



British Rule in India

GUIDE TO READING

The BIG Idea

Struggle for Rights The British brought stability to India but destroyed native industries and degraded Indians.

Content Vocabulary

- sepoy (p. 702)
- viceroy (p. 704)

Academic Vocabulary

- civil (p. 704)
- estate (p. 707)

People, Places, and Events

- Kanpur (p. 703)
- Queen Victoria (p. 703)
- Bombay (p. 705)
- Indian National Congress (p. 705)
- Mohandas Gandhi (p. 706)
- Rabindranath Tagore (p. 707)

Reading Strategy

Determining Cause and Effect As you read, use a chart like the one below to identify some causes and effects of British influence on India.

Cause	Effect
1. British textiles	
2. cotton crops	
3. school system	
4. railroad, telegraph, telephone services	

The British brought order and stability to India, but India paid a high price for British rule. The mistrust and cultural differences between the British and Indians sparked an independence movement and renewed interest among Indians in their culture and history.

The Sepoy Mutiny

MAIN IDEA Mistrust and cultural differences between the British and Indians led to violent conflict.

HISTORY & YOU Does your family follow certain traditions or religious practices? Read to learn how cultural differences helped ignite an Indian rebellion in 1857.

Over the course of the eighteenth century, British power in India had increased while the power of the Mogul rulers had declined (see Chapter 15). The British government gave a trading company, the British East India Company, power to become actively involved in India's political and military affairs. To rule India, the British East India Company had its own soldiers and forts. It also hired Indian soldiers, known as **sepoys**, to protect the company's interests in the region.

Events Leading to Revolt

In 1857 a growing Indian distrust of the British led to a revolt. The British call the revolt the Sepoy Mutiny. Indians call it the First War of Independence. Neutral observers label it the Great Rebellion.

The major immediate cause of the revolt was a rumor that the troops' new rifle cartridges were greased with cow and pig fat. The cow was sacred to Hindus. The pig was taboo to Muslims. To load a rifle at that time, soldiers had to bite off the end of the cartridge. To the sepoys, touching these greased cartridges to their lips would mean that they were polluted.

A group of sepoys at an army post in Meerut, near Delhi, refused to load their rifles with the cartridges. The British charged them with mutiny, publicly humiliated them, and put them in prison. This treatment of their comrades enraged the sepoy troops in Meerut. They went on a rampage, killing 50 European men, women, and children. Soon other Indians joined the revolt, including Indian princes whose land the British had taken.

Within a year, however, Indian troops loyal to the British and fresh British troops had crushed the rebellion. Although Indian troops fought bravely and outnumbered the British by about 230,000 to 45,000, they were not well organized. Rivalries between

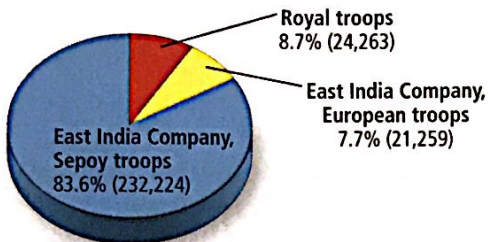
Causes of the Sepoy Mutiny

- Increased British power in India; decreased power for Mogul rulers
- Growing distrust of British
- British disrespect for Indian religions and culture

Effects

- End of the Mogul Empire
- Beginning of direct British rule in India
- Indian nationalist movement

Troops Employed in British India, 1857



Source: *Statistical Abstract Relating to British India from 1840 to 1865.*

CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

Charles Canning was the British governor-general in India. After the British crushed the sepoy uprising, Canning declared that any mutineer who had not committed murder could be spared execution. The *Times* of London called this decree the “clemency of Canning.”

1. **Identifying** The sepoys made up what percentage of the troops of the British East India Company in 1857?
2. **Analyzing** What British attitude toward the sepoys does the cartoon show? Describe details from the cartoon that reveal this attitude.

The Great Rebellion in India

The caption of *The Clemency of Canning* (1857) reads, “Well, then, they shan’t blow him from nasty guns; but he must promise to be a good little sepoy.”



THE CLEMENCY OF CANNING.

Hindus and Muslims kept the Indians from working together.

Atrocities were terrible on both sides. At **Kanpur** (Cawnpore), Indians massacred 200 defenseless women and children in a building known as the House of the Ladies. Recapturing Kanpur, the British took their revenge before executing the Indians.

Effects of the Revolt

As a result of the uprising, the British Parliament transferred the powers of the East India Company directly to the British

government. In 1876 **Queen Victoria** took the title Empress of India. The people of India were now her colonial subjects, and India became her “Jewel in the Crown.”

Although the rebellion failed, it helped to fuel Indian nationalism. The rebellion marked the first significant attempt by the people of South Asia to throw off British *Raj* (rule). Later, a new generation of Indian leaders would take up the cause.

✓ Reading Check Describing What were some effects of the Great Rebellion?

British Colonial Rule

MAIN IDEA The British brought order and stability to India, but they also hurt India's economy and degraded the Indian people.

HISTORY & YOU Do people in your life have both a positive and a negative influence on you? Read to learn how British rule in India had both positive and negative results for India.



See page R47 to read excerpts from Dadabhai Naoroji's *The Impact of British Rule in India* in the Primary Sources and Literature Library.

After the Sepoy Mutiny, the British government began to rule India directly. They appointed a British official known as a **viceroi** (a governor who ruled as a representative of a monarch). A British civil service staff assisted the viceroy. This staff of about 3,500 officials ruled almost 300 million people, the largest colonial population in the world. British rule involved both benefits and costs for Indians.

Benefits of British Rule

British rule in India had several benefits for subjects. It brought order and stability to a society badly divided into many states with different political systems. It also led to a fairly honest, efficient government.

Through the efforts of the British administrator and historian Lord Thomas Macaulay, a new school system was set up. The new system used the English language, as Macaulay explained:

PRIMARY SOURCE

"What then shall the language of education be? [Some] maintain that it should be the English. The other half strongly recommend the Arabic and Sanskrit. The whole question seems to me to be, which language is the best worth knowing? . . . It is, I believe, no exaggeration to say that all the historical information which has been collected from all the books written in the Sanskrit language is less valuable than what may be found in short textbooks used at preparatory schools in England."

—*A New History of India*, Stanley Wolpert, 1977

The goal of the new school system was to train Indian children to serve in the government and army. The new system served only elite, upper-class Indians, however. Ninety percent of the population remained uneducated and illiterate.

The British hired Indians and built roads, canals, universities, and medical centers.

A postal service was introduced shortly after it appeared in Great Britain. India's first rail network, beginning in Bombay, opened in 1853. By 1900, 25,000 miles (40,225 km) of railroads crisscrossed India.

Costs of British Rule

The Indian people, however, paid a high price for the peace and stability brought by British rule. Perhaps the greatest cost was economic. British entrepreneurs and a small number of Indians reaped financial benefits from British rule, but it brought hardship to millions of others in both the cities and the countryside. British manufactured goods destroyed local industries. British textiles put thousands of women out of work and severely damaged the Indian textile industry.

In rural areas, the British sent the zamindars to collect taxes. The British believed that using these local officials would make it easier to collect taxes from the peasants. However, the zamindars in India took advantage of their new authority. They increased taxes and forced the less fortunate peasants to become tenants or lose their land entirely. Peasant unrest grew.

The British also encouraged many farmers to switch from growing food to growing cotton. As a result, food supplies could not keep up with the growing population. Between 1800 and 1900, 30 million Indians died of starvation.

Finally, British rule was degrading, even for the newly educated upper classes who benefited the most from it. The best jobs and the best housing were reserved for Britons. Although many British colonial officials sincerely tried to improve the lot of the people in India, British arrogance cut deeply into the pride of many Indians.

The British also showed disrespect for India's cultural heritage. The Taj Mahal, for example, was built as a tomb for the beloved wife of an Indian ruler. The British used it as a favorite site for weddings and parties. Many partygoers even brought hammers to chip off pieces as souvenirs. British racial attitudes led to the rise of an Indian nationalist movement.

✓ Reading Check Examining How was British rule degrading to Indians?

Indian Nationalists

MAIN IDEA The British presence in India led to an Indian independence movement.

HISTORY & YOU What methods did Martin Luther King, Jr., use in the civil rights movement of the 1960s? Read to learn about Gandhi, the Indian leader who first practiced nonviolent protest.

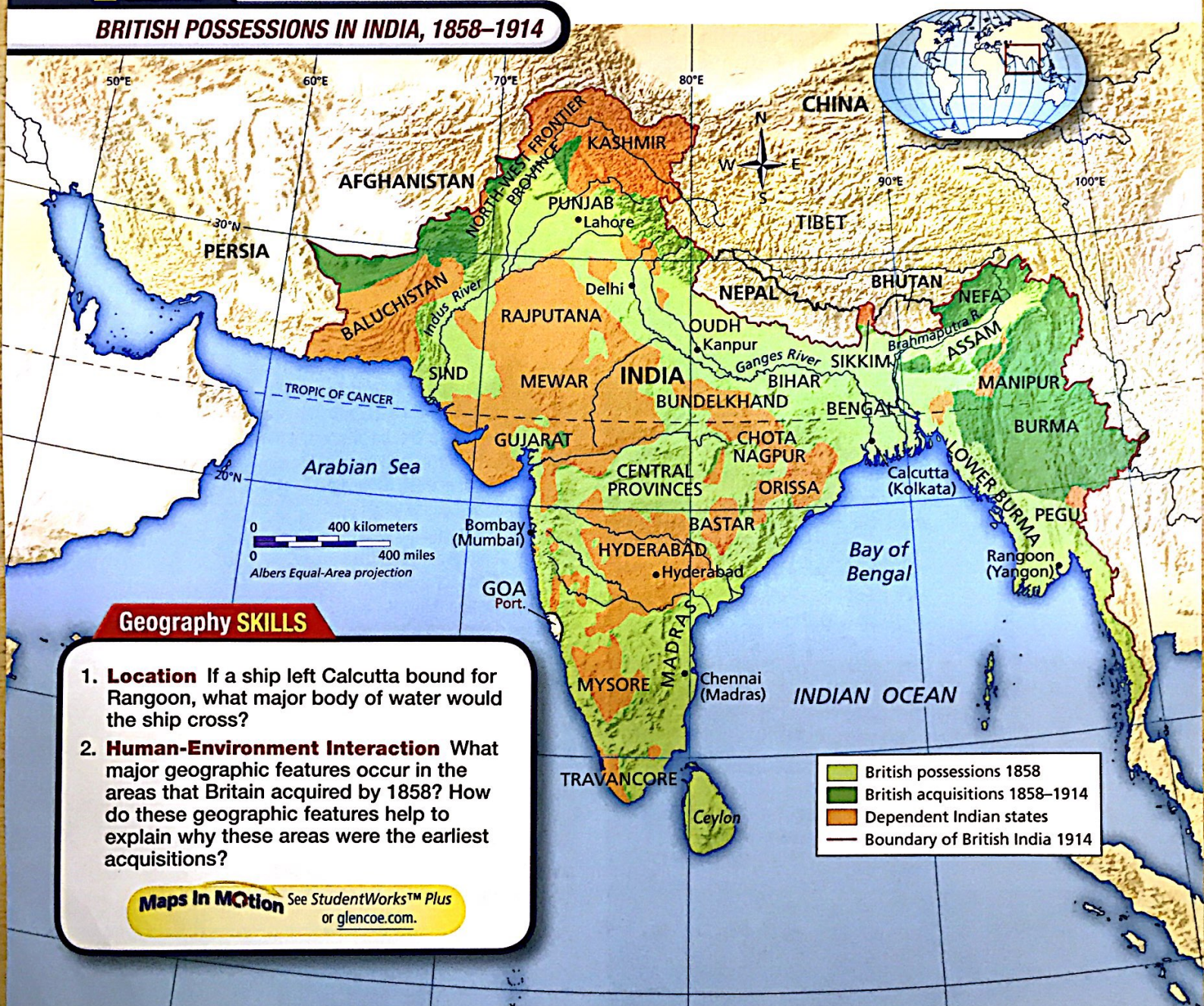
The first Indian nationalists were upper-class and English-educated. Many of them were from urban areas, such as **Bombay** (Mumbai), Madras (Chennai), and Calcutta (Kolkata). Some were trained in British law and were members of the civil service.

At first, many Indian nationalists preferred reform to revolution. However, the slow pace of reform convinced many that relying on British goodwill was futile. In 1885 a small group of Indians met in Bombay to form the **Indian National Congress (INC)**. The INC did not demand immediate independence. Instead, it called for a share in the governing process.

The INC had difficulties because of religious differences. The INC sought independence for all Indians, regardless of class or religious background. However, many of its leaders were Hindu and reflected Hindu concerns. Later, Muslims called for the creation of a separate Muslim League.

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC

BRITISH POSSESSIONS IN INDIA, 1858–1914



Geography SKILLS

- 1. Location** If a ship left Calcutta bound for Rangoon, what major body of water would the ship cross?
- 2. Human-Environment Interaction** What major geographic features occur in the areas that Britain acquired by 1858? How do these geographic features help to explain why these areas were the earliest acquisitions?

Maps in Motion See StudentWorks™ Plus or glencoe.com.

Such a league would represent the interests of the millions of Muslims in Indian society.

In 1915 the return of a young Hindu from South Africa brought new life to India's struggle for independence. **Mohandas Gandhi** was born in 1869 in Gujarat, in western India. He studied in London and became a lawyer. In 1893 he went to South Africa to work in a law firm serving Indian workers there. He soon learned of the racial exploitation of Indians living in South Africa.

On his return to India, Gandhi became active in the independence movement. Using his experience in South Africa, he began a movement based on nonviolent resistance. Its aim was to force the British to improve the lot of the poor and to grant independence to India. Ultimately, Gandhi's movement led to Indian independence.

✓ Reading Check Describing Who were the first Indian nationalists?

Colonial Indian Culture

MAIN IDEA British rule sparked renewed interest among Indians in their own culture and history.

HISTORY & YOU Do you know where your ancestors came from? Are you curious about your cultural roots? Read to learn about an Indian author who helped awaken a new interest in Indian culture in the early 1900s.

The love-hate tension in India that arose from British domination led to a cultural awakening as well. The cultural revival began in the early nineteenth century with the creation of a British college in Calcutta. A local publishing house was opened. It issued textbooks on a variety of subjects, including the sciences, Sanskrit, and Western literature. The publisher also printed grammars and dictionaries in various Indian languages.

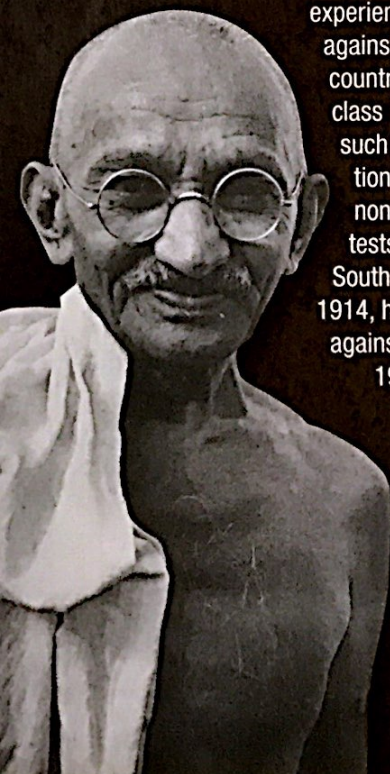
This revival soon spread to other regions of India. It led to a search for a new national

PEOPLE *in* HISTORY

Mohandas K. "Mahatma" Gandhi
1869–1948 Indian Independence Leader

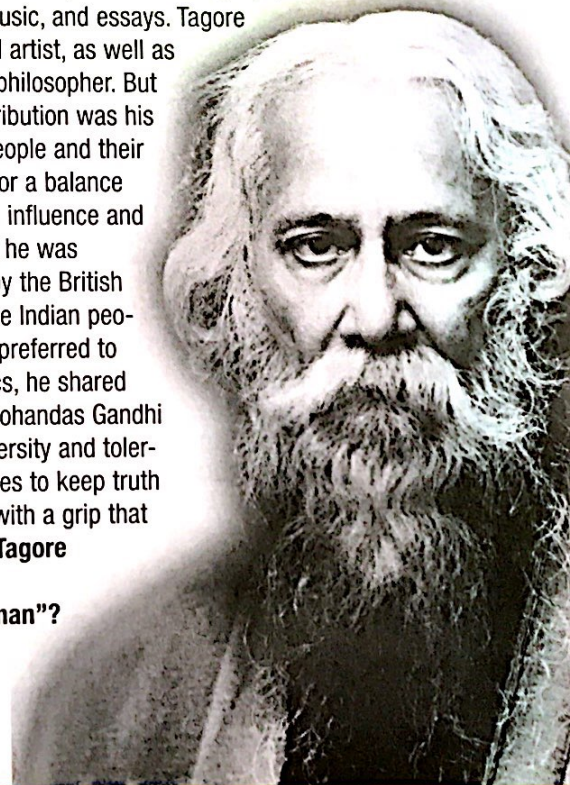
The seeds of India's independence were planted in another British colony—South Africa. Mohandas K. Gandhi, a young lawyer practicing in South Africa, experienced first-hand the discrimination against Indians that was common in that country. He was ordered to give up a first-class seat on a train. Gandhi witnessed such injustices against the Indian population every day. He resolved to fight using nonviolent resistance. He organized protests against racism and unjust laws in South Africa. Upon returning to India in 1914, he organized civil disobedience against British rule. After his arrest in

1922, he defended his beliefs at trial: "Nonviolence is the first article of my faith. It is also the last article of my creed." Gandhi's methods eventually paid off. Britain agreed to India's independence in 1947. **How did Gandhi hope to win India's freedom?**



Rabindranath Tagore
1861–1941 Indian Writer and Social Reformer

Rabindranath Tagore was India's version of the European "Renaissance man." An accomplished poet who won the 1913 Nobel Prize in Literature, he also wrote plays, short stories, novels, music, and essays. Tagore was also a skilled artist, as well as an educator and philosopher. But his greatest contribution was his devotion to his people and their culture. Striving for a balance between Western influence and ancient customs, he was revered equally by the British colonizers and the Indian people. Although he preferred to stay out of politics, he shared with his friend Mohandas Gandhi a devotion to diversity and tolerance: "Bigotry tries to keep truth safe in its hand with a grip that kills it." **Why is Tagore considered a "Renaissance man"?**



identity and a modern literary expression. Indian novelists and poets began writing historical romances and epics. Some wrote in English, but most were uncomfortable with a borrowed colonial language. They preferred to use their own regional tongues.

Nationalist Newspapers

Printed in the various regional Indian languages, newspapers were a common medium used to arouse mass support for nationalist causes. These newspapers reached the lower-middle-class populations—tens of thousands of Indians who had never learned a word of English.

In his newspaper *Kesari* ("The Lion"), journalist Balwantrao Gangadhar Tilak used innuendo (suggestion) to convey the negative feelings about the British without ever writing anything disloyal. G. S. Aiyar, editor of the popular *Swadeshamitram* ("Friend of Our Own Nation"), organized the Triplicane Literary Society. At these meetings, the region's young intellectuals gathered to discuss poetry and politics.

Tagore

The most famous Indian author was **Rabindranath Tagore**, winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1913. A great writer and poet, Tagore had many talents. He was also a social reformer, spiritual leader, educator, philosopher, singer, painter, and international spokesperson for the moral concerns of his age. He set to music the Bengali poem *Bande Mataram* ("Hail to Thee, Mother"), which became Indian nationalism's first anthem. Tagore liked to invite the great thinkers of the time to his expansive country home, or **estate**. There he set up a school that became an international university.

Tagore's life mission was to promote pride in a national Indian consciousness in the face of British domination. He wrote a widely read novel in which he portrayed the love-hate relationship of India toward its colonial mentor. The novel reflected an Indian people who admired and imitated the British but who agonized over how to establish their own identity.

Tagore, however, was more than an Indian nationalist. His life's work was one long prayer for human dignity, world peace, and the mutual understanding and union of East and West. As he once said,

PRIMARY SOURCE

"It is my conviction that my countrymen will truly gain their India by fighting against the education that teaches them that a country is greater than the ideals of humanity."

—Rabindranath Tagore

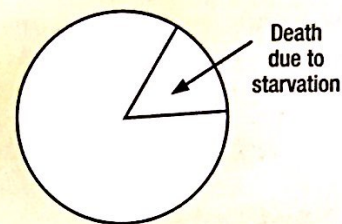
✓ Reading Check **Comparing** How did the nationalist movement parallel cultural developments in India?

Vocabulary

1. **Explain** the significance of: sepoys, Kanpur, Queen Victoria, viceroy, civil, Bombay, Indian National Congress, Mohandas Gandhi, Rabindranath Tagore, estate.

Main Ideas

2. **Identify** the event that ignited sepoy discontent into a full-scale mutiny.
3. **Illustrate** the percentage of India's population that died of starvation in the 1800s. Use a graph like the one below.



4. **State** the aim of Mohandas Gandhi's nonviolent resistance movement.

Critical Thinking

5. **The BIG Idea Predicting Consequences** Many British lived in India for decades. Do you think living in India would have changed British attitudes toward Indians? Explain.
6. **Drawing Conclusions** Do you think the benefits of British rule to India outweighed its costs? Support your answer.
7. **Analyzing Visuals** Study the photograph of Tagore on page 706. Describe some aspect of the photo that you believe provides a clue to Tagore's personality.

Writing About History

8. **Descriptive Writing** Imagine you are a member of India's upper class. You have just attended a reception at the home of a British official. Describe in writing your impressions of the home, making a comparison to your own residence.

History ONLINE

For help with the concepts in this section of *Glencoe World History*, go to glencoe.com and click Study Central™.