

Lecture-1



Charters of the East India Company

The Charters of 1600

The East India Company (EIC)/The British East India Company was an English and later a British Joint Stock Company primarily formed to trade with The Indian Subcontinent, Southeast Asia and also the Qing Dynasty ruled China. The **East India Company** was originally chartered on Thirty-One December 1600 from Queen Elizabeth I under the name of “**Governor and Company of Merchants of London Trading into the East-Indies**” to George Earl along with Two Hundred and Fifteen Knights, Aldermen (Elected Municipal Officials) and Burgesses (Freemen of Scotland Representatives).

The Company at one point in time used to account for half of the world’s trade ranging from cotton, silk, indigo, salt, spices, saltpetre, tea, to opium. The Company had begun its operations as a trading company but it soon became interested in politics and to act as an agent of The British Government in India. The Charter was mainly given the Queen assent to meet competition with The Dutch and Portuguese.

The Terms of the Charter:

- The Charter gave the company permission for traffic along with Merchandise Trade and permission to assemble at any convenient place, to make reasonable laws and ordinances for the good government of the East India Company.
- It gave exclusive trading rights to The Company.
- It gave the company the exclusive right to trade in the whole of Asia, Africa and America.
- The Charter had a life span of Fifteen Years.
- The Affairs were to be conducted on Democratic lines.
- No British Subject could carry trade without a license from The Company.
- To maintain Law and Order on long voyages The Company used the Crown’s powers and thus permitted itself to select a Commander in Chief on each Voyage and that person could punish anyone and set into motion “The Martial Law”.
- The charter gave the company a monopoly to trade with all countries east of the Cape of Good Hope and west of the Straits of Magellan.