**Chapter three**

3. BRITISH CONQUEST OF INDIA AND LOCAL RESISTANCE

* **Background and India’s Traditional Economy**

With more than 1 billion inhabitants, India ranks second only to China among the world’s most populous countries. Its people are culturally diverse, and religion plays an important role in the life of the country. About 81 percent of the people practice Hinduism, a religion that originated in India. Another 13 percent are Muslims, and millions of others are Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists, and Jains. Eighteen major languages and more than 1,000 minor languages and dialects are spoken in India.

India’s long history stretches back to the Indus Valley civilization of about 2500-1700 bc. For hundreds of years, India was home to massive empires and regional kingdoms. British rule in India began in the 1700s. Foreign domination engendered Indian nationalism, which eventually led to India winning its independence in 1947. With independence, part of India became the new predominantly Muslim nation of Pakistan. The two nations subsequently struggled over border differences and Hindu-Muslim relations. India and Pakistan fought two wars over the Jammu and Kashmīr region, and the status of the territory remains in dispute.

India’s population is rich with diverse ethnic and cultural groups. Ethnic groups are those based on a sense of common ancestry, while cultural groups can be either made up of people of different ethnic origins who share a common language, or of ethnic groups with some customs and beliefs in common, such as castes of a particular locality. The diverse ethnic and cultural origins of the people of India are shared by the other peoples of the Indian subcontinent, including the inhabitants of Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan, and Sri Lanka.

The government identifies some groups of people in India as tribal, meaning they belong to one of the more than 300 officially designated “scheduled tribes.” The tribal people are sometimes called hill tribes or *adivasis* (“original inhabitants”). For the purpose of affirmative action, the Indian government publishes “schedules” (lists) of the tribes, as well as of some other disadvantaged groups, such as the former Untouchables. Members of India’s various hill tribes are thought to be indigenous and tend to be ethnically distinct. These groups typically marry within their community and often live in large, adjoining areas, which are preserved by government policies restricting the sale of land to tribe members.

The Major “tribes” are the Gond and the Bhil. Each has millions of members and encompasses a number of sub-tribes. Most other tribes are much smaller, with tens of thousands of members. Very few tribal communities now support themselves with traditional methods of hunting and gathering or with shifting cultivation (also known as slash-and-burn agriculture) because of government restrictions aimed at protecting the environment. Instead, they generally practice settled agriculture. Tribal groups tend to live in rural areas, mainly in hilly and less fertile regions of the country. Less than 5 percent practice traditional tribal religious beliefs and customs exclusively; most now combine traditional religions and customs with Hinduism or Christianity. A large majority identify themselves as Hindus; but a small percentage, mainly in the northeast, identify themselves as Christians.

Religion is very important in India, with deep historical roots; Hinduism and Buddhism both originated here. Most people in India practice Hinduism with Islam a distant second. Other important religions include Christianity, Sikhism, Buddhism, and Jainism.

About 80 percent of Indians are Hindus. Significant differences exist within this Hindu majority, arising not only out of divisions of caste, but also out of differing religious beliefs. One great divide is between devotees of the god Vishnu and devotees of the god Shiva. There are also Hindus who are members of reform movements that began in the 19th century. The most significant of these is perhaps the Arya Samaj, which rejects divisions of caste and idol worship. Hindus may come together also as devotees of a guru. Despite its differences, the Hindu community shares many things in common. All Hindus who go to Brahman priests for the rituals connected with birth, marriage, and death will hear the same Sanskrit verses that have been memorized and repeated for hundreds of generations. Hindus also come from all parts of the country to visit pilgrimage sites. Four of the most sacred are at the four corners of India: Badrinath in the Himalayas; Rāmeswaram in Tamil Nādu state; Dwarka on the Gujarāt coast; and Puri in Orissa. Vārānasi is also a significant holy city for Hindus.

About 13 percent of the Indian population practices Islam that is in turn divided into several different communities. The major division in the Muslim population is between Sunni and Shia branches. The Shia community has a significant presence in several areas, most notably in the cities of Lucknow in Uttar Pradesh and Hyderābād in Andhra Pradesh.

India’s other major religious groups include Christians (2.3 percent of the population), Sikhs (1.9 percent), and Buddhists (0.8 percent). Smaller religious groups include Jains, Baha’is, and Parsis. Christians live primarily in urban areas throughout India, with major concentrations in the states of Kerala, Tamil Nādu, and Goa. Christians are a majority in three small states in the northeast: Nagaland, Mizoram, and Meghalaya. Most Sikhs live in Punjab, generally in rural areas.

Buddhists live in small numbers in the Himalayas from Ladakh to Arunāchal Pradesh; many converts also live in Mahārāshtra. The Jains live mainly in the belt of western states, from Rājasthān through Gujarāt and Mahārāshtra to Karnātaka. This region has many magnificent Jain temples, supported substantially by prosperous Jain traders. Parsis live mainly in Mumbai and in cities in Gujarāt, and Jews have small communities in Mumbai, Kolkata, and Cochin.

The caste system is pervasive in India. Although it is entwined in Hindu beliefs, it encompasses non-Hindus as well. A caste (*jati* in Sanskrit) is a social class to which a person belongs at birth and which is ranked against other castes, typically on a continuum of perceived purity and pollution. People generally marry within their own caste. In rural areas, caste may also govern where people live or what occupations they engage in. The particular features of the caste system vary considerably from community to community and across regions. Small geographical areas have their own group-specific caste hierarchies. There are thus thousands of castes in India. In traditional Hindu law texts, all castes are loosely grouped into four *varnas,* or classes. In order of hierarchy, these varnas are the Brahmans (priests and scholars), the Kshatriyas (warriors and rulers), the Vaisyas (merchants, farmers, and traders), and the Sudras (laborers, including artisans, servants, and serfs). The varnas no longer strictly correspond to traditional professions. For example, most Brahmans today are not priests, but farmers, cooks, or other professionals.

Ranked below the lowest caste were the people of no caste, the Untouchables or *Harijans* (“People of God,” a term first used by Indian leader Mohandas Gandhi). Untouchables traditionally performed tasks considered “polluting,” such as slaughtering animals or leatherworking. Physical contact with these people was viewed as defiling. The practice of labeling people Untouchable was outlawed by India’s constitution, although Harijans continue to face discrimination in getting work and housing. Today many former Untouchables prefer to be called *dalits* (Hindi for “oppressed ones”).

Since independence the importance of caste has declined somewhat in India. Modern travel has brought people of every caste in contact with one another, since it is impossible to avoid physical contact with a former Untouchable in a crowded bus or train. Although caste is intimately linked with the giving and taking of food, no one can be certain of the caste of a person who cooks food in the restaurants and food stalls of towns and cities. There are no particular castes linked to the modern professions of bank clerk, postal worker, teacher, and lawyer. Many people have also been influenced by the nationalist movement’s ideological commitment to the equality of men and women, and lower castes have increasingly used the power of their numbers and their right to vote to gain social status in their local community. Yet castes have shown no sign of disappearing altogether, mainly because of the system of marriage. Almost all Hindu marriages in India are arranged, and almost all arranged marriages occur between people of the same caste. Only a handful of young people make “love marriages” across caste lines, and many suffer socially when they do so.

Muslims are often treated as just another caste, particularly in India’s villages. There are caste-like categories among the Muslims as well. These are called brotherhoods in northern India, and they identify Muslims with their traditional occupations, such as butchers or leatherworkers. As with Hindus, Muslims marry within their brotherhood. Among Christians as well, in the 19th century and to a much less significant extent more recently, converts and their descendants continued to be identified by their Hindu caste of origin.

Discrimination against lower caste members, including the Harijans or former Untouchables, is still a problem in India. As a result violence between castes sometimes breaks out. Since independence, many lower caste groups have mobilized politically and have achieved positions of power or leverage in several states. More than 50 percent of the positions in the national civil service are reserved for members of lower castes. Efforts to organize the landless and the homeless, however, have not enjoyed the same success. In rural areas, men of lower caste traditionally serve those of higher caste. This situation has aggravated caste conflict and has helped to keep the poor politically and socially weak.

Relations between Hindus and Muslims have also been problematic. After the partition of British India into India and Pakistan, Muslims of the Northern provinces who stayed in India—where they were a minority—became vulnerable. Riots between Hindus and Muslims have occurred on occasion since the mid-1960s. Muslims in rural areas remain largely untouched by the conflict. Riots tend not to occur in areas where there are structures of mutual social or economic advantage—for example, in towns with a large industry owned by Hindus and employing Muslims. Also, at the personal level, there are many examples of friendships and mutual respect. Muslim leaders have served as presidents of India, and Muslims have held positions of great prominence in all fields, including the military.

The various religious groups of India have had a significant role in art and architecture that date back thousands of years. India’s earliest known civilization, the Indus Valley civilization (about 2500-1700 bc) produced fine sculpted figures and seals. The basis for Indian music may well be traced to the chanting of the Vedas, the Hindu sacred texts composed between about 1500 and 1000 bc. Much of Indian literature has its roots in the great Sanskrit epics, *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana,* which date from 400 bc. Secular literature in the form of story and drama has been important since the classical age of the 4th century ad. Royal patronage of these art forms continued throughout history, and the government of independent India also supports the arts with national academies for music, art, drama, literature, and other programs. There are yearly prizes for work in all the Indian languages, and in the several musical, dramatic, and art traditions. The government’s national radio network is a major employer of musicians.

As India has incorporated different peoples, so, too, has its culture absorbed outside influences. Sculpture derived from the Greeks developed a uniquely Indian style over time (the Gandhara School). Musical instruments brought by the Muslims in the 15th century were incorporated into existing musical methods in Hindu devotional poetry and song. Similar patterns are found in painting and architecture in the period of Mughal rule and patronage. British rule had no influence on classical music, but popular music was changed, particularly in the 20th century. Prose literature, and to a lesser extent poetry, was transformed by the model of the English novel, short story, and romantic poem. The British adapted Indian domestic architecture (the bungalow) and blended Mughal, Hindu, and European forms into a distinctive monumental architecture, visible most significantly in New Delhi.

Over many centuries, Indian architecture, sculpture, and painting developed many distinct styles based on religious, cultural, and regional influences. Some of the earliest examples of all three come out of Buddhism. For instance, Buddhist traditions gave rise to stupas, or burial mounds of earth and stone, constructed in the 3rd century bc. Images of the Buddha were carved in the 2nd century ad, and stories of the Buddha are depicted in paintings on temple walls carved in stone cliffs at Ajanta between the 2nd century bc and the 7th century ad.

After the 5th century ad, Buddhism’s influence on art declined as that of Hinduism and Jainism rose. Hindu and Jain temples developed in many styles, most characterized by ornate carvings, pyramidal roofs and spires, and numerous sculptures of divinities housed within. Sculpture frequently portrayed Hindu and Jain gods in relief on temple walls, and became increasingly elaborate, linear, and decorative through the 13th century.

Muslim invaders from Central Asia and Persia brought new artistic styles and techniques, among them the dome, mosaic, and minaret. Many domed tombs and mosques from the 12th century and later have been preserved, as have some magnificent fortresses. Because Islam forbids carved images, sculpture took the form of gloriously elaborate geometric and floral designs adorning the temples. One of the most famous examples of Islamic architecture in India is the Taj Mahal in Āgra (started in 1632 and completed in 1648).

India has had a distinguished theatrical tradition for more than a thousand years. The Gupta Dynasty (ad 320-550?) saw the flowering of Sanskrit drama. The great plays that survive from that time are generally secular, such as *Shakuntala* by Kalidasa,about the court, kings, and courtesans. Classical plays are rarely revived, although modern playwrights have experimented with traditional mythic and historical themes. Theater other than folk theater, which struggles despite government patronage to survive, is directly from the European tradition and is popular only in larger cities. Theater has been eclipsed by the cinema and more recently by television.

**3.2 COLONIAL HISTORY OF INDIA**

 **3.2 .2 NDIA BEFORE 1850S**

By the 10th century Turkic Muslims began invading India, bringing the Islamic religion to India. The Ghaznavids, a dynasty from eastern Afghanistan, began a series of raids into northwestern India at the end of the 10th century. Mahmud of Ghaznī, the most notable ruler of this dynasty, raided as far as present-day Uttar Pradesh state. Mahmud did not attempt to rule Indian Territory except for the Punjab area, which he annexed before his death in 1030.

A little more than a century after Mahmud’s death, his magnificent capital of Ghaznī was destroyed in warfare among rivals within Afghanistan. In 1175 one of the successors to Mahmud’s dismembered empire, the Muslim conqueror Muhammad of Ghur, began his conquest of northern India. Within 20 years he had conquered all of north India, including the Bengal region. In 1206 Qutubuddin Aybak, one of Muhammad of Ghur’s generals, founded the Delhi Sultanate with its capital at Delhi and began the Slave dynasty. Also in 1206 Genghis Khan united the Mongol tribes and established the Mongol Empire. He then moved rapidly into China and westward, reaching the Indus Valley about 1221. In the following three centuries the Mongols remained the dominant power in northwest India, gradually merging with the Turkic Muslim peoples there.

The Delhi Sultanate engaged in constant warfare during its 300-year reign, subduing intermittent rebellions of the nobles of the Bengal region, repelling incursions of Mongols to the northwest, and conquering and looting Hindu kingdoms as far south as Madurai in Tamil Nādu. Beginning with the Slave dynasty, the sultanate was ruled by a succession of five dynasties before it was finally overthrown by the Mughal emperor Humayun in 1556. During the reign of the short-lived Khalji dynasty (1290-1320), the warrior leader Alauddin financed his successful campaigns to south India with an established system of local revenue. The next dynasty that of the Tughluqs, weakened when Muhammad Tughluq moved his capital from Delhi to the more centrally located Daulatabad in an effort to assert more permanent rule over his southern lands. He lost control over the Delhi area, and nobles in the south and in Bengal also established their independence. In 1398 the Mongol conqueror Tamerlane invaded India, sacking Delhi and massacring its inhabitants. Tamerlane withdrew from India shortly after the sack of Delhi, leaving the remnants of the empire to Mahmud, who as last of the Tughluqs ruled from 1399 to 1413. Mahmud was succeeded by the Sayyid dynasty (1414-1451), under which the Delhi Sultanate shrank to virtually nothing. The Lodi dynasty (1451-1526), of Afghan origin, later revived the rule of Delhi over much of north India, although it was unable to give its rule a firm military and financial foundation. The rest of India remained under the rule of other kings, some Muslim and some Hindu. The greatest of these polities was the Hindu empire of Vijayanagar, which existed from 1336 to 1565, centered in what is now Karnātaka.

Many Indians converted to Islam during this era. One of the areas where a great majority of the population became Muslim was in the Punjab region, which by the end of the Delhi Sultanate had been under the continuous rule of Muslim kings for more than 500 years. Muslims did marry Hindus (the founder of the Khalji dynasty was the offspring of one such marriage), and Hindus did convert to Islam. In general, Muslim kings were far from tolerant; even despising their Hindu subjects, but there is no record of forced mass conversions. The region that is now Bangladesh also became overwhelmingly Muslim during this period. This area had been mainly Buddhist before the Muslims arrived. Even in south India, where the Hindu revival inspired by the works of Shankara and others had its greatest influence, a small minority of people became Muslim.

The Mughal Empire was founded in 1526 by Babur, a descendant of Tamerlane. It is famous for its extent (it covered most of the Indian subcontinent) and for the heights that music, literature, art, and especially architecture reached under its rulers. The Mughal Empire was born when Babur, with the use of superior artillery, defeated the far larger army of the Lodis at Pānīpat, near Delhi. Babur’s kingdom stretched from beyond Afghanistan to the Bengal region along the Gangetic Plain. His son Humayun, however, lost the kingdom to Bihār-based Sher Khan Sur (later Sher Shah) and fled to Persia (now Iran). Humayun recaptured Delhi in 1555, shortly before his death.

Humayun’s son Akbar, whose name (meaning “great”) reflected the ruler he became, extended the Mughal Empire until it covered the subcontinent from Afghanistan to the Bay of Bengal and from the Himalayas to the Godāvari River. The Mughals moved their capitals frequently: Wherever they made camp became the capital. The cities they built, and the citadels within those cities, were like army camps, with the nobles living in tents, rich carpets on the ground, and just the walls, audience halls, royal residences, and mosques built of stone. In the course of the dynasty those citadels were located in Lahore, in and around Āgra, in the architecturally spectacular city of Fatehpur Sikri, and near the city of Shahjahanabad (“city of Shah Jahan”).

Although illiterate, Akbar matched the learning of his father and grandfather, both of whose courts were enriched by Persian arts and letters, and surpassed them in wisdom. He brought under his control the Hindu Rajput kings who ruled just south and west of Āgra by defeating them in battle, extending religious tolerance, and offering them alliances cemented by marriage (Akbar married two Rajput princesses, including the mother of his son and successor, Jahangir) and positions of power in his army and administration. As an observant Muslim, Akbar brought to his court adherents to various sects of Islam, as well as priests of other faiths, including Christians, to hear them present their beliefs. European visitors to the Mughal court became even more frequent in the succeeding reigns of Jahangir and Shah Jahan. Europeans were allowed to establish trading posts at the periphery of the empire and beyond, but they never became influential at court.

Paying for the military campaigns and for the magnificent court required the transformation of traditional patterns of taxation and administration. Sher Shah initiated the necessary administrative system, and Akbar improved it. By accurately assessing average yearly harvests for land in different regions and then standardizing the percentage of the harvest due in taxes, Akbar secured a reliable source of income from land revenues. To make it easier to govern his empire, he divided it into provinces and subdivided it into districts. He established a bureaucracy of ranked officials to administer the functions of the empire and paid many of its members in cash rather than in the traditional form of grants of land, allowing for flexibility in the location and type of assignments the officials were given. This system was so successful that the British adopted it in large part.

The system came under strain with Shah Jahan’s costly and unsuccessful campaign to capture the Mughal’s ancestral homeland of Samarqand in 1646, and his son Aurangzeb’s equally costly efforts to extend the empire south. In 1686 and 1687 Aurangzeb conquered the Muslim kingdoms of Bijāpur and Golkonda, which controlled the northern half of the Deccan Plateau. But his attempt to subdue the Hindu Maratha Confederacy (centered in what is now Mahārāstra state) was ultimately unsuccessful, and the Mughal armies suffered numerous defeats. Aurangzeb’s growing religious intolerance also undermined the stability of the empire. In 1697 he re-imposed a poll tax on non-Muslims, abolished during Akbar’s rule. Disaffection over such discriminatory policies, along with the now-crushing tax burden, led to widespread rebellion at the end of Aurangzeb’s reign.

Although it did not formally end until 1858, the Mughal Empire ceased to exist as an effective state after Aurangzeb died in 1707. The political chaos of the period was marked by a rapid decline of centralized authority, by the creation of many small kingdoms and principalities by Muslim and Hindu adventurers, and by the formation of large independent states by the governors of the imperial provinces. Among the first of the large independent states to emerge was Hyderābād, established in 1712. The tottering Mughal regime suffered a disastrous blow in 1739 when the Persian king Nadir Shah led an army into India and plundered Delhi. Among the treasures stolen by invaders were the mammoth Koh-i-noor diamond and the magnificent Peacock Throne, made of solid gold inlaid with precious stones. Nadir Shah withdrew from Delhi, but in 1756 the city was again captured—this time by Ahmad Shah, emir of Afghanistan, who had previously seized Punjab.

**3.2.2 Maratha Confederacy**

Despite these outside sieges upon Delhi, it was the Marathas who first attempted to appropriate the lands of the Mughal Empire. Moving from the northwestern Deccan Plateau, they seized lands in Gujarāt in the 1720s, central India in the 1730s, the provinces up to the Bay of Bengal in the 1750s, and south India as far as Tanjore (Thanjāvūr) in what is now Tamil Nādu in the 1760s. They were defeated by the Afghans on the Pānīpat battlefield in 1761, preventing them from expanding any farther north. The Marathas held mainly nominal control of much of the land they conquered and did not collect taxes from many areas. The Sikhs, whose persecution under the later Mughals provoked them to transform themselves into a community of warriors, built a kingdom in the Punjab in the late 18th century.

By the 18th century British sea power matched that of the Dutch, and the European rivalry in India began to take on a military dimension. During the first half of the 18th century the French, who had begun to operate in India in about 1675, emerged as a serious threat to the growing power and prosperity of the English East India Company. By the mid-18th century the British and French were at war with each other throughout the world. This rivalry manifested itself in India in a series of conflicts, called the Carnatic Wars, which stretched over 20 years and established the British as the primary European power in India.

As the French and British skirmished over control of India’s foreign trade, the Mughal Empire was experiencing its rapid decline and regional kingdoms were emerging. The continuously warring rulers of these kingdoms used well-trained and disciplined French and British forces to support their military activities. The foreigners, however, had their own agenda, frequently expanding their own political or territorial power under the guise of championing a local ruler. Led by innovative and effective Joseph François Dupleix, the French managed to place themselves in a powerful position in southern India, especially in Hyderābād by 1750. In 1751, however, British troops under Robert Clive captured the French southeastern stronghold of Arcot in a pivotal battle. With this encounter the balance of power in the south swung to favor the British, although the struggle for control of India’s trade continued.

In Bengal, the English East India Company had begun fortifying Fort William in Calcutta (now Kolkata) to defend against possible attacks by the French. Nominally a part of the Mughal Empire, Bengal was at this time virtually independent under the emperor’s *nawab* (governor). In response to reports of unauthorized activities of the British, the nawab Siraj-ud-Dawlah attacked Calcutta in 1756. Some British survivors of the attack were imprisoned in a small dungeon known as the Black Hole of Calcutta where a number of them died. After the incident, Robert Clive, then the British governor of Fort Saint David, moved north from Madras and, conniving with the commander of his enemy’s army, defeated the nawab in the Battle of Plassey in 1757. The battle marked the first stage in the British conquest of India. The French attempted to regain their position in India but were beaten back by the British in 1761. In 1764 the British again defeated local rulers at the Battle of Buxar. This victory firmly established British control over the Bengal region.

**3.3. The British Empire in India**

The English East India Company continued to extend its control over Indian territory throughout the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Treaties made with Indian princes provided for the stationing of British troops within these princely states. To pay for the troops the British were often given revenue-collecting rights in certain parts of the states; this gave them indirect control over these areas. Many of these states were annexed when succession to the throne was in doubt or when the ruler acted in ways that seemed contrary to British interests.

The British made even more significant gains by military means. In the late 1700s they were drawn into a three-way conflict when the nizam of Hyderābād asked for British assistance against his rivals: the Marathas, and Tipu Sahib, the sultan of Mysore. In 1799 the British marched on Seringapatam, Tipu’s capital, and defeated his troops. Tipu was killed defending the city. The British annexed much of Mysore outright; they controlled the remainder through a new sultan they installed. After a series of battles (1775-1782, 1803-1805, 1817-1818) with the Marathas, the British also succeeded in bringing Maratha lands under their control.

In 1773 the British Parliament passed the Regulating Act, the first of a series of acts that gave British governors greater control over the English East India Company. Under the Regulating Act the company was still permitted to continue handling all trading matters and to have its own troops, but its activity was now supervised by parliament. The act also established the post of governor-general of India and made the holder of the office directly responsible to the British government. Warren Hastings became the first governor-general of India in 1774.

The British proceeded to make major changes in the administration of their realm. The three presidencies (administrative districts)—Bengal, Bombay, and Madras—adopted different systems of fixing responsibility for the payment of land taxes. In Bengal, the local landed gentry accepted responsibility for a fixed amount of taxes in return for ownership of large estates. Under this arrangement the British did not share in the gains of any potential improvements in agricultural productivity. By contrast, in Madras and Bombay, peasant cultivators paid annual taxes directly to the government. The tax rate could be adjusted at fixed intervals, so in this case the British could reap the benefits of agricultural expansion. A civil service system was developed that admitted British officers through a merit examination, trained them in an administrative college, and paid them handsomely to reduce corruption. Meanwhile, the development of the textile industry in Britain forced a transformation of India’s economy: India had to produce raw cotton for export and buy manufactured goods—including cloth—from England, while the cottage industries that produced textiles in India were ruined.

At the same time British attitudes about Indian culture changed. Until about 1800 the East India Company traders adapted themselves to the country, donning Indian dress, learning Sanskrit, and sometimes taking Indian mistresses. As British rule strengthened, and as an influential evangelical Christian movement emerged in the early 19th century, India’s customs were judged more harshly. Missionaries, who had been kept out by the company for fear they would upset Indians and thus disrupt commerce, were now brought in. Laws were passed to abolish Indian customs such as suttee (the immolation of a widow on her husband’s funeral pyre). The 18th-century company officers, such as Sir William Jones, a scholar of Sanskrit who discovered the relationship of Indo-European languages, were replaced by British subjects who felt Indian thought and literature was of virtually no value. In 1835 English was enforced as the language of government.

Under the leadership of Governor-General James Andrew Broun Ramsay, 10th earl of Dalhousie, the empire continued to expand. After two wars with the Sikhs, the Sikh state of Punjab was added in 1849. Governor-General Dalhousie also annexed Sātāra, Jaipur, Sambalpur, Jhānsi, and Nāgpur on the death of their native rulers, taking advantage of a British doctrine that declared Britain’s right to govern any Indian state where there was no natural heir to the throne. The absorption of Oudh, long under Britain’s indirect control, was the last major piece added to the company’s possessions; it was annexed in 1856. Dalhousie’s tenure was also marked by various improvements and reforms: the construction of railroads, bridges, roads, and irrigation systems; the establishment of telegraph and postal services; and restrictions on slave trading and other ancient practices. These innovations and reforms, however, aroused little enthusiasm among Indian people, many of whom regarded the modernization of their country with both fear and mistrust.

***Sepoy* Rebellion**

The annexation of Indian territory and the rigorous taxation on Indian land contributed to a revolt against British rule that began in 1857. The revolt started as a mutiny of Indian *sepoys* (soldiers) in the service of the English East India Company in Meerut, a town northeast of Delhi. The mutiny erupted when some sepoys refused to use their new Lee-Enfield rifles. To load the rifles, the soldiers had to bite off the ends of greased cartridges. Rumors that the cartridges were greased with the fat of cows and pigs outraged both Hindus, who regard cows as sacred, and Muslims, who regard pigs as unclean. After taking Meerut, the mutineers marched to Delhi and persuaded the nominal sovereign of India, the Mughal emperor Bahadur Shah II, to resume his rule. The revolt spread rapidly, with local rulers playing an active part in expelling or killing the British and putting their garrisons under siege, especially at Lucknow. The revolt extended through Oudh Province (now part of Uttar Pradesh) and present-day northern Madhya Pradesh. The British were able to crush it, making particular use of Sikh soldiers recruited in the Punjab. The mutiny ended by 1859, with both sides guilty of atrocities.

The Sepoy Rebellion, with its unanticipated fury and extent, left the British feeling insecure. In August 1858 the British Parliament abolished the English East India Company and transferred the company’s responsibilities to the British crown. This launched a period of direct rule in India, ending the fiction of company rule as an agent of the Mughal emperor (who was tried for treason and exiled to Burma). In November 1858, in her proclamation to the “Princes, Chiefs, and Peoples of India,” Queen Victoria pledged to preserve the rule of Indian princes in return for loyalty to the crown. More than 560 such enclaves, taking in one-fourth of India’s area and one-fifth of its people, were preserved until Indian independence in 1947. In 1876, at the urging of British Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli, Queen Victoria took the title of Empress of India.

Among the reforms introduced after the adoption of direct rule was a reorganization of the administrative system. A secretary of state, aided by a council, began to control Indian affairs from London. A viceroy (a governor who acts in the name of the British crown) implemented London’s policies from Calcutta. An executive and a legislative council provided advice and assistance. Provincial governors made up the next level of authority, and below them were district officials.

The army was also reorganized after the imposition of direct rule. The ratio of British to Indian soldiers was reduced, and recruitment policies were reshaped to favor Sikhs and other “martial races” who had been loyal during the Sepoy Rebellion. Castes and groups that had been disloyal were carefully screened out.

Although the system of revenue collection remained largely unchanged, landowners who remained loyal during the mutiny were rewarded with titles and grants of large amounts of land, much of it confiscated from those who rebelled. Later, during agitations for Indian independence, the British were able to rely on many landowners for support.

With the imposition of direct rule, the economy of India became even more closely linked than before with that of Britain. The opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 reduced the sailing time between Britain and India from about three months to only three weeks, enabling London to exercise tight control over all aspects of Indian trade. Railroads, roads, and communications were developed to bring raw materials, especially cotton, to ports for shipment to England, and manufactured goods from England for sale in an expanding Indian market. Development schemes, such as massive irrigation projects in the Punjab, were also intended to serve the purpose of enriching England. Indian entrepreneurs were not encouraged to develop their own industries.

Although some industrialization took place during this period, its benefits did not reach the majority of the Indian population. During the 1850s, mechanized jute industries were developed in Bengal and cotton textiles in western India, mainly by British firms. Although these industries expanded rapidly from 1880 to 1914, and although an Indian iron-and-steel industry was developed in the early 20th century, India remained essentially an agrarian economy. By 1914 industry accounted for less than 5 percent of national income, and less than 1 percent of India’s workforce was employed in factories. A succession of severe famines occurred at this time despite the general improvement of agricultural production, the expansion of the railways, and the development of administrative procedures designed to tackle such crises. With only small advances in public health, death rates remained high and life expectancy low.

The assumption of direct British rule in 1858 made Indians British subjects and promised in principle that Indians could participate in their own governance. Few reforms addressed this issue, however. Although local government councils had been elected even before 1857, it wasn’t until the Indian Councils Act of 1861 that Indians were permitted, by appointment, to participate in the Executive Council, the highest council of the land. Indian representation on local and provincial bodies gradually expanded under British rule, although never to the point of complete control. The higher civil service had theoretically been opened to Indians in 1833, and the Queen’s Proclamation of 1858 confirmed this point again. Nevertheless, candidates for the service had to go to England to compete in the examination, which emphasized classical European subjects. Those few who managed to overcome these initial obstacles and join the service encountered discrimination that prevented them from advancing.

**The Movement for Independence**

 **Rise of Indian Nationalism**

The Sepoy Rebellion and its aftermath increased political awareness among the Indian people of the abuses of British rule. This growing consciousness found its strongest voice among an English-educated intelligentsia that grew up in India’s major cities during the last three decades of the 19th century. These men were journalists, lawyers, and teachers from India’s elite. Most had attended universities founded in 1857 by the British in Bombay (now Mumbai), Calcutta (now Kolkata), and Madras (now Chennai). Studying the political theorists of Western democracy and capitalism such as John Stuart Mill convinced many that they were being denied the full rights and responsibilities of British citizenship.

Following the defeat of the 1857 rising the British government took responsibility for ruling India from the E.I.C. This was in 1858 and British rule continued until independence in 1947. In 1877 Queen Victoria (r.1837-1901) in Britain adopted the title “Empress of India”.

Dissatisfaction with British rule took organized political form in 1885, when these men, with the support of sympathetic Englishmen, formed the Indian National Congress. Resolutions at the first session called for increased Indian participation on provincial legislative councils and improved access for Indians to employment in the Indian Civil Service. Initially the organization adopted a moderate approach to reform. For its first 20 years, the Congress served as a forum for debate on questions of British policy toward India, as well as a platform to push for economic and social changes. Central to a newly developed Indian identity was the argument, articulated by three-time Congress president Dadabhai Naoroji, that Great Britain was draining India of its wealth by means of unfair trade regulations. The Congress also took issue with the restraint on the development of native Indian industry and the use of Indian taxes to pay the high salaries and pensions of the British who ruled over India by “right” of conquest.

The Indian National Congress Movement later party was founded in Bombay in 1885. Congress was established as a modern secular party of all India. Initially, Congress did attract some educated Muslims and others as well as Hindu. But the rise of Hindu militancy and the numerical domination of Congress by Hindus alienated Indian Muslims and resulted in the rise of a rival Muslim political organization.

At the same time, a Hindu social reform movement that had begun 50 years earlier contributed ideas about the injustice of caste and gender discrimination. Reformers lobbied for laws to permit, for example, the remarriage of Hindu women widowed before puberty. In western India, one reformer, journalist Bal Gangadhar Tilak, impatient with the slow pace of the nationalist movement, attempted to mobilize a larger audience by drawing on Hindu religious symbolism and Maratha history to spark patriotic fervor. A similar thread of nationalism appeared in Bengal. By 1905 extreme nationalists had arisen to challenge the more moderate members of Congress, whose petitioning of the British government had had little success.

George Nathaniel Curzon, who was viceroy of India from 1899 to 1905, presided over the affairs of British India at its peak, and he worked to weaken nationalist opposition to British rule. In 1905 he partitioned the administratively unwieldy province of Bengal into East Bengal and Assam (with a Muslim majority) and Bengal, Bihār, and Orissa (with a Hindu majority). This measure sparked a set of developments in the nationalist movement that were to transform India’s future. The Hindu elite of Bengal, many of whom were landlords collecting rent from Muslim peasants of East Bengal, were roused to protest not just in the press and at public meetings, but with direct action. Some pushed a boycott and *swadeshi* (literally “own-country,” but meaning here “buy Indian”) campaign against British goods, especially textiles. Others joined small terrorist groups that succeeded in assassinating some British officials. This movement echoed in other parts of India as well. By 1908 imports had fallen off significantly, and sales of local goods enjoyed a five-year boom that gave real impetus to the development of native industries

Part of India about 3/5 was ruled directly by British officials. The rest of India about 2/5 was still formally under the rule of dependent Indian princesses. Each prince had a British resident at his court and the princess had to accept the “advice” of the resident in important matters with the threat of deposition in favor of another member of the princely family if he did not follow the resident’s advice.

The emergence of extremism, led particularly by Tilak, resulted in a split in the Congress in 1907. The election of a new Liberal government in Britain in 1906 and the subsequent appointment of a new Liberal secretary of state, John Morley, gave new heart to the moderates. Many extremists were imprisoned by the British for lengthy terms.

Finally, the partition of Bengal, the vehement agitation against it, and the prospect of liberal reform crystallized the opposition of the Muslim elite to the trend of Indian nationalism. They worried about the role of a Muslim minority in a fully democratic, independent India. In October 1906 a delegation of about 35 Muslim leaders called upon Lord Minto, the viceroy, to ask for separate electorates for Muslims and a weighted proportion of legislative representation that would reflect their historic role as rulers and their record of cooperating with the British. (These requests were later adopted in the reforms incorporated in the Government of India Act of 1909.) In December, this delegation, joined by additional delegates from every province of India and Burma, formed the All-India Muslim League (later the Muslim League). Although the Muslim League did not then generate a mass following, its leaders played an important role in the politics that accompanied the challenge to British rule and the partition of India in 1947.

Ultimately the opposition to the partition of Bengal was successful. In 1911 the division was annulled, and the eastern and western portions of Bengal were reunited as a presidency, with Calcutta as its capital. Assam became its own province, while Bihār and Orissa were joined as a province (divided into separate provinces in 1936). Also at this time, the British authorities announced that the capital of India would be moved from Calcutta (where it had been formally since 1858) to Delhi. There, a new adjoining city called New Delhi would be built to house the government offices; it was inaugurated as the capital in 1931. Although New Delhi was constructed on a grand imperial scale, the losses from World War I (1914-1918) dealt what was to become a mortal blow to the British Empire.

The most valued part of Britain’s colonial empire the “jewel in the Crown” was India. It absorbed a large per cent age of Britain’s export of manufactories especially cotton textiles and a great deal of Britain’s export of capital. Britain also imported a large volume of commodities from India but the balance of trade was favorable to Britain.

 **The World Wars and the Emergence of Gandhi**

British rule over Indian had the following achievements: The unity of Indian sub-continent; internal stability with law order and internal peace; extensive railway system; efficient famine code form 1883 on; and a modern education though of variable quality and irrigation works which increased the area of cultivated land.

India was a major source of support for Britain’s war effort during World War First. Some 750,000 Indian troops served in Europe, the Middle East, and Africa; more than 36,000 were killed. India supplied wheat and other goods to British forces east of Suez, and with the loss of trade with Germany and the other Central Powers and the continuance of heavy taxation, the economic cost of the war was evident. Political resistance to British rule continued, although mainly at a more moderate level. A small, mostly Sikh revolutionary movement appeared briefly in Punjab.

Shortly after the war began, Indian lawyer Mohandas Gandhi returned to India from South Africa, where he had organized and led an Indian ambulance corps when the war broke out. When he came to India in 1915 he was already an important political leader because of an earlier trip to India in 1901 and 1902 and because of his efforts for civil liberties in South Africa. He met with the viceroy and the leaders of the Congress, and in 1916 he forged a pact with Mohammed Ali Jinnah, leader of the Muslim League, for Congress-Muslim League joint action. Gandhi also became involved in a number of campaigns of nonviolent resistance, in which he honed the nonviolent techniques he had developed in South Africa.

India made a large contribution to Briin in manpower and material resources in the 1914-18 war. Indians expected some political reward for India’s contribution to Britain’s war effort.

In 1917 Edwin Montague, the secretary of state for India, had announced a policy of the “gradual development of self-governing institutions with a view to the progressive realization of responsible government in India as an integral part of the British Empire.” As the war ended the British introduced a fresh set of reforms, culminating in the Government of India Act of 1919. This act brought some Indian control over certain executive departments in the provinces and greater representation of Indians in the central legislative council. Also, the act made it easier for Indians to gain admission into the civil service and into the officer corps of the army, an aspect of the law which encountered resistance from some British.

In the same year that it passed these reforms, however, the legislative council also passed the Rowlatt Acts. The Rowlatt Acts, which detractors called the Black Acts, made permanent some restrictions on civil liberties that had been imposed during the war. Specifically, the acts gave the government emergency powers to deal with so-called revolutionary activities. There was an immediate wave of disapproval from all Indian leaders, and Gandhi stepped in and organized a series of nonviolent acts of resistance. Gandhi called these acts *satyagraha* (Sanskrit for “truth and firmness”). These included nationwide work stoppages (*hartal*) and other activities in which Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs participated together. One of these protests coincided with a Hindu festival in Amritsar. Despite a last-minute ban on public meetings, thousands of unarmed pilgrims and protesters gathered in a public square to celebrate on April 13, 1919. Without warning, British troops opened fire on the peaceful crowd, killing nearly 400 people. The success of the Rowlatt Satyagraha followed by the Amritsar incident brought public sympathy to the nationalist movement, and with it a new level of prestige.

In 1909, the Morley-Minto Reforms gave India elected assemblies in the India provinces though the suffrage was still restricted. Moreover, these assemblies were really “sham parliaments” they could talk and criticize but they did not have executive powers to control the provincial administration for less the central administration in Delhi.

In August 1917, Montague, the secretary of states for India in the British Cabinet made a statement that the goal of British policy for India was: "The gradual development of self-governing institutions with a view to the progressive realization of responsible government in India as an integral part of the British Empire." This is known in Indian history as the Montague Declaration. The British government’s implementation of the Montague Declaration was the government of India Act passed by the British parliament in December 1919. This Act was usually called the Montague-Chelmsford Reforms.

In 1920, when the government failed to make amends, Gandhi began an organized campaign of noncooperation. Many Indians returned their British honors, withdrew their children from British schools, resigned from government service, and began a new boycott of British goods. Gandhi reorganized the Congress in 1920, transforming it from an annual gathering of self-selected leaders with a skeleton staff to a mass movement, with membership fees and requirements set to allow even the poorest Indian to join. Gandhi ended the noncooperation movement in 1922 after 22 Indian policemen were burned to death. A lull in nationalist activity followed. Gandhi was jailed shortly after ending the noncooperation movement and remained in prison until 1924. In 1928, a British committee began to study the next steps of democratic reform, sparking a revival of the Congress movement. In its 1929 annual session, the Congress issued a demand for “complete independence.

* In 1927, the conservative Government in Britain decided to appoint the Simon Commission to inquire and report on political changes for India before the ten years specified in the 1919 Act had expired.

Gandhi then led another even more massive movement of civil disobedience. It climaxed in 1930 with the so-called Salt Satyagraha, in which thousands of Indians protested taxes, particularly the tax on salt, by marching to the Arabian Sea and making salt from evaporated seawater. Tens of thousands, including Gandhi, were sent to jail as a result. The British government gave in, and Gandhi went to London as the sole representative of the Congress to negotiate new steps of reform.

In 1935, after these negotiations, the British Parliament approved legislation known as the Government of India Act of 1935. The legislation provided for the establishment of autonomous legislative bodies in the provinces of British India, the creation of a federal form of central government incorporating the provinces and princely states, and the protection of Muslim minorities. The act also provided for a bicameral national legislature and an executive arm under control of the British government. The federation was never realized, but provincial legislative autonomy went into effect April 1, 1937, after nationwide elections. In these elections, the Congress saw victory in much of India, except in areas where Muslims were a majority. Congress governments, with significant powers, took office in a number of provinces.

Gandhi believed in non-violent resistance. He believed in resistance called *satyagraha* meaning "soul-force". He believed that resistance against British rule could be carried out by non-violent through strikes, boycotts of British products and non-violent demonstrations. Of course, despite Gandhi's wishes, such methods of resistance sometimes led to violence.

When World War II broke out in 1939 the British declared war on India’s behalf without consulting Indian leaders, and the Congress provincial ministries resigned in protest. After extended negotiations with the British, who were searching for a way to grant independence some time after the war’s end, Gandhi declared a “Quit India” movement in 1942, urging the British to withdraw from India or face nationwide civil disobedience. Along with other Congress leaders, he was imprisoned in August that year, and the country erupted in violent demonstrations. Gandhi was not released until 1944.

The Muslim League supported Britain in the war effort but had become convinced that if the Congress Party were to inherit British rule, Muslims would be unfairly treated. Jinnah campaigned vigorously against Congress during the war and increased the Muslim League’s support base. In 1940 the League passed what came to be known as the Pakistan Resolution, which demanded separate states in the Muslim-majority areas of India (in the northwest, centered on Punjab, and in the east, centered on Bengal) at independence. Many Muslims supported the Muslim League in its demand, while Hindus (and some Muslims) supported the Congress, which opposed partition of British India. Another round of negotiations over Indian independence began after the war in 1946, but the Congress and the Muslim League were unable to settle their differences over partition. Jinnah proclaimed August 16, 1946, Direct Action Day for the purpose of winning a separate Muslim state. Savage Hindu-Muslim riots broke out in Calcutta the next day and quickly spread throughout India. In September, an interim government was installed. Jawaharlal Nehru, the leader of Congress, became India’s first prime minister. A united India, however, no longer seemed possible. The new Labor government in Britain decided that the time to end British rule of India had come, and in early 1947 Britain announced its intention of transferring power no later than June 1948.

* The 1930s was a critical decade of progress towards Indian independence. The British government and all British parties now realized that independence in India would have to come sooner than British had previously expected though the British government still sit no date for independence. Moreover, the Indian Civil Service (ICS) became much more indianized in the 1930s.

**THE WAR FOR INDEPENDENCE**

When World War II broke out in Europe in September 1939, Congress refused to support the British war effort and abandoned participation in Indian government as a protest against the British government having involving India in the war against Germany without consulting India of getting the approval of the India Congress. It was also protesting against the refusal of Britain to grant immediate independence to India. In fact, Congress launched a new political struggle caused difficulties for Britain in India but Britain was able to maintain control of India and used India as a base from 1941 on for the war against Japan.

It was easier to maintain control of India under war time conditions than peace one. Moreover, the Muslim League and Indian Muslims continued on the whole cooperation with Britain. The very large British Indian army further enlarged during the war was unaffected by Congress agitation and made a big contribution to Britain’s war efforts in the Middle East, East Africa and East Asia.

However, in the war, Japan was able to recruit an army was called the Indian National Army (INA) from Indian soldiers taken prisoner by the Japanese army. This army was recruited and led by Indian radical Subhas Chandra Bose who had gone to Germany and then Japan after the beginning of the war. The INA was supposed to be fighting for the liberation of India from Britain though in fact if the Japanese had won it would have mean Japanese imperialism replacing British imperialism, rather than Indian freedom.

The Indian achieved nothing in the war. Instead, in the war there was a terrible famine in Bengal in 1943 which further discredited British rule. After World War II, opposition to colonialism was stronger in Asia partly because of the defeats by the colonial powers by the Japanese in 1941-42.

Britain could therefore expect increasing opposition to any attempt to maintain British rule in India. Also the USA on which Britain was economically dependent at the end of the war was hostile to old fashioned colonialism unless the anti –colonial forces were led by communists which was not the case in India. Moreover, for Britain in no longer seemed worthwhile to continue ruling India. India was no longer vital to the British economy. It seemed, economically and politically, more advantageous to Britain to give early independence to India and have hopefully good relations with an independent India.

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The British Labor Party won an over whelming victory in the 1945 election in Britain and formed a labor government. The Labor Party was committed to Indian independence. In fact, the labor government decided on independence very soon after the war. Britain handed over power and left Indian in August 1947. However, the unity of the Indian sub-continent was not preserved at independence. There was partition two independent Indian states emerged, i.e., India, which was chiefly Hindu and Pakistan which was overwhelmingly Muslim.

The state of Pakistan was created in the Muslim majority areas of Northwest Indian and what was called East Pakistan which was the Muslim majority part of Bengal province. East Pakistan was geographically separated from the rest of Pakistan. Later in 1971, East Pakistan separated successfully from Pakistan and became the state of Bangladesh. India achieved independence under the leadership of Jawaharlal Nehru (1889-1964) who was the first Prime-Minister of independent India. Nehru was a modern educated Indian who in fact educated at one of the leading schools of England and at Cambridge University. He became in 1920s and 30s, the main Congress leader next to Gandhi though very critical of British policy and though he had spent much time in prison in India, Nehru was definitely committed to modernizing, industrializing, and non-traditional India rather than a kind of India which Gandhi aspired to build. Although, of course, even Gandhi was not just a Hindu traditionalist. Gandhi was assassinated in 1948 by a fanatic Hindu traditionalist. Large scale communal massacres accompanied independence as Hindu and Muslim minorities tried to reach India or Pakistan.

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At independence, Britain abandoned the princely states which were about two fifth of the Indian sub-continent. Britain advised the princes to accede to either India or Pakistan which reluctantly they did. There was trouble however in the state of Kashmir in the northwest. Most of the people were Muslim but the ruler was Hindu who acceded to India. Pakistan did not accept this decision and there was fighting in Kashmir between Indian and Pakistan troops until the UN arranged cease fire but could achieve no definite solution. The frontier in Kashmir, which Indians called Jammuand Kashmir, is still in ceasefire.

**Indian Independence**

* When World War II broke out in Europe in September 1939, Congress refused to support the British war effort and abandoned participation in Indian government as a protest against the British government having involving India in the war against Germany without consulting India of getting the approval of the India Congress.

As independence approached and Hindus and Muslims continued to fight and kill each other, Gandhi once again put his belief in nonviolence into play. He went on his own to a Muslim-majority area of Bengal, placing himself as a hostage for the safety of Muslims living among Hindus in western Bengal. With the British army unable to deal with the threat of mounting violence, the new viceroy, Louis Mountbatten, decided to advance the schedule of the transfer of power, leaving just months for the parties to agree on a formula for independence. Finally in June 1947 Congress and Muslim League leaders, against Gandhi’s wishes, agreed to a partition of the country along religious lines, with predominantly Hindu areas allocated to India and predominantly Muslim areas to Pakistan. They agreed to a partition of the Muslim-majority provinces of Punjab and Bengal as well. Hindu, Muslim, and Sikh refugees numbering in the millions streamed across the newly drawn borders. In Punjab, where the Sikh community was cut in half, a period of terrible bloodshed followed. In Bengal, where Gandhi became what Lord Mountbatten called a “one-man boundary force,” the violence was insignificant in comparison. On India’s Independence Day, August 15, 1947, Gandhi was in Calcutta rather than Delhi, mourning the division of the country rather than celebrating the self-rule for which he had fought.

* As Congress was leading non-Muslims to in dependence, the Muslim League was leading Muslims towards independence but as a separate Muslim state following the partition of the Indian sub-continent in 1947.

As it was expected, the liberation movement resulted in a free but divided India. The British colonial rule in that nation led to the creation of two states, i.e., Pakistan and India. Pundit Nehru became the first premier of the liberated India while Muhammad Jinahh became the premier of Pakistan. Shortly he died and replaced by Ali Khan.

However, it did not take too long when the two nations engaged in a fierce civil war over Kashmir. Murder and violence between Hindus and Muslim became the order of the day. Primarily mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948) involved himself in the issue and tried to stop the enmity and bring peace in that nation. Unfortunately, on Jan 30, 1948 he was shot by an extremist Hindu. With this the Indian lost their great leader. Indeed, his effort to reunite the sub- continent India and establish friendly relationship with the Muslims cost his life.

The news of assassination of Gandhi shocked the world. The All India Radio announced his death as follow “Mahatma Gandhi was assassinated in New Delhi at twenty minutes past five this afternoon. His assassin was a Hindu