

British Imperialism in India



British expand their economic interest in India during the 17th and 18th centuries

- After Aurangzeb's death, the Mughal Empire is unable to prevent European traders from establishing trading centers in India
- Many smaller Indian states emerge while the Mughal ruler becomes increasingly a figurehead
- In 1757 Col. Robert Clive led East Indian Company troops to victory over the army of the Nawab of Bengal and his French allies. After this victory the British East India Company expanded dramatically in power.



The British East India Company, in cooperation with the Indian rulers (or maharajahs) of these small states, controls much of India and Pakistan

-In theory the British government supervised the British East India Company but in reality the company acted almost completely independently of the British Crown up until the mid-19th century

-Many company officials (see William Fullerton in the 1760s) wielded great power in India in addition to leading lives of luxury as virtual nabobs

-Eventually the British imposed rules on local manufacturing and forced Indians to buy British textiles rather than locally made goods



In reaction, some Indians discuss reforming their society

- One of the best-known early reformers is Ram Mohun Roy (1772-1833), a Hindu brahmin from Bengal
- Sometimes called the “Father of Modern India,” Roy called for an end to such traditional religious and social practices as *sati* (ritual suicides performed by widows on their husbands’ funeral pyres), child marriages, and strict caste separation
- In Roy’s view, these practices caused foreigners to view Indian culture and religion as backward
- Roy called for change so as to modernize Indian society and overcome domination by foreigners like the British



The area the British eventually controlled, directly or indirectly, was vast



The Sepoy Rebellion (1857)

-The British in India were vastly outnumbered by the natives. To maintain their power they had to rely on Indian soldiers, called Sepoys (from the Turkish word *sipahi*, for cavalryman or soldier).

-The Sepoys rebelled in 1857-1858. Many Sepoys were upset about European rule, particularly with regard to religion. The East India Company had great difficulty putting down the rebellion.

-As a result of the rebellion, the British government took over control of India. In the British Empire India soon became the “jewel in the crown.” Queen Victoria was now the ruler of India.



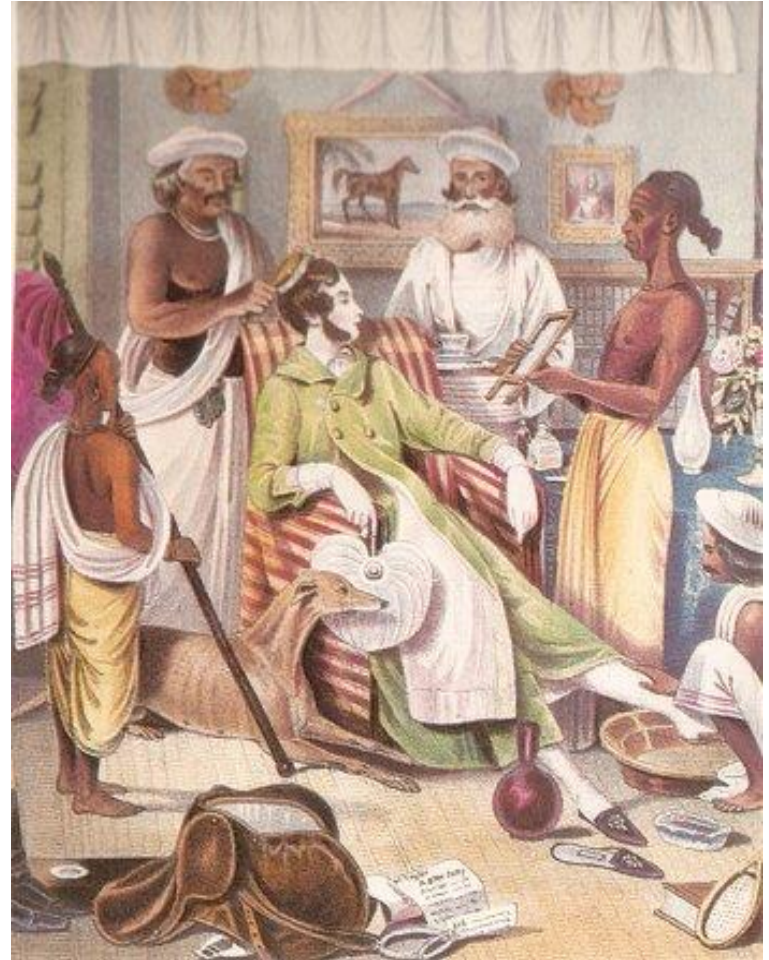
Why did the Sepoy Rebellion Fail?

- The Indians failed to unite against the British
- Hindus and Muslims split
- Some Indian groups stayed loyal to the British (e.g., Sikhs, Hindus and even some maharajahs who had earlier made deals with the British)



Long-term effects of the Sepoy Mutiny

- The British government exercised greater control over India; this rule continued up until 1947
- The British became more racist towards the Indians, treating them increasingly as inferiors
- There was greater distrust between the British and the Indians
- Muslims and Hindus grew to dislike each other more



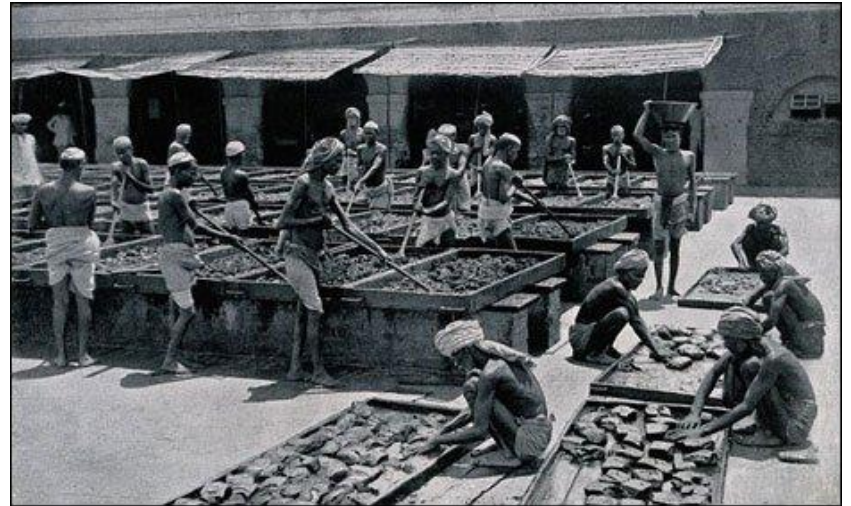
Some Indians oppose the British Raj

- It seems as if it is the British who benefit most from British rule, not the Indians
- In the late 19th century the British consolidate their control over India and use it to protect their interests in other parts of Asia and Africa (Sikhs from the Punjab and Nepalese Gurkhas were used to put down insurrections in other parts of the British Empire, e.g.)



The British make use of India to make tea, cotton, opium and other cash crops

- The Indians resent British control of their economy
- India increasingly functions in the world economy as a British dependency
- British help develop India further by means of roads, bridges and railroads
- Indian elites are used to help govern India



Indian nationalist movements continue

- Jawaharlal Nehru, **Mahatma Gandhi** and others lead efforts to end British imperialism in India by joining the Indian National Congress Party (aka the INC, founded in 1885)
- In 1908 the all-India Muslim League is formed in opposition to British rule
- In 1920-1922 and in 1930-1934 Gandhi led an Indian civil disobedience movement (a campaign based on *satyagraha*, or non-violent direct action)

