



## 16

## ESTABLISHMENT OF BRITISH RULE IN INDIA TILL 1857

Before the beginning of the formal rule of the Britishers in India, there was a background of Indo-European economic relationship. The British East India Company sometimes referred to as “John Company”, was a Joint- Stock Company established in 1600, as The Company of Merchants of London Trading into the East Indies. During this time, other trading companies, established by the Portuguese, Dutch, French, and Danish were similarly expanding in the region. The British Company gained footing in India in 1612 after Mughal emperor Jahangir granted the rights to establish a factory (a trading post) in Surat to Sir Thomas Roe, a representative diplomat of Queen Elizabeth I of England. The formal British rule in India is understood to have commenced in 1757, after the Battle of Plassey, when the Nawab of Bengal surrendered his dominions to the British East India Company. Henceforth the British Company transformed from a commercial trading venture to a political entity which virtually ruled India. Now it acquired auxiliary governmental and military functions, until its dissolution in 1858 when, consequent to the Government of India Act 1858, the British government assumed the task of directly administering India.



### OBJECTIVES

After studying this lesson, you will be able to:

- learn the European commercial and political stakes in India.
- the reasons for the conflicts between the English and the French in India in the 18th Century.
- know the growth of British power in Bengal.
- understand the expansion of British Power in India.
- gain knowledge about the Subsidiary Alliances concluded by Lord Wellesley.
- know how the Policy of Doctrine of Lapse, introduced by Lord Dalhousie, led to the expansion of British power in India.

### 16.1 A NEW PHASE IN EUROPEAN EASTERN TRADE WITH ASIA

Even after securing the control over the trade routes during sixteenth-seventeenth centuries, the Europeans did not solve the basic pattern which had long dominated trade between India and the West. Indian goods were in far greater demand in



**Notes**

**ESTABLISHMENT OF BRITISH RULE IN INDIA TILL 1857**

Europe than were European goods in India. Merchants might profit handsomely through the sale of Indian goods, which were of both better quality and lesser price than similar European products. The result was both a drain of bullion from Europe to India, as well as stiff competition for European producers who were unable to match either the price or quality of Indian goods.

In fact the British East India Company, in the first 50 years of its existence, had no interest in the development of colonies, preferring to engage in trade only, following the pattern set by the Portuguese. This pattern was changed by 1650 when the power of the old guard British royalist merchants was broken, and a new class of merchants wrested control of the Company. They followed the pattern set by the colonial merchants in American colonies and the West Indies, and sought to establish a network of colonies linking England, Africa and India in a complicated network of exchange relationships.

The Mughal Empire declined in the first half of the eighteenth century. The political vacuum was filled by the rise of regional states like Bengal, Hyderabad, Awadh, Punjab and Maratha Kingdoms. But these regional powers could not provide lasting political stability resulting into a lustful chance for the British East India Company to establish a territorial empire in India. Now a set of institutions and regulations were required to rule India through colonial mechanism. They adopted three methods to expand the British Empire. They were: **1. Wars and conquests, 2. Subsidiary Alliance System, and 3. annexation of territories through the adaptation of doctrine of lapse.** Initial method was outright military conquest or direct annexation of territories; it was these areas that were properly called British India. Latter on to consolidate its position diplomatic efforts through treaties and agreements with indigenous rulers were also made.



**INTEXT QUESTIONS 16.1**

1. Discuss the methods the British used to establish their rule in India.  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Name the Indian regional states in the first half of the eighteenth century.  
\_\_\_\_\_

**16.2 ANGLO-FRENCH STRUGGLE IN SOUTH INDIA**

By the beginning of the eighteenth century only two European trading companies of the British and the French were left in India competing for the Indian resources. The Anglo- French rivalry, taking the form of three Carnatic Wars constituted landmarks in the history of British conquest of south India in the eighteenth century. In order to establish their supremacy, it was necessary for the English East India Company to eliminate the French from this region. As a result of Seven Years' War (1756–1763) in Europe, the French and English settlements in India also became involved in open hostilities. In the third Carnatic war, the British East India Company defeated the French forces at the battle of Wandiwash ending almost a century of conflict over supremacy in India. This

**Notes**

battle gave the British trading company a far superior position in India compared to the other Europeans. The French were defeated by Sir Eyre Coote at Wandiwash in January, 1760, and Pondicherry capitulated a year later. The work of Dupleix and Bussy in the South was thus destroyed in 1760–1761; the French possessions in India were, however, restored by the treaty of Paris (1763). This conflict was resolved in the English East India Company's favour because of its strong navy in India, its progressively increasing military strength and good leadership, the support they received from the Government in England, and the larger resources at its command in Bengal. A part of the fallout of the events in the Carnatic cycle of wars that the weakness of the Indian regional powers (in particular their inability to make naval interventions and the ineffectiveness of large armies of some of their powers against smaller European forces) became manifest and this had grave implications in the political history of the rest of the eighteenth century.

**INTEXT QUESTIONS 16.2**

1. Which battle during third Carnatic war ended almost a century of conflict over supremacy between the French and British powers in India?  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Discuss the effects of the Carnatic wars?  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. What were the causes of the British success in Carnatic wars?  
\_\_\_\_\_

**16.3 BRITISH OCCUPATION OF BENGAL: PLASSEY TO BUXAR (1757–1765)**

The first major conflict of the British against an Indian power was in Bengal. The history of Bengal from 1757 to 1765 is the history of gradual transfer of the power from the nawabs to the British. During this short period of eight years three nawabs, Siraj-ud- Daula, Mir Jafar and Mir Qasim ruled over Bengal but they failed to uphold the sovereignty of the nawab and ultimately the reign of control passed into the hands of the British. The British, unable to compete with the Asian merchants in business, resorted to force, taking control of Bengal in 1757 under the pretext of the "Plassey revolt". The result was that the British achieved victory in Bengal, for their use of force led to the decline of the very trade they so longed to control. By the time Siraj-ud- Daula succeeded Ali Vardi Khan as nawab of Bengal in 1756 trade privileges and their misuse by the Company and its officers had already become an issue of conflict. There was a privilege which had been granted to the Company for its export and import trade by the Mughal emperor Farrukhsiyar. According to this Imperial *farman*, the Company had to pay Rs. 3000 a year and in return could carry on trade duty-free in Bengal. The Company's servants extended this privilege to their own coastal trade, inter- Asian trade and finally the inland trade. This was an obvious usurpation. Certain other factors like the fortification around Calcutta without the permission of the



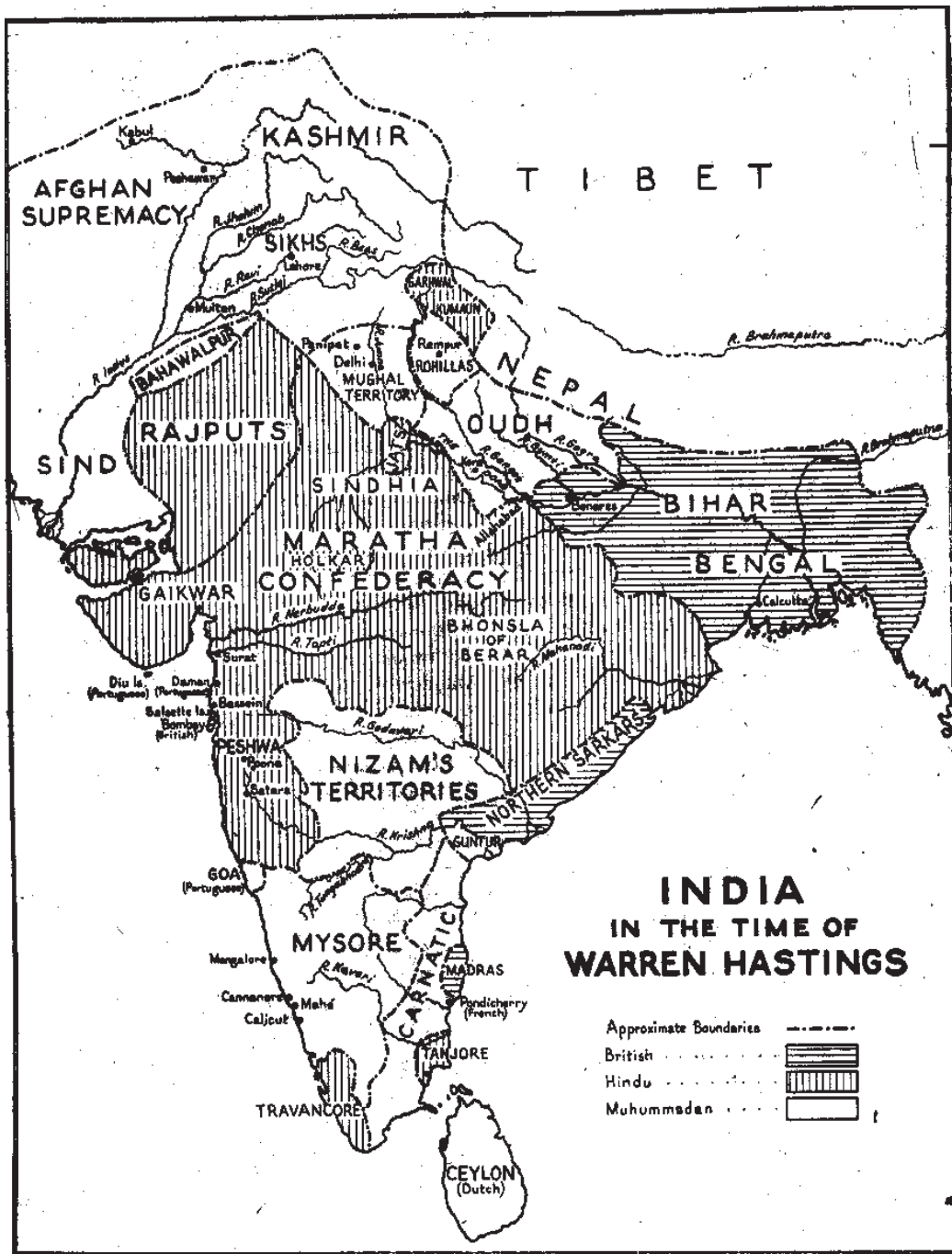
## Notes

nawab and repeated defiance of the nawab's authority along with sheltering the offenders of the nawab were the acts on the part of the English Company which provoked the nawab. The Company officials also suspected that nawab was going to have an alliance with the French in Bengal. Siraj-ud-Daula's attack on Calcutta precipitated an open conflict. The British retaliation started with hatching a conspiracy against the nawab in alliance with his officers like Rai Durlabh, Ami Chand, Mir Jafar and Jagat Seth. So English victory in the battle of Plassey (23 June, 1757) was pre-decided. It was not the superiority of the military power but the conspiracy that helped the English in winning the battle. Mir Jafar, The commander-in-chief of the Nawab was awarded the Nawabship by Clive for his support to the English. Mir Jafar responded by paying a sum of Rs. One Crore and Seventy Seven lakhs (17,700,000) to the Company and large sums to the Company officers as bribe. But Mir Jafar could not support the ever increasing demands of the English who were also suspicious about his collaboration with the Dutch Trading Company. Mir Jafar, who was made nawab after the battle of Plassey, was deposed in 1760. Mir Qasim was placed on the throne by the British in the hope that he would be able to meet their financial demands. The new Nawab assigned to them the district of Burdawan, Midnapore and Chittagong for the expenses of the British army which was to help him. This alliance was of great help to the British in their campaign against the French in 1760–1761; the money paid by Mir Qasim helped the Calcutta Council to finance their war in South. The Nawab succeeded in establishing a better system of administration. But he came into conflict with the British in Bengal on the question of a privilege i.e. duty free private trade of the Company. Mir Qasim's proposed plan about equal trade duties for British and Indian traders was turned down by the British council at Calcutta. Mir Qasim, in the circumstances, remitted all duties on Indians and the British alike for two years. This measure deprived the British private traders of the privileged position they had created for themselves, they could not compete with Indian traders on equal terms. The Nawab's attempts to reorganize the army and shifting of capital from Murshidabad to Monghyr were also taken as unforgivable offences by the Company.

In June 1763 under Major Adams British army defeated Mir Qasim the Nawab of Bengal. Mir Qasim fled to Patna and took help from Emperor Shah Alam II and Shuja-ud-Daula (Who was Nawab of Awadh and also the Wazir of the Mughal empire). Matters came to a head when the chief of the Company's factory at Patna, tried to seize the city. This precipitated war. Mir Qasim, an excellent civil administrator, was no military leader. His army was defeated. When he was forced to withdraw to Awadh, the Nawab Wazir and emperor Shah Alam II decided to come to the defence of the eastern *subas* of the empire. The confederates advanced to Patna, and a battle was fought at Buxar on October 22, 1764. With a decisive victory at Buxar, the British army overran Awadh. The Nawab Wazir fled to the Rohilla country, but Shah Alam II came to terms with the British. Lord Clive, then British Governor in Calcutta, also concluded treaty of Allahabad with the Shuja-ud-Daula Nawab Wazir of Awadh, who was to pay fifty lakhs of rupees for the expenses of the war and was given back his dominions. He entered into defensive alliance with the Company. Awadh became for the British a buffer state. Shah Alam II was now a fugitive- Delhi had now fallen into the hands of the Rohilla chief Najib-ud-daulah. The British gave emperor Shah Alam II possession of Kara and Allahabad, while he granted them the *Diwani* of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa in return for a regular annual payment of twenty- six lakhs of rupees.



Notes



Map 16.1 INDIA IN 1783



**INTEXT QUESTIONS 16.3**

1. The ruler of Bengal in 1757 was:
  - a. Shuja-ud-daulah
  - b. Siraj-ud-daulah
  - c. Mir Qasim
  - d. Mir Jafar



**Notes**

**ESTABLISHMENT OF BRITISH RULE IN INDIA TILL 1857**

2. The battle of Plassey was fought in:
 

a. 1757	b. 1764
c. 1765	d. 1771
3. What were the causes for the battle of Plassey?  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. Who replaced Mir Jafer as Nawab of Bengal in 1760?  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. Mention the causes for the battle of Buxar.  
\_\_\_\_\_

**16.4 THE DUAL SYSTEM OF ADMINISTRATION OF BENGAL**

The early mechanism of the establishment of Company rule in Bengal followed the administrative system under the Mughals. The Mughal provincial administration had two main heads - *nizamat* and *diwani*. Broadly speaking, *nizamat* meant administration of law and order and criminal justice; while *diwani* was the revenue administration and civil justice. The provincial *Subadar* was in charge of *nizamat* (he was also called *nazim*) and the *diwan* was in charge of revenue administration. After the treaty of Allahabad the English East India Company was made the Diwan of Bengal but Lord Clive choose not to take over the administration of Bengal directly; this responsibility was left to the Nawab's *Naib Diwan* and *Naib Nazim* Muhammad Raza Khan. As naib nazim he was to represent the nawab and as naib diwan he was to represent the Company. Thus the Nawab had to handle the entire responsibility for the civil and criminal justice administration. However, he had to function through Muhammad Raza Khan who was placed under the superintendence, direction and control of the British Company. As the Diwan, the Company directly collected its revenue, while through the right to nominate the *Deputy Nazim*, it controlled the *nizamat* or the Police or Judicial powers. This arrangement is known as '*Dual or Double Government*'. Under this system British had power and resources without responsibility while the Nawab had the responsibility of the administration without power to discharge it. Thus the Nawab had to take all responsibility for bad governance. The revenue remained the sole earning of the Company in lieu of a meager annual payment to the Mughal emperor.



**INTEXT QUESTIONS 16.4**

1. Explain the terms *nizamat* and *diwani*.  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. What do you mean by *Dual or Double Government*?  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Why did Lord Clive introduce system of *Dual or Double Government*?  
\_\_\_\_\_



## Notes

**16.5 IDEOLOGY OF EXPANSION: TOOLS AND METHODS**

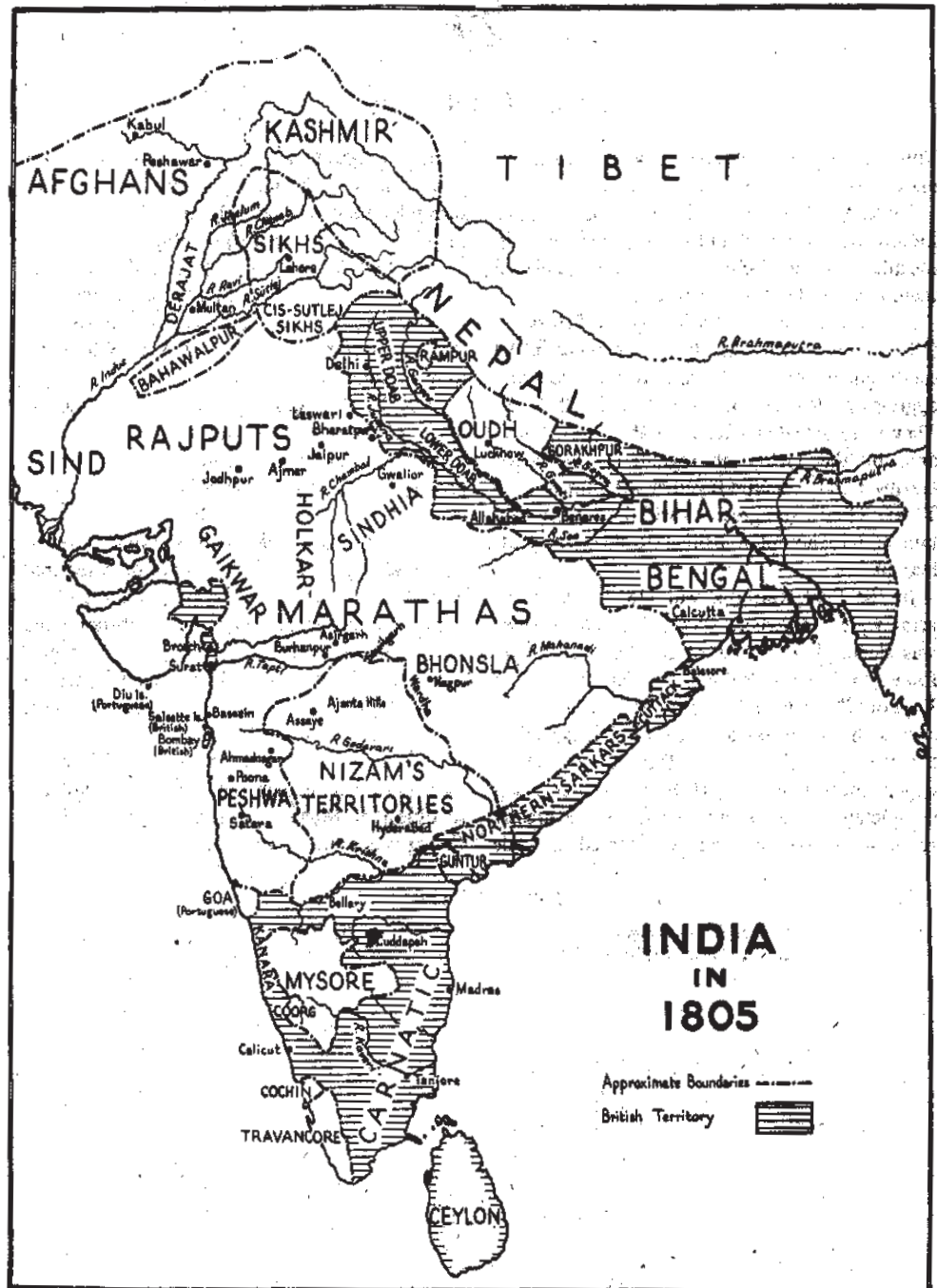
Shifting its role from a trading corporation, the English East India Company gradually became supreme political power in India. There were other regional kingdoms which were conquered by the British. Haidar Ali and his son Tipu Sultan the legendary rulers of Mysore (in Carnatic, modern day Indian state of Karnataka), gave a tough time to the British forces in the second half of the eighteenth century. Haidar Ali was in command of the army in Mysore from 1749; he became the ruler of the state in 1761. Until his defeat by Sir Eyre Coote in 1781 Haidar Ali continued his struggle against the Company. Mysore finally fell to the Company forces in 1799, with the slaying of Tipu Sultan in 1799. With the gradual weakening of the Maratha Empire in the aftermath of the three Anglo-Maratha wars fought during 1772-1818, the British also secured the Maratha territories. It was during these campaigns, both against Mysore and the Marathas, that under the command of Arthur Wellesley, the British had secured the entire region of Southern India (with the exception of small enclaves of French and local rulers), Western India and Eastern India.

The second method was the use of subsidiary agreements (*sanad*) between the British and the local rulers. This development created what came to be called the Native States, or Princely States. The Subsidiary Alliances system was also introduced by Lord Wellesley in and after 1798. The British, under the subsidiary alliance system, agreed to protect the Indian rulers against external threats and internal disorder but, in return, the Indian rulers who accepted the Subsidiary Alliance system were to agree to the stationing of British contingent for whose maintenance they would pay a subsidy to the British. The ruler under the system of alliance could neither enter into alliance with any other power nor fight a war without prior permission from the British. A British resident was stationed at these ruling states that had the authority to interfere in state politics. This system was suited best to the advantage of the British as, without even spending a single penny the British were able to maintain large forces. Moreover this system enabled the English to weed out the foreign influence from the Indian courts. The Nizam of Hyderabad was first to enter into a subsidiary alliance with the English in 1798. He was forced to replace the French officers from his court and put English officers in their place. He also granted the territories of Bellari and Cudappah to British for the maintenance of the army. The subsidiary alliances created the Princely States (or *Native States*) of the Maharajas and the Nawabs, prominent among which were: Cochin (1791), Jaipur (1794), Travancore (1795), Hyderabad (1798) and Mysore (1799). The annexed regions included the *North Western Provinces* (comprising Rohilkhand, Gorakhpur, and the Doab) (1801), Delhi (1803), and Sindh (1843). Punjab, Northwest Frontier Province, and Kashmir, were annexed after the Anglo-Sikh Wars in 1849. Kashmir was sold under the Treaty of Amritsar (1850) to the Dogra Dynasty of Jammu, and thereby became a princely state. In 1854 Berar was annexed, and the state of Oudh two years later. The Main purpose of the subsidiary alliance system was to expand the British Empire in India by bringing new territories under its control and to decrease the French influence so that The British could become the paramount power in India.

Punjab remained the last Indian state to be conquered by the British in 1849. It was under the rule of Maharaja Ranjit Singh who had united the various Sikh *misls* into one state. He had established a modern administrative system. His army was the



Notes



Map 16.2 INDIA DURING 1797-1805

second largest modernized regular army in Asia after the British army. The East India Company maintained friendly relations with Ranjit Singh. But just within one decade of his death in 1839, two Anglo-Sikh wars were fought and in 1849 Punjab also became part of the British India.

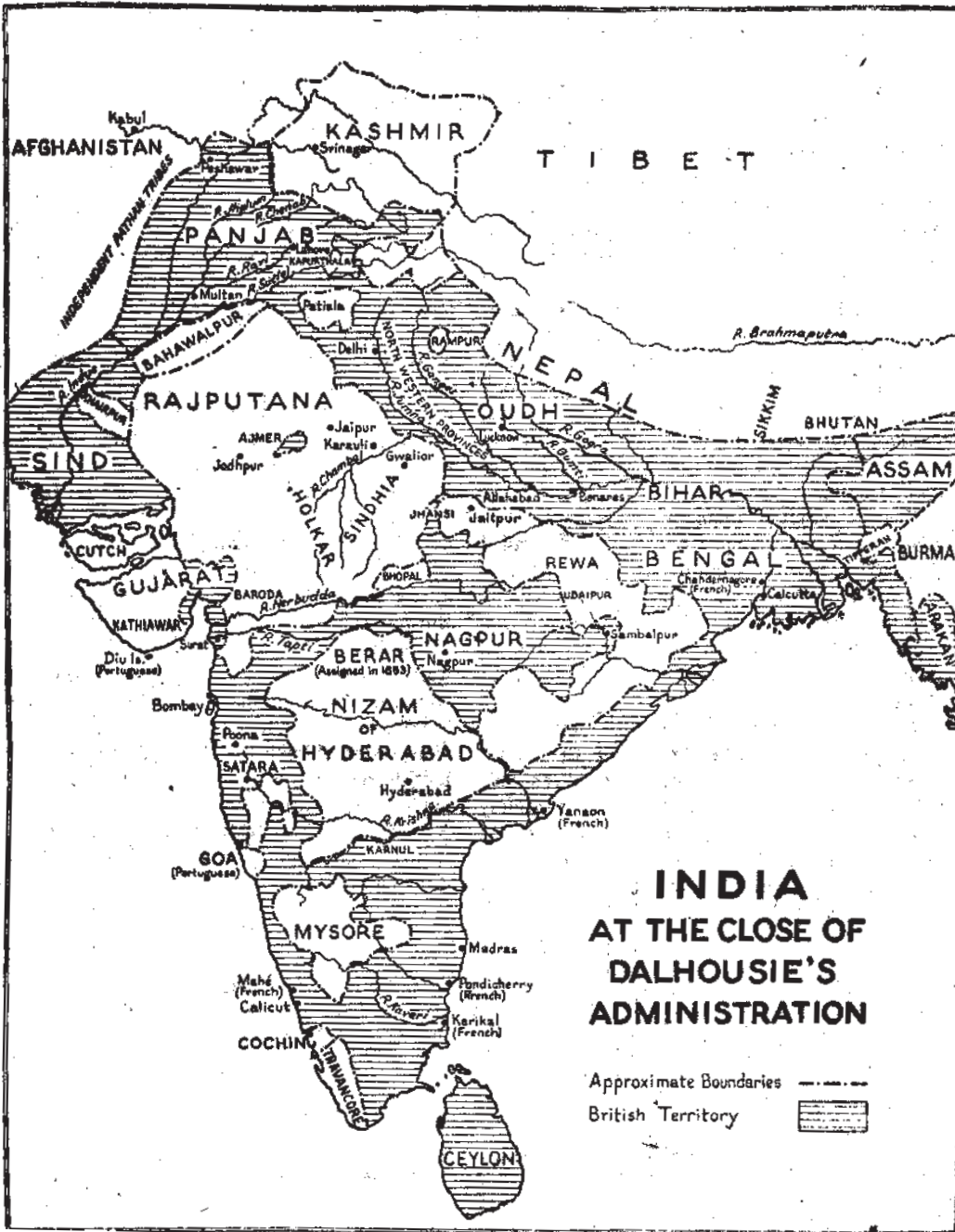
The *Doctrine of Lapse* was an annexation policy devised by Lord Dalhousie, who was the Governor General of India between 1848 and 1856. There was a widespread





**Notes**

custom of adoption among the Indian kings to secure an heir in the absence of a natural successor i.e. son. But as per the doctrine of lapse any Indian state created by or under the direct influence (paramount) of the British East India Company, as a vassal state under the British Subsidiary System, would automatically “lapse” or annexed by the British if the ruler was either incompetent or died without a natural male heir. Thus not only the long-established right of the Indian sovereigns without an heir to choose successor was taken over, but the British also took over the authority of



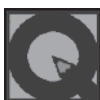
Map 16.3 INDIA IN 1857



**Notes**

**ESTABLISHMENT OF BRITISH RULE IN INDIA TILL 1857**

deciding the competence of the Indian rulers. With the introduction of this policy of lapse, the Company could establish absolute, imperial administrative control over many regions spread over the subcontinent. The Company took over the princely states of Satara, Jaitpur, Sambalpur, Nagpur and Jhansi using this Doctrine. Often the annexation, such as that of Awadh [Oudh] in 1856, was justified on the grounds that the native prince was of evil disposition, indifferent to the welfare of his subjects.



**INTEXT QUESTIONS 16.5**

1. What were the measures adopted by Lord Wellesley to expand the British power in India?  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. What do you mean by the subsidiary alliance system?  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Explain the Doctrine of Lapse?  
\_\_\_\_\_

**16.6 GROWTH OF COLONIAL ADMINISTRATIVE APPARATUS**

The need for constitutional change arose after the East India Company became the political power in 1757. The British Government was no longer willing to allow the Company's affairs to continue unsupervised. Pressure from merchants and manufacturers to end the monopoly of the Company mounted. Public opinion was critical of corruption in the Government in Bengal. Free enterprise was a major demand. The British Parliament enacted a series of laws among which the Regulating Act of 1773 stood first, to curb the Company traders' unrestrained commercial activities and to bring about some order in territories under the Company control. Limiting the Company charter to periods of twenty years, subject to review upon renewal, this act gave the British government supervisory rights over the Bengal, Bombay, and Madras presidencies. The Regulating Act also created a unified administration for India, uniting the three presidencies under the authority of the Bengal's governor, who was elevated to the new position of governor-general. Warren Hastings was the first incumbent governor-general (1773–1785). The Pitt's India Act of 1784 sometimes described as the "half-loaf system", as it sought to mediate between Parliament and the company directors, enhanced Parliament's control by establishing the Board of Control, whose members were selected from the British cabinet. As governor-general from 1786 to 1793, Lord Cornwallis, professionalized, bureaucratized, and Europeanized the company's administration. He also outlawed private trade by company employees, separated the commercial and administrative functions, and enhanced the salaries of company's servants.

As revenue collection became the company's most essential administrative function, Lord Cornwallis granted legal ownership of land to the zamindars in Bengal. In return, zamindars had to pay the government fixed revenue by a certain particular date. This arrangement was to last for ever; hence the title "permanent settlement" was given. This system was also known as the zamindari sys-

**Notes**

tem. The immediate consequence was that as now zamindar became the owner of the land, the peasant was reduced to the status of the tenant on his own land. Moreover now land became a negotiable property and the state was excluded from agricultural expansion and development, which came under the purview of the zamindars. In Madras and Bombay, however, the *ryotwari* (peasant) settlement system was set in motion, in which peasant cultivators had to pay annual taxes directly to the government.

The Charter Act of 1813 ended the monopoly of the Company over trade with India. The Company's control over revenue, administration and appointments remained untouched. The Charter Act of 1833 abolished the Company's monopoly of the China trade. The Act also deprived the presidencies of the power to make laws, concentrating legislative power with the Governor-General and his council.

With such expansion of the British territories and the increasing administrative responsibilities, a bureaucracy was also required to control British possessions. In 1785, Lord Cornwallis created a professional cadre of Company servants who had generous salaries, had no private trading or production interests in India, enjoyed the prospect of regular promotion and were entitled to pensions. All high-level posts were reserved for the British, and Indians were excluded. Cornwallis appointed British judges, and established British officials as revenue collectors and magistrates in each district of Bengal. From 1806 the Company trained its young recruits in Haileybury College near London. Appointments were still organized on a system of patronage. In 1829 the system was strengthened by establishing districts throughout British India small enough to be effectively controlled by an individual British official who henceforth exercised a completely autocratic power, acting as revenue collector, judge and chief of police. After 1833 the Company selected amongst its nominated candidates by competitive examination. After 1853, selection was entirely on merit and the examination was thrown open to any British candidate. The Indian civil service (i) was very highly paid; (ii) it enjoyed political power which no bureaucrat could have had in England.

**INTEXT QUESTIONS 16.6**

1. Which was the first Act enacted by the British Parliament to control the East India Company's activities in India?  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Who was the first governor-general of Bengal?  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. What was the main feature of the Charter Act of 1833?  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. Name the college established in London to train the Company servants ?  
\_\_\_\_\_

**16.7 JUDICIAL ORGANIZATION**

By the mid- eighteenth century, the British had a political presence in the three *presidency* towns of Madras, Bombay, and Calcutta which also saw the



**Notes**

**ESTABLISHMENT OF BRITISH RULE IN INDIA TILL 1857**

emergence of British judicial system in India. The Mayor’s Court was established in 1727 for civil litigation in Bombay, Calcutta, and Madras. In 1772 an elaborate judicial system, known as *adalat*, established civil and criminal jurisdictions. Both Hindu *pandits* and Muslim *qazis* (Sharia court judges) were recruited to aid the presiding judges in interpreting their customary laws, but in general, British common and statutory laws became applicable. The two main theoretical principles underlying the entire British judicial system in India were the notions of the *Rule of Law* and *Equality before law*; thus as per theory no one was above the law (certain rules which defined the rights, privileges and obligations of the people) and all the citizens irrespective of their caste, class and other status, were now equal before law. The principle of habeas corpus provided that no person could be arrested or kept in prison without a written order from the local executive or the judicial authority. Even the Government servant, if the acts done in their official capacity could be sued in the court of Law. The natural upshot of the Rule of Law was the Equality before the Law, which subsequently followed the Rule of Law. The Equality before the Law appeared as a novel feature in the caste-ridden Indian society.

Under the *Regulating Act* of 1773 the King-in-Council created a Supreme Court in the *Presidency town* of Calcutta. Under the charter, the Supreme Court also had the authority to exercise all types of jurisdiction in the region of Bengal, Bihar, and Orissa, with the only caveat that in situations where the disputed amount was in excess of Rs. 4,000, their judgment could be appealed to the Privy Council at London. The Supreme Courts in Madras and Bombay were finally established in 1801 and 1823, respectively.

Lord Cornwallis separated the executive and judicial duties at district level. For the civil cases *Sadar Diwani Adalat* was the highest appealing body followed by the four Provincial Courts of Civil Appeal at Calcutta, Dacca, Murshidabad and Patna. Then at local levels District Courts, Registrars’ Courts and a number of Subordinate Courts were making the hierarchy. A large number of magistrates were active to deal with criminal cases, above them were four Courts of Circuit at Calcutta, Dacca, Murshidabad and Patna which were governed by *Sadar Nizamat Adalat* at Calcutta. In 1831 William Bentinck abolished the four Provincial civil and criminal courts and redistributed their work to Commissioners and District Collectors.



**INTEXT QUESTIONS 16.7**

1. Explain the terms *Rule of Law* and *Equality before law*?  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. In which town The Supreme Court was established for the First time under the *Regulating Act* of 1773?  
\_\_\_\_\_

So to conclude the British rule over India changed the course of history in India. The British came to India in the beginning of the seventeenth century. The British East India Company was established with the aim of having monopoly over Asian trade. In the process of gaining trading rights in India, the British annexed many



Indian princely states and formed laws and policies of their own. Slowly but rapidly the entire Indian sub continent came under the British rule. However its policies were disliked by Indians and together they revolted against the company in 1857. This led to the downfall of the company and the administration of India went directly under the Queen. By the Government of India Act of 1858 the direct rule of the British Crown was finally established in place of the Company's rule.

**WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNT**

You have learnt about the establishment of rule or dominion of the British East India Company on the Indian subcontinent. You have seen how British rule commenced in 1757, after the Battle of Plassey, when the Nawab of Bengal surrendered his dominions to the Company, in 1765, when the Company was granted the *diwani*, or the right to collect revenue, in Bengal and Bihar, or in 1772, when the Company established a capital in Calcutta, appointed its first Governor-General, Warren Hastings, and became directly involved in governance. This process continued in the other parts of India as well. The establishment and expansion of British Power used the mechanism of the Subsidiary Alliance system, and the expansion policy of Dalhousie through the doctrine of lapse. This lesson narrates the British administrative and Judicial Organization in India before 1858. The East India Company's rule lasted until 1858, when, consequent to the Government of India Act 1858, the British government assumed the task of directly administering India.

**TERMINAL QUESTIONS**

1. How did the English attain supremacy in India?
2. How did Lord Wellesley expand the British power in India? Explain the merits and demerits of the Subsidiary Alliance system.
3. Describe the policy adopted by Dalhousie to expand the British Empire in India.
4. Describe the British Judicial organization in India.

**ANSWERS TO IN TEXT QUESTIONS****16.1**

1. The British adopted 1. Wars and conquests, 2. Subsidiary Alliance System and 3. annexation of territories through the adaptation of doctrine of lapse, to expand the British Empire.
2. Bengal, Mysore, Hyderabad, Awadh, Punjab and Maratha Kingdom.

**16.2**

1. Battle of Wandiwash in Jan 1760
2. The British supremacy was established and the weakness of the Indian regional powers in particular their inability to make naval interventions and the



ineffectiveness of large armies of some of their powers against smaller European forces became manifest.

3. Their Strong Naval power in India, progressively increasing military strength and good leadership, the support the Company received from the Government in England, and the larger resources at its command in Bengal were some of the reasons for the British success in Carnatic wars.

### 16.3

1. Siraj-ud-daulah.
2. (a) 1757.
3. Sirajuddaulah's earlier attack and capture of Fort William, Calcutta during June, 1756, the illegal use of Mughal Imperial export trade permits (dastaks) granted to the British in 1717 for engaging in internal trade within India, British interference in the Nawab's court, additional fortifications with mounted guns had been placed on Fort William without the consent of the Nawab.
4. Mir Qasim.
5. Equal trade duties for British and Indian traders, the Nawab's attempts to reorganize the army and shifting of capital from Murshidabad to Monghyr were the causes for the removal of Mir Qasim which ultimately led to the Battle of Buxar.

### 16.4

1. *Nizamat* meant administration of law and order and criminal justice; *Diwani* was the revenue administration and civil justice.
2. As the Diwan the Company directly collected its revenue, while through the right to nominate the *Deputy Nazim* for the Nawab it controlled the *nizamat* or the Police or Judicial powers.
3. The Company did not want to take direct responsibility of the administration of Bengal and was interested in earning revenue.

### 16.5

1. Military Conquests and Subsidiary Alliances system.
2. Under this system, Indian rulers under British protection would maintain British troops within their states and would pay for these troops. They surrendered control of their foreign affairs to the British. In return, the East India Company would protect them from the attacks of their rivals.
3. The *Doctrine of Lapse* was an annexation policy devised by Lord Dalhousie. Any Indian state created by or under the direct influence (paramount) of the British East India Company, as a vassal state under the British Subsidiary System, would automatically "lapse" or annexed by the British if the ruler was either incompetent or died without a natural male heir.

### 16.6

1. The Regulating Act of 1773.
2. Warren Hastings.

**Notes**

3. The Charter Act of 1833 abolished the Company's monopoly of the China trade.
4. Haileybury College.

**16.7**

1. *Rule of Law* and *Equality before law* meant that no one was above the law (certain rules which defined the rights, privileges and obligations of the people) and all the citizens irrespective of their caste, class and other status, were now equal before law.
2. *Presidency town* of Calcutta.

**HINTS TO TERMINAL QUESTIONS**

1. See sub-unit 1.2 .
2. See sub-unit 1.5, paras 1 and 2.
3. See sub-unit 1.5, para 4.
4. See sub-unit 1.7.

**GLOSSARY**

1. **East India Company:** The Company was a Joint- Stock Company established in 1600, as The Company of Merchants of London Trading into the East Indies. Initially involved in trading with India, it remained ruling power in India till 1858.
2. **Dual or Double Government:** This system was introduced in Bengal after the battle of Buxar. As the Diwan of Bengal the Company directly collected its revenue, while the *nizamat* or the Police and Judicial powers remained with the Nawab.
3. **Subsidiary Alliance system:** The Subsidiary Alliance System was used by lord Wellesley to bring the Indian states within the boundary of the British political power. Under this doctrine, Indian rulers under British protection suspended their native armies, instead maintaining British troops within their states. They surrendered control of their foreign affairs to the British. In return, the East India Company would protect them from the attacks of their rivals.
4. **Doctrine of Lapse:** It was an annexation policy by the British East India Company, introduced by lord Dalhousie Governor -general of India. Under the doctrine princely territory under the direct rule of the East India Company would automatically be annexed if the ruler was either incompetent or died without a direct heir.
5. **Charter Acts:** The Charter Acts were passed by the British Parliament to govern the activities of the East India Company, endowed it with enormous Commercial privileges and granted them the powers to rule India up to 1858. The Charter Acts issued enabled the East India Company, commercial privileges in several series, for twenty years each. The first Charter Act was granted in 1793, granting the company provision of 20 years. Later the Charter Act was renewed in the year 1813, 1833 and 1853 respectively.
6. **Rule of Law:** also called supremacy of law, means that the law is above everyone and it applies to everyone. Whether governor or governed, rulers or ruled, no

**Notes**

one is above the law, no one is exempted from the law, and no one can grant exemption to the application of the law.

7. **Equality before the law:** equality under the law or legal egalitarianism is the principle under which each individual is subject to the same laws, with no individual or group having special legal privileges. Legal egalitarianism admits no class structures entail separate legal practices.





## 17

## ECONOMIC EFFECTS OF BRITISH COLONIALISM

Britain's relationship with her Indian colony was one of political subordination, but economic exploitation formed the core of this relationship. This process of colonization was geared clearly to benefit the mother country, even at the cost of the colony. In this chapter we will discuss the aspect of economic exploitation within the process of colonization.



### OBJECTIVES

After studying the lesson, you will be able to:

- delineate the three phases of British colonization in India
- comprehend the changes brought by colonial revenue settlements in the Indian countryside
- analyse the mixed impact of colonial capitalist innovations within the colony;
- explain the 'drain of wealth' theory propounded by early nationalists and
- understand the distinct nature of colonial 'modernisation' in the colony and that it did not necessarily imply 'progress'

### PHASES OF BRITISH COLONIALISM

Colonial exploitation was carried on broadly through three phases. The **first phase (1757-1813)** of 'mercantilism' was one of **direct plunder** in which surplus Indian revenues were used to buy Indian finished goods to be exported to England. In the **second phase (1813-1858)** of **free trade** India was converted into a source of raw material and a market for British manufactured goods. The **third phase (1858 onwards)** was one of **finance imperialism** in which British capital controlled banks, foreign trading firms and managing agencies in India. This phased exploitation was carried out through a range of economic policies, primarily in the industrial and agricultural sectors of the colonial economy.

### 17.1 THE FIRST PHASE OF BRITISH COLONIALISM

This 'First Phase' is generally dated from 1757, when the British East India Company acquired the rights to collect revenue from its territories in the eastern and southern parts of the subcontinent, to 1813, when the Company's monopoly over trade with India came to an end.



## Notes

The British had come to India in the seventeenth century, purely as a trading company, backed by an exclusive royal charter to trade with India, from their queen, Elizabeth I. They set up their first 'factory' on the banks of the Hughli River in Bengal. The Company had managed to acquire permits or a 'dastak' from the Mughal emperor that exempted it from having to pay duties on its trade. This led to a great deal of corruption among the employees of the Company, as the 'farman' was widely misused by them for their private trade. It also meant heavy losses in revenue for the Bengal governors (later nawabs) in way of customs duties. This became a contentious issue and one of the chief factors, which led to the Battle of Plassey, fought in 1757.

The primary function of the British East India Company in this period was to buy spices, cotton and silk from India and sell them at huge profits to the large market these goods enjoyed in Britain. This meant that large quantities of bullion would flow out of Britain into India to pay for these commodities. Despite efforts, it seemed difficult to find British goods that could be sold in India in exchange, to stem this outflow of bullion. Besides the expenditure on buying commodities, the Company also spent very large amounts on the wars that it had to fight with other European powers, all in search of the same goods to trade in. These included the Portuguese, the Dutch and the French. Thus the acquisition of 'diwani' (right to collect revenue) in Bengal, after the Battle of Buxar, which followed the Battle of Plassey, opened the way for the Company to raise money for its expenditure in India.

## LAND REVENUE POLICIES

After the diwani of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa was granted to the East India Company in 1765, the maximization of revenue from the colony became the primary objective of the British administration. Agricultural taxation was the main source of income for the company, which had to pay dividends to its investors in Britain. Therefore, the British administration tried out various land revenue experiments to this aim. These experiments also partly determined the relationship that the colonial state would share with the people it governed.

In 1772, the Governor of Bengal, Warren Hastings, introduced a system of **revenue farming** in the province of Bengal. In this system European District Collectors would 'farm' out the right to collect revenue to the highest bidder. This system was a total failure and ruined the cultivators because of the arbitrarily high revenue demands.

To undo this disaster, Cornwallis introduced the system of **Permanent Settlement** in 1793. Under this system, 'zamindars', who earlier only had the right to collect revenue, were established as the proprietors or owners of land. The state's demand for land revenue was permanently fixed. But if the zamindars were unable to pay the full tax on time, their lands would be taken away and auctioned by the state. Through this system, the state tried to create an enterprising class of landowners, who would try to improve crop production in their fields to earn profits. Besides, it would be simpler for the state to deal with a limited number of zamindars than with every peasant, and a powerful section of society would become loyal to the British administration.

But this system led to greater impoverishment of the tenant-cultivator because of the burden of high revenue assessment. It also caused great difficulty for zamindars, many of whom were unable to pay the revenue on time and lost their lands. A large number of traditional zamindar houses collapsed. The system also encouraged subinfeudation i.e. many layers of intermediaries between the zamindar and cultivator, adding to the woes of the peasantry.

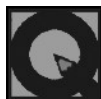
**Notes**

To keep out intermediaries from revenue collection, so that the state could acquire a larger share of the income from land, the **Ryotwari System** was started by Alexander Read in 1792, for the Madras Presidency. Later it was introduced in the Bombay Presidency as well. Under this system, revenue was initially collected from each village separately, but later each cultivator or 'ryot' was assessed individually. Thus, peasants not zamindars were established as property owners. Although this system increased the revenue collected by the state, the assessments were faulty and the peasants overburdened by the taxes. The landed intermediaries continued to flourish.

In the north and northwest of India the **Mahalwari Settlement** was followed after 1822 where the state made settlements with either the village community or, in some cases, the traditional 'talukdar'. Each such fiscal unit was called a 'mahal'. Under this system, some recognition was given to collective proprietary rights.

As a result of the revenue policies of the British, agriculture stagnated and peasants almost became tenants at will. They also increased the number of landed intermediaries, and strongly entrenched the figure of the moneylender in the countryside. Landlords and zamindars became an important class and collaborators of British colonial rule.

The acquisition of diwani rights meant that the Company could now tap the wealth of local rulers, zamindars and merchants in the rich province of Bengal and use them to buy the goods that would be shipped to Britain for sale. Large quantities of wealth, including illegal incomes of company officials, made its way to Britain from Bengal. Company officials amassed huge fortunes before they returned home, and they were referred to as 'nabobs' in Britain, on account of their flashy lifestyles. A lot of this money was used to fuel the Industrial Revolution in Britain. The greed for incomes from land revenue also led the Company to pursue an aggressive policy of territorial expansion in India.

**INTEXT QUESTIONS 17.1**

1. What were the three phases of colonization in British India?  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. What was one of the chief factors that led to the Battle of Plassey?  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. With whom did the Company permanently settle the revenue in Bengal?  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. In which presidencies was the Ryotwari settlement first introduced?  
\_\_\_\_\_

**17.2 THE SECOND PHASE OF BRITISH COLONIALISM  
(FREE TRADE)**

The 'Second Phase' is generally seen to have begun with the charter Act of 1813, when the Company lost its monopoly trading rights in India, and ended in 1858, when the British crown took over the direct control and administration of all British territory in India.



## Notes

## ECONOMIC EFFECTS OF BRITISH COLONIALISM

As the Company's profits grew, the support they enjoyed from the British government became precarious. Earlier many members of the parliament had 'East Indian' interests, who used the Company's resources to maintain their patronage within the government. But as unprecedented levels of industrialization were achieved in Britain, there was a gradual change in the constitution of the parliament. Adam Smith's book, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, heralded a new school of economic thought, which critiqued the idea of companies enjoying exclusive monopolies and lobbied for a government policy of 'free trade' or 'laissez faire'. In a bid to acquire greater control over the Company's earnings, the parliament started attacking individual Company officials with charges of 'misconduct'. The 'Free Traders', dominant in the parliament with the turn into the 19<sup>th</sup> century, demanded free access to India, which led to the passing of the Charter Act of 1813, thus ending the monopoly enjoyed by the Company in India, while subordinating its territorial possessions to the overall sovereignty of the British crown.

'Free Trade' changed the nature of the Indian colony completely, through a dual strategy. Firstly it threw open Indian markets for the entry of cheap, mass-produced, machine-made British goods, which enjoyed little or almost no tariff restrictions. The passage of expensive, hand-crafted Indian textiles to Britain, which had been very popular there, was however obstructed by prohibitive tariff rates. And secondly British-Indian territory was developed as a source of food stuff and raw material for Britain, which fuelled rapid growth in its manufacturing sector, crucial to the emergence of a powerful capitalist economy. These changes reversed the favourable balance of trade that India had enjoyed earlier. This phase laid the foundations of a classic colonial economy within India through the complex processes of commercialization of agriculture and deindustrialization, which are discussed below.

## COMMERCIALIZATION OF AGRICULTURE

It is often believed that the colonial administration encouraged the **commercialization of agriculture** that improved the position of peasants in many areas of the Indian colony. From the 1860s onwards, the nature of agricultural production was determined by the demands of the overseas markets for Indian primary products. The items exported in the first half of the nineteenth century included cash crops like indigo, opium, cotton and silk. Gradually raw jute, food grains, oil seeds and tea replaced indigo and opium. Raw cotton remained the most in demand item. This expansion in cash crop production was accompanied by the building of railways, after 1850, to improve trade networks.

But commercialization seems to have been a forced artificial process that led to very limited growth in the agricultural sector. It led to differentiation within the agricultural sector, but did not create the figure of the 'capitalist landowner' as in Britain. The lack of any simultaneous large scale industrial development meant that accumulated agrarian capital had no viable channels of investment, for it to be converted into industrial capital. Initiatives to expand the productive capacity and organization of agriculture was also a risky proposition, as the sector catered to a distant foreign market with wildly fluctuating prices, while the colonial state provided no protection to agriculturists. Commercialization thus, increased the level of sub-infeudation in the countryside and money was channelised into trade and usury.

The larger part of the profits generated by the export trade went to British business houses, which controlled shipping and insurance industries, besides commission agents, traders and bankers. Those who benefited in the colony were big farmers, some



Notes

Indian traders and moneylenders. Commercialization further intensified the feudal structure of landlord-moneylender exploitation in rural areas.

The so called process of commercialization, which was supposed to lead to capitalist agriculture, was often carried out through very exploitative and almost unfree forms of labour. Tea was grown in plantations in Assam, owned by whites, and they used **indentured labour**, which was almost like slavery. White planters had to force farmers to grow indigo because it yielded low profits and upset the harvesting cycle. This involved inhuman levels of coercion, which eventually led to the indigo-rebellion in 1859-60. Commercialization did lead to limited phases of success in the cotton producing areas of western India in 1860s and in jute production in eastern India, but they were because of increases in demand rather than capitalist innovation in production and organization.

Farmers were forced to grow cash crops also because they had to pay the high revenue, rents and debts in cash. The shift away from food crops like jowar, bajra and pulses to cash crops often created disaster in **famine** years. A decline in world demand for Indian cotton led to heavy indebtedness, famine and agrarian riots in the Deccan cotton belt in the 1870s. The jute industry collapsed in the 1930s, which was followed by a devastating famine in 1943 in Bengal. Although, causes of these famines have been widely debated by historians, it is undeniable that the aggregate production of food crops remained far behind population growth, and millions of people died of starvation and epidemics.



Fig. 17.1 Bengal Famine 1943

Among the limited steps that the colonial government took towards improving agricultural productivity included the construction of some **irrigation canals** in northern, north-eastern and south-western parts of India. 'Permanently Settled' eastern India got left out this government initiative, because there was no scope of increasing the revenue any further. Thus revenue maximization and limited famine-relief in extreme situations were the factors that motivated this public investment. It did lead to great prosperity and commercial agriculture in limited enclaves, especially in the canal colonies of Punjab, but



**Notes**

**ECONOMIC EFFECTS OF BRITISH COLONIALISM**

it was confined to a small number of already well-off farmers who could pay the high water rates. It also encouraged the cultivation of cash crops like sugar, cotton and wheat, while reducing the production of millets and pulses. In some cases, like the United Provinces, it did not suit local conditions and caused swamps and excessive salinity.

In 1853, Lord Dalhousie took the decision to construct railways in India. Very often the railways have been seen as a marker of the modernization that took place under British rule. But the construction of the railways in India only further strengthened the colonial nature of India’s economic development. The railway network made it easier to penetrate the interior markets and sources of raw material in the colony and linked them to port cities, instead of linking internal markets to each other. The railway network was thus primarily geared to serve the interest of foreign trade. Railway lines built in frontier regions would facilitate army movement and some “famine lines” were built in scarcity areas. Moreover, the whole project was built with British capital, and investors in Britain were guaranteed 5% interest, which was paid out of Indian revenue. Most of the high level expertise and railway equipment like machinery, railway lines and even coal to an extent, was imported from Britain. This ensured that the ‘multiplier’ effects of constructing the railways also remained absent in India.

Amongst other factors, the penetration of the interiors of the country, made possible by the railways, had another grave fall out – the ruin of the Indian handicrafts industry, which had enjoyed patronage both from local ruling elites and markets overseas. With the expanding control of the British, traditional native courts disappeared. The British also enforced an unequal tariff system, whereby the entry of Indian commodities in British markets was restricted by high custom duties. In turn, the Industrial Revolution in Europe enabled the mass production of cheap machine-made goods, which flooded Indian markets. Unable to compete with this, Indian commodities lost both their overseas and domestic markets. This destructive process led to **deindustrialisation** that increased pressure on land.



**INTEXT QUESTIONS 17.2**

1. Which economist propounded the idea of free trade or *laissez faire* in the 18<sup>th</sup> century?  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. How did the commercialization of agriculture cause famine?  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Which region benefited most by the irrigation canals built by the British?  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. How did the Industrial Revolution in Britain lead to ‘deindustrialisation’ in British India?  
\_\_\_\_\_

**17.3 THE THIRD PHASE OF BRITISH COLONIALISM**

The third phase is seen to have begun from the 1860s, when British India became part of the ever-expanding British empire, to be placed directly under the control and sovereignty of the British crown. This period was one of ‘finance-imperialism’, when some

**Notes**

British capital was invested in the colony. This capital was organized through a closed network of British banks, export-import firms and managing agencies.

Although the process of colonization has been divided into stages, one should keep in mind that this periodisation is in some ways arbitrary. The third phase was merely a consolidation of the trends that were already witnessed clearly in the second phase. It may be more useful to study these phases as heavily overlapping, where new and more subtle forms of exploitation existed alongside older, cruder forms. However, the new development that marked out the third phase was an intensification of the rivalry between developed and industrialized countries, for colonies in Asia, Africa and Latin America. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, countries like France, Belgium, Germany, the United States, and even Japan witnessed rapid industrialization. In the face of competition in the world market, Britain's lead in this regard dwindled. In search for newer markets and sources of raw material, these countries stepped up their drive for colonies and strengthened their control over existing ones. Industrial development also led to capital accumulation, which was concentrated in a small number of banks and corporations. This capital was invested in the colonies to sustain the rapid inflow of raw materials to fuel further expansion of industrial production.

High tariff restrictions in other developing capitalist countries led to a contraction of markets for British manufactured goods. And the need for heavy imports of agricultural products into Britain, was making her position vulnerable in her trade with other countries. India proved crucial in solving the problem of Britain's deficits. Britain's control over India ensured that there would always be a captive market for Lancashire textiles. Moreover, India's export surplus in raw material with countries other than Britain, counter-balanced her deficits elsewhere.

While on the one hand indigenous handicrafts faced impoverishment, on the other hand, there were few attempts at developing modern industries in the colony. Although the colonial government spoke about 'free trade', indigenous enterprise faced many obstructions perpetuated by the state's discriminatory policies. British capital was initially invested in railways, jute industry, tea plantations and mining. The Indian money market was dominated by European banking houses. While British entrepreneurs had easy access to capital made available by this banking network, Indian traders had to depend on family or caste organizations for their capital needs. British banking houses and British trading interests were well organized through Chambers of Commerce and Managing Agencies and could also influence the colonial state, to carefully deny Indian entrepreneurs access to capital. Before the First World War, British Managing agencies controlled 75% of industrial capital, and most of the profits from this limited industrialization were also sent back to Britain.

But, in spite of heavy odds, Indian entrepreneurs found opportunities to expand and grow, whenever Britain underwent periods of economic hardship. It was during the First World War that some Marwari businessmen from Calcutta, like G.D. Birla and Swarupchand Hukumchand invested in the jute industry. Gradually their control started expanding into other areas like coal mines, sugar mills and paper industry, and they could even buy up some European companies. The greatest success of Indian capital was seen in the cotton industry in western India, which took advantage of high demands during the war years (1914-18) to consolidate its successes, and eventually was in competition with Lancashire. Certain traditional trading communities like Gujarati Baniyas, Parsis, Bohras and Bhatias became important in this sector. The Tata Iron



## Notes

and Steel Company under government patronage provided leadership to the fledgling iron and steel company of India.

After the first world war, links with the foreign market was re-established, but again in the Depression years (1929–1933), the domestic market became relatively free to be exploited by indigenous industry, as foreign trade declined. The colonial government also provided some protection to the sugar and cotton industries, in the face of falling prices in the agricultural sector. Low prices forced capital from land into the manufacturing sector. Indians also ventured into the field of insurance and banking. Again, during the Second World War (1939–45), as foreign economic influence declined, Indian entrepreneurs managed to make huge profits. Strengthened by its limited success, the Indian capitalist class strengthened their links with the nationalist movement. They soon started demanding the establishment of heavy industries under state ownership and started organizing themselves to resist the entry of foreign capital.

But, to place these markers of success in perspective, on an overall level, these developments remained confined to the domestic market and indigenous capital still had a long battle ahead, against the structural weaknesses of a colonial economy. The potential for growth remained depressed given the massive poverty of the Indian people.

Early Indian nationalists like Dadabhai Naoroji, M.G. Ranade and R.C. Dutt had expected Britain to undertake capitalist industrialization in India, but were deeply disillusioned with the results of colonial industrial policies. Consequently, they formulated a strong economic critique of colonialism in the late nineteenth century. Dadabhai Naoroji put forward the **drain of wealth theory**. Poverty in India, according to them, was the result of a steady drain of Indian wealth into Britain—a result of British colonial policy. This drain occurred through the interest that India paid for foreign debts of the East India Company, military expenditure, guaranteed returns on foreign investment in railways and other infrastructure, importing all stationery from England, ‘home charges’ paid for the Secretary of State in Britain and salaries, pensions and training costs of military and civilian staff employed by the British state to rule India. Even if this drain was a small fraction of the value of India’s total exports, if invested within the country it could have helped generate a surplus to build a capitalist economy.

The ultimate question that has been asked of colonial economic policies in India is whether there had been any development at all. The answer to this question is not simple. We may start with looking at eighteenth-century Mughal India, before the British had entrenched themselves as an invincible territorial power. The view that eighteenth century Mughal India was undergoing a deep economic crisis and decline has been pervasive among historians. It has been seen as the decisive broader context within which we may locate the decline of the Mughal empire. But some later historians have refuted this view, and have instead drawn attention to the rise of new rebellious groups into power, to account for the fall of the empire. They have argued that the Mughal period was in fact a period of over all well-being and economic growth rather than stagnation or crisis. Within the political structure, there was sufficient space and autonomy in the hands of local landed elites and urban guilds to generate and accumulate surplus. Moradabad-Bareilly, Awadh. Banaras and Bengal were some such ‘surplus areas’. Forests were being cleared to expand cultivation. Consequent rises in agricultural yield and the establishment of a cash nexus made surplus accumulation possible in the hands of erstwhile landlords and zamindars, who challenged Mughal paramountcy to emerge as the new regional power elite.



**INTEXT QUESTIONS 17.3**

1. Which world event provided Indian entrepreneurs the first opportunity to expand and grow?  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Who propounded the 'drain of wealth' theory?  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Have later historians seen the 18<sup>th</sup> century as a period of economic backwardness?  
\_\_\_\_\_

Thus, the picture we get of India is one of a buoyant economic climate with a reasonable potential for growth. How do we then explain the backwardness and poverty that we encounter, at the end of the subsequent 200 years of British colonialism? Some writers have argued that the British did try to partially 'modernize' India, but it failed because of the strong hold of traditional structures. But we have noted above that these half-hearted attempts at 'modernisation' were motivated primarily to benefit the 'mother country'. Backwardness in the 'peripheral' colonies needs to be seen as the necessary flip side of the Industrial Revolution in the 'core', centred on the West. The same processes that led to industrialization in Britain, generated and sustained backwardness in her Indian colony, because the British economy was linked parasitically to the Indian economy, in an integrated world economic system of 'free trade'.

India in 1947 was not at a pre-industrial stage, and so her post-independence economic growth patterns may not be compared with processes of industrialization in the West. In 1947, India had already been a part of capitalist development in the west for 200 years, but in capacity of a colony. So, in 1947, independent India embarked into a process of modernization from a 'colonial' mode rather than a 'traditional' mode, which was structurally backward and underdeveloped.

**WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNT**

Phased economic exploitation of the colony was the core motive for the British to establish their rule in the Indian subcontinent. The nature of this exploitation changed over the course of their reign, owing to changes within Britain, and these in turn had specific economic, social and political consequences for the colony. Most economic initiatives undertaken by the colonial state was couched in the language of development and 'modernisation', but they had a differential impact on the colony, often leading to backwardness rather than growth. And finally most of these initiatives helped exploit the resources of the country to enable industrialization in Europe.

**TERMINAL QUESTIONS**

1. What were the revenue policies introduced by the British, and what changes did they bring about in the countryside in the colony?
2. Why was the commercialization of agriculture in the colony a 'forced' process?

**Notes**



3. Explain the phase of 'finance imperialism'.

**ANSWERS TO INTEXT QUESTIONS****17.1**

1. The first phase (1757-1813) of 'mercantilism' was that of direct plunder, the second phase (1813-1858) was that of free trade and the third phase (1858 onwards) was that of finance imperialism.
2. The misuse of the 'dastak' by Company employees for their private trade angered the Nawab of Bengal
3. Zamindars
4. Madras and Bombay Presidencies

**17.2**

1. Adam Smith
2. The production of cash crops was encouraged at the cost of food crops.
3. Punjab
4. Cheap machine made goods from Britain flooded the markets in India, and Indian handicrafts could not compete with them.

**17.3**

1. The First World War
2. Dadabhai Naoroji
3. No, later historians have characterised the 18<sup>th</sup> century as a period of general well-being and economic growth.

**HINTS FOR TERMINAL QUESTIONS**

1. See section 17.1 'Land Revenue Policies'
2. See section 17.2 'Commercialisation of Agriculture'
3. See section 17.3 'The Third Phase of British Colonialism'

**GLOSSARY**

- |                 |   |  |
|-----------------|---|--|
| 1. Mercantilism | – | an economic theory followed in Europe between the 16 <sup>th</sup> and 18 <sup>th</sup> centuries, in which states used warfare to ensure an inflow of bullion, and control trade and resources through colonies |
| 2. Bullion      | – | wealth in the form of precious metals like gold and silver   |
| 3. Diwani       | – | the right to collect revenue   |
| 4. Taluqdar     | – | a revenue official in the countryside in pre-British India   |

- 5. Monopoly – the exclusive right to a certain trade
- 6. Tariff – custom duties payable to country of export
- 7. Free Trade – international trade free of any government regulation or restriction
- 8. Commercialisation – modifying something for the purpose of trade
- 9. Unfree forms of labour – labour undertaken not only for a money wage but under other kinds of force – mental, physical, customary, political etc.
- 10. Multiplier effect – a concept in economics where an increase in spending is expected to stimulate other economic activities. For instance the building of railways would involve building of wagons and tracks that would push up the yield of iron and steel and coal. It would also lead to the employment of a large number of people.
- 11. Deficit – when incomes from trade are less than expenditure.





## **SOCIAL CHANGES IN MODERN INDIA**

The Indian subcontinent witnessed significant social changes during the 18-19<sup>th</sup> centuries. The onset of British rule, increasing urge for social and religious reform, rise of a middle class, rapid growth of newspapers in both English and Indian languages, changes in physical infrastructure and semi-political unification of the country were partly responsible for these changes. The end of the Mughal rule was followed by the strengthening of many regional kingdoms during the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The gradual expansion of British rule in this vacuum signified an entirely unfamiliar system of governance with long term repercussions.



### **OBJECTIVES**

After studying this lesson, you will be able to:

- trace the broad outlines of cultural policies of British rulers in India;
- examine the nature of the conflict between the Orientalists and the Anglicists;
- assess the impact of British rule on educated classes in India;
- explore the evils in the social and religious life;
- explain the background of the rise of a modern Indian intelligentsia;
- the reform movements and the issues raised by them;
- identify the stages of the growth of western education in India and
- identify the stages of the growth of press in India.

### **18.1 BRITISH CULTURAL POLICIES IN INDIA**

The beginning of British rule in India witnessed many imperial ideologies in operation. Back home in England, there were divergent ideologies at work regarding best possible ways of governing the Empire. Policies were often driven by the popularity of specific ideologies in Europe in general and England in particular. They also depended upon the whims and fancies of higher British authorities in India. After the battles at Plassey (1757) and Buxar (1764), British rulers faced many difficulties in governing the regions they had won. It will be very interesting to see that different ideologies took centre stage at different times.



## Notes

**Orientalists**

The first generation of British administrators in India like Warren Hastings, William Jones and Jonathan Duncan popularised the view that India had a glorious past which had subsequently degenerated. These scholars and administrators were called Orientalists. They were keen to learn and propagate Indian languages and tradition. This, they thought, would ensure a better understanding of India which would eventually strengthen their rule over this country. To stretch this argument further, we can say that the Orientalists depicted India's past in a way that was in consonance with the needs of the colonial administration. Important institutions that came to be identified with their efforts were the **Calcutta Madrasa** founded by Warren Hastings (1781), the **Asiatic Society of Bengal** founded by William Jones (1784) and the **Sanskrit College at Benaras** founded by Jonathan Duncan (1794).

**William Jones** learnt Indian classical languages and found important linguistic connection between Sanskrit and classical western languages like Greek and Latin. For around fifty years, the Asiatic Society was an important centre of learning and a rare institution to undertake translations of notable Sanskrit texts. An important journal published by it was the *Asiatick Researches*. Warren Hastings held the view that Hindus possessed laws which continued unchanged for centuries. Therefore, the British should master these laws and the Sanskrit language in which these texts were written if they wished to establish their governance in the country. To provide a precise idea of the customs and manners of Hindus, N. B. Halhed published *A Code of Gentoo Laws in 1776*.

There was a strong urge to make local British administrators familiar with Indian culture and tradition. **Fort William College** founded by Wellesley in 1801 to train the young British recruits to the civil service in India was meant to serve primarily this purpose. This college became an important centre for producing knowledge on and about India. It had many departments devoted exclusively to research on Indian languages and literature.

**Influence of Ideas on administrative and economic policies**

Influence of ideas was clearly visible in the administrative and economic policies. Lord Cornwallis, who became Governor General in 1786, was influenced by the 18<sup>th</sup> century Whig political philosophy. In the Whig philosophy, the main organs of the government, i.e. executive, legislative and judiciary should be separate. This would provide check and balance on each other's activity so that no organ exercises arbitrary powers. Philip Francis and Edmund Burke were the two most eminent political thinkers of the 18<sup>th</sup> century England. Burke insisted that the prosperity of the natives must be secured before any attempt was made to reap profit from them. Philip Francis, his friend and a member of the Supreme Council in Calcutta in the 1770s, drew up a comprehensive plan for administering property in Bengal. This plan subsequently influenced Cornwallis' policy of Permanent Settlement for Bengal, Bihar and Orissa in 1793. Cornwallis succeeded in laying the foundation of a strong Whig policy in the governance of Bengal. You will read more about the policy of Permanent Settlement in the chapter dealing with economic history of British period.

England was the first country to experience Industrial Revolution which led to a massive increase in the output of finished products. British industrial capitalists now argued for a free play in the British colonies. They put pressures on the British government to curtail the company's monopoly in the Indian market. Free market



**Notes**

theorists influenced the ideological positions of many policy makers in India as well. Finally the Charter Act of 1813 abolished Company’s monopoly of trade with India. Simultaneously, the **Liberals** and the **Utilitarians** gained strong positions within the policy making apparatus of India.



**INTEXT QUESTIONS 18.1**

1. Name some important institutions established by the Orientalists?  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Underline the importance of the Asiatic Society in promoting studies on India.  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Who established the Fort William College?  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. Which was the first country to experience Industrial Revolution?  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. Which Act abolished the monopoly of the East India Company over the India Trade?  
\_\_\_\_\_

**18.2 SOCIO-RELIGIOUS REFORMS**

A distinct feature of the 19<sup>th</sup> century India was the urge for social and religious reforms which cut across castes and communities. India had a long tradition of religious reforms and social dissent. During the ancient period, an urge for reform can be seen in Upanishadic texts, Buddhism, Jainism, Vajrayan, Tantricism etc. During the medieval age, the popularity of the Bhakti and the Sufi saints is well known. Attempts to explore India’s past by the first generation of British rulers helped to sharpen educated classes’ consciousness of their own existence. Early reformers were groping to find suitable answers. But the agenda for the modernization was not set by the western influence because the logic for reform was sought to be located within India’s past.

**BENGAL RENAISSANCE**

Reform movements which took deep roots within Bengal have often been termed as Bengal Renaissance. Bankim Chandra Chatterji and Bipin Chandra Pal referred to developments in the 19<sup>th</sup> century Bengal as a period of Renaissance. It may not be proper to compare European Renaissance with developments in Bengal as the context was entirely different and the patterns not too similar. However, the features which were referred to while talking of a Bengal Renaissance may be clubbed under three major categories, i.e. historical rediscovery, linguistic and literary modernization and socio-religious reforms.

**BRAHMO SAMAJ**

**Rammohan Roy** from Bengal was the most notable reformer of the modern times. He was among the first to bring political questions in the ambit of public debate. His



## Notes

Atmiya Sabha, founded in 1814, discussed important social and political questions of the time. In 1828, its enlarged edition was called the **Brahmo Sabha** which was renamed Brahmo Samaj later on. Soon he started touching upon many burning social issues of the time including the widely-prevalent practice of becoming *sati*. He rallied support to the efforts of William Bentinck (Governor General) for abolition of this custom and wrote extensively for the cause. In 1829, the custom of *sati* was formally abolished. He also condemned polygamy and many other forms of subjugation of women. Roy was also an advocate of modern education. He opened an English school as well as a Vedanta college (1825). He was a firm believer in the concept of one God. He was opposed to idolatry and found Upanishads as the basis of true Hinduism. He wished to purify Hinduism by removing all kinds of evils that had crept into it over centuries. He was not opposed to English education and spread of western knowledge.



Fig 18.1 Raja Ram Mohan Roy

After Roy's death in 1833, the Brahmo Samaj started getting disorganized. It was given a definite shape and popularized beyond the city of Calcutta under the leadership of **Debendranath Tagore** who joined in 1842. A year later, he wrote Brahmo Covenant. This Covenant was a statement of the creed of the Samaj and made a list of the duties and obligations of its members.

**Keshab Chandra Sen** (1838–84) who joined the Samaj in 1858 was a very eloquent and persuasive leader. He took the activities of the Samaj beyond Bengal and into UP, Punjab, Madras and Bombay. He radicalized the Samaj by attacking caste system, underlining women's rights, promoting widow remarriage and raising the issue of caste status of Brahmo preachers which was earlier reserved for Brahmans. He laid stress on universalism in religion. His radicalism brought him into opposition with



## Notes

Debendranath. In 1866, the Samaj was formally divided into Adi Brahma Samaj (headed by Debendranath) and the Brahma Samaj of India (headed by Keshab Chandra).

**ISHWARCHANDRA VIDYASAGAR**

Another Bengali reformer who actively raised the issues related to women was **Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar**. He was an active proponent of education of girl child as he believed that lack of education was the real cause underlying all their problems. With the help of an Englishman named Bethun, he set up many schools devoted especially to girl child. He forcefully attacked child marriage and polygamy. He was a strong advocate of widow remarriage. It was due to his active mobilization of support that the Widows' Remarriage Act was passed in 1856 legalizing all widow remarriages. He arranged many such remarriages. He set a personal example when his son Narayan also married a widow.

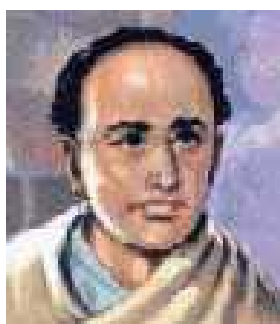


Fig 18.2 Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar

**Ramakrishna Mission**

During the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, another notable reform movement in Bengal, which soon spread to other parts of the country, was the Ramakrishna Mission. The movement began under an ascetic and priest Gadadhar Chatterjee or **Swami Ramakrishna Paramhansa** (1836–86) who achieved inner peace around 1871–2. He preached universality of all religions and favoured preserving beliefs and rituals of Hinduism. Among his important disciples was Narendra Nath or **Swami Vivekananda** who accepted Ramakrishna as his guru in 1885. He spread the message of spiritual Hinduism in America and Europe during his tour of 1893–97. He established Ramakrishna Mission in 1897 and set up a Math at Belur. He died at a young age of forty in 1902. Vivekananda was opposed to degeneration in religion, manifold divisions, caste rigidities, practice of untouchability, superstitions etc. He pointed out that the present condition of Hindus was due to their ignorance which was helped by their being a subject race. He attempted to establish Hindu spiritual supremacy vis-à-vis the selfish civilization of the West. However, he believed that India had to learn work ethics, forms of organization and technological advances from the West.

**REFORM MOVEMENTS IN WESTERN INDIA**

Many important reform movements arose during the 19<sup>th</sup> century western India. Reformers like KT Telang, VN Mandalik and RG Bhandarkar glorified India's past. There were some who led a direct attack on social evils like caste system and encouraged widow remarriage, e.g. Karsondas Mulji and Dadoba Pandurang. They formed Manav Dharma Sabha in 1844 and **Paramhansa Mandali** in 1849. The Mandali carried its activities secretly. Its members took a pledge that they would abandon all





## Notes

caste distinctions. The Mandali declined after 1860 as its membership and activities lost secrecy. Keshab Chandra Sen's twin visits to Bombay in 1864 and 1867 had a deep impact on social reform in this part. A direct consequence of his visits was the founding of the Prarthana Samaj in 1867 by Atmaram Pandurang. Mahadev Govind Ranade, who ran the Deccan Education Society, was the real force working behind this organization. Several members of the **Prarthana Samaj** had earlier been active in the Paramhansa Mandali. This Samaj denounced idolatry, priestly domination, caste rigidities and preferred monotheism. Apart from Hindu sects, it also drew upon Christianity and Buddhism. It sought truth in all religions. Drawing inspiration from the Maratha Bhakti saints of the medieval period, Ranade sought to establish the concept of one compassionate God.

### Arya Samaj

The most profound reform movement in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century India was the **Arya Samaj**. It started in the western India and the Punjab, and gradually spread to a large part of the Hindi heartland. It was founded by **Dayanand Saraswati** (1824-83). In 1875, he wrote Satyarth Prakash (or the light of truth) and in the same year founded the Bombay Arya Samaj. The Lahore Arya Samaj was founded in 1877. Subsequently, Lahore became the epicentre of the Arya movement. Dayanand opposed a ritual-ridden Hindu religion and called for basing it on the preaching of the Vedas. Only Vedas, along with their correct analytical tools, were true. He attacked puranas, polytheism, idolatry and domination of the priestly class. He adopted Hindi for reaching out to the masses. He also opposed child marriage. He was fiercely opposed to multiplicity of castes which he thought was primarily responsible for encouraging conversion of lower castes into Christianity and Islam.

After Dayanand's death in 1883, the Samaj lay scattered. Most important attempt to unite the Samaj and its activities was the founding of the **Dayanand Anglo Vedic Trust and Management Society** in Lahore in 1886. In the same year, this society opened a school with **Lala Hansraj** as its principal. However, some leaders of the Samaj were opposed to Anglo Vedic education. They were Munshi Ram (**Swami Shraddhanand**), Gurudatt, Lekh Ram and others. They argued that the Arya Samaj's educational initiative must focus on Sanskrit, Aryan ideology and Vedic scriptures and should have little space for English learning. This militant wing thought that Dayanand's words were sacrosanct and his message in Satyarth Prakash could not be questioned. While the moderate wing led by Lala Hansraj and **Lajpat Rai** pointed out that Dayanand was a reformer and not a rishi or sadhu. Conflicts also arose over the control of the DAV Management Society. These differences finally led to a formal division of the Arya Samaj in 1893 when Munshiram broke away along with his supporters to initiate a gurukul-based education. Therefore, after 1893 the two wings of the Arya Samaj were-DAV group and Gurukul group.

Munshi Ram and Lekh Ram devoted themselves to popularizing of the teachings of the Vedas and began an Arya Kanya Pathshala at Jalandhar to safeguard education from missionary influence. In 1902, Munshi Ram founded a Gurukul at Kangri in Haridwar. This institute became the centre of the gurukul education wing of the Arya Samaj in India. It was here that Munshi Ram adopted *sanyas* and became Swami Shraddhanand. The two wings of the Arya Samaj, i.e. DAV wing and the Gurukul wing had differences on the question of education but were united on important political and social issues of the time. The Arya Samaj as a whole opposed conversion of Hindus to Islam and Christianity and therefore advocated re-conversion of recent converts to Hinduism. This process was called *shuddhi*. They also advocated greater



## Notes

usage of Hindi in Devanagari script. In the 1890s, the Arya Samaj also raised the issue of cow slaughter and formed *gaurakshini* sabhas (or the cow protection societies) for protection of cows. The Arya Samaj led a prolonged movement against untouchability and advocated dilution of caste distinctions.

## REFORM MOVEMENTS AMONG MUSLIMS

There was a sense of loss of power among educated and elite Muslims of India. This happened mainly because of-(i) transfer of power from Mughals to British, and (ii) replacement of Persian by English as the language of employment and advancement in the new bureaucracy. The movement of the **Farazis** which arose among the peasants of early 19<sup>th</sup> century Bengal advocated return to pure Islam. They followed the teachings of Shah Waliullah of Delhi (1703–63) who had, a century earlier, talked about regaining purity of Islam and objected to infiltration of non-Islamic customs among Muslims. Founding leader of the Farazis, **Shariat Ullah** (1781–1839) preached religious purification and advocated return to the *farai*z, i.e. obligatory duties of Islam, namely-*kalimah* (profession of faith), *salat* (or *namaz*), *sawn* ( or *rozah*), *zakat* (or alms to poor) and *Hajj*. He also preached *tawhid* or monotheism. Another movement which arose among Muslims of Bengal was the **Tariqah-i-Muhammadiyah** under the leadership of Titu Mir who was initiated by Sayyid Ahmad Barelwi. This movement also talked about return to past purity. Another movement which was more concerned about the decline in power of the ulema class (Muslim priestly class) arose at Deoband in the United Provinces.

Delhi School of Islamic Thought was derived from the Delhi College (currently Zakir Husain College) which had begun imparting a parallel education- Islamic as well as English. Beginning 1830s, the college helped to foster a modern consciousness in the Muslim community. However, the revolt of 1857 and consequent crackdown by the British forces ended this intellectual excitement. However, the urge for modernization could easily be felt among a section of Muslims.

The new leadership was provided by **Sayyid Ahmad Khan** (1817–98) who rightly thought that modern education was the most important path for improvement in the condition of Indian Muslims. He called for the study of European science and technology. In 1866, he formed the British Indian Association. He stayed in England for more than a year during 1869-70. On his return, he asked his Muslim brethren to adopt some positive features of the English society like its discipline, order, efficiency and high levels of education. He pointed out that there was no fundamental contradiction between Quran and Natural Science and the new circumstances demanded dissemination of English language within an Islamic context. He founded the Moham-medan Anglo Oriental College at Aligarh in 1875 which went on to become the most important seminary for modern higher education among Muslims. At the elementary level, students followed the standard government curriculum in a carefully constructed Islamic environment. In 1878, the college classes were also started and non-Muslims were also enrolled. In 1886, Sayyid Ahmad Khan founded the Mohammadan Anglo Oriental Educational Conference. The Muslim graduates of Aligarh who numbered 220 during 1882–1902, provided lot of excitement to the Muslim intellectual world and in due course of time provided an able and modern leadership to the community.

## Impact of reform movements

Reform movements of the 19<sup>th</sup> century set a strong background for the national liberation movement against the British imperialism. Some women reformers also

**Notes**

played a prominent role in the social life of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. One may mention such names as Pandita Ramabai in western part, Sister Subbalaksmi in Madras and Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain in Bengal. Reform movements helped the growth of a modern middle class which was conscious of its rights. Some Indian reformers also protested British attempts to pass those laws which they thought interfered with their religion and society. This was evident in the case of the Age of Consummation of marriage by raising the age of consent from 10 to 12. We can also see that some of these reform movements, by raising issues which were in conflict with interests of other communities or were revivalist in nature, also worked towards polarization along communal lines.

**INTEXT QUESTIONS 18.2**

1. Briefly examine some important issues raised by Rammohan Roy.  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Analyse the nature of conflict between Debendranath Tagore and Keshab Chandra Sen.  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. When was the Arya Samaj divided? Who were the leaders of different factions?  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. What did the Farazi movement insist on?  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. Examine the role of Sayyid Ahmad Khan in modernizing the Muslim community?  
\_\_\_\_\_

**18.3 RISE OF WESTERN EDUCATION IN INDIA**

British rulers were keen to spread their ideology and culture in India. This could strengthen their roots in this country. Besides, it would also create a class of Indians who might act as reliable agents of the British Empire. English education was the most important medium of achieving these objectives. Several attempts were made throughout 19-20<sup>th</sup> centuries to popularize English education and make structural changes accordingly. Initially, the Orientalist administrators and scholars like Warren Hastings, Cornwallis, William Jones, Jonathan Duncan and others attached more importance to Indian classical education but gradually their ideas lost ground. It was thought that British Empire had to fulfill a civilizing mission in India and therefore western sciences and culture needed to be popularized.

**INTRODUCTION OF ENGLISH EDUCATION & CHARTER ACT OF 1813**

English education was first introduced in India in 18<sup>th</sup> century through some charity schools in Calcutta, Madras and Bombay for educating European and Anglo-Indian children. Although the East India Company supported these schools in various ways but it did not take any responsibility for teaching English to the Indian population. The beginning was finally made in the year 1813 through a **Charter Act**. This Act allowed missionaries to travel to India. These missionaries were always keen to spread



## Notes

western literature and teachings of Christianity through English medium. More importantly, this Act asked the company to spend one lakh rupees annually for—  
 (i). encouraging Indian educated classes, reviving and improvement of literature and  
 (ii). promotion of sciences among Indians. However, this clause was interpreted differently by different people.

**DEBATE ON MEDIUM OF EDUCATION AND ROLE OF MACAULAY**

Very soon a debate arose about the choice to be made with regard to the medium of education in India on which the company's government was to spend. There were impassioned debates between the votaries of Oriental and English systems. Things started drifting in favour of English education when Bentinck took over as the Governor General of India in 1828. **T.B. Macaulay** was appointed as the Law Member in his Council in 1834. Macaulay was a great advocate of English education. He was made President of the General Committee of Public Instruction. Supporters of English based education or Anglicists, led by Lord Macaulay, emerged victorious. Macaulay issued his minutes on Indian education on February 2, 1835. This message became the guiding principle for introduction of English education in India. The government resolved that its aim in future would be promotion of European literature and sciences through the medium of English language. In future, all funds spent by the Company on education would be for this purpose alone. This shift meant that now English education in India would become an important medium for the import of western knowledge.

Macaulay was of the opinion that support to English education in India would create “a class of persons Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste.” It was presumed that this class would eventually become strong pillars of the British Raj in India. It was expected that these Indians, trained through English education, would learn western morality and ethics. When incorporated into the structure of colonial rule, these Indians would help to strengthen the British domination of India. This was the “**downward filtration**” theory. This kind of education was not meant for the masses but for the learned and affluent few in India. This theory assumed that ethics of English education would percolate down to the masses through these Indians. These trained Indians, when acting as teachers, could act as the medium through which elementary education would percolate downward in regional languages. Macaulay was convinced that with limited funds, it would be impossible to attempt to educate the masses. It is better that a few English educated Indians act as a “class of interpreters”. This class, by enriching vernacular languages and literature, would help western sciences and literature reach the masses. This would enable British rulers to spread western morality to Indian masses at a much less public expenditure. This theory also saw education as a means to enable Indians to occupy subordinate positions and function as clerks etc. in the Company's bureaucracy.

**WOOD'S DISPATCH**

The most important part of the development of education in 19<sup>th</sup> century, especially English education, was the guidelines prepared by Charles Wood, the Secretary of State, in 1854, popularly known as the **Wood's Dispatch**. This comprehensive scheme dominated education policy in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It firmly put the European model on the map of Indian education.

Its essential features:

- It declared the aim of education in India to be diffusion of European knowledge.
- For higher education, English would be the preferred medium of instruction while

**Notes**

the vernacular languages would be the medium through which European knowledge could infiltrate to the masses.

- It proposed a hierarchy of schools, i.e. vernacular primary schools at the village level, followed by Anglo-Vernacular high schools and an affiliated college at the district level.
- This Dispatch recommended grants-in-aid for the first time to encourage private efforts in the field of education.
- It proposed to set up a Department of Public Instruction to be headed by a Director, one in each of the five provinces under the British rule. This Department would review the progress of education in the particular province. The Department of Public Instruction was established in 1855 and replaced the Committee of Public Instruction and Council of Education.
- It proposed to set up universities at Calcutta, Bombay and Madras on the model of London University which would hold examinations and confer degrees. The universities of Calcutta, Bombay and Madras were established in 1857.
- Apart from the formal education, the Dispatch underlined the importance of vocational education and emphasized the need to set up technical schools and colleges.
- It also recommended setting up of training institutes for prospective teachers.
- It also supported education for women. Many modern girls' schools were set up subsequently and also received government's grants-in-aid.

**HUNTER COMMISSION**

A commission was set up in 1882 under W.W. Hunter to review the progress made in the field of education following Wood's Dispatch. It was confined mostly to secondary and primary education. The Hunter Commission made a large number of recommendations. It laid special emphasis on primary education whose control ought to be transferred to district and municipal boards. At the secondary level, there should be two streams—one literary education which should lead to university education and the other of a practical nature leading to a career in commercial or vocational field. Private initiative in the field of education should be encouraged. It underlined the need to provide adequate facilities for spread of women education outside the presidency towns. For the next two decades, the recommendations of the Hunter Commission showed its impact all over. It saw unforeseen growth in secondary and collegiate education. The Punjab University and the Allahabad University were founded in 1882 and 1887 respectively.

**INTEXT QUESTIONS 18.3**

1. Which Act asked the East India Company to spend one lakh rupees annually on education?  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Who was the most active proponent of English education in India?
  - a. Jonathan Duncan
  - b. T.B. Macaulay



**Notes**

- c. Warren Hastings
  - d. William Jones
3. Briefly examine the motive of Macaulay in spreading English education in India.  
\_\_\_\_\_
  4. Underline the importance of the Wood’s Dispatch in guiding education policy in India.  
\_\_\_\_\_
  5. What was the Hunter Commission concerned with?  
\_\_\_\_\_

**18.4 GROWTH OF PRESS IN INDIA**

The growth of press and journalism formed an important background for the rise of a new consciousness during the modern period. The spread of printing technology meant that books were easily available. In other words, widespread printing opened new channels of communications across India. This new printing technology helped the growth of press and journalism. The newspapers began getting published in English language in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a large number of newspapers in local languages also started. James Augustus Hickey published the first newspaper in India named *The Bengal Gazette* in 1780. It was followed by a series of newspapers from Bengal, Bombay and Madras. Some important papers were *The Calcutta Chronicle* (1786), *The Madras Courier* (1788), and *The Bombay Herald* (1789).

These early newspapers in English were meant primarily for the European and Anglo-Indian community staying in India. However, the Company’s officials were concerned about news of their misdoings appearing in these papers. Therefore, restrictions were often imposed. Lord Wellesley (1796–1804) imposed strict regulations through the Censorship of the Press Act in 1799. This Act warranted that all content was to be cleared by the Secretary to the Government. Names of the printer, editor and proprietor were to be clearly printed in every issue. Lord Hastings (1813–23) relaxed some of these laws in 1818 and removed the pre-censorship of the press. However, these relaxations proved temporary as John Adams, who became acting Governor General in 1823, imposed some tough regulations on Press in the same year. License was made mandatory for starting or using a press. The Governor General reserved the right to cancel a license.

The officiating Governor General, Charles Metcalfe (1835–36) was a supporter of free press. He removed the regulations of 1823. Metcalfe’s Press Act just wanted publishers to give a declaration about the place and premises of the publication. This liberating influence had a positive impact on the growth of press as a large number of newspapers started publishing till stiff regulations were again imposed in 1857 due to the Revolt. Most serious restriction on the growth of Indian language newspapers was Lord Lytton’s **Ver-nacular Press Act** of 1878. A highly biased and racial measure, this Act attempted to stifle any opposition to the government voiced in the local languages of the country. Similar restrictions were not imposed on the English language newspapers. It was an important example of Lytton’s conservative and arrogant attitude. It indirectly empowered the government to control all seditious writings by Indian intelligentsia. There was no appeal

**Notes**

against the decision of the District Magistrate. This Act was repealed in 1882 by Lord Ripon who was a very popular Viceroy among Indians for his liberal views and measures.

**INTEXT QUESTIONS 18.4**

1. Which was the first newspaper in India and when was it published?  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Underline the importance of widespread use of printing technology in the growth of newspapers.  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. What restrictions were imposed by the Censorship of the Press Act, 1799?  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. How did Charles Metcalfe bring about some positive changes?  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. What was the Vernacular Press Act of 1878?  
\_\_\_\_\_

**WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNT**

You have learnt that British rulers looked at India quite differently. Policies made by them were also influenced by their ideological inclinations. During 19<sup>th</sup> century, a series of reform movements swept across India. These movements tried to address issues related to condition of women, caste rigidities, evils that had crept in religious beliefs of people, modernization of communities, educational backwardness etc. British policy makers also tried to popularize English education in India. This could be the medium for the import of European culture and morality. This would eventually help them strengthen their control over this country. During this period, both the English as well as the Indian language press flourished. However, restrictions were imposed at different times to curtail the freedom of press. Social changes that occurred during the modern period helped to prepare the country ultimately for a national liberation movement against the British rule.

**GLOSSARY**

- Orientalists** : Group of British Administrators who popularized India's glorious past.
- Whig political philosophy** : Executive, Legislative & Judiciary should be separate organs of the government.
- Bengal Renaissance** : Historical rediscovery of Bengal's glorious past & modernization of its language & literature.



**Notes**

<b>Custom of Sati</b>	:	Practice of immolation of wife in the Funeral pyre of husband.
<b>Polygamy</b>	:	Having more than one wife.
<b>Brahmo Covenant</b>	:	Written by Debendranath Tagore, it is a statement of the creed of the samaj having a list of duties & obligation of its members.
<b>Spiritual Hinduism</b>	:	Propogating spirituality of Hinduism by Swami Vivekanand.
<b>Idolatry</b>	:	Worship of Idols.
<b>Monotheism</b>	:	Believe in one God.
<b>Anglo Vedic education</b>	:	Aryan ideology, vedic scriptures should be taught with English education.
<b>Shuddhi</b>	:	Movement started by Arya Samaj, opposing conversion of Hindus to Islam and Christianity recon version of recent converts to Hinduism.
<b>Gaurakshini Sabha</b>	:	Society for protection of cows.
<b>Faraiz</b>	:	Maintaining purity of Islam and objecting to infiltration of non-islamic customs; Advocating profession of faith, namaz, roza, zakat and haj.
<b>Natural science</b>	:	Attempting to understand nature.
<b>Charter Act</b>	:	Legal document given by Queen of England thereby granting East India company exclusive privileges of trading and related terms of references & was renewed from time to time.
<b>Vernacular Press</b>	:	Printing press dealing with publishing of newspapers in local Indian languages.



**TERMINAL QUESTIONS**

1. How were ideologies so important in shaping British policies in India?
2. What was the contribution of the Orientalists in popularizing India's past?
3. What were the main social evils that afflicted the Hindu society in 19<sup>th</sup> century?
4. How important were the issues related to women in the reform movements of this period?
5. What was Vivekananda's opinion about the Eastern and the Western civilizations?
6. What were the important issues raised by the Arya Samaj?
7. Identify the important reform movements in the Muslim community during 19<sup>th</sup> century? What were the issues raised by them?
8. Examine Macaulay's advice on spreading English education in India?





9. What was the “downward filtration” theory?
10. What was so wrong about the Vernacular Press Act of 1878?

**ANSWERS TO INTEXT QUESTIONS****18.1**

1. Calcutta Madrassa (1781), Asiatic Society of Bengal (1784) and Sanskrit College at Benaras (1794)
2. Asiatic Society undertook translation of important ancient Sanskrit texts.
3. Lord Wellesley
4. England
5. Charter Acts of 1813

**18.2**

1. Issues like lack of modern education, polygamy and custom of sati. See 18.2, para 3.
2. Keshab Chandra Sen was socially more radical in his views than Debendranath Tagore. See 18.3, para 5.
3. 1893; DAV section: Lala Hansraj, Lala Lajpat Rai; Gurukul section: Munshi Ram (Swami Shradhanand), Lekh Ram, Gurudatt.
4. Religious purification and return to the faraiz, i.e. obligatory duties of Islam.
5. He put great stress on modern education for the Islamic community in India. For this he opened Mohammedan Anglo Oriental College at Aligarh. See 18.2, para 14.

**18.3**

1. Charter Act of 1813
2. T.B. Macaulay
3. He thought that spread of English education in India would create a class of Indian who would support British rule. See 18.3, para 4.
4. This Dispatch was a comprehensive scheme, designed on the European model, which guided the Indian education policy for fifty years. See 18.3, para 5.
5. It was concerned with the progress made in education after Wood’s Dispatch and was confined mostly to secondary and primary education. See section 18.3, para 6.

**18.4**

1. The Bengal Gazette, 1780
2. The widespread use of printing technology ushered in the growth of newspapers as well as production of books in large quantity. See para 18.4, par 1.
3. All content was to be cleared by the Secretary to the Government. Besides, name of the printer, editor and proprietor should be printed on every issue. See section 18.4, para 2.

**Notes**

4. He removed the regulations on press imposed in 1823. Now the publishers just had to give a declaration about the place and location of the publication. See section 18.4, para 3.
5. The Vernacular Press Act of 1878 imposed strict control over the newspapers published in Indian languages.

**HINTS TO TERMINAL QUESTIONS**

1. 18.1 under influence of ideas on administrative and economic policies.
2. 18.2 para 2 ; 18.2.1 and 18.2.2
3. 18.2.2. and 18.2.3.
4. 18.2.5 under Arya samaj
5. 18.2.3. under Rama Krishna Mission
6. 18.2.7.
7. 18.3 and 18.1.1.
8. 18.3.2 para 1.
9. 18.3.2 para 2.
10. 18.4 para 3.



## 19

## POPULAR RESISTANCE TO COMPANY RULE

The early years of the English East India company's rule in India witnessed a large number of uprisings and rebellions. As we have learnt, over a period of 100 years, starting from 1750s to 1850s, the English East India company adopted various measures to transform India into a colony. Different policies followed by the British in India during this period were primarily in the interest of the British. A number of land revenue experiments were made which caused hardship to cultivators. Local administration failed to provide relief and natural justice to the rural poor. In this lesson we will learn how the peasantry and tribal people suffered under the colonial administration and why they resorted to revolts. With a brief narrative of important popular uprisings, we will analyze the nature and significance of these uprisings. The Revolt of 1857 has a major significance because, for the first time, it brought together people having different ethnic, religious and class background in a unified movement against the British rule.



### OBJECTIVES

After studying the lesson, you will be able to:

- discuss the background to the popular revolts which broke out till 1857;
- explain the nature and significance of these revolts,;
- identify the issues that led to the Revolt of 1857.and
- analyse the importance and significance of the Revolt of 1857.

### 19.1 CIRCUMSTANCES LEADING TO POPULAR REVOLT

We have read in earlier lessons that the British rule in India had a number of changes in socio-economic life of the Indian people. The industrial Revolution (we will learn more about it in subsequent Lessons) made it necessary for England to look for raw materials and markets in other countries. This necessity guided the policy of the colonial ruler in India. Indian economy was geared to serve the interests of the British masters. Let us recall some of the important changes in Indian economy during this period.

- A new set of property relations was introduced and land was made saleable commodity.
- Private ownership of land was recognized and a number of intermediaries came into existence in between the owner and cultivator of the land.



**Notes**

**POPULAR RESISTANCE TO COMPANY RULE**

- Commercial crops were encouraged in place of food crops to serve the British capitalists.
- Speculation and investment in land by merchants, bureaucrats and landlords led to the growth of absentee landlordism.
- Growing burden of taxation made the cultivators an easy prey to the revenue collections, merchants and money lenders.
- Transfer of wealth from India to England became a common feature.
- Local industries were suppressed in order to make way for the British manufactured goods.
- Tribals lost their traditional rights in land due to the land revenue policy of the British government.

All these changes dealt a serious blow to the rural society, particularly the cultivators and tribals. For the peasant, the new changes in agrarian economy and social structure meant more intensive and systematic exploitation.

To recall it again, the colonial rulers were concerned only with the collection of revenues in time which were fixed at high rates. Zamindars and others who were engaged in collecting the revenue were least concerned about the paying capacity of the cultivators and forcefully collected the taxes. In meeting the increasing demand of taxes, the peasants were compelled to sell their lands or they were caught in the trap of money lenders. Justice could not be expected from the local administration because it was under the influence of the rich. Thus, under the colonial rule, the nexus of the official, the landlord and the money lender combined together to exploit the peasantry. Bengal famine of 1770, bear testimony to the devastating effect of the British policy over the rural society. Alongwith the colonization of the economy, changes introduced by the British in local administration and society created discontent and resentment among local population. This discontent at various junctures took the form of rebellion.



**INTEXT QUESTIONS 19.1**

1. How did Indian peasantry met the increasing demand of taxes by Britishers?  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Under the colonial rule nexus of which agencies was formed to exploit the peasantry?  
\_\_\_\_\_

**19.2 MAJOR UPRISINGS**

Before analyzing the nature and importance of early resistance to the British authority, it would be better for us to be introduced to some of the rebellions. From 1760s to the Revolt of 1857, there were a large number of rebellions spreading over different parts of India. We will discuss these rebellions in two categories – the peasant uprising and the tribal uprisings.

**(i) Peasant Uprisings**

Growing burden of taxation, eviction from land and the Bengal famine led to the impoverishment of a large section of the peasantry. Many of these people being



## Notes

evicted from lands joined the bands of *Sanyasis* and *Fakirs*. Though they were religious mendicants they used to loot the grain stocks of the rich and the treasuries of the local government. The *Sanyasis* often distributed their wealth among the poor and established their own government. However, they could not sustain their struggle for long in the face of strong repressive measures of the British rulers. Bankim Chandra Chatterjee wrote a novel, *Anand Math* to immortalise the *Sanyasi* Rebellion.

Peasants of Rangpur and Dinajpur, two districts of Bengal, were aggrieved by the tyranny of the revenue contractors. One such revenue contractor, Debi Singh, created a reign of terror by torturing the peasants in order to collect taxes. When the British officials failed to protect the peasant, the peasants took the law in their own hands. They attacked the local *cutchheries* and store houses of the contractors and government officials. The rebels formed their own government and stopped paying revenues to the Company agents. This rebellion was in 1783. The rebels were finally forced to surrender before the Company officials.

In South India, the situation was in no way different. The dispossessed landlords and displaced cultivators raised the banner of revolt. The *poligars* of Tamilnadu, Malabar and coastal Andhra revolted against the colonial rule in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. The revolt of the *Mappilas* of Malabar was most significant. The *Mappilas* of Malabar were the descendants of the Arab settlers and converted Hindus. Majority of them were cultivating tenants, landless labourers, petty traders and fishermen. The British conquest of Malabar in the last decade of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and the introduction of the British land revenue administration in Malabar enraged the *Mappilas*. Over assessment, illegal taxes, eviction from land and the change in land ownership right caused growing discontentment among them. Thus, they rose in revolt against the British and the landlords. The religious leaders helped in strengthening the solidarity of *Mappilas* and in developing anti-British consciousness. These *Mappilas* were suppressed by the colonial rulers.

In Northern India the *Jats* of Western U.P. and Haryana revolted in 1824. In Western India Maharashtra was a common centre of uprising and Gujarat also witnessed the revolt of the *Kolis*. We can add more to the list of peasant rebellions. But let us look at tribal uprisings.

### (ii) Tribal Uprisings

The establishment of colonial rule also affected the tribal people. Living outside the boundary of the mainstream population the tribals lived in their own world being governed by their own traditions and customs. The colonial government extended their authority to the tribal lands and the tribals were subjected to various extortions. The tribals resented the entry of the colonial administration into their land. Take the example of the *Bhils* of *Khandesh* and the *Kols* of *Singhbhum* (Bihar) who enjoyed independent power under their chiefs. But the British occupation of their territories and the entry of merchants, money-lenders and the British administration in these tribal lands curbed the authority of the tribal chiefs. This led the tribal leaders to revolt against the British rule and their target of attack were all the outsiders in the tribal territories. The insurrections were suppressed by the British.

Similarly, the *Santhals* had been living in a large tract of land in the border of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. Their livelihood depended upon the flora and fauna of the jungle. With the introduction of the British rule they were used to clear jungle lands and once they started cultivation on these lands, they were forcibly evicted. Thus, penetration



**Notes**

**POPULAR RESISTANCE TO COMPANY RULE**

of landlords, merchants and money-lenders into their lands brought misery and oppression for the simple living Santhals. The oppression forced the Santhals to take up arms, and they found their leaders in two brothers, Sidhu and Kanu. It was believed that Sidhu and Kanu had blessings from the gods to bring an end to their miseries. They decided to get hold of their lands and to set up their own government. The rebellious Santhals were supported by the local poors like the Gowallahas, Telis, Lohars and others. The rebellious Santhals ultimately failed in the face of the ruthless suppression by the British.

**19.3 NATURE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE EARLY RESISTANCE**

The above narrative of the popular revolts makes certain points clear about the nature of these revolts.

- Actions of the rebels prove that they were clear about their interest and about their enemies. Some features of the peasant and tribal protest movements demonstrate a certain level of political and social consciousness among them.
- In many instances local issues might have triggered off the rebellion. But in the course of the development of the movement, its objective was broadened. Immediate context of a movement may be the oppression of local landlords, once the movement started, it ended up as protest against the British Raj.
- Religious belief, Ethnic ties and traditions played a positive role in mobilizing the peasants and strengthening their solidarity. Very often their notions of their own good old past inspired rebels to recover their lost past. Past basically meant to the rebels to get relief from exploitation and oppression.
- Attempt was made by the ruling class to define the rebellions as a problem of law and order and act of crime. This is complete denial of the peasants understanding of their grievances and their right to protest. It is necessary to understand the domain of peasant and tribal action in its own terms.
- However, the rebels did not have a future plan beyond the restoration of the old order. In spite of their limited objective and narrow world view the rebels definitely exposed the unpopular character of the colonial rule.



**INTEXT QUESTION 19.2**

1. The Santhal Rebellion took place in which region?  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Which novel immortalize the Sanyasi Rebellion?  
\_\_\_\_\_

**19.4 REVOLT OF 1857—CAUSES AND COURSES**

In the earlier section, we have studied how in different parts of India at different point of time, popular revolts posed a challenge to the British Raj. In 1857, we see for the first time, peasant discontent along with protest of some other sections of society against the British conquest, brought together various sections of the society in a unified movement. The events of 1857 are regarded by many historians as early manifestation of nationalism.

**Notes****Reasons for the Revolt**

There were specific grievances which actually precipitated the people's discontent against the British Raj and led to the Revolt of 1857. The Revolt broke out on 10<sup>th</sup> May in Meerut, when Sepoys revolted and started marching towards Delhi to restore the last Mughal ruler, Bahadur Shah II, on the throne. The Revolt started by the Sepoys very soon spread to other sections of the society. Why did this happen? The British government by introducing changes in the land revenue system and in the administrative structure made its rule unacceptable to the majority of the local population. Lord Dalhousie's policy of annexation and the doctrine of lapse, particularly the annexation of Awadh and other parts of north and central India, created widespread discontentment among the local people in this region. Land being the major economic resource the various land revenue settlements like the permanent settlement, Ryotwari settlement, Mahalwari settlement, etc. introduced by the British in India had significant repercussions on land distribution and distribution of power in local society. The new land settlements were basically aimed at increasing the government's revenue earnings and creating a class of local agents who will stand in support of the British Raj. All these had disastrous consequences on the cultivators and growing revenue demands even compelled Taluqdars and other chiefs to sell their land. Money lending and auction of property further added to the hardship of the peasantry. Artisans and handicrafts men were affected by the promotion of British manufactured goods and neglect of indigenous industry.

Besides the economic grievances, at the social level there was a strong reaction in the local society against the British intervention in their age-old customs and traditions. Being guided by the philosophy of racial superiority a section of the British officials was engaged in modernizing and civilizing India. People were apprehensive of the social legislation introduced by the British. Particularly the abolition of Sati and the widow remarriage act had a negative effect on the common people. These changes were viewed as intervention in the local tradition and culture. Added to this was the fear of conversion to Christianity. All these alienated the people from the British Raj.

The sepoys had their own reasons for resentment. The sepoys were unhappy for low pay and racial discrimination in matters of promotion, pension and terms of service. Soldiers who were basically hailing from the peasant families were also unhappy with the new land settlements introduced by the British. It is true that the sepoys were agitated for various reasons but an immediate provocation was their suspicion that they would be forced to renounce their cultural ethos of centuries old society. Just before the Revolt of 1857, there was a rumor of bone dust in the Atta (flour) ration. The cartridges of the Enfield rifles, which had to be bitten off before loading, were reportedly greased with pork and beef fat. This was perceived as an attack on the religious belief of the soldiers-both the Hindus and the Muslims. Sentiment of the sepoys was well reflected in a proclamation issued at Delhi,- 'It is well known that in these days all the English have entertained these evil designs-first, to destroy the religion of the whole Hindustani Army and then to make the people by compulsion Christians. Therefore, we, solely on account of our religion, have combined with the people, and have not spared alive one infidel, and have re-established the Delhi dynasty on these terms.'

**Courses of the Revolt**

Initial disturbances started in March, 1857 when at Barrackpore, near Calcutta, Mangal Pandey, a sepoy, asked other sepoys to rise against the British military officers and he killed the British Adjutant, Mangal Pandey was later arrested and hanged to death. After that in May, 1857 at Meerut the regiments of Indian sepoys shot down the



**Notes**

**POPULAR RESISTANCE TO COMPANY RULE**

British officers, broke open the prisons, released their comrades and crossed over to Delhi to appeal Bahadur Shah II, the pensioner Mughal emperor, to become their leader. Rumour spread about the fall of the British rule and soon the rebellion spread to other parts of north and central India. In Awadh, the sepoys proclaimed that sepoy Raj had arrived. Dissatisfaction and disillusion against the British Raj brought many local chiefs, peasants, artisans, civil servants, and religious medicants together in this revolt. In Awadh, the revolt spread to Lucknow, Kanpur, Allahabad, Benaras, Rohilkhand, Bundelkhand, Gwalior, Jhansi and Bihar. The revolt in these areas had massive response among the civil population. Some important leaders of the rebellion were Rani Laxmi Bai, Tantia Tope, Begum Hazrat Mahal, Nana Saheb, Kunwar Singh of Arrah.



*Fig. 19.1 Bahadur shah (II) Zafar  
Last Mughal Emperor freedom fighter*



*Fig. 19.2 Rani of Jhansi  
Laxmi Bai freedom fighter*



*Fig. 19.3 Tantia Tope*



*Fig. 19.4 Nana Sahib*



**INTEXT QUESTION 19.3**

- 1) What were the grievances of Indian sepoy?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 2) Name any five important leaders of rebellion of 1857?  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Notes****19.5 NATURE AND CONSEQUENCES OF THE REVOLT****Nature**

Historians are of different opinions regarding the nature of the Revolt of 1857. British historians interpreted the revolt as a mutiny of the sepoy. Ignoring the grievances of the local people and their participation in the movement, the British historians felt that the rebellion was engineered by the sepoy, and some landholders and princes having vested interest. Recent researches on 1857 however argue that self-interested motives did not have much significance before the combined opposition to the unpopular British regime.

Some historians view the Revolt of 1857 as the first war of Indian independence. Those who don't agree with this interpretation argue that the rebel leaders did not make an attempt to establish a new social order. They tried to restore the old Mughal rule by inviting Bahadur Shah II. It is said that "Although Indian initiatives and priorities were so central in the experience of change there was no national revolt in 1857. The discontented were fractured in loyalty and intention, often looking back to a society and a policy which were no longer viable". Thus, it was not revolution but just a restoration.

Recent studies on the Revolt of 1857, however, focus on the popular participation in the revolt. Besides the sepoy and Taluqdars, rural peasantry participated in large numbers in the revolt. In the case of Awadh, it has been shown that taluqdars and peasants jointly launched the attack. Even in many places when taluqdars made peace with the British, peasants continued their movement. The sepoy had linkage with their kinsmen in the villages and the revolt of the sepoy influenced the civilian population to ventilate their grievances against the British rule. Thus the Revolt of 1857 took the character of a popular uprising.

**Causes of the Failure of the Revolt**

In spite of popular participation in the Revolt of 1857, the rebels were ultimately forced to surrender before the British. Reasons for the failure of the rebels were:

- the rebels had limited supply of arms and ammunitions,
- there was a lack of communication and centralized leadership among the rebels,
- the British had sufficient resources and also better arms and equipments,
- the rebels did not have clear political agenda for future except their distrust on the foreign rule.
- the rebels, in spite of the popular character of the movement had failed to enlist the support of merchants, intelligentsia and many local princes that rather supported the British.



**Notes**

**Significance of the Revolt**

The British though managed to suppress the revolt but realized the extent of people’s resentment. The events of 1857 compelled the British to re-examine their policy towards India, after the revolt; therefore, they adopted a strategy to check the future incidents of such a revolt. In order to win back the confidence of local princes, the British made a declaration that they would no longer expand their existing territorial possessions. Special awards were given to the loyal princes. In the recruitment of army, community, caste, tribal and regional loyalties were encouraged in order to check the solidarity among soldiers. the British took recourse to the policy of ‘divide and rule’ by tactfully utilizing caste, religious and regional identities of Indian people. Another important consequence of the Revolt of 1857 was the declaration of Royal Proclamation in 1858. By this proclamation India’s administration was taken over directly by the British Crown abolishing East India Company’s rule.

Finally, though the rebels failed, their heroic struggle against the British Raj left a deep impression in people’s mind. The spirit of Indian nationalism which was at a formative stage in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was greatly influenced by this Revolt.



**INTEXT QUESTION 19.4**

1) When and how was East India company’s rule abolished?

\_\_\_\_\_

2) Enlist any three major causes of the failure of the Revolt?

\_\_\_\_\_



**WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNT**

In this lesson we have learnt that the establishment of the British rule in India resulted in transformation of India into a colony of the British empire. Rural society was greatly affected by this transformation. Being evicted from their lands, peasants became labourers on their own lands. Different form of taxes made their life more miserable. Whereas those who were engaged in small industries had to close their factories as a result of the import of British manufactured goods. All these changes and unresponsive attitude of the British administration compelled the peasantry to vent their grievances through rebellions. Rebellions were not successful before the organized British armed forces. However, these struggles paved the way for future challenge to the British Raj in India. In this regard, the Revolt of 1857 is unique in a sense that cutting across the caste, community and class barriers, Indian people for the first time put up a unified challenge to the British rule. Though the efforts of the rebels failed, the British government was pressurized to change their policy towards India.



**TERMINAL QUESTIONS**

1. Explain the nature of the rebellions earlier to the Revolt of 1857.
2. Discuss the causes of the Revolt of 1857.

**Notes**

3. Explain the significance of the Revolt of 1857.

**ANSWERS TO INTEXT QUESTIONS****19.1**

- 1) By selling their land –holdings.
- 2) Officials of British Government, land lord and Money lender.

**19.2**

- 1) Border of Bengal, Bihar & Orissa.
- 2) Anand-math written by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee.

**19.3**

- 1) Low pay, social discrimination in promotion , pension & terms of service.
- 2) Rani Laxmi Bai, Tantia Tope, Begum Hazrat Mahal, Nana Saheb, Kunwar Singh of Arrah.

**19.4**

- 1) In 1858 through a declaration of Royal Proclamation by the British crown.
- 2) Refer section 19.5

**HINTS TO TERMINAL EXERCISES**

1. Refer section 19.2, 19.3
2. Refer section 19.4
3. Refer section 19.5 para 4