

## Sir Thomas Roe [1581-1644]

Sir Thomas Roe was an English diplomat of the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods. He was England's first official ambassador to India.

### Thomas Roe - Family Background

1. Thomas Roe was born in 1581 at Low Leyton to Sir Robert Rowe and Elinor Jermy.
2. He matriculated at the age of twelve from Magdalen College, Oxford, in 1593.
3. Roe entered Middle Temple and became the body to Queen Elizabeth I of England in 1597.
4. Thomas Roe was knighted in 1604 by King James I of Scotland.
5. Roe got married to Lady Beeston in 1614 just a few weeks before embarking for India.
6. Thomas Roe died in 1644 at the age of 62-63 and was buried in the parish church of St. Mary in Woodford, London.

### Sir Thomas Roe & India - UPSC Prelims Facts

1. In 1614, Thomas Roe was elected Member of Parliament for Tamworth (Tamworth is a constituency represented in the House of Commons of the UK Parliament since 2010) by Christopher Pincher, a Conservative.
2. In 1615, [The East India Company](#) persuaded King James to send Thomas Roe as a royal envoy to the Agra court of the Great Mughal Emperor, [Jahangir](#). He resided at Agra for four years, until 1619.
3. During this time, due to his manly qualities, dogged persistence and natural dignity, he was able to swipe out the Portuguese Influence from the Mughals despite some opposition from Prince Khurram ([Shah Jahan](#)) and Nur Jahan.
4. The immediate result of the mission was to obtain permission and protection for an East India Company factory at Surat. (Check out the details of [Thomas Roe's visit to Surat as ambassador to Mughal court](#) on the linked page.)
5. Firman to Thomas Roe by Jahangir: Roe's embassy to India secured an accord by which the English secured the right to trade and to establish factories in return for becoming the virtual naval auxiliaries of the empire. Hence, the permanent establishment of the EIC factory at Surat was the beginning of the stronghold of English in India.
6. Thomas Roe's mission was also to begin a Mughal-Company relationship that would help East India Company gradually be drawn into the Mughal nexus.
7. This success, with England's exclusion from Indonesia by the Dutch in the same period, determined that India, not the Far East, should be the chief theatre of English activity in Asia.
8. Therefore, the 17th century saw a period of peaceful trading through factories operating under Mughal grants. This held good for Surat and later for Hugli (1651) in Bengal. In the south the factory at Masulipatam (1611) was moved to the site of Madras (now Chennai), granted by a Hindu raja (1640). In 1647 it came under the control of the sultans of Golconda and then passed to the Mughals in 1687.
9. The only exception to this arrangement was the island port of Bombay (now Mumbai); although independently held, its trade was small because the Marathas, soon locked in combat with the Mughals.
10. In 1639 AD, the East India Company obtained the lease of the city of Madras from the local king where it built Fort St. George to protect its factory. Later Madras was made the South Indian headquarters of the Company.

11. Sir Thomas Roe work- titled as “Journal of the mission to the Mogul Empire” is a valuable contribution to the history of India in the early 17th century.

### Additional Notes on Thomas Roe for UPSC

1. In 1621, Roe was elected Member of Parliament for Cirencester.
2. Roe received diplomatic credentials to the Ottoman Empire, arriving at Constantinople in December in 1621.
3. He concluded a treaty with Algiers in 1624, by which he secured the liberation of several hundred English captives.
4. In 1629, Roe was successful in arranging a peace between Sweden and Poland. It helped him free up Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden to intervene decisively in the Thirty Years War on the side of the Protestant German princes.
5. Roe also negotiated treaties with Danzig and Denmark. After attending the Diet of Regensburg a gold medal was struck in his honour on his return home in 1630.
6. In January 1637, Roe was appointed Chancellor of the Order of the Garter, with a pension of £1200 a year.
7. In June 1640, Roe was made a privy councillor and was elected Member of Parliament for Oxford University.
8. He was also appointed as England's ambassador to the Holy Roman Empire from 1641 to 1642.
9. He sat in the House of Commons at various times between 1614 and 1644.