE: 1526-1740

- 1526 [Baber](#) founds the Mughal empire in India.
- 1566-1605 Reign of [Akbar](#) greatest of the Mughal emperors.
- 1658-1707 Reign of [Aurangzeb](#)—strict adherence to Islamic law alienates Hindu subjects.
- 1674 [Shivaji](#) founds the Maratha empire in the Deccan as the Mughul empire began to collapse.
- 1739 [Nadir Shuh](#), a Persian general invades India, sacks Delhi, and steals the Peacock throne.

EARLY BRITISH ERA: 1740-1815

- 1600 British East India Company granted a charter.
- 1612 First British trading post established at Surat.
- 1650 More British trading Trading posts established at Bombay, Calcutta, and Madras.
- 1751 [Siege of Arcot](#) is [Clive's](#) first great success in India.
- 1756 Over a hundred British citizens perish in the "Black Hole of Calcutta".
- 1757 With the help of the traitor [Mir Jafar](#), Clive wins Bengal for Britain at the [Battle of Plassey](#).
- 1773 [Warren Hastings](#) appointed first Governor of India. Later, tried in Britain for corruption.
- 1775-1803 Victories over the [Mahratta kingdoms](#) in the Deccan increase Britain's influence in central India.
- 1799 Death of [Tipu Sultan](#) brings thirty years of wars with the [Mysore Kingdom](#) in southern India to a close.

LATER BRITISH ERA: 1815-1947 AD

- 1842 [First Anglo-Afghan War](#)—Massacre at Khyber Pass.
- 1845 [Sikh Wars](#) results in the annexation of Punjab.
- 1852 [Burmah is annexed](#) to British territory.
- 1857 [Indian Mutiny](#)—worst rebellion in history of the British empire.
- 1858 East India Company is dissolved—India made colony of the British Empire.

RECOMMENDED READING – BRITISH INDIA

CORE READING ASSIGNMENTS

Home - <u>Peeps at History - India</u>	<i>entire book</i>
Marshall - <u>Our Empire Story</u>	<u>Part V—India</u> to <u>The Empress of India</u> (28)

SUPPLEMENTAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Lang - <u>The Story of Lord Clive</u>	<i>entire book</i>
Sellar - <u>The Story of Lord Roberts</u>	<i>entire book</i>
Synge - <u>Struggle for Sea Power</u>	<u>Story of the Great Mogul</u> to <u>Black Hole of Calcutta</u> (3)
Steel - <u>The Adventures of Akbar</u>	<i>entire book</i>
Synge - <u>Struggle for Sea Power</u>	<u>Trial of Warren Hastings</u> (1)
Synge - <u>Growth of the British Empire</u>	<u>The Indian Mutiny</u> to <u>The Empire of India</u> (2)
Wood - <u>Boy's Book of Battles</u>	<u>Plassey</u> to <u>Delhi</u> (2)
Morris - <u>Historical Tales - English</u>	<u>The Massacre of an Army</u> (1)
Surridge - <u>India</u>	<i>entire book</i>
Gilliat - <u>Heroes of the Indian Mutiny</u>	<i>entire book</i>
Younghusband - <u>The Story of the Guides</u>	<i>entire book</i>

ALSO RECOMMENDED

Marshall - <u>Our Island Story</u>	<u>The Siege of Delhi</u> to <u>The Pipes at Lucknow</u> (2)
Church - <u>English History Stories - III</u>	<u>Plassey</u> to <u>Cawnpore, Lucknow, Delhi</u> (3)
Synge - <u>Great Englishmen</u>	<u>Robert Clive</u> (1)
Gaskoin - <u>The Hanoverians</u>	<u>Our Indian Empire</u> (1)

* *Level I and II Study Questions are based on **Core Reading Assignments**.*