



# India's 80th Independence Day: How We Got Here

Podcast length: ~18 min

Lesson time: 40–50 min

Episode: *Episode 91 · Takaro Explains*



## Listen to the episode

Kiran and Debkanya trace India's journey from a 1600s trading company to independence in 1947 — and explain why 2026 marks the 80th Independence Day.

## Learning Focus

Students will trace how the East India Company grew from a trading business into a colonial ruler, understand the shift from Company rule to the British Crown in 1858, and explore how peaceful and armed resistance movements led to India's independence in 1947.

## Learning Strands

**Primary:** History & Civics

**Supporting:** Social Studies, Media Literacy, Ethics

## Key Vocabulary

East India Company

Satyagraha

Indian National Congress

Salt March

Partition

Divide and Rule

Republic

## Learning Objectives

By the end of this lesson, students will:

- Explain how the East India Company transitioned from a trading business to a ruling colonial power.
- Identify the key events of 1857–1858 that shifted control of India from the Company to the British Crown.
- Describe Mahatma Gandhi's Salt March and its role in the independence movement.
- Compare peaceful and armed approaches to India's freedom struggle.
- Analyze why India's 2026 Independence Day is called the "80th" despite only 79 completed years.

## Materials Needed

- Whiteboard or large paper
- Markers
- Printed or digital map of India
- Timeline template (optional)

## Learning Outcomes

Students can:

- Students can sequence the major events of India's colonial and independence history from the 1600s to 1947.
- Students can explain the difference between East India Company rule and direct British Crown rule.
- Students can articulate at least one argument for and against peaceful protest as a strategy for change.
- Students can describe what Partition was and why it happened.

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## Before Listening 3–5 min

*What comes to mind when you hear the words “independence” or “freedom”? Where does that feeling come from?*

Before listening, consider:

*Do you think a peaceful protest can really change a powerful government's mind? Why or why not?*

## Listen to the Podcast 15–18 min

As you listen to the episode, pay attention to:

1. How the East India Company's role changed over time — from trader to ruler
2. The difference between the 1857 uprising and the 1930 Salt March as forms of resistance
3. Why the hosts say 2026 is the “80th” Independence Day even though only 79 years have passed

## Check for Understanding 8–10 min

1. **Recall:** In what century did the East India Company first arrive in India, and what was its original purpose?
2. **Explain:** What happened in 1857, and how did it change who controlled India?
3. **Evidence:** What does the episode say the British-built railways, postal system, and universities were really built for?
4. **Reasoning:** Why did Gandhi choose salt, of all things, as the focus of his most famous protest?
5. **Evaluate:** Was the founding of the Indian National Congress in 1885 a bold move or a cautious one? Explain your reasoning.

**Remember:** 1947 was independence's first year — like a first birthday — which is why 2026 is called the 80th Independence Day even though only 79 full years have passed.

## Choose One 10–12 min

### OPTION A — DISCUSSION

#### Peaceful Protest vs. Armed Struggle

The episode describes two different paths to Indian independence: Gandhi's nonviolent Satyagraha, and the more direct, sometimes armed resistance of figures like Bhagat Singh and Subhas Chandra Bose.

- Which approach do you think was more effective, and why?
- Can peaceful protest work against a government that doesn't want to listen?
- Is it fair to judge historical resistance movements by today's standards?

Encourage students to support their view with at least one specific detail from the episode.

### OPTION B — EXTENSION ACTIVITY

#### Build an Independence Timeline

In small groups, students create a timeline of India's path to independence using the dates mentioned in the episode.

1. List the key dates from the episode:  
1600s, 1857, 1858, 1885, 1930, 1939,  
August 14 1947, August 15 1947
2. For each date, write a one-sentence “why it mattered” note
3. Present the timeline to the class, highlighting the single event they think mattered most

Provide large paper or a whiteboard section per group.

## Exit Ticket 2–3 min

*In one sentence, explain why India's 2026 Independence Day is called the “80th” even though the country has completed only 79 full years of independence.*