

Continuity and Change in ASIA

Join us every Wednesday for an insightful look at *Continuity and Change in Asia*, a social studies-based program exploring political and social issues shaping Asia today and designed to encourage students to better understand the various issues shaping the countries and regions of East, South and Southeast Asia. This Newspapers In Education program is in partnership with the Asia Outreach Centers at the University of Washington Jackson School of International Studies. Series will run through Wednesday, June 7, 2006.

Activities

- 1:** This week's article speaks about colonialism. Research this word and its meaning alone or as a class. What other countries in the history of the world have been colonized? Research, then make a list of these countries, then look through *The Seattle Times* for a story that is related to one of the countries on your list in some way. How has colonialism impacted the country and its people and what evidence of this can you find in the article you have selected? Write an expository essay on this subject.

ARTICLE 2

Legacies of Imperialism and Colonialism:

South Asia in Colonialism's Wake

by Keith Snodgrass – Associate Director and Outreach Coordinator, South Asia Center, Henry M. Jackson School of International Studies, University of Washington

At the stroke of the midnight hour bridging August 14 and 15, 1947, India and Pakistan freed themselves of almost two centuries of rule at the hands of the British, ushering in a long period of decolonization around the world. How was it that a small group of Europeans was able to rule nations with populations numbering several hundred million? What changes took place in Indian society as a result of this colonization? What effects did this colonization have on India and on the rest of the world?

The British first assumed official control over a small piece of Indian territory in 1757, after a long period of being, like other foreign powers in India, traders. By 1857, Britain exercised control through a variety of mechanisms over most of the Indian subcontinent, and continued to do so until 1947. While the British often co-opted Indian symbols and modes of governance, they also adapted many of these to their own needs.

Indians and Britons worked to understand one another for their own ends, and in the case of Britain this was largely in order to consolidate its rule. One of the means of doing this was to cultivate different groups of people based on a variety of factors. One of these, which the British identified and used, was religious identification, dividing their Indian subjects into two

large groupings of Hindus and Muslims. Was this British classification system what eventually lead to the division of the subcontinent in 1947 into predominantly Hindu India and almost exclusively Muslim Pakistan?

Another method of the colonialists was to use Indian royalty as a sort of go between in the form of what are called "Princely States." One of these was Kashmir, and that status is part of the reason this mountainous territory continues to be a place of conflict between India and Pakistan.

So, several ways can be seen in which the colonial experience served to divide South Asians. But there were also connecting activities. What is still the world's largest railway system was built mostly during the colonial era, allowing Indians to travel in ways never before possible. While this travel helped to enhance people's experience of India as a nation, it also allowed, as MK Gandhi said, "evil to travel faster." Which assessment do you agree with?

While only a small percentage of Indians and Pakistanis speak English, it has served as a connecting language both between the citizens in these countries and with the outside world. The current growth of computer services and call center operations in India is at least partly because of the English language, which became important in South Asia during the colonial era. English language abilities also serve to separate classes in India, with the better off able to send their children to "English medium" schools, increasing their chances of success in careers, while the poorer sectors must rely on Indian-language government schools, which limits their career options.

The independence movements, which lead to the British departure from India and Pakistan, were emulated all over the world in places where European governments ruled non-European peoples. India was a leading figure in the non-aligned movement, which attempted to find a place for nations outside of the main Cold War Era political alignments of the U.S.-led West and the Soviet Union-led East. Pakistan played a leading role in formulating new ideas for a modern Islamic state. Each of these has taken on new forms through the years.

Now, more than 50 years after the end of colonial rule, are these countries still "post-colonial?" How much does Pakistan's close, but difficult, alliance with the U.S. in the War on Terror affect the ability of Pakistanis to decide the future of their own country? Does India's opening of its economy over the past 15 years and increasing integration into global industrial and communications networks compromise its independence? Understanding the history of South Asian countries will be very valuable in answering these questions and in determining what the people and governments of these countries might do in the future.

Questions for discussion:

- What were the effects of colonial rule in India and Pakistan?
- How and why did this colonial rule come to an end?
- What are some long term effects of the colonial period? In your opinion, to what degree does the colonial experience still have a major effect in the independent states of South Asia?



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