Imperialism in India
Chapter 27 section 4
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The British Government allowed the British East India Company to rule India. The BEIC had its own army; the officers were British, the Indian soldiers were called Sepoys.

India supplied raw materials for British factories; it was also a marketplace for the finished products. It was called “The Jewel in the Crown” because it was so valuable to the British Empire’s economy.

Britain held nearly all the political and economic power in India. The Indian economy could not operate on its own; Indian industries were restricted and could not compete with British goods. This put many local industries out of business.

Plantations focused on growing cash crops (tea, coffee, cotton, indigo, and opium) that the British could trade in other nations. This meant a decrease in actual food production; without enough food to meet consumption needs, the Indians experienced famine. Trade in these cash crops was also linked to world events. Cotton production in India increased during the American Civil war. The British took Indian opium and traded it in China for tea. This led to a war between the British and the Chinese.

Indian nationalism began to grow. The Hindus and Muslims resented the attempts of Christian missionaries to force a new religion upon them. The Indians also resented British racism and British control of their land and resources. Nationalism included the desire to rid India of British control and become an independent nation.

Religious tensions caused a Sepoy Mutiny (or rebellion) to break out in the Sepoy army. In 1857, the sepoys received new rifles that required the use of powder that was kept in cartridges. To open the powder cartridge, the soldiers bit the end of the cartridge off. To make this easier, the cartridges were smeared with grease. The grease was made of beef fat or pork fat. This little fact offended the people of 2 religions: Hindus (cows are sacred) and Muslims (religion forbids them to eat pork). Some of the sepoys refused to use the cartridges. Instead of being sensitive to the religious beliefs of others, the British jailed the sepoys who refused to bite the cartridges. This
led to a rebellion that spread across India. It took the BEIC about a year to end the rebellion; the British government sent troops to assist in ending the struggle.

The Indians really were unable to unite because of weak leaders and because of the religious differences between the Muslims and the Hindus. Most Hindus preferred the British rule to Muslim rule. Many local princes did not take part in the rebellion. Many Sikhs (a religious group) remained loyal to the British.

Results of the Sepoy Mutiny:
1. Lasted 1857 – 1858.
2. The British Government took direct control of India from the BEIC. British policy in India was directed by a cabinet minister and carried out by a British governor – general who was called a viceroy.
3. Distrust between the British and the Indians increased.
4. British racism increased.
5. Indian nationalism increased; Indian independence was achieved in 1947.
6. The time period 1858 – 1947 when the British held direct control of India is called the Raj.
Western-Held Territories in Asia, 1910

GEOGRAPHY SKILLBUILDER: Interpreting Maps
1. Region Which nation in 1910 held the most land in colonies?
2. Location How is the location of India a great advantage for trade?
Social Class in India

In the photograph at right, a British officer is waited on by Indian servants. This reflects the class system in India.

British Army

Social class determined the way of life for the British Army in India. Upper-class men served as officers. Lower-class British served at lesser rank and did not advance past the rank of sergeant. Only men with the rank of sergeant and above were allowed to bring their wives to India.

Each English officer's wife attempted to re-create England in the home setting. Like a general, she directed an army of 20 to 30 servants.

Indian Servants

Caste determined Indian occupations. Castes were divided into four broad categories called varna. Indian civil servants were of the third varna. House and personal servants were of the fourth varna.

Even within the varna, jobs were strictly regulated, which is why such large servant staffs were required. For example, in the picture here, both servants were of the same varna. Although the two servants were from the same varna, they had different jobs.