

**BRITISH GOVERNORS UNDER
COMPANY RULE (1758-1857)**

A multiplicity of motives underlay British penetration into India: commerce, security and a purported moral uplift of the people. The 'expansive force' of private and company trade eventually led to the conquest or annexation of territories in which spices, cotton and opium were produced. British investors ventured into the unfamiliar interior landscape in search of opportunities that promised substantial profits. British economic penetration was aided by Indian collaborators such as the bankers and merchants who controlled intricate credit networks. British rule in India would have been a frustrated or half-realized dream had their Indian counterparts not provided connections between rural and urban centres.

External threats, both real and imagined, such as the Napoleonic Wars (1796-1815) and the Russian expansion towards Afghanistan (in the 1830s), as well as the desire for internal stability, led to the annexation of more territories in India. Political analysts in Britain wavered initially as they were uncertain of the costs or the advantages of undertaking wars in India, but by 1810, as the territorial aggrandisement eventually paid off, opinion in London welcomed the absorption of new areas. Occasionally the British Parliament witnessed heated debates against expansion, but arguments justifying military operations for security reasons always won over even the most vehement critics.

The British soon forgot their own rivalry with the Portuguese and the French and permitted them to stay in their coastal enclaves, which they kept even after Indian independence in 1947. The British, however, continued to expand vigorously well into the 1850s.

A number of aggressive Governor-Generals undertook relentless campaigns against several Hindu and Muslim rulers. Among them were Richard Colley Wellesley (1798-1805). William Pitt Amherst (1823-

1828) George Eden (1836-1842), Edward Law (1842-1844) and James Andrew Brown Ramsay (1848-1856), who is also known as the Marquess of Dalhousie. Despite desperate efforts at salvaging their tottering power and keeping the British at bay, many Hindu and Muslim rulers lost their territories: Mysore (1799, but later restored), the Maratha Confederacy (1818) and Punjab (1849). British success in large measure was the result not only of their superiority in tactics and weapons but also of their ingenious relations with Indian rulers through the 'subsidiary alliance' system, introduced in the early nineteenth century. Many rulers bartered away their real responsibilities by agreeing to uphold British paramountcy in India, while they retained a fictional sovereignty under the rubric of Pax Britannica. Later, Dalhousie espoused the Doctrine of Lapse and annexed outright the estates of deceased princes of Satara (1848). Udaipur (1852), Jhansi (1853), Tanjore (1853). Nagpur (1854) and Oudh (1856).

European perceptions of India and those of the British especially, shifted from unequivocal appreciation to sweeping condemnation of India's past achievements and customs. Imbued with an ethnocentric sense of superiority, British intellectuals, including Christian missionaries, spearheaded a movement that sought to bring Western intellectual and technological innovations' to Indians. Interpretations of the causes of India's cultural and spiritual 'backwardness' varied, as did the solutions. Many argued that it was Europe's mission to civilize India and hold it as a trust until the Indians proved themselves competent for self rule.

The immediate consequence of this sense of superiority was to open India to more, aggressive missionary activity. The contributions of three missionaries based in Serampore (a Danish enclave in Bengal) — William Carey, Joshua Marshman and William Ward — remain unequalled and have provided inspiration for future generations of missionaries. The missionaries translated the Bible into local languages, taught company officials the local

languages, and, after 1813, gained permission to proselytise in the company's territories. Although the actual number of converts remained negligible, except in rare instances when entire groups embraced Christianity, such as the Nambuthiris in the south or the Nagas in the north-east, the missionary impact on India through publishing, schools, orphanages, vocational institutions, dispensaries and hospitals was unmistakable.

Robert Clive

The English force were led by Robert Clive to capture Arcot and other regions in the south and was instrumental in laying the foundation of the British Empire in India. In the Carnatic Wars between the French and the English, the latter finally defeated the French in the Battle of Wandiwash to gain control over South India. In 1758, the East India Company appointed Clive as the first Governor of Bengal. He had served two terms: as Governor of Bengal during 1758-1760 (3 years) and 1765-1769 (5 years). Clive is remembered as the founder of the British Empire in India. Clive remained in England from 1760 to 1765 and on his return in 1765, the emperor ceded the diwani of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa to the company. He is also credited with the ruin of the people of Bengal as he introduced a dual system of governance (1765—1772) in Bengal. But Clive is best remembered for rectifying the structural defects of the British governance system and for permanently settling affairs with the Mughal emperor. Contemporary historians consider him to be the first British administrator who envisaged a definite governance policy, for the East India Company.

Warren, Hastings (1772-1785)

Warren Hastings reached India in 1772 as Governor of Bengal and became the first Governor-General of India in 1774. He introduced several reforms, established civil and criminal courts, and courts of appeal. During his tenure, the British Parliament passed the Regulating Act, 1773, giving a

legalized working constitution to the company's dominion in India. It envisaged a Council of Ministers headed by the Governor-General. He is best remembered for the revenue, judicial and trade reforms he brought to the system.

Sir John Macpherson (1775-1786)

Warren Hastings was succeeded by Macpherson in 1775. Macpherson remained at the helm of company's affairs in India from almost 12 years, till 1786. The Pitt's India Act of 1784 was also passed during his tenure, which placed the Company's affairs in permanent, centralized control of the British Parliament, during his time.

Lord Cornwallis (1786-1793)

Lord Cornwallis succeeded Macpherson in 1787. As Governor-General of India for nearly 8 years, Charles Cornwallis (the Marquis of Cornwallis) professionalised, bureaucratised and Europeanised the company's administration. He also outlawed private trade by company employees, separated the commercial and administrative functions, and remunerated company servants with generous graduated salaries. He created the Civil Services of India. He introduced a new revenue system under the Permanent Settlement of Bengal, In 1793 with a view to stabilizing land revenue and creating a loyal contented class of zamindars, and the East Indian Company acted as overlord over them. This led to an increase in the number of litigations. This abolished periodic auction of zamindari rights and established permanent zamindari rights to collect land revenue from tenants and pay a fixed amount to the government treasury every year.

REVENUE REFORMS Because revenue collection became the company's most essential administrative function. Cornwallis made a pact with Bengali zamindars, who were perceived as the Indian counterparts to the British landed gentry. The Permanent Settlement system, also known as the zamindari system, fixed taxes in perpetuity in return

for ownership of large estates, but the state was excluded from agricultural expansion, which came under the purview of the zamindars. In Chennai and Mumbai, however, the ryotwari (peasant) settlement system was set in motion. In this system, the government surveyed and assessed the land before taxing them, pattas were given to the Ryots and the rent was paid directly by the peasants to the government.

In the long run, neither the zamindari nor the ryotwari systems proved effective because India was integrated into an international economic and pricing system over which the company had no control, while an increasing number of people subsisted on agriculture due to the lack of other employment. Millions of people involved in the heavily taxed Indian textile industry also lost their markets as they were unable to compete successfully with cheaper textiles produced from Indian raw materials in Lancashire's mills.

JUDICIAL REFORMS Beginning with the Mayor's Court, established in 1727, for civil litigation in Mumbai. Kolkata and Chennai, justice in the interior came under the company's jurisdiction. In 1772, an elaborate judicial system, known as adalat, established civil and criminal jurisdictions along with a complex set of codes or rules of procedure and evidence. Both Hindu pandits and Muslim qazis (sharia court judges) were recruited to aid the presiding judges in interpreting their customary laws, but in other instances. British common and statutory laws became applicable. In extraordinary situations where none of these systems was applicable, the judges were enjoined to adjudicate on the basis of 'justice, equity and good conscience. The legal profession provided numerous opportunities for educated and talented Indians who were unable to secure positions in the company, and, as a result, Indian lawyers later dominated nationalist politics and reform movements.

Notable Rulers in India (1720-1949)

Saadat Khan Burhan-ul-Mulk (1722-1739) - Awadh,

Safdar Jung (1739-1754) - Awadh; Shuja-ud-daulah (1754-1775) - Awadh; Asaf-ud-daulah (1775-1797) - Awadh; Wazir Ali (1797-1798) - Awadh; Nizarm-ul-Mulk Asaf Jah (1724-1748) - Hyderabad; Nasir Jung (1748-1750) - Hyderabad; Muzaffar Jung (1750-1751) - Hyderabad; Salabat Jung (1751-1760) - Hyderabad; Nizam Ali (1760-1803) - Hyderabad; Sikandar Jah (1803-1829) - Hyderabad; Nasir-ud-daulah (1829-1857) - Hyderabad; Afjal-ud-daulah (1857-1869) - Hyderabad; Mahabat Ali Khan (1869-1911) - Hyderabad; Osman Ali Khan (1911-1949) - Hyderabad, Hyder Ali (1761-1782) - Mysore, Tipu Sultan (1782-1799) - Mysore, Ranjit Singh (1792-1839) - Punjab.

Land Revenue Administration And Land Reforms

Permanent Land Settlement at Zamindari System. As per the prevailing land revenue administration system during the tenure of Warren Hastings, the collection of land revenue was entrusted to the highest bidder who was to pay a fixed amount to the government and in turn, could collect as much as they could from the farmers. The government remained the owner of the land. The bid system was devised to give the company a regular source of income with minimum administrative effort, but this actually led to fluctuation in revenues as many bidders used to run away when they were not able to pay the revenue to the government. In 1793, Lord Cornwallis supported by his advisor Sir John Shore introduced the Permanent Land Settlement. The zamindar (or landlord) was made the owner of the land and he could sell, pledge or divide land between his family members. In return, he was to give a fixed amount of revenue to the government every year, and in case of inability to pay the revenue, the government could revoke the right of the zamindar and entrust the same to some other person. To start with, each zamindar was given land on a 10 year lease and the zamindars who paid regular revenues were made the ultimate owners of the land. This new system helped zamindars to increase productivity and at the same

time reap more profits as the land revenue was fixed. But later the zamindars became autocrats and started exploiting the farmers and the land. As the miseries of the farmers increased the system was abolished in Bengal by passing the West Bengal Land Acquisition Act, 1855.

Mirasdari System In the Chennai Presidency, the Palegar system was prevalent during the early years of nineteenth century. The palegars were the landlords who exercised judicial powers and also possessed military powers. They were allowed by the British to collect land revenue to the tune of 50 per cent of the annual production. In 1855, the Governor of Chennai, Sir Thomas Monroe, abolished the palegar system, by curtailing their legal and military powers and reducing them to the states of mere revenue collectors. These palegars were called Mirasdars. The eldest landlord became the mirasdar. He was not necessarily the owner of the land coming under his miasdari. The farmers were the actual land owners and had to pay regular revenue. The defaulters, even in case of famine or drought, were penalized and after 30 years of introducing the mirasdar system, the government had to replace it with the ryotwari system.

Ryotwari System The ryotwari system was first introduced in the Chennai Presidency during the Munroe period. The ryots (or the cultivators), whose condition had reached the lowest during the Bengal famine, were helped greatly by this new system. The ryots, who had become slaves to the zamindars and mirasdars were able to improve their hereditary land under this system. This system established a direct link between the government and the ryots or farmers. There were no zamindars and now in this case government acted as zamindars. The twofold advantage that the government benefitted from implementing this system was that the government was getting extra revenue from the land as more and more ryots has become enthusiastic because of their improving economic condition. This increased the productivity from the land and also led the ryots to cultivate more land, which used to be lying idle.

Also, the government started getting support from the ryots as the system had freed them from the authority of the zamindars. However, the biggest defect of this system was that it proved unfavourable to the ownership of private property, fairness of royal life and co-existence.

Mahalwari System This was a scientific land revenue settlement implemented by Lord Bentinck. He got the land records surveyed and divided the land into mahals on the basis of village communities, with separate estates. The settlement for 30 years on each estate was given to the village chief or elders. These states were further divided among cultivators according to the measurements of the detailed survey. The rights of cultivators were safeguarded in this system and the government kept a paid servant, called patwari, to manage land revenue as well as land administration accounts. The patwaris from a group of villages used to report to the talukdars, who were established landlords with good past records.



The Nawabs of Bengal (1717-1772)

Murshid Quli Khan (1717-1727); Shuja-ud-din (1727-1739); Sarfraz Khan (1739-1740); Alivardi Khan (1740-1756); Sirajud Daulah (1756-1757), Mir Jafar (1757-1760); Mir Qasim (1760--1763); Mir Jafar (1763-1765), Najm-ud-daulah (1765-1772).

Sir John Shore (1793-1798)

He succeeded Lord Cornwallis as Governor-General in 1793. He was a stern believer in the policy of neutrality. Just after his resuming the office of Governor-General, he was approached by the Nizam to help him fight the Marathas in the Battle of Khurdla in 1793. As Shore remained neutral, the Nizam lost the war and turned towards the French. This brought resentment among the European officers in his ranks and they rebelled against him. After this, Shore started taking active interest in the internal affairs of the kings. After the death of the Nawab of Oudh, he took active interest in bringing the rightful heir to the throne. He returned to England in 1798.

Lord Wellesley (1798-1805)

In 1798, Lord Wellesley succeeded Sir John Shore with the aim of establishing British supremacy in India and to put an end to French conspiracy. During the Governor-Generalship of Lord Wellesley, the Fourth Mysore War (1799) was fought. This was the last Mysore war. Tipu Sultan, after regaining lost strength, set out again on his plan to oust the British from India with the help of Napoleon and the Persian king. Lord Wellesley, visualizing danger, sought an alliance with the Nizam and the Marathas and defeated and killed the valiant Tipu Sultan in 1799, besides war. Wellesley depended on a system of subsidiary alliances to expand British territories, whereby the ruler of an aligning state was compelled to accept permanent stationing of a British force within his territory and pay subsidy for its maintenance. Sometimes a territory was added in lieu of payment. A ruler also had to accept a British resident. They were not allowed to employ any European without British approval nor negotiate with any Indian ruler without consulting the Governor-General. Thus subsidiary lost sovereignty in external matters, while the British resident interfered in internal administration, thereby causing the rulers to lose control over their territories.

★ **Governor-Generals between Lord Wellesley and Lord Francis Hastings**

Some records say that Lord Wellesley was succeeded by Lord Cornwallis who took over as Governor-General in 1805. He wanted to reverse the neutrality policy adopted by Wellesley but his health did not allow him to officiate and he died within 6 months. In 1805, he was succeeded by Sir George Barlow. Barlow made Treaty of Gwalior and Gohad with Scindia and Treaty of Lahore with Ranjit Singh in 1805. He is remembered for withdrawing to Rajput kingdoms. He was replaced with Lord Minto in 1807; Minto had a difficult time suppressing the rebellions at Chennai and Travancore in his initial years. He started expanding the British establishment further and was able to get the rights for the areas east of Sutlej from Ranjit Singh after Treaty of Amritsar. The Charter Act of 1813 was passed during his tenure.

Lord Francis Hastings (1813-1823)

Under the governorship of Lord Hastings, Nepal was defeated in 1814, resulting in Nepal ceding Gharwal and Kumaon to the British. In 1818, the Marathas made a last attempt to regain their independence. This led to the Third Anglo-Maratha War in which the Marathas were completely crushed. During Hastings' tenure, various reforms were initiated such as the ryotwari settlement according to which direct settlement was made between the government and the ryots (cultivators). The revenue was fixed for a period not exceeding 30 years, on the basis of the quality of the soil. Half the net value of the crop was to be given to the government. During this period, special attention was paid to education, building roads, bridges and canals. Lord Hastings became the first Governor-General to resign from the post on charges of bribery and corruption. He returned to England in 1823.

Lord William Bentinck (1828-1835)

Bentinck was famous for the social reforms he introduced, such as the abolition of sati (1820), suppression of thuggee, suppression of female infanticide and human sacrifices. English was introduced as the medium of higher education on the advice of his council member, Thomas Babington Macaulay. Lord Bentinck also made a pact with Maharaja Ranjit Singh, the ruler of Punjab. By the Charter Act of 1833, the company ceased to be a trading company and became an administrative power. He also adopted some corrective measures in the civil services. However, it was Cornwallis who founded the British Civil Service in India.

EDUCATION REFORMS Education for the most part was left in the charge of Indians or with private agents who imparted instruction in the vernacular languages. But in 1813, the British became convinced of their duty to awaken the Indians from intellectual slumber by exposing them to British literary traditions, earmarking a party sum for the

cause. Controversy between two groups Europeans - the Orientalists and Anglicists –over the money was to be spent prevented them from formulating any consistent policy until 1835 when William Cavendish Bentinck, the Governor-General from 1828 to 1835; finally broke the impasse by resolving to introduce the English language as the medium of instruction, English replaced Persian in public administration and education.

JUDICIAL REFORMS The judicial system saw rapid reforms during his tenure. All provincial and circuit courts were abolished as they were not functioning satisfactorily. Instead, Bentinck divided Bengal into 20 districts and appointed a commissioner in each district, who carried out the functions of the judges of provincial courts. He also established one more civil court, Sadar Diwani Adalat and one criminal court, Sadar Nizamut Adalat at Allahabad. Indians were appointed as deputy magistrates and jurors. The courts also adopted the regional languages and the use of Persian was discontinued in courts. The most significant occurrence was the proper compilation and indexing of laws for the first time, which made the legal procedure simpler and dispensation of justice swifter.

SOCIAL REFORMS The Company's educational policies in the 1830s tended to reinforce existing lines of socio-economic division in society rather than bringing general liberation from ignorance and superstition. Whereas the Hindu English-educated minority spearheaded many social and religious reforms, either in direct response to government policies or in reaction to them, Muslims as a group initially failed to do so, a position they endeavoured to reverse. The western-educated Hindu elite sought to rid Hinduism of its much criticized social evils: idolatry, the caste system, child marriage and sati. Religious and social activist Raja Ram Mohan Roy (1772-1833), who founded the Brahma Samaj (Society of Brahma) in 1828, displayed a attainments and skilful use of the press by these early reformers enhanced the possibility of effecting broad reforms

without compromising societal values or religious practices.

PUBLIC WELFARE REFORMS Many roads, bridges and canals were built during Bentinck's tenure, the most significant being the Grand Trunk Road between Kolkata and Delhi and the road from Agra to Mumbai. He was also pivotal in the development of a structured canal system in the north-eastern frontier. He also permitted the use of steam boats in the Ganges and in other rivers.

Governor-Generals between Lord Bentinck and Lord Dalhousie

Lord Bentinck resigned from his post in 1835 and was replaced by Lord Charles Metcalf. Lord officiated as an acting Governor-General. He is remembered for removing restrictions on the press and media. After a few months, he was replaced by Lord Auckland in 1836. During the tenure of Lord Auckland, the English incurred heavy losses in the first Afghan War. He was recalled to England in 1842 and was replaced by Lord Elenborough (1842-1844). During his tenure, the First Sikh War (1845) was fought between the Sikhs and the British. The Sikhs were defeated and were brought under British control. He is remembered for reducing the price of salt by abolishing the octroi duty on it. He also permitted the appointment of English-speaking Indians in some crucial government positions. Henry Hardinge was the Governor-General from 1844 to 1848.

Lord Dalhousie (1848-1856)

Lord Dalhousie succeeded Lord Harding in 1848. During his tenure, the Second Sikh War (1848-1849) was fought, in which the Sikhs were defeated again and Dalhousie was successful in annexing the whole of Punjab to the British dominion. The Doctrine of Lapse was introduced by Lord Dalhousie, whereby, in the absence of a natural heir, the sovereignty of Indian states was to lapse to the British and such rulers were not permitted to adopt a son to inherit their kingdoms.

INFRASTRUCTURAL REFORMS

The 1850s witnessed the introduction of the three engines of social improvement that the British illusion of permanence in India. They were the railroad, the telegraph and the uniform postal service. gurated during Dalhousie's tenure as Governor General.

Railways The first railroad lines were built in 1850, from Howrah (Haora, across the Hoogly River from Kolkata) inland to the coalfields at Raniganj, Bihar, adistance of 240 km. But this was not used as public transport. The first railway line, for public use between Mumbai and Thane, was opened in 1853.

Telegraph In 1851, the first electric telegraph line was laid in Bengal nd soon Agra, Mumbai, Kolkata, Lahore, Varanasi and other cities were linked.

Postal system In 1854, the three different presidencies or regional postal systems merged to facilitate uniform methods of communication at an all India level. With uniform postal rates for letters and newspapers one-half anna and one anna, respectively (sixteen annas equalled one rupee) - communication between the rural and the metropolitan areas became easier and faster. The increased ease of communication and the opening of highways and waterways accelerated the movement of troops, the transportation of raw materials and goods to and from the interior, and the exchange of commercial information.

The railroads did not breakdown the social or cultural distances between various groups but tended to create new categories in travel. Separate compartments in the trains were reserved exclusively for the ruling class, separating the educated and wealthy from ordinary people. Similarly, when the Sepoy Rebellion was quelled in 1858, a British official exclaimed that 'the telegraph saved India'. He envisages ofcourse that British interests in India would continue indefinitely. Other reforms include setting up of the Public Work Department and passing of the Widow Remarriage Act. 1856.



Doctrine of Lapse

Lord Dalhousie followed vigorously the policy of annexing feudatory states by what is commonly known as 'Doctrine of Lapse'. He was convinced that British administration was better for the people than the rule of Indian kings, Accordingly he regarded them as anomalies, to be abolished by every possible means. He further believed that good faith must be kept with rulers on the throne and with their legitimate heirs while no sentiment should save the dynasties which had fortified sympathies by generations of misrule or preserve those that had no hereditary successor. The Doctrine of Lapse was that outcome of these principles, complicated by the Hindu law and practice of adoptions. Dalhousie held that state of ruler could not pass to a son adopted without the consent of the suzerain (the company in this case). Such consents, at the same time, could not be easily given. The Doctrine of Lapse, which had been recognized as early as 1834, thus became a powerful instrument in Dalhousie's hands for hastening the process of political unifications and the administrative consolidation of the country under the British rule.

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