The Industrial Revolution increased the wealth of many nations. To remain prosperous, countries wanted to be sure that they had readily available supplies of raw materials for their factories. They also looked for new markets for the products that their industries turned out. In additions, businesspeople sought places where they could invest their profits and make even more money. All these needs were met by acquiring colonies.

In the nineteenth century, European nations began to view Asians and African societies as a source of industrial raw materials and as a market for Western manufactured goods. The products of European factories were sent to Africa and Asia in return for oil, tin, rubber, and other natural resources needed to fuel European industries.

All of the major industrial countries of Europe acquired colonies in the 19th century. The areas they took over were in Asia, Africa and Latin America. This period from 1850 until about 19010 is called the Age of Imperialism. *Imperialism* is the policy of extending authority and control over another territory or country.

The country that owned the largest number of colonies was Great Britain. In 1800, it controlled Canada, parts of India, Australia, New Zealand, Honduras, and several islands in the Caribbean. In addition to the places mentioned, by 1900 Britain controlled much of Africa, much of Southeast Asia, Hong Kong, and a number of islands in the Mediterranean and the Pacific. Due to its large amount of colonies, it was said that “the sun never sets on the British Empire,” because at some part of the day it was also was daylight on a British colony.

During the 1700s, the ruler of India became weaker and weaker. At the same time, British trading gained strength. The major goal of the British trading companies was to profit from selling Indian cotton cloth, silk and sugar to other countries. The British imperialized and controlled India until 1857, it helped build telegraphs, railroads and irrigation systems. In addition, it set up a postal service and a number of schools. Great Britain also organized a large army of Indian solders to defend its interests. Missionaries arrived to teach Indian Hindus and Muslims about Christianity. Although many of the changes benefitted Indians, many of the Indians resented British interference. The British did not allow Indians to hold high level positions in business. The British set-up schools that taught English and Western ideas and paid little attention to the long history and advanced culture of the Indians. Most of the British tended to treat Indians as inferiors.

These conditions in India contributed to an independence movement. One of the most important 20th – century leaders, Mohandas Gandhi persuaded many Indians to practice passive resistance. His followers refused to obey British laws, serve in the armed forces, pay taxes or cooperate with British officials until their demands for independence were met. Gandi, who was called, “Mahatma” or the “Great One,” also urged nonviolence. Despite arrests and beatings at the hands of the British, his followers did not attempt to use force or even to defend themselves.

Another place of imperialism was in Africa. Ever since the days of the Portuguese explorers, during the Age of Exploration, Europeans had taken African land for colonies. Great Britain took the largest portion of Africa. It had scattered holdings in West Africa—Nigeria, the Gold Coast, Sierra Leon, and Gambia. Most of British possessions were in the Eastern half of Africa. They stretched in the almost unbroken line from Egypt in the north to the Cape of Good Hope in the south. The British used African waterways to shorten the voyage between Britain and India. Britain found a great source of wealth in African gold, diamonds, and other natural resources.

Colonies that were imperialized by larger, more powerful countries required protection by the military of the imperialist nations. Supply bases and military forts were built to defend the citizens of the imperialist nations against native rebellions and attacks by the forces of other imperialist nations. Because European countries were acquiring new lands and creating colonies their influence began to spread all over the world.