

## UNIT

# 17

## Effects of British Rule

### Learning Objectives



#### To acquaint oneself with the knowledge of

- British East India Company's emergence as a territorial power
- Failure of dual government established by Robert Clive and assumption of direct responsibility of the Company under Regulating Act of 1773
- Cornwallis' Permanent Settlement in Bengal and Thomas Munro's Ryotwari System in Madras Presidency
- Wellesley's Subsidiary Alliance and Dalhousie's Doctrine of Lapse leading to annexation of more number of Indian territories without war
- The Company government's relationship with Indian Rulers
- Reforms in civil and judicial administration carried out by Cornwallis and Wellesley
- Social and educational reforms and the building of rail and communication networks attempted by Bentinck and Dalhousie
- Neglect of irrigation and exploitation of forest resources by the colonial state leading to frequent famines, forcing the peasants and artisans to move out of the country as indentured labourers
- Drain of Wealth theory of Dadabhai Naoroji

### Introduction

The general breakdown of the central authority, in the wake of Mughal's fall, resulted in a English trading company taking over India. Initially, the English East India Company's focus was not on administration. Its aim was ensuring smooth trade. However, after the terrible Bengal famine of 1770, they began to exercise power with some responsibility. Notwithstanding their exploitative economic policy, their professed objective was the safety of the people they governed and administration of justice. The justification for their expansionist policy was the extermination of tyranny of the local rulers and the harassment by robbers and marauders in

the country. Railways and telegraph, introduced for easier communication, also served the purpose of curbing resistance and the control of the local population. However, their agrarian and commercial policies had a ruinous impact on the economy. India's wealth was drained in several forms. By the 1830s there was large scale emigration of ruined peasants and weavers to plantations in the British Empire countries.

### 17.1 Establishment of British Raj

Buxar was the real foundation battle for British dominion in India. Not only the Nawab of Bengal and Oudh, but the Mughal emperor ShahAlam II and his prime minister were also



opposed to the British. As a result of the Battle of Buxar, the Company ceased to be a company of merchants and became a formidable political force. Under the pretext of corruption in Bengal administration Clive was appointed Governor of Fort William. Clive did not like his predecessor Vansittart's decision restoring Oudh to Shah Alam. So he called for fresh negotiation with Shuja-ud-daulah. As a result of this, two treaties of Allahabad were signed. The emperor granted the Diwani (revenue administration) of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa to the Company. The emperor Shah Alam II was to get the districts of Allahabad and Kora, besides an annual allowance of 26 lakhs of rupees from the revenues of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. The province of Oudh was restored to Shuja-ud-daula on the payment of war indemnity. The treaties held the Nawab of Bengal responsible for the governance of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa.

Before the emperor granted the Diwani to Clive, the Nawab of Bengal, successor of Mir Jafar, had practically transferred the Nizamat (civil administration) to the Company. So the Company had to function as Diwan and the Nizam. The Diwan's duty included the collection of revenue and the control of civil justice. The Nizam's function was to exercise military power and to dispense criminal justice. Thus the Company acquired the real power, while the responsibility of administration was with the Nawab. This arrangement is called Dual System or Double government or Dyarchy.

But soon the dual system began to break down. Governance without responsibility led to the outbreak of a terrible famine in 1770. Nearly one third of Bengal's population perished. The miseries of the province were intensified by the Company servants who had monopolized the sale of rice and realized huge profits. Finally, the Company realized its responsibility and passed the Regulating Act of 1773. Warren Hastings was appointed the Governor General of Bengal.



Warren Hastings

The administrative head of East India Company was Governor (of Fort William or of Fort St. George) until 1772. Warren Hastings who was Governor of Fort William was made Governor-General of Bengal according to the Regulating Act of 1773. The Charter Act 1833 designated this post as Governor-General of India and William Bentinck was appointed the first Governor-General of united British India. The Governor-General was selected by the Court of Directors of the East India Company, to whom he was responsible. After the great rebellion of 1857, when the government of India was transferred from the East India Company to the Crown, the title "Viceroy and Governor-General" was first used in the queen's proclamation of 1858. Canning was the first Viceroy and Governor-General of India accountable to the British Parliament.

## 17.2 Land Tenures: Permanent Settlement and Ryotwari Settlement

The Regulating Act of 1773 imposed on the court of Directors the legal obligation of informing all revenue transactions of the Company servants to the British Treasury. The Governor and Council consisting of the Commander-in-Chief and two counsellors sat as a Board of Revenue which discussed revenue matters. The Pitt India Act of 1784 separated the civil and military establishments in India.

Governor-General Cornwallis, himself a big landlord, wanted to create landlords after the British model in India. Cornwallis came to a settlement with the revenue farmers. This resulted in the creation of a new type of middlemen, called zamindars, reducing the cultivators to the position of mere tenants. This settlement that Cornwallis



Cornwallis



made with the zamindars of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa in 1793, in pursuance of the instruction from the Directors, is called the Permanent Settlement. 'Settlement' refers to the assessment and fixing of the quantum of land revenue to be paid by each zamindar to the government. For Bengal, Bihar and Orissa (Odisha), this was fixed permanently. Thus the zamindars who were originally tax collectors acquired hereditary rights over the land assigned by the government. The zamindars pocketed whatever they collected over and above the settlement.

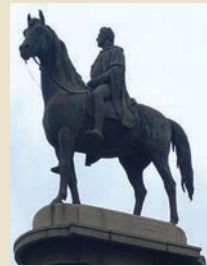
The first quarter of the nineteenth century was a formative period in the land revenue history of the Madras Province. First after a great deal of deliberations Permanent Settlement was adopted. The districts of Chengalpattu, Salem and Dindigul were divided into a number of *mittahs* and sold to the highest bidders. Most of the purchasers, after fleecing the peasants, failed in the course of a year or two. The experiment was therefore abandoned. Then the Board of Revenue tried a system of village leases.

Mahalwari was introduced in 1833 during the period of William Bentinck. Under the system the revenue settlement was made with the proprietor of the estate but the land revenue was collected from individual cultivators.

Under the Village Lease system the assessment of each village was to be fixed for a period of three years based on the actual collections over a series of past years. In districts where *mirasi* rights existed, the *mirasdar* was made responsible for the rent collections. In districts where the *mirasi* rights did not exist, an arrangement was made with the village headman. This system failed due to various reasons such as bad monsoons, low price of grains and the short period of lease. When crops failed entire villages defaulted and fled without paying the revenue. The government had to seek the help of the district collectors to bring back the peasants to the village.

By 1814 the Court of Directors had decided to introduce the ryotwari system. This was a system formulated by Governor Thomas Munro. Under this system the ryot, an Anglicization by the British in India of the Arabic word *ra'iyah*, meaning a peasant or cultivator, was the proprietor and tax payer of the land. The government dealt with him directly without the intervention of any middlemen. The peasant was entitled to possession of land so long as he paid the land revenue. Apart from eviction, default could result in attachment of livestock, household property and personal belongings. The government assessed the revenue of each cultivated field. The revenue assessment was reviewed once in thirty years, taking into account the changes in grain prices, marketing opportunities, irrigation facilities and the like. The ryotwari system introduced the concept of

Thomas Munro: Munro arrived Madras in 1780. In the first 12 years he was engaged in Mysore War as soldier. He worked in the Baramahal (Salem district) from 1792-1799 and Kanara from 1799-



Thomas Munro

1800. He was collector of Ceded Districts: Kadapa, Kurnool, Chittoor, Anantapur. It was during this period that he conceived the idea of Ryotwari Settlement. In 1820 he became Governor of Madras Presidency and served for seven years. In 1822 he officially enforced the Ryotwari System in Madras. During his governorship, he gave attention to education and regarded any expenditure on it as an investment. He also emphasized the need for Indianization of the services. He died of Cholera at Pattikonda (Karnool district) in July 1827. A very popular governor, people constructed shrines in his honour, and named their children after him. His statue was erected at Madras in 1839 by public subscription.

private property in land. The individual holders were registered and issued *pattas*. They were permitted to sell, lease, mortgage or transfer the right over land.

### 17.3 Subsidiary Alliance and Doctrine of Lapse

Governor General Wellesley (1798-1805)

pursued a forward policy to establish British supremacy in India. His annexation of territories was not a result of victory in war. It was by assumption of the entire administration of an Indian State, with its rulers retaining his title and receiving a fixed allowance.



Wellesley

Before Wellesley, the Company concluded alliances with Indian princes. The Nizam and the Nawab of Oudh received subsidies for the maintenance of British contingents. Such forces were generally stationed outside the State concerned. Payment was made in cash. Difficulties arose when the payments were not promptly paid. Wellesley broadened the scope of this arrangement by his Subsidiary Alliance System, bringing under it Hyderabad, Mysore, Lucknow, the Maratha Peshwa, the Bhonsle (Kolhapur) and Sindhia (Gwalior).

The provisions of the Subsidiary Treaty are:

- (a) An Indian ruler entering into Subsidiary Alliance with the British had to dissolve his own armed forces and accept British forces and a British Resident in his territory.
- (b) He had to pay for the British army's maintenance. If he failed, a portion of his territory would be taken away and ceded to the British.
- (c) The protected prince was to sever all connections with European powers other than the British, especially the French.
- (d) No European should be employed without the permission of the British.
- (e) No negotiation with any Indian power should be held without the Company's permission and
- (f) No other Indian power to interfere in its internal affairs. Thus the states

brought under the system became dependent on the Company in political and military matters, sacrificing their own sovereignty and status.

The Subsidiary System increased the military resources and efficiency of the Company government. The immediate result of this system was the discharge of thousands of professional soldiers by the political powers. The disbanded soldiers indulged in freebooting activities. Pindaris (marauders) began to swell on account of the Subsidiary System. In view of the guaranteed support to the Princes by the Company, the protective States mal-administered and paved the way for the annexation.

Distinction between 'Presidency' and 'Province': The British called Presidency the place where the office of Chief Administrative Head was situated. Madras, Bombay and Calcutta were the three Presidencies. Later when the Presidency became unwieldy for governance, they created provinces like Central and United Provinces.

### Doctrine of Lapse

Traditionally Hindu custom allowed the adoption of a son in the absence of male heirs. The adopted son had the right to inherit property. In this context the question raised was whether



Dalhousie

such an adopted prince holding the state subordinate to the Paramount Power (England) could succeed without the consent of the latter. Before Dalhousie's arrival, the custom was to obtain the sanction of the Company government before or after adoption. Governor General Dalhousie held that the paramount power could legally refuse to sanction adoption in the case of rulers of States dependent on it. This meant that dependent States could be regarded as lapsed to the paramount power, by its refusal to sanction the succession of adopted sons.





By applying this policy known as Doctrine of Lapse, the first state to fall was Satara. Shahji of Satara died (1848) and the son he adopted on the eve of his death was not recognized by Dalhousie. Gangadhar Rao, Raja of Jhansi died in November 1853 and Dalhousie annexed that state immediately. (His widow, Rani Lakshmi Bai, played a prominent role in the Great Rebellion of 1857.) Raghuji Bhonsle III died in 1853 without a child. Nagpur was immediately annexed. In 1851, the last Peshwa died. He had been a pensioner of the Company for thirty-three years, but Dalhousie refused to continue paying the pension to his son, the Nana Sahib. The Doctrine of Lapse, thus, served as an instrument for the pursuit of its annexation policy. When the Crown took over India in 1858 Doctrine of Lapse was withdrawn.

## 17.4 Native States and British Paramountcy

In the aftermath of the Battle of Plassey (Palashi) (1757), when the Company embarked on its career of expansion, it established the system of dual government. Under this system, everything was sought to be done by the Company's servants in the name of some powerless and dependent prince. In theory the Company was only the diwan (the collector of revenue), but in practice it exercised full authority. This authority was asserted by the refusal to continue the payment of annual tribute to the Mughal emperor Shah Alam II promised by Clive. Cornwallis even stopped affirming obedience in letters to the emperor. Wellesley carried matters further with his objective of establishing British predominance through his Subsidiary Alliance System. Wellesley made subsidiary alliances with the three of the major States of India: Hyderabad, Poona and Mysore.

Hastings (Moir) who became Governor General in 1813 ordered the removal of the phrase denoting the imperial supremacy from his seal. He refused to meet Emperor Akbar II, unless he waived all authority over the Company's possessions. But Hastings laid down a policy

that the Company was in no way responsible for the administration of the Indian States. Thus, under the Subsidiary System, each Prince was secure on his throne, notwithstanding the discontent of his people or by his jealous neighbours. In regions such as Kathiawar and Central India, divided among a great number of petty chiefs, the Company's close supervision became indispensable for prompt action.

The Company army helped the Indian rulers under the Subsidiary system to quell any rebellion or disturbance within the State. In Hyderabad, the authority of the Nizam did not prevail in certain areas, as the Arab troops lived without any control. The assistance of British troops helped reduce the Arabs to obedience. In Mysore state the financial management of the raja provoked a rebellion in 1830 and the treaty of Wellesley only provided authority for the Company to interfere. William Bentinck, as Governor General, relieved the raja of all his powers and appointed Mark Cubbon to administer Mysore. In Gwalior, during a minority, the parties at the durbar quarrelled bitterly among themselves. The army of the State passed out of control. Ellenborough moved with a strong army, but the State army resisted. At the battle of Maharajpur, the State army was defeated and new terms of conditions including the limitation of the military forces maintained by it were imposed in 1843.

Dalhousie's new method of annexing territories, Doctrine of Lapse, as we have seen, increased the territories under British domain. Every accession of territory also increased the influence of the Company over the governments of the Indian princes.

## 17.5 Reforms in Civil and Judicial Administration

Cornwallis organized company administration securing the services of William Jones, a judge and an Orientalist. He set up a machinery for the detection and punishment of crime, thereby ending the dual system of government established by Clive. The collection



of revenue was separated from administration and justice. He deprived the collectors of their judicial function and confined them to revenue collection. Civil and criminal courts were thoroughly reorganized. At the top of the judicial system were the Sadar Diwani Adalat and the Sadar Nizamat Adalat. These two highest civil and criminal courts of appeal at Calcutta were presided over by the Governor General and his Council. Under them were four provincial courts of appeal at Calcutta, Deccan, Murshidabad and Patna. Each was to function under three European judges, aided by Indian advisers. Next came the District and City courts, each presided over by a European judge assisted by Indians. Every district and important city was provided with a court. At the bottom of the judicial system were courts under Indian judges, called munsifs. In civil cases, Muslim law was imposed and followed. In criminal cases, Hindu and Muslim laws were applied according to the religion of the litigants.

The biggest contribution of Cornwallis was the reform of the civil services. Cornwallis provided scope for employing capable and honest public servants. He put an end to the old tradition of the civil service wherein the Company's servants were given a small salary but were permitted to trade. Cornwallis appointed people solely on merit but considered that efficiency required the exclusion of Indians from the Company's service.

Every district was divided into *thanas* (police circles). Each thana was under a *daroga*, an Indian officer. Cornwallis' police system was further improved under Warren Hastings. The rigid separation of judicial and revenue powers was given up. The Collector began to function as Magistrate as well.

Cornwallis, who toned up the civil and criminal administration, however, did not pay adequate attention to the education of Company servants. It was Wellesley who emphasized the need for educating and training them. Wellesley thought the civilians should have a knowledge of the languages, laws, customs and manners

and history of India, in addition to their liberal education in England. With this object, the College of Fort William was founded at Calcutta in 1800. A three year course of study was provided for the Company's civil servants. The college was staffed by European professors and eighty Indian pundits. This became the Oriental School for Bengal civilians. In 1806 the East India College was established in England. In Madras, the College of Fort St George was set up by F.W. Ellis in 1812 on the lines of College of Fort William. It was here that the theory that the South Indian languages belonged to a separate family of languages independent of Sanskrit was formulated.

## 17.6 Education and Development under Company Rule

### Education

The establishment of a *Madrasa* by a learned maulvi with the support of Warren Hastings was the beginning of initiatives of British government to promote education. This Madrasa started with forty stipendiary students. What Warren Hastings had done for the Muslims, his successor was prepared to do for the Hindus. Cornwallis established a Sanskrit college (1791) in Benares. The successive governors in the next twenty years, however, did nothing to follow it up. The Company held the view that it was not desirable in its own interests to encourage education in India. In 1813, when the Company Charter was renewed, it contained a clause intended to force on the Company the initiative for a regular educational policy. Hastings encouraged the foundation of vernacular schools by missionaries. He was the patron of the Hindu College, established at Calcutta in 1817, supported by the Indian public for the teaching of English and of Western science. The cause of education was further promoted by missionaries like Alexander Duff. Thanks to Hastings' liberal outlook, press censorship instituted in 1799 was abolished. It was in such an atmosphere that the Bengali Weekly, the *Samachar Darpan* was started in 1818.



The Charter of 1833 emphasized the development of the country primarily in the interest of its inhabitants. William Bentinck, appointed the first Governor General of united India reformed the society by suppressing thuggee (robbery and murder committed by the thugs in accordance with their ritual), abolishing sati and introducing English as the medium of instruction in schools and colleges. This he thought would facilitate Indianization of the services. Bentinck founded the Calcutta Medical College in March 1835. The students of this college were sent to London in 1844 to complete their studies. Ten years after the establishment of the Calcutta Medical College, the Grant Medical College in Bombay was founded in 1845. In 1847 the Thomason Engineering College at Roorkee (now IIT Roorkee) came into existence. In 1849 a school for girls was founded in Calcutta.

Macaulay came to India as a law member in 1835. He was appointed President of the Board of Education. He had a poor opinion of indigenous learning. Macaulay recommended and government accepted to make English the literary and official language of India.

Dalhousie showed keen interest in education. He approved of the system of vernacular education designed by James Thomason, Lieutenant Governor of the North-Western Provinces (1843-53). The Educational Dispatch of Charles Wood (1854) outlined a

A charter is a grant by a country's sovereign power to start a company, university, or city with rights and privileges clearly stated. The East India Company was started with Queen Elizabeth's Charter of 1600. It came to be renewed every twenty years, after Warren Hastings took over as Governor General since 1773. The Charter of 1853 was the last one before the Company government was taken over by the Crown.

comprehensive scheme of education-primary, secondary, collegiate. Departments of Public Instruction and a university for each of the three Presidencies were organized for the purpose. University of Madras was established under this plan (1857), along with universities in Bombay and Calcutta. Dalhousie modified the policy of Macaulay by encouraging educational institutions in vernaculars too. He also agreed to the principle of grants-in-aid to private effort, irrespective of caste or creed.

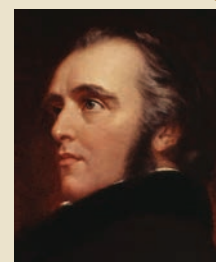
## 17.7 Efforts at Safety and Developmental Measures

### Pindari War

Pindaris were freebooters composed of both Muslim and Hindu bands. The Subsidiary Alliance of the Company had led to the disbandment of thousands of soldiers and most

**Macaulay:** Macaulay found nothing good in Indian literature, philosophy and medicine. Macaulay, in his minute of 1835 wrote: 'I have no knowledge of either Sanskrit or Arabic. But I have read translations of the most celebrated Arabic and Sanskrit works. I have conversed both here and at home with men distinguished by their proficiency in the Eastern tongues. I have never found one among them who could deny that a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia.

... We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern, -a class of persons Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect. To that class we may leave it to refine the vernacular dialects of the country, to enrich those dialects with terms of science borrowed from the Western nomenclature, and to render them by degrees fit vehicles for conveying knowledge to the great mass of the population.



Macaulay





The villagers burning themselves to avoid Pindaris



William Bentinck

of them joined them and swelled their numbers in central India. The British proclaimed Pindari War. But it turned out to be a war against Marathas and the outcome of this prolonged war (1811 to 1818) was that the whole of Central India came under British rule.

### Suppression of Thuggee

The Thugs were robbers operating between Delhi and Agra from the fourteenth century. They were bound together by oaths and ritual and murdered unsuspecting travellers in the name of the goddess Kali. Bentinck placed William Sleeman in charge of the operation to eliminate the Thuggee menace. Between 1831 and 1837 more than three thousand Thugs were convicted. Five hundred became approvers. By 1860 the problem of thuggee had ceased to exist.



Thuggees

### Abolition of Sati

Bentinck showed great courage and humanity by his decision to abolish *sati*, the practice of burning widows alive with the corpses of their husbands. Previous governors-general were reluctant to prohibit the custom as an interference in religion but Bentinck enacted a law (Sati Abolition Act, 1829) to put an end to this practice. Raja Rammohan Roy's campaigns and efforts played a decisive part in getting this inhuman practice abolished.

## Railways, Postal & Telegraph Systems

The first serious proposal for constructing railways was made by the European business community. The Directors were doubtful whether railways could be successfully built in India. Governor General Dalhousie however persuaded them arguing that the railways would bring very considerable economic advantage. Yet before the Great Rebellion less than three hundred miles of track had been laid.

Though several proposals for the laying of telegraph communication between India and London were put forward, the telegraph service was inaugurated only in 1854. During the Great Rebellion of 1857 its importance was realised. In the aftermath of 1857, it became an urgent necessity. The time of communication between London and Calcutta came down from several days to twenty eight minutes. With the opening of Suez Canal in 1869, the journey between Europe and India was reduced by some 4000 miles. By 1870 the government of British India was in effective contact with Secretary of State, India Office, London. Subsequently, with the exception of Curzon, Governor Generals were reluctant to do anything without seeking the permission of Whitehall, the headquarters of the East India Company.

The railway line from Bombay to Thane was opened in 1853; from Howrah to Raniganj in 1854-55. The first railway line in south India ran from Madras to Arakonam in 1856. Royapuram was one of the railway stations inaugurated in that year.



First Train: Bombay(Mumbai) to Thane





## Irrigation

The British neglected irrigation. The irrigation channels and tanks built by Indian rulers fell into disuse and there was little effort on the part of the Company to undertake repairs or renovation works. In Madras, as we will see in the following section, a few irrigation works were carried out because of the personal enthusiasm of Arthur Cotton, an Engineering officer. Against much opposition, Cotton built a dam across the Kollidam (Coleroon) in 1836. In 1853, a dam across the Krishna river had also begun. In the north, before the takeover of India by the Crown, Jumna canal was completed in 1830 and by 1857 the Ganges canal had been extended to nearly 450 miles. In the Punjab area the Bari Doab canal had been excavated by 1856. But the canal water contributed to soil salinity and water logging causing great ecological distress.



Arthur Cotton

## Forests

Land revenue was the mainstay of the British Indian government's fiscal system. Therefore, in their effort to extend the areas of cultivable land, forests were destroyed. Zamins were created out of Jungle Mahal forests and auctioned off for regular cultivation. The original inhabitants of this region, the Santhals were evicted. Therefore it was the Santhals who were the first tribal group to resist the British rule in India. Slope cultivation was encouraged in the hilly and mountainous tracts. Land was provided to European enterprises at a throwaway price for slope cultivation. Further, in their enthusiasm to try plantation crops, zamindars and Indian rulers destroyed the forests. Coffee, for instance, did not grow in many places. Yet in the process of attempting coffee cultivation large tracts of virgin forests were destroyed. Timber came to be exploited with the massive construction of the railway system. In the 1870s, it was calculated that every year one million sleepers

were needed to build railway tracks. Indian trees, particularly *sal*, *deodar*, and *teak*, were preferred for their strength over other Indian timbers. These three species were intensively exploited. Much *sal* was extracted from the forests of the Jungle Mahals of West Bengal and Bihar. Timber went to England too for the building of railways. The myth that India's forests were inexhaustible was exploded. It was in this background that the colonial state, in order to manage and control forest resources, started the Forest Department and passed the Indian Forest Act, 1865. This was a draconian act which restricted the use of forest resources by indigenous groups who resented it. In order to contain protest and resistance the British enacted the dreaded Criminal Tribes Act, 1871. During the entire colonial period there were frequent insurrections by tribal people against the colonial state. The legacy of the colonial forest acts continues to haunt contemporary times as well.

## 17.8 Deindustrialization and Drain of Wealth

Europe had always imported more from the East than was exported here. There was little that the East required from the West in return for the spices, silks, calicos, jewels and the like it sent there. The industrial revolution in textile production that took place in England reversed this relationship for the first time. India was systematically de-industrialized. Rather than being the world's leading exporter of cloth and textiles, India became a market for Lancashire cottons. Cheap machine-made British goods led to the flooding of Indian markets. Indian cotton piece goods began to lose ground gradually given that machine-made goods were more durable and cost less.

The Company government, in the first three decades, followed a policy of allowing unrestricted flow of imports of British goods into India. Without any import duty English goods were much cheaper than domestic products. At the same time, Indian manufactures were shut



out from the British market by high protective duties. This policy ruined the Indian weavers and traders. Large numbers of weavers were thrown out of employment and forced to seek livelihood in agriculture, which increased the pressure on the already overcrowded land.

Charles Travelyan to a Select Committee of the House of Commons in 1840 made the following observation: “The peculiar kind of silky cotton formerly grown in Bengal, from which the fine Dacca muslins used to be made, is hardly ever seen. The population of the town of Dacca has fallen from 150, 000 to 30, 000 or 40,000 and the jungle and malaria are fasten croaching upon the town. ... Dacca, which was the Manchester of India has fallen off from a very flourishing town to a very poor and small one; the distress there has been very great indeed.”

Abbe Dubois, a French Catholic missionary, before his return to Europe in 1823 wrote: “misery and desolation prevailed everywhere and that thousands of weavers were dying of hunger in the different districts of the Presidency [Madras].”



Abbe Dubois

“The misery hardly finds parallel in the history of commerce.... The bones of cotton weavers are beaching the Gangetic plains of India,” said the Governor General William Bentinck.

Contrasting Muslim rule with British governance William Bentinck himself acknowledged the benevolent nature of the former. ‘In many respects’, Bentinck wrote, ‘the Muhammedans surpassed our rule; they settled in the countries which they conquered; they intermarried with the natives; they admitted them to all privileges, the interests and sympathies of the conquerors and conquered became identical.

Our policy on the contrary, has been the reverse of this— cold, selfish and unfeeling.’

Military and civil administrative costs in British India consumed an average of eighty per cent of the budget, leaving twenty per cent to be divided among the various departments concerned. Agriculture was left to its deteriorating condition. Irrigation was neglected. Arthur Cotton wanted the colonial state to give priority to irrigation rather than building railway network, but his suggestion was turned down by the imperial government in England. Outbreak of successive famines in the last quarter of the nineteenth century ultimately prompted the government under British Crown to initiate some steps for the building of dams.

The Ryotwari system intended to create a large body of independent peasants, who would be protected from the “corrupt and faithless zamindar,” however, in reality achieved the contrary result of strengthening the position of the big landlords. The government showed little interest in protecting the interests of tenants in ryotwari areas. Since land was the main source of revenue, its rigorous collection became an imperative policy of the British. The Torture Commission, appointed by the Company government in Madras in its report presented in 1855 exposed the atrocities perpetrated by the Indian revenue and police officials in the process of collecting land tax from the cultivators. The Torture Act which justified forcible collections of land revenue was abolished only after 1858.

## 17.9 Famines and Indentured labour

Famine, though no stranger to India, increased in frequency and deadliness with the advent of British colonial rule. Between 1800 and 1825, there were only four famines. But in the last quarter of the century there were 22 famines. It is estimated that over five million died. By 1901, Romesh Chunder Dutt, a former ICS officer and a staunch nationalist, enumerated 10 mass famines since the 1860s, putting the total death toll at 15 million.

The *laissez faire* (non-intervention of government in trade) principles to which the colonial state was committed since 1833 was applied to famines also. For years, western-educated Indians had argued that British rule was grossly impoverishing India. The Orissa (Odisha) famine, in which one third of the population died of starvation and disease, served as a patent proof of this thesis. It prompted nationalist Dadabhai Naoroji, to begin his lifelong investigations into Indian poverty.

An eye witness (an Englishman) of the terrible famine in the Guntur district of Madras Presidency in 1833 said: 'It is dreadful to see what revolting food human beings may be driven to partake of. Dead dogs and horses are greedily devoured by these surviving wretches; and the other day, an unfortunate donkey having strayed from the fort, they fell upon him like a pack of wolves, tore him limb from limb and devoured him on the spot.'

**Madras Famine of 1876-78:** The failure of two successive monsoons caused a severe famine in the Madras Presidency during 1876-78. The viceroy Lytton adopted an hands-off approach similar to that followed in Orissa. 3.5 million people died in the presidency.

The introduction of plantation crops and slope cultivation in Ceylon, Mauritius, Fiji, Malaya, the Caribbean islands, Natal and South Africa required enormous labour. Initially slave labour was used for this

purpose. But after the Company government abolished slavery in India (1843), the system of indentured was used. Under this system, labourers were hired on contract for a period of five years (indenture) and they could return to their homeland with passage paid at the end. Many impoverished peasants and weavers went hoping to earn some money. But in effect it was worse than slave labour. The colonial state allowed agents (*kanganis*) to trick or kidnap indigent landless labourers. 150 indenture labourers "the innocent victims of a new system of slavery" were first taken from Thanjavur in 1828 to the new British coffee plantations in Ceylon. All of them deserted. Therefore, recruitment coupled with criminal laws prohibiting desertion started in the 1830s. People courted this new form of slavery to escape starvation deaths.

In 1815, the Governor of Madras received a communication from the Governor of Ceylon (Sri Lanka) asking for coolies to work on the coffee plantations. The Madras Governor forwarded this letter to the collector of Thanjavur, who after enquiry reported back saying that the people were very much attached to the soil and hence unless some incentive was provided it was not easy to make them move out of their native soil. But the outbreak of two famines (1833 and 1843) forced the people, without any prompting from the government, to leave for Ceylon to work as coolies in coffee and tea plantations under indentured labour system. During 1843-1868, nearly 1.5 million people (1,444,407) had gone from Madras to Ceylon as indentured labourers.



Famine in Madras



Famine in Orissa



Indentured labourers





**Indentured Labour System:** It was a penal contract system, totally differing from the contractual labour system of the present day. According to the Indentured Labour System, the coolie (the term applied to an Indian indentured labourer) had to work in jail-like condition, was punishable by forfeiture of wages or imprisonment for (a) negligence of duty or refusal to attend to work (b) insolence or disobedience of orders or other misconduct (c) quitting service before the expiry of the contract. By invoking one of these provisions the planters on the flimsiest pretexts invariably either deprived the labourers of their wages or put them behind bars. The contract prohibited the formation of associations by coolies either with the objective of claiming increase in wages or for termination of their contract. The Plight of women in plantations is described poignantly in Bharati's famous song 'Karumbu thottathile'

### Drain of Wealth

Dadabhai Naoroji in his *Poverty and Un-British Rule in India* explained how the English rulers were different from the earlier invaders. He said, in the case of former foreign invaders, they plundered and went back. They made,



Dadabhai Naoroji

no doubt, great wounds, but India, with her industry, revived and healed the wounds. When the invaders became rulers of the country they settled down in it; whatever was the condition of their rule, there was at least no material or moral drain in the country. But with the English the case was different. There are the great wounds of the first wars in the burden of the public debt and those wounds are kept perpetually open and widening by draining away the lifeblood in a continuous stream. The former rulers were like butchers hacking here and there, but the English with their scientific

scalpel cut to the very heart, and yet, there is no wound to be seen, and soon the plaster of the high talk of civilization, progress and what not covers up the wound.

Naoroji argued that a great deal of wealth was drained to England in the form of Home Charges. The following constituted the Home Charges:

- Incentive to the shareholders of the Company
- Savings and the salaries of European officials, European traders and Planters remitted to England.
- Pensions to those who retired from civil and military services.
- The salaries of the staff and the Secretary to Home Government, India Office at London
- Expenses on wars fought in India and interests for the loans obtained from the banks for the conduct of wars and for the building of railroads.

India's loan to England was 130 million pounds in 1837. It increased to 220 million pounds, of this 18 percent was for conducting wars waged against Afghanistan and Burma. A government report of 1908 informed that on account of railways, India had incurred a debt of 177.5 million pounds. In order to give outlet to the saturated capital the British secured the capital from private enterprise in England. In the form of guaranteed interest of 5 percent, the Colonial state promised to repay the interest in sterling. There was a loss of 220 million pounds to India on this score.

Calling this as drain of wealth Dadabhai Naoroji lamented that had the money drained to England remained in the pockets of Indians, India would have economically progressed. Even Gazni Mahmud's pillage stopped after eighteen times but the British plunder seemed to be unending, he quipped. R.C. Dutt estimated that during the last decade of the reign of Queen Victoria (1891-1901), of the total income 647 million pounds, 159 million pounds drained to England. This worked to 44 percent of the total income of the country.



## SUMMARY

- The consequences of “assumption of power without responsibility” by the Company are highlighted
- Bringing more Indian territories under British domain through Subsidiary Alliance and Doctrine of Lapse is explained
- Zamindari land tenures and Permanent Settlement in Bengal and the Ryotwari System in Madras Presidency are discussed
- Changes effected in civil and judicial administration are highlighted
- Socio-cultural and educational reforms and developmental programmes of successive governor generals are examined
- How railways and telegraph enabled the British to have closer control of the people they governed is explored
- Dadabhai Naoroji's analysis of drain of wealth is dealt with.
- Company government's exploitative policies leading to famines forcing the peasants and artisans to move out to work as indentured laboures in British colonies elsewhere.



## EXERCISE



### 1. Choose the Correct Answer

1. \_\_\_\_\_ was the real foundation battle for British dominion in India.  
(a) Plassey (b) First Carnatic War  
(c) Buxar (d) Wandiwash
2. According to the \_\_\_\_\_ treaty, Shah Alam II granted the Diwani of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa to the company.  
(a) Allahabad (b) Madras  
(c) Poona (d) Pondicherry
3. \_\_\_\_\_ introduced the Dual system in Bengal.  
(a) Warren Hastings (b) Dupleix  
(c) Cornwallis (d) Robert Clive
4. \_\_\_\_\_ was passed to regulate the Company affairs in India.  
(a) Regulating Act (1773)\  
(b) The Pitt India Act (1784)  
(c) Charter Act (1813)  
(d) Charter Act (1833)
5. \_\_\_\_\_ was the first Viceroy and Governor General of India accountable to the British Parliament.  
(a) Cornwallis (b) Canning  
(c) Wellesley (d) Hastings
6. Cornwallis made the Permanent Settlement with the Zamindars of \_\_\_\_\_.  
(a) Mysore (b) Bombay  
(c) Bengal (d) Madras
7. \_\_\_\_\_ introduced the ryotwari System.  
(a) Cornwallis  
(b) Thomas Munro  
(c) Robert Clive  
(d) Warren Hastings
8. The British officer who ended the menace of Thuggee was \_\_\_\_\_.  
(a) William Adam  
(b) William Sleeman  
(c) James Holland  
(d) John Nicholson
9. \_\_\_\_\_ was the first state to fall under the policy of Doctrine of Lapse.  
(a) Nagpur (b) Oudh  
(c) Jhansi (d) Satara



10. \_\_\_\_\_ justified forcible collection of land revenue.

- (a) ryotwari Act
- (b) Pitt India Act
- (c) Permanent Settlement Act
- (d) Torture Act

11. \_\_\_\_\_ introduced English as the literary and official language of India.

- (a) Cornwallis                      (b) William Bentinck
- (c) Macaulay                      (d) Thomas Munroe

12. Madras University was established in \_\_\_\_\_.

- (a) 1837                      (b) 1861
- (c) 1844                      (d) 1857

13. The efforts of \_\_\_\_\_ played a decisive part in getting the practice of *sati* abolished.

- (a) Warren Hastings
- (b) William Jones
- (c) Raja Rammohan Roy
- (d) Dayanand Saraswati

14. The first railway line in south India ran from Madras to \_\_\_\_\_ in 1856.

- (a) Vaniampadi                      (b) Katpadi
- (c) Villupuram                      (d) Arakonam

15. Find out the correct statement.

- (a) The Governor General was selected by the Court of Directors of the East India Company.
- (b) The Subsidiary System decreased the military resources and efficiency of the Company.
- (c) The establishment of the Madrasa by Lord Wellesley was the beginning of British Government to promote education.
- (d) Lord Dalhousie founded the Calcutta Medical College in March 1835.

16. **Assertion (A):** The British Government initiated steps for the building of dams.

**Reason (R):** There were successive famines in last quarter of the 19th Century.

- (a) A is correct; R is wrong.
- (b) A is correct R is not the correct explanation of A.
- (c) A is correct; R is the correct explanation of A
- (d) A is wrong; R is correct

17. Which of the following pairs is wrongly matched?

- (a) Gangadhar Rao - Jhansi
- (b) Raghuji Bhonsle - Nagpur
- (c) Shaji - Satara
- (d) Scindia - Kolhapur

18. Match the following

- (A) Arthur Cotton - 1. Sanskrit College
  - (B) William Sleeman - 2. Kollidam
  - (C) William Bentinck - 3. Thuggee Menace
  - (D) Cornwallis - 4. Abolition of Sati Act
- (a) 4, 1, 2, 3                      (b) 2, 3, 4, 1  
(c) 3, 2, 1, 4                      (d) 2, 1, 4, 3

## II. Write Brief Answers

1. The Regulating Act, 1773.
2. Governor Thomas Munro.
3. Distinction between 'Presidency' and 'Province'.
4. "The biggest contribution of Cornwallis was in the field of civil services" – Explain.
5. Write a note on irrigation development under the British.
6. Write a note on Dacca Muslin.
7. "Drain of wealth impoverished India" – How?



### III. Write Short Answers

1. "Dual System".
2. How did the Zamindars acquire hereditary rights over the lands assigned by the Government?
3. Doctrine of Lapse.
4. Reforms of Cornwallis in judicial administration.
5. Dispatch of Charles Wood.
6. Pindaris and Thuggees.
7. Impact of Industrial Revolution on Indian handloom weavers.
8. Indentured Labour System.

### IV. Answer the following in detail

1. Explain the Subsidiary Alliance introduced by Lord Wellesley.
2. What was the nature of educational development under Company's Rule?
3. Narrate the circumstances leading to the passing of the Indian Forest Act, 1865 and point out its effects.

### Activity

1. Compare and contrast the Railways and Post & Telegraph Systems of the British with that of India.
2. Arrange a debate on the advantages and disadvantages of British colonialism in India.

### Assignment

1. Prepare a comprehensive report on the drain of wealth by the British in India.
2. "The network of Indian Railways in India owes its origin to the British" – Narrate the recent attempts at modernization in this sector in India.



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### A-Z GLOSSARY

<b>in pursuance</b>	a follow up	செயல்படுத்தும் விதமாக
<b>scalpel</b>	surgical knife	அறுவைக் கத்தி
<b>contingent</b>	a part of a military force	இராணுவப் பிரிவு
<b>ceded</b>	granting of some possessions	விட்டுக் கொடுத்தல்
<b>paramount</b>	supreme	ஒப்பியர்வற்ற
<b>farrier</b>	a person who makes and fits metal plates for horse's feet	குதிரைக்கு லாடமடிப்பவர்
<b>draconian</b>	heartless	கொடுமையான
<b>insurrection</b>	rebellion	கிளர்ச்சி
<b>devoured</b>	to eat or swallow something eagerly	விழுங்குதல்
<b>pillage</b>	loot especially during war	சூறையாடுதல்