

The Mughal Empire

The Mughal Empire was founded in 1526 by Zahir-Ud-Din Muhammed, an Islamic Turkish ruler who defeated Ibrahim Lodi, the last Delhi Sultan. The empire's religion was Islamic and as the boundaries of the empire spread, so did the religion. The empire spread through a series of wars with the surrounding nations including the Sikhs, Rajputs, and Jats. In 1707, the empire reached its largest and covered all but the southern part of present day India, as well as a large portion of the Middle East.

Between 1526 and 1707, the Mughals became pioneers in architecture, completing the Taj Mahal, the Pearl Mosque in Lahore, and the Badshahi Mosque in Delhi. The Mughals also valued the arts and established their own styles of painting, glass work, and carpets

In 1615, the Mughal Emperor Jahangir gave the English East India Company (and therefore the English) permission to establish a factory, or trading settlement, at Surat. Over the next hundred years, the British established even more factories and trading posts along the western coast and tip of India. Their three main factories and trading posts were Calcutta, Bombay, and Madras. In 1717, the Mughal Empire granted the British a firman, a royal decree, exempting the East India Company from paying duties in Bengal.

During this time, the Mughals and British traded extensively with each other. The Mughals exported many different goods to the British including, but not limited to, coffee, tea, aloes, silk and cotton cloth, and spices such as pepper, ginger, clove, and cinnamon. The main British exports to India were metals such as lead and iron, manufactured goods such as guns and cannons, and especially a heavy woolen cloth called broadcloth.

The trade of silk and cotton cloth into England became a point of contention for the British. Production of broadcloth was a major moneymaking business for the British. Everyone wore the cloth and it was exported to all of its colonies. However, it was too heavy for people in India to wear. The people of India did buy the cloth, but it was used to line chests, upholster furniture, and line their tents. The silk and cotton cloth that was being imported into England became very popular and was being used and worn by the upper class instead of the broadcloth. The cloth that the Mughals made was very luxurious. The cloth was hand-loomed and could have gold or silver threads in it. Sometimes the cloth would be hand-painted. Also, the Mughals invented a color-fast dyeing technique. They created many different kinds of cloth in many different patterns. The importation of this cloth amounted to 60 percent of the East India Company's sales in London in 1750. This worried the British because they were afraid the importation of the Indian cloth would hurt the British broadcloth industry. Earlier, weavers in London had become so upset at the importation of the Indian-made cloth that they attacked the East India House in January of 1697. In fact, the British were so concerned that they passed legislation prohibiting the selling and wearing of Asian textiles. Though the Act was passed, it did not actually stop people from selling and wearing the textiles and they remained popular throughout Europe.

Throughout this time the British became a larger force in India, taking over small towns. The Mughal Empire became weaker due to the British influence, as well as wars with other Indian nations such as the Jats, Sikhs, and Rajputs. In 1757, the British forcibly took over the city of Bengal. After this success, the British quickly continued to

take over other cities and towns in India. In 1857, the Mughal Empire completely collapsed and the British controlled India.