



Sources for the Indian History



Sources for the History of Modern India

- **Abundance of Historical Material (Mid-18th to Mid-20th Century)**

- A vast range of records and documents are available to study India during this period.
- Priority given to archives in constructing the history of modern India.
- **Archives:** A collection of historical records and documents (primary sources).
- They are created as part of administrative, legal, social, or commercial activities.
- These documents are **unique/original**, not produced for the purpose of informing future generations.
- An important component of archives related to modern India are **official records**:
- Papers of government agencies at various levels.

- **Records of the East India Company (1600-1857)**

- Provide detailed accounts of trading conditions.
- When the British Crown took over administration, it maintained a large variety of official records.
- These help historians trace important developments stage by stage.

- They reveal processes of **decision-making** and **psychology of policymakers**.
- Records of other European East India companies (Portuguese, Dutch, French) are also relevant.
- Especially useful for **economic history** and understanding the **political set-up** of the 17th and 18th centuries.
- **Contemporary & Semi-Contemporary Works**
- Include **memoirs, biographies, and travel accounts**.
- Offer insights into the 18th and early 19th centuries.
- **Newspapers and Journals (Late 18th Century Onwards)**
- Very valuable for social, political, and economic information, particularly in the 19th and 20th centuries.
- **Other Sources**
- **Oral evidence, creative literature, and paintings** also shed light on modern Indian history.

Archival Materials

- There are four main categories of official records:
 1. Central government archives.
 2. State government archives.
 3. Records of intermediate and subordinate authorities.
 4. Judicial records.

- *Additional archives:*
 - *Private archives* (personal and family papers)•
 - *Archival sources available abroad*•
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1. Central Government Archives

- *National Archives of India (New Delhi)*
 - Houses most of the Government of India's archives•
 - Provides **authentic and reliable** source materials on various aspects of modern Indian history•
 - Records are grouped under different secretariat branches: public/general, revenue, political, military, secret, commercial, judicial, education, etc•
- *Survey of India*
 - Began with James Rennell as the first Surveyor General of Bengal (1767)•
 - Survey records include journals and memoirs of surveyors:
 - Offer geographical, socio-economic, and other important historical details•
- *Proceedings of Public, Judicial, and Legislative Departments*
 - Useful for studying social and religious policies of the colonial government•
 - Educational policies and growth of the education system are documented•
- *Home Department Records*

- Papers on the emergence of the nationalist movement were in the public series initially•
 - In 1907, a new series called *Home Political* was started for political and communal issues•
 - *Reforms Office Records*
 - Valuable for analyzing constitutional developments from 1920 to 1937•
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2. Archives of the State Governments

- *Source Material in State Archives*
 1. Records of the former British Indian provinces•
 2. Records of the erstwhile princely states (merged into the Indian Union after 1947)•
 3. Records of foreign administrations other than the British•
- *Important Collections*
 - *Khalsa Darbar Records (1800-1849)* from the Kingdom of Lahore•
 - *Peshwa Daftar (Alienation Office, Pune):*
 - Single most valuable source for Maratha history (a century before the fall of the Peshwas)•
 - *Princely States of Rajasthan* (Jaipur, Bikaner, Jodhpur, Udaipur):
 - Now housed in the Rajasthan State Archives, Bikaner•

- **Dogra Rule in Jammu and Kashmir (from 1846):**
 - State papers available in Jammu.
- Other princely state archives: Gwalior, Indore, Bhopal, Rewa (Madhya Pradesh), Travancore & Cochin (Kerala), Mysore (Karnataka), Kolhapur (Maharashtra).

3. Archives of Three Presidencies

- **Bengal Presidency (Fort Williams)**
 - Early records lost during the sack of Calcutta in 1756.
 - Archives post-Battle of Plassey (1757) survive in series at:
 - National Archives of India.
 - State Archives of West Bengal.
- **Madras Presidency**
 - Records from AD 1670 onward, including those of the Governor and Council of Fort St. George.
 - Provide insights into the Anglo-French struggle and English conflicts with Indian powers in the south and Deccan.
- **Bombay Presidency**
 - Stored in the Maharashtra Secretariat Record Office (Mumbai).
 - Vital for the history of Maharashtra, Gujarat, Sindh, and the Kannada-speaking districts which later merged into Mysore (1956).

4. Archives of Other European Powers

- **Portuguese Archives (Goa, 1700-1900)**
 - Valuable for the history of Portuguese possessions in India.
 - Orders/dispatches from Lisbon and responses/reports from India.
- **Dutch Records**
 - Cochin & Malabar: Madras Record Office.
 - Chinsura: State Archives of West Bengal.
- **French Archives**
 - Chandernagore and Pondicherry (Puducherry) archives were taken to Paris before French withdrawal.
- **Danish Archives**
 - Moved to Copenhagen after Tranquebar and Serampore were sold to the British (1845).
 - Remaining Danish records (1777-1845) on Tranquebar: Madras Record Office.

5. Judicial Records

- **Madras Record Office**
 - Houses archives of the Mayor's Court at Fort St. George (from AD 1689), the earliest available judicial archives.
- **Calcutta High Court**
 - Has records of the Mayor's Court at Fort William (1757-1773) and the Supreme Court of Bengal (1774-1861).

- **Maharashtra Secretariat Record Office (Bombay)**
 - Holds records of the *Mayor's Court at Bombay (est. 1728)*, the *Bombay Recorder's Court*, and the *Supreme Court*.
 - **Contents of Judicial Archives**
 - Proceedings, minutes, copies of wills, probates, letters of administration.
 - Useful for genealogical and socio-economic research.
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6. Published Archives

- **Parliamentary Papers**
 - Include excerpts from the *East India Company records* and *Government of India under the Crown*.
 - **Reports of Parliamentary Select Committees, Royal Commissions** (on education, civil reforms, famines), **Parliamentary debates** on the Indian empire.
 - **Proceedings of Indian & Provincial Legislatures**
 - *Weekly Gazettes* by central/provincial governments.
 - Collections of laws/regulations issued periodically.
 - All serve as important source materials for research.
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7. Private Archives

- **Documents/Papers of Individuals and Families of Note**
 - Includes papers of eminent nationalist leaders and records of organizations like the *Indian National Congress*.
 - Housed in places like the *Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi*.
 - **Archives of Banks, Business Houses, and Chambers of Commerce**
 - Crucial for studying economic changes.
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8. Foreign Repositories

- **England**
 - **India Office Records (London):**
 - *Minutes of the Courts of Directors and the General Court of the East India Company.*
 - *Minutes and correspondence of the Board of Control (Board of Commissioners for the Affairs of India).*
 - *Records of the Secretary of State and the India Council.*
 - **British Museum:**
 - Collections of papers of British viceroys, secretaries of states, and high-ranking civil/military officials who served in India.
 - **Missionary Societies (e.g., Church Missionary Society, London):**

- Provide insight into educational/social development in pre-independent India.
- **France**
 - *Archives Nationale, Paris*, and archives of French Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Colonies, War:
- Records on French possessions and socio-political conditions.
- **Netherlands**
 - *Rijksarchief, The Hague*: Dutch East India Company records.
- **Denmark & Portugal**
 - Archives in *Copenhagen* and *Lisbon*, respectively.
- **Pakistan**
 - Archives in *West Pakistan Record Office (Lahore)*, *Record Office (Peshawar)*, and *Sind*:
- Provide information on regional history and India's relations with neighbors like Afghanistan, Iran, etc.
- Examples: *Bishop Heber's Journal*, *Abbe Dubois's Hindu Manners and Customs* (details on socio-economic life during the decline of Indian powers and rise of the British).
- **Notable British Travellers**
 - George Forster, Benjamin Heyne, James Burnes (*Narrative of a Visit to the Court of Sinde*), Alexander Burnes (*Travels Into Bokhara*), C.J.C. Davidson (*Diary of the Travels and Adventures in Upper India*), John Butler (*Travels and Adventures in the Province of Assam*).
- **Notable Non-British Travellers**
 - Victor Jacquemont (*Letters from India...*), Baron Charles (*Travels in Kashmir and the Punjab*), William Moorcroft.
- **Importance of Travel Accounts**
 - Generally reliable and indispensable.
 - Supplement official records in constructing modern Indian history.

Biographies, Memoirs, and Travel Accounts

- **Missionaries, Travellers, Traders, Civil Servants**
 - Left written accounts of experiences and impressions about India.
 - Missionaries wrote to encourage more evangelical missions.

Newspapers and Journals

- **Early Newspapers (Late 18th Century)**
 - First attempts by disgruntled East India Company employees to expose private trade malpractices.
 - **1776**: William Bolts planned a newspaper but was suppressed by the Company.

- **1780:** James Augustus Hickey published *The Bengal Gazette or Calcutta General Advertiser*
- Hickey's press seized within two years due to criticism of government officials.
- Other early publications: *The Calcutta Gazette* (1784), *The Madras Courier* (1788), *The Bombay Herald* (1789).
- **Growth in the 19th Century**
- By the mid-19th century, many powerful newspapers edited/published by fearless journalists.
- **One-third** of the founding fathers of the Indian National Congress (1885) were journalists.
- Examples:
 - *The Hindu & Swadesamitran* (G. Subramaniya Iyer),
 - *Kesari & Mahratta* (Bal Gangadhar Tilak),
 - *Bengalee* (Surendranath Banerjea),
 - *Amrita Bazaar Patrika* (Sisir & Motilal Ghosh),
 - *Sudharak* (Gopal Krishna Gokhale),
 - *Indian Mirror* (N.N. Sen),
 - *Voice of India* (Dadabhai Naoroji),
 - *Hindustan & Advocate* (G.P. Varma).
- Other noted newspapers: *The Tribune*, *Akhbar-i-Am*, *Indu Prakash*, *Dnyan Prakash*, *Kal*, *Gujarati*, *Som Prakash*, *Banganivasi*, *Sadharani*
- **Indian Nationalists & Revolutionaries Abroad**
- *Indian Sociologist* (London, Shyamji Krishnavarma),

- *Bande Matram* (Paris, Madam Cama),
- *Talwar* (Berlin, Virendranath Chattopadhyay),
- *Ghadar* (San Francisco, Lala Hardayal).
- **Significance of Newspapers**
- Depict almost all aspects of life in colonial India (from the 1870s).
- Track major events of the freedom struggle (especially from the 1920s).
- **Caution:** Newspaper accounts can carry biases (e.g., a pro-British London paper vs. an Indian nationalist paper).

Oral Evidence

- **Oral History**
- Constructing history from non-written sources (personal reminiscences, interviews, etc.).
- Broadens historical inquiry and can corroborate findings from written sources.
- Some historians remain skeptical of its complete accuracy.

Creative Literature

- **Emergence of the Novel (Late 19th Century)**
- A significant outcome of Indo-European contact.

- **Bankim Chandra Chatterji (1838-94):**
 - Famous Bengali novelist; wrote mostly historical novels.
 - *Anandamath* (1882): Known for “Vandemataram” and depiction of the Sanyasi Revolt (1760s).
 - *Rajasimha*: His last novel.
- **Icharam Suryaram Desai (1853-1912):**
 - Gujarati literary scholar; wrote *Hind ane Britannia* (an early novel with political overtones).
- **Tamil Writers:**
 - Girija Devi (*Mohana Rajani*, 1931),
 - Ramatirthammal (*Dasikalin Mosavalai*, 1936).
- **Telugu:** G.V. Krishna Rao (*Keelubommalu, The Puppets*, 1956).
- **Malayalam:**
 - Vaikom Muhammad Basheer (*Balyakalasakhi*, 1944),
 - Thakazhi Siva Sankara Pillai (*Tottiyude Makan, Chemmeen*).
- **Common Features**
 - Strong sense of realism.
 - Deep interest in marginalized/oppressed sections.
 - Novels reflect the social milieu of their respective times.
- Emerged under the patronage of the East India Company.
- Depict people, festivals, trades, dances, attire of the time.
- Popular until the introduction of photography (1840s).
- **Pictorial Images of 1857 Revolt**
 - Produced by both British and Indians.
 - Range of forms: paintings, pencil drawings, etchings, posters, cartoons, bazaar prints.
 - British paintings often commemorated British heroes (e.g., *Relief of Lucknow* by Thomas Jones Barker, 1859).
 - *In Memoriam* (Joseph Noel Paton) portrayed English women/children in fear during the revolt.
 - These images help historians interpret British and Indian worldviews of 1857.
- **Kalighat Paintings (19th Century, Calcutta)**
 - Depicted mythological figures and ordinary people's daily lives.
 - Reflected social changes and sometimes criticized social evils.
- **New Art Movement (Late 19th Century)**
 - Stimulated by growing nationalism.
 - Artists like Nandalal Bose and Raja Ravi Varma.
 - **Bengal School:** Led by Abanindranath Tagore (nephew of Rabindranath Tagore), E.B. Havell, Ananda K. Coomaraswamy.

Painting

- **Company Paintings (Patna Kalam)**

- Focused on Indian mythology, cultural heritage, and modern art trends.

Summary

- **Sources of Modern Indian History** include:

1. **Archival Materials** (public, private, and foreign repositories).

- **Public Archives:** Government of India, state governments, archives of Bengal/Madras/Bombay Presidencies, judicial records.

- **Private Archives:** Personal/family papers of prominent figures, records of banks, businesses, and chambers of commerce.

- **Foreign Repositories:** India Office Records (London), British Museum, archives in Pakistan, etc.

2. **Biographies, Memoirs, and Travel Accounts**

- Written by travelers, traders, missionaries, civil servants.
- Memoirs of Indian leaders during the Independence movement.

3. **Newspapers and Journals**

- Published in India and abroad, crucial for understanding political, social, and economic developments.

4. **Oral Evidence**

- Personal reminiscences and interviews, though sometimes questioned for accuracy.

5. **Creative Literature**

- Novels, poems, plays highlighting social realities.

6. **Paintings**

- Company paintings, depictions of the 1857 revolt, Kalighat paintings, and the nationalist art movement.

These varied sources collectively provide a comprehensive understanding of India's history from the mid-18th to the mid-20th century.

Thank You

