



**NORTH
SOUTH
UNIVERSITY**



DHP

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY AND PHILOSOPHY



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Trader to Ruler (1600-1757):

Transformation of British trading interest into the colonial annexation of the Kingdom of Bengal

Human Emergence (~2.5 million years ago)

Early humans like *Homo habilis*, *Homo erectus*, & *Homo sapiens* lived by hunting and gathering.

They used tools, fire, and language.

Agricultural Revolution (~10,000 BCE)

People started farming and keeping animals. They began living in one place, and populations grew.

Early Societies (~8000–3000 BCE)

Small villages appeared. People made crafts, traded goods, and practiced early religions.

River Valley Civilizations (~3000 BCE)

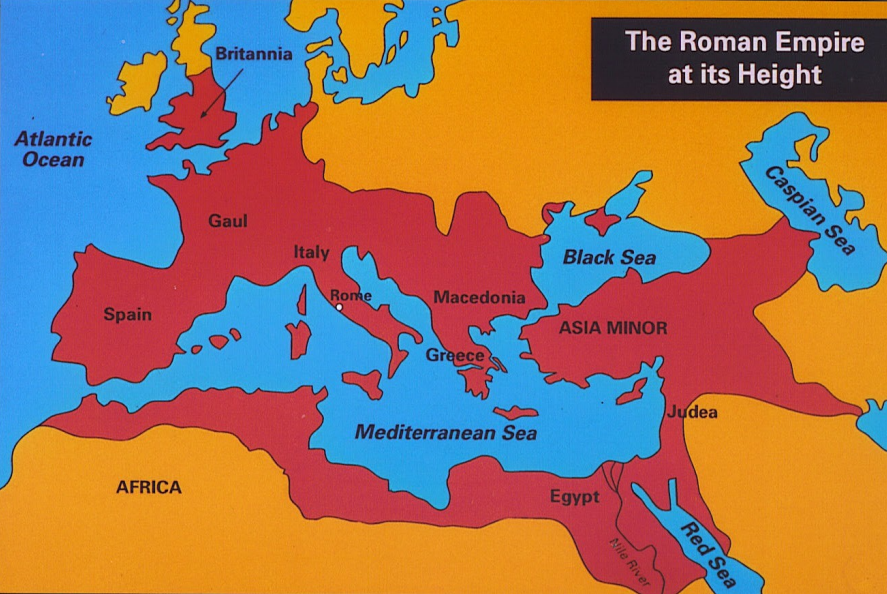
Big civilizations developed near rivers—in Mesopotamia, Egypt, the Indus Valley, and China. They built cities, created writing, and had organized governments.

City-States & Kingdoms (~2500–1500 BCE)

Small states ruled by kings emerged. Laws were written (like Hammurabi's Code), and trade grew between regions.

Empires Form (~1500 BCE – 500 CE)

Powerful empires like Egypt, Persia, Rome, Maurya, and Han took shape. They had strong governments, large armies, and built roads and systems to rule large areas.



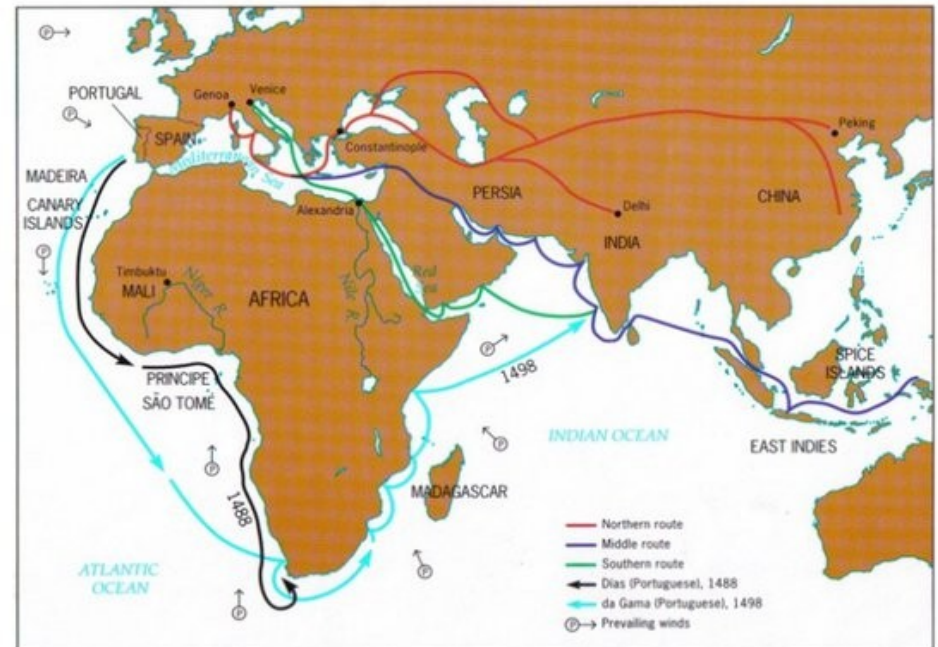
- ❑ It included territory in Europe, North Africa, and Western Asia, and was ruled by emperors.
- ❑ The fall or the decline of the Western Roman Empire in 476 had unfolded over many years due to a combination of internal weaknesses and external pressures.
- ❑ The Eastern Roman Empire, or Byzantine Empire, continued to exist for nearly a thousand years until the fall of Constantinople in 1453.
- ❑ The rise of the Ottoman Turks in the late 13th century posed a significant threat to the Eastern Roman Empire.
- ❑ The Ottomans gradually expanded their territories

➤ Finally, the dwindling Byzantine Empire came to an end in 1453, when the Ottomans led by Sultan Mehmed II breached Constantinople's ancient land wall after besieging the city for 55 days.

➤ Along with Ottoman victory, they acquired significant control on the **Silk Road & Spice trade route**, which the European countries frequently used to trade with Asia.



Silk Road and Spice Routes



- You might be wondering as to what the Europeans had traded in those era – those were basically spices like **Peeper**, Ginger, Cinnamon, **Cloves**, Cardamom, **Cumin Anise**, Nutmeg, **Saffron** & other medicinal plants.
- **Even today the demand of spice is very high & the Global spice market worth USD 15.44 billion in 2020.**
- India offers low temperature in winter & high temp during summer. Most of the spices require relatively low temp during their early growth stage and high temp in reproductive stage.
- **Similar climate is also available in Indonesia.**



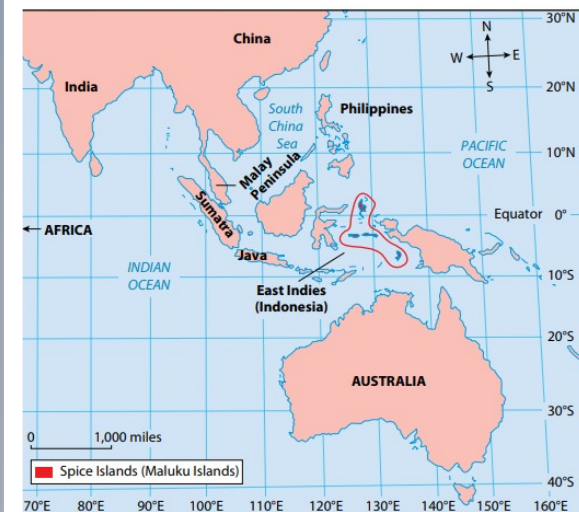
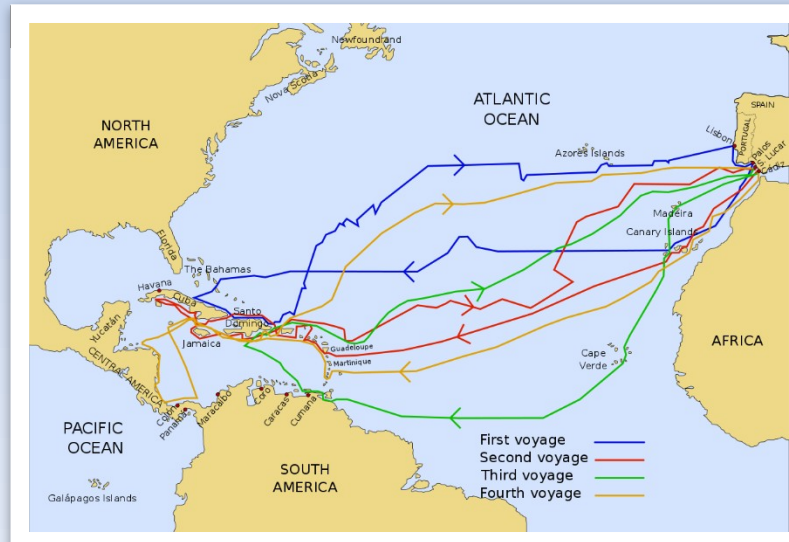
- During the Middle Ages, spices were as valuable in Europe as gold & gems & the single most important force driven the world's economy.
- **Spices were seen as a sign of status in the Roman Empire.**
- Spices were abundantly used by the elites in preparing their food.
- **Due to the lack of refrigeration and poor hygiene standards, food often spoiled quickly, leading to a high demand for spices to mask the flavor of food that was not fresh.**
- Refrigerator is a 20th century(1913) invention & therefor besides preparing delicious foods spice also worked as an alternative to current days refrigerator.



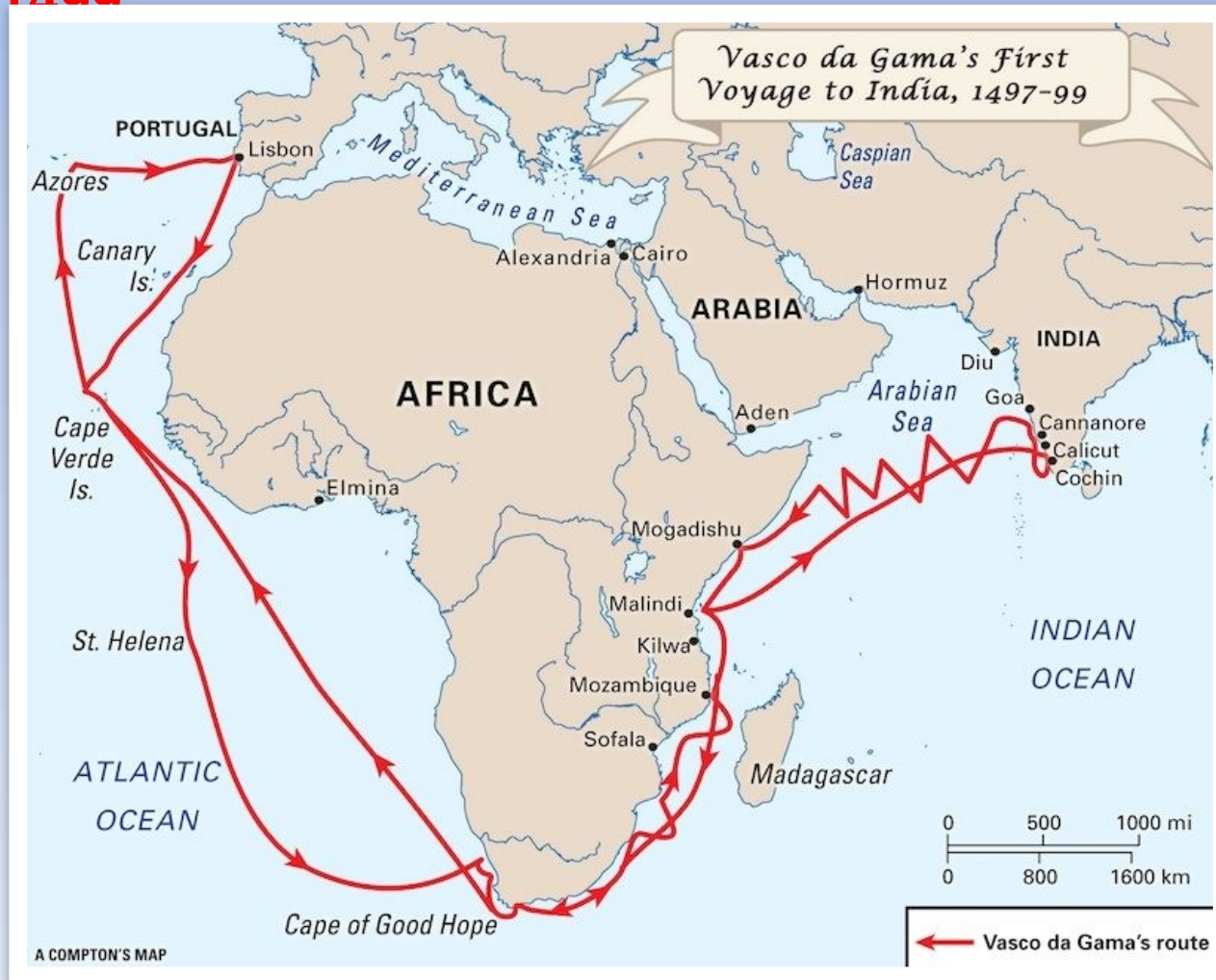
- Although many say that the Ottoman Empire “blocked” the Silk Road but practically they allowed the Europeans to pass but at a high price.
- **Since the Ottomans profited from trade, so why would they block?**
- Soon the European traders realized that if they could directly reach Indian & East Asian markets their profits would soar up.
- **Moreover, dealing with the Ottomans not only increased costs but also presented its own risks, the risk-reward ratio of long distance maritime adventures seemed lucrative to European merchants.**
- In the short term the Ottomans misjudged the idea and capability of their rivals.



- And arguably, they never really recovered from this error.
- With technological advancements in 15th & 16th century, particularly in cartography & astronomy, the European explorers dared to discover the spice destinations.
- In 1492, Italian explorer Christopher Columbus sailed from Spain aiming to reach Indies instead reached one of the Bahamian Islands across Atlantic & thought he had reached Asia.
- When he saw the mistake, these were renamed as the West Indies, to distinguish from East Indies (Spice Islands) in the Pacific Ocean.
- Which we now



Here you can see the route of Famous Portuguese explorer Vasco Da Gama's first Voyage to India from 1497-1499



Before going deep into Indian history, let's have a look at the broad divisions of Historical timeline.

Ancient History – 2.5 m BCE - 3000 BCE to 700 AD

Medieval History - from 700 AD to 1857 AD

Modern History - 1857 to continuing

From the middle of medieval era, India came under the direct rule of Delhi Sultanate(1206 AD to 1526 AD) & Mughal Empire(1526–1857).

So to understand the British rule in India we need to go a little back in the mediaeval age when the Mughal rule came to shamble following the death of Aurangzeb.

List of Mughal Emperors Who Ruled India:

We all know that the Mughal invasion started in 1526 with Babar being the first emperor.

He was the descendant of Tamerlane & Genghis Khan defeated Afghan Sultan Ibrahim Lodi in the 1st Battle of Panipat in 1526 & founded Mughal Empire (1526-1530)

Humayun
(1530-
1540)



Burr
Dynasty
(1540-
1555)



Humayan
(1555-
1556)



Akbar
(1556-
1605)



Jahangir
(1605-
1627)



Shah Jahan
(1628-1658)



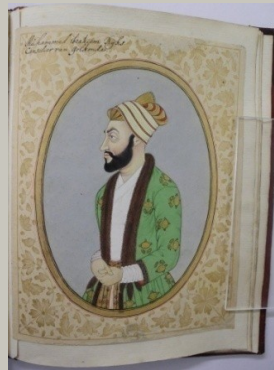
**Rafi ud
Darajat**
(1719)



Aurangzeb
(1658-1707)



**Muhamma
d Ibrahim**
(1720)



**Bahadur
Shah**



**Muhammad
Shah**
(1720-1748)



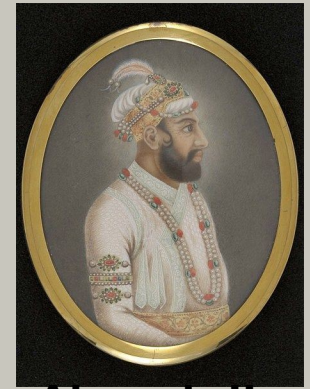
**Jahandar
Shah**



**Ahmed Shah
Bahadur**
(1748-1754)



**Farrukh
Siyar**



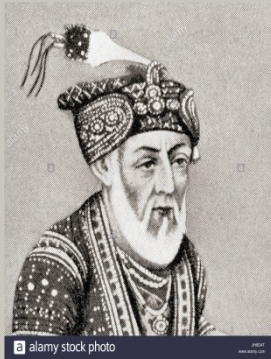
Alamgir II
(1754 -
759)



**Shah Jahan
III(1759-
1760)**



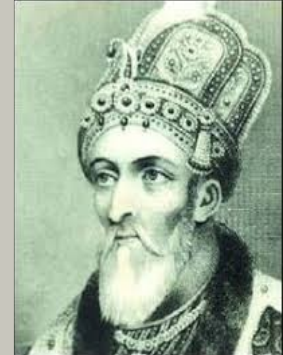
**Shah Alam
II(1760-
1806)**



**Akbar Shah
II (1806-
1837)**



**Bahadur
Shah
II(1837-1857)**



Among them, Aurangzeb was the last powerful Mughal ruler.

I am sure you all know the name of his father Emperor Shah Jahan who built the famous Taj Mahal to commemorate his beloved wife Mumtaz Mahal situated on the bank of the Yamuna in the Indian city of Agra.



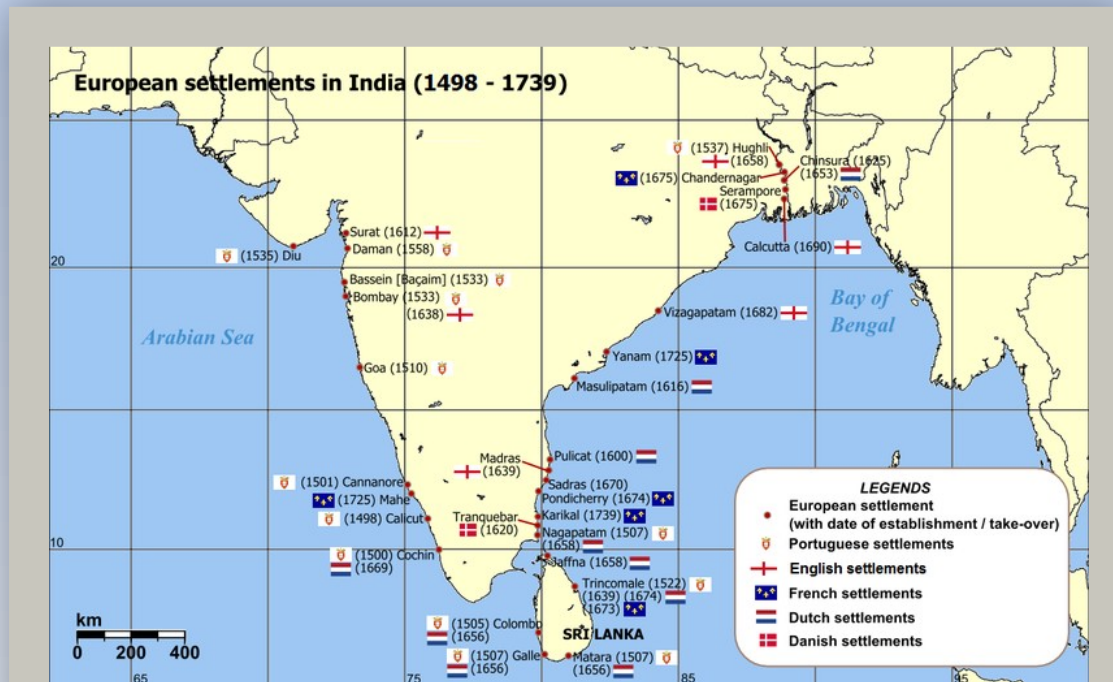
One morning in Sep 1657, when Shah Jahan became gravely ill & the news spread like wildfire throughout the kingdom.

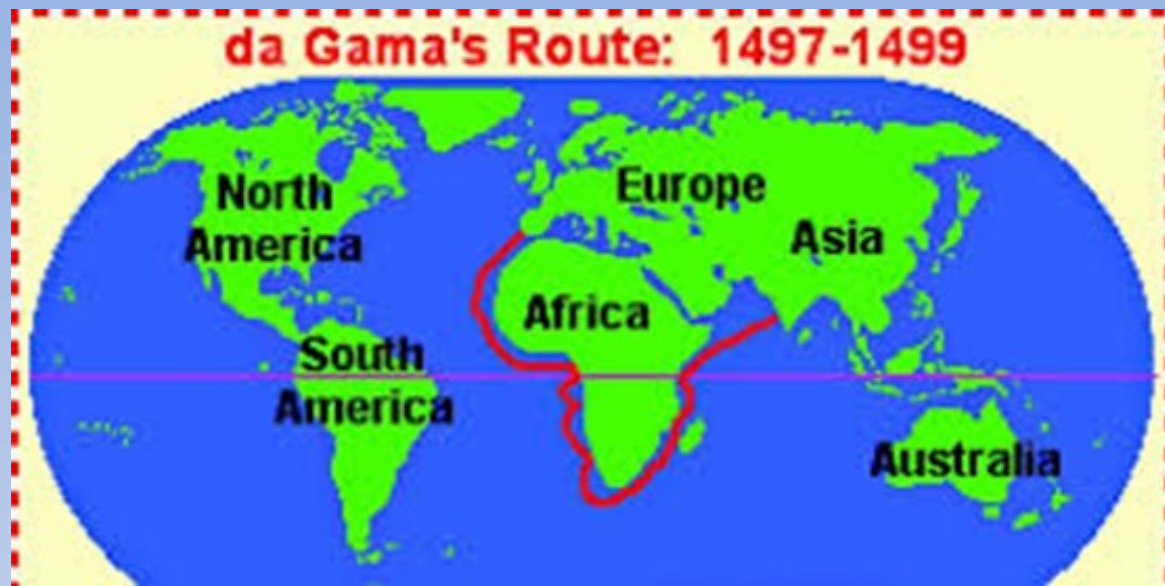
Shah Jahan's four sons believed their father was on the brink of death that encouraged them into a bitter fight to take over power.

Aurangzeb had executed his brothers Dara Shikoh & Murad, driven out Shah Suza to Burma and locked up his ailing father in Agra Red Fort to become the Emperor himself- an unprecedented act by any son.

However Bahadur Shah Zafor was the last emperor till 1857 that is when the Mughal emperor officially came to an end.

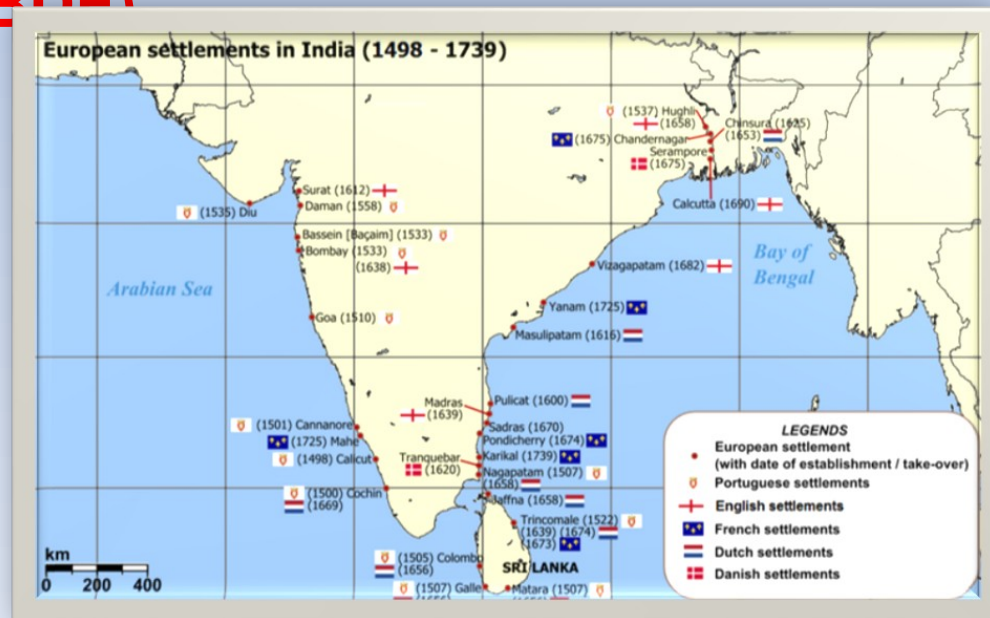
- After the death of Aurangzeb the situation drastically changed & to the historians this was the period of change & continuity.
- On one side, there was downfall of mighty Mughal Empire with the rise of regional kingdoms on the other hand the foundation of the British Empire in India was in the making by colonizing India by the EIC.
- Point to note, before the Mughal invasion, the Europeans already established their foothold in India.





- It has been already mentioned before that Portuguese explorer Vasco-da-Gama was the first European to have discovered the sea route to reach India in 1498.
- **He arrived at Calicut in the Malabar Coast in South-West India.**
- After staying in India for a period of 03 months, Vasco da Gama returned with a rich cargo which he sold in the European market at a price 60 times the cost of his voyage.

- Vasco da Gama returned to India to set up trading post including merchant links in India. After the Portuguese:
- # The Dutch arrived at Pulicat in 1595.
 - # The British came to Surat, Gujrat in 1608,
 - # The Danish came to Travancore in 1616,
 - # The French came to Pondicherry in 1664,
- These traders all combined are called as European traders. But, the Portuguese came around 100 years before others.(PDRDE)





- Being motivated by the successful business stories of the Portuguese, in 1600, a group of English merchants led by Sir **Thomas Smyth** petitioned Queen Elizabeth-I to grant them a Royal Charter to trade with countries in eastern hemisphere.
- Queen was so excited that she herself became one of the shareholders of the EIC.
- Subsequently in 1608, the EIC sent **Captain William Hawkins** to the court of the Emperor Jahangir to secure royal patronage.

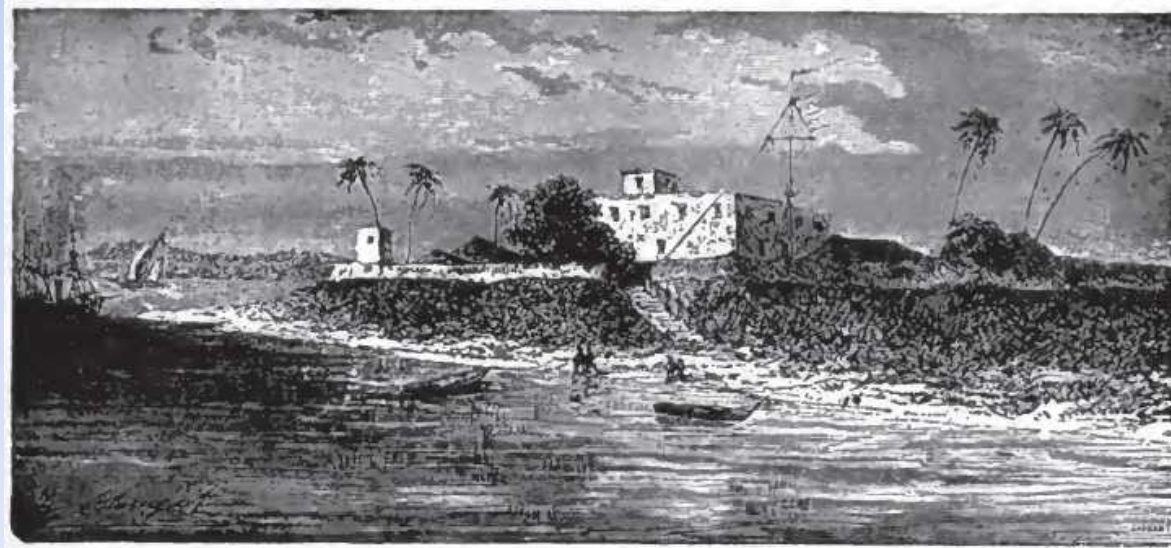


- William succeeded in getting royal permit to establish factories at various places on the Western coast of India.
- In 1615, Emperor James-I of England sent Sir Thomas Roe to Jahangir's court for more concession.
- Roe succeeded in securing a royal charter giving the Company freedom to trade in the whole of the Mughal territory.
- EIC started the full-fledged trade in India but soon trading interest clashed with other European companies 'in Indian, Chinese & Southeast Asian markets.
- Over and above, in 1623, the Company got driven out by the Dutch East Indies out of Indonesia as they had gained a strong foothold in the region.



- Defeated by Dutch(Nedarland) & losing hope of trading in Indonesia, EIC concentrated more into trading with India.
- Since all the European companies were trying to buy the same products like the fine qualities of cotton, silk, all kinds of spices and other medicinal plants.
- The price of commodities went high & this was nothing but the obvious demand price economics.
- If the demand is high naturally the prices would go up.
- These in turn affected the profit margin.
- So instead of finding different ways to minimize the cost the only easy way to reduce the competition was to eliminate the competitors.

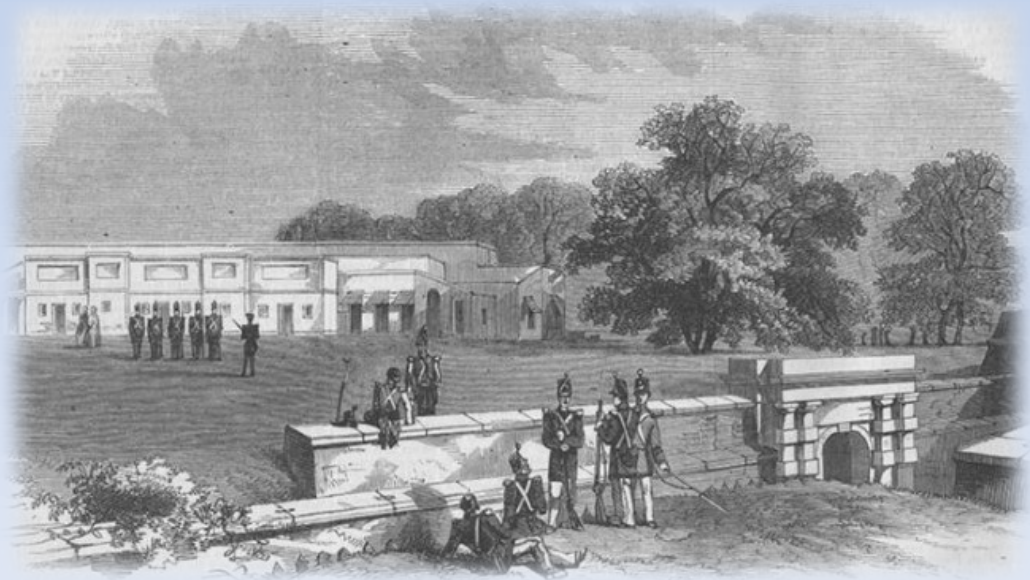
- Following such competition, they started sinking each other's ships, ambushed vessels, blocked routes and prevented rival ships moving out of the region with goods.
- Under the Mughal patronage, the British first expelled the Portuguese trading venture in India, which had a massive control of trading in India.
- In **1651**, the British decided to set up a factory on the bank of Hugli River in West Bengal which would include warehouses & accommodation for their officers and staff.





- **The English also persuaded local merchants to settle around Hugli factory.**
- **Under the situation there is no doubt that the locals will be dissatisfied. When EIC fortified the trading posts and maximizing profit certainly the locals were bitterly hit.**
- **So, besides the European merchants, the English were fighting with local rulers.**

- Without meddling into local politics it wouldn't be possible to manipulate business and commerce.
- Meanwhile, the Company managed to acquire **Bombay as dowry** by having a marriage treaty (1662) under which Charles II of England & Catherine of Braganza, daughter of Portuguese King John IV got married.
- In 1698 Company also purchased three villages - Sutanati, Govindapur & Kolkata. Subsequently Fort William was raised in order to provide protection around the factory.





- **Aurangzeb was still Mughal emperor (1658-1707).**
- **The English company kept on perusing for more and more concessions.**
- **It must be pondering in your mind as to why they were asking for more and more concessions.**
- **The initial company objective was to buy goods, and ship those back to be sold in European markets.**

- But it would be naive to say that they would only be engaged in fair trade.
- The company had corrupt officials, who were doing private trade, made millions of pounds by doing private trade and led lavish lifestyle back in England.
- These traders **were not paying any tax** and caused enormous revenue loss to the government of Bengal.
- These were all taking place around 1700 when Bengal was the economic hub for rest of India.

(Just to get an idea of the Indian riches of that time - **in that period, India accounted for 25% of world economic production as opposed to England's 1.9%.** Bengal was at the center of that production. It had a large shipbuilding industry with an output of 223,250 tons/annually during 16th & 17th centuries compared with 23,061 tons produced in 13 colonies in North America from 1769 to 1771. **Bengal became the foremost muslin exporter with Dhaka as capital of the worldwide muslin trade.)**

- But the Mughal Empire started to decline as Aurangzeb died in 1707.
- Soon after, all of his Subeders & Zamindars started exercising regional autonomy as it would benefit them and they could rule like king. They had no particular obligation to Delhi.
- This was an important timeline as from here the situation started deteriorating.
- After Aurangzeb, Bahadur Shah 1 was the next emperor and remained so until 1707 to 1712. He was not that powerful.
- Although many Nawabs ruled Bengal but we shall discuss 3 important Nawabs. Murshid Kuli Khan was the first Nawab of Bengal from 1717-1727. Loss of huge revenue was a serious concern for him.
- Besides, the behavior of the company made the Nawab irritated. This led to serious conflict between Nawab & EIC. Before further escalation of the situation, Murshid Kuli Khan died in 1727.

- Let's us fast forward to **Nawab Ali Bardi Khan**. He became the Nawab in 1740 & ruled for nearly 16 years. During this time he was mostly engaged in the fight against the Marathas.
- **Marathas were another empire in India just like the Mughals and they too wanted to establish their rule in India.**
- They contributed largely for the downfall Mughal rule in India. Towards the end of **Ali Bardi Khans** power, he focused on the dev of Bengal & turned towards the EIC. But, he too died in 1756.
- **Then came Nawab Siraj ud Daula, the grandson of Ali Bardi Khan.**
- Even Siraj ud Daula didn't like the behaviors of the EIC & wanted to do something about the situation.
- **EIC was depriving Bengal of precious revenue and had been undermining the authority of the Nawab.**
- So, far we have heard about the Nawab's side and as you know every story got two sides. Now we shall listen to what the British had to say

- **In 1756**, Siraj Ud Daula captured the fort William at Calcutta with 30,000 soldiers and kept the English soldiers & officials as captives. **(Black hole incident)**
- This news reached English officials in madras. They sent forces including naval ships under then Lt Col Robert Clive who was an officer in the company's army.
- Before taking on **Siraj Ud Daula**, Clive hatched a conspiracy with Nawab's Deputy Mir Zafar & promised him the post of Nawab.
- **In 1757**, when Robert Clive attacked Siraj Ud Daula's forces at Plessey, Mir Zafar remained inactive ensuring Nawab's defeat. (Plessey situated near Murshidabad which was the capital of Nawab of Bengal)
- Siraj Ud Daula fled from the battle field but was captured by Mir Zafars forces and assassinated.
- **This was the first major victory of EIC in India.**

- As reward, Robert Clive was made the Governor of Bengal.
- The victory gave massive boost to EIC & now they felt that they were capable of ruling besides doing trade.
- But the company was not interested in taking over the administration. They wanted to do trade with maximum privileges.
- To do that, in 1758, Governor Robert Clive nominated Warren Hastings as the Resident Officer of Bengal.
- He was held captive by Siraj Ud Daulas forces when they captured Fort William, Calcutta in 1756 before the Battle of Plessey that took place in 1757

- By employing the Resident Officer, the company wanted to manipulate the succession of the throne so that a favourable administration can be installed.
- **EIC rule in India started in 1757.**
- After the battle of Plessey, Mir Zafar was made the puppet Nawab of Bengal as promised by Robert Clive.
- **Even the puppet Nawabs were not as helpful as they deemed.**
- After all they had to maintain basic level of dignity & sovereignty if they really wanted respects from their subjects.
- **So, in 1760, when Mir Zafar protested, Mir Zafar's son in law Mir Kashim was installed as the new Nawab.**

- In the same year Robert Clive returned to Britain with massive wealth and came back after couple of years.
- As time passed even **Mir Kashim** retaliated & in 1764, the company fought battle of Buxar under the command of Major Hector Munro against the combined force of Bengal Nawab **Mir Kashim**, Awadh Nawab **Suja-ud-Daula** & Mughal Emperor **Shah Alam II**. Lack of coordination among the allies caused their defeat.
- **Mir Kashim fled from the battle field and later on committed suicide & Mir Zafar was reinstalled as the Nawab in 1764 for 2nd time.**
- During the Battle of Buxar Robert Clive was in England and returned to India for the **2nd time in 1765** & became the **Governor of Bengal**.

- In 1765 after the death of Nawab Mir Zafar, the mood of the company changed & they were demanding for more money, more territories and more privileges.
- Since the puppet Nawabs wouldn't listen to all their demands, the Englishmen wanted to be Nawab themselves.
- So, the Governor Robert Clive then went to the company chairman in London and proposed to be the Nawab.
- But to the British parliament, the company was important and at the same they didn't want their officers to indulge in private trade so they came up with Regulating Act of 1773 for better management of the company affairs.
- This act also laid the foundation of the centralized administration in India headed by a Governor General.



- Warren Hastings being the Governor of the largest province became the 1st Governor General of India.
- Under the Regulatory Act of 1773 the Supreme Court of India was established.
- Warren Hastings made significant role in expanding the company power by . The coextending its territorial control over other territories.
- In 1772, five years after leaving India until 1767, Clive was charged with corruption and was acquitted but he committed suicide in 1774.

***That's the end of this
fascinating session***