

British Entrance in the Sub-Continent:

The British arrived in the subcontinent in the early 17th century through the establishment of the British East India Company.

1. The British East India Company:

The British East India Company was a trading company established in 1600 with the primary purpose of trading with countries in the East India. It received a charter from Queen Elizabeth I, granting it a monopoly on English trade with the East. The company's main objective was to export goods like spices, textiles, and tea from the Indian subcontinent to Europe.

2. Expansion of Trade and Territories:

Over time, the British East India company expanded its trade operations in the Indian subcontinent. Initially, it established trading posts in various coastal regions, such as Surat and Madras (now Chennai), to facilitate its commerce.

The British presence and subsequent rule in the Indian subcontinent were not initially welcomed or invited by the local population. The British East India Company arrived in the subcontinent with the primary purpose

of trade, but over time they expanded their influence and control through a combination of military conquests, strategic alliances and economic exploitation.

Factors that allowed the British to establish their rule:

1. Military and Diplomatic Strategies:

The British East India Company realized that to protect and expand their trade, they needed to establish control over strategic regions. They used military force and diplomatic alliances with local rulers to gain territorial control. In several instances, they intervened in local conflicts and supported rulers who were willing to collaborate with them.

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2. The Battle of Plassey (1757):

One pivotal event that significantly contributed to the British control over India was the Battle of Plassey. In 1757, the British East India Company, led by Robert Clive, defeated the Nawab of Bengal, Siraj-ud-Daulah, at Plassey. This victory gave the British effective control over Bengal and laid the foundation for their expansion in India.

3. Divide and Rule Policy:

The British employed a "Divide and Rule policy" to maintain control over the vast and diverse subcontinent. They exploited existing religious, cultural and regional divisions to create a sense of mistrust and disunity among the local populations, making it easier for them to exert their authority.

4. Economic Exploitation:

The British East India Company not only focused on trade but also exploited India's resources and wealth. They introduced cash crops like indigo and opium, which led to the decline of traditional industries. Additionally, the British levied heavy taxes and imposed various economic policies that benefitted their interests at the expense of the local population.

5. Military Superiority:

The British had advanced military technology and tactics that gave them an advantage over many regional rulers. They possessed superior firearms, artillery, and a well-organized army that allowed them to dominate in battles against native forces.

Over time, the company's influence evolved into direct British Crown rule, leading to almost two centuries of British colonial rule in India until India gained Independence

British Crown Takes Control:

As the British East India Company's influence grew, its administrative and military functions became entwined with governance. Due to mismanagement and corruption, the British Parliament decided to take direct control of India in 1858.

The rule shifted from the British East India Company to the British Crown, and the period from 1858 to 1947 is known as the "British Raj."

During the British Raj, the Indian subcontinent was governed directly by the British government through a viceroy representing the British Crown. The British administration established various laws and institutions to govern India. They introduced a system of governance, infrastructure development, and educational reforms, but these were often geared toward serving British interests and maintaining control.

It is essential to understand that British dominance in the Indian subcontinent was not a result of a pre-existing unified government or consent from the local population. It was a process driven by military conquest, strategic alliances, economic exploitation, and the British East India Company's gradual assumption of administrative functions, leading to direct British rule under the British Raj.

COLONIAL RULE:

Colonial rule refers to a system of governance where one country or a foreign power establishes political, economic and cultural control over another territory or region. The ruling power, known as the colonial power or colonizer, extends its authority over the colonized region, which may be geographically distant and inhabited by people with distinct cultures, languages and traditions.

BRITISH COLONIAL RULE:

British colonial rule refers to the period when the British Empire exercised political, economic and military control over various territories and regions around the world. It was a significant era of expansion and dominance for the British Empire, spanning from the 16th to the 20th century. The British Empire was one of the largest and most influential colonial empires in history and at its peak, it covered nearly a quarter of the world's land.

Key features and aspects of British colonial rule:

1. Geographic Extent:

2. Economic Exploitation.
3. Administrative Structure.
4. Cultural Influence.
5. Infrastructure development.
6. Social Impact.
7. Movements for Independence.
8. Legacy.

The end of British Colonial rule was marked by a process of decolonization that gained momentum after World War II. Many colonies achieved independence through negotiations, peaceful means or in some cases through armed struggle. As a result of decolonization, most former British colonies gained independence in the mid-20th century, becoming sovereign nations with their own governments and destinies.

The War of Independence (1857):

The War of Independence in 1857, also known as the Indian Rebellion, the Sepoy Mutiny or the first war of Independence was a significant armed uprising against British colonial rule in India. It began as a mutiny among the sepoys (Indian soldiers) of the British East India Company's army but quickly

escalated into a broader revolt involving various sections of Indian society.

Causes of the War of Independence

1. Discontent among Sepoys: The Sepoys were dissatisfied with several policies of the British East India Company, including the introduction of the new Enfield rifle that required the use of cartridges greased with animal fat. This led to religious concerns for both Hindu and Muslim Sepoys, who believed the cartridges violated their religious beliefs.

Moreover, Indian soldiers were paid less than their European counterparts and faced economic hardships, leading to resentment.

The company officials did not feel any hesitation in injuring the religious sentiments of the soldiers. In 1806, Sir George Barlow ordered that, from then onwards the Indian soldiers would not be allowed while at parade to use the tilak and to cover their heads with the safa:

The reaction of Indian soldiers fueled to the fire of hatred which was burning in the hearts of common people against British.

2. Religious Cause:

The East India Company had arrived in India for the purpose of trade and commerce but along with trade, it always regarded the propagation of Christianity as its first and foremost duty. The company officials were keen to see all the Indians united under the banner of Christianity (Ahmad Saeed, Trek to Pakistan, Lahore, p.4). A priest named Dr. Pfander came to India in 1854, made scathing attacks on Islam in his book Mizan-ul-Haq. It enraged and shocked the Indian Muslims.

Another priest named E. Edmond declared in an open letter in 1855 that since India had come under one government, it should also have only one religion i.e., Christianity.

3. Political Cause:

The English had become the rulers of India by depriving the Muslims of their government. They left no stone unturned in wiping out all the traces of Islam and the Muslims from the country. After defeating the Muslims politically, the English colonial rulers now started a well-organised campaign to malign the history, culture and religion of the Muslims.

4. Accession of State:

Right from the beginning, the company had been cherishing the desires of conquering the whole country and ruling over it single handedly. Thus, one by one, it started occupying and annexing the independent Indian states. This forcible annexation of states was carried out on a massive scale during the period of Lord Dalhousie. He did not tolerate the existence of any other state which could pose a threat to the activities and interests of the company. Thus, he annexed eight states to the British occupied territories.

The company resorted to an extreme form of injustice and cruelty in this whole process. Hundreds of thousands of people, who were associated with the courts of these states were faced with dire economic problems and hardships after the annexation of their states.

5. Economic Exploitation:

The brutal economic exploitation of the Indians at the hands of the company is a unique phenomenon in the whole human history. Before the arrival of company, all the government posts were held by the Indians. The Hindus and Muslims worked alike in all the government departments.

When the company started occupying different regions of the country, the local inhabitants had to undergo severe economic hardships. Those hundreds of thousands of people who were formerly associated with the courts of the rulers of the Indian states became bankrupt as soon as these states were annexed to British Empire. The company deliberately destroyed the native industries.

In the judicial systems, the stamp Act was introduced which not only made difficulties for the Indians to seek justice but also added to their economic hardships.

Key Events and Outcomes:

1. The Revolt Begins: The rebellion began on May 10, 1857, in the town of Meerut when Indian sepoys refused to use the new cartridges and mutinied. The rebellion quickly spread to other parts of northern and central India.

2. Delhi as the center of Rebellion:

Delhi became a focal point of the rebellion, with Indian sepoys and civilians proclaiming Bahadur Shah II, the last Mughal emperor, as the symbolic leader of the uprising.

3. Widespread Uprising: The rebellion saw the participation of various groups, including soldiers, landlords, peasants, tribal groups and members of the nobility. It extended beyond military barracks and involved attacks on British symbols of authority.

4. Suppression and Repression: The British responded to the rebellion with considerable force and brutality. Both sides committed acts of violence leading to significant loss of life.

5. British Suppression and Aftermath: The British eventually suppressed the rebellion with a combination of military force and political strategy. The uprising was effectively quelled by mid-1858.

6. End of the East India Company's Rule: As a result of the rebellion's aftermath, the British Crown took direct control of India from the British East India Company in 1858. This period of direct rule by the British government is known as the British Raj.

Causes of Failure:

Unfortunately, the independence movement could not succeed to achieve its

Objectives due to the following reasons:

1. Changes in the Plan: The revolutionaries had planned to start the war of independence throughout the country simultaneously on May 31, 1857. But it was started prematurely due to the cartridge incident and the plan to wage the war simultaneously throughout the country could not materialise.

2. The backstabbing of the Sikhs: Besides keeping away from the war, the Sikhs provided every possible assistance to the English army. They gave generous financial and military assistance to their English masters.

3. Absence of an Active and Efficient leader: The freedom fighters were not fighting under a single commander. No doubt, they had pledged their support for and loyalty to Bahadur Shah Zafar but he at that time was not that much energetic and experienced commander to lead and guide the people. He was surrounded by a host of traitors and flatterers.

4. Challenging Economic Conditions: Indians were, at that time, facing acute economic

problems. The soldiers who had gathered around Bahadur Shah Zafar were crippled by severe economic hardships. In the presence of such an economic crisis the soldiers could not be expected to fight properly and deliberately.

Impacts:

The war of Independence in 1857 had far-reaching consequences. It shook the foundation of British colonial rule in India and led to changes in governance and policies. It also played a significant role in shaping Indian nationalism and the subsequent struggle for independence which gained momentum in the decades that followed. The events of 1857 are remembered as a critical chapter of India's fight for freedom and self-determination.