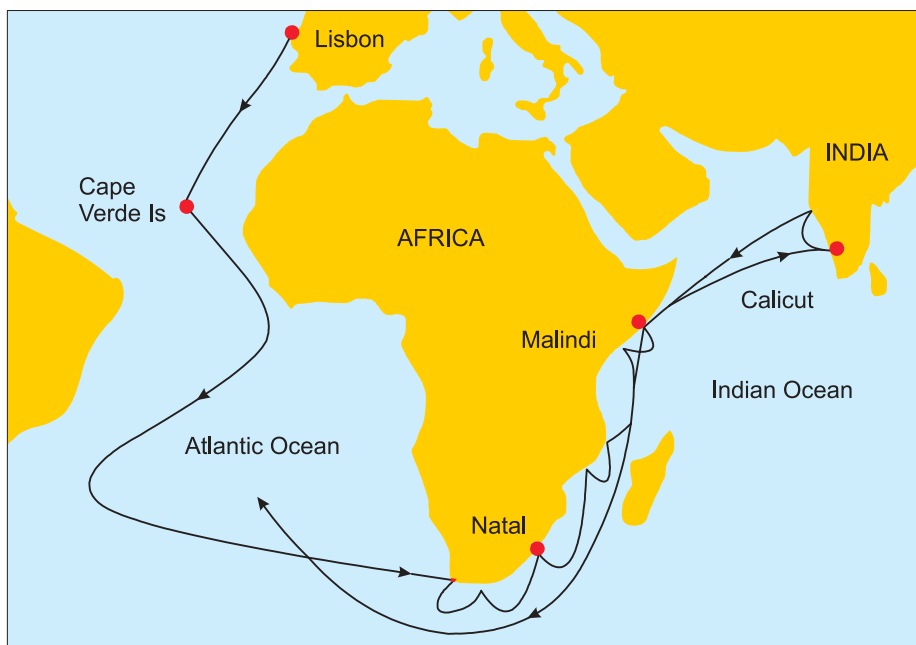




Approximately 250 years from the death of Aurangzeb (1707) to 1947 is taken as the modern period for the Indian history. We shall study the change of events during this period in this book ' We have read the history of ancient and medieval periods. However, the modern period in Europe is taken from 16th century. Thus, the time frame of the division of three periods is not uniform for the whole world.

Overview



Route followed by Vasco da Gama from Lisbon (Portugal) to India in 1497 and back

In 1453, the Turks took control of the overland trade routes connecting Europe to the East. This forced the Europeans to look for alternative sea routes. The invention of astrolabe, mariner's compass, use of gunpowder, improved cartography and ship building facilitated the sailors.

In 1498, Vasco da Gama of Portugal had landed at Calicut along the west coast of India. Later the other European sailors reached India. They all primarily came for trade in spices and textiles. However, they captured land, made their

forts and fought between themselves. The English defeated their rivals, Portuguese, Dutch and French.

Note : Astrolabe was an instrument formerly used for measuring the angle of altitudes of stars and calculating latitudes in navigation. Mariner compass has a free moving magnetic needle which tells directions even in dark night.

New Geographical Categories

In the mid-eighteenth century new inventions such as steam engine, powerloom and cotton gin led to Industrial Revolution in England. The Europeans got cheap raw materials and half-processed items from India and other countries. They further processed them on their machines and sold back the finished products at high benefit in India and other countries. Thus, emerged new geographical categories of the world—Europe, America, Africa, Middle East, Asia and the far East, Australia and the Pacific.

In the eighteenth century many provincial kingdoms such as Awadh, Bengal and Hyderabad (in India) declared their independence. The Rajputs became powerful. The Marathas gained power under the Peshwas but they lost it in the Third Battle of Panipat with Ahmad Shah Abdali in 1761. The Sikhs established their independent state under Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Haidar Ali and his son, Tipu Sultan established and consolidated the kingdom of Mysore. Invasions of Nadir Shah (1739) and Ahmad Shah Abdali destroyed the already weak Mughal Empire. Three Carnatic wars 1744 to 1763 between French and the British for the sole control of trade in southern India resulted into the victory of the British. They subsequently became successful to extend their political control over most part of the India upto 1857. The Nationalist Movement in India from 1857 to 1947 led to the independence of India in 1947. Thus, emerged new geographical categories of India.

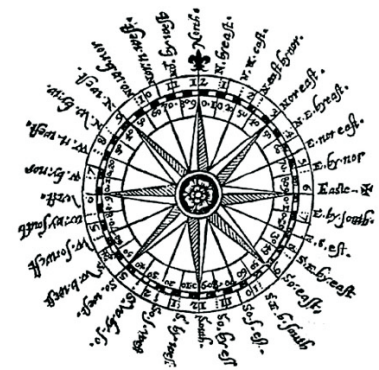
Dates or Outline of the Time Frame

Previously, history was thought as an account of the big events about rulers, their coronation, marriage and battles. These were fixed events and specific dates could be determined. But, now, historians write about a number of other issues—when did cultivation begin, what did people produce, how cities developed and new ideas spread and how cultures and societies changed. These events could not be precisely dated in terms of a particular year. Because these are long processes that happen over a period of time, sometimes decades, sometimes centuries even. One cannot fix one single date on which British rule was established, or the national movement started, or changes took place within the economy and society. So, the historians only refer to a **span of time**, that too an **approximate period** over which particular changes became visible. Moreover, these changes were not experienced by all classes and groups of people in the same way. To suggest the wide and small differences in the changes, this book of history is titled as **Our Pasts** in the plural.

The historians select a set of dates around which they compose their story of the past. The dates are not important on their own. But the focus of the historian on a particular set of events as a basic framework for writing makes it important. For example, when a British historian writes the history of British India, he writes on the format (time frame) of dates of the different Governor-Generals of British India. Then he




(a) Astrolabe used to calculate latitude



(b) used to know directions



Warren Hastings (First Governor-General of India)



fills it with their policies, activities, achievements. In this format, the activities of Indians have no space or little space, that too, narrated from the eye of the Governor General. Clearly, we need another format for Indian history based on the policies, activities and achievements of Indians.

Three Periods of Indian History

James Mill, a European historian divided Indian history into three periods—Hindu, Muslim and British. He tried to characterize an age through the religion of the chief rulers of the time. To do so is to suggest that the lives and practices of the others do not really matter. Also, the rulers of ancient India did not all share the same faith. The European historians interpreted that British rule represented all the forces of progress and civilisation. Such a conception is not acceptable today.

Some Western historians classify Indian history into 'ancient', 'medieval' and 'modern'. This periodisation depended upon the thought that modern period was a time of growth of all the forces of modernity— science, reason, democracy, liberty and equality. The 'term' medieval was used to describe a society out of reach of the modern features. But we can see that there was no equality, liberty or democracy under British rule of the modern period. There was no economic growth and progress of the Indians. Therefore, by the word 'modern' only a time span of last 250 years should be taken. This word need not be interpreted literally. Many historians, therefore, refer to this period as **colonial**.

Colonial Period

The word 'colonial' is related to a country that controls and rules other countries, usually ones that are far away. We shall study about the way the British conquered the country and established their rule and control over the economy. They collected revenue to meet all their expenses, bought the goods at low prices, forced the peasants to produce crops they needed for export and other things. As a consequence of British rule, values and tastes, customs and practices also changed a lot. When a country is ruled by another, it leads to political, economic, social and cultural changes, this process is called **colonisation**.

The policy and practice of establishing rule of one country over the other for deriving economic benefits is termed as **colonialism**. The roots of colonial practice can be traced to political settlers transferred to new lands.

Sources of History of the Modern Period

We have come across various sources of history for the ancient and medieval history from excavations and inscriptions to the written chronicles and books. Sources of history about the last 250 years of Indian history are official records of the British Administration, diaries of people, accounts of pilgrims and travellers, autobiographies

of important personalities, written and printed. As printing spread, newspapers were published. However, oral traditions and folklores preserve the history of the tribals and peasants and others.

Official Records of the British Administration

For efficient administration the British officials put everything in black and white, be it policy or plan, instruction or investigation. So, they used to send letters, memos, notings and reports to the Central Government head office or provincial government offices at all levels. The village tahsildar's office, the collectorate, the commissioner's office, the provincial secretariats, the law courts—all had their separate record rooms. To preserve important records special institutions like archives and museums were established. When the city of New Delhi was built, the National Archives and National Museum were both located close to the Viceregal Palace (now Rashtrapati Bhawan). The top authority may require any important document any time.



The National Archives of India came up in the 1920s

The documents were carefully copied out in beautiful and clear letters in the early years of the nineteenth century. Specialists of beautiful writing were called **calligraphists**. With the spread of printing in the middle of the nineteenth century, proceedings of each government department were printed in multiple copies to keep in records at various levels.

Survey Records

To administer the country effectively, the British surveyed about everything of the country—the topography, the soil quality, the land under cultivation, cropping pattern, the flora, the fauna and the local histories. Some of these could be renamed as forest surveys, botanical surveys, zoological surveys, and archaeological surveys. From the end of the nineteenth century, Census operations were held every ten years. These prepared detailed records of caste, religion, occupation, number of family members, gender, age etc. of all the people in all the provinces of India.


What Records do not Tell ?

The official records tell mostly about the thoughts and activities of the government officials. But the feelings and motivation of general public are seldom shown by these records.

Newspaper Report : A Police Strike in British Rule

More than 2000 policemen in Delhi refused to take their food on Thursday morning as a protest against their low salaries and the bad quality of food supplied to them from the Police Lines kitchen.

As the news spread to the other police sections, the men there also refused to take food.... One of the strikers said, "The food supplied to



us from the Police Lines kitchen is not fit for human consumption. Even cattle would not eat the chappattis and dal which we have to eat.”

—Hindustan Times

22 March, 1946

There are plenty of other written sources from which we can know about the general public — diaries of people, accounts of pilgrims and travellers, autobiographies of important personalities. As printing spread, newspapers were published which debated ideas and feelings in public. In 1780, Bengal Gazette, a weekly commercial magazine, was also printed. The Europeans discovered new geographic lands, and made accurate maps. The illiterate tribals and peasants and the labour in the mines and the poor on the street had their oral family traditions or folklore. These are also resources for writing history.

In Other Parts of the World

The European settlers particularly from Britain had settled in the American continent. There were 13 colonies of settlers mostly on the Atlantic sea coast in North America. They were ruled by Britain thousands of kilometres away. The colonists reacted to taxes and tightening of control by the British Government. In October 1781, the American colonists defeated the British army. George Washington was the commander of the colonists. In 1783, England recognised the independence of American colonies. The colonists adopted a republican form of government and named the new republic as the United States of America.

Only six years after the America became a republic, a revolution took place in France. The French society was divided into three classes—clergy or church officials, nobility and the commoners (peasants, artisans, merchants, teachers, etc). The commoners had no right and lived in misery. In July 1789, the commoners revolted. They forced open the Bastille prison— the symbol of autocracy, when thousand of men and women marched in protest and set the prisoners free. The new National Assembly adopted the declaration of Rights of Man and citizen, which propounded the ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity. The French Revolution inspired revolutionary movements all over the world.



Key Words

- » Cartography : activity of making maps.
- » Colonial : related to a country that controls and rules other countries.
- » Flora and fauna : plants and animals.
- » Calligraphists : specialists of beautiful writing.
- » National Archives : where important official records are preserved.
- » Census operations : to prepare detailed records—caste, religion, occupation, number of family members, gender, age, etc. of all the people in a country.
- » Revolution : a time when people change a ruler or political system by using force or violence.

- » Industrial Revolution : the period in the 18th and 19th centuries in Europe and the USA when machines were invented and the first factories were established.
- » Modern period : a time span of last 250 years of Indian history (not meaning literally).

SUMMARY

- ▶ Approximately 250 years from the death of Aurangzeb (1707) to 1947 is taken as the modern period for the Indian History.
- ▶ In 1453, the Turks took control of the overland trade routes connecting Europe to the East. This forced the Europeans to look for alternative sea routes.
- ▶ In 1498, Vasco da Gama of Portugal had landed at Calicut along the West coast of India.
- ▶ Industrial revolution led to new geographical categories of the world.
- ▶ In the 18th and 19th centuries new geographical categories of India emerged.

Exercise Time

A. Tick (✓) the only correct choice amongst the following :

1. In 1498, Vasco da Gama Landed at
 - a. Surat
 - b. Calicut
 - c. Mumbai
 - d. Delhi
2. British rule in india is called
 - a. regulation
 - b. colonial
 - c. connecting
 - d. commercial
3. The _____ historians wrote around the life of the rules.
 - a. old
 - b. turks
 - c. contemporary
 - d. cartography
4. In 1453, the _____ took control of the overland trade routes connecting Europe to the East.
 - a. Turks
 - b. Arabs
 - c. British
 - d. Europain
5. Acitivity of making maps is called
 - a. drawing
 - b. maping
 - c. calligraphy
 - d. cartography

B. Fill in the blanks :

1. Third Battle of Panipat was fought between _____ and Ahmad Shah Abdali.
2. The official records tell mostly about the _____ and activities of the government officials.
3. In 1780, Bengal _____, a weekly commercial magazine was printed.
4. In 1781, George _____, the commander of colonists in America defeated the British army.
5. Industrial revolution led to new geographical _____ of the world.

C. Match the Following :

- | | |
|----------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Vasco da Gama | a. England |
| 2. George Washington | b. Maharaja Ranjit Singh |
| 3. Industrial Revolution | c. Calicut |
| 4. Sikhs | d. Ahmad Shah Abdali |
| 5. Third Battle of Panipat | e. Commander of colonists |



D. Write true (T) or False (F) against the following statements in given brackets :

1. Industrial Revolution began in England in the 19th century.
2. Printing of books in India was done since ancient times.
3. The British thought surveys were important for effective administration.
4. England was the first country to experience Industrial Revolution.
5. Official documents help us understand what the people of the country think and feel.

E. Answer in one word or one phrase :

1. Which year is considered to be the beginning of modern period in India ?
2. Who fought the Carnatic wars ?
3. Who established and consolidated the kingdom of Mysore ?
4. What are the dates of nationalist movement in India ?
5. Where is the National Archives situated in New Delhi ?

F. Answer these question briefly :

1. Why did the post-18th century saw rebuilding of almost all countries of the world ?
2. What is the problem with the periodisation of Indian history that James Mill offers ?
3. What are the sources of studying history during the modern period ?
4. Why is Vasco da Gama's voyage to India regarded as a land mark in history ?
5. What was known as Industrial Revolution ?

G. Answer these questions in detail :

1. Describe the new geographical categories formed of the world and of India in the eighteenth century.
2. Discuss the various sources used to write the history of modern period of India.

PROJECT WORK

- Make a survey of your classmates or young friends in the neighbourhood. Find out their name, date of birth, age, height, if they wear spectacles, what food or dish they like most, what dress they like most, percentage of marks obtained in the last annual examination, games and sports they play, movies or serials they watched this year, their fantasies , etc.