



Queen Victoria writes letters as her Indian servant waits for his orders.



British East India Company's coat of arms



## WITNESS HISTORY AUDIO

### Critical of British Rule

In 1871, Indian nationalist Dadabhai Naoroji (DAH dah by now ROH jee) criticized British rule in India:

“ [Indians] call the British system ‘Sakar ki Churi’ (SA kur kee CHOO ree), the knife of sugar. That is to say, there is no oppression, it is all smooth and sweet, but it is the knife notwithstanding.”

**Focus Question** How did Britain gradually extend its control over most of India, despite opposition?

# The British Take Over India

## Objectives

- Understand the causes and effects of the Sepoy Rebellion.
- Explain how British rule affected India.
- Describe how Indians viewed Western culture.
- Identify the origins of Indian nationalism.

## Terms, People, and Places

sati

sepoy

viceroi

deforestation

Ram Mohun Roy

purdah

## Note Taking

**Reading Skill: Identify Causes and Effects** As you read this section, make a flowchart to show the causes and effects of British rule in India.



For more than 200 years, Mughal rulers governed a powerful empire in India. By the mid-1700s, however, the Mughal empire was collapsing from a lack of strong rulers. Britain then turned its commercial interests in the region into political ones.

## East India Company and Rebellion

In the early 1600s, the British East India Company won trading rights on the fringe of the Mughal empire. As Mughal power declined, the company's influence grew. By the mid-1800s, it controlled three fifths of India.

**Exploiting Indian Diversity** The British were able to conquer India by exploiting its diversity. Even when Mughal power was at its height, India was home to many people and cultures. As Mughal power crumbled, India became fragmented. Indians with different traditions and dozens of different languages were not able to unite against the newcomers. The British took advantage of Indian divisions by encouraging competition and disunity among rival princes. Where diplomacy or intrigue did not work, the British used their superior weapons to overpower local rulers.

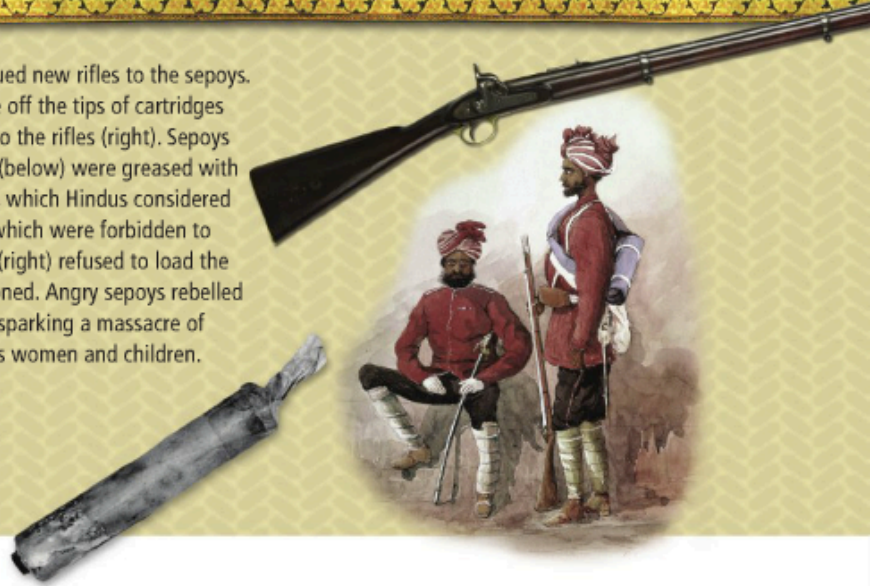
**Implementing British Policies** The East India Company's main goal in India was to make money, and leading officials often grew rich. At the same time, the company did work to improve roads, preserve peace, and reduce banditry.

# THE SEPOY REBELLION



In 1857, the British issued new rifles to the sepoys. Troops were told to bite off the tips of cartridges before loading them into the rifles (right). Sepoys believed the cartridges (below) were greased with animal fat—from cows, which Hindus considered sacred, and from pigs, which were forbidden to Muslims. When sepoys (right) refused to load the guns, they were imprisoned. Angry sepoys rebelled against British officers, sparking a massacre of British troops, as well as women and children.

◀ A Sepoy rebels against British forces.



By the early 1800s, British officials introduced Western education and legal procedures. Missionaries tried to convert Indians to Christianity, which they felt was superior to Indian religions. The British also pressed for social change. They worked to end slavery and the caste system and to improve the position of women within the family. One law banned **sati** (SUH tee), a Hindu custom practiced mainly by the upper classes. It called for a widow to join her husband in death by throwing herself on his funeral fire.

**Growing Discontent** In the 1850s, the East India Company made several unpopular moves. First, it required **sepoys** (SEE poyz), or Indian soldiers in its service, to serve anywhere, either in India or overseas. For high-caste Hindus, however, overseas travel was an offense against their religion. Second, the East India Company passed a law that allowed Hindu widows to remarry. Hindus viewed both moves as a Christian conspiracy to undermine their beliefs.

Then, in 1857, the British issued new rifles to the sepoys. Troops were told to bite off the tips of cartridges before loading them into the rifles. The cartridges, however, were greased with animal fat—either from cows, which Hindus considered sacred, or from pigs, which were forbidden to Muslims. When the troops refused the order to “load rifles,” they were imprisoned.

**Rebellion and Aftermath** Angry sepoys rose up against their British officers. The Sepoy Rebellion swept across northern and central India. Several sepoy regiments marched off to Delhi, the old Mughal capital. There, they hailed the last Mughal ruler as their leader.

In some places, the sepoys brutally massacred British men, women, and children. But the British soon rallied and crushed the revolt. They then took terrible revenge for their earlier losses, torching villages and slaughtering thousands of unarmed Indians.

## Imperialism in India to 1858



**Geography Interactive**  
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Web Code: nap-2441

A British officer fights sepoys near Delhi.



The Sepoy Rebellion left a bitter legacy of fear, hatred, and mistrust on both sides. It also brought major changes in British policy. In 1858, Parliament ended the rule of the East India Company and put India directly under the British crown. It sent more troops to India, taxing Indians to pay the cost of these occupying forces. While it slowed the “reforms” that had angered Hindus and Muslims, it continued to develop India for Britain’s own economic benefit.

**✓ Checkpoint** What were the causes of the Sepoy Rebellion in northern and central India?

### Impact of British Colonial Rule

After 1858, Parliament set up a system of colonial rule in India called the British Raj. A British **vicero**y in India governed in the name of the queen, and British officials held the top positions in the civil service and army. Indians filled most other jobs. With their cooperation, the British made India the “brightest jewel” in the crown of their empire.

British policies were designed to incorporate India into the overall British economy. At the same time, British officials felt they were helping India to modernize. In their terms, modernizing meant adopting not only Western technology but also Western culture.

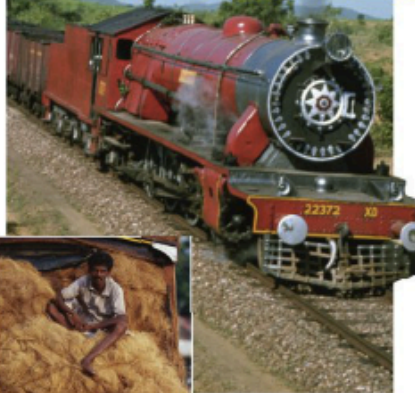
**An Unequal Partnership** Britain saw India both as a market and as a source of raw materials. To this end, the British built roads and an impressive railroad network. Improved transportation let the British sell

### Thinking Critically

- 1. Draw Conclusions** How was the Sepoy Rebellion a clash of cultures?
- 2. Map Skills** Which regions were most affected by the Sepoy Rebellion?

### Vocabulary Builder

overall—(OH vur awl) *adj.* total



their factory-made goods across the subcontinent and carry Indian cotton, jute, and coal to coastal ports for transport to factories in England. New methods of communication, such as the telegraph, also gave Britain better control of India. After the Suez Canal opened in 1869, British trade with India soared. But it remained an unequal partnership, favoring the British. The British flooded India with inexpensive, machine-made textiles, ruining India's once-prosperous hand-weaving industry.

Britain also transformed Indian agriculture. It encouraged nomadic herders to settle into farming and pushed farmers to grow cash crops, such as cotton and jute, that could be sold on the world market. Clearing new farmlands led to massive **deforestation**, or cutting of trees.

**Population Growth and Famine** The British introduced medical improvements and new farming methods. Better healthcare and increased food production led to rapid population growth. The rising numbers, however, put a strain on the food supply, especially as farmland was turned over to growing cash crops instead of food. In the late 1800s, terrible famines swept India.

**Benefits of British Rule** On the positive side, British rule brought some degree of peace and order to the countryside. The British revised the legal system to promote justice for Indians regardless of class or caste. Railroads helped Indians move around the country, while the telegraph and postal system improved communication. Greater contact helped bridge regional differences and develop a sense of national unity.

The upper classes, especially, benefited from some British policies. They sent their sons to British schools, where they were trained for posts in the civil service and military. Indian landowners and princes, who still ruled their own territories, grew rich from exporting cash crops.

**Checkpoint** How did British colonial rule affect Indian agriculture?

### Railroads and Trade

By building thousands of miles of railroads, the British opened up India's vast interior to trade. The British also encouraged Indians to grow tea (top photo) and jute (bottom photo). Today, tea is one of India's biggest crops. *What were some of the benefits of British rule?*

## Different Views on Culture

Some educated Indians were impressed by British power and technology and urged India to follow a Western model of progress. These mostly upper-class Indians learned English and adopted Western ways. Other Indians felt that the answer to change lay with their own Hindu or Muslim cultures.

**Indian Attitudes** In the early 1800s, **Ram Mohun Roy** combined both views. A great scholar, he knew Sanskrit, Persian, and Arabic classics, as well as English, Greek, and Latin works. Roy felt that India could learn from the West. He was a founder of Hindu College in Calcutta, which provided an English-style education to Indians. Many of its graduates went on to establish English schools all over the region. While Roy saw the value of Western education, he also wanted to reform traditional Indian culture.

Roy condemned some traditions, such as rigid caste distinctions, child marriage, sati, and **purdah** (PUR duh), the isolation of women in separate quarters. But he also set up educational societies that helped revive pride in Indian culture. Because of his influence on later leaders, he is often hailed today as the founder of Indian nationalism.



**Western Attitudes** The British disagreed among themselves about India. A few admired Indian theology and philosophy. As Western scholars translated Indian classics, they acquired respect for India's ancient heritage. Western writers and philosophers borrowed ideas from Hinduism and Buddhism.

However, most British people knew little about Indian achievements and dismissed Indian culture with contempt. In an essay on whether Indians should be taught in English or their own languages, British historian Thomas Macaulay arrogantly wrote that "a single shelf of a good European library is worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia."

**✓ Checkpoint** How did Indians and British view each other's culture in the 1800s?

## Indian Nationalism Grows

During the years of British rule, a class of Western-educated Indians emerged. In the view of Macaulay and others, this elite class would bolster British power. As it turned out, exposure to European ideas had the opposite effect. By the late 1800s, Western-educated Indians were spearheading a nationalist movement. Schooled in Western ideals such as democracy and equality, they dreamed of ending imperial rule.

**Indian National Congress** In 1885, nationalist leaders organized the Indian National Congress, which became known as the Congress party. Its members believed in peaceful protest to gain their ends. They called for greater democracy, which they felt would bring more power to Indians like themselves. The Indian National Congress looked forward to eventual self-rule, but supported Western-style modernization.

**Muslim League** At first, Muslims and Hindus worked together for self-rule. In time, however, Muslims grew to resent Hindu domination of the Congress party. They also worried that a Hindu-run government would oppress Muslims. In 1906, Muslims formed the Muslim League to pursue their own goals. Soon, they were talking of a separate Muslim state.

**✓ Checkpoint** How are the origins of Indian nationalism linked to British rule?

## Section 4 Assessment

### Progress Monitoring Online

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#### Terms, People, and Places

1. What do the key terms listed at the beginning of the section have in common?

#### Note Taking

2. **Reading Skill: Identify Causes and Effects** Use your completed flowchart to answer the Focus Question: How did Britain gradually extend its control over most of India, despite opposition?

#### Comprehension and Critical Thinking

3. **Recognize Cause and Effect** What were the causes and effects of the Sepoy Rebellion?
4. **Draw Conclusions** What were the positive and negative effects of British rule on Indians?
5. **Analyze Information** How did British rule lead to growing Indian nationalism?

#### Writing About History

**Quick Write: Draft an Opening Paragraph** Write an opening paragraph for a persuasive essay on whether the British were right to pass laws that tried to reform the caste system. Remember that the first few sentences of your draft are your chance to build interest in your topic. Add details that will help grab the reader's attention.

