

Chapter- 18

The British Raj and the First War of Independence

STUDY NOTES

Let's Learn

European Traders

Several hundred years ago, the Arabs and the Europeans traded with India. They traded mainly over land. India at that time was a very rich country, famous for its spices, gold, pearls and silk. In fact, it was called the Golden Bird. The first European to find a sea route to India was the Portuguese Vasco Da Gama. He went around Africa and landed India in 1498 in Calicut in Kerala



(now Kozhikode). The Portuguese started trading with India, mainly in spices. They were followed by the Dutch, French and the English Traders. Soon, they started fighting against each other to get a bigger share of the trade for themselves.

Finally, the British defeated the others. The British formed the English East India Company in the year 1600 for trading in India. They made trading centers in the western and eastern coasts. They bought mainly spices and textiles from India.

British Control

The wealth taken back to Britain by the traders of the East India Company was used to fund the industrial revolution in Britain. The British now needed a steady supply of raw materials for their factories. They also needed a market to sell the goods being made by the factories. Soon,

the British were not content with being more traders in India. They wanted to control the land. Around 250 years ago, the Mughal Empire in India had started declining. Several regional kingdoms emerged. The British took advantage of the constant fighting between them, and started gaining control over India.



The first stage of the British conquest of India was marked by the Battle of Plassey in 1757. The British were led by Robert Clive. In this battle, the British defeated Siraj-ud-Daulah, the Nawab of Bengal and became very powerful in Bengal. Seven years later, in 1764, another battle was fought between the East India Company and the Indian Nawabs - Mir Qasim of Bengal, the Mughal Emperor Shah Alam II and the Nawab of Awadh. This battle is known as Battle of Buxar. After this battle Bengal, Bihar and parts of Orissa (now Odisha) came under the British rule. Robert Clive became the first British governor of Bengal. Over the next 100 years they extended their control over most of India.

Discontent Among Indians

Soon, there was widespread discontent among the Indians. The officers of the East India Company used unfair means to get rich. They did so at the cost of the Indians. The farmers in India were forced to grow crops like indigo and cotton, which provided the British with raw materials for their factories. The British purchased these at very low prices. As a result, the farmers suffered. They became poorer, while the British made huge profits.

The mill cloth made by the British industries was sold in India. This was cheaper and of better quality than the cloth made by local weavers, so more and more people bought it.



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As a result of this, the Indian hand-loom industry suffered and the workers became poorer. Traders also suffered because of the goods coming from Britain. The British made unjust laws through which they could take control of more and more kingdoms in India.

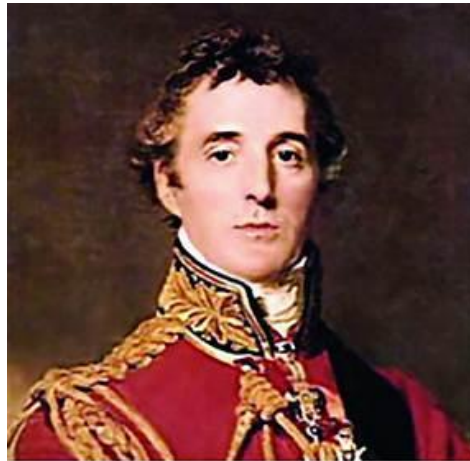
British Policies

- Divide and Rule policy-

Britishers pitted one ruler against another and gained advantage of their fight.

- Subsidiary Alliance-

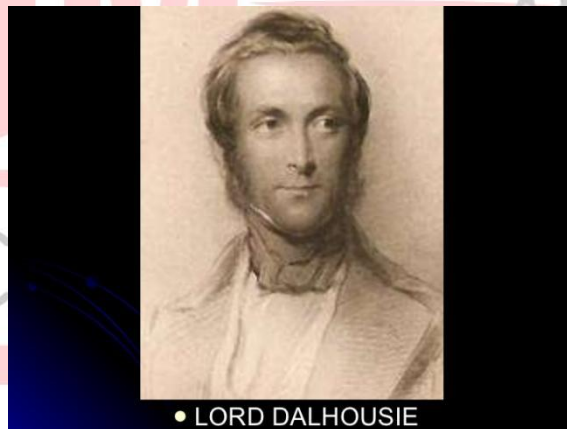
This policy was introduced by the Governor general Lord Wellesley. Under this policy, the rulers had to suspend their armies and keep British forces in their territory and pay for their maintenance. They also had to give some part of their kingdom to the British.



Lord Wellesley

- Doctrine of Lapse-

This policy was introduced by Lord Dalhousie. Under this policy any kingdom, whose ruler died without having a natural son, would be taken over by the British.



● LORD DALHOUSIE

Disappointment among Indians towards British Policies

- Indian sepoys in British army were not treated well. They also could not get higher posts in the army.
- The farmers were forced to grow cotton and indigo in place of food grains because cotton and indigo were in great demand in Europe. The British also gave very low prices for cotton and indigo. This made Indian farmers poorer.
- Indian craftsmen were also not happy with the British. The British bought cotton and other raw materials at low prices from India and sent them to England. There these materials were processed in machines to make clothes at low cost. The ready made clothes were

- Again sold in Indian markets at high rates. Thus, Indian craftsmen and weavers lost their jobs.
- Many Indian rulers who had lost their kingdoms due to the Doctrine of Lapse were already unhappy with the British.

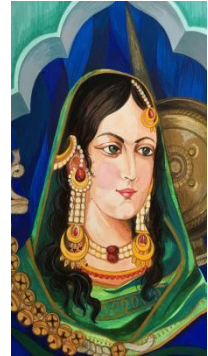
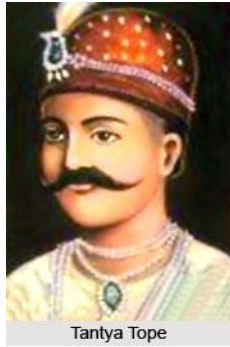
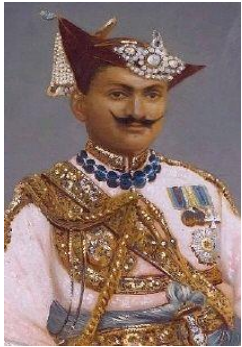
The Revolt of 1857-The First War of Independence

Many of the Indians - the farmers, workers, traders and the rulers - were angry and dissatisfied with the British rule. Whenever such a situation exists, there were chances of a revolt or an uprising. People forget their fears and differences, and together rise against the rulers. This is what happened in India in 1857. A small incident started a revolt that quickly spread through the population. It was when Enfield rifles were introduced in the army. There was a rumour that the cover of the cartridges of this rifle was greased with the fat of pig and cow and the cover had to be bitten off by teeth. From this incident the Indians' anger broke out and the revolt of 1857 was started.

Leaders leading the Revolt of 1857

The sepoys rebelled starting the Revolt of 1857, also known as the Indian Mutiny or the Uprising of 1857. Mangal Pandey was the first sepoy to openly refuse to use the cartridges. He was arrested and hanged on April 8, 1857. Again the revolt started in Meerut on April 24, 1857, when the Indian sepoys rebelled and marched to Delhi and declared Bahadur Shah Zafar, the last Mughal emperor, as the emperor.

These revolts were led by different leaders in different parts of the country.



NANA SAHIB

(led revolt in Kanpur)

TANTIA TOPE

KUNWAR SINGH

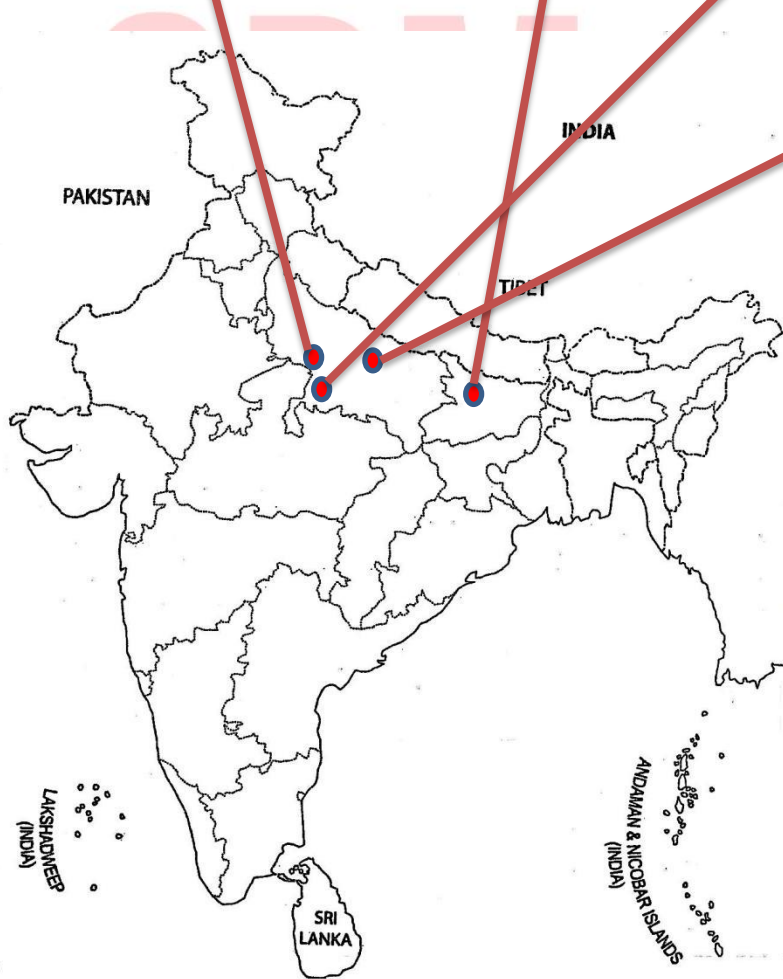
(led revolt in Bihar)

RANI LAKSHMI BAI

(led revolt in Jhansi)

BEGUM HAZRAT

(led revolt in Awadh-Lucknow)



Reasons behind the Failure of the Revolt

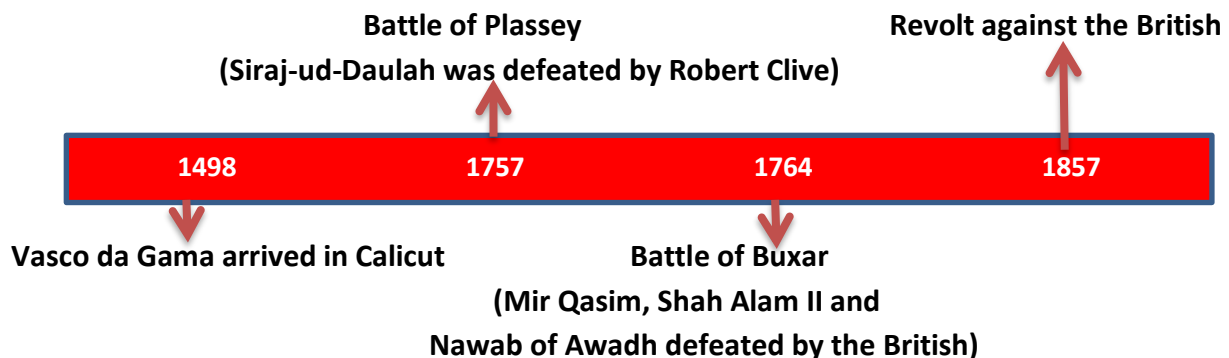
- The revolt was not planned and organized properly.
- The revolt did not get support from entire country.
- People from all sections of society did not support it.
- The Indian soldiers did not have good weapons.

Result of the Revolt of 1857

Though the revolt was suppressed, it proved to be a turning point in the history of India. The rule of the East India Company came to an end. India was now directly under the rule of the British Crown and Queen Victoria became the Empress of India. India was no longer ruled by governor-generals, but by viceroys.



TIME LINE



MEMORY MAP

Background

- British arrived in India as traders
- Soon started gaining political powers in India

Causes

- Exploitation of farmers and workers
- Annexation of territories with the help of unfair laws
- Discrimination against Indian soldiers in terms of salaries and positions in the army
- The spread of a rumour related to the cartridges greased with the animal fat

Revolt of 1857 (Fought between the British and soldiers, workers, and farmers of India)

Consequences

- The Mughal rule came to an end
- The British Parliament took over the control of India from the East India Company
- A viceroy was appointed by the British government to rule the country
- People realized the importance of unity in gaining freedom

Let's know more

Fill in the blanks

- Nizams of Hyderabad, Scndhias of Gwalior and Zamindars of Awadh are few rulers who strongly _____ the Revolt of 1857.
- The revolt of 1857 laid the foundation of _____ in India.
- During the Revolt of 1857 there was a circulation of properly baked Chapaties with secret messages by the Chowkidars of the villages. It was called the _____ movement.
- The Revolt of 1857 officially started on 10th _____, 1857.

Let's Do

A. Fill in the blanks.

1. The first European to find a sea route to India was _____.
2. The British became very powerful in Bengal after the Battle of _____ in 1757.
3. The Revolt of 1857 started in the city of _____.
4. _____ was declared the leader of the 1857 revolt.
5. The British _____ took over the control of India from the East India Company.

B. Write T for true and F for false sentences.

1. On his first trip to India, Vasco da Gama landed in the city of Calcutta.
2. The British bought cheap raw materials from Indians and sold them as finished goods at high prices.
3. India became independent from British rule after the rule of the East India Company ended.
4. The British were able to take control o India because the rulers were always fighting among themselves.
5. The Revolt of 1857 was the fist war of independence fought by the Indians.

Multiple choice questions.

1. Which of these countries traded with India about 500 years ago?
a. Britain b. Portugal c. French d. all of these
2. One of the main items the European traders bought from India was:
a. Furniture b. jewellery c. spices d. arms
3. The Indian soldier who started the revolt against the British was
a. Tantia Tope b. Nana Saheb c. Rani Lakshmi Bai d. Mangal Pandey
4. The Mughal Emperor who participated in the First War of Independence was
a. Bahadur Shah Zafar b. Akbar c. Humayun d. shah Jahan
5. Who did the British defeat in the Battle of Plassey?

- a. Tantia Tope b. Nana Saheb c. Rani Lakshmi Bai d. Siraj-ud-Daulah

Understand and Answer

C. Answer the following questions.

1. Which European country was the first to start trade with India?
2. Name three other European countries that started trading with India.
3. Why did the countries trading with India fight among themselves? Who finally won the fight?
4. What gave the British an opportunity to start gaining control over India?
5. Explain why the Industrial Revolution in Britain was bad for the weavers in India.
6. Give one example of an unjust law made by the British to take over kingdoms in India.
7. Why were the Indian soldiers unhappy with the new rifles?
8. Why were the British able to crush the Revolt of 1857?

Teacher's Note

Why do you think spices were in such demand in Europe and the Arabian countries?

Improve your G. K

- Henry Lawrence was the British Official who suppressed the Revolt of Jhansi.
- Shah Mal was the leader associated with Barout in Uttar Pradesh during the 1857 revolts.
- Karl Marx was the author of the book "The First Indian War of Independence - 1857-59".
- Sir Hume described Rani Lakshmi Bai as the best and bravest military leader of the rebel.

ANSWER KEY

Let's know more

- Opposed
- Nationalism
- Chapati
- May

Let's Do

- A.** 1. Vasco da Gama
2. Plassey
3. Meerut
4. Bahadur Shah Zafar
5. Government

- B.** 1. F
2. T
3. F
4. T
5. T

MCQ

1. d. All of these
2. c. Spices
3. d. Mangal Pandey
4. a. Bahadur Shah Zafar
5. d. Siraj-ud-Daulah

Understand and Answer

1. The Portuguese started trading with India, mainly in Spices.
2. Dutch, French and English traders are the European countries that started trading with India.
3. They started fighting against each other to get a bigger share of the trade for themselves. Finally, the British won the fight.
4. Around 265 years ago, the Mughal Empire in India had started declining. Several Regional Kingdom emerged. The British took advantage of the constant fighting between them and started gaining control over India.
5. The Industrial Revolution in Britain was bad for the weavers in India because the cloth made by the British mills was cheaper and of better quality than the local weavers. So more and more people bought it. As a result of this the handloom industry suffered and the workers became poorer. Traders also suffered because of goods coming from Britain.
6. One such law said that, if a ruler died without a male child, his Kingdom would be taken over by the British. This made the Kings and Nawabs of India very unhappy.

7. Indian soldiers were unhappy because of the new rifles they had to use. To load these rifles, the soldiers had to bite off the end of greased cartridges. A rumour spread among the soldiers that the cartridges were greased with the fat of cows and pigs. The Hindus regard cows as sacred and Muslims regard pigs as unclean. So the rumour angered both the Hindu and the Muslim soldiers.

8. The British were able to crush the Revolt of 1857 because the British had superior weapons and greater military strength. Many Indians also sided with the British.

