UNIT 1 -UPSC - Modern India

Vasco da Gama when landed at Calicut, sailing via the Cape of Good Hope in 1498, marked the beginning of the European era in Indian history. The Portuguese by the 16th Century had already established their colony in Goa.

In the next century, India was visited by a large number of European travellers - Italians, Englishmen, Frenchmen and Dutchmen. They were drawn to India for different reasons. Some were traders, others adventurers, and quite a few fired by the missionary zeal to find converts to Christianity. Eventually England, France, the Netherlands and Denmark, floated East India Companies.

During the late 16th and the 17th Centuries, these companies competed with each other fiercely. By the last quarter of the 18th Century the English had vanquished all others and established themselves as the dominant power in India. The British administered India for a period of about two centuries and brought about revolutionary changes in the social, political and the economic life of the country.

Once the British had consolidated their power, commercial exploitation of the natural resources and native labour became ruthless. By the middle of the 19th Century arrogant exploitation of the people had tried the patience of the Indians to the limit.

The six decades between the end of the "mutinous" war of 1857 - 59 and the conclusion of First World War saw both the peak of British imperial power in India and the birth of nationalist agitation against it. With increasing intrusion of aliens in their lives, a group of middle class Indians formed the Indian National Congress (1885) - a society of English educated affluent professionals - to seek reforms from the British.

The anticolonial struggle became truly a mass movement with the arrival of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (1869 - 1948) in 1915 who had suffered great humiliation in South

Africa due to the policy of racial discrimination and later commited to rid his motherland of the ills of foreign rule.

Successive campaigns had the effect of driving the British out of India in 1947, but with independence came the independence of the country into Pakistan.