

THE COLONIAL ERA IN INDIA (Notes)

DATE CHART

Year / Period	Event / Development	Significance / Notes
1498	Vasco da Gama reached Calicut (Kerala)	First direct sea route from Europe to India; beginning of European trade.
1505	Portuguese establish first colony at Cochin	Start of European colonial presence in India.
1600	English East India Company founded in England	Gained permission from Queen Elizabeth I to trade with India.
1608	First English ship reached Surat (Gujarat)	British East India Company began trade in India.
1664	French East India Company established	French became a major European trading competitor.
1757	Battle of Plassey	British defeated Nawab Siraj-ud-Daulah; start of British political control in India.
1764	Battle of Buxar	British defeated combined forces of Bengal, Awadh, and Mughal emperor; gained <i>Diwani</i> (revenue rights) of Bengal, Bihar, Orissa.
1793	Permanent Settlement introduced by Lord Cornwallis	Fixed land revenue system in Bengal; benefited zamindars, hurt peasants.
1798-1805	Lord Wellesley's rule	Introduced <i>Subsidiary Alliance</i> policy — extended British influence.
1818	End of Maratha Power	British became the supreme power in India.
1835	English Education Act passed	Promoted English as medium of instruction; created English-educated Indians.
1848-1856	Lord Dalhousie's rule	Introduced <i>Doctrine of Lapse</i> ; annexed Satara, Jhansi, Nagpur, etc.
1855-56	Santhal Rebellion	Tribal uprising in Bihar-Jharkhand region against British oppression.
1857	The Revolt of 1857 (First freedom struggle)	Large-scale uprising against British rule; turning point in Indian history.
1858	End of East India Company's rule	British Crown took direct control over India (beginning of <i>British Raj</i>).
1859-62	Indigo Revolt (Bengal)	Peasants protested against forced indigo cultivation.

- **Colonialism:** Control of one country over another's political, economic & cultural life.
- India was rich in **trade, crafts, and agriculture** before Europeans arrived.
- European powers sought **wealth, trade routes, and colonies** from the 15th century.

- Arrival of Europeans

- **Portuguese:** Vasco da Gama (1498, Calicut).
- **Dutch, French, and British** followed.
- British East India Company (EIC) became most powerful.

- From Trade to Territory

- EIC came for trade → gradually gained **political power**.
- **Battle of Plassey (1757)** – start of British rule in India.
- Expansion methods:
 - **Subsidiary Alliance** – Indian states kept British troops & paid for them.
 - **Doctrine of Lapse** – states without male heirs annexed.
 - **Wars & treaties** with Indian rulers.
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- Economic Impact

- **India's economy restructured** for British benefit.
- Export: raw materials (cotton, jute, indigo).
- Import: British manufactured goods → decline of Indian industries.
- **Agriculture → cash crops** (indigo, tea, opium).
- **High land taxes** → peasant poverty & famines.
- **Drain of Wealth** to Britain (Dadabhai Naoroji's term).

- Administrative & Social Changes

- New **laws, courts & bureaucracy** replaced Indian systems.
- Introduction of **English education**.
- British claimed a “**civilising mission**.”
- Traditional culture & institutions weakened.
- Railways, telegraph & postal system introduced (for colonial needs).

- Indian Resistance

- Revolts against British rule:
 - **Santhal Rebellion (1855–56)** – tribal uprising.
 - **Indigo Revolt (1859–62)** – peasants against indigo planters.
 - **Revolt of 1857** – first major war of independence.
- Indians gradually became politically conscious → rise of nationalism.

- Legacy of British Rule

- Positive: Infrastructure (railways, telegraph, postal, education).
- Negative: Economic exploitation, deindustrialisation, poverty.
- Rise of **educated Indians** → foundation for freedom struggle.
- Social & political transformation shaped modern India.