

Changes and Impact: Indian Administration and Society

After Plassey and Buxar, the East India Company emerged as a supreme commercial military power and gradually transformed itself from trader conquerors to rulers. This shift necessitated the establishment of new legislative and institutional framework for governing the subject population. This process was marked by an initial dependence on existing framework but gradual establishment of new systems and institutions, thus bringing changes to different aspects of Indian life. In this task of formulating state policies, the British were guided by economic and intellectual developments in England, the requirements of the time as well as by the limits of newly established colonial government.

INDIAN ADMINISTRATION UNDER THE BRITISH

The early administration of East India Company was that of a trading corporation. 'Factories' or trading establishments were run by company's servants. Less important factories were headed by a senior merchant or a 'factor' while each main factory was headed by a **President**, later called Governor. The main factories later came to be known as Presidencies like Calcutta, Madras and Bombay Presidencies.

The jurisdiction of the Company steadily grew through various processes, and so did its administration.

- In 1698, the Company bought the zamindari rights of villages of **Sutanuti, Calcutta and Govindpur**.
- In 1757, the Company received the zamindari of **24 parganas** near Calcutta.
- In 1760, Mir Qasim rewarded the Company with zamindari rights of **Burdwan, Midnapore and Chittagong**.

After 1764, the Company emerged as the supreme power in Bengal. However, the Company had little intention of making any innovations in Bengal administration and only desired to carry on their profitable trade, collect taxes and maintain British hold over Bengal. Further, direct annexation of Bengal would have created unnecessary complications. Hence, the Company opted for **Dual Government (1765–72)** in theory, with the Company as Diwan and the Nawab as Nazim. The Deputy Subahdar (appointed by the Company) was to function in the interest of the Company, while maintaining a fiction of Mughal sovereignty. Indian officials were allowed to function as before, but under overall supervision of British officials. Even in exercise of Diwani rights, revenue collection was initially carried out by Nawab's deputies. The main stress was on

maintenance of law and order so that Company's trade and exploitation of resources could be carried out without disturbance. However, both British as well as Indian officials were corrupt men and only busied themselves in grasping their share in Bengal plunder, resulting in total administrative breakdown in Bengal.

By 1772, administrative breakdown in Bengal along with other factors such as financial crisis faced by the East India Company led to the passing of **Regulating Act of 1773** to control Company's administration. The Act remodelled the Company's constitution at home as well as in India. Gradually, as the Company transformed from a commercial body to a commercial-cum political body, it realized that it could hold its empire together only by evolving a suitable system of administration. Such a system evolved from time to time with economic developments in Britain and with changing imperial interests.

Until 1813, the British interests were restricted to the following.

- Controlling financial resources through taxation
- Sustaining British superiority in terms of monopoly of trade

Both these interests could be fulfilled without disturbing the existing administrative system. Hence, Warren Hastings (1772–85) and Cornwallis (1786–93) only modified the administration from the top thus initiating the process of change, leaving the rest of the system untouched.

After 1813, the British society began to face drastic changes as a consequence of the Industrial Revolution. Now the British interests mainly lay in converting India into-

- A market for British manufactures
- A Source of raw materials for their industries

This required greater penetration into Indian economy and society and the existing legal system had to be overhauled to promote modern business and regulate various economic transactions with the help of modern laws, giving rise to the need for new administrative and legal systems.

Broadly speaking, the entire administrative structure of the East India Company composed the following.

1. The Home Government in London
2. The Government of India
3. The Financial and Revenue administration
4. Organization of the Civil Services, the Army and the Police
5. Organization of the Judicial Services
6. Economic Policy
7. Social Policy
8. Educational Policy

Ideas Influencing Indian Administration:

The intellectual current called **Utilitarianism** with James Mill, Jeremy Bentham, David Ricardo and John Stuart Mill as its exponents, was largely responsible for the kind of administration and judicial system that was put in place in India under the Company's rule. Their ideas on Indian problems and their prescriptions were as follows:

Problems:

- Indian society was backward, decadent and despotic. The people were completely devoid of values of rationalism and individualism, which were seen as essential building blocks for a modern society.
- There was absence of any security for individual rights.
- There was degradation of the many by the few, resulting in servility, superstition, poverty and crime.

Prescriptions:

- Such a society could be improved through proper legislation which would impart 'human justice' as opposed to 'divine justice'. Administration based on justice and uniformity could convert India into a progressive society. In brief, Utilitarianism chiefly stood for an advocacy of the rule of law; the laws were to be scientifically defined and embodied in a written form in codes. These were to be implemented by a body of local courts accessible to every man.

Note: In 1819, James Mill was included as a member of the executive government of the East India Company.

The Home Government

The Company's administration was looked after by two institutions in England—Court of Proprietors (CoP) and Court of Directors (CoD). The CoD was the Company's executive in England and comprised of 24 Directors who were elected by a body of share-holders known as the CoP. Beginning from the Regulating Act of 1773, the powers and privileges of the CoD were progressively curtailed by successive acts of the British Parliament, until they were completely taken over by the Crown in 1858.

The Government of India

The powers and privileges enjoyed by the Company in India were derived from two sources—partly from the British Crown and Parliament and partly from the Mughal emperors and regional kings. The Company's factories in Bengal and on the east and west coast were administered at each of its principle settlements at Calcutta (Fort William), Madras (Fort St. George) and Bombay by a President (or Governor) and a Council comprising of senior servants of the Company. Initially, the three 'Presidencies' were independent of one another and answerable directly to the Court of Directors in London. The administration of Government of India was first centralised (1773–1858) and then decentralised (Act of 1861 onwards) by successive acts of the British Parliament.

The Financial and Revenue Administration

After the victories at Plassey and Buxar, the Company emerged as a commercial-cum-military-cum-political power in Bengal. Henceforth, land revenue emerged as its main source of income. Other sources included customs and excise duties, tribute received from Indian states, monopolies, opium and salt trade, etc. The Company's land revenue policy in India and its impact has been discussed in detail in the chapter 'Changes and Impact: Indian Economy'.

Organization of the Civil Services, the Army and the Police

The chief goal of British administration in India was the maintenance of law and order for the perpetuation of British rule in India. Keeping this goal in mind, the British administration was based upon three main pillars namely the Civil Service, the police and the army.

The Civil Service

The term 'civil service' was used by the Company to differentiate them from their military and ecclesiastical employees. The main function of civil service was to implement laws and collect revenue. The civil service worked according to a set of rules as opposed to the personal whims of a monarch and formed a distinct feature of the Company's administration.

In the beginning, the Court of Directors exercised the patronage of nominating the civil servants. The Directors nominated their favourites, often their sons and relatives, as posting in India gave them ample opportunity to make quick money by indulging in private trade and bribery.

Cornwallis tried to address this issue of corruption by banning private trade and raising salaries (e.g. the salary of the Collector of a district was raised to ₹1500 a month and 1 per cent commission on the revenue collected from his district). At this time, the Company's civil service became one of the highest paid services in the world. Simultaneously, Cornwallis also adopted the short-sighted policy of Europeanisation of services and no Indian could enter the Civil Service. In fact, it was officially laid down in 1793 that all higher posts in administration worth more than 500 pounds a year in salary could be held by Englishmen only. In view of his efforts to reform, modernise and rationalise the civil service, Cornwallis is also known as the '**Father of Civil Service in India**'.

To further deal with the problem of corruption, Lord Wellesley introduced **training** for civil servants in 1798. Accordingly, in 1800, **Fort William College** at Calcutta was founded which also trained civil servants in Indian languages, literature and sciences. However, the College did not find favour with the Directors of the Company and in 1805 they replaced it with the East India College founded at **Haileybury** in England which ran a training course of two years for young officers appointed for services in the East. For the next 50 years, the Company's civil servants were a product of the Haileybury College.

The Charter of 1833 carried Section 87 which introduced **limited competition** for civil service. The Court of Directors were now required to nominate four times the vacancy. Only one-fourth of them were selected on the basis of a competitive exam.

The Charter of 1853 took away the privilege of the Directors to appoint the civil servants and introduced **open public competition**. A committee headed by Macaulay was set up to make recommendations regarding age, qualification, etc. Subsequently, the Haileybury College was abolished (1858) and the competitive examinations became the sole responsibility of Civil Service Commission. This competitive exam was to be held every year in London in English language, thus making it virtually impossible for an Indian to compete in it. Thus, these provisions did not materially change the policy of keeping the Civil Service of the Company a close preserve of the British nationals.

Though, in 1863, **Satyendranath Tagore** (brother of Rabindranath Tagore) became the first Indian to enter the Civil Services, the number of Indians in the service remained negligible. As a sop to Indians, the Company later created the uncovenanted posts of Deputy Collector, placed between the Collector and the Tehsildar, to which experienced Indian could hope to rise.

The collector (a civil servant) was the senior most officer in the district who was chiefly responsible for collection of revenue. In this task, he was assisted by a Tehsildar who was an Indian.

The Indian Civil Service developed into one the most powerful services in the world, known as the **steel frame** which sustained the British rule. Given their enormous power, the Civil Servants came to believe that they had a divine right to rule India, opposed everything that was progressive in Indian life and became a target of Indian nationalists during the freedom movement. After 1947, independent India continued with this system of civil service which is retained almost in its original form till date.

The Army

The bulk of the company's army comprised of Indian soldiers (in 1857, Indians comprised 86 per cent of the total strength of the Company's army). This was mainly because maintaining an exclusive British army would have been very expensive. However, all the officers in the army, as in other branches of administration, were British and the highest an Indian could reach was at the level of a Subedar. Yet, it is surprising that a handful of British officers could control a predominantly Indian army. This is mainly attributed to the absence of modern nationalism in India at that time. Moreover, the Company was a good paymaster to Indians who already had the tradition of loyalty to the salt! The main task of the army was to keep India under subjugation. A secondary task was to fight England's wars with the Russians and the French and other enemies.

The Police

The Police as the third pillar of administration was again a creation of **Cornwallis**. Prior to this, policing was done by Zamindars with the help of armed retainers. Cornwallis disbanded these armed retainers and replaced them with an organised police force directly under the command of the Company. The police force was divided into **thanas (circles) headed by a Daroga** who was an Indian. In the beginning, this force was headed by a District Judge but later handed over to the civil service. The main task of the police was to keep crimes under check and prevent conspiracy against the British rule. In the 20th century, the police was deployed on a large scale mainly to contain the rising tide of national movement.

Organisation of the Judicial Services

The pre-British judicial setup in India was a diverse mix of Hindu law of the Shastras, the Muslim Koranic law as well as the customary law backed by the ruling authority. Once the Europeans began to settle in India they could not accept the Muslim law that talked about amputation of limbs or stoning of criminals as penalties, nor could they accept special privileges for the Brahmins.

Rudimentary Judicial Framework

It was Warren Hastings who first tried to build up the initial judicial framework based on Mughal model and set up the Diwani Adalat (decided civil cases, appeals went to Sadr Diwani Adalat) and the Faujdari Adalat (decided criminal cases, appeals went to Sadr Nizamat Adalat, followed Muslim law). These courts followed both Muslim and Hindu laws.

Europeanisation of Judiciary

Lord Cornwallis brought further changes in this framework and gave a stable structure to Indian Judiciary. He abolished the District Faujdari Adalats presided over by Indian judges and replaced them with four circuit courts presided over by European covenanted servants who decided the cases with the help of Qazis and Muftis. Similarly, he also abolished the Sadr Nizamat Adalat at Murshidabad and replaced it with a similar court set up at Calcutta comprising of the Governor General and members of the Supreme Council assisted by the Chief Qazi and two Muftis.

Separation of Judicial from Executive Functions

In 1793, Cornwallis compiled his judicial reforms in the form of the famous **Cornwallis Code** based on the principle of separation of powers. The Code divested the Collector of all his judicial powers and left him with the duty of revenue administration alone. The judicial powers were given to a new class of officer—the District Judge. In this way, the separation of judicial from executive functions was first made under Cornwallis.

Reform of Criminal Law

An important feature of the new judicial setup under the British was that enough tolerance was shown towards existing civil and criminal laws. Only the most important modifications were introduced here and there as a complete overhaul of the system was neither needed nor desirable at that time.

Cornwallis went ahead with reforms in criminal law, which the Mohammedans took to be divinely ordained, and set up a judicial system based on **principle of equity** and western notion of justice. He replaced religious or personal law of the ruler or his local agent with written (and later codified) **secular law** and the sovereignty of law was proclaimed. Punishments such as amputation of limbs and other body parts were replaced by imprisonment or fines. Non-Muslims were allowed to testify against Muslims in criminal cases, not permitted so far by Muslim law of evidence.

However, the reforms by Cornwallis produced many undesirable effects as well. The secular code was complicated and unfamiliar to the common man. Lawyers, therefore, had to be employed that added to the litigation costs; people could no longer hope to get affordable justice. Indian judicial functionaries like panchayats, zamindars and qazis were replaced by European judges ignorant of the habits and customs of the Indian people. People now had to come to the district towns which made the process quite lengthy and cases dragged on for years; the common man was thus denied speedy and affordable justice. For instance, a zamindari in Madras went into litigation in 1832 on account of dispute regarding inheritance and debt. The judgement was finally delivered only in 1896, after 64 years! Lastly, like other branches of administration, even the judiciary ultimately

served the interests of the Company, often at the cost of true justice to the common people.

The Charter Act of 1793 also required that all laws relating to rights of persons and property be printed with translation in Indian languages so that people can know about their rights and immunities. In this way, this Act laid the foundation of governance based on **written laws** in British India in place of personal rule of past rulers.

Recognition of Personal Civil Law

The British, however, allowed personal civil laws of various Indian communities to continue in civil matters such as those concerning marriage, divorce, adoption, succession, inheritance, etc.

Codification of Laws

Notably, the British also systematised the entire process of law making and law keeping. Under the Charter Act of 1833, all law-making authority was vested in the Governor-General-in-Council. An **Indian Law Commission** headed by Lord Macaulay was appointed for the **codification of existing laws**. The Indian Penal Code and the Codes of Civil and Criminal Procedure were enacted by its efforts. These codes were applicable throughout the country and for the **first time**, all Indians came under the ambit of a single system of laws. Further, the laws were now open to judicial interpretations and subsequent amendments.

Rule of Law and Equality before Law

The British deserve the credit for introducing in India the modern concept of rule of law, which meant that administration was to be carried out as per the formulated laws and not according to the whims and fancies of any ruler (Yet, the police and the civil servants continued to exercise a great deal of extra-legal powers!) Equality before law meant that all persons were equal in the eyes of law irrespective of their religion, caste or class. For instance, a Brahmin and a shudra, a zamindar and a peasant shall all be equal before law.

Though the Europeans were kept out of their fold and there were different laws and different courts for them, both these modern concepts of justice significantly contributed to a sense of equality among Indians. The new judicial system set in motion a process of **unification of India**; India was now one unit, at least in judicial terms.

Extent of Indian Participation in Administration and Judiciary: In the new judicial and administrative system introduced by the British, **Indians were excluded from higher offices** as a matter of policy since the task of British consolidation could not be left to Indians. Though Indianisation of covenanted services (services held by Englishmen only) was done eventually, it was mainly done in order to cut down state expenditure even as the British government provided justification for the same in terms of justice, moral obligation and local needs.

Economic Policy

This area has been extensively covered in the chapter 'Changes and Impact: Indian Economy'.

Social Policy

The idea of British responsibility towards welfare of Indian people did not emerge immediately after Plassey and Buxar but only during the period of dual government (1765–72) when the Company's servants carried out open and unashamed plunder of Bengal. A servant of the Company wrote in 1769, 'It must give pain to an Englishman to have reason to think that since the accession of the Company to the Diwani the condition of the people of this country has been worse than it was before...this fine country which flourished under the most despotic and arbitrary government, is verging towards its ruin.' Adam Smith preferred to call the Court of Proprietors as the court 'for appointment of plunderers of India'.

The corruption and plunder carried out by the Company in Bengal attracted severe criticism and increased the pressure on the British Parliament to regulate the affairs of the Company, leading to the passing of the Regulating Act of 1773. It was through this act that the British government accepted for the first time the power and responsibility (though partial) for Company's administration. Henceforth, the process continued through subsequent acts.

Social Policy During 1773–1813 (Blend of Orientalism and Political Pragmatism)

Warren Hastings, the First Governor-General, was in favour of an administration which was well versed in Indian languages and responsible to Indian traditions. He personally encouraged study and translation of Indian texts. Under his patronage, Bengali became the first vernacular to be studied systematically by the Englishmen. **Nathaniel Halhed**, a close associate of Hastings compiled a set of Hindu customary and religious laws and translated them into English. In 1788, he also published a **Grammar of the Bengali Language**. Hastings was also instrumental in the establishment of the **Asiatic Society** which helped in the 'rediscovery' of early traditions of Indians. In 1781, Hastings set up the **Calcutta Madrasa** for the study of Persian and Arabic languages. In this way, the early social policy during the days of Warren Hastings reflected a happy combination of British Orientalism and political pragmatism.

Social Policy After 1813 (Cautious Intervention)

Until 1813, the British broadly followed a policy of non-interference in socio-cultural and religious life of the Indians. However, after 1813 there was a change in British attitude towards Indian problems in the aftermath of industrial and intellectual Revolutions in Britain and Europe which filled the Englishmen with the modern liberal ideas of humanism, liberty, equality and fraternity. Several officers who came to India after 1813 were deeply influenced by these ideals and wished to change the socio-cultural life of the Indians along modern lines. However, the existing officials were ready to modernise Indians only to the extent it made them better customers of British goods and reconciled them to the British rule. The challenge therefore was to maintain a workable balance between the two forces and what emerged was a policy of 'cautious intervention' in Indian social institutions.

The term social policy covers a wide range of policies pertaining to law, social customs, family, criminality, education, status ranking, etc. Given the wide range of social issues, and that some of these have been dealt with earlier, we shall concentrate here on spread of Christianity, social

customs of infanticide, sati, widow-remarriage, slavery and education. It is also noteworthy that Bengal, being the headquarters of the Company's government, emerged as the **social laboratory** where the British developed some of their early state policies with the view to regulating the collective life of subject population.

Religion

Spread of Christianity: Christian missionaries and religious persons such as Charles Grant (Chairman of Court of Directors) and William Wilberforce asserted that Hinduism was based on superstition, idolatry and domination of the priestly classes. They encouraged the spread of Christianity which, in their view, was the only true religion while all others were false. They also extended enthusiastic support to the policy of modernising and Westernising India in the hope that this would eventually lead to conversions to Christianity and encouraged the establishment of several modern schools, colleges and hospitals. Subsequently, under the pressure of missionary lobby, the British Parliament inserted a provision in the **Charter of 1813** allowing **missionaries** to go to India and even settle there under a license. But after the revolt of 1857, this attitude was reversed and the British began to support orthodox elements in society including promotion of casteism and communalism.

Social Customs

Female infanticide: The evil custom of female infanticide was the first social custom to be suppressed by the British. It was prevalent in many parts of India, especially among the Rajputs, Mewatis and the Jats. Girls in these communities were seen as an economic burden, leading to the practice of killing female infants by various dubious practices including starvation and poisoning.

- **Jonathan Duncan**, the Resident of Banaras, was the first official to suppress infanticide.
- Infanticide was later banned by Bengal Regulations of 1795 and 1802 (**Regulation VI of 1802**), only once the British were convinced that such a law will not evoke any major public outrage.

Sati and Widow Remarriage

Sati was the next social evil to be suppressed by the British. Sati was practiced in almost all parts of India with maximum cases being reported from Bengal.

- In 1789, **Colebrooke**, the Collector of Shahabad, stopped an act of sati and tried to prove that sati was against Vedic culture.
- In 1813, the government fixed the minimum age for a sati at 16 years. It also declared that a widow whose child was less than three years could not become sati unless the child was entrusted in someone else's care.
- Even as the government shied away from immediately suppressing this custom, a group of Bengali intelligentsia led by **Ram Mohan Roy** actively agitated for the abolition of sati. Moved by the loss of his sister-in-law to sati, Ram Mohan wrote a series of articles to build a strong public opinion against the custom and his journal '**Sambad Kaumudi**' became the main organ of the agitation. Rammohan's efforts were opposed by a group of orthodox Hindus led by **Kasinath Tarkavagish** and '**Samachar Chandrika**' emerged as their main mouthpiece.

- In 1829 sati was finally abolished in Bengal Presidency by means of a legislation passed by **Governor General Bentinck**. In fact, Bentinck made it a crime to associate with the act of sati in any form. The legislation was later extended to Bombay and Madras presidencies in 1834.
- In 1856, the **Hindu Widow Remarriage Act** was passed which legalised remarriage of widows and declared issues from such marriages as legitimate.

It is noteworthy that the initiative for abolishing infanticide as well as sati chiefly came from individual administrators, Christian missionaries and Indian intelligentsia even as the Company's government delayed total suppression of these customs for the extreme fear of inciting a violent Indian reaction.

Slavery

Slavery was a system of labor exploitation prevalent in India. Once again, British attitude towards slavery was marked by procrastination.

- Evangelical propaganda against slavery was led by **William Wilberforce**.
- The **Charter Act of 1833** directed the Government of India to take measures for the abolition of slavery.
- Slavery was finally abolished by the **Indian Slavery Act of 1843** (also known as Act V of 1843).

Both European and Indian social reformers believed that no amount of social legislation alone could eradicate social evils, until people were themselves convinced about the desirability of a law. And for such an attitudinal change, education was a key intervention. Yet, social and religious institutions were an area in which the British intervened with great caution. The interventions came after much procrastination and adequate pragmatic political consideration. It was also seen that the impact of most of these legislations was limited and did not evoke any violent Indian response. All the same, even this policy of limited social intervention was abandoned by the colonial government in the wake of the Revolt of 1857 and replaced by support to orthodox elements of society.

Educational Policy

Education in Pre-British Era

In the pre-colonial times, the indigenous system of education comprised of Madrasas and Makhtabs for Muslims and Tols and Pathshalas for Hindus. Schools were funded by rich zamindars and the state played little role in school education. Curriculum mainly comprised of study of religious scriptures and philosophical texts which were rather crammed than understood; as such the spirit of enquiry and rationalism hardly developed in India. Languages like Sanskrit, Persian and subjects like grammar, law, medicine, etc., were also taught. The system mostly followed oral tradition in the absence of printing press and in general, women were denied formal education. The main merit of this system was that it provided the basic literacy to meet the needs of day today life; a major drawback was the lack of scientific and secular learning.

During the 18th century, the numerous political convulsions created situations that were hardly conducive for any intellectual pursuits. Both Hindu and Muslim seats of learning were in a state of decay.

Early European Efforts in the Field of Education

The Western Christian Missionaries deserve the credit for introducing Modern System of Education in India. They were the first to set up modern schools and publish literary works. In 1556, at Goa, the first modern printing press in India was established by the Portuguese Missionaries. The Danish missionaries published a Tamil dictionary. However, their intention behind these efforts was not to educate people as an end in itself but as a means to evangelisation.

Education under the Company

Immediately after the Company came to power, it followed the policy of non-intervention in social and religious life of the subject population. However, with time the Company faced increasing pressure from different quarters such as the Missionaries and the Liberals to take responsibility for promotion of learning. Accordingly, the Company made some half-hearted efforts to foster oriental learning (**Work of the Orientalists**). These were as follows:

- In 1781, Calcutta Madrasa was set up by **Warren Hastings** for the study of Persian and Arabic.
- In 1791, Banaras Sanskrit College was set up by **Jonathan Duncan** for the cultivation of the laws, literature and religion of the Hindus. The aim of both these institutions was to provide a regular supply of qualified Indians to help in Company's administration.
- In 1784, Asiatic Society of Bengal was set up by **William Jones**.

Further, under the pressure of missionary lobby, the British Parliament inserted a provision in the **Charter of 1813** providing for a yearly fund of ₹1 lakh for promotion of literature and sciences among Indian subjects. It was for the first time that the Court of Directors accepted state responsibility for promotion of learning in India. But even this small sum was not released by the Company until 1823.

Meanwhile, as the British Empire in India expanded, the administrative needs of the Company increased and an all European staff was proving to be too expensive. Hence, the need arose for affordable local staff to serve at the clerical and middle level, particularly in Revenue and Judicial departments. Naturally, this staff was required to have a working knowledge of English language, apart from the knowledge of Persian and vernaculars; and gave rise to the Orientalists vs. Anglicists debate.

Orientalists-Anglicists Controversy

It referred to the prolonged debate on whether the Company should promote Indian (Oriental) or Western (Anglicist) learning. Till 1823 the educational fund allocated by the Charter of 1813 remained unutilised. Even in 1823, when the **General Committee of Public Instruction** was set up, the 10 members of the committee remained divided in two equal groups namely the Orientalists (led by **HT Prinsep**) and the Anglicists (who advocated that the funds be utilised for promotion of Western subjects through English medium).

The Stalemate was broken only when Governor General Bentinck appointed GB Macaulay as the Chairman of the Committee (both of them were Anglicists). Macaulay showed great contempt for Indian customs and literature and had once stated, 'a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of Indian and Arabia.'

The debate was finally settled in favour of the Anglicists with the presentation of the famous **Macaulay's Minute** on 2 February 1835, formally accepted by the government of Bentinck in a resolution passed on 7 March 1835. As per the Minute it was decided to devote the limited resources to the teaching of Western learning in English medium to the upper classes only. Education of masses could not be attempted in the limited resources and thus Macaulay instilled an implicit faith in the filtration theory. He believed that the English educated Indians would in turn enrich the vernacular, enabling western knowledge to reach the masses. Hence, the development of vernacular was seen ancillary to the spread of western education.

Accordingly, the government soon opened a few English schools and colleges at the cost of a large number of elementary schools. In higher courts, Persian was replaced by English as the court language by **Bentinck** in 1835. By a further notification of 1838, all state funds for oriental learning were declared closed. In 1844, it was further announced that applicant for government employment should possess knowledge of English. In this way, the traditional Indian system of education gradually withered away in the absence of official support.

Note: In the North-West Provinces, James Thomason (Lieutenant Governor during 1843–53) tried to develop a comprehensive scheme of village education through vernacular, known as **Thomason's Plan**.

Role of Bengali Intellectuals

It is widely believed that the main factor which tipped the scale in favour of the Anglicists was the economic factor, duly highlighted by a group of Indians who wanted an education system that would help them earn their livelihood. Even without discounting the value of oriental learning, they believed that it was generally more beneficial for Indians to receive English education. A notable role in this regard was played by Raja Ram Mohan Roy. Protesting against the government proposal to strengthen the Sanskrit College, he wrote to Lord Amherst in 1823 that Sanskrit education could, 'only be expected to load the minds of youth with grammatical niceties and metaphysical distinctions of life which are of little or no practical use to their possessors or to the society.' Clearly, Rammohan's protests did not go unheeded.

The Orientalists: The Orientalists were guided by practical considerations and were in favour of promoting Indian classical tradition of learning in Indian languages or vernaculars as they believed that the Indians were generally opposed to Western knowledge. Some of the Orientalists were also interested in exploring ancient Indian civilisation.

The Anglicists: On the other hand, the Anglicists were in favour of Western education in English language only and included various groups in England, such as the Evangelicals, the Liberals and the Utilitarians. The Evangelicals were convinced about the superiority of Christian ideas and hoped that modern education would destroy the existing faith of Indians and help them in converting people to

Christianity. As for the Utilitarians, they were convinced about the superiority of modern Western knowledge and were highly critical of Indian religion and culture.

The Anglicists were of the view that the Indians were backward people and they could progress only through modern western education. They advocated the 'downward filtration theory' which said that since English education was expensive (and only a small sum of ₹1 lakh per annum was allocated), let us educate a group of elite people who in turn would educate the rest of society. In this way, education would gradually filter down from these elites to the masses. The Anglicists included persons like Charles Grant, Thomas Babington Macaulay and James Mill. Lord Macaulay in his famous minute argued that, 'Oriental learning was completely inferior to European learning.'

Western educated Indians, led by Rammohan Roy also advocated study of Western knowledge and considered it as 'key to the treasures of scientific and democratic thought of modern West'. He joined hands with David Hare and founded the Hindu College at Calcutta (March 1817) which imparted instruction mainly in English language and emphasised the study of Western humanities and sciences.

We may now conclude that education policy in India under the British was guided by the following considerations.

- **Political:** To serve as an instrument for consolidation of British rule in India. Macaulay aimed of creating a class of persons who would be 'Indians in blood and colour, but English in taste, opinion, morals and intellect'. In the beginning, the class of English educated Indians like lawyers, doctors and engineers did support the British rule in India as their interests were linked with the continuation of the British rule. Thus, initially, Macaulay's dream did materialise.
- **Evangelical:** To propagate the Christian religion. Macaulay had written to his father stating, 'No Hindu who has received English education ever remains attached to his religion. It is my firm belief that if plans of education are followed up, there will not be a single idolator among the respectable classes of Bengal thirty years hence.' (Macaulay clearly failed to realise the profundity of Hinduism and his hopes here did not materialise!).
- **Administrative:** To obtain a cheap supply of clerks (educated Indians on subordinate posts in Company's administration).
- **Commercial:** To raise the demand for British manufactures and create new markets for British goods as modern educated Indians were expected to be British in their taste.
- **Moral:** To inculcate a new set of values that justified the colonial rule and glorified the British ways.

Wood's Education Dispatch (1854)

Sir Charles Wood, the President of the Board of Control and later the Secretary of State for India, was a firm believer in the superiority of the English race and sincerely believed that the English institutions could serve as a useful model for the world. In 1854, he sent a comprehensive dispatch on the scheme of future education to the Government of India, famously known as the Wood's Dispatch. It came to be considered as the Magna Carta of English education in Indian. It recommended a properly articulated scheme of education from the primary school to the University for the whole of British India. The major recommendations of the Wood's Dispatch may be summarised as follows:

- It declared that the aim of government's education policy was the teaching of Western education. Wood had clearly stated, 'the education we desire to extend in India is ... European knowledge' and reiterated that the aim of education in India was the diffusion of European languages, through the medium of both English and Indian languages (vernacular).
- It further clarified that Indian languages shall be the medium of instruction in primary schools, followed by Anglo-vernacular schools in middle and high school levels and education in English medium at College and University level.
- It also recommended the following.
 - Creation of a Department of Public Instruction in each province.
 - Establishment of a network of graded schools-elementary, middle and high schools.
 - Establishment of University at Calcutta, Bombay and Madras on the model of the London University.
 - Setting up a system of grants-in-aid for financial help to foster private enterprise in education.
 - Setting up of Technical Schools and Colleges (vocational instruction was emphasised)
 - Setting up Teachers' Training Institutions and vernacular schools.
 - The Dispatch also made recommendations in support of education for women.

Almost all the above recommendations were implemented.

- In 1857, Universities were set up in Calcutta, Bombay and Madras. Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, the novelist, was one of the first two graduates of Calcutta University.
- Girls' Schools set up mostly by Bethune's efforts were brought under the grant-in-aid system.
- Hindu College in Calcutta (later known as Presidency College) was set up by David Hare for promotion of secular education.
- Similarly, in Bombay and Madras also, several missionary schools were established.

In this way, by 1850s, the foundation for English education was laid by the British. The next fifty years witnessed rapid Westernisation of education system in India and the indigenous system was replaced by the English system.

Education of Women

The first step in the field of women's education was taken by Christian missionaries, whatever their motive.

- In 1819, the Calcutta Female Juvenile Society was set up by the Christian missionaries.
- In 1849, a Girl's School in Calcutta was founded by JED Bethune, President of the Council of Education.
- The Wood's Dispatch of 1854 also emphasised on the need for female education.

In a final analysis, the spread of English education in India came with its own merits and demerits. Western education broadened the horizon of knowledge and infused a new spirit of rationalism among younger generation. Whatever little effort the British made did help in the spread of modern ideas, but not in the form desired by the British. Modern ideas spread

through the educated Indians, political parties and press and included the ideas of democracy and nationalism.

The reality was that neither the Company nor the Crown was really interested in promoting any kind of learning in India. Changes in education system were made to promote British interests such as supply of clerks, creation of market for British goods and justify the colonial rule. A meagre sum was allocated for promotion of learning activities. This sum was spent in the establishment of a handful of English schools and colleges at the cost of mass education with the net effect that literacy was hardly better in 1921 than in 1821. The filtration theory did not work in practice and instead created a linguistic and cultural divide between the educated few and the illiterate masses. Scientific and technical education and women's education was also neglected as it lacked usefulness in the eyes of the British. By 1857, there were only 3 medical colleges in the country in Calcutta, Bombay and Madras. And the only good engineering College at Roorkee was open only for Europeans and Eurasians. Emphasis on English and high fees for schools and colleges made education a virtual monopoly of the rich. For the next 100 years, education was so very limited that it even failed to compensate for the destruction of the traditional education system!

To sum up, it was in the 19th century that the British put in place new systems of administration and judiciary. While they benefitted the British by providing greater control and penetration into India, they benefitted the Indians by uniting them under uniform administrative and judicial framework and provided ground for the first stirrings of national consciousness.



Previous Years' Questions – Preliminary Exam

1. What is the correct chronological sequence of the following? [UPSC 1997]

1. Wood's Education despatch
2. Macaulay's minute on education
3. The Sargent Education Report
4. Indian Education (Hunter Commission)

Choose the correct answer from the following options.

- (a) 2 1 4 3 (b) 2 1 3 4
(c) 1 2 4 3 (d) 4 3 1 2

2. Which of the following was the aim of education as stated by the Wood's despatch of 1854? [UPSC 2002]

- (a) The creation of employment opportunities for native Indians
- (b) The spread of western culture in India

- (c) The promotion of literacy among the people using English medium of language
- (d) The introduction of scientific research and rationalism in the traditional Indian education

3. By a regulation in 1793, the District Collector was deprived of his judicial powers and made the collecting agent only. What was the reason for such regulation?

[UPSC 2010]

- (a) Lord Cornwallis felt that the District Collector's efficiency of revenue collection would enormously increase without the burden of other work
- (b) Lord Cornwallis felt that judicial power should compulsorily be in the hands of

Europeans while Indians can be given the job of revenue collection in the district

- (c) Lord Cornwallis was alarmed at the extent of power concentrated in the District Collector and felt that such absolute power was undesirable in one person

- (d) The judicial work demanded a deep knowledge of India and a good training in law and Lord Cornwallis felt that District Collector should be only a revenue collector



Practice Questions – Preliminary Exam

1. 1. Female foeticide was the first social custom which was suppressed by the British.
2. William Jones was the first official to suppress it.

Which of the above statements is/are correct? Choose the correct answer from the following options.

- (a) I only (b) 2 only
(c) both (d) neither

2. Which among the following became the organ of Rammohan Roy's agitation against the practice of sati.

- (a) Samachar Chandrika
- (b) Young India
- (c) Kesari
- (d) Sambad Kaumudi

3. 1. Kasinath Tarkavagish opposed the banning of slavery.
2. In 1829, Governor General Bentinck passed the legislation legalising the remarriage of widows.

Which of the above statements is/are incorrect? Choose the correct answer from the following options.

- (a) I only (b) 2 only
(c) both (d) neither

4. Which of the following statements is incorrect?

- (a) In 1813, minimum age for sati was fixed at 18 years.

- (b) Infanticide was banned by the regulation of 1802.

- (c) Charles Grunt encouraged the spread of Christianity in India.

- (d) Brooke, the collector of Shahabad, tried to show that sati was against Vedic culture.

5. With reference to the Orientalist vs. Anglicist debate, consider the following statements.

1. The Orientalists were guided by practical considerations.

2. The Anglicists included various groups in England such as the Evangelicals, the Liberals and the Utilitarians.

Which of the above statements is/are incorrect? Choose the correct answer from the following options

- (a) I only (b) 2 only
(c) both (d) neither

6. Which of the following are incorrectly matched?

- (a) Orientalists-downward filtration theory

- (b) Anglicists-downward filtration theory

- (c) Anglicist-Lord Macaulay

- (d) Orientalist-Warren Hastings

7. Under whom was the separation of judicial from executive functions was first made?

- (a) Warrant Hastings

- (b) Lord Hastings

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- (c) Cornwallis
(d) John Shore
8. 1. The main job of civil servants was collection of revenue.
2. Training for civil servants was introduced by Cornwallis.
- Which of the above statements is/are correct? Choose the correct answer from the following options.
(a) I only (b) 2 only
(c) both (d) neither
9. Which of the following is incorrect?
(a) Fort William College-1800
(b) East India College, Hailyburry-1805
(c) Nomination cum competition for civil service-1853
(d) training for civil servants 1798
10. A handful of British officers could control a predominantly Indian army because-
1. Indian soldier had the tradition of loyalty to the salt.
2. A south Indian soldier fighting against a Marathi soldier could not think that he was being anti-India.
- Which of the above reasons is/are correct? Choose the correct answer from the following options.
(a) I only (b) 2 only
(c) both (d) neither
11. Indianisation of covenanted services (services held by Englishmen only) was done mainly in order to-
1. Cut down expenses
2. Provide justice and meet local needs
- Which of the above reasons is/are incorrect? Choose the correct answer from the following options.
(a) I only (b) 2 only
(c) both (d) neither



Practice Questions – Main Exam

1. In what ways did the colonial social policy change in the period after 1813?
2. Trace the evolution of British intervention with reference to sati, infanticide and slavery.
3. What were the reasons behind administrative reforms of the 19th century? Discuss.
4. What factors guided the British education policy in India? Critically analyse.
5. Write a critical note on the following-
(a) the development of judicial and administrative systems during the first half of 19th century.
(b) the effect of English education in India.

Answers

Previous Years' Questions – Preliminary Exam

1. (a) 2. (d) 3. (c)

Practice Questions – Preliminary Exam

1. (a) 2. (d) 3. (c) 4. (a) 5. (d)
6. (a) 7. (c) 8. (a) 9. (c) 10. (c)
11. (b)