



MODERN INDIAN HISTORY: 1

INDIA IN 18<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY

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India in 18<sup>th</sup> Century

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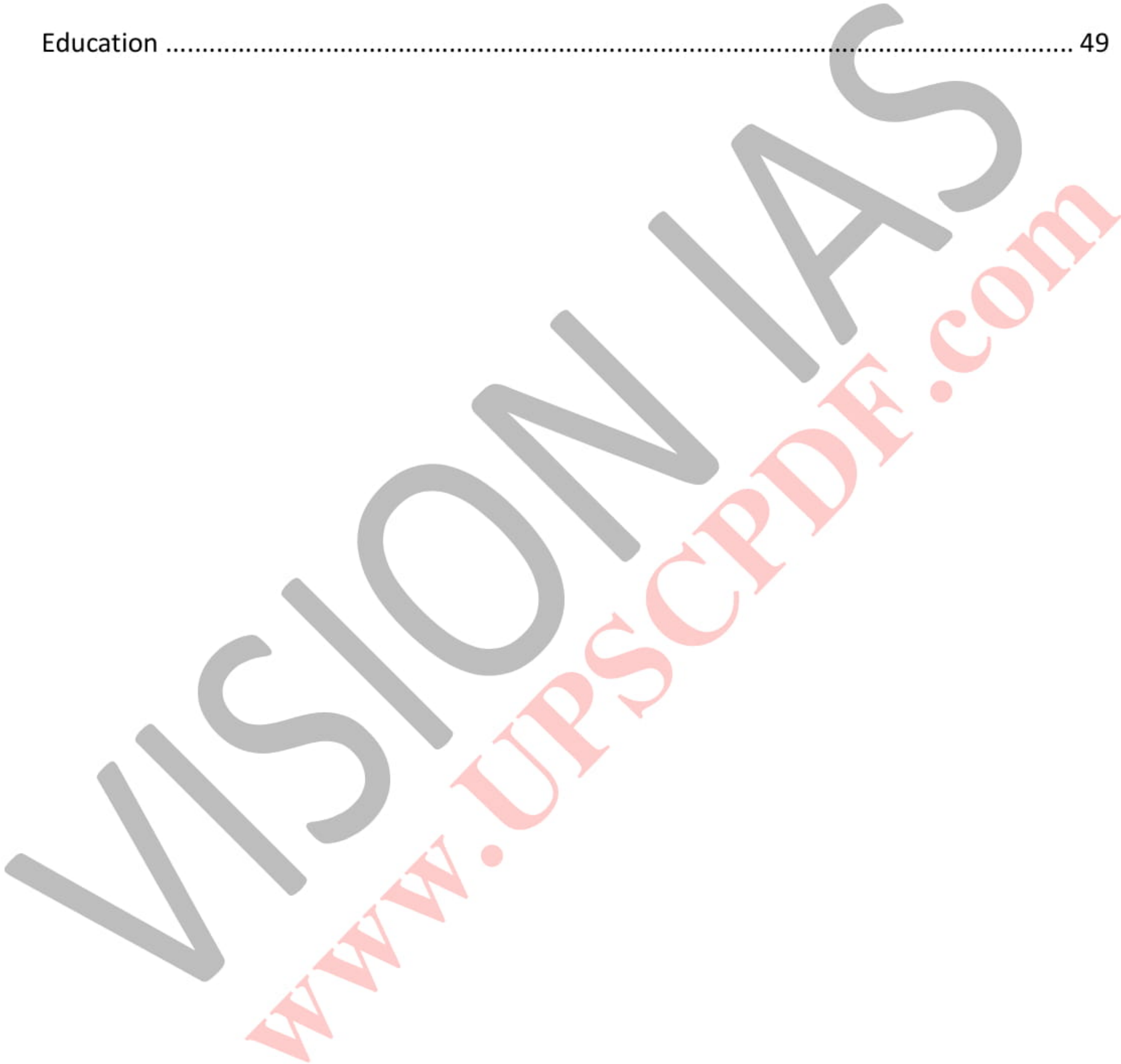
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## 1. Decline of the Mughals

The Mughal dynasty founded by Zahiruddin Babur following his decisive victory at the battle of Panipat in 1526 continued to grow in size under his successors. It reached its territorial climax under Aurangzeb (1657-1707) when the Mughal Empire was stretched from Kashmir in the North to Jinji in South and from Hindukush in the West to Chittagong in the East. But the process of decline had set in during the time of Aurangzeb and it could not be arrested by his weak successors. Ironically such territorial gains by Aurangzeb instead of increasing the strength of the empire actually weakened the foundations because of his socio-religious policies which, in sharp contrast to his ancestors, were intolerant and fundamentalist in nature.

After Aurangzeb's death in 1707 the empire kept shrinking in size and kept weakening. In the 150 years period between 1707 when Aurangzeb died and 1857 when the last of the Mughals Bahadur Shah Zafar was deposed by the British there were as many as 12 Mughals who occupied the throne. Two of the longest surviving, Muhammad Shah (1719-48) and Shah Alam (1759-1806) of these witnessed devastating attacks by Nadirshah (1739) and Ahmadshah Abdali, who attacked six times during 1748-67. These aggressions left the foundations of the Mughal Empire completely shaken apart from leading to rebellion, revolt and cessation by regional powers all around.

Causes of the downfall of the Mughal Empire can be analysed under following heads:

### Aurangzeb's Responsibility

Although the expansion of Mughal Empire reached its optimum point under Aurangzeb yet it only resembled an inflated balloon. The Mughal Empire had expanded beyond the point of effective control and its vastness only tended to weaken the centre.

His policy of religious bigotry proved counterproductive and provoked a general discontent in the country and the empire was faced with the rebellions of Sikhs, the Jats, the Bundelas, the Rajputs and above all, the Marathas. Aurangzeb was orthodox in his outlook and he tried to remain within the framework of Islamic law which was developed outside India in vastly dissimilar situations and could hardly be applied rigidly to India.

The failure of Aurangzeb to respect the susceptibilities of his non-Muslim subjects on many occasions, his adherence to the time-worn policy towards temples and re-imposition of jizyah (per capita tax levied on a section of an Islamic state's non-Muslim citizens) as laid down by the Islamic law did not help him to rally the Muslims to his side or generate a greater sense of loyalty towards a state based on Islamic Law. On the other hand, it alienated the Hindus and strengthened the hands of those sections which were opposed to the Mughal Empire for political or other reasons.

Aurangzeb's mistaken policy of continuous war in Deccan was again a fatal blow to Mughal Empire. It was continued for 27 years and drained the resources of the empire completely. So Aurangzeb's various such steps marked the start of Mughal Empire's decline.

### Weak successors of Aurangzeb

The Mughal system of government being despotic much depended on the personality of



emperor, thus succession of weak emperors was reflected in every field of administration. All the emperors after Aurangzeb were weaklings and therefore unable to meet the challenges both internal and external. Bahadur Shah I (1702-1712) was too old to maintain the prestige of the empire and he liked to appease all parties by profuse grants of titles and rewards. Due to his such attitude he was nick named "Shah-i-Bekhabar" (The Headless king), Jahandar Shah (1712-13), the next in succession, was a wildly extravagant fool, Farrukshiyar was a complete coward, while Muhammad shah spent more of time in watching animal fights. Due to his addiction to wine and woman, Muhammad shah got a title of "Rangeela". Ahmad shah was even one step ahead in his sensual pursuit and extended the harem (a separate place for concubines/wives of emperor) to a very large area where he spent weeks or months. In administration he also took equally foolish decisions. Thus successors were evidently weak and the huge task of managing such a vast Mughal empire was far beyond their capacity.

### Degeneration of Mughal Nobility

There was also the degeneration of the Mughal nobility. When the Mughals came to India, they had a hardy character. But too much of wealth, luxury and leisure softened their character. Their harems became full. They got wine in plenty. They went in palanquins to the battle-fields. Such nobles were not fit to fight against the Marathas, the Rajputs and the Sikhs. The Mughal Nobility degenerated at a very rapid pace.

The chief reason for the degeneration of the nobility was that gradually it became a closed corporation. It gave no opportunity of promotion of capable men belonging to other classes as had been the case earlier. The offices of the state became hereditary and the preserve of people belonging to a few families. Another reason was their incorrigible habits of extravagant living and pompous display which weakened their morale and drained their limited financial resources. Most of the Nobles spent huge sums on keeping large harems, maintaining a big staff of servants etc. and indulged in other forms of senseless show.

The result was that many of the nobles became bankrupt in spite of their large Jagirs. Dismissal from service or loss of Jagirs spelt ruin for most of them. That promoted many of them to form groups and factions for securing large and profitable Jagirs. Others turned themselves into grasping tyrant who mercilessly fleeced the peasants of their Jagirs. Many Nobles became ease-loving and soft. They dreaded war and became so much accustomed to an extravagant way of life that they could not do without many of the luxuries even when they were on military campaigns.

The Mughal Nobility was corrupt and fact-in-ridden. By giving suitable bribes, any Government rule could be evaded or any favour secured. The interests of the Mughal Empire did not appeal to them. The British regularly bribed Mughal Nobles for getting their work done. Even the highest nobles took bribes which were called Peshkash or presents. That lowered the tone of administration. With the passage of time, corruption and bribery increased. Later on, even some of the Mughal Emperors shared the money which their favourites charged as Peshkash from people desirous of getting a post or seeking a transfer. Factionalism kept on growing till it extended to all branches of administration the two major causes of functionalism were struggle for Jagirs and personal advancement and struggle for supremacy between the Wazir and the monarch. Thus faction fights weakened the

and to interfere in the court politics, gave a chance to the Marat

court politics and prevented the Emperors from following a consistent policy. Factionalism became the most dangerous bane of the Mughal Rule from 1715 onwards. To save themselves from these faction fights, the Mughal Emperors depended upon unworthy favourites and that worsened the situation.

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### Court Factions

Towards the end of Aurangzeb's reign influential nobles at the court organised themselves into pressure groups. Though these groups were formed on clan or family relationships, personal affiliations or interests were the dominating factors. These groups kept the country in a state of perpetual political unrest. The 'turani' or central Asian party consisted of nobles from trans-oxiana. During the reign of Muhammad Shah, Asaf Jah, Nizam-ul-mulk, Kamruddin and Zakariya Khan were the principle leaders of Turani faction, while the leaders of the Persian faction were Amir Khan, Ishaq Khan and Saadat Khan. These factions kept their own retainers who were mostly recruited from central Asia or Persia as the case might be. Together these two factions known as the Mughal or Foreign Party were pitched against the Hindustani party whose leaders during this period were Sayyid Abdulla Khan and Sayyid Hussain Ali (sayyid brothers), who enjoyed the support of the Hindus. Each faction tried to win the emperor to its view point and poised his ears against the other faction. They fought battles, upsetting the peace of the country and could not manage administration properly. Even in the face of foreign danger these hostile groups could not forge a united front and often intrigued with the invader. The personal interest of Nizam-ul-mulk (kilich khan) and Burhan-ul-mulk (saadat khan) led them to intrigue with Nadir Shah.

### Defective Law of Succession

Another cause was the absence of the law or custom, of the firstborn child to inherit the family estate (primogeniture), in preference to siblings, in the matter of succession to the throne. The result was that every Mughal Prince considered himself to be equally fit to become the ruler and was prepared to fight out his claim. After the death of Bahadur Shah, the various claimants to the throne were merely used as tools by the leaders of rival factions to promote their own personal interests.

Zulfikar Khan acted as the king-maker in the war of succession which followed after the death of Bahadur Shah I in 1712. Likewise, the Sayyid Brothers acted as king-makers from 1713 to 1720. They were instrumental in the appointment of four kings to the throne. After them Mir Mohammad Amin and Asaf Jah Nizam-ul-Mulk acted as king-makers. Thus the absence of the law of succession contributed to the decline of the Mughal Empire.

### The rise of Marathas

Another important factor which contributed to the decline of the Mughal Empire was the rise of the Marathas under the Peshwas. They consolidated their position in Western India and then started entertaining plans for a Hindu-Pad Padshahi or a Greater Maharashtra Empire. The dream could be realised only at the cost of the Mughal Empire. The gains of the Marathas were the loss of the Mughals.

The Marathas became the strongest power in Northern India in the mid-eighteenth century. They played the role of king-makers at the Delhi Court. They acted as the defenders of the country against foreign invaders like Ahmad Shah Abdali. It is true that the Marathas did not succeed in their great mission but their conquests in Northern India in the 18th century gave a death-blow to the Mughal Empire. The inability of the Mughal Emperors to accommodate the Marathas and to adjust their claims within the framework of the Mughal Empire, and the consequent breakdown of the attempt to create a composite ruling class in India; and the



impact of all these developments on politics at the court and in the country, and upon the security of the north-western passes.

### Military Weaknesses

Another cause of Mughal downfall was the deterioration and demoralization in the Mughal Army. The abundance of riches of India, the use of wine and comforts had their evil effects on the Mughal Army and nothing was done to stop the deterioration. The soldiers cared more for personal comforts and less for winning battles. A number of military vices may be attributed to the degenerate Mughals; indiscipline, luxurious habits, inactivity and commissariat and cumbrous equipment.

The impotence of the Mughal Armies was declared to the world when the Mughals failed to recapture Qandhar in spite of three determined efforts made by them. In 1739, Nadir Shah not only plundered the whole of Delhi but also ordered wholesale massacre. When such a thing happened without any effort on the part of the ruler to stop it, he forfeited the right to command allegiance from the people. The Mughal States was a police state and when it failed to maintain internal order and external peace, the people lost all their respect for the Government.

The demoralization of the army was one of the principal factors in the disintegration of the Mughal Empire. The source of the weakness was the composition of the army which consisted chiefly of contingents maintained by the great nobles from the revenues of assignments held by them for that purpose. As the authority of the sovereign relaxed, the general tendency among the great nobles was naturally to hold them as their own those assignments which maintained their personal troops.

The general laxity of discipline converted the army into a mob. Drill was unknown and a soldier's training which he might undergo or as he liked, consisted in muscular exercise and an individual practice in the use of the weapons with which he was armed. He mounted guard or not as he liked. There was no regular punishment for military crimes. Aurangzeb himself habitually overlooked a matters of course acts of treason, cowardice and deliberate neglect of duty before the enemy.

About the military system of the Mughals, it is contended that their weapons and methods of war had become outmoded. They put too much reliance on artillery and armoured cavalry. The artillery was local in action and ponderous in movement. It was rendered stationary by huge tail of camp which looked like a city with its markets, tents, stores and baggage. All kinds of people, men and women, old and young, combatants and non-combatants, besides elephants, cattle and beasts of burden, accompanied the Mughal Army.

On the other hand, the Maratha cavalry was swift and elusive like wind. They suddenly erupted on Mughal Camps and launched damaging attacks on their posts. Before the Mughals could get time for recovery, the Marathas, "like water parted by the oar," closed and fell on them.

At the turn of the 18th century, musketry made rapid progress and became prominent in the methods of warfare. Swift running cavalry of matchlock men was superior to army equipped with heavy artillery and armour-clad cavalry. In spite of that, the Mughals refused to change their old methods of warfare and no wonder they were defeated by the Marathas.



### **Economic Bankruptcy**

After the death of Aurangzeb, the Mughal Empire faced financial bankruptcy. The beginning had already been made in the time of Aurangzeb and after his death; the system of tax farming (assigning the responsibility for tax revenue collection to private citizens or groups) was resorted to. Although the Government did not get much by this method, the people were ruined. They were taxed to such an extent that they lost all incentive to produce.

Shah Jahan had increased the state demand to one-half of the produce. The extravagant expenditure by Shah Jahan on buildings was a crushing burden upon the resources of the country. The venality of the officials and the tyrannical caprice of the Mughal Governors, added to the misery of the people who had little or no means, for obtaining redress. Aurangzeb's long war in Deccan besides emptying the royal treasury almost ruined the trade and industry of the country. The marches of the imperial army damaged crops in the Deccan, While the beasts of burden ate away all standing crops and greenery. The emperor ignored all complaints brought to him because of financial difficulties. Whatever little was left was destroyed by Maratha raiders- Maratha horses were fed on standing crops and Maratha soldiers destroyed whatever property they found too heavy to be carried. The peasant gave up the agriculture and took life of plunder and highway robbery.

Under later Mughals as provinces asserted their independence one after the other and ceased the payment of any revenue to the center, the numerous wars of succession and political turmoil coupled with the lavish living of the emperors emptied the royal treasury to the extent that salaries of soldiers could not be paid regularly. The financial collapse came in the time of Alamgir II who was practically starved by his Wazir Imad-ul-Mulk and it is stated that Alamgir II had no conveyance to take him to the Idgah and he had to walk on foot.

### **Nature of Mughal State**

Mughal government was essentially a police government and confined its attention mainly to the maintenance of internal and external order and collection of revenue. The Mughals also failed to effect a fusion between Hindus and Muslims and create a composite nation whatever little effort was made by akbar to weld the people into a nation was undone by bigotry of Aurangzeb and his worthless successors. Many Indian chiefs looked upon Mughal rulers as foreigners and as enemies of India and Hindu religion which gave the Marathas, the Rajputs and others their awaited opportunity.

### **Invasion of Nadir Shah and Ahmad Shah Abdali**

The invasion of nadir shah in 1739 gave a death blow to the stumbling Mughal Empire. Besides depleting the Mughal treasury of its wealth, it exposed to the world the military weakness of the empire and its utter degeneration. Turbulent element in the country so far kept in check by the name and prestige of empire rose in rebellion. The repeated invasion of nadir's successors Ahmad Shah Abdali deprived the empire of frontier provinces of Punjab Sindh, Kashmir etc. The Mughal authority has so greatly shrunk that in 1761 Abdali fought the battle of panipat not against Mughal Empire but against the Marathas who virtually controlled the whole of north India. For about a decade 1761-72 a virtual afghan dictatorship under Naji-ud-daula was set up in Delhi.



### Coming of the Europeans

With the weakness of Mughal central authority in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, war-lordism raised its early head. The European company also acted as war lords and profited from the confused times. The European company out did Indian princes in every sphere whether it was trade and commerce or diplomacy and war. The territorial gains of the English East India Company destroyed all chances of the revival of the Mughal Empire. The British won the Battle of Plassey and continued to expand their Empire in the Deccan and in the Gangetic Region. With the passage of time, they were able to establish their hold over the whole of India and there could be not be any chance for the revival of the Mughal Empire.

## 2. Rise of regional powers

By 1761, the Mughal Empire was Empire only in name, as its weaknesses had enabled the local powers to assert their independence. Yet the symbolic authority of the Mughal Emperor continued, as he was considered to be a source of political legitimacy. The new states did not directly challenge his authority and constantly sought his sanction to legitimise their rule. **The emergence of these states in the eighteenth century, therefore, represented a transformation rather than collapse of the polity.** It signified a decentralisation of power and not a power vacuum or political chaos.

Some of these states such as Bengal, Awadh and Hyderabad, may be characterised as 'succession states'. They arose as a result of assertion of autonomy by governors of Mughal provinces with the decay of central power. Others, such as the Maratha, Afghan, Jat and Punjab states were the product of rebellions by local chieftains, zamindars and peasants against Mughal authority. Not only did the politics in the two types of states or zones differ to some extent from each other, but there were differences among all of them because of local conditions. Yet, in many areas of governance these states continued the Mughal institutions and the administrative systems. Apart from the successor states and the rebel states, there were also a few principalities like the Rajput kingdoms, Mysore and Travancore, which already enjoyed considerable amount of autonomy in the past and now in the eighteenth century became completely independent.

None of these states, however, succeeded in arresting the economic crisis which had set in during the 17<sup>th</sup> century. All of them remained basically rent-extracting states. The zamindars and jagirdars, whose number and political strength constantly increased, continued to fight over the income from the agriculture, while the condition of the peasantry continued to deteriorate. While these states prevented any breakdown of internal trade and even tried to promote foreign trade, they did nothing to modernise the basic industrial and commercial structure of their states. This largely explains their failure to consolidate themselves or to ward off external attack.

### Bengal

The province of Bengal gradually became independent of Mughal control after Murshid Quli Khan became the governor or *Nazim* of Bengal. He was given the unprecedented privilege of holding the two offices of *nazim* and *diwan* (collector of revenue) simultaneously. The division of power, which was maintained throughout the Mughal period to keep both the imperial

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officers under control through a system of checks and balances, was thus done away with. This helped Murshid Quli, who was already known for his efficient revenue administration, to consolidate his position further. The foundation of Bengal state was of course his very successful revenue administration, which even in the days of political chaos elsewhere in the Empire, made Bengal a constant revenue paying surplus area. This efficient collection system was operated through powerful intermediary zamindars. But along with the rise of zamindars as a new powerful elite in the province, there was also the growing importance of merchants and bankers during this period.

Murshid Quli Khan died in 1727, and his son-in-law Shuja-ud-din ruled Bengal till 1739. In that year, Alivardi Khan deposed and killed Shuja-ud-din's son, Sarfaraz Khan, and made himself the Nawab. These three Nawabs gave Bengal a long period of peace and orderly administration and promoted its trade and industry. It was Alivardi's reign, which marked a virtual break with the Mughals. The major problem for Alivardi came from outside – he has to face Maratha depredations. Ultimately in 1751, Alivardi came to terms with the Marathas by agreeing to pay *chauth* (one-fourth of the revenue) and handing over Orissa. However one major fallout of Maratha raids was the disruption of Bengal trade, particularly of the overland trade with north and west India. But it was short-lived and recovery was aided by a massive increase in European trade.

Alivardi died in 1756, nominating his grandson Siraj-ud-daula his successor. But his succession as challenged by other contenders for the throne resulting in intense court factionalism, as the overmighty zamindars and commercial people felt threatened by an extremely ambitious and seertive young nawab. This destabilised the administration of Bengal and the advantage was taken by the English East India Company, which acquired foothold in Bengal through what is popularly known as the Plassey conspiracy of 1757 that ended the rule of Siraj-ud-daula. (This will be dealt in details in later sections.)

### Oudh/Awadh

The subah of Awadh was extended from Kanauj district in the west to the river Karmnasa in the east.

It became virtually independent in 1722 when Saadat Khan was appointed its Governor. He succeeded in suppressing lawlessness and disciplining the big zamindars. He also carried out a fresh revenue settlement and thus, increasing the financial resources of his government.

Saadat Khan's successor was his nephew Safdar Jang, who was simultaneously appointed the *wazir* of the Empire in 1748 and granted in addition the province of Allahabad. 1753 marked an important turning point in the political history of north India, by signifying the visible succession of Awadh and Allahabad from the remainder of the dwindling Empire. After Safdar Jung's death, his son Shuja-du-daula was appointed the governor of Awadh. When Afghan leader Ahmad Shah Abdali arrived again in India to engage Marathas in the Third Battle of Panipat (1761), Shuja joined the Afghan invader to see his local opponents, the Marathas, humbled and weakened. Within his own domain of Awadh and Allahabad his autonomy and power remained unchallenged till his encounter with the English East India Company in 1764. His involvement in the struggle between the British and the deposed Nawab of Bengal, Mir Qasim, led to his defeat by the British in the battle of Buxar (1764). (This will be dealt in details in later sections.)



### Hyderabad and the Carnatic

The autonomous kingdom of Hyderabad was founded in 1724 by a powerful noble at the imperial court, Chin Qulich Khan, who eventually took the title of Nizam-ul-Mulk Asaf Jah. He never openly declared his independence from the Central government but in practice he acted like an independent ruler. He subdued the refractory zamindars and showed tolerance towards the Hindus who had economic power in their hands and as result, Hyderabad witnessed the emergence of a new regional elite who supported the nizam.

After the death of nizam, Asaf Jah, Hyderabad began to experience a series of crises. During the subsequent years, the Marathas, Mysore and the Carnatic – all settled their territorial scores against Hyderabad. The situation improved again after 1762 during the period of Nizam Ali Khan, who seized control of the administration and during his long reign lasting up to 1803, he settled border disputes with his neighbours giving Hyderabad the much desired political stability.

The Carnatic was one of the *subahs* of the Mughal Deccan and as such came under the Nizam of Hyderabad's authority. But just as in practice the Nizam had become independent of Delhi, so also the Deputy Governor of the Carnatic, known as the Nawab of Carnatic, had freed himself of the control of the Viceroy of the Deccan. Later, after 1740, the affairs of the Carnatic deteriorated because of the repeated struggle for its Nawabship and this provided for an opportunity to the European trading companies to directly interfere in Indian politics.

### The Sikhs

Founded at the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century by Guru Nanak, the Sikh religion spread among the Jat peasantry and other lower castes of the Punjab. The transformation of the Sikhs into a militant, fighting community was begun by Guru Hargobind. It was, however, under the leadership of Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth and last Guru of Sikhs, that they became a political and military force. Aurangzeb was initially not very hostile to the Sikhs; but as the community grew in size and challenged the central authority of the Mughals, the emperor turned against them. Religious intolerance launched under the Aurangzeb's reign also provoked opposition from Sikh. After Guru Gobind Singh's death, Banda Bahadur rallied together the peasants and the lower castes of the Punjab and carried on a vigorous though unequal struggle against the Mughal army. However he failed because Mughal centre was still strong and the upper classes and castes of Punjab joined forces against Banda Bahadur for his championship of the lower castes and rural poor.

The invasion of Nadir Shah and Ahmad Shah Abdali and the consequent dislocation of Punjab administration gave the Sikhs an opportunity to rise once again. With the withdrawal of Abdali from the Punjab, they began to fill the political vacuum. Between 1765 and 1800 they brought the Punjab and Jammu under their control. But at this stage, power in the Sikh polity became more horizontally structured, as *misl*s, or combinations based on kinship ties, now held territories as units. The political authority in Punjab remained decentralized and more horizontally dispersed during this whole period until Ranjit Singh, the chief of the Sukerch misl, tried to raise a more centralized Sikh state at the end of the eighteenth century. By the Treaty of Amritsar in 1809, the English recognized him as the sole sovereign ruler of Punjab. By the time of his death, his authority was recognized in territories between the river Sutlej and the mountain ranges of Ladakh, Karakoram, Hindukush and Sulaiman.

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At the central level of *darbar* politics also Ranjit Singh maintained a careful balance between the powerful Sikh chiefs on the one hand and on the other freshly recruited military commanders from among the peasants of central Punjab and the non-Punjabi nobles, such as Dogra Rajputs from Jammu. This delicate balancing game functioned well until Ranjit Singh's death in 1839. Within a decade of his death independent Sikh rule disappeared from Punjab, as a struggle for power among the mighty Sikh chiefs and the royal family feuds helped the English to take over without much difficulty.

### The Marathas

Like all other powers that emerged and moved against the Mughal Empire, Maratha also had a history of suppression by the empire, especially in the war of 27 years, which started with an invasion of the Maratha Empire by Mughals under Aurangzeb in 1681. The Mughal strategy consisted of steady pressure on Maharashtra's forts, beating Maratha forces in the field when they could bring them to a battle and devastating Maharashtra's countryside. It can be inferred that the brutal attitude of the Mughal troops toward the Maratha partially functioned as a basis for hostility between two groups. Furthermore, since the Marathi believed in Hinduism, the religious intolerant positions adopted by the Muslim Mughal Empire provoked the resentment of the Marathas.

When Aurangzeb died after forty years of futile warfare in the Deccan, the Marathas still remained to be subjugated. The Maratha kingdom was, however, certainly weakened and the process was further exacerbated due to the civil war between Shahu at Satara and his aunt Tara Bai at Kolhapur who had carried out an anti-Mughal struggle since 1700 in the name of her son Shivaji II. The contest with the Tarabai faction was settled later in the Treaty of Warna in 1731, which gave the state of Kolapur to Shivaji II. In 1719, by helping the Sayyid brothers establish a puppet emperor in Delhi, *peshwa* (prime minister) Balaji Viswanath secured for his master a Mughal *sanad* (imperial order) recognizing Shahu's right to *chauth* and *sardeshmukhi* (one-fourth and one-tenth respectively of government revenue) in six Mughal provinces of Deccan, chauth of Malwa and Gujarat and independent status in Maharashtra.

After Maratha civil war was brought to an end, the control of the state gradually passed on from the line of Shivaji to that of the peshwas. After Balaji Vishwanath died in 1720, he was succeeded as Peshwa by his 20-year-old son Baji Rao I. By 1740, when Baji Rao died, the Marathas had won control over Malwa, Gujarat and parts of Bundelkhand. The Maratha families of Gaekwad, Holkar, Sindhia and Bhonsle came into prominence during this period. In the short period of 20 years he had changed the character of the Maratha state. From the kingdom of Maharashtra it had been transformed into an Empire expanding in the North. He, however, failed to lay firm foundations of an empire. New territories were conquered and occupied but little attention was paid to their administration. The Marathas did not try to overturn the local zamindars for the payment of yearly tributes. A civilian system of revenue administration took time to emerge in this newly conquered region and this was a feature typical of all Maratha conquests.

After the death of Baji Rao, his son Balaji Bajirao, better known as Nana Saheb (1740-1761) was appointed in his place. This was indeed the peak period of Maratha glory when all parts of India had to face Maratha depredations. In face of an Afghan invasion overrunning Lahore and Multan, a treaty in 1752 brought the Mughal emperor under the protection of Marathas. The Maratha expedition to Punjab was, however, short-lived and soon a Sikh rebellion put any end



to Maratha authority in this region. In any case, the Marathas by then had gained mastery over large parts of north Indian; but there was never any attempt to establish an empire. It was only in Khandesh, Malwa and Gujarat that they tried to put in place some kind of administration; their conquest elsewhere would seldom go beyond plunder and levying of chauth and sardeshmukhi. As a result it was difficult to maintain this mastery and soon an Afghan invasion under Ahmad Shah Abdali dealt a deadly blow to Maratha glory.

In the crucial Third Battle of Panipat, the Maratha forces under Sadasiv Rao Bhao were routed by Abdali and this marked the beginning of the decline of Maratha power. The peshwa died within weeks and as the young peshwa Madhav Rao tried to gain control of the polity, factionalism among the Maratha sardars raised its ugly head. This faction fighting increased further after Madhav Rao's death in 1772. His uncle Rahunath Rao tried to seize power, but was opposed by a number of important Maratha chiefs. Out of frustration, Rahunath Rao went over to the British and tried to capture power with their help. This resulted in the First Anglo-Maratha war. (This will be dealt in details in later sections.)

It was perhaps only the Maratha state that had the potential to develop into a new pan-India empire replacing the Mughals; but that potential was never fully realized because of the nature of the Maratha polity itself. Marathas produced a number of brilliant commanders and statesmen needed for the task. But the Maratha sardars lacked unity and they lacked the outlook and programme which were necessary for founding an all-India Empire. And so they failed to replace Mughals. They did, however, succeed in waging continuous war against the Mughal Empire. The Maratha state ultimately declined not so much because of factionalism, but because of the increasing power of the English in the Deccan. It was difficult for the Marathas to resist this efficient army. The only way the Marathas could have stood up to the rising British power was to have transformed their state into a modern state. This they failed to do.

#### **Causes for Maratha defeat in Third Battle of Panipat -**

- Abdali's forces outnumbered the Maratha forces.
- Near famine conditions prevailed in the Maratha camp as the road to Delhi was cut off.
- The Maratha policy of indiscriminate plunder has estranged both Muslim and Hindu powers like Jats and Rajputs.
- Mutual jealousies of the Maratha commanders considerably weakened their side.
- Abdali's forces were better organised and also better equipped. Use of swivel guns mounted on camels caused havoc in the Maratha forces.

#### **Political significance of Third Battle of Panipat -**

- Though Maratha suffered heavy loss of human lives in the battle, Maratha power soon began to prosper as before. It continued to do so for forty years until British supremacy was established by the second Anglo-Maratha war (1803).
- By the death of great Maratha captains, path was opened for the guilty ambitions of Raghunath Rao.
- It lowered Maratha prestige in the Indian political world.
- Maratha dream of an all India empire was irrevocably lost.
- It cleared the way for the rise of British Empire in India.

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### The Jats

The agriculturists Jat settlers living around Delhi, Mathura and Agra had revolted against the oppressive policies of Aurangzeb. However the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb suppressed the revolt but the area remained disturbed. Though originally a peasant uprising, the Jat revolt, led by zamindars, soon became predatory. The Jat state of Bharatpur was set up by Churaman and Badan Singh. Jat power reached its highest glory under Suraj Mal (1756-1763), who compelled the Mughal authorities to recognize him. He successfully withstood a siege by Abdali's army and supported the Marathas in the Third Battle of Panipat. He tried to lay the foundation of an enduring state by adopting the Mughal revenue system. But after his death in 1763, the Jat state declined and was split up among petty zamindars most of whom lived by plunder.

### Rohelas and Bangash Pathans

Muhammad Khan Bangash, an Afghan adventurer established his control over the territory around Farrukhabad, between what are now Aligarh and Kanpur. Similarly during the breakdown of administration following Nadir Shah's invasion, Ali Muhammad Khan carved out a separate principality, known as Rohilkhand, at the foothills of the Himalayas between the Ganga in the south and the Kumaon hills in the north. The Rohelas clashed constantly with Awadh, Delhi and the Jats.

### Rajputs

After Aurangzeb's death, weakened central authority created new opportunities for aggrandizement by provincial officers. During the first three decades of the eighteenth century, nascent regional kingdoms in several Northern provinces began to appear. The strained relationship of the Rajputs with the Mughals led them to the formation of an anti-Mughal league. Ajit Singh, Jay Singh II and Durgadas Rathod led the league. During the tussle between the Sayyid brothers, the Rajputs followed several policies in order to fulfill their self-interest. In this way the Rajputs won the prestigious posts in the Mughal court during the Sayyid brothers. Thus the Rajputs got the power of controlling vast Empire extending from Delhi to Surat on the Western coast.

Apart from this in Rajasthan, the leading Rajput emirs energetically overturned the intricate imperial administrative controls imposed on that province. Rajputs dedicated considerable efforts into expanding their home territories, in order to build near-autonomous regional kingdoms. Furthermore, as the Mughal Empire was gradually being burdened with difficulties, Rajas stopped paying tribute.

The desire for independence partially arose from the harsh treatments they were granted, dating back to the reign under Aurangzeb. The ruthless campaigns of Aurangzeb in Rajasthan as well as his religious intolerance, including revival of Jizyah, significantly aroused anger of many Rajputs. The insults which had been offered to their chiefs and their religion and the ruthlessness and unnecessary severity of Aurangzeb's campaigns in their (Rajput's) country left a bitter taste which never healed. A race which had been the backbone of the Mughal Empire at the beginning of the reign was hopelessly alienated, and never again served the throne without distrust.

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## Mysore

Next to Hyderabad the most important power that emerged in South India was Mysore under Haider Ali. The kingdom of Mysore had preserved its precarious independence ever since the end of the Vijayanagar Empire and had been only nominally a part of the Mughal Empire. Haider modernised his army with French experts, who trained an efficient infantry and artillery and infused European discipline into the Mysore army. Haider, and later his son Tipu Sultan, introduced the system of imposing land taxes directly on the peasants and collecting them through salaried officials and in cash, thus enhancing enormously the resource base of the state.

The state of Mysore under Haider Ali and Tipu Sultan was involved in establishing a centralised military hegemony. Its territorial ambitions and trading interest got it engaged in a state of constant warfare. Haider Ali had invaded and annexed Malabar and Calicut in 1766, thus expanding the frontiers of Mysore significantly. They were in conflict with Marathas and other powers in the region like Hyderabad and then the English on whom Haider Ali inflicted a heavy defeat near Madra in 1769. After his death in 1782, his son Tipu Sultan followed his father's policies. His rule came to an end with a defeat at the hands of the English in 1799 – he died defending his capital Srirangapatnam. (This will be dealt in details in later sections.)

Unlike other eighteenth century states which did not challenge the political legitimacy of the Mughal emperor, in a symbolic gesture to proclaim his independence, Tipu issued coins without any reference to the Mughal emperor; and instead of Emperor Shah Alam's name he inserted his own name in the *khutba* (Friday sermons at the mosques); finally, he sought a *sanad* from the Ottoman Khalif to legitimise his rule. But he too did not completely sever links with the Mughal monarch. Being a "realist" as he was, Tipu recognised Mughal authority when it suited him and defied it when it did not.

## Travancore

Further south, the southernmost state of Travancore had always maintained its independence from Mughal rule. It gained in importance after 1729 when its king Martanda Varma started expanding his dominions with the help of a strong and modern army trained along Western lines. The Dutch were ousted from the region; the English were made to accept his terms of trade and local feudal chiefs were suppressed. He undertook many irrigation works, built roads and canals, and gave active encouragement to foreign trade. Travancore withstood the shock of a Mysorean invasion in 1766 and under Martanda Varma's successor Rama Varma its capital became a centre of scholarship and art. In his death towards the closing years of the eighteenth century the region lost its former glory and soon succumbed to British pressure, accepting a Resident in 1800.

## 3. Advent of Europeans

After Aurangzeb's death, disintegration of Mughal Empire

European nations with their advancements in the field of maritime navigation and their trading ambitions were on the lookout for establishing monopoly on the trade with the 'East Indies'. India obviously had to be the prime target as it offered maximum scope for trading and profiteering. The first ones to arrive on the scene were the Portuguese.

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## Portuguese

Portugal's king Henry (1393 – 1460) encouraged maritime navigation by opening training and research institutes for the purpose. Portuguese were the first one to have navigated the entire African coast line. In 1497 Vasco da Gama commenced his voyage under the patronage of King Emmanuel and finally Vasco-da-Gama landed at Calicut on 21<sup>st</sup> May 1498, and the sea route to India was discovered. Thus the Portuguese came to India. Vasco-da-Gama was well-received by the Zamorin of Calicut Mana Vikramma. When Vasco-da-Gama went back he carried with him products of the East. He returned to India two more times.

The Government of Portugal established the Portuguese Trading Company to regulate trade and commerce. The company was to function under a Viceroy. Francisco De Almeida became the 1<sup>st</sup> Portuguese Viceroy in India. He initiated the Blue Water Policy, which aimed at the Portuguese Mastery of the Sea and confined Portuguese relationship with India only for the purpose of trade & commerce.

Alfonzo-De-Albuquerque (1509-1550) was the greatest Portuguese Viceroy in India. The Portuguese trading centres which were confined to Calicut & Cochin were now extended to other places under Albuquerque. He conquered Goa in 1510 from the Sultan of Bijapur. West Asia in the Persian Gulf and Malaysia in the East were also conquered, Diu & Daman also became Portuguese trading centres. In Bengal, Hooghly & Balasore became the Portuguese trading centres. Goa became the Headquarters of the Portuguese in India. Albuquerque thus made the Portuguese strong in India. He was an efficient administrator, he integrated the locals into the administration. He encouraged the propagation of Christianity & inter-marriage with the natives. The Viceroys who came after Albuquerque were weak & inefficient. As a result the Portuguese began to decline in India. In 1661 Portugal was at war with Spain and needed support from England. This led to the marriage of Princess Catherine of Portugal to Charles II of England, who imposed a dowry that included the insular and less inhabited areas of southern Bombay while the Portuguese managed to retain all the mainland territory north of Bandra up to Thana and Bassein. This was the beginning of the strong English presence in India as well. Thus Portuguese finally left India in the mid-17<sup>th</sup> Century A.D. But three of their settlements, namely Goa, Diu & Daman remained in their hands till 1961.

### Causes for Decline of Portuguese:

1. After Albuquerque the Portuguese administration in India became inefficient because his successors were weak & inefficient.
2. The Portuguese officials were neglected by the home government. Their salaries were low. Thus they indulged in corruption and malpractice.
3. The Portuguese adopted forced inter-marriage & conversion to the Christian faith which made the natives hostile.
4. In 1580 Portugal was merged with Spain which neglected the Portuguese interest in India.
5. The Portuguese had to face the stiff competition of the Dutch in India.
6. Portuguese discovered Brazil which diverted their attention from India.



**The Impact of Portuguese:**

1. The Portuguese began to spread Christianity in the Malabar & the Konkan coast. Missionaries like St. Francis Xavier, Father Rudolf & Father Monserette played a leading role in propagating the Christian faith.
2. The Missionaries started schools & colleges along the west coast, where education was imparted in the native language.
3. The missionaries undertook research on Indian history and culture. Fa Heras has made a deep study on the Indus Valley Civilization.
4. The Portuguese brought the printing press to India. The Bible came to be printed in the Kannada & Malayalam language.
5. The Portuguese brought some crops to India like Tobacco, some fruits & vegetables were also introduced by him potatoes, lady's finger, chilly, pineapple, sapota, groundnuts, etc.

**The Dutch**

The Portuguese were followed by the Dutch. The East India Company of Netherlands was formed in 1592 to trade with East Indies. Cornelius Houtman is the first Dutch to come to India. The Dutch established trading centres at Nagapatnam in Tamil Nadu, Machalipatnam in Andhra Pradesh, Chinsora in Bengal & at Mahe on the Malabar Coast. The headquarters of the Dutch in India was Nagapatnam. The Dutch could not withstand the stiff competition of the Portuguese and the English and thus left India. The complete monopoly of the Dutch over trade and commerce of Indonesia was another reason as to why they left India.

**The Danes**

Denmark was a minor colonial power to set foot in India. The Danish East India Company was formed in 1616 and they established trading outposts at Tranquebar in Tamil Nadu (1620), a colony called Fredericknagore, in honor of their ruler King Frederick the V<sup>th</sup> near Serampore, West Bengal in 1755. Occupied twice by the English during their war with Denmark, Fredericknagore failed as a commercial venture. In 1777, after the Danish company went bankrupt, Serampore became a Danish crown colony. However, Serampore's commercial failure was compensated by its immense success on the cultural front. Since the British banned missionary activities in their territories, Serampore became a safe haven for missionaries in India.

In 1799, Reverend William Carey and two fellow Baptist missionaries established a printing press in Serampore to print copies of the Bible. In 1819, Carey established the Serampore College, the first institution to impart western style higher education in Asia. In 1827, a Royal Charter by the King of Denmark declared it as a university at par with those in Copenhagen and Kiel. In 1845, Denmark ceded Serampore to Britain, thereby ending the nearly 150 years of Danish presence in Bengal.

**The British**

After British victory over the Spanish Armada in 1588 the merchants and traders of the country started thinking in terms of engaging in direct trade with 'the East Indies'. In 1599 a resolution was passed under the chairmanship of the Lord Mayor to form an 'Association' to trade directly with India. On 31-December 1600 Queen Elizabeth granted a charter to the governor and

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directors of 'Company of merchants of London trading directly with East Indies' to 'traffic and trade freely into and from the East Indies, in the countries and parts of Asia and Africa and into and from all islands, ports, havens, cities, creeks, towns and places of Asia, Africa and America or any of them. The charter was given for 15 years with provision for its termination at 2 years' notice. Subsequently King James I made it perpetual with clause for termination at 5 years notice 'if the monopoly in trade was found to be injurious to the people at large'.

First two voyages of the company were financed through shares purchased by its members with promise of proportionate division of profit yielded 500% to 600% profit by trade through the Spice Islands with a factory at Bantam. The factory had to be shut down because of resistance from the Dutch. The third voyage under Captain Hawkins headed for Surat in India. From Surat Captain Hawkins went to the court of Jahangir to secure concessions for the company's trade. The concessions were granted but were soon revoked under pressure from vested interests in the court.

IN 1612 Captain Best defeated the Portuguese fleet in the Battle of Swalley near Surat and got permission for setting up a factory at Surat.

IN 1615 Sir Thomas Roe was sent by King James I to the court of Jahangir who granted trading concessions to the British despite opposition from his court.

IN 1622 the British consolidated their position by helping Iran to secure possession of Ormuz from the Portuguese. Same year they set up factories at Aramgaon and Masulipatnam.

IN 1633 Factories were set up at Balasore and Hariharpur in Orissa.

IN 1640 Madras was bought and a factory was set up at Fort St George. This was followed by setting up a factory at Hooghly in 1651 and lease of the island of Bombay from King James II at a nominal rent of Pound sterling 10.

IN 1688 the British suffered a minor reversal when they fought with Saista Khan the Governor of Bengal and were defeated. They were told to get out of the Mughal territory and also close down their factory at Surat. They immediately made peace and regained their lost position. The peace agreement was followed by permission for another factory near Calcutta and purchase of the three villages of Sutanati, Govindpur and Kalikata which are the centre of present day Kolkata.

IN 1714 John Surman accompanied by William Hamilton a physician who had treated emperor Faruk Shiyar of some undisclosed disease called on the emperor pleading for more concessions. In July 1717 the emperor issued a farman (royal order) whereby the British were allowed duty free trade in Bengal in lieu of Rs. 3000 per annum, a sum of Rs. 10000 as a one-time settlement for all the outstanding dues for the Surat factory and duty free trade without any consideration within the Hyderabad state. The company was also allowed to use their own currency minted at Bombay throughout India.

### Internal developments of the

Between 1615 and 1686 the company grew from strength to strength. It was allowed to grant commissions to its captains in 1615. In 1625 the Governors and Directors of the company were given judicial powers in civil as well as criminal matters. In 1661 the company was authorised to

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send ships of war with men and ammunitions for the safety of its possessions overseas. In 1683 it got full powers to declare war and to make peace as also to raise, train and maintain an army. Three years later in 1686 it got the authority to appoint Admirals of its navy and to coin money of all species.

Between 1698 and 1702 the company suffered some reverses when the government of Great Britain was in need of 2 million pounds sterling which the company was unable to make available. A parallel company emerged who was granted license for monopoly trade and the old company was given notice to wind up its operations in 2 years. A compromise was worked out under which the two companies operated together for seven years after which the old company surrendered its charter in 1709 to queen Anne and the new company stepped into its shoes as 'united company of merchants of England trading to the east indies'.

### The French

License for trading with India and the East indies was first granted by King Louis XII in 1611 but was not followed up seriously. In 1664 King Louis XIV granted another license under the governorship of Colbert. The company was to concentrate on India with Madagascar as the half-way house. In 1667 first French factory was set up at Surat with Francis Caron as its Director-General. A factory at Masulipatnam was also established in 1669. Caron was replaced in 1672 by Francis Martin who founded Pondicherry in 1673 under a grant from the king of Bijapur Sher Khan Lodhi.

In 1693 the Dutch snatched Pondicherry but it was restored to the French under the treaty of Reswick. Between 1697 and 1739, the French consolidated their position by adding Chandernagor, Balasore and Kasimbazaar in their possessions. They got Mahe and Karaikal as reward for helping the winning party in the first Carnatic war (Anglo-French war). The real trouble between the French and the English men started when the French won control of Tanjore which the British considered vital for their trade security.

## 4. Anglo-French struggle for supremacy

English and French Companies were inevitably drawn into politics due to their trade interests. After the decline of the Mughal central authority, Mughal viceroys of Deccan were unable to protect trade interests of the European companies against the exactions of the subordinate officials or raids of the Marathas. Hence, European companies came to the conclusion that they required to develop their militaries to protect themselves. Both British and French companies wanted to maximise their profits. They sought to reduce all competition and gain monopolistic control.

### First Carnatic war

home. Dupleix's analysis of the conflict can be traced to the Anglo-French rivalry. Dupleix wanted to maintain supremacy in the Carnatic as the French Governor advised his

which was not agreed to by the British. Dupleix took two simultaneous actions. He approached the governor of Carnatic Anwar-ul-din for instructions to the British and also messaged the French governor of Mauritius La Bourdonnais for reinforcements. When asked by Anwar ul din

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to maintain peace the British agreed but when Dupleix saw that reinforcements had come under La Bourdennais from Mauritius he decided to strike and won. He captured the British possessions in Fort St George, Madras and other nearby areas. The victory was soured because of differences between Dupleix and La Bourdennais. Peace finally came with the treaty of Aix La Chappelle in 1748 when the British got back Madras and the French got Louisburg in North America.

### Second Carnatic war

After the death of Nizam ul mulk Asif Jah of Hyderabad in 1748 his second son Nasir Jung and son in law Muzaffar Jung were fighting for succession. The son in law was helped by the French (Dupleix) and the son by the British. Dupleix's party won resulting in increase in the French possessions and a personal jagir worth 10000 pounds annually. After Robert Clive's arrival on the scene the British recaptured Arcot and established control over whole of Carnatic. Dupleix was recalled in 1754 and his successor Godeheu signed treaty with the British undoing all that Dupleix had achieved.

### Third Carnatic war

In 1756 the seven years' war had started in Europe and the two sides started fighting in India as well. Count Lally the French Commander-in-Chief in India captured Fort St. David and recalled Bussy the French General who had remained in Deccan after the French victory in the first Carnatic battle. After Bussy's recall Salabat Jung of Deccan came under British influence and the British General Eyre Coote defeated Count Lally recapturing the lost British possessions. Normalcy returned with the signing of the Peace of Paris (1763) signed by representatives of Great Britain on one side and the United States, France, and Spain on the other.

### Reasons for the defeat of French against the British

In the struggle for supremacy between British and French, British emerged victor after the end of the Third Carnatic War (1758-63). Following reasons were responsible for British victory:

- French were focussed at the same time on Continental expansion in Europe which divided their resources.
- French government was despotic, dependent on the monarch and inferior to the English system of government.
- French East India Company was a state department and wasn't run as professionally as the British East India Company, whose shareholders always focussed on finances of the company. In contrast, shareholders were guaranteed dividends in France and French East India Company had to be subsidised on several occasions.
- British recognised the importance of Bengal, the resources of which were liberally used in the third Carnatic War. In contrast, French influence in Hyderabad did not yield them adequate benefits. In fact, it has been rightly said that no general could have won India by starting from Pondicherry as a base and contending with a power which held Bengal.
- Overall, British navy were more superior.
- Count de Lally, who was sent at a critical time, was high-headed and of a violent temper. He greatly alienated his compatriots.



## 5. The British in Bengal

### The black hole incident

In anticipation of the seven years' war the British had started fortifying their factories in Bengal which was objected to by Siraj ud daula the governor of Bengal. There were other complaints which the governor was receiving against the British including harassment of the masses by the company's employees. Some businessmen whom Siraj ud daula wanted in his custody for misdemeanours were given refuge by the British who refused to hand over the fugitives to the Nawab. Siraj ud daula therefore ordered the British to close down their factories and vacate their possessions in Calcutta and Kasimbazaar, but the Company paid no heed. As a consequence, Siraj organized his army and laid siege to the fort. The garrison's commander organised an escape, leaving behind 146 soldiers under the command of John Zephaniah Holwell, a senior East India Company bureaucrat who had been a military surgeon. However, desertions by allied troops made even this temporary defence ineffectual, and the fort fell on 20 June, 1756. Following the surrender, Holwell and the other Europeans were placed for the night in the company's local lockup for petty offenders, popularly known as the Black Hole. It was a room 18 feet (5.5 metres) long and 14 feet (4 metres) wide, and it had two small windows.

According to Holwell, 146 people were locked up, and 23 survived. The incident was held up as evidence of British heroism and the nawab's callousness. However, in 1915 British schoolmaster J.H. Little pointed out Holwell's unreliability as a witness and other discrepancies, and it became clear that the Nawab's part was one of negligence only. The details of the incident were thus opened to doubt. A study in 1959 by author Brijen Gupta suggests that the incident did occur but that the number of those who entered the Black Hole was about 64 and the number of survivors was 21.

The British sent Robert Clive and Admiral Watson to avenge the atrocity committed on the British subjects. After a brief battle the Nawab agreed to restore the British to their previous position.

### Battle of Plassey

Robert Clive who had not yet fully reconciled, entered into a conspiracy with the Nawab's Commander-in-Chief Mir Jafar and his Chief of treasury Rai Durlabh and marched the British forces towards Plassey (1757). As part of the pre-planned conspiracy Mir Jafar defected along with his forces to the British side and the battle was over. Mir Jafar became the Nawab and as reward granted Jagir North of Calcutta to Clive. Besides, 24 Parghanas were granted to the company in addition to cash payment of Rs 1 crore and a huge amount in deferred payments in installments. The arrangement broke the finances of Bengal and Mir Jafar didn't survive on the throne for more than 2 years. His son in law Mir Qasim who was aspiring to be the Nawab of Bengal sought support from Clive who readily obliged. Mir Qasim's ascendance to the throne resulted in greater influence of the British. Mir Qasim also shifted his capital from Murshidabad to Munghyr. Dual government had been established in Bengal after the British obtained the right to have a Diwan of their choice appointed from the Emperor and the right to have a Nizam of their choice appointed from the Nawab.

### Importance of the battle of Plassey

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- The battle was hardly important from the military point of view. It was a mere skirmish. The English army didn't show military superiority. It was desertion in the Nawab's camp and treason that resulted in the victory of Clive. Clive excelled in the game of diplomacy and used Jagat Seth and Mir Jafar to win without fighting.
- It gave the British the access to the rich resources of Bengal. These were used to win the wars in Deccan including defeating the French in the Third Carnatic war, and also to extend influence over Northern India.
- Company virtually monopolised the trade and commerce in Bengal. The French never recovered their lost position in Bengal; the Dutch made a last attempt, but were defeated in the Battle of Bedara in 1759. From commerce the British proceeded to monopolise political power in Bengal.
- A gradual transformation was brought about in the nature of the East India Company. It no longer was merely a commercial body, but became a military Company having significant landed property, which could only be maintained by arms.

### The Battle of Buxar

After his defeat in 1763 Mir Kasim took refuge under the Nawab of Avadh. Because of a clash of interest between the British and the Nawab of Avadh with each eyeing the territory of Bengal for their expansion a clash was seen to be imminent. As a gesture of gratitude to the Avadh Nawab who had granted him shelter in his territory Mir Kasim had agreed to bear the battle expenses. In May 1765 the combined might of the Nawab of Avadh, Mir Kasim and some French men who had joined the fray just because it was against their traditional rivals was defeated by the British taking away from Mir Kasim and his ilk any trace of will to fight. Therein probably lies the importance of the battle of Buxar which according to some historians 'riveted the shackles of company rule upon Bengal'.

### Reasons for the battle of Buxar

Some historians suggest that Mir Kasim was working for political independence. However, available evidence suggests that this was not the case since he did not seek the three assigned districts, or questioned Company's monopoly in saltpetre trade or their share in the chunam trade of Sylhet. The main reason for the exasperation of Mir Kasim was the overstepping of the Company from its legal and political authority. Company deployed the use of gomasthas (an Indian agent in British East India Company) for coercing the population. Mir Kasim wanted restore the jurisdiction of his courts over gomasthas.

Privilege of Dastak which exempted the Company from paying taxes on trade was misused by the Company officials to indulge in private trade, without payment of any duties. This gave an unfair advantage to company's officials over the native traders. Mir Kasim took the desperate measure of abolishing all duties for inland trade, this placing the Indian merchants on the same footing as the British. Though, this was his legitimate right, it wasn't acceptable to the Company. Moreover, Calcutta Council wanted a war because they hoped that the new ruler that they would appoint would present them with lavish gifts and presents. Mir Kasim did not wish to establish his supremacy in administration; he just wanted followed in letter and spirit.

### Significance of the battle of Buxar

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It reconfirmed the verdict of the battle of Plassey. If Plassey was won by taking recourse to diplomacy and treachery, Buxar showed the might and the strength of the British. It resulted in Nawab of Awadh becoming a grateful subordinate. Mughal emperor became a pensioner of Company. Doors to Delhi and Agra lay open for the Company. Nawabs of Bengal and Awadh did not challenge the superior position of the Company again. Victory of Buxar made British a great power of Northern India and contenders for the supremacy of whole country.

### Settlement with Awadh

By the **Treaty of Allahabad (1765)**, Nawab of Awadh Shuja-ud-Daula was confirmed in his possessions on the following conditions:

- Surrendering Allahabad and Kora to Mughal emperor Shah Alam
- Rs 50 lakhs were paid to Company as war indemnity
- Balwant Singh, zamindar of Benaras was confirmed in full possession of his estate.

### Reasons as to why Clive did not annex Awadh.

- Annexing Awadh would have placed Company under an obligation to protect extensive land frontier, which could have been open to attack by the Afghans under Ahmad Shah Abdali and the Marathas.
- Awadh was created as a buffer state.
- A treaty of friendship converted Shuja-ud-Daula into a loyal of Company bound by self-interest.

### Settlement with Shah Alam II and Introduction of Dual system in Bengal

By the **Second Treaty of Allahabad (August 1765)**, the fugitive Emperor, Shah Alam was taken under the Company's protection and was to reside at Allahabad. Shah Alam issued a firman (royal order) which granted Company the Diwani functions of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa in return of an annual payment of Rs 26 lakhs to the emperor. Company also provided for the expenses of the Nizamat functions.

The system of government where Company exercised Diwani functions, while the Nawab of Bengal was responsible for the Nizamat functions, came to be known as the Dual system. However, it was a sham as it was the East India Company which exercised all political power, and merely used the Nawab and its administration as an instrument for their purposes.

### Clive's justification of the Dual System:

Clive wanted to maintain Nawab as a shadow authority which the Company should seem to venerate.

- Open assumption of authority would have shown the true colours of Company and might have resulted in uniting Indian princes against it.
- Company did not wish to generate much interest in England regarding the functioning of the company. It wanted to avoid interference of British Parliament.
- It was also doubtful whether other European Companies would acknowledge Company's subahship and pay duties that they paid to Nawabs of Bengal.

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- Open assumption of political power would have attracted the attention of other European powers. A conglomerate of European powers against British as during American War of Independence was not desirable.
- Company did not have adequate personnel to run the administration of Bengal.
- Directors of the Company were more interested in financial and commercial gains rather than territorial acquisitions. Dual system would serve Company's interests well.

As a result of the system, Company acquired real power without any responsibility.

#### Evil effects of the Dual system:

- Administrative breakdown resulted as Nawab had to power to enforce law and provide justice, and Company disavowed all responsibility. In the countryside, the dacoits roamed freely and the Sannyasi raiders reduced the government to a mockery.
- Decline of agriculture as the peasants suffered from over-assessment and harshness in exactions from the government officials.
- Disruption of trade and commerce resulted from Company's servants monopolising internal trade of Bengal. They would undersell the Indian merchants in the local markets.
- Ruination of Industry and Skill.
- Moral degradation set in the Bengal society. There was no longer incentive to work as almost all profits were exacted by Company's officials and only bare minimum remained. The society became static and showed unmistakable signs to decay.

## 6. Administrative measures taken by the British from 1773 to 1853

East India Company was basically a trading company which to secure its business interests manipulated the local rulers engaging, in the process, in warfare and annexation of territories which are activities alien to a trading company. The British government facilitated these activities of the company by granting them charters with powers to recruit and maintain an army and a navy, and confer Magistracy on its employees for preservation of order; all in the name of protecting and furthering the company's business interests. In return the company made an annual payment of four million pounds sterling to the government.

After annexation of vast territories in Bengal, Bihar, Orissa and some areas in the South following armed conflicts with the local Rulers news started trickling into England about some of the highhandedness of the company's men against the natives. This resulted in demands of government's control over its functioning. The matter was referred by the British parliament to a select committee and after taking in to consideration the committee's recommendations the Regulatory Act of 1773 was passed.

#### Regulating Act of 1773

This act is of great constitutional importance as

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- a. It was the first step taken by the British government to control and regulate the affairs of the east India company in India
- b. It recognised, for the first time, the political and administrative functions of the company.
- c. It laid the foundations of central administration in India.

**Salient features of the act:**

1. The Regulating Act although implying the ultimate sovereignty of the British Crown over new territories, asserted that the Company could act as a sovereign power on behalf of the Crown. It could do this while concurrently being subject to oversight and regulation by the British government and parliament. The company was also required to appoint a governor general with a four member council in Calcutta who was to act as the highest administrative authority in the company's possessions in India. Governor General in council were also required to be appointed for Madras and Bombay but they were to act in subordination to the governor general in Calcutta
2. The Court of Directors of the East India Company (60 members) were required under the Act to submit all communications regarding civil, military, and revenue matters in India for scrutiny by the British government.
3. For the governance of the Indian territories, the act asserted the supremacy of the Presidency of Fort William (Bengal) over those of Fort St. George (Madras) and Bombay.
4. It also nominated a Governor-General (Warren Hastings) and four councillors for administering the Bengal presidency (and for overseeing the Company's operations in India). The subordinate Presidencies were forbidden to wage war or make treaties without the previous consent of the Governor-General of Bengal in Council, except in case of imminent necessity. The Governors of these Presidencies were directed in general terms to obey the orders of the Governor-General-in-Council, and to transmit to him intelligence of all important matters.
5. The Regulating Act also attempted to address the prevalent corruption in India: Company servants were henceforth forbidden to engage in private trade in India or to receive "presents" from Indian nationals.
6. It provided for the establishment of a Supreme Court at Calcutta 1774 comprising one chief justice and three other justices. The governor general could make rules and regulations for running the administration but these were to be deposited in the Supreme Court for their scrutiny.

This was followed by the Judicature Act of 1781, the Pitts' India Act of 1784 and the Declaratory Act of 1788.

**The Judicature Act of 1781**

The Judicature Act of 1781 extended the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court to all the inhabitants of Calcutta and at the same time excluded the Governor General and his council members from depositing the sanction for acts done by them in their official capacity. The rules and regulations made by the governor general with the Supreme Court was also dispensed with because of the inconvenience it caused.



**Pitts India Act, 1784**

To rectify the drawbacks of regulating act of 1773 British Parliament brought Pitts India Act, 1784. It was also the first attempt on the parliament to control the company indirectly.

**Important provisions of Pitt's India Act, 1784:**

1. It distinguished between commercial and political functions of company.
2. A **Board of control** (governing board) was constituted with six members, two of whom were members of the British Cabinet and the remaining from the Privy Council. The Board also had a president, who soon effectively became the minister for the affairs of the East India Company. The Act stated that the Board would henceforth "superintend, direct and control" the government of the Company's possessions, in effect controlling the acts and operations relating to the civil, military and revenues of the Company.
3. The **Governor General –in-council** of the Company was reduced to **three from four** members, and the governor-general, a crown appointee, was authorized to veto the majority decisions.
4. The governors of Bombay and Madras were also deprived of their independence. The governor-general was given greater powers in matters of war, revenue and diplomacy.
5. The supreme court of Calcutta was meant only for English subjects.
6. The act authorized court of directors to make all the recruitments in India.

By a supplementary act passed in 1786 Lord Cornwallis was appointed as the second governor-general of Bengal, and he then became the effective ruler of British India under the authority of the Board of Control and the Court of Directors. The constitution set up by Pitt's India Act did not undergo any major changes until the end of the company's rule in India in 1858.

Besides the above charters granted to the company were also revised from time to time and at regular intervals of 20 years in 1793, 1813, 1833 and 1853.

**Charter act of 1793**

The Act made only fairly minimal changes to either the system of government in India or British oversight of the Company's activities. Most importantly, the Company's trade monopoly was continued for a further 20 years. Salaries for the staff and paid members of the Board of Control were also now charged to the Company. Other provisions of the Act included:

- The Governor-General was granted extensive powers over the subordinate presidencies.
- The Governor-General's power of over-ruling his council was affirmed, and extended over the Governors of the subordinate presidencies.
- Senior officials were forbidden from leaving India without permission.
- Royal approval was mandated for the appointment of the Governor-General, the governors, and the Commander-in-Chief.
- The East India Company was empowered to grant licences to both individuals and Company employees to trade in India (known as the "privilege" or "country" trade), which paved the way for shipments of opium to China.

The Company's charter was next renewed by the Charter Act of 1813.



### Charter Act of 1813

The East India Company Act 1813, also known as the Charter Act of 1813, was an Act of the Parliament of the United Kingdom which renewed the charter issued to the British East India Company, and continued the Company's rule in India. Its important provisions were as follow

1. The Company's commercial monopoly was ended, except for the tea trade and the trade with China. Reflecting the growth of British power in India.
2. The Act expressly asserted the Crown's sovereignty over British India.
3. It allotted Rs. 100,000 (1 lakh) to promote education in India.
4. Christian missionaries were allowed to come to British India and preach their religion.
5. The power of the provincial governments and courts in India over European British subjects was also strengthened by the Act.
6. Financial provision was also made to encourage a revival in Indian literature and for the promotion of science.

### Charter act of 1833

This act was final step towards centralism in India.

#### Important Provisions of Charter Act of 1833

1. Complete ended monopoly on all items of trade including tea and opium (complete free trade policy). East India Company became purely administrative body.
2. The Charter Acts of 1833 centralized the administration in India. The Governor General of Bengal, according to the act was declared as the Governor General of India. The First Governor General of India was Lord William Bentinck.
3. Governor General in council got powers of superintendence, direction and control of the whole civil and military government and the revenues of India.
4. It attempted to introduce a system of open competition for selection of civil servants, and stated that the Indian should not be debarred from holding any place, office and employment under the company. However this provision was negated after opposition from court of directors.
5. The charter Act of 1833 enlarged the Executive council by the addition of fourth member (Law Member) for legislative purposes. T.B Macaulay was the first law member.
6. All the laws and enacts passed by the legislative council were called as Acts of the Government of India, before this they were called as regulations.
7. It provided for the appointment of a law commission in India
8. The Act provided that there would be no indiscrimination made between the Indian and the British residents in Indian provinces on the basis of caste, creed and religion Charter of 1833 made provision to create uniform and codified system of law in India.



### Charter Act of 1853

It was the last of the series of charter acts.

1. The Act separated, for the first time, the legislative and executive functions of the Governor-General's Council.
2. It made 4th member of governor general in council at par with other members as right to vote was conferred to him. It provided for further addition of 6 members to governor general in council known as 'Legislative Councilors'. Six Members were the Chief Justice and a puisne judge of Calcutta Supreme Court, and four representatives, one each from Bengal, Madras, Bombay and NWFP. Therefore, the total number of members became 10. This Legislative wing of the council functioned as a mini parliament, adopting the same procedure as British parliament. Thus, legislation, for the first time, was treated as the special function of the government.
3. Relieved the governor general from the responsibility of governor of Bengal (Lord Dalhousie became first governor general without the additional responsibility) A lieutenant governor was appointed for Bengal (Andrew Fraser).
4. Renewed the term of East India Company for an indefinite period;
5. Reduced the number of Board of Directors from 24 to 18 and 6 out of them were nominated;
6. Indian Civil Service became an open competition. Macaulay was made Chairman of the Committee on the Indian civil services (Macaulay committee). Written competitive exams started from 1854.
7. The Act for the first time introduced local representation in the Indian (Central) Legislative Council. The Governor-General's Council had six new legislative members out of which four members were appointed by the local (provincial) governments of Madras, Bombay, Bengal and Agra.

## 7. Revenue administration, Police, Judiciary and civil services

### Land revenue policy under British East India Company

Since the acquisition of Diwani rights for Bengal, Bihar and Orissa in 1765, a major concern of Company was to increase the land revenue collection, which historically was the major source of revenue for the state in India. Warren Hastings got rid of Indians completely from revenue collection. In 1772, he introduced a new system known as the 'farming system', in which European district collectors were made in charge of revenue collection. Land was farmed to the highest bidder for five years. Most of the revenue-farmers were speculators who did not have any permanent interest in the land and tried to extort maximum revenue from the cultivators. The result was that many revenue contractors fell in heavy arrears, many had to be arrested for default and the ryot (farmer) deserted the land. The bias of Warrant Hastings against centralization worked against an effective system of land revenue collection.



## Permanent Settlement system

### Features:

It was introduced in Bengal, Bihar, Orissa, Banaras division of modern UP, and Northern Carnatic in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The zamindars were recognised as the owners of land and a ten years' settlement was made with them in 1790. In 1793, under Governor General Lord Cornwallis the decennial settlement was declared permanent and the zamindars and their legitimate successors were allowed to hold their estates at that very assessed rate for ever. The state demand was fixed at 89% of rental.

### Reasons for the introduction of Permanent Settlement system:

- This ensured a fixed and stable income for Company. It also saved the government from the expensed on making periodical assessments and settlements.
- A permanent settlement, it was hoped would end corruption as the officials would not be able to alter assessment at will.
- The burden of revenue collection was given to the intermediaries or Zamindars. This eased the burden of administration on the part of Company.
- It was thought at that time, that a revenue demand which was fixed, would lead to investments in agriculture on the part of the Zamindars as the increase in revenue would benefit them. Cornwallis thought that the company could increase its revenue by taxing trade and commerce. However, this did not happen.
- A loyal group was created whose interests were in the continuation of British rule in India.

### Consequences:

- State proved to be a great loser in the long run as prospective share in the increase in land revenue were sacrificed.
- Since the land revenue was to be fixed for perpetuity, it was fixed at a high level – the absolute maximum, and the customary rates were increased. This placed a high burden of revenue.
- Though a fixed revenue demand was placed with the Zamindars, no rules were placed regulating the collection of revenue from the peasants. As a result, Zamindars placed exorbitant demands.
- Absentee landlordism was a consequential feature. Zamindars took no interest in the development of agriculture.
- Peasants suffered from the double injustice of surrendering their property rights and being left entirely at the mercy of Zamindars.

## Ryotwari System

This system was first introduced in Malabar, Coimbatore, Madras and, Madurai by **Sir Thomas Munro**. Subsequently, this system was extended to Maharashtra, East Bengal, parts of Assam and Coorg.



Main reasons behind its adoption were:

1. In permanent settlement areas, land Revenue was fixed. Over the years, agriculture prices/exports increased but government's income did not increase. (Because middlemen-zamindars pocketed the surplus)
2. Zamindars were oppressive which resulted in frequent agrarian revolts in the permanent settlement areas.
3. In Bihar, Bengal, there existed Zamindar/feudal lords since the times of Mughal administration. But Madras, Bombay, Assam did not have Zamindars/feudal lords with large estates. So, it was hard to 'outsource' work, even if British wanted.
4. In case of Ryotwari there is no middlemen for tax collection thus farmer has to pay less taxes which increased their purchasing power that resulted in increased demand for readymade British products in India.

Consequently, all subsequent land tax or revenue settlements made by the colonial rulers were temporary settlements made directly with the peasant, or 'ryot' (e.g., the ryotwari settlements). This model was based on English yeomen farmers.

#### Features:

1. Government claimed the property rights to all the land, but allotted it to the cultivators on the condition that they pay taxes. In other words, it established a direct relation between the landholder and the government.
2. Farmers could use, sell, mortgage, bequeath, and lease the land as long as they paid their taxes. In other words Ryotwari system gave a proprietary right to the landholders.
3. If they did not pay taxes, they were evicted
4. Taxes were only fixed in a temporary settlement for a period of thirty years and then revised.
5. Government had retained the right to enhance land revenue whenever it wanted.
6. Provided measures for revenue relief during famines but they were seldom applied in real life situation.

#### Consequences:

1. Farmers had to pay revenue even during drought and famines, else he would be evicted.
2. It amounted to replacement of large number of zamindars by one giant zamindar called East India Company.
3. Although ryotwari system aimed for direct Revenue settlement between farmer and the government but over the years, landlordism and tenancy became widespread. Because textile weavers were unemployed so they started working as tenant farmers for other rich farmers. In many districts, more than 2/3 of farmland was leased.
4. Since Government insisted on cash revenue, farmers resorted to growing cash crops instead of food crops. And cash crop needed more inputs which resulted in more loans and indebtedness.
5. After end of American civil war, cotton export declined but government didn't reduce the revenue. As a result most farmers defaulted on loans and land was transferred from farmers to moneylenders.

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### Mahalwari System

It was implemented in Gangetic valley, north-west provinces, parts of central India and Punjab. Because in North India and Punjab, joint land rights on the village were common. So, British decided to utilize this traditional structure in a new form known as Mahalwari system.

### Features

1. The revenue was determined on the basis of assessment of the produce of a Mahal (estate consisting of several villages). Here the settlement was made with the whole village community jointly and separately and taxation was imposed on the village community.
2. The village community had to distribute these tax collection targets among the cultivators
3. Each individual farmer contributed his share in the revenue.
4. Everyone was thus liable for the others' arrears.
5. But still the ownership rights were vested with the individual peasants thus Farmers had right to sell or mortgage their property.
6. The village community did not necessarily mean entire village population. It was a group of elders, notables of high castes.
7. A village inhabitant, called the Lambardar, collected the amounts and gave to the British
8. British periodically revised tax rates.

### Consequences

1. Since Punjab, Northern India had fertile land. So British wanted to extract maximum Revenue out of this region. Land Revenue was usually 50% to 75% of the produce.
2. As generations passed, fathers divided land among sons which resulted in fragmentation of farms and farms became smaller and smaller thus productivity declined. But still British demanded Revenue in cash. So, farmers had to borrow money to pay taxes in the case of crop failures.
3. As a result, more and more farms passed into the hands of moneylenders. When farmer failed to repay debt, Moneylender would take away his farm but he has no interest in self-cultivation so he would be leasing it to another farmer.
4. Thus, sub-leasing, indebtedness and landlessness became more and more common in Mahalwari region.

Mahalwari was also called Modified Zamindari system because in Mahalwari areas, the Land revenue was fixed for the whole village and the village headman (Larnbardar) collected it. Meaning theoretically Village itself was a landlord/zamindar. Other names for this system were Joint rent, 'joint lease', 'brotherhood' tract (mahal) holding and 'gram wari' etc.

### Police administration

der and to and 1791 Cornwallis organised a regular po  
modernising the old Indian system. He established Thanas (circles) in a district under a Daroga (an Indian) and a superintendent of police as the head of a district. He relived the Zamidars of their police duties.

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In 1808 Lord Mayo appointed an SP for each division helped by a number of spies but these spies committed plundering on local people.

In 1814 by an order of court of directors, the appointment of darogas and their subordinates was abolished in all possessions of the company except in Bengal.

Lord William Bentinck abolished the office of the SP. The Collector/Magistrate was now to have the police force in his jurisdiction and the commissioner in each division was to act as the SP. This arrangement resulted in a badly organised police force, putting a heavy burden on the collector/magistrate. Presidency towns were the first to have the duties of the collector/magistrate separated.

### Judiciary

Earlier, the administration of justice used to be under the Zamindars and was arbitrary in nature

#### Reforms under Warren Hastings:

District Diwani adalats were established in districts to try civil disputes. These adalats were placed under the collector and had Hindu laws applicable for Hindus and Muslim laws for Muslims. The appeal from district Diwani adalats lay to the Sadar Diwani Adalat.

District Fauzdari adalats were setup to try criminal disputes and were placed under an Indian officer assisted by Qazis and Muftis. These Adalats were also under general supervision of the collector. The approval for capital punishment and for acquisition for property lay to the Sadar Nizamat Adalat at Murshidabad. Under regulating act of 1773 a Supreme Court was established at Calcutta.

#### Reforms under Cornwallis:

The District Fauzdari Courts were abolished and, instead, four Circuit Courts were established at Calcutta, Dhaka, Murshidabad and Patna. These Circuit courts had European judges and were to act as court of appeal for both civil and criminal cases.

Sadar Nizamat Adalat was shifted to Calcutta and put under Governor General and members of supreme council assisted by chief Qazis and chief Muftis. District diwani adalat was now designated as the District, City or the Zila Court and placed under a district judge. The collector was relieved from magisterial functions.

He introduced Code de Cornwallis a judicial procedure code. The Cornwallis code provided for:

1. There was a separation of revenue and justice administration.
2. European subjects were also brought under jurisdiction.
3. Government subjects were answerable to the civil courts for actions done in their official capacity.
4. The principle of Sovereignty of Law was established.

The gradation of civil courts was established:

- a. Munsiff's court under Indian officers.

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- b. Registrar's court under a European Judge.
- c. District Court under district judge.
- d. Four circuit courts as provincial courts of appeal.
- e. Sadar Diwani Adalat at Calcutta.
- f. King in Council for appeals of 5000 pounds and above.

### Reforms under William Bentinck:

The four circuit courts were abolished and their functions were transferred to collectors under the supervision of the Commissioner of revenue and circuit. Sadar Diwani Adalat and Sadar nizamat Adalat were set up at Allahabad for convenience of people of upper provinces. Till now Persian was the official language in courts, now the suitor has the option to use Persian or a vernacular language, while in Supreme Court English language replaced Persian.

In 1833 a law commission was set up under Macaulay for codification of Indian laws. As a result Civil procedure code, 1859 and Indian Penal Code, 1860 and a Criminal Procedure Code, 1861 were prepared.

### Civil Services

The word civil services for the first times appeared in the records from 1757. The office of the District Collector was created for the first time in 1771 by Lord Warren Hastings. However, it was Lord Cornwallis, who is regarded as the founding father of modern Indian Civil Services. He created police service, judicial service and revenue services, formulated the code of conduct for civil servants and laid down the procedure for their promotion. Indians were barred from high posts from very beginning. The reasons for exclusion of Indians were:

1. The belief that only English could establish administrative services serving British interests.
2. They belief that Indians were incapable, untrustworthy and insensitive to British interests.
3. High competition among Europeans themselves for lucrative posts was there, so they didn't offer them to Indians.

In 1800 Lord Wellesley founded the Fort William College to train civil servants. However, from 1806, the Fort William College was replaced by Hailey Bury College in London to train civil servants.

The 1813 Charter Act the office of civil servants as the civil service with an annual salary of 500 pounds. Lord William Bentinck restored, and revived magisterial powers of district collector which was divested by Lord Cornwallis.

Charter act of 1853 ended the companies' patronage and provided for open competition in recruitment. Although theoretically it was made open but the relevant provisions were never really implemented until 1858.



### Sources of Company's income in India

Land revenue was the major source of revenue for the state. Other sources of revenue included customs and excise duties, opium and salt trade, tributes received from Indian states, income from forests, stamps, registration etc.

East India Company had the monopoly of trade in salt. It was manufactured along the Coromandel and Malabar Coast through the process of solar evaporation of sea water. Even though, Madras manufactured sufficient salt, it was imported from U.K. for consumption in Bengal, albeit at a much higher price.

Opium was cultivated in British territories of Banaras and Patna and Indian states. East India Company had monopoly on the trade of opium produced in the British territories and was sold at a profit of more than 200%. Forcible introduction of opium into Chinese markets led to Opium wars (1839-42).

## 8. Significant Policies/administrative measures to consolidate the Empire

### British policy towards Indian States

The evolution of relations between the British authority and states can be traced under following broad stages:

#### 1. Policy of Relative Isolationism (before 1740):

British were more commercial and enterprising company thus initially when they did not have consolidated their position, they had to maintain the policy of isolationism. Commercial interest of British compelled them to often depend upon the native princes. Also the British were cautious to the fact that they were aliens in the soil of India and hence any aggressive policy would mean devastation.

#### 2. East India Company's struggle for equality with Indian States from a position of subordination(1740-1765)

Starting with Anglo-French rivalry with the coming of Dupleix in 1751, the East India Company asserted political identity with capture of Arcot (1751). With the battle of Plassey in 1757, the East India Company acquired the political power next only to the Bengal Nawabs. In 1765 with the acquisitions of diwani rights of Bengal, Bihar and Odhisa, the east India Company became a significant political power.

#### 3. Policy of Ring- Fence(1765-1813)

In the north, constant threat of Marathas remained and in south Haider Ali became a scourge to the British imperialism. A new policy was required to tackle this situation as a result ring fencing policy was introduced. This policy was reflected in Warren Hastings' wars against the Marathas and the Mysore, and aimed at creating buffer zones/states to defend the company's frontiers and protected from direct onslaught of the enemies secondly from these states British would operate against enemies. This was put into practice in Anglo-



Mysore war when Hyderabad was used as the buffer state. Similarly, the Awadh and Rohilkhand were used as buffer states against Marathas. **Wellesley's policy of Subsidiary Alliance** was an extension of ring fence policy. The buffer states and the ring fencing provinces would not any longer remain the same, rather, they were first brought under control of British and from there the policy of expansionism would be carried out effectively.

#### 4. Policy of Sub-ordinate Isolation (1813-57)

Lord Warren Hastings replaced the policy of mutual reciprocity and amicability in relations between princely states and British with policy of sub-ordinate isolation. Under this policy as many as 145 native states in central India, 20 in Rajputana (present day Rajasthan) and another 145 in the Kathiawad region were brought (actually bullied) into submission by the company so that it could extract whatever advantages it wanted in terms of land, agricultural produce or any kind of revenue for promoting its trade interests and multiplying profits. Subject to this limited interest the native sovereign was left uninvolved in any other manner. The infamous 'doctrine of lapse' whereby the company could take complete control and possession of a native state in case there was any problem of succession after the ruler's death or incapacity to rule. Even after the conquest and annexation, isolation took place as the British never treated the princely states as the part of British Empire in India. Rather what they did was, they controlled each and every important aspect of administration and retained the princes for other regular affairs.

(A next phase in the British's relationship with the native states termed as '**subordinate union policy**' which unfolded after 1858, will be dealt with later)

#### Subsidiary Alliance

Lord Wellesley (1798-1805) was sent in India to counter the threat of Napoleon, who had reached Egypt and was planning to invade India via Red Sea.

Wellesley decided that the best way to counter Napoleon was to make sure that he got no assistance from any Indian ruler. This required political influence. He laid down the principles of subsidiary alliance in detail. Indian states were coaxed into accepting the alliance. Otherwise, force was used.

#### Salient features of subsidiary alliance:

- External relations were surrendered to the care of the Company. No state was to declare war without the permission of the Company. Also, mediation of Company was required to negotiate with other states.
- Company troops were required to be stationed within the territory of the states. For the maintenance of these troops, larger states gave the sovereign rights over certain parts of their territory to the Company, while smaller states were required to pay in cash.
- A British resident was required to stay in the state.
- Company was not to interfere in the internal affairs.
- States were required to take permission of the Company in employing Europeans.

#### Advantages to Company:

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- This allowed the Company to maintain additional troops at strategic locations without any significant expense.
- It disarmed the Indian states and deprived the Indian princes any means of forming any confederacy against the British.
- By stationing their troops in the territory of Indian states, British gained control of strategic and key locations in India.
- It acquired the power to effectively counteract any possible French moves in India.
- Company acquired 'territories in full sovereignty' of certain territories which were granted to them by Indian states in lieu for the upkeep of the British army.

Nawab of Hyderabad (1798 and 1800), rulers of Mysore (1800), Raja of Tanjore (1799), Nawab of Awadh (1801), the Peshwa (1801), Bhonsle Raja of Berar (1803), the Scindhia (1804) and Rajput states were made to sign treaties.

### Doctrine of lapse

Lord Dalhousie held that the rulers of the states which were tributary and owed subordination to British government required the assent of the British government for adoption which it has a right to refuse. As for the principalities that were created or revived by the grants of the British government, Dalhousie held that succession should never be allowed to go by adoption. British government has no right related to adoption in case of 'protected allies.'

Doctrine of lapse was not a new instrument. As early as 1834, the Court of Directors had laid down that in case of failure of lineal successors the permission to 'adopt' was an indulgence that "should be the exception, not the rule, and should not be granted but as a special mark of favour and approbation. Dalhousie contribution lay in applying it uniformly. He did not neglect any opportunity in consolidating the territories of the East India Company.

The states annexed by the application of Doctrine of Lapses under Lord Dalhousie were Satara (1848), Jaitpur and Sambhalpur (1849), Baghat (1850), Udaipur (1852), Jhansi (1853) and Nagpur (1854).

### Foreign policy and Important domestic events

Political and administrative consolidation of the country impelled government of India to reach out for natural, geographical frontiers for defence which some time resulted in border clashes. Secondly the British government had as its major aims in Asia and Africa:

1. Protection of invaluable Indian empire.
2. Expansion of British commercial and economic interests.
3. Keeping other European imperialist powers whose colonial interests came in conflict with those of British, at an arm's length.

While the interests served were British the money spent and the blood shed was the Indian. A general survey of India's relation with its neighbours is as follows:

### Nepal

The British desire to reach out to natural geographical frontiers brought them into conflict first of all with the Nepal in 1814; a border clash resulted into war which ended with a treaty in

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favour of British.

1. Nepal accepted a British resident.
2. Nepal ceded the districts of Garhwal and Kumaon, and abandoned claims to tarai.
3. Nepal also withdrew from Sikkim.

This brought many advantages to British. It got better facilities for trade with Central Asia. It acquired hill stations such as Shimla, Mussoorie and Nainital. Gorkhas joined the British Indian army in large numbers.

**Burma**

The expansionist urges of the British fueled by lure of forest resources, market for British manufacturers and the need to check French ambitions in Burma and in rest of South East Asia, finally resulted in the annexation of Burma after three wars.

First Burma War (1824-26) was fought in wake of Burmese expansion westwards and their occupation of Arakan and Manipur, which posed a threat to Assam and Brahmaputra valley. This led to continuous friction between Bengal and Burma. British forces occupied Rangoon in 1824. Finally peace was established in 1826 with the **Treaty of Yandabo**. Burma recognized the Manipur as an independent state and the terms of treaty allowed the British to acquire most of the Burma's coastline and also a firm base in Burma for future expansion. The other Burma wars were fought in 1852 and 1885 respectively.

**Afghanistan**

In the early nineteenth century, increased Russian influence in Persia replaced British influence and thwarted an English scheme for establishments of new route by river Euphrates to India. Especially after the Treaty of Turkmanchai (1828) between Persian and Russia, the English got alarmed about possible Russian plans for India. Soon there was a search for a scientific frontier from the Indian side. Passes of north-west seemed to hold the keys to gateway of India. The need was felt for Afghanistan to be under control of a friendly prince.

Auckland who came to India in 1836 as the Governor General, advocated a forward policy. The Amir of Afghanistan, Dost Mohammad, wanted British friendship but made it conditional on the British to help him recover Peshawar from Sikhs, a condition which the British government in India rejected. Dost Mohammad now turned to Russia and Persia for help. When Auckland heard about the arrival of Russian envoy Yan Vitkevich in Kabul and the possibility that Dost Mohammad might turn to Russia for support, his political advisers exaggerated the threat. British fears of a Russian invasion of India took one step closer to becoming a reality when negotiations between the Afghans and Russians broke down in 1838. The Persians, with Russian support, attempted the Siege of Herat (1838) but backed down when Britain threatened war.

Russia, wanting to increase its presence in South and Central Asia, had formed an alliance with the Persians, which had territorial disputes with Afghanistan as Herat had been part of the Persian Empire. The **Treaty of 1838** was entered into by British, Sikhs and Shah Shuja (who has been deposed from the Afghan throne in 1809 and had been living since then as a British pensioner at Ludhiana). The treaty provided that:



1. Shah Shuja be enthroned with the armed help of the Sikhs and Company will remain in the back ground providing the financial assistance.
2. Shah Shuja will conduct foreign affairs with the advice of the Sikhs and British.
3. Shah Shuja agreed to give up his sovereign rights over Amirs of Sindh in return of a large sum of money.
4. Shah Shuja recognized Maharaja Ranjit Singh's (the Sikh Ruler) claims over the afghan territories on the right bank of river Indus.

But soon there was a drastic change in political situation of that area because of the removal of original irritants – as Persia lifted its claim to siege Herat and Russia recalled envoy from Kabul, but still British decided to go ahead with their forward policy and this resulted in the First Afghan war (1838-42). The British intention was to establish a permanent barrier against scheme of aggression from the North West. The British denied that they were invading Afghanistan, claiming they were merely supporting its legitimate Shuja government against foreign interference and factious opposition.

An English army entered triumphantly into Kabul (August 1839) after a successful attack. Most of the tribes had already been won over by bribes. Dost Mohammad fled with his loyal followers across the passes to Bamyan, and ultimately to Bukhara. In August 1839, after almost thirty years, Shuja was again enthroned in Kabul. But Shah Shuja was unacceptable to Afghans. The Afghans resented the British presence and the rule of Shah Shuja. As the occupation dragged on, British allowed their soldiers to bring their families to Afghanistan to improve morale; this further infuriated the Afghans, as it appeared the British were setting up a permanent occupation. Dost Mohammad unsuccessfully attacked the British and their Afghan protégé, and subsequently surrendered and was exiled to India in late 1840.

By this time, the British had vacated the fortress of Bala Hissar and relocated to a cantonment built to the northeast of Kabul. The chosen location was indefensible, being low and swampy with hills on every side. To make matters worse, the cantonment was too large for the number of troops camped in it.

Between April and October 1841, disaffected Afghan tribes were flocking to support Dost Mohammad's son, Akbar Khan, in Bamiyan and other areas north of the Hindu Kush Mountains, organized into an effective resistance by chiefs such as Mir Masjidi Khan and others. In November 1841, a senior British officer, Sir Alexander 'Sekundar' Burnes, and his aides were killed by a mob in Kabul. The British forces took no action in response, which encouraged further revolt. The British situation soon deteriorated when Afghans stormed the poorly defended fort inside Kabul. In the following weeks the British commanders tried to negotiate with Akbar Khan. Macnaghten (a British civil servant in India nominated to the Governorship of Bombay) secretly offered to make Akbar Afghanistan's 'wajir' in exchange for allowing the British to stay, while simultaneously disbursing large sums of money to have him assassinated, which was reported to Akbar Khan. A meeting for direct negotiations between Macnaghten and Akbar was held near the cantonment on 23 December 1841, but Macnaghten and the three officers accompanying him were seized and slain by Akbar Khan.

The commander William Elphinstone had partly lost command of his troops already and his authority was badly damaged. Compelled by situations, in January 1842, he went under an agreement provided for the safe exodus of the British garrison and its dependents from Afghanistan. The departing British contingent numbered around 16,500, of which about 4,500



were military personnel, and over 12,000 were camp followers. The military force consisted mostly of Indian units and one British battalion.

On the way they were attacked by Ghilzai warriors as they struggled through the snowbound passes. The evacuees were killed in huge numbers as they made their way down the treacherous gorges and passes lying along the Kabul River, and were massacred at the Gandamak pass before the only survivor reached the garrison at Jalalabad which was under British control. The grandiose plan of forward policy exploded like a balloon and this war cost India around one and half crore rupees and nearly 20000 men.

Under a new expedition, the British reoccupied Kabul in September 1842, but having learnt their lessons well, they arrived at a settlement with Dost Mohammad by which the British evacuated Kabul and recognized him as independent ruler of Afghanistan.

Second Afghan war took place during 1878-80.

### Anglo–Mysore Wars

The Anglo–Mysore Wars were a series of wars fought in India over the last three decades of the 18th century between the Kingdom of Mysore and the British East India Company, represented chiefly by the Madras Presidency.

The **First Anglo–Mysore War (1767–1769)** saw Hyder Ali gain some measure of success against the British but suffer heavy defeats at the hands of the Marathas. Hyder Ali's alliance with the Nizam of Hyderabad against the British too was a failure owing to defeats of their combined power against the British and later the spread of mutual suspicion between the two Islamic powers. The Kingdom of Mysore regained some of its lost lands and had to relinquish many territories to the south of Mysore to the British.

The **Second Anglo–Mysore War (1780–1784)** witnessed bloodier battles with fortunes fluctuating between the contesting powers. This war saw the rise of Sir Eyre Coote, the British commander who repeatedly defeated Hyder Ali. But Hyder and his son Tipu prevailed and this led to the last British–Indian treaty with an Indian ruler on equal footing. The war ended in **1784 with the Treaty of Mangalore**, at which both sides agreed to restore the other's lands to the the state existing before the war.

In the **Third Anglo–Mysore War (1789–1792)**, Tipu Sultan, the ruler of Mysore and an ally of France, invaded the nearby state of Travancore in 1789, which was a British ally. The resultant war lasted three years and was a resounding defeat for Mysore. The war ended after the 1792 siege of Seringapatam and the signing of the **Treaty of Seringapatam**, according to which Tipu had to surrender half of his kingdom to the British East India Company and its allies.

The **Fourth Anglo–Mysore War (1799)** saw the defeat of Tipu Sultan and further reductions in Mysorean territory. Mysore's alliance with the French was seen as a threat to the East India Company and Mysore was attacked from all four sides. Tipu's troops were outnumbered in proportion of 4:1 in this war. Mysore had 35,000 soldiers, whereas the British commanded 60,000 troops. The Nizam of Hyderabad and the Marathas launched an invasion from the north. The British won a decisive victory at the Battle of Seringapatam in 1799. Tipu was killed during the defence of the city. Much of the remaining Mysorean territory was annexed by the British, the Nizam and the Marathas. The remaining core, around Mysore and Seringapatam, was

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restored to the Indian prince belonging to the Wodeyar dynasty, whose forefathers had been the actual rulers before Hyder Ali became the de facto ruler. The Wodeyars ruled the remnant state of Mysore until 1947, when it joined the Union of India.

### Anglo-Maratha Wars

The **Anglo-Maratha Wars** were three wars fought in the Indian sub-continent between Maratha Kingdom and the British East India Company.

#### First Anglo-Maratha War (1775-82):

The first Anglo Maratha War took place between Marathas and British during 1775-1782. The main cause for this war was the Struggle for power between Sawai Madhar Rao and Raghunath Rao. Madhav Rao was supported by Nanaphadnavis. Raghunath Rao (Raghoba), who murdered the then peshwa Narayan Rao, Approached British for help to be installed as peshwa against Madhar Rao, the newly born posthumous son of Narayan Rao, Nanafadnavis formed a confederation with clever Marath chiefs to extend cooperation to young peshwa Madhav Rao, The British wanted to take the advantage of struggle by supporting on behalf of one party namely Raghunath Rao. **The British entered into a pact with Raghunath Rao at Surat in 1775.** Raghunath Rao promised British to surrender **Salsette** and **Bessien** if the British install him as peshwa. The combined armies of British and Raghunath Rao attacked peshwa and succeeded. But all this was done by the Bombay Government without the permission of superior Government at Calcutta. In Calcutta council opponents of Warren Hastings were in Majority. They declared the treaty was unjust.

Colonel Upton was sent to Poona to negotiate with Maratha leader Nana Fadnavis. **Nana Fadnavis entered into a treaty with British on March 1, 1776. It is called Purandhar treaty.** As per this treaty Salsette and Bessien were given to British. Raghunath Rao was sent to Gujrat with pension of Rs.25,000 per annum.

But this treaty was ineffective due to the shelter given by the Bombay Government to Raghunath Rao. The war began again when the court of Directors Upheld the Surat treaty. The British troops marched to Poona. **But they were defeated at Talegaon and compelled to sign Wadgaon treaty in January 1779.** As per this treaty British surrendered all the territories taken by the British Government since 1773. Later the British Governor-General in Bengal, Warren Hastings, rejected the treaty on the grounds that the Bombay officials had no legal power to sign it, and ordered Goddard to secure British interests in the area by sending an army under Goddard. He captured Ahmedabad and Bassein but failed to advance to Poona. Hastings sent another army under Popham. The Marath chiefs now expressed their willingness to enter into treaty with the British. Mahadaji Sindia started negotiations and **a treaty of Salbai** was concluded on May 17, 1782 between British and Marathas. As per the treaty of Salbai status quo was maintained. This treaty gave the British 20 years of peace with the Marathas. This treaty also helped the British to exert pressure on Mysore with the help of Marathas to recover their territories from Hyder Ali.

#### Second Anglo-Maratha War 1803-05:

Wellesley's desire to impose subsidiary Alliance on Marathas and his aggressive policy of interfering into the internal affairs of the Marathas was the main cause for the war. The Maratha leaders, Mahadaji Sindhia and Nana Fadnavis who played prominent role in first Anglo-

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Marathawar died in 1793 and 1800 respectively. There was a struggle in the Maratha politics between Daulat Rao Sindia, successor of Mahadaji Sindia and Yashwant Rao Holkar for power. Holkar reached near the sight of Poona. Then Bajji Rao II fled to Bassein and concluded subsidiary alliance with the British on Dec.31, 1802. This was not acceptable to other Maratha leaders. So, they wanted to fight with the British. Consequently second Anglo-Maratha war was broke out in 1803. Sindia, Holkar and Bhonsle fought in the second Anglo-Marathawar. Wellesley defeated the armies of Sindia and Bhonsle at Assaye in September 1803 and at Argaon in November, 1803. Then **the treaty of Deogaon** was concluded on December 17, 1803 between Raghuji Bhonsle and the company. As per this treaty Bhonsle agreed to cede the English the province of Cuttack, Balasore and territory west of the river Warda and accepted the subsidiary alliance with British. Later Sindia army was defeated at Aligarh and finally at Laswar by the British. Sindia concluded the treaty of **Surji Arjunagaon** with British on December 30, 1803. As per this treaty Sindia agreed to cede the territory between the river Ganga and Yamuna, Anmadnagar, Broach and parts of Bundelkhand. As per the **treaty of Burhanpur** (Feb.27, 1804), Sindia agreed to enter into subsidiary alliance with British. Holkar continued the war with British. The East India Company realised that the policy of expansion through war was costly and reduced profits. The company's debt was increased. Therefore Wellesley was recalled from India. The company entered into peace treaty with Holkar on 24 December, 1805. This treaty is called **Rajpurghat Treaty**. As per this treaty Yashvanth Rao Holkar agreed to renounce all claims to the area north of the Bundi hill. British also promised not to disturb Holkar's possessions in Mewar and Malwa. **The treaty of Rajpurghat marked the end of the second Anglo-Maratha war.**

#### The Third Anglo-Maratha war (1817-18)

The third war (1817-18) was the result of an invasion of Maratha territory in the course of operations against Pindari robber bands by the British governor-general, Lord Hastings. The Peshwa's forces, followed by those of the Bhonsle and Holkar, rose against the British (November 1817), but the Sindia remained neutral. Peshwa attacked the British Residency at Poona in November, 1817. But the Maratha chiefs were defeated. The Peshwa was defeated at Ashti; Appa Sahib of Nagpur was defeated at Sitabaldi Hills; Malhar Rao Holkar was defeated at Mehidpur. Daulat Rao Sindia concluded a treaty with British on Nov. 5 1817. It is called **Treaty of Gwalior**. This treaty made Sindia a mere spectator in the Third Anglo-Maratha war. Malhar Rao Holkar concluded the **Treaty of Mandasor** with British on January 6, 1818. Peshwa was dethroned and pensioned off. He was sent to Bithur near Kanpur. The British annexed all his territory. The British created kingdom of Satara out of Peshwa's lands to satisfy Marathas. The Maratha chiefs existed at the mercy of British after this war.

#### Annexation of Sindh

The British East India Company started its occupation of Sindh at the time when it was ruled by Balochi tribesmen of Dera Ghazi Khan. Most of them were Talpur (a branch of Laghari tribe), Laghari, Nizamani, Murree, Gopang and other Balochi tribesmen. Karachi was the first area in the province to be occupied by the British East India Company in 1839. Four years later, most of the province (except for the State of Khairpur) was added to the Company's domain after victories at **Miani** and **Dubba**. Many people helped the British in the conquest of Sindh, including a Hindu government minister of Sindh, Mirs of Khairpur, Chandio Tribesmen, and Khosa Tribesmen.



Charles Napier had brought first army consisting of mostly Bengali soldiers. The Balochi ruling forces of Sindh used to attack the British led armies in the darkness of night. The Bengali soldiers could not compete in those war techniques, and they used to run away. Then, Charles Napier hired Khosa Baloch tribesman (from Dera Ghazi Khan) in his army, to fight with the ruling Balochis of Sindh, who were also originally from Dera Ghazi Khan, Punjab. Chandio Baloch Sardar brought a cavalry of 10,000 to support Charles Napier in the Miani war, but did not participate in the actual war, and his armies stood on reserve to attack in case Charles Napier lost the war. For his role, Chandio sardar got Chandka (present day Larakana, Qambar-Shahdadkot districts) as Jagir.

Talpurs of Khairpur also got Khairpur state as gift from Charles Napier for non-participation in the war. The first Aga Khan had helped the British in the conquest of Sindh and was granted a pension as a result. Finally Sindh was made part of British India's Bombay Presidency in 1847.

**Anglo-Sikh Wars**

Anglo-Sikh Wars (1845–46; 1848–49), two campaigns fought between the Sikhs and the British. They resulted in the conquest and annexation by the British of the Punjab in northwestern India.

**The first Anglo-Sikh war (1845-46)** was precipitated by mutual suspicions and the turbulence of the Sikh army. The Sikh state in the Punjab had been built into a formidable power by the Maharaja Ranjit Singh, who ruled from 1801 to 1839. Within six years of his death, however, the government had broken down in a series of palace revolutions and assassinations. By 1843 the ruler was a boy—the youngest son of Ranjit Singh—whose mother was proclaimed queen regent. Actual power, however, resided with the army, which was itself in the hands of *panchs*, or military committees. Relations with the British had already been strained by the refusal of the Sikhs to allow the passage of British troops through their territory during the First Anglo-Afghan War (1838–42).

Having determined to invade British India under the pretext of forestalling a British attack, the Sikhs crossed the Sutlej River in December 1845. They were defeated in the four bloody and hard-fought battles of Mudki, Ferozpur, Aliwal, and Sobraon. The British annexed Sikh lands east of the Sutlej and between it and the Beas River; Kashmir and Jammu were detached, and the Sikh army was limited to 20,000 infantry and 12,000 cavalry. A British resident was stationed in Lahore with British troops.

**The Second Sikh War (1848-49)** began with the revolt of Mulraj, governor of Multan, in April 1848 and became a national revolt when the Sikh army joined the rebels on September 14. Indecisive battles characterized by great ferocity and bad generalship were fought at Ramnagar (November 22) and at Chilianwala (Jan. 13, 1849) before the final British victory at Gujarat (February 21). The Sikh army surrendered on March 12, and the Punjab was then annexed.

Thus after the Battles of Plassey (1757) and Buxar (1764) which established British dominion in India, the Anglo-Mysore wars (1766–1767) consolidated British claim over South Asia, resulting in the British Empire in India, though resistance among various groups such as the Afghans and the Burmese would last well into the 1880s.



## 9. Economic Impact of colonial policies in India

### Distinct stages of colonialism in India and their impact on Indian economy

**Stage 1:** This was Pre-colonialism stage when British East India Company competed with other European powers for trade with India. Since India mostly exported and imported very few items, British were required to pay in Bullion. In fact, balance of trade was so heavily in favour of India that high import duties were placed on Indian goods like linen etc.

**Stage 2:** In 1765, after the battle of Buxar, in the treaty concluded with Mughal emperor Shah Alam, British acquired the Diwani rights of Bengal. British used the land revenue that was extracted to buy Indian goods and export them. Though the export of India increased, India did not gain anything. Thus the 'drain of wealth' started. The demand of land revenue was increased, which impoverished the peasantry. The famine of 1769-70 resulted in death of one-third of the population.

**Stage 3:** With the emergence and dominance of the ideas of laissez-faire Capitalism and free-market in England, monopoly of East India Company was gradually abolished through Charter acts of 1813 and 1823. This changed the character of Indo-British trade. So far, India had mostly been an exporting nation; now onwards it became an importing country.

Of course, free trade was practised only one way; that is import duties on Indian goods remained exorbitantly high. The 'free trade' between India and Britain was largely in favour of Britain due to restriction placed on Indian exports. India mainly exported raw materials and imported industrial goods.

**Stage 4:** With the surplus capital that Britain acquired, investments were made in India. These related to the development of Railways, Telegraph etc. However, contracts were given to British capitalists. Even ancillary industries did not develop in India. Ancillary goods were mostly imported. Profits made by British investments in India were sent back.

### Impact of political currents in British administration over the policies in India

With the coming of the Tory party into power under the leadership of Lord Grey, Benthamites (supporter of Jeremy Bentham's ideas of economics mainly utilitarianism) and Humanitarians became active in the matter of reforms in England. As a result, the court of directors thought that in order to renew their charter in 1833, they would have to bring in socio-economic reforms in India. Lord Bentinck was advised to remove the most conspicuous abuses in the Indian society.

The purpose of Christian missionary activity in India was to spread Evangelisation. This found a number of supporters in Britain. Charter act of 1813 lifted all restriction on the entry of missionaries of the U.K. into India.

Above all, it was the business interests of the capitalist class in Britain that advocated a stronghold over the Indian Territory to safeguard their commercial interests. Policy of laissez-faire which favoured free trade led to gradual abolition of monopoly of East India Company. **It is**

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noticeable that trade was free only one way; high duties were placed on Indian goods that were imported by Britain.

***Other Important Developments in India before 1857***

**Postal System**

Before 1837, the East India Company's dominions in India had no universal public postal service, one that was shared by all regions. Although courier services did exist, connecting the more important towns with their respective seats of provincial government (*i.e.* the Presidency towns of Fort William (Calcutta), Fort St. George (Madras), and Bombay), private individuals were, upon payment, only sparingly allowed their use. **That situation changed in 1837, when, by Act XVII of that year, a public post, run by the Company's Government, was established in the Company's territory in India.** Post offices were established in the principal towns and postmasters appointed. The postmasters of the Presidency towns oversaw a few provincial post offices in addition to being responsible for the main postal services between the provinces. Postal services required payment in cash, to be made in advance, with the amount charged usually varying with weight and distance.

After the recommendations of the commission appointed in 1850 to evaluate the Indian postal system were received, Act XVII of 1837 was superseded by the **Indian Postal Act of 1854**. Under its provisions, the entire postal department was headed by a Director-General, and the duties of a Postmaster-General were set apart from those of a Presidency Postmaster; the former administered the postal system of the larger provinces (such as the Bombay Presidency or the North-Western Provinces), whereas the latter attended to the less important Provinces (such as Ajmer-Merwara and the major Political Agencies such as Rajputana). Postage stamps were introduced at this time and the postal rates fixed by weight, dependent no longer also on the distance traveled in the delivery.

**Telegraph**

Before the advent of electric telegraphy, the word "telegraph" had been used for semaphore signalling (optical telegraph). During the period 1820–30, the East India Company's Government in India seriously considered constructing signalling towers ("telegraph" towers), but by mid-century, electric telegraphy had become viable, and hand signalling obsolete.

Dr. W. B. O'Shaughnessy, a Professor of Chemistry in the Calcutta Medical College, received permission in 1851 to conduct a trial run for a telegraph service from Calcutta to Diamond Harbour along the river Hooghly. Four telegraph offices, mainly for shipping-related business, were also opened along the river that year. The telegraph receiver used in the trial was a galvanoscope of Dr. O'Shaughnessy's design and manufactured in India. When the experiment was deemed to be a success a year later, the Governor-General of India, **Lord Dalhousie**, sought permission from the Court of Directors of the Company for the construction of telegraph lines from Calcutta to Agra, Agra to Bombay, Agra to Peshawar, and Bombay to Madras, extending in

soon granted, the first 3,050 miles and including forty  
Telegraph Act for India was the British Parliament's Act XXXIV of 1854. When the public telegrams service was first set up in 1855, the charge was fixed at one rupee for every sixteen words (including the address) for every 400 miles of transmission.



By February 1855 all the proposed telegraph lines had been constructed and were being used to send paid messages. Dr. O'Shaughnessy's instrument was used all over India until early 1857, when it was supplanted by the Morse instrument. By 1857, the telegraph network had expanded to 4,555 miles of lines and sixty two offices, and had reached as far as the hill station of Ootacamund in the Nilgiri Hills and the port of Calicut on the southwest coast of India.

It should be noted that during the Indian rebellion of 1857, more than seven hundred miles of telegraph lines were destroyed by the rebel forces, mainly in the North-Western Provinces. **The East India Company was nevertheless able to use the remaining intact lines to warn many outposts of impending disturbances. The political values of the new technology were, thus, driven home to the Company** and, in the following year, not only were the destroyed lines rebuilt, but the network was expanded further by 2,000 miles.

**Development of 'Press' in India**

Press was introduced by the Portuguese in 16<sup>th</sup> century. Initial attempts to publish newspapers were made by the disgruntled East India Employees. **James Augustus Hickey published the first newspaper in India entitled The Bengal Gazette in 1780.** It was seized in 1782 due to the outspoken criticism against the Governor General and the Chief Justice.

**The censorship of Press Act, 1799**

Fearing French menace, Lord Wellesley imposed almost wartime restrictions on the press. Pre-censorship was imposed. Due to the progress of liberal views that were gaining ground in England, the restrictions were repealed by Lord Hasting and pre-censorship done away with in 1818.

**The Licensing Regulations for Press, 1823**

Interim Governor General John Adams gave a practical shape to his reactionary views through regulations that required every printer and publisher to obtain a license for starting or using a press. The Governor-General had the right to cancel a license or call for a new application. These regulations were mainly directed against the Vernacular newspapers. **Raja Ram Mohan Roy's Mirat-ul-Akbar was one of the newspapers that had to stop publication.**

William Bentinck was in favour of liberalising press. He thought, that this would provide vent to the political feelings of Indians. However, he has to resign in 1835 to due ill health. It was left to his faithful successor Charles Metcalfe, officiating Governor-General (1835-36), to complete press reforms. As a result, he has been called as the 'Liberator of Indian press.' He repealed the regulations of 1823. A new press act was passed which required a declaration giving the account of premises of publication. This led to a growth of newspapers all over the country.

**Railways**

In 1845, the Court of Directors of the East India Company, of India, Lord Dalhousie, a number of applications they had received from private contractors in England for the construction of a wide ranging railway network in India, and requested a feasibility report. It was suggested, that three experimental lines be constructed and their performance evaluated.



Contracts were awarded in 1849 to **the East Indian Railway Company** to construct a 120-mile railway from **Howrah-Calcutta** to **Raniganj**; to the **Great Indian Peninsular Railway Company** for a service from **Bombay** to **Kalyan**, 30- miles away; and to the **Madras Railway Company** for a line from **Madras city** to **Arkonam**, a distance of 39- miles.

Although construction **began first, in 1849**, on the East Indian Railways line, **it was the first-leg of the Bombay-Kalyan line—a 21-mile stretch from Bombay to Thane—that, in 1853, was the first to be completed.**

The feasibility of a train network in India was comprehensively discussed by Lord Dalhousie in his **Railway minute** of 1853. The Governor-General vigorously advocated the quick and widespread introduction of railways in India, pointing to their political, social, and economic advantages.

The first leg of the East Indian Railway line, a broad gauge railway, **from Howrah to Pandua**, was opened in 1854, and the entire line up to Raniganj would become functional by the time of the Indian rebellion of 1857.

But it should be noted that the railway lines were not built out of the Indian exchequer but by private enterprise. Thus, it gave the English capital and enterprise a chance of investment. Subsequently, railway lines in India were mostly built by Indian companies under a system of 'Government guarantee.'

Development of railways was also not accompanied by the development of ancillary industries. Thus, it heralded a 'commercial revolution' by penetrating deep into the markets of India rather than facilitating 'industrial revolution.'

### Canals

The first irrigation works undertaken during East India Company's rule were begun in 1817. Consisting chiefly of extensions or reinforcements of previous Indian works, these projects were limited to the plains north of Delhi and to the river deltas of the Madras Presidency.

In 1835–36, Sir Arthur Cotton successfully reinforced the Grand Anicut Dam in the Kaveri River Delta, and his success prompted more irrigation projects on the river. A little farther north, on the Tungabhadra River, several low dams constructed by Krishna Deva Raya were also extended under British administration.

The Western Jamna Canal was repaired by British army engineers and it reopened in 1820. The Doab Canal was reopened in 1830 after considerable renovation involved raising the embankment. Farther west in the Punjab region, the 130-mile long Hasli Canal, was extended by the British in the Bari Doab Canal works during 1850–57.

The first new British work with no Indian antecedents was the **Ganges Canal** built between 1842 and 1854. Contemplated first by Col.

who balked at the idea of

cutting a canal through extensive low-lying land in order to reach the drier upland destination. However, after the Agra famine of 1837–38, during which the East India Company's administration spent a large sum on famine relief, the idea of a canal became more attractive to the Company's budget-conscious Court of Directors

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Later with the supportive stand of, James Thomason as Lt. Governor at north western provinces, and Lord Dalhousie as Governor-General of India, canal construction, under Cautley's supervision, went into full swing. A 350-mile long canal, with another 300 miles of branch lines, was completed. The Ganges Canal was officially opened in 1854 by Lord Dalhousie.

## 10. Critical analysis of British Policies

India is perhaps the sole example in human history where a trading company took over the reins of government and continued to be a trading company even thereafter. Quite obviously the first and the last objective of the company continued to be profit making. Governance instead of being a vehicle for public welfare was reduced and degenerated to a tool for maximising the company's profits. The most visible impact of the company's policies therefore was disempowerment of the upper class zamindars, impoverishment of the common man and total marginalisation of the local artisans. Critical analysis of some of these policies can be done in the light of their effect over masses, under following heads:-

### Extent of the change in the life in Indian villages

Prior to British, villages were community centred. These were self-sufficient in nature. However, the system of administration turned the existing systems upside down. Village panchayats were made deprived of their traditional judicial and executive functions.

Land revenue demand traditionally ranged from one-sixth to one-third of the rent before the advent of the British. This increased substantially under the British. As a result of the land revenue system established by the British, land became a commercial entity. In a significant departure with the previous practises, tax had to be paid in cash. Due to the cyclic nature of Indian agriculture owing to heavy dependence on monsoon, there were fluctuations in the yield, due to which peasants were unable to pay the tax. Since in the case of non-payment, they faced eviction, recourse to payment through money-lenders was taken, which created heavy indebtedness of the farmers and they were exploited by high interest rates of money-lenders as well. Bedakhali (eviction) from the land in case of non-payment was a common practise. New social classes like the landlord, the trader, the moneylender, and the landed gentry shot into prominence.

British put in place new judicial mechanisms. Laws were written down and codified. Courts of law were established. As a result, traditional judicial mechanisms were eroded. Common people did not understand the new judicial setup. Advocates were required who remained beyond the avail by common people due to their high fees.

Handicrafts and other traditional industries were destroyed as a result of the economic policies of British.

### Impact on the handicraft industry in India

British economic policy in India was primarily to serve the economic interests of the business class in Britain. Some expected British to introduce modern industry in India. However, what was witnessed was the gradual 'deindustrialisation' of Indian industries.



The ruination of Indian industries was due to the following reasons:

- Loss of the traditional patrons like Indian princes, Nawabs and other administrators who patronised fancy arts and handicrafts and often employed the best craftsmen on a regular salary basis.
- New classes, namely of European officials and western educated Indian professional class arose under the British rule. These poured scorn of everything that was Indian.
- After introduction of free trade after 1813, British goods made in industries flooded the Indian markets. Cheap imported cotton goods spelled ruination of the Indian weaving industry.
- Construction of Railways further enabled penetration of British goods into Indian markets.
- High import duties were imposed on Indian goods in Britain.
- Indian artisans were compelled to divulge their trade secrets.
- Special privileges were given to British manufacturers in India.

### Famines

These were the inevitable consequence of British policies and exposed the real nature of British paternalism. During the rule of the East India Company India suffered from twelve famines and four severe scarcities.

In the Bengal famine of 1769-70, almost one-third of the population of Bengal province was wiped out. No major relief features were taken by the state; rather the company servants profited through hoarding of grains.

Under the East India Company, no attempt was made to formulate any general system of famine relief or prevention. However, the provincial governments and district officers tried various experiments to offer relief through measures like storage of grains by the Government, penalties on hoarding, bounties on imports, advancing loans for sinking of wells and so on.

### Education

Western education in India started due to the efforts of Christian missionaries, for whom, education was not an end-in-itself, but a means to evangelisation.

Initially, the British did not accept the responsibility of imparting education to Indians living in territory under their administrative jurisdiction. In continuance from the medieval times, education in India was mostly imparted in the form of study of religious teaching scriptures and philosophy, which were mostly crammed rather than understood. It had failed to modernise itself and did not develop the spirit of scientific enquiry and rationality.

Early efforts to foster Oriental learning were through opening up of Calcutta Madrasa (1781) and Sanskrit college (Banaras, 1792). Due to the efforts of Raja Ram Mohan Ray Hindu College opened in Calcutta in 1817.

The first beginning towards state administered education was made with the Charter act of 1813, when amount of one lakh rupees was sanctioned for education.

However, there was debate between the Orientalists and Anglicists. Former wanted to impart

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education in Indian languages while the latter preferred English as a medium of education.

The debate went in favour of the Anglicists, when in the famous Macaulay's minutes (1835), it was decided to use English as a means of education.

English was favoured to create a class of Indians, who were Indian in flesh but British in their thinking. English educated officials were also required to carry out the administrative tasks of the Company. English educated also became the market for British manufactured goods from neckties to shoes.

In 1854, Wood's dispatch made a departure from the policy and decided that the medium of education would be mother tongue in primary, mix of mother tongue and English in secondary and high school level, and English in college and university education.

Politically, the interests of western educated class, which consisted of doctors, lawyers, engineers, teachers etc. was aligned with the continuation of British rule in India. They consciously or unconsciously became supporter of British rule in India.

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