BHIC–110

HISTORY OF INDIA FROM 1757-1857

SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
INDIRA GANDHI NATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY

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COURSE CONTENTS

	Page No.
COURSE INTRODUCTION	**6**
UNIT 1: Indian Polity, Society and Economy in mid 18th century	9
UNIT 2: Mercantile Policies and Indian Trade	27
UNIT 3: Colonial Expansion-I-Bengal and Punjab	37
UNIT 4: Colonial Expansion II-Mysore and Marathas	50
UNIT 5: Imperial Ideologies and Psyche: Orientalists Construction of India and the Utilitarians	68
UNIT 6: British Administration and Law	81
UNIT 7: The Spread of English Education	93
UNIT 8: The New Land Settlements	104
UNIT 9: Commercialisation of Agriculture	118
UNIT 10: Deindustrialisation	133
UNIT 11: Economic Impact of the Colonial Rule	142
UNIT 12: Social Discrimination and Colonial Rule	155
UNIT 13: Tribal and Peasant Resistance	165
UNIT 14: Revolt of 1857	176
UNIT 15: The Beginnings of Indentured Labour	191
SUGGESTED READINGS	**201**

Guidelines for Study of the Course

In this Course we have followed a uniform pattern for presenting the learning material. This starts with an Introduction to the Course underlining the significant themes and covers 15 Units. For the convenience of study all the Units have been presented with a uniform structure. Objectives as the first section of the Unit have been included to help you find what are you expected to learn from the study of the Unit. Please go through these objectives carefully and keep reflecting and checking them after studying a few sections of the Unit. Introduction of the Unit introduces you to the subject areas covered and guides you to the way the subject-matter is presented. These are followed by the main subject area discussed through Sections and Sub-Sections for ease of comprehension. In between the text some Self-Check Exercises have been provided. We advise you to attempt these as and when you reach them. These will help you assess your study and test your comprehension of the subject studied. Compare your answers with the Answer Guidelines provided after the Summary. The Key Words and unfamiliar terms have been explained subsequently. At the end of the course under Suggested Readings we have also provided a list of books or articles as references. These include the sources which are useful or have been consulted for developing the material for the concerned Unit. You should try to study them; they will help you in understanding and learning the subject matter in an all-inclusive manner.

COURSE INTRODUCTION

This course is designed to introduce you to the different aspects of the social, economic and political history of India from the mid 18th century to the mid 19th century. This is a period in which we see the decline of the great Mughal empire, the consequent rise of regional polities and then an emergence of the British as an imperial power. It is a period marked by intricate complexity. Some historians have called the 18th century part of this phase as a 'Dark Age' but they have been hotly contested by other historians with more sophisticated tools and sources who have shown that there is a great deal of dynamism in the social, economic and political life of this period. We try to introduce some of these aspects to you in the first unit of this course titled Indian Polity, Society and Economy in the mid 18th century'.

The second unit introduces to you the rise of the British imperial power as a mercantile power which operated through the monopoly of the East India Company. We here familiarize you with the structure of this East India Company as a joint stock company and tell you how it was given monopoly trade privileges by the British government to further its path of mercantilism. This venture was contested by a lobby of Free Traders in England and this led to withdrawal of some of the monopoly privileges by the government. This dynamic led to a situation where the East India Company gradually turned towards acquisition of political power to further its trading and economic policies. As Prof. Sabyasachi Bhattacharya puts it "the evolution of the English East India Company from the Voyage system to factory system, from that to forts and eventually to the position of a territorial power helped in business; it was not just a fit of absent mindedness and an aberration from the proper task of merchants that led to the political hegemony of the Company that later became the British Empire. It was useful to have military power to back up coercion of the artisans, to bully local merchants and to eliminate other foreign merchants particularly the French and the Dutch."

It is precisely this territorial expansion in the context of the newly formed regional states that marks our units 3 and 4 where we show you the colonial expansion in to Bengal and Punjab as well as in to Mysore and on to the Maratha state system. The imperial expansion and later consolidation was also situated on the terrain of ideas and ideologies. This is the theme of unit 5 which looks in to the impact of ideas such as Orientalism and the Utilitarianism which guided and shaped the logics and the justifications which the British gave for their territorial designs and consolidation. How was love for India(Warren Hastings) and aggressive brutal conquests combined in the minds of the early British administrators is a question we seek to answer through this unit.

The British sought to impose a rule of law in India in the phase of consolidation. This was indeed novel for India as in theory under the rule of law everyone was equal before the law. Given the dominance of customary law where such a notion never found an expression this was indeed an advance. However in practice this notion was to give way to discriminatory notions of Indians being an inferior race by the end of the 19th century. We discuss how the systems of rule of law and courts and the police were established in unit6.Unit7 deals with the debates on the education policy to be adopted by the East India

Company and the British. From the initial phase of non intervention in this field to debates on the spread of English education the British kept in view the consolidation of their rule in India. Units 8 to 11 discuss the ways in which the British intervened in the agrarian sector to establish land revenue settlements and then initiated the commercialization of agriculture to operationalise their notions of private property and creation of wealth in India. In the process the Indian economy was gradually being structurally subordinated to the British imperial interests which led to the plunder and misery of the Indian people. We here look at deindustrialization, famines and poverty under the British rule.

Unit 12 looks at the social discrimination and disprivileged groups and analyse how the British rule strengthened these aspects. Units 13 and 14 analyse the protest against the miserable conditions created by the company and the British rule and look at the initial protests and resistance by the tribals and the peasants in Unit 13. Unit 14 looks at the first war of independence in India also known as the Revolt of 1857 and looks at its organization course and failure. Unit 15 looks at how2 the Indians under the impact of the colonial rule gradually migrated to the overseas plantation colonies to work as indentured labour. The story of their recruitment, transportation and work in the colonial plantations as unfree labour is outlined in this unit.

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UNIT 1 INDIAN POLITY, SOCIETY AND ECONOMY IN MID 18TH CENTURY

Structure

1.0 Objectives
1.1 Introduction
1.2 18th Century: A Dark Age?
1.3 Decline of the Mughal Empire
- **1.3.1 Internal Weaknesses: Struggle for Power**
- **1.3.2 External Challenge**
- **1.3.3 Continuity of Mughal Traditions**
- **1.3.4 Continuity of Mughal Traditions**

1.4 The Emergence of Regional Polities
- **1.4.1 Successor States**
- **1.4.2 The New States**
- **1.4.3 Independent Kingdoms**
- **1.4.4 Weakness of Regional Polities**

1.5 The Rise of British Power
- **1.5.1 From Trading Company to Political Power**
- **1.5.2 Anglo-French Struggles in South India**
- **1.5.3 Conquest of Bengal: Plassey to Buxar**
- **1.5.4 Recorganisation of the Political System**

1.6 Let Us Sum Up
1.7 Key Words
1.8 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

1.0 OBJECTIVES

The aim of this Unit is to introduce you to the main political developments in the mid-18th century. Here we will present only an outline of the political map which the following units will fill in. After reading this Unit you will become familiar with the following themes:

- the decline of Mughal Empire,
- the emergence of Mughal provinces as regional power-Hyderabad, Bengal and Awadh
- the rise of new states-Marathas, Jats Sikhs and Afghans,
- the history of Mysore, Rajput states and Kerala as independent principalities, and
- the beginnings of a colonial empire.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Our study begins around 1740 and ends in 1773. The first Carnatic war and Nadir Shah's invasion of India were the early landmarks. The last milestone was the reorganisation of the political system during the tenure of the Warren Hastings.

The decline of the Mughal Empire is the first theme. This was a long-drawn out process to which many factors contributed. Nadir Shah's invasion in 1739 and the massacre of Delhi seriously weakened an already feeble Mughal Empire. Other factors including economic crisis contributed to the empire's decline. The Mughal Empire did not survive but its institutions and traditions continued in the regional states and British provinces. Mughal administrative practices, especially in respect of land revenue, were adopted.

The second theme, the emergence of regional powers, was perhaps the most significant. Three groups of states can be distinguished. The successor states, Hyderabad, Awadh and Bengal were erstwhile provinces of the Mughal Empire which broke away to become independent. The 'new states' were the creation of the Marathas, Sikhs, Jats and Afghans; in this process in some of these states, an important role was played by popular peasant movement against imperial demands. A third category was that of the independent kingdoms of Mysore, the Rajputs and Kerala which have sometimes been wrongly called 'Hindu Polities'. Why did all these regional powers fail to keep the British out? Some crucial areas of weakness are indicated in this Unit.

The final theme taken up is the transition of the East India Company from a trading enterprise to a political power. We shall trace this transition and resultant conflicts in South India and Bengal.

1.2 18TH CENTURY: A DARK AGE?

Till recently the 18th century was described as a Dark Age when chaos and anarchy ruled. The Mughal Empire collapsed, regional powers failed to establish empires and stability returned only with the spread of British supremacy in the late 18th Century. It suited the British writers of the Cambridge History of India, and their Indian followers, to paint the 18th Century as black so that British rule would show up as a blessing in comparison. Historian Jadunath Sarkar's words in the History of Bengal Vol. II, deserve to be quoted:

> On 23rd June 1757 the Middle ages of India ended and her modern age began in the twenty years from Plassey Warren Hastings all felt the revivifying touch of the impetus from the west.

There are obvious problems with such a view. The Mughal Empire's influence was not as widespread or deep as was believed. Significant parts of India, especially in the North East and South, remained outside it, as did many social groups. Hence Mughal decline cannot serve as an adequate theme for discussing changes taking place all over India. Scholars have recently argued that the establishment of regional polities was perhaps the dominant feature of the eighteenth century, rather than the fall and rise of all-India empires. The 18th Century is presented by Satish Chandra, a leading historian of medieval India, as a distinct chronological whole, rather than split into two have, pre-British and British.

1.3 DECLINE OF THE MUGHAL EMPIRE

The first half of the eighteenth century witnessed the decline of the Mughal Empire. By 1740, when the period of our study begins, Nadir Shah had laid waste to Delhi. It was the Marathas, not the Mughals, who fought Abdali in 1761. By 1783 the Mughal emperor was a pensioner of the British.

1.3.1 Internal Weaknesses: Struggle for Power

Aurangzeb's misguided policies had weakened the stable Mughal polity. But the two main pillars on which the empire rested-the army and the administration-were still upright in 1707. Wars of succession and weak rulers plagued Delhi from 1707 to 1719. Muhammad Shah's rule from 1719 to 1748 was long enough for a revival of imperial fortunes but the complete incompetence of the emperor ruled out this possibility.

It was in his reign that Nizam-ul-Mulk resigned as wazir and set up the independent state of Hyderabad in 1724. Bengal, Awadh and Punjab followed the same pattern and the empire was split up into successor states. Petty chiefs interpreted this as a signal for rebellion and the Marathas began to make their bid to inherit the imperial mantle.

1.3.2 External Challenge

The Persian monarch, Nadir Shah attacked India in 1738-39. Lahore was soon conquered and the Mughal army was defeated at Karnal on 13th February 1739. To complete the ignominy, the Mughal emperor Mohammed Shah was captured and Delhi lay waste. The well known poets Mir and Sauda lamented the devastation of Delhi. However, the impact of Nadir Shah's invasion and Delhi was not as big a setback as commonly believed. Abdali's invasions left Delhi worse off but by 1772 the city had revived. 70 crores of rupees were gathered from the official treasury and the safes of the rich nobles. The Peacock Throne and the Kohinoor diamond were the two most priced items of his loot. Nadir Shah gained strategically crucial Mughal territory to the west of the river Indus including Kabul. India was once more vulnerable to attacks from the North West.

Ahmad Shah Abdali gained prominence as Nadir Shah's commander and established his rule over Afghanistan after the death of Nadir Shah. He invaded North India many times between 1748 and 1767. The most well known was his victory over the Marathas in 1761 which is known as the third Battle of Panipat.

1.3.3 Decline: Some Interpretations

Our Understanding regarding the decline of the Mughal power has changed over the decades. The traditional view, presented by Irving, Sarkar etc., highlighted the personal failings of the emperors and the nobles, their immorality and indulgence in luxury. Mughal rule was portrayed by Sarkar and others as Muslim rule and Maratha, Sikh and Bundela uprisings were understood as a Hindu reaction to Islamic onslaught.

As opposed to this view point, the crisis in the Mughal economic system has been rightly stressed by Satish Chandra and Irfan Habib. Satish Chandra has pointed to the crisis in the *Jagirdari* system as the basic reason for the downfall, caused by a shortage of *jagirs* and over abundance of *jagirdars*. Ifran Habib showed the agrarians system becoming more exploitative as pressure on limited resources grew. This sparked off peasant revolts which ruined imperial stability.

The New Cambridge History of India takes a completely opposite stand from Habib. Mughal decline is seen as the result of the success of the Mughal system, rather than its failure. It is argued, for example, that the zamindars whose rebellions against the Mughals spelled the end of the empire, were rich not poor farmers, backed by wealthy merchants. However, this view is yet to be established with further evidence. The generally accepted view remains one of economic crisis.

1.3.4 Continuity of Mughal Traditions

In sharp contrast to the rapid territorial disintegration of the Mughal empire was the stubborn survival of the Mughal tradition of government. By 1761 the Mughal Empire was an empire only in name; it could better be described as the state of Delhi. But the prestige of the emperor, the king of kings, was so considerable, that whether it was acquiring territory, a throne or an empire, the sanction of the emperor was sought. Even rebel chiefs of the Marathas and Sikhs sometimes recognised the emperor as the fount of authority. The Sikhs made offerings to the Delhi court in 1783 (despite their gurus having been killed by the Mughals) and the Maratha leader, Shahu, visited Aurangzeb's tomb in 1714.

The British and the Maratha fought over possession of the person the emperor, hoping to gain legitimacy for their claims to inherit the imperial mantle. Shah Alam II was made a pensioner of the company after the battle of Buxar but he preferred the protection of the Marathas at Delhi. British occupation of Delhi in 1803 brought him once again under British protection.

Mugahl administration practice was adopted by the regional powers. It was natural for the success states of the Mughal Empire to continue with old Mughal practice. Even the states, such as the Maratha, which began as popular reactions against imperial rule, copied Mughal methods of administration. Many officers schooled in Mughal practice found employment in numerous local kingdoms.

Continuity of Institutions Vs. Change in Structure

However, we should not deduce from the continuity of institutions that the Mughal political system survived. The new polities were regional; none could achieve an all- India scale. Some of the old institutions were reintegrated into new political systems by the regional chiefs and later by the British. The old Mughal institutions served very different functions under colonialism. Land revenue practices might be the same as earlier, but the wealth gathered was drained from India under colonialism. This distinction between form and function is blurred by imperialist historians with the intention of emphasising continuity of institutions to show that the British were no different from their predecessors.

Check Your Progress 1

1) What were the financial and territorial gains made by Nadir Shah? Write in five lines.

   ……
   ……
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   ……

2) Read the following sentence and mark right or wrong.
   i) Struggle for power between nobles at the centre was a major internal weakness for the Mughal.
   ii) The personal failings of the Mughal emperor were largely responsible for the decline of the Mughal Empire.
   iii) The 'New Cambridge History of India' completely inverts the argument of economic crisis.
   iv) Continuity of institutions from Mughal to British systems proves that the British were no different from native rulers.

3) Did the Mughal traditions end with the decline of the Mughal Empire? Explain in 50 words.

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1.4 THE EMERGENCE OF REGIONAL POLITIES

Along with the decline of the Mughal Empire, the second major them of the 18th Century was the emergence of regional polities. Broadly there were three kinds of states which came into prominence:

- the states which broke away from the Mughal empire,
- the new states set up by the rebels against the Mughal, and
- the independent states.

1.4.1 Successor States

Hyderabad, Bengal and Awadh were the three cases where provincial governors under the Mughals set up independent states. The breakaway from Delhi occurred in stages – the revolt of individuals followed by that of the social groups, communities and finally regions. Zamindari revolts in the provinces against imperial demands triggered off the breakaway. Governors did not get support from the centre and tried to secure support of the local elites.

However, links with the centre were maintained and Mughal tradition continued. Awadh and Hyderabad came to the help of the Mughals when Nadir Shah invaded Delhi. Through their links with factions of nobles, the provincial chiefs were often strong enough to control the centre. Hence the changes in polity in this period may more appropriately be characterised as transformation (to use Muzaffar Alam's term) rather than collapse. A new political order was constructed within the Mughal institutional framework.

The collapse of the all India polity did not lead to generalised economic decline. The regional picture was very varied. Punjab's economy was disrupted by foreign invasions but Awadh experienced economic growth. Safdar Jang, Nawab of Awadh, on his accession paid Rs. 3 crores to Nadir Shah. A stable polity developed in Awadh on the basis of economic prosperity while the states set up in Punjab collapsed.

Hyderabad

The death of Nizam-ul-Mulk in 1748 marked the closing of a glorious first chapter in the history of Hyderabad. It had started with the foundation of the state in 1724 by Nizam-ul-Mulk, a prominent noble at the time the Saiyids controlled the court at Delhi. He assisted Mohammed Shah in deposing the Saiyids and in return was given the office of Subadar of the Deccan.

He reorganised the administration and streamlined the revenue system. After a brief tenure as wazir at Delhi from 1722 to 1724, he returned to the Deccan to set up a state which was independent in practice, though he continued to declare allegiance to the Mughal emperor. The formation of regional elite gave stability to this independence, as Karen Leonard has shown in her study of Hyderabad's political system. Reform of the revenue system, subduing of Zamindars, and tolerance towards Hindus were among his wise policies.

But his death in 1748 exposed Hyderabad to the machinations of the Marathas and later the foreign companies. The Marathas invaded the sate at will and imposed Chauth upon the helpless inhabitants. Nizam-ul-Mulk's son, Nasir Jang and grandson, Muzaffar Jang, entered into a bloody war of succession. The French under Dupleix used this opportunity to play off one group against the other and supported Muzzaffar Jang, who gave them handsome monetary and territorial rewards.

Bengal

Independence in practice and allegiance in name to the power at Delhi marked the rule of the Nawabs of Bengal. Murshid Kuli Khan became Governor of Bengal in 1717 under Mughal aegis but his link with Delhi was limited to sending tribute. Shuja-un-din became Nawab in 1727 and ruled till 1739 when Alivardi Khan assumed charge. In 1756 Siraj-ud-daula became the Nawab of Bengal on the death of his grandfather Alivardi Khan.

The Bengal rulers did not discriminate on religious grounds in making public appointments and Hindus reached high positions in the Civil Service and obtained lucrative zamindaris. The Nawabs were fiercely independent and

maintained strict control over the foreign companies trading in their realm. Fortifications were rightly not allowed in the French and English factories at Chandernagar and Calcutta, nor did the Nawab concede to their special privileges. The sovereignty of the ruler was upheld even in the face of the threats of the British East india Company to use force to obtain its end.

Awadh

Saadat Khan Burhan-ul-Mulk gradually secured the independence of Awadh after his appointment as Governor in 1722. The main problem in Awadh was posed by the zamindars who not only refused to pay land revenue but behaved like autonomous chiefs with their forts and armies. Saadat Khan subdued them and introduced a new land settlemtn which provided protection to the peasants from the zamindars. The *Jagirdari* system was reformed and *jagirdaris* granted to the local gentry, who were also given positions in the administration and army. A "regional ruling group" emerged, consisting of Shaikhzadas, Afghans and sections of the Hindus.

1.4.2 The New States

The second groups of regional states were the 'new states' or insurgent states' set up by rebels against the Mughals-the Marathas, Sikhs, Jats and Afghans. The first three began as popular movements of peasant insurgency. The leadership was not with the nobility but with 'new men', often from lower orders, e.g., Hyder Ali, Sindhias and Holkars.

Marathas

If the two main themes of the 18th century were decline of Mughal power and foundation of colonial rule, then a third theme was the rise and fall of regional states, the most significant among them being the Marathas. One all-India empire declined, a second one took its place and a third empire failed to come into being. Mughal decline spanned the first part of the century, British ascendency grew rapidly in the second half, and most of the terrain of the middle of the century was occupied by the swaying political fortunes of the Marathas.

The basic contours of the Maratha State system system dominated by the Peshwas or chief ministers were evolved during the time of Balaji Vishwanath. He was a loyal official of Shahu, Shivaji's grandson, who was head of the Marathas after his release from custody in 1707. The powers of the office of the Peshwa rapidly increased during his tenure till it became the fountainhead of authority of the entire Maratha Empire.

Balaji Vishwanath died in 1720 and his son Baji Rao in 1740, the period whence our study commences. By then the Marathas were no longer a regional power but had attained the status of an expansionist empire. They had acquired control over far flung areas of the Mughal Empire. The main weakness, however, was that these conquests were made at the initiative of the Maratha Chiefs who were unwilling to accept regulation by the Peshwa. These chiefs had accepted the

Peashw's authority because of the military and financial benefit that accrued from this association. Collection of *Chauth* and *Sardeshmukhi* of a certain area was assigned to the chiefs and conquest permitted. These chiefs were only too willing to go over to the other side if the Peshwa exercised control over their activities. This was the situation in Balaji Vishwanath's time.

Perhaps learning from this, Baji Rao himself led military campaigns and acquired the prosperous area of Malwa and Gujarat among others. Unfortunately he got embroiled in conflict with the other great power in the Deccan, Nizam-ul-Mulk. An alliance against the Mughals, and later the British, would have benefited both, but they chose to go in for alliances with even Mughal functionaries against each other.

The Nizam was decisively beaten twice by Baji Rao's forces but the struggle for mastery between the two continued. When the British entered the fray the contest became a triangular one, which proved to be of great advantage to the British, who could play off one against the other.

Balaji Rao, better known as Nana Saheb, was Peshwo from 1740 to 1761. Maratha power achieved its climax during his rule. Expansion was now no longer limited to areas over which the Mughals has an uncertain hold. No part of India was spared the depredations of Maratha conquest. The South proved relatively easier to subdue. Hyderabad surrendered a large chunk of territory after its defeat in 1760 and Mysore and other states paid tribute. In the east, repeated conquests of Bengal gained them Orissa in 1751. In Central India, Malwa, Gujarat and Bundelkhand, which had been conquered by Baji Rao, were better integrated with the rest to the Maratha Empire.

Struggle between Mughals, Marathas and Afghans

Mastery over North India proved more difficult to maintain after the initial easy conquest. The Mughals at Delhi came under Maratha influence but the Afghans under Abdali threw back the Marathas.

The Third Battle of Panipat, 1761

The third battle of Panipat commenced on 14th January 1761. But the conflict and its outcome were brewing since 1752 when Maratha forces overran North India and established their influence at the Delhi court. Imad-ul-Mulk was proclaimed the Wazir of the Kingdom but for all practical purposes the Marathas were the rulers. The Marathas were not content with their acquisitions and looked greedily towards the Punjab, which was ruled by a tributary of Abdali. This was a grave mistake. Abdali had retreated from India after carrying away what he could. He left behind trusted followers in charge of certain areas, but decided to return to challenge the ambitious Maratha Powers.

The conflict inevitably became a multifaceted one as the major and minor north Indian powers got drawn in. Here the Afghans were at an advantage as the Marathas had acquired many enemies in the process of conquering and

administering this core area of the empire. The Mughal nobles, apart from Imad-ul-Mulk, had been defeated by them in the power game. The Jat and Rajput chiefs were completely alienated by their conquests which were followed by imposition of heavy fines. The Sikhs, already frustrated in their attempt to consolidate their power by the foreign invasions, were obviously in no mood to help the Marathas to include Punjab in their empire.

The Rohilkhand chief and the Awadh Nawabs, whose area had been overrun by the Marathas, even went to the extent of joining hands with Abdali. The Maratha armies marched alone to the battlefield of Panipat to confront Abdali.

The Maratha army was no match for the Afghans though it boasted of troops trained along Western lines. 28,000 Marathas died on the battlefield, along with the commanders of the army, the Peshwa, minor son Vishwas Rao and the latter's cousin, Sadashiv Rao Bhau. The Peshwa, Balaji Baji Rao did not survive for long, after hearing the tragic news of the defeat.

Aftermath of the Third Battle of Panipat

The third battle of Panipat proved significant in the struggle for mastery over India. The Marathas' ambition of replacing the Mughals as the imperial power was checked at a strategic point by this defeat. The beneficiaries were the British rather than the Afghas. The British got a tremendous opportunity to expand their influence in Bengal and India. Once they had got these footholds there was no looking back. For a brief while after the debacle of 1761 it seemed as if the fortunes of the Marathas were reviving. Madhav Rao, who became Peshwa in 1761, was successful in subduing once again the old enemies, the Rohilas, the Rajput and Jat Chiefs in the north and Mysore and Hyderabad in the south. But the early demise of the Peshwa in 1722, at the age of 28, finally ended the dream. Factional struggle for power ensued, exposing the Maratha power to defeat at the hands of the British in the first Anglo-Maratha war.

Nature of the Maratha State and Movement

The rise of the Marathas was both a regional against Mughal centralisation as well as a manifestation of the upward mobility of certain classes and castes. The petty rural gentry and the hereditary cultivators (*mirasdars*) formed the social base. Peasant castes wanted to achieve kashatriya status while official sought to concentrate power in their hands.

Levy was institutionalised as *chauth* and made a legitimate part of the Maratha state system. Money was raised through *chauth* to supplement the income from the poor, underdeveloped home areas of the Marathas. But reliance on plunder was an inadequacy of the Maratha system and they did not impose direct rule even when the rich areas of Carnatic, Coromandel and the Gangetic Valley came under their control.

The Marathas adopted some parts of the Mughal administrative system, but they concentrated attention on techniques of extracting surplus. The absence of a proper administrative hierarchy or a well-defined provincial authority prevented

them from consolidating their influence at the rapid pace necessary before the Afghans and British could defeat them.

These administrative and financial weaknesses were compounded by their technological backwardness, especially in the military sphere. The new development of the time, artillery, small arms, especially the flint guns and improved firearms were not adopted.

Sikhs

The strategically located province of Punjab had witnessed the spread of a democratic, new religion, Sikhism, at the end of the 15th century. It was confined to the personal sphere for two centuries, but by the time of Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth Guru, political ambitions and military had transformed the adherents of this faith into a well-knit community. Guru Gobind Singh's conflict with Aurangzeb is well known, as is Banda Bahadur's rebellion against Aurangzeb's successor.

For a quarter century after the suppression of Banda Bahadur's rebellion in 1715, the Sikhs were quiescent. But adversity for the Mughal Empire proved to be a beneficial opportunity for the Sikhs. The invasion of Nadir Shah and Abdali exposed north India and what they could not plunder and take away, was looted by the Sikhs. On the basis of this booty and taking advantage of the breakdown of imperial control of Punjab, the Sikhs rapidly established their control once Abdali and his followers returned home.

There followed a period when 12 *Misls* or confederacies constituted the province. Recent scholarship has debunked the view that the Sikh political system was theocratic and placed it alongside secular polities elsewhere in the country. Punjabi's rise to prominence had to wait till the end of the century for Ranjit Singh.

Jats

The Jats were an agriculturist Caste inhabiting the Delhi-Agra belt. In the latter half of the 17th century their revolts against Mughal domination shook the stability of the core area of the Mughal Empire. As Mughal power declined, Jat power grew and a peasant revolt was transformed into into an uprising that proved destructive of all other groups in the region, including the Rajput Zamindars. Despite originating as a peasant rebellion, the Jat state remained feudal, with Zamindars holding both administrative and revenue powers and revenue demands under Suraj Mal were higher than under the Mughal.

Churaman and Badan Singh founded the Jat State at Bharatpur but it was Suraj Mal who consolidated Jat power during his rule from 1756 to 1763. Expansion of the state brought its boundaries to the Ganga in the east, the Chambal in the south, Delhi in the north and Agra in the west. In addition he possessed great administrative ability, especially in the fields of revenue and civil affairs. However, his rule was short lived and his death in 1763 also marked the demise of the Jat state.

Farukhabad and Rohilkhand

The states of Rohilkhand and the kingdom of the Bangash Pathans were al fall-out of the Afghan migration from the 17th century. Large scale immigration of Afghans into India took place in mid-18th century because of political and economic disruption in Afghanistan. Ali Muhammad Khan took advantage of the collapse of authority in north India following Nadir Shah's invasion, to set up a petty kingdom, Rohilkhand. This was the area of the Himalayan foothills located between Kumaon in the north and the Ganga in the south. The Rohias, as the inhabitants of Rohilkhand were known, suffered heavily at the hands of the other powers in the area, the Jats and the Awadh rulers and later the Marathas and the British. Mohammad Khan Bangash, an Afghan, had set up an independent kingdom to the east of Delhi in the area around Farrukhabad.

The Afghani use of artillery, especially the flint gun, ended the domination of cavalry since the early medieval ages discovered the stirrup.

Politically the role of the Afghans was negative. Not only did they accentuate the decline of the Mughals but they helped Abdali to subdue Awadh, which could have checked British expansion.

1.4.3 Independent Kingdoms

There was a third type of state which was neither the result of a breakaway from or rebellion against Delhi. Mysore the Rajput states and Kerala fall in this category.

Mysore

The mid-18th century witnessed the emergence of Mysore as a significant power in South India. Haidar Ali laid the foundations of Mysore's power, which were consolidated by his able son, Tipu Sultan. Though Haidar Ali was only a junior officer, of common parentage, in the Mysore army, he gradually rose to be a brilliant commander. His most remarkable achievement was his realisation that only a modern army could be the basis of a powerful state. Consequently he inducted French experts to set up an arsenal and train the troops along western lines. Soon after he was able to overthrow the real power behind the Mysore throne, the minister Nunjaraj in 1761.

The boundaries of the Mysore states extended to include the rich coastal areas of Canara and Malabar. An expansionist at heart, Haidar naturally clashed with other powers in the region, the Marathas, Hyderabad and the new entrants in the game, the British. In 1769 he inflicted a heavy defeat on British forces very close to Madras. With his death in 1782, his son Tipu became Sultan and extended his father's policies further. However, Tipu's rule falls outside the scope of this Unit.

Rajputs

The Rajput rulers did not lag behind in consolidating their position by taking advantage of the disintegration of the Mughal Empire. None were large enough to contend with the Marathas or the British or the British for the position of

paramount power. Their method was to slowly loosen their ties with Delhi and function as independent states in practice. They participated in the struggle for power at the court of Delhi and gained lucrative and influential governorships from the Mughal emperors.

Rajput policy continued to be fractured in the post Mughal period. All the states followed a policy of constant expansion absorbing weak neighbours whenever possible. This took place within the State too, with one faction ousting the other in a continuously played game of one-up-manship at the court of the Mughals. The most-known Rajput ruler, Jai Sing of Amber, ruled Jaipur from 1699 to 1743.

Kerala

The three states of Cochin, Travancore and Calicut together comprised the present Travancore had gained incorporated into these states by 1763. But the expansion of Mysore proved destructive for the stability of Kerala. Haidar Ali invaded Kerala in 1766 and annexed Malabar and Calicut.

Travancore, the southern most state and by far the most prominent one, was spared Travancore had gained in importance after 1729 when its King, Martanda Verma, expanded his dominions with the help of a strong and modern army trained in Western lines and well equipped with modern weapons. The Dutch were ousted from Kerala and the feudal chiefs suppressed. His vision extended beyond expansion to development of his state and provision was made for irrigation and transport and communication. His successor Rama Verma, a man of great creativity and learning, including Western knowledge, was responsible for making Trivandrum, the capital, a centre of scholarship and art.

1.4.4 Weaknesses of Regional Polities

These states were strong enough to destroy Mughal power but none was able to replace it by a stable polity at an all-India level. According to one view, this was because of some inherent weaknesses in these regional polities. Though some of them tried to modernise, notably Mysore, on the whole they were backward in science and technology. These states could not reverse the general economic stagnation which had plagued the Mughal economy. The *Jagirdari* crisis intensified as income from agriculture declined and the number of contenders for a share of the surplus multiplied. Trade, internal and foreign, continued without disruption and even prospered but the rest of the economy stagnated.

The above analysis of weaknesses has been questioned by historians recently. Some representative examples will illustrate different trend. Satish Chandra argues that it is wrong to talk of generalised economic decline and social stagnation. The resilience of the economy was in sharp contrast to the ease with which the polity collapsed. For example, Bengal withstood the ravages of early colonial rule very well. Bengal's economy stabilised after the 1770s and export of cotton piece goods went up to 2 million in the 1790s from 400,000 in the 1750s.

The social structure did not stagnate, it changed and low castes moved upwards and "new men" pushing forward was a common feature all over India.

Muzaffar Alam presents a regionally varied picture, with some areas (Awadh) experiencing economic prosperity and other areas stagnation (Punjab). Polities remained regional because there emerged not state system indigenously with enough surpluses for an all-India system comparable to the Mughal Empire.

Check Your Progress 2

1) What were the stages in the breakaway of Mughal Provinces from the centre? Answer it in about 50 words.

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2) List the major territories acquired by the Marathas from 1740 to 1761.

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3) What were the major states set up by rebels against the Mughals?

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4) Write ten lines on the weakness of regional polities.

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1.5 THE RISE OF BRITISH POWER

The third and the most crucial feature of the 18th century polity was the rise and expansion of the British power in India. It opened a new phase in the history of

India. In this section you will become familiar with how the British came to India and subsequently expanded their influence.

1.5.1 From Trading Company to Political Power

The mid-18th century saw the transformation of the English East India Company from a trading enterprise to a political power. From its establishment on 31 December 1600 to 1744, the English East India Company slowly expanded its trade and influence in India. The Portuguese and Dutch were eased out by a strategy combining war and manoeuvres at eh Mughal court. By the 18th century the main foreign power remaining in the fray was the French East India Company, a comparatively late entrant in the race.

The beginning of the empire is usually traced to 1757 when the British defecated the Bengal Nawab at Plassey. The ground for the victory of 1757 was laid in South India where British military might and diplomatic strategy were successfully tested out in the conflict with the French Company. This conflict, popularly known as the Carnatic Wars, spanned a quarter century from 1744 to 1763. Unit 9 will take this up in detail.

The English East India Company had remained a commercial body for one and a half centuries. Why did it acquire its political ambitions at this time?

The expansion of European production and trade and the emergence of aggressive nation states in Europe lay behind the expansion of the European companies in India from the 1730s. In India, the decline of Mughal authority obviously provided a great opportunity for expansion of influence.

The company's need for more revenue from taxation inclined it towards establishing an empire. The company needed money to maintain its trade and pay its troops and so acquisition of territory seemed the best method of meeting this requirement. The company's interest in conquering Bengal was two-fold-protection of its trade and control over Bengal's revenue. The intention was to remit the surplus revenue of Bengal as tribute through the channel of investment in Bengal goods. The value of Bengal goods exported rose from 4,00,000 in 1765 to one million towards the end of the 1770's.

1.5.2 Anglo-French Struggle in South India

Hyderabad had become independent of central authority under Nizam-ul-Mulk but after his death in 1748 it entered into a period of grave instability, as did the Carnatic. Disputes over succession offered the foreign companies a chance for intervention.

First Carnatic War

The First Carnatic War was provoked by the outbreak of hostilities in Europe in 1742 between the two countries. By 1745 the war spread to India where French and English East India Companies were rivals in trade and political influence. The English attack of French ships near Pondicherry was duly matched by the

French occupation of Madras. At this juncture the Nawab of Carnatic responded to an English appeal to protect Madras and his armies were defeated by the small French army at St. Thomas near Madras. With the end of the war in Europe, the hostilities in India ceased, but only temporarily. The issue of supremacy had not been decisively settled and from 1748 onwards s situation of conflict once again emerged.

The second Carnatic War

The second war was the outcome of the diplomatic efforts of Dupleix, the French Governor-General in India. Disputes over claims to the throne arose both in Hyderabad and in the Carnatic. Dupleix was quick to extend support to Chandra Sahib in the Carnatic and Muzaffar Jang in Hyderabad, with the intention of obtaining handsome rewards from them. This early preparation was useful as the French and their allies defeated their opponents in 1749. The French gained territorially and monetarily. Significant gains were the Northrns Sarkars, Masulipatnam and some villages around Pondicherry. Political influence was secured at the Nizam's court by the appointment of an agent at the court.

The English avenged their defeat in 1750. Robert Clive master minded the occupation of Arcot with only 200 English and 300 Indian solider. Chandra Sahib had no option but to rush to the defence of his capital, lifting the siege of Trichonopoly and releasing Muhammad Ali in consequence. This was what Clive had hoped would happen.

The French effort to strike back was frustrated by the lack of support given by the French government. They had incurred heavy losses in America and India and preferred a humiliating peace to an expensive conflict. Thus the vey nature of the company, it's beginning almost a department of the state, proved disastrous for it. The French state was not only corrupt and decadent; it failed to keep in line with current development and visions into the future. Dupleix was recalled after negotiations with the English company in 1754. The French influence in India.

Peace like war, was once again linked with Europe. The Treaty of Paris in 1763 reduced the French company to a pure trading body without any political privileges.

The conflict between the English and French companies was a crucial stage in the consolidation of British power in India. At the end of 20 years the superiority of the British over the French was clearly proved. The lessons learnt in the Carnatic were well applied in other parts of the country.

1.5.3 Conquest of Bengal: Plassey to Buxar

Bengal was the first province where the British castablished political control. The Nawab, Siraj-ud-daula, was defeated at the battle of Plassey in 1757. The grant of the Zamindari of 24 Parganas by Mir Jafar in 1757 and then of the Burdwan, Midanpore and Chittagon in 1760 by Mir Kasim gave the Company's servants the of opportunity to oppress the officials of the Nawab and the peasants. Trading privileges were similarly misused. Mir Kasim followed Siraj-ud-daula's example

and refused to accept these attacks on his sovereignity. He joined battle with the British at Buxar in 1764 along with the Nawab of Awadh and the Mughal emperor. The company won an easy victory. Here our concern is with the changes in the political system.

Dual Government

The treaty of Bengal in 1765 inaugurated the Dual Government of Bengal. Clive became Governor of Bengal and Company the virtual ruler. The Nawab was the ruler merely in name as his army had been disbanded. The administration was handed over to a Deputy Subadar, who would function on behalf of the Nawab, but would be nominated through the Deputy diwan. As the offices of diwan and subedar were held by the same person, the company's control was total.

Moreover, the great advantage was that responsibility continued to be with the Nawab. The blame for the extortions and oppression by the company's servants fell on the Nawab. It is estimated that 5.7 million were taken away from Bengal in the years 1766 to 1768 alone. Senior British officials including Clive admitted that Company's rule was unjust and corrupt and meant untold misery for the people of Bengal.

1.5.4 Reorganisation of the Political System

The administrative abuses were so great that the company ended the dual government in 1772. The company was essentially a trading corporation, ill equipped to administer territory. Changes were necessary in the constitution to enable it to wield political power and for the British Government to regulate the functioning of the company. This was affected by the Regulating Act of 1733. .

Introduction of Western Institutions

The significance of the Regulating Act for our discussion lies in its introduction of the British mode of governance. British style institutions were introduced. The Governor-General and his Madras. The Supreme Court of justice was set up at Calcutta to administer justice according to British percepts. The nucleus of an administrative apparatus already existed within the company, as it had an army, collected taxes and imparted justice. Initially the old system was only extended, but by the turn of the century, British principles had permeated deep.

One such principle was the separation of the judiciary from the executive. Civil courts set up and presided over by judges, proved popular, 200,000 cases per year being the average in the early nineteenth century. The police system took shape under Carnwallis.

Reliance on Indians to man the services continued, but on different terms. Both the Nawab and his subordinates lost power as the company became the supreme authority. The powerful state apparatus created was intended to enforce obedience of the subjects. Continuities with earlier practice existed but the change in the way people were ruled was fundamental.

Change was immediately visible. Revenue collection procedures were derived from varied traditional and Mughal practices. But the establishment of control of the British Government over the Company's administration and policies marked the replacement of the indigenous political system by an imperial system subservient to the interests of Britain.

Check Your Progress 3

1) Why did the East India Company adopt an expansionist policy after the 1720's? Write your answer in 50 words.

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2) Write five lines as the Dual Government and its advantages for the British.

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1.6 LET US SUM UP

The 18th century is no longer accepted as a classic dark age when anarchy ruled. Mughal decline was not the predominant feature of the century. The growth of regional powers was an equally significant development of the mid-18th century. The rise of British power, which began in the mid-18th century, was the third major development.

Continuity of traditions from Mughal to regional and British polities was remarkable. But the differences between these three polities were equally striking. The same institutions performed very different functions when integrated into a new political system. The regional powers that emerged were of three trypes-the successor states, the new states and the independent kingdom. The first group proved to be stable polities. The Marathas, the main contender for the status of anal-Indian Empire came from the second group of 'new states'. But a combination of unfortunately time's external challenges and internal weakness dashed their dreams. The states set up by the Sikhs, Jats and Afghans were fairly short-lived.

The regional powers were not able to take the place of the Mughals. Thought some states were very prosperous, and some achieved considerable military powers, none could achieve resources and power to maintain an all-India polity.

Modernisation attempts were limited. Backward regional states easily succumbed to the superior British system.

The struggle with the French for supremacy marked the first phase of the rise of the British power. The conquest of Bengal was the second and decisive step. The British initially ruled through indigenous institutions but introduced constitutional changes economy, though the colonial institutions were a mixture of Mughal and British modes. British power in India was integrated into Britain's world-wise imperial system.

1.7 KEY WORDS

***Chauth*:** A levy consisting of one fourth of land revenue, collected by Maratha chiefs from the areas assigned to them by the Peshwa. In return the chiefs were expected to protect these areas from external aggression.

***Jagirdari* System:** A system of giving land to Mughal Mansabdar or officer in lieu of cash payment. The grantees were expected to collect the land revenue of these areas to pay their armed retainers and themselves. They also commanded administrative authority over the areas called *jagirs*.

1.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

1) See Sub-sec. 1.3.2.
2) i) ii) iii) iv)
3) See. 13.4
4) Sub-sec. 1.3.4

Check Your Progress 2

1) See Sub-sec. 1.4.1
2) See Sub-sec. 1.4.2
3) See Sub-sec. 1.4.3
4) In your answer you should briefly refer to factors like backward social structure continuity of *Jagirdari* crisis, inferior economic system and a failure to evolve a stable alternative all-India Polity. You should also discuss the various view points expressed See Sub-sec. 1.4.4

Check Your Progress 3

1) Your answer should include the need for more revenue by the British, along with other increasing economic requirements of the British State. See Sub-sec. 1.5.1
2) See Sub-sec. 1.5.3

UNIT 2: MERCANTILE POLICIES AND INDIAN TRADE

Structure

2.0 Objectives

2.1 Introduction

2.2 Structure of the East India Company

2.3 East India Company's Monopoly

2.4 Monopoly Versus Free Trade

2.5 Nature of the Company's Trade

2.6 Mercantile Business and Political Power

2.7 Rise of Industrial Capitalism and the Company's Mercantile Policies

2.8 Rise of Industrial Capitalism and the Company's Mercantile Policies

2.8 Let Us Sum Up

2.9 Key Words

2.10 Answers To Check Your Progress Exercises

2.0 OBJECTIVES

In this Unit you will study:

- how the East India Companies were structured as joint stock enterprises of many investors,
- how and why these merchant capitalist ventures known as East India Companies were give monopoly trade privileges by the governments of their respective countries,
- how there was a struggle between monopoly trade of the English East India Company and English Free Traders, leading to the withdrawal of monopoly privileges,
- the nature of the trade of the English Company and the private trade of servants of the Company in India as a collective monopoly.
- the reasons why merchant capitalist enterprises turned towards acquisition of territories and political power, and
- how the rise of industrial capitalism changed the nature of Indo-British economic relations, and consequent changes in the Company's mercantile policies.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

You already know the circumstances in which the East India Companies came into existence as a result of the long evolution of merchant capitalism in Europe. You also know the role played by European East India Companies, particularly the English Company, in the political history of India in the last decades of the 18th and early 19th centuries. This Unit introduces you to the structure and nature of the East India Company's trade in India and the monopoly that it enjoyed, the struggle between monopoly trade of the Company and English Free Traders, the motives behind acquisition of territories and political power by the Company, rise of industrial capitalism in English and its effect on the Company's mercantile policies.

2.2 STRUCTURE OF THE EAST INDIA COMPANY

You must have observed that today business enterprise is dominated by companies which sell stocks and shares in order to raise the capital they need in business. These are joint stock companies as distinct from business owned by a single proprietor or some proprietors in partnership. The East India Companies of Europe were some of the earliest joint stock companies in the world.

What was so special about these companies and how did the joint stock form of organisation give them any advantage? To begin with, the joint stock structure, that is to say the collection of capital from a number of stock or shareholders enabled these companies to put together a much larger quantity of capital then was possible for a single proprietor or a few in partnership. Moreover, a joint stock company ensured continuity of business activities and policies over a long period, something for centuries; unlike the shorter life span of business run by a single proprietor. Consider also the fact that in joint stock company there is scope for mobility of capital; in other words, the money invested in the shareholdings of one company could be taken out by the share owner (by selling his share to another) and put to other uses, including investment in another company. Thus capital was not tied up in one enterprise, but moved with greater ease to more profitable enterprises, thus ensuring the most efficient use of capital.

For all these reasons the joint stock company form of organising the business of East Indian trade was superior to and more efficient than any earlier form. Particularly for the trade with India the European countries needed this new form of organisation because of the large amount of investment required, the uncertainty of business (ship-wreck, wars etc), and the long waiting period between investment and realisation of profit (due to the long voyage by sailing ships around the continent of Africa to India). In the early days the English merchants used to pool their money to buy or hire and equip ships to go on a voyage to India for these reasons. The logical culmination of this development was the foundation of the East India Company (1600) as a joint stock enterprise. In the beginning only a few very wealthy merchants of London were shareholders of the East India Company. But in course of the 18th century relatively smaller shareholders began to participate in and became owners of the

new United Company of the Merchants of England Trading to the East Indies (founded in 1708). This new company continued to be called the East India Company as of old.

2.3 EAST INDIA COMPANY'S MONOPOLY

Another structural feature of the English East India Company was that it was granted a monopoly by the government of England. What was meant by this monopoly and why did the government grant it? Monopoly' in a general sense means the exclusive control of trade with India and other countries on the India Ocean and further east up to China. In consequence only the East India Company (to the exclusion of any other person or business firm) was legally entitled to trade with the above-said countries. This was a legal right conferred upon the East India Company by Queen Elizabeth I in the first instance and later by other monarchs. Why did the monarchs or governments do so in the 17th and 18th centuries? They gave this monopoly right to the East India Company partly because it was commonly believed, under the influence of the Mercantilist school of thought, that the state must promote trade abroad to bring home wealth from foreign trade. The risky trade with distant countries was supposed to be particularly in need of monopoly system so as to ensure to the investors profits of monopoly and thus to encourage such investment. Moreover, the relatively wealthy English merchants in the Indian trade were influential in the monarch's courts and the government.

At any rate, the upshot was that the Government in England conferred a monopoly of trade on the East India Company. This was done by granting to the Company's 'charter', i.e. a deed or a written grant of monopoly rights renewed from time to time by the government. The instrument by which such a right was conferred on the company became known in late 18th and early 19th centuries as the 'Charter Act', passed by the English Parliament. (The French and Dutch East Indian Companies also enjoyed monopoly rights granted by their government.)

Now, it is one thing to declare such a government grant of monopoly, and it is quite another thing to make the monopoly (i.e. the exclusion of others) effective in fact. What did the legal monopoly mean in actual practices?

2.4 MONOPOLY VERSUS FREE TRADE

From the middle of the 18th century till 1813 the East India Company, particularly its top management, called the Court of Director, had to struggle very hard to make the Company's monopoly rights effective, i.e. to exclude others from entering the trade. This was no easy task. For one thing, the English East India Company's own employees were naturally not above the temptation to set up a private business along with their official business, i.e. the Company's business. For another, there were always merchants and adventures making their way to India and managing to set up business firms of their own; these were called 'free merchants' for interlopers' (i.e. intruders engaged in unauthorised business). Both kinds of activities came in the way of the Company's monopoly.

As regard the first of these, the private business of the servants or employees of the East India Company, the problem was that the self-interest of the bulk of the Company's employees including the top men in India would not allow the strict implementation of the instructions of the Company Directors to stop private trade. The scale of salary, till the beginning of the 19th century was low, and the practice of supplementing the salary with profits of private trade was, widespread. What is more, the Company servants were in the habit of passing off their own private trade commodities as part of the Company's export commodities in order to claim exemption from internal duties in Bengal. This, known as the abuse of the *dastak* (i.e. permit to trade duty free), became the subject of contention and a cause of conflict, between the Bengal Nawab and the English. In fact the private trade interests of the Company's servants and the Company's officials trade became practically inseparable in the last half of the 18th century.

As for the Free Merchants their chief aim was to expand their business at the cost of the Company's business. Yet they were tolerated because the Company's servants found them increasingly useful to enable the Company's servants to invest their savings and ill-gotten plunder. Sending money to England was also facilitated by the Free Merchants. As the Directors of the East India Company and conscientious Governors like Lord Cornwallis began to insists on the withdrawal of the servants of the company from private trade, the Free Merchants obtained more capital from the Company servants. They acted so to speak as agents of the Company Servants. Hence there developed a number of Agency Houses which later, in the last half of the 19th century, became known as Managing Agencies.

In the meanwhile the monopoly privilege of the EIC came under attack in England. The doctrine of Free Trade, promoted by economic like Adam Smith (*Wealth of Nations*, 1776), was inimical to monopolies. The capitalists excluded from Indian trade by the EIC naturally lent support to the campaign for Free Trade. Capital accumulating in England wanted freedom from restrictions on investment. Moreover, the on-going Industrial Revolution brought to the fore in merchandising activities of the EIC, importing goods from India to England, diminished in importance in comparison with industrial manufacturing in England. There were strong lobbies in Parliament pressing for the abolition of the Company's monopoly.

In these circumstances the Charter Act of 1813 was passed abolishing the monopoly in Indian trade; another Charter Act in 1833 abolished the remaining part of the Company's privileged monopoly, that in the China trade. Thus, after more than two hundred years, the monopoly conferred on the EIC was taken away by the government.

Check Your Progress 1

1) What are the advantages of the joint stock companies? Answer in five sentences?

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2) What do you understand by Monopoly of Trade?

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3) Write in brief about the challenges that the EIC faced in respect of its monopoly over Indian trade? Answer in 100 words

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2.5 NATURE OF THE COMPANY'S TRADE

We have been discussing above the legal monopoly created by the English government. In fact, the monopoly was entrenched upon, as we have noted. However, in certain parts of India the Company and English private traders collectively enjoyed virtually a monopolistic position. This was, for example, true of Bengal from the last decades of the 18th century.

When the essence of mercantile capitalist business was buying cheap, and selling dear, reduction of competition would be inevitably the aim of business. If you were aiming to buy cheaply you would find it advantageous to have as few buyers in the market as possible; obviously that helps to buy cheaply. Likewise it helps to sell your goods dear if you have as few sellers as possible. That is what monopolistic business is about. However, real life seldom matches the text book definition of a monopolist on a single buyer in the market. Conditions approximating that situation may exist under special circumstances, for example the use of coercion or force, legislation, or even warfare to eliminate competitors. All these means were used by the English East India Company in India.

The European East India Company's main business was to procure certain commodities like spices, indigo, cotton cloth etc. and export them to Europe. Procurement of these goods in India initially took place under fairly competitive conditions. A 17th century English Factory had generally to compact with local or 'country' merchants' and foreign traders, including other European East India Companies. In course of the 18th century the Englishmen increasingly acquired a position of advantage:

i) Other European East India Companies were marginalized through the military and political victories of the English Company over the others.

ii) The weakness of the successor states and principalities since the decline of the Mughal Empire allowed the East India Companies to bully and bribe the local powers to grant Europeans special trade privileges.

iii) Artisans as well as peasants, e.g., weavers and indigo growers, were sometimes subjected to coercive practice from the late decades of the 18th century in order to procure goods at a cheap price or to persuade them to produce the goods for the Company. By the end of the 18th century the position acquired by the English East India Company and the servants of the Company in private trade may be described as a collective monopoly in respect of the chief commodities of export to Europe.

2.6 MERCANTILE BUSINESS AND POLITICAL POWER

We have discussed till now some of the features of mercantile capitalist activities, typified by the East India Company, but we have not touched upon one question. What motivated a company of merchants like EIC to launch on territorial expansion and what did it have to do with politics?

In the beginning of European trade with India there were only voyages to India by one or more ships from time to time. However, it was not easy to procure large quantities of goods in India at short notice when a 'voyage' visited an Indian port. Therefore, it became necessary to set up Factories in or near major sea ports or production centres. You must note that these were not factories of today where things are actually produced; the word 'factory' in 17th and 18th century English meant foreign trading stations set up by a merchant Company. The officials posted there were called 'factors' who were essentially salaried agents purchasing goods on behalf of the East India Company for export. Now the English as well as the other East India Companies wanted to protect the factories with a fort around it. After the decline of the Mughal empire set in, such protective fortification may have been need in some regions and some local government tacitly or explicitly allowed acquisition of land and building of forts by East India Companies. However, the Companies began to exceed the limits of legitimate self protection and fortified and militarized their trading stations as centres of armed power challenging local governments. Fort William of Calcutta and Fort ST. George of Madras were prominent instances of this kind. Thus, the fort provided a nucleus allowing the foreign merchants to spread their control over the neighbouring territory. The territorial claims of the Company sometimes had a legal basis (e.g. the grant of zamindari rights, as in Bengal), but more often than not the real basis of the territorial claims in the last decades of the 18th century was the military strength of the Company. You already know how the European Companies operated as one of the territorial powers from the middle of the 18th century.

The evolution of the English EIC from the Voyage system to factory system, from that to forts and eventually to the position of a territorial power helped in

business; it was, not just a fit of absent mindedness and an aberration from the proper task of merchants that led to the political hegemony of the Company that became the British Indian Empire. It was useful to have military power to back up coercion on the artisans (e.g. the Bengal weavers) to produce goods at a cheap price, to bully the local merchants to make them subservient to English factors and private traders, and, of course, to eliminate other foreign merchants (particularly the French and the Dutch) from competing with the English. Moreover, a military and territorial power could extract from the regional principalities and the local nobility "Protection money", bribes etc, not to speak of plunder that ware fare brought in. Finally, control over territories brought in revenue. The classic example of this was the Dewani of Bengal from 1765. The company's share of the land revenue of Bengal enabled it to reduce for many years the remittance of bullion from England. Bullion was needed to buy goods in India for export by the Company and it was, of course, desirable to reduce bullion export from England by raising cash in India to pay for exports from India. Thus the territorial ambitions of the East India Company made a lot of economic sense so far as English interests were concerned.

These are some of the reasons why we see the Company playing such a salient role in Indian political history in the 18th century to emerge as the largest territorial power by the beginning of the 19th century.

2.7 RISE OF INDUSTRIAL CAPITALISM AND THE COMPANY'S MERCANTILE POLICIES

In England in 1750, about 40 to 45 per cent of national income originated in the agricultural sector; by 1851 agriculture's share diminished to 20 per cent and by 1881 it came down to about 10 per cent. The contribution of foreign trade to England's national income was 14 per cent in 1790; it increased to 36 per cent by 1880. This helps us measure the rapid pace of industrialisation in England; that country was transformed in the last half of the 18th and early 19th century. As a result industrial manufacture foreign trade in manufactures became the mainstay of the English economy. In particular the growth of English cotton textile industry obviously meant an end to the demand for Indian cloth in England. On the contrary, England was now seeking markets for her cotton textiles in, among other countries, India Moreover, to make industrial goods, England needed now more raw material than before, for example, England now, after her industrialisation, would import raw cotton from, among other countries, India. Thus the whole basis of economic relationship between England and India was different after the industrialisation of England compared to what it had been in the era of merchant capitalism.

In short, the Indian acquired by the merchant company had to fulfill a different role after the transformation of England into the first industrial capitalist country. The merchant company and their empire slowly veered towards a new role in the new scheme of things. In the period you are studying in this course, i.e. till 1857,

only the beginnings of a new imperialism can be seen. It is seen in the decline of the export of Indian manufacture goods to England. The value of cotton cloth exported from India to England declined from pound 1.3 million to only pound 0.1 million in the years 1815 to 1832. In the same period the import of cotton cloth from England increased almost 15 times. In the previous century the mainstay of the Company's mercantile policy was to purchase cotton cloth in India for export. That procurement or purchase was naturally abandoned in the early decades of the 19th century. In the last days of the Company's trading career, in the 1820's, no cotton manufactures were exported by it to England; the only goods it exported were raw silk, saltpetre or raw material for gunpowder, indigo an agricultural product, and (the only manufactured commodity) a small amount of silk cloth. As regards imports from England, the East India Company stopped it altogether from 1824, except for military stores etc, used by the Company itself. The trade between India and Europe passed from the hands of the Company to private traders; as you know, the Charter Act of 1813 fully opened Indian trade to the private traders.

Another great change in the Company's policies and finances took place in the first decades of the 19th century. This was the increase in non-commercial earnings of the Company, i.e. what was called the Territorial Revenue which came from the land revenue and other taxes collected from territories conquered by the Company. At the same time the commercial earning declined because, as you already know, the Company's trade diminished in these years to the vanishings point. Thus from 1820's the Company depended almost entirely on Territorial Revenue whereas up to the 1765 the only income had been from commercial profits. From 1765, the assumption by the Company of the Dewani of Bengal, territorial revenue began to increase and eventually outstrip commercial earnings. Thus the finances of the Company reflected its transformation from and merchant corporation to a territorial power.

Finally, one may note that it was the Company's deliberate policy to divert the revenue it collected to commercial purposes. This was a result of the Company being simultaneously part of the government in Bengal from 1765 and a merchant company. A substantial portion of the revenue of Bengal was used in the purchase of goods for export to England, the so-called 'investment'. As a Committee of the English House of Common puts it in 1783, such 'investment' was not actually employment of trading capital brought into Bengal, but merely a means of "payment of a tribute". This was a major example of what the Indian economic nationalists later called 'economic drain'. The territorial revenues also enabled the Company to raise money on credit (the so-called Territorial Debt) and to pay for military action for further territorial expansion.

Check Your Progress 2

1) List some of the economic factors that motivated the EIC to acquire territory and political power in India.

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2) What are the changes brought about by Industrial Revolutions in the Company's mercantile policy? Answer in 100 words.

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3) Read the following sentences and write 'Yes' and 'No' against each sentence.
   i) The charter Act of 1813 passed by the English Parliament abolished the monopoly of the EIC in Indian Trade.
   ii) The 'Factories' established by the English in India in 17th and 18th century were the foreign trading stations.
   iii) The EIC tried to get territories power in India because the local rulers failed to administer the country properly.
   iv) Industrialisation in England did not bring any basic change in the economic relationship between England and India.
   v) In the early 19th century the Company's earnings from territorial revenue increased compared to commercial profits.

2.8 LET US SUM UP

You have studied in this Unit the structure of the East India Companies as joint stock companies and you have seen how their respective governments conferred on them monopoly privileges. In course of the 18th century this monopoly was encroached upon by private trade very substantially. A struggle between the monopoly trade and private trade existed. In practice, a collective monopoly position was acquired by the English Company and Company servants in respect of the main export commodities in some parts of India from the last decades of the 18th century. This was correlated with the increasing political hegemony and territorial expansion of the English Company. The industrial transformation of England during the late18th and early 19th centuries brought about major changes in the Company's mercanataile policies. A series of legal measures brought increasing control of the British government over the Company which in turn was changing from a merchant company to a territorial power.

2.9 KEY WORDS

Factory: Since the 19th century it means a workshop for manufacture of industrial goods; in earlier two centuries it meant merchant company's foreign trading station. Hence 'Factor' means a merchant company's employee stationed abroad.

Free Merchant: European traders who evaded the legal monopoly of the East India Company in Indian trade; often called 'interlopers' for intruders.

Mercantilism: Economic doctrine, widely accepted in 16th-17th century Europe, which encouraged state intervention to promote export and limit import so as to enrich a country with bullion.

Monopoly: Exclusive possession of the trade in some commodity or branch of trade (e.g. East India trade); often conferred by the state, under the influence of Mercantilism; a statutory privilege, not always effective in practice, in the case of Indian trade.

National income: The total flow of goods and services (measured in monetary terms) which is produced in the economy of a state.

2.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

1) See Sec. 2.2
2) See Sec. 2.3
3) Your answer should refer to the increasing private business of the Company officials, role of the 'Free merchants' capitalists free trade, etc. See Sec. 2.4.

Check Your Progress 2

1) See Sec. 2.6
2) Your answer should focus on the decline of the export of Indian manufactured goods to England, increase in export of raw materials from India to England, increase in export of English manufactured goods in India market, increase in company's territorial revenue, etc. See Sec. 2.7
3) i) Yes ii) Yes iii) No iv) No v) Yes

UNIT 3 COLONIAL EXPANSION AND INDIAN RESISTANCE - I

Structure

3.0 Objectives

3.1 Introduction

3.2 The English and the French in India: Their Strength and Weaknesses

3.3 The First Carnatic War (1740-48)

3.3.1 The role of the Nawab of Carnatic

3.3.2 Defiance of Dupleix by the French Admiral

3.3.3 Superiority of French in First Carnatic War

3.4 The Second Carnatic War (1751-55)

3.4.1 Succession Rivalry in Carnatic and Hyderabad

3.4.2 Dupleix's Intervention

3.4.3 Entry of the British

3.4.4 Recall of Dupleix

3.4.5 French Influence Restricted to Hyderabad

3.5 The Third Carnatic War (1758-63)

3.5.1 French Offensives in Carnatic

3.5.2 Problems of the French Army

3.5.3 The Naval Debacle

3.5.4 Battle of Wandiwash

3.6 Causes of French Failure

3.7 The Aftermath

3.8 Let Us Sum Up

3.9 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

3.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this Unit, you will learn the following points:

- the two major forcing trading companies that existed in South India in the 18th century i.e. the English and the French; their relative strengths, and weaknesses,
- the extent to which Indian powers were able to withstand foreign interference in their affairs as well aggression against them,
- the nature of the conflict between the English and French companies as it unfolded from 1740 onward, and

- the economic, political and military factors which were to determine the outcome of this conflict.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This unit focuses on the process of British consolidation, through conquests and elimination of rivals in various parts of the sub-continent. In this Unit you would be reading about South India. The expansion of the British in South India was basically the outcome of the hostilities between the English and the French East India Companies. South India was the main arena for French activities. Not only was Pondicherry their capital, but in the neighboring princely states like Hyderabad and Mysore, they wielded great influence. In order to make maximum profits it was necessary for a trading company to eliminate all completion and establish its monopoly. Hence it had become very essential for the British to eliminate the hold of the French from this region. By 1761 this task had been achieved and the following narrative will outline the stages of this process.

3.2 THE ENGLISH AND THE FRENCH IN INDIA: THEIR STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

Both the French and the English East India Companies were the products of the rise of mercantile capitalism in Europe. This phase of capitalism is regarded as a preparatory phase when trade with Asiatic and Latin American countries was carried on to help in the process of capital accumulation. Trade was carried on in goods which were manufactured in India and for which there was a heavy demand in Europe.

However, the way in which the two Companies took advantage of trade with the East differed greatly. While the English Company had a vastly superior infrastructure with much large fleets, the French were deficient even in their knowledge to commerce. The English Company was the wealthier body and conducted more frequent voyages. In comparison with the French Company it had a more continuous history of trading with the East. To appreciate the qualitative difference in the two Companies we must take into account the nature of their origins. While the French Company was the offspring of state patronage whose revenues were largely drawn from monopoly of the tobacco trade, the English EIC was a great private corporation, founded and maintained by individual enterprise not dependent in any way on the state. In fact the state was in its debt. The impact of these differences was very great, as will been later in the course of events.

The French EIC was formed in 1664 whereas the English Company had been formed in 1600 and had begun trade in cloth and calicoes with India in 1613 by an Imperial *firman* received from Emperor Jahangir. However, they had obtained the right to trade only on the Western coast-at Surat, Ahmedabad, Cambay and Goa. The French Company also established their first factory at Surat in 1668. But this did not pose a serious threat to the English Company, since they failed to

"buy cheap & sell dear" and all they succeeded in doing was to reduce the price of European goods and increase that of Indian goods.

The factory at Surat was succeeded by one at Masulipatam in 1669. Then in 1674 Francois Martin founded Pondicherry, which was to become future capital of the French in India. It was a rival to Madras. It grew in size and strength and became as impressive as the English settlement at Madras-but it could not match the latter in the extent and variety of its commerce. Between 1690 and 1962 a factory was set up at Chandernagore in the East. It proved no challenge to the English settlement in Calcutta.

Fortunes of the French East India Company declined in the beginning of the 18th century and the factories at Surat, Bantam and Masulipatam had to be abandoned. However, that was only a temporary setback and by the 1720s, the French Company had staged a comeback with the revival of interest on the part of the French mercantile bourgeoisie in the Company. The Company was reconstituted; it adopted a new name and was now known as 'Perpetual Company of the Indies'. French naval power was greatly improved-a base being established at Mauritius. It was also reported that 10 to 12 ships were being built in English for the French Company. In 1725 the French established themselves at Mahe on the Malabar Coast and in 1739 at Karaikal on the East Coast.

3.3 THE FIRST CARNATIC WAR (1740-48)

The scene was thus set for a confrontation between the two forces. The opportunity was provided by the outbreak of the war of Austrian Succession in Europe in which the English and the French were in opposite camps. There was the possibility of an outbreak of hostilities between the British and the French in India but it was the French who hesitated. Perhaps conscious of their relatively weaker position in India, they tried hard to prevent an extension of hostilities to India. The English did not share this sentiment. However, and in a deliberately provocative manner, seized some French ships off the south-eastern coast of India. The French, having no fleet in India, had to wait until the arrival of the fleet from Mauritius. Immediately on its arrival, the French launched an attack on the English by both land and sea, within a week Madras had surrendered to the French and the first Carnatic war had begun.

3.3.1 Role of the Nawab of Carnatic

The English appealed to Anwar-ud-din the Nawab of Carnatic, for protection and assistance and the later requested Dupleix, the French Governor to raise the siege of Madras. But the French were in no mood to accede to his request, just as the English had ignored him in the past. Since the Nawab had no naval fleet, he was not in a position to intervene effectively. Yet he felt that he could teach the French a lesson on land and therefore sent an army against the French troops besieging Madras. Despite its impressive size his troops suffered an ignominious defeat at the hands of the French. This was an eye-opener for the Europeans in India; it reveled that even a small disciplined European force could easily defeat

a much larger Indian army. This knowledge was invaluable to them in future dealings with Indian princes.

3.3.2 Defiance of Dupleix by the French Admiral

The initial seizure of Madras had been possible because of the arrival of Admiral La Bourdaunairs' fleet from Mauritius. But the latter refused to co-operate with Dupleix since he felt that he held independent charge and took orders only from the French Government. Much to the chagrin of Dupleix, the French Governor-General, he struck a deal with the English. Madras would be returned to them on the payment of a ransom amount of 400,000. The French Governor-General was not even consulted on the matter. If he had way, Madras would not have been returned to the English at any price. Dupleix was now free to assume the initiative vis-à-vis the English. He made a fresh attack on Madras in September 1746, which surrendered as easily as in the first instance. The English prisoners were marched to Pondicherry and quartered there.

The French followed up this military success with an attack on Fort St. David, a minor English possession to the south of Pondicherry. But this time the English were better prepared to defend their settlement. They had stationed their fleet off the coast of Pondicherry and were able to withstand the French attack effectively. The siege of Fort St. David lasted for 18 months. The French did not withdraw the siege either and it was only after the conclusion of hostilities in Europe with the signing of the treaty of Aix-La-Chappelle in 1848 that the English possessions were restored of them. The French possessions in North America were also returned to them.

3.3.3 Superiority of French in First Carnatic War

Despite their naval weakness, it was obvious that the French had performed better in the first Carnatic War. Had it not been for the quarrel between Dupleix and La Bourdaunairs, the English would have faced total ruin in India. P.E. Roberts, the British official historian for India feels that this is an exaggeration. He argues that the war on the Coromandel Coast affected only a single English Presidency and that too the Weakest.

French military superiority was obvious not only to the English but also to the Indian powers. Since the latter did not possess navies, they could not have a say at all in European conflicts in India. Even their land armies, though impressive numbers, were no match for European armies. In the heyday of the Mughal Empire, Indian princes could expect assistance from the centre but with the disintegration of the Mughal Empire that source of help was no longer available.

Dupleix had learnt his lessons well from the first Carnatic. War: he was convinced that, in any quarrel between the Indian prices, his disciplined army would be very useful. And in those days of political unrest, there was no dearth of Indian princes who would invite Dupleix's assistance to turn the scales in their favour.

Check Your Progress 1

1) What were the advantages that the British EIC had over their French counter parts? Write in ten lines.

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2) Read the following statement and mark right or wrong.
   i) The English EIC was founded in 1664.
   ii) The first French factory was established at Surat.
   iii) Fortunes of the French Company declined in the first decade of the 18th century.
   iv) The English East India Company had a monopoly over the tobacco trade.
   v) The French were more successful than the British in buying cheap and selling dear.
   vi) The British launched the first offensive in the first Carnatic War.
   vii) Fort St. David was a minor French possession in the south of Pondicherry.

3) Describe in five lines the significance of the Nawab of Carnatic's participation in the first Carnatic War.

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3.4 THE SECOND CARNATIC WAR

Unlike the first Carnatic war, there was no European war to provide a pretext for the outbreak of hostilities between the English and the French in the second instance. Rivalry in India provided the context, but it became a life and death struggle for the survival of the English and French EIC in India.

3.4.1 Succession Rivalry in Carnatic and Hyderabad

Carnatic was a province under the *subedar* of Deccan, i.e., the Nizam of Hyderabad and was ruled by a governor-the Nawab, with his headquarters at Arcot. Since the subadar of the Deccan was usually busy with his own affairs-at this time tackling the Marathas and other forces in Northern India, the Nawab practically enjoyed independent power.

In 1740, i.e. before the first Carnatic War, the Marathas had invaded the Carnatic and killed the Nawab-Dost Ali. They also took his son-in-law Chanda sahib as prisoner to Satara. The prevailing conditions of stability prompted the Nizam to come to the Carnatic in 1743 and to appoint Anwar-ud-din Khan as the Nawab of Carnatic. But this appointment only worsened the situation especially after 1748

when Chanda sahib was set free by Maratha after seven years of captivity. In the same year i.e. in 1748 Asaf-Jan-Nizam ul Mulk, the Hyderabad Nawab, passed away. He was successes by his son, Nasir Jang but his grandson, Muzaffar Jang laid claim to the throne on the ground that the Mughal Emperor had appointed him as the Governor of the Carnatic. Muzaffar Jang found an ally in Chanda Sahib to fight together to gain their respective seats in Hyderabad and the Carnatic.

3.4.2 Dupleix's Intervention

This was a wonderful opportunity for the foreign merchant companies to pursue their own ends. The French took the initiative and Dupleix concluded secret treaties with Chandra Sahib and Muzaffar Jang with a view to placing them on the thrones of the Carnatic and the Deccan.

In August 1749 the three allies ambushed and killed Anwar-ud-din at the battle of Ambur, located south-east of Vellore. His son, Muhammad Ali, fled to Trichinopoly and Chandr Sahib became Nawab of Carnatic.

3.4.3 Entry of British

The English felt that the initiative was slipping out of their hands. Hence they now established friendship with Nasir Jang, the Nizam of Hyderabad, and persuaded him to come and crush his enemies in the Carnatic and send some help to Muhammad Ali in Trichinopoly. But Nasir Jang's attempts to crush his enemies only resulted in his own death in 1750. Muzaffar Jang was released from prison and proclaimed *Subedar* of the Deccan.

As a token of his gratitude the new *subedar* amply rewarded the French. Dupleix was appointed Governor of all the Mughal Dominions south of the river Krishna. Territories near Pondichery were ceded to the French as also some areas on the Orissa coast, including the famous market-town to Mauslipatam. In return at Muzaffar Jang's request, Dupleix placed at his disposal the services of his best officer-Bussy, with a French army. He knew that this was the best way of ensuring French interests in the Hyderabad court and thereby its influence in the whole of the Deccan.

It seemed as if the British position in Madras would be lost irrevocably. However, the appointment of Saunders, a more dynamic Madras Governor in September 1750, changed the situation. He decided to go to the assistance of Muhammad Ali in 1751. In the meantime the French, having realised that their siege of Trichy was not proving successful, changed their tactics and were trying to woo Muhammad Ali. The latter wavered, was even willing to give up his claims to the Nawabship of the Carnatic, provided the French persuaded the Nizam of Hyderabad to obtain a new appointment for him in any other part of the Deccan. But the British proved to be better masters in the art of the diplomacy and persuaded Muhammad Ali not to give up his claim, but instead to bide his time. But he was further advised that the pretence of negotiations with the French persuaded the Nizam of Hyderabad to obtain a new appointment for his in any other part of the Deccan. But the British proved to be better masters in the art of

the diplomacy and persuaded Muhammad Ali not to give up his claim, but instead to bide his time. But he was further advised that the pretence of negotiations with the French be kept up, so that the latte may be fooled pretence of negotiations with the French be kept up, so that the latter may be fooled effectively. When the English had prepared a full-scale offensive, they sent a detachment to Trichy in May 1751. The idea was to help Muhammad Ali against the French. Later in the same year, the rulers of Mysore, Tanjore and the Maratha chief, Morari Rao, also gave help to Muhammad Ali and the English. In the meantime Clive proposed an expedition against Arcot as the best means of preventing the fall Clive proposed an expedition against Arcot as the beast means of preventing the fall of Trichinopoly. Chanda Sahib would have to divert an effective part of his army for the protection of the capital. Arcot was successfully occupied by Clive with the help of a mall British force-consisting of 200 European and 300 Indian soldiers. The Nawab had to send reliving forces from Trichy and it was only after battling for 53 days that he managed to win back Arcot. The seizure of Acrot demoralised the French so greatly that the French general Jacquer-francois Law, in charge of the siege of Trichy, abandoned his post and fled to Srirangam. The British pursued him and Law finally surrendered on 9 June 1752. Shortly thereafter a dispirited Chanda Sahib also surrendered to the English. He was beheaded on the orders of the Tanjore generals.

The English prestige was greatly enhanced by this incident and the French were in a sorry plight. But they were not willing to give up that easily and Dupleix was devising a fresh strategy. He won over Morari Rao, the Maratha chief and the ruler of Mysore and secured the neutrality of the Raja of Tanjore, the siege of Trichinopoly was renewed in December 1752 and continued for more than one year, and both sides were successful alternatively.

3.4.4 Recall of Dupleix

Dupleix's valiant efforts to relieve the French position were not much appreciated by the French authorities. They were greatly annoyed at the heavy financial losses that Dupleix's policy involved and decided to recall him. On 1 August 1754 Godeheu succeeded Dupleix as Governor-General in India. In a complete reversal of Duplex's policy, he reopened negotiations with the British and concluded a treaty. The English and the French both agreed not to interfere in the quarrels of native prices and each party was left in possession of the territories that it actually occupied at the time of the treaty.

How did the tide turn against Dupleix? Displeasure with his policies in India was only a part of the reason. It must be recalled that the French East India Company was directly controlled by the French Government which had to consider the larger political issues confronting the state. It was the fear of serious repercussions in America that prompted the French to suspend hostilities in India.

When the English realised that Dupleix was to be withdrawn and that they had scored a point, they decided to press their advantage further. While the negotiations were proceeding, they fanned the growing sentiments in France against Dupleix and maintained that Dupleix's "ambition and artifice" were sure

to sabotage any negotiations. They insisted that he be replaced by a more pliable negotiator. Thus the British too had a hand in the downfall of Dupleix and this was of decisive importance to them in their engagements with the French.

3.4.5 French Influence Restricted to Hyderabad

The work of Dupleix was practically undone. The only place where his policy continued to have some impact was at Hyderabad, where Bussy still maintained his influence, despite the opposition of the nobility, which was more favourably disposed towards the English. Bussy even induced the Nizam to grant him the Northern Sarkars consisting of the districts of his Mustafanagar, Ellore, Rajahmundry and Chicacole. These districts with annual revenue of more than 30 lakhs of rupees were to help meet the expenses of maintaining the French army in Hyderabad. For the time being, at least, Bussy's position in Hyderabad was secure. He had succeeded in maintaining French military presence in Hyderabad in spite of the best efforts of the nobility to expel the French troops from the Nizam's territory. (They had even succeeded in doing so, briefly in 1756).

There is no denying the fact that the prestige of the French in India had been greatly enhanced by the dangerous exploits of Dupleix in the second Carnatic War. It is indeed ironic that the French Government, in the interests of securing "the gains of commerce" which could only accrue in peacetime, chose to reverse all Dupleix's positions and recall him in disgrace. Dupleix had to reackon with the hopeless incompetence of the French generals. The indecision, lack of energy and cowardice of Law and his colleagues was in sharp contract to the brilliant genius and bold dash of Clive.

Check Your Progress 2

1) Match the following

i)	A	Chanda Sahib	a)	Hyderabad
ii)	B	Muzaffar Jang	b)	Madras
iii)	C	Mohammad Ali	c)	Carnatic
iv)	D	Saunders	d)	Trichinopoly

2) How did the British gain an upper hand over the French in the second Carnatic War? Answer in 100 words.

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3.5 THIRD CARNATIC WAR

Clive's masterly abilities in building the English fortunes in India had begun revealing themselves. The heyday was the 1750s and the arena Bengal. It was not a mere coincidence then that at the outbreak of the Seven Years' War between the English and the French in Europe in 1756 the English captured Chandernagore in India. Siraj-ud-daula the Nawab of Bengal was enraged at this

behavior of the Company especially since he had warned the English that he would not tolerate such behavior on the part of either of the European powers. When Chandernagore was besieged, the Nawab, gallantly enough, gave shelter to the French captives in his court and refused to drive them away even when the English offered military help in exchange against an impending attack on Bengal by the Mughal heir-apparent, This refusal of the Nawab to hand over the French became one of the reasons for was between him and the British.

In south India, however, neither the French nor the British were in a position to indulge in war immediately. Both were handicapped by lack of resources. The major part of the Madras military and naval forces of the British had been sent to recover Calcutta, which had been seized by the Nawab of Bengal. The French Government had plans to strike a severe blow against the English this time and had made preparations. An impressive French army under Count de Lally had set sail for India but it encountered several difficulties on the way. Hence the reinforcements for the French did not reach India until the second quarter of 1758, just in time to protect the French interests in south India as the English fleet had returned from Bengal, victorious and ready to take on the French. They brought enough reinforcement of men and money.

3.5.1 French Offensives in the Carnatic

The stage was thus set for the third Carnatic War. This time the French were on the offensive. They were successful in taking fort St. David in a swift operation. Meanwhile Bussy from Hyderabad had been attacking the English possessions in the Northern areas. He managed to take over all of them including the fort at Vizianagaram on 24 June 1758.

The English were quite justifiably alarmed at their reverses. They even feared a possible expulsion from India. According to James Mill, “had Dupleix been still the guide and conductor of the enemy’s affairs, it is more than probable that their most gloomy apprehensions would have been realised.”

3.5.2 Problems of the French Army

But the French were unable to sustain their valiant military effort. Problems of varying nature began to surface on the horizon. First, there were the financial difficulties of the Company which would henceforth come in the way of preparations for every fresh military offensive. There were no funds to pay the troops. Already handicapped thus, the French general added to his troops’ woes by indulging in rude and haughty behavior towards them. He refused to listen to their advice and thus alienated them. Lally’s supposedly wise decision to “strike at the root of British power in the Carnatic by reducing Madras” backfired when he failed to get naval co-operation. The French naval forces were commanded by Admiral and Ache had already suffered defeat at the hands of the English in April 1758. He refused to set sail for Madras. Consequently Lally had to postpone his plans for a seizure of Madras. He thus lost a valuable opportunity-the like of which would never offer itself in the future.

Lally thought he would solve the financial problems of the French company by forcing the Raja of Tanjore to pay an outstanding amount of 70 lakhs of rupees owing to the Company since the time of Dupleix. Tanjore was besieged on 18 July 1758 and though the Raja was hardly in a position to offer any resistance, the French could not press their advantage. Problems within the French army once again surfaced-there were a shortage of ammunition; both Lally and his soldiers distrusted each other; the French troops were badly demoralised.

3.5.3 The Naval Debacle

Meanwhile the English fleet had inflicted heavy losses o the French fleet in August 1758. A dispirited d'Ache resolved to abandon the French naval effort and left the Indian seas in the same month. This compelled Lally to withdraw from Tanjore, thereby inflicting a heavy blow to his reputation as well as that of the French.

However, Lally continued to challenge the British by conquering minor English Settlements on the Coromandel Coast, so that, at one stage, the English were left only with Madras, Trichy and Chingleput in the Carnatic. By December 1758 with the onset of the monsoon English fleet had to leave the harbourless Madras coast, and this gave Lally an opportunity to embark on a fresh siege of Madras. But the problems of the French army had not been effectively tackled and the siege of Madras continued for three months. It had to be finally withdrawn when the English fleet returned in February 1759.

From this point onwards the fortunes of the French in India went into a decline that could not be reversed. In the next twelve months the debacle was completed. Miscalculations and wrong decisions in the Deccan cost them dearly. Lally unwisely prevailed upon Bussy to leave Hyderabad, leaving the French forces there under incompetent commanders. His repeated requests to be allowed to return to Hyderabad fell on deaf ears. Having assessed the situation, the English sent an army from Bengal to the Northern Sarkars. They occupied Rajamundry and Musulipatam and in 1759 concluded a favourable treatly with Nizam Salabat Jang. French influence in the Deccan had thus been irretrievably lost. What was worse from the French point of view was that, they were replaced by the English at the court of Hyderabad.

3.5.4 Battle of Wandiwash

The decisive battle of the third Carnatic War was Fought at Wandiwash on 22 January 1760. General Eyre Coote's army totally routed the French army under Lally. In the next three months all the minor French possessions in the Carnatic had been effectively reduced by Coote's efforts. The French were left with not possessions in the Carnatic except Jinje and Pondicherry. Finally, in May 1760, the English laid siege to Pondicherry.

At this juncture Lally tried to retrieve the situation with a last-ditch attempt at alliance with Nawab Haidar Ali of Mysore. The latter even sent a contingent to the aid of the French. But the French and Haidar Ali's contingent were unable to

decide on a concerted plan of action and Haidar's contingent ultimately returned to Mysore without fighting a single battle.

After more than six months of encirclement, the French capital of Pondicherry unconditionally surrendered on 16 January, 1761. The city was completely destroyed by the victors and its fortifications reduced to mere rubble. A contemporary account states that "in a few months not a roof was left standing in this once fair and flourishing city". Shortly thereafter Jinje and Mahe, the two French settlements on the Malabar Coast also surrendered to the English leaving the French without even a toehold in India. More distressing was the fates of the French general Count de Lally. After being detained as an English prisoner of war for two years, he was allowed to return to France at the end of the Seven Years War. But far from receiving kindly treatment, he was imprisoned in the Bastille for more than two years and afterwards executed.

The Peace of Pairs did restore the French Factories in India to the French company but the French East India Company formally ended its career in 1769. Thereafter the French Crown maintained the French factories in India for the benefit of private traders. It was a feeble effort and the French, like their Portuguese and Dutch counterparts in India, confined themselves to "country trade". Their dependence on the English was revealed by the fact that both in Europe and in India their business transactions were in collaboration either with the English Company directly or with its officials or private English traders residing in India.

3.6 CAUSES OF FRENCH FAILURE

To what do we ascribe the final French failure in India? Was it a mistake on the part of the French Government to recall Dupleix? Indeed, the French reverse began to occur after Duplex's humiliating exit from India. Or was the French inferiority at sea the main reason? The Fact that the French had no permanent naval presence in India was a disabling factor vis-à-vis the British, who had a formidable naval presence; what was more problematic was that, on the occasions when the French navy from Mauritius did come to the assistance of their Indian counterparts, it created fresh problems for the French Company in India.

However, these were secondary factors. What really turned the tide in Britain's favour was its recent access to the rich resources of Bengal. From this secure base they could send a constant supply of men and money to Madras and distract the French by launching diversionary attacks against the French as they did in the Northern Sarkars.

3.7 THE AFTERMATH

In the aftermath of the third Caranatic War, the English reigned supreme over India. All their European rivals had been eliminate but the task of subjugating Indian rulers still remained. In south India Mysore was a major force to reckon with and so were the Marathas. Battles with these two states were to become a

major preoccupation with the East India Company in the third and last quarter of the eighteenth century. By the second of the nineteenth century, however, they had secured their position in southern India rather firmly. They were now concerned with fortifying the frontiers of India, especially the land-frontier to the North-West in the face of the Russian threat to British possessions in the East.

Check Your Progress 3

1) Read the following statements and mark right or wrong.
   i) The third Carnatic War began with the English capture of Pondicherry in India.
   ii) The French naval forces were led by Admiral d'Arche in the third Carnatic War.
   iii) In this War, the English launched an attack on Tanjore.
   iv) At the end of the War, the French retained their influence in Hyderabad.

2) Trace the reasons for the French failure in the third Carnatic War. Write in five lines.
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3.8 LET US SUM UP

After reading this Unit you must have learned that the Anglo-French rivalry, talking the form of three Carnatic Wars constituted landmarks in the history of British conquest of south India in the 18th century. In order to establish their supremacy, it was necessary for the English EIC to eliminate the French from this region. The outbreak of two successive wars in Europe in which the British and the French were rivals, prepared the background for Anglo-French rivalries. The stage was set by the chaotic conditions in Hyderabad and the Carnatic, making it possible for the two companies to meddle in Indian affairs. The conflict was ultimately resolved in the English EIC's favour because of its strong navy in India, its progressively increasing military strength and good leadership, the support they received from the Government in England, and the larger resources at its command in Bengal. A part of the fallout of the events in the Carnatic cycle of wars was that the weakness of the Indian regional powers (in particular their inability to make naval interventions and the ineffectiveness of large armies of some of their powers against smaller European forces) become manifest and this had grave implications in the political history of the rest of the 18th century.

3.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

1) See Sec. 3.2
2) See Sub-sec. 3.3.1
3) i) × ii) ✓ iii) ✓ iv) × v) × vi) ✓ vii) ✓

Check Your Progress 2

1) i) A-c ii) B-a, iii) C-d, iv) D-b
2) See Sub-sec 3.4.3

Check Your Progress 3

1) i) × ii) ✓ iii) ✓ iv) ×
2) You should refer to the absence of a permanent naval base, and more financial resources for the British. See Sec. 3.6.

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UNIT 4 COLONIAL EXPANSION AND INDIAN RESISTANCE - II

Structure

4.0 Objectives

4.1 Introduction

4.2 Bengal Before the British Conquest

4.3 British Conquest of Bengal: 1757-65

4.3.1 Siraj-ud-daula and the British

4.3.2 Mir Jafar and the British

4.3.3 Mir Kasim and the British

4.4.4 After Mir Kasim

4.4 Significance of British Success

4.5 Decline of the Mughal Empire and the Rise of the Successor States in North India

4.6 Awadh: From Subsidiary Alliance to Annexation

4.7 The Benefits of Subsidiary Alliance to the East India Company

4.8 Encroachments by the Company and Resistance by the Awadh Regime: 1765-1775

4.8.1 Weakening of Awadh's Defences: 1775-1801

4.8.2 The Treaty of 1801

4.8.3 Decline and Fall of the Awadh Dynasty: 1801-1856

4.9 Expansion in Other Parts of North India

4.9.1 The British Interest in Punjab

4.9.2 The Mode of Conquest of Punjab

4.10 Let Up Sum Up

4.11 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercise

4.0 OBJECTIVES

The history of British domination in India started with the subjugation of Bengal to the British imperialist system. After reading this Unit you will be able to:

- understand the background of the British conquest of Bengal,
- learn about the transformation of power from the Bengal Nawabs to the British authority, and
- explain the factors that led to this transformation of power and its significance,
- about the way North, India, especially Awadh and Punjab came under the British rule,

- about the shifting policies of British in their strategy of conquest, and
- about the circumstances which aided the British to spread their rule over Northern India.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This Unit introduces you to the gradual transfer of power from the Nawabs to the 'British in Bengal during the period 1757 to 1765. In this Unit an attempt has been made to show that it was mainly the commercial rivalry between the British and the Bengal Nawabs which largely decided the course of events in the 1750s. The personal failure of any Nawab was not an important decisive factor for this development, as some historians have tried to establish. However, the degeneration in the administration that started in the 18th century had no doubt contributed to the final collapse of the independent Bengal polity. Here we have first discussed the background of the British conquest of Bengal and the political developments from 1757 to 1765. Then we focus on the explanation for this transformation and the significance of the battle of Plassey and Buxar which were land marks in the process of British imperialist expansion in India.

British expansion in North India, particularly in the kingdom of Awadh, was a process of building an alternative hegemony by the British in opposition to the Mughal and the Awadh ruler's authority. The use of force in the battle field on the part of the East India Company, remained minimal after the Battle of Buxar in 1764, and no major confrontation tool place until Awadh was fully annexed and made a part of Company's domination in 1856.

4.2 BENGAL BEFORE THE BRITISH CONQUEST

You have read that the changes in European economy i.e. from feudalism to capitalism and then from mercantile capitalism to industrial capitalism led to fierce competition among various European powers to establish colonial empire. In this process of imperialists expansion Bengal became since the 17th century, the hunting ground of the Dutch, the French and the English companies. It was mainly the rich resources and good prospects of trade in Bengal which attracted the various foreign companies. Referring to Bengal Francois Bernier, a traveler who visited India during Aurangzeb's reign wrote:

> The rich exuberance of the country ... has given rise to a proverb in common use among the Portuguese; English and Dutch that the kingdom of Bengal has a
>
> hundred gates open for entrance, but not one for departure".

In the 18th century exports from Bengal to Europe consisted of raw products, such as, saltpetre, rice, indigo, pepper, sugar, etc. and silk, cotton textiles, handicrafts etc. Bengal goods comprised nearly 60 per cent of British imports from Asia in the early 18th century. Commercial potentiality of Bengal was naturally the chief cause of the interest of the English in this province.

Regular contact of the English with Bengal started in the 1630s. First English company in the east was set up at Balasore in Orissa in 1633, then at Hugli, Kasimbazar, Patna and Dacca. By 1690s the acquisition of the zamindari rights of the three villages of Sutnati, Calcutta and Govindpur and the foundation of Calcutta by the Company completed this process of English commercial settlement in Bengal. The annual investment of the Company in Bengal turned to

£ 150,000 in 1680.

Since the 17th century the English East India Company was allowed to trade freely in Bengal, in return the Company had to pay annually Rs.3,000 (£350) to the Mughal emperor. When the Company paid the Mughal Emperor annually (£350) for free trade in Bengal that time Company's exports from .Bengal were worth more than £ 50,000 a year.

The provincial governors were not in favour of such a privilege for the Company because this meant a heavy loss to their exchequer. So there was always pressure from the provincial administration to compel the English Company to pay more for its trade in the province. The English on their part tried to establish its complete control over the trade through various means. Murshid Kuli Khan, who established his independent authority over Bengal, was not in favour of the special privileges enjoyed by the Company-because of the loss that resulted to the treasury. So the tussle between the English commercial interest and the local government in Bengal was already marked before the mid 18th century.

While the rising commercial interest of the English was becoming a serious threat for the Bengal polity, the provincial administration in Bengal itself had certain weaknesses. You have read in Unit 2 of Block I how an independent political authority emerged in Bengal, following the disintegration of the Mughal Empire.

The stability of this regional power was dependent on certain conditions:

- Nawab's rule depended on the support of powerful faction of the local aristocracy.
- He needed the support of Hindu *Mutaseddis* who were in control of the financial administration.
- The support of the big Zamindars was also very essential because they not only supplied revenues to the treasuary but also helped the Nawabs with their own militia in times of need and by maintaining law and order in their areas.
- The co-operation and support of the bankers and business houses, particularly the house of the Jagat Seths; the largest financial house in Bengal was also needed.

All these different groups had different interests and expectations from the Nawab.

The stability of Nawab's regime depended on maintaining proper balance among these various

interest groups. The common people had no. place in this power equation between the ruler and the interest groups. They were the victims of the growing demands of the Zamindars but there was no protection from the administration. There was no initiative on the part of the rulers to involve the people in the anti-imperialist struggle.

4.3 THE BRITISH CONQUEST OF BENGAL, 1757-65

The history of Bengal from 1757 to 1765 is the history of gradual transfer of power from the Nawabs to the British. During this short period of eight years three Nawabs, Siraj-ud-daula, Mir Jafar and Mir Kasim ruled over Bengal. But they failed to uphold the sovereignty of the Nawab and ultimately the rein of control passed into the hands of the British. We will now discuss the developments in Bengal from 1757 to 1765 and see how the British ultimately got control over Bengal.

4.3.1 Siraj-ud-daula and the British

Siraj-ud-daula succeeded Alivardi Khan as Nawab of Bengal in 1756. The succession bf Siraj was opposed by his aunt Ghasiti Begum and his cousin Shaukat Jang who was the governor of Purnea. There was a dominant group in the Nawab's court comprising Jagat Seth, Umichand, Raj Ballabh, Rai Durlabh, Mir Jafar and others who were also opposed to Siraj. Besides this internal dissension within the Nawab's court, another serious threat to Nawab's position was the growing commercial activity of the English Company. The conflict between the Nawab and the English Company over trade privileges was nothing new. But-during Siraj-ud-daula 's reign . Certain other factors further strained the relations between the two. They are:

- The fortification around Calcutta by the English Company without the permission of the Nawab.
- The misuse of the Company's trade privilege by its officials for their private trade.
- The English Company at Calcutta had given shelter to Krishna Das, son of Raj

  Ballabh, who had fled with immense treasures against the Nawab's will.

Siraj-ud-daula was unhappy with the Company for these reasons. The Company on its part became worried about Siraj because the Company officials suspected that Siraj would cut down the privilege of the Company in alliance with the French in Bengal. Siraj-ud-daula 's attack on the English fort at Calcutta precipitated an open conflict.

The arrival of a strong English force under the command of Robert Clive at Calcutta from Madras strengthened the British position in Bengal. The secret alliance of the Company with the conspirators of the Nawab's camp further strengthened the position of the British. So English victory in the battle field of Plassey, (June, 1757) was decided before the battle was fought. It was not the

superiority of the military power but the conspiracy of the Nawab's officials that helped the English in winning the battle. It is very difficult to ascertain why Shiraj failed to take appropriate action. He could not save himself ultimately and was murdered by the order of Mir Jafar's son Miran.

4.3.2 Mir Jafar and the British

Mir Jafar was promised the Nawabship by Clive before the battle of Plassey. This was his reward for his support to the British against Siraj.

The British now became the kingmakers of Bengal. Mir Jafar was made to pay a heavy price to his English friends for their favour. But the treasury of Murshidabad did not have enough resources to satisfy the demands of Clive and his fellow countrymen. Mir Jafar paid out about Rs. 1,750,000 in presents and compensation t0 the British.

Immediately after his accession Mir Jafar faced some serious internal problems. They were:

- Some of the Zamindars like Raja Ram Sinha of Midnapore, Hizir Ali Khan of

  Purnea refused to accept him as their ruler.
- Mir Jafar's soldiers who were not getting salary regularly were in a rebellious mood.
- He had doubts about the loyalty of some of his officials, specially of Rai Durlabh. He believed that Rai Durlabh had instigated the rebellion of Zamindar against him. But Rai Durlabh was under the shelter of Clive so he could not touch him
- There was an attempt by the Mughal Emperor's son who later on became Shah

  Alam to capture the throne of Bengal.
- The financial position of the Nawab was also weak, mainly because of the demands of the Company and mismanagement of resources. All these made Mir Jafar more dependent on the English Company. But the Company was unhappy with the Nawab for some reasons.
- The English Company was under the impression that Mir Jafar, in collaboration with the Dutch company was trying to curb the growing influence of the English in Bengal.
- Mir Jafar also failed to respond to the ever increasing demands of the English.

Meanwhile the death of Miran, son of Mir Jafar, again created a conflict over the question of succession. The fight was between Miran's son and Mir Kasim, the son in-law of Mir Jafar. Vansittart who came as Governor of Calcutta took the side of Mir Kasim, Mir Kasim in a secret agreement with Vansittart agreed to pay the necessary funds to the Company if they support his claim to the Nawabship of Bengal. Mir Jafar had already lost the

confidence of the English. The rebellion of [Mir Jafar's army for their due salary made it easier for the British to force Mir Jafar to step down.

4.3.3 Mir Kasim and the British

Mir Kasim's accession to the throne of Bengal followed the same way, the way through which Mir Jafar had come to power. Like his predecessor, Mir Kasim also bad to pay large amounts of money to the English. Besides this he had given three districts of Burdwan, Midnapore and Chittagong to the English Company. After assumption of power the. two most important things that Mir Kasim did were:

- shifting the capital from Murshidabad to Monghyr in Bihar in order to keep a safe distance from the Company at Calcutta, and
- re-organising the bureaucracy by the men of his own choice and remodelling the

  army to enhance its skill and efficiency.

The first few months of Mir Kasim's reign went very well. But gradually the relationship with the British became embittered. Reasons for this were:

- Ram Narayan, the Deputy governor of Bihar, was not responding to the repeat,

  requests by Nawab to submit his accounts. But Ram Narayan was supported by

  the English officials of Patna who never concealed their anti-nawab feeling.
- The misuse of the Company's Dustak or trade permit by Company officials for their private trade generated tension between the British and the Nawab.

The Company servants wore not paying any duty on their goods. Whereas local merchants had to pay duty. While the Nawab lost tax revenue because of the nonpayment of duty by the Company officials die local merchant, faced unequal competition with the Company merchants. Moreover, the .Company officials completely, ignoring the officials of the Nawab. They were forcing the local people. to sell their goods at low prices, Mir Kasim complained against these practices to Governor Vansittart, but this had no effect.

As it happened in the case of Mir Jafar, in the case of Mir Kasim also when the British found that Mir Kasim had failed to fulfil their expectation they started searching for a suitable replacement of Mir Kasim. But Mir Kasim was not ready to surrender so easily, unlike his predecessor. He tried to put up a united resistance against the British with the help of the Mughal Emperor Shah Alam and Shuja-ud-daula of Awadh.

However, Mir Kasim ultimately failed to protect his throne and the battle of Buxar (1764) completed the victory and the domination of the British in eastern India.

4.3.4 After Mir Kasim

Mir Jafar was brought back to the throne of Bengal. He agreed to band over three districts-Midnapore, Burdwan and Chittagong to the English for the maintenance of their army and to permit duty free trade in Bengal (except a duty of 2% on salt). But Mir Jafar was in bad health and he died shortly after' this. His minor son Najim-ud-daula was appointed Nawab. The real administration was carried on by a Naib-Subadar, 'who would be appointed or dismissed by the English.

'In the summer of 1765 Clive came back as the Governor of Bengal. Clive now engaged himself in completing his unfinished task, i.e, to make the British the supreme political authority in Bengal. He approached the Mughal emperor Shah Alam who was practically a prisoner of Shuja-ud-daula, the Nawab of Awadh, since. 1761 for an agreement. The emperor responded positively to Clive's proposal. An agreement was signed between Shah Alam and Clive on August 1765. By this agreement Shah Alam was given Allahabad and the adjoining territories, while the emperor granted by a firman, the Diwani of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa to the East India Company. The right of Diwani gave the British complete control over the Bengal revenues or financial administration.

The responsibility for defence, law and order and the administration of justice remained in the hands of the Nawabs, But the Nawabs had virtually lost their military power after the battle of Buxar, So after the grant of Diwani the Nawabs were in reality reduced to a cipher.

The above discussion shows how the political events from 1757 to 65 gradually led to the transfer of power from the Bengal Nawabs to the British East India Company. In the following section we will try to understand the factors that led to this change.

4.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF BRITISH SUCCESS

We have seen in the earlier sections that how decisively the British established their political supremacy in Bengal by winning two battles, one at Plassey (1757) and the other at Buxar (1764). Apart from the overall significance of the British victory the two battles had certain specific significance of their own.

The success of the British in the battle of Plassey had a significant impact in the history of Bengal.

- The victory of the British, whether by treachery or any means, undermined the position of the Nawab in Bengal.
- Apparently there was not much change in the government and the Nawab still remained the supreme authority. But in practice the Nawab became dependent on the Company's authority and the Company began to interfere in the appointment of Nawab's officials.

- Internal rivalry within the Nawab's administration was exposed and the conspiracy of the rivals with the British ultimately weakened the strength of the administration.
- Besides the financial gain, the English East India Company was also successful in establishing their monopoly over Bengal trade by marginalising the French and

  the Dutch companies.

The battle of Buxar gave them the complete political control over Bengal. Actually, the process of transition started with the battle of Plassey and culminated in the battle of Buxar.

The battle of Buxar sealed the fate of the Bengal Nawabs and the British emerged as the ruling power in Bengal.

Mir Kasim was successful .in forming a confederacy with the Emperor Shah Alam II and Nawab Shuja-ud-daula of Awadh against the British. This confederacy failed before the British force. The victory of the British in this battle proved the superiority of the British force and strengthened their confidence. This was a victory not against Mir Kasim alone but against the Mughal Emperor and the Nawab of Awadh also. The success of the British in this battle gave a clear indication that the establishment of the British rule in other parts of India was not very far off.

Check Your Progress 1

1) What was the nature of Bengal polity? Write your answer in 100 words .

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2) Why did the relationship become strained between the British and the Bengal Nawabs? Write your answer in 100 words.

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3) Read the following statements and mark-right (√) or wrong (X) ..

   i) The Bengal Nawabs did not object, to the free trade of the English Company in Bengal.

   ii) The growing trade of the Company in Bengal, augmented the financial resources of the Bengal rulers.

iii) Siraj-ud-daula objected to the misuse of trace privileges m Bengal by the Company officials.

iv) Mir Jafar's army rebelled against him because he failed to pay their salary

v) The British became critical of Mir Kasim because -he wanted to establish his independent authority.

vi) The right of Diwani gave the British complete control over the financial and administrative affairs of Bengal.

4.5 DECLINE OF THE MUGHAL EMPIRE AND THE RISE OF THE SUCCESSOR STATES IN THE NORTH INDIA

You have already read earlier that the process of Mughal decline started in the beginning of the 18th century and the invasion of Nadir Shah in 1739 sealed the fate of Mughal rule.

Taking advantage of this weakness of the central authority, a large number of independent and semi-independent states a rose all over Indi; some as a result of the assertion of autonomy by governors of Mughal provinces and others as the product of rebellion against Mughal authority. In North India, Awadh, Rohillas, Jats and Sikhs were the prominent examples. These powers competed and sometimes collaborated with each other and with the British in order to consolidate and expand their dominions.

Even though the actual power and authority of the Mughal house over its subordinate ruling groups declined, Mughal sovereignty was still universally recognized. All powers seeking to establish their rule in the 18th century India needed to acquire imperial titles and rights. Reasons for this were more material than simply a belief in the divine major tradition for the incumbent regional ruler trying to be king to imitate. Secondly, the Mughal rule had trained executive and financial officials which the regional rulers could not do. Thirdly, and this was more important in the states like Awadh, the local rule was initially established in the name of the Mughals and any formal repudiation of Mughal authority would have incited the *taluqdars* to assert their independence.

4.6 AWADH: FROM SUBSIDIARY ALLIANCE TO ANNEXATION

The Company's fortunes improved dramatically when Clive in collaboration with the influential Indian merchants and nobles, defeated the Nawab of Bengal Siraj-ud-Daula in 1757 at Plassey and installed a puppet Nawab, Mir Jafar, in his place. Bengal, one of the wealthiest provinces of India, proved an extraordinary advantage to the British. The massive Rs. 30 million land revenues, secured by good natural irrigation, were deployed not only to support the poorer presidencies of Bombay and Madras but also to recruit more army and enrich its servants. The

results were obvious when the Company's armies defeated a combined force of Mir Kasim, Shuja-ud-Daula (the Nawab of Awadh), and the Mughal Emperor, Shah Alam II. From that time the company became most dominant power in the sub-continent. By securing from the Emperor the grant of Diwani or the right to collect revenue of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa and by forcing a subsidiary alliance on the Awadh Nawab, the Company at once legitimised its position in India and created a buffer between its territories and the more turbulent regions of Western India.

The army which fought the British in Buxar in October 1764 was basically an Awadh army composed of the Mughal, Durrani and local Awadhi troops. Lacking in a centralized command and prone to mercenary activities like the looting of both the Company's and Nawab's beggage trains right in the midst of the battle, this army symbolised the Awadhi society as a whole.

The Awadh elites consisted of three basic strata, each different from the other in tradition and culture—

i) the Awadh dynasty and many of its highest officials were Shia Muslims who were an insignificant part of the population and considered themselves as part of the Mughal imperial service elite;

ii) the castes of scribes Kayasthas and Khattris, who predominated in the Awadh administration.

iii) the Rajput and Brahmin landholders who were dominants as local zamindars though they had very limited place in the provincial administration.

It is not only the tensions between the central and local power, and also the assertion of independence, particularly by the zamindars, which tended to weaken the regime. About eighty percent of all the zamindars, both Hindus and Muslims, asserted that they had been established in their estates prior to the arrival of Saadat Khan, the founder of the Awadh dynasty. Thus, the vast majority of the landholders saw themselves as prior to, and largely independent of, the provincial rulers of Awadh.

In this situation, it was not surprising that Saadat Khan, upon his appointment as *subedar* of Awadh, acted always in the name of the Mughal Emperor and began his term of office with a punitive tour of his new province at the head of a military expedition. Thus, the dynasty derived its legitimacy from the Mughals, and enforced it locally through show of strength. When they were defeated and dominated by the British after 1764 and when they repudiated the Mughal authority in 1819, the Awadh rulers were left with little else to generate loyalty among their subjects. Even when they assumed the leadership of the revolt against the British in 1857 in Awadh, they had to act in the name of the Mughals.

4.7 THE BENEFITS OF SUBSIDIARY ALLIANCE TO THE EAST INDIA COMPANY

Although Shuja-ud-Daula was restored to Awadh, he was firmly bound to the Company by a treaty which provided for mutual defence (paid for by the Nawab), trade free of duty for the company in his territory, and his payment of Rs 5,000,000 as war debts. The ramifications of this treaty proved enormous for the history of not only the parties involved but of all of north India.

Under the subsidiary alliance, the Nawab agreed to the permanent stationing of a contingent of British force in his territory and paid Rs. 210,00 per month per brigade. He also agreed to the posting at his count of a British Resident and gave assurance that he would not employ any European in his service without the consent of the British.

They system of Residency proved very crucial in the years to come. By the extension of extraterritorial protection, by the administration of guaranteed pension and by the provision of honours and preferment, the Resident attracted a circle of important dependents and so made himself a new power centre at the Awadh Capital.

Extraterritoriality, coupled with resources of manpower and money mobilised in Awadh proved crucial in redrawing the political map of India. The armies recruited from Awadh and Bihar and supported by the money exacted from the people of Bengal and rulers of Awadh helped the Company in winning repeated victories over the Marathas and the Sikhs and led to its emergence as the paramount power in India. It also helped the Company to keep Awadh in check by providing extraterritorial protection to the dissidents from the jurisdiction of the Awadh rulers thereby creating a constituency loyal to the Company.

The Company, through the Resident stationed at the Awadh capital, increasingly encroached upon the powers of the rulers so much so that by the beginning of the nineteenth century many of the high officials, courtiers and the large landholder of the province tended to repose their faith in the Company and considered it as the real source of power. Even reigns of the Nawabi family, like Asaf-ud-Daula and Saadat Ali Khan, relied on Company's intervention for securing the position of Nawabi. The Company, therefore, by manipulation and show of force, had acquired so much authority that the annexation of Awadh in 1856 became a logical conclusion.

4.8 ENCROACHMENTS BY THE COMPANY AND RESISTANCE BY THE AWADH REGIME: 1765-1775

In spite of their subordinate status within the subsidiary Alliance system, the Awadh rulers asserted their independence in many respects. Shuja-ud-Daula, despite company's protests, managed to raise an army of 100,000, all uniformed and trained in European fashion. He also retained the French officers, numbering

150 and controlling an advanced artillery unit. Moreover, he, with Company's help, annexed Rohilkhand and Etawah in 1774. His most important act of resistance, however, was in restricting the trade by the Company and other Europeans in Awadh territory. Even when the Treaty of Allahabad, between the British and the Nawab was drawn up in 1765, Shuja had objected strongly to Article 8, which allowed duty-free trade by English merchants and their agents in his territory. But he was persuaded to allow merchants and their agents who held Company *dastaks*, or permits, to enter and set up business. This soon led to abuses which Shuja had feared. These traders, although exempted from tariffs as such, increasingly refused to pay any transit and sales duties, interfered with indigenous markets and acted generally as if they were free from the Nawabi rule of law.

Faced with Nawab's strenuous protests, the Company banned all its own traders and agents and withdrew all protection from free merchants in Awadh and Benars in May 1768.

The profits from this trade were so good for the British merchants that some of them went back to England to agitate against the ban. Their pressure forced the East India Company Court of Directors in London to lift the ban in 1771. Shuja again objected and threatened to withdraw from the Alliance. The new Governor-General, Warren Hastings, had no option but to promise that "no English gentlemen should reside in his country and that I would never interfere in any disputes between the English *gumashtas* and his people".

The importance of this meeting between Warren Hastings as Shuja-ud-Daula in 1773 in Benaras was that it erected a trade barrier that closed Awadh to the commercial penetration of the East India Company until 1801.

4.8.1 Weakening of Awadh's Defences: 1775-1801

After the death of Shuja-ud-Daula in 1775, his son Asaf-ud-Daula tried to gain control of Awadh. Since the Mughal practice denied any dynastic continuity at the provincial level, Asaf-ud-Daula had to vie with other aspirants for the same position. In this struggle he struck a compromise with the East India Company which, while securing the Nawabi for him, proved to be very harmful for the state.

In the new treaty, Asaf-ud-Daula, in order to save his shaky position, made a number of concessions to the Company. He added to it the Benaras region, agreed to pay an increase of 50,000 rupees, nearly a quarter more than the previous sum, each month as subsidy for the Company's brigade in Awadh. He also greed to the dismissal and expulsion of all Europeans in his service or living in Awadh, unless allowed by the Company. He had to place his relationship with the Company above his ties to the Mughal Emperor. Thus from the beginning of his reign, Asaf-ud-Daula had to admit and adjust himself to de facto dependence on the East India Company.

Thus, the Company took advantage of the dissension in the ruling clan to further consolidate its position in Awadh. Soon, its demands rose to such heights that the

Awadh ruler could not satisfy them. Now the Company demanded *tankhwahs*, or assignments of revenues for those territories would transfer them directly to the Company, thus bypassing the Awadh regime. This drew the Company deeply into the Awadh administration. The Company specified the districts it wished to be assigned, involved itself in the appointment of revenue agents in those districts, tried to oversee their activities and account books, and frequently enforced their demands through the use of the Company's troops.

Company's interference in the affairs of state became even more marked after Asaf's death in 1797. Wazir Ali, Asaf-ud-Daula's son and proclaimed heir, did not suit the Company because of his anti-Company view. He was deposed in January 1798 by the Company and a group of nobles in the Awadh Court. Saadat Ali Khan, the installed Nawab, thus became the second Nawab After Asaf-ud-Daula to assume power with the assistance of the Company. But his position was even more dependent. He initially agreed to cede vast territories to the Company. But later on the Company preferred cash payments to land. The annual subsidy to the Company's troops stationed in Awadh was increased by 20 lakh rupees bringing the annual payments to a minimum of 7,600,000 rupees. Further, the new Nawab was obliged to pay 1,200.000 rupees to the Company for the costs of its exertions in putting him in his nephew's place. Finally, the Nawab accepted that "…all correspondence between the Nawab Saadat Ali Khan and any foreign power of state, shall be carried on with the knowledge and concurrence of the Company." Thus, the new Awadh ruler was reduced financially and isolated diplomatically.

4.8.2 The Treaty of 1801

Not satisfied with this, the new Governor-General Lord Wellesley, forced the Nawab to sign a new treaty in 1801, according to which he had to cede the Doab, Gorkhpur and Rohilkhand to the Company.

Besides territorially isolating him, the new treaty had three important provisions which worked towards the final elimination of the Awadh regime:

i) The Awadh army was drastically reduced to less than one-tenth of its previous size.

ii) The Company took responsibility for defending the Awadh territories "against all foreign and domestic enemies.

iii) The Awadh ruler was required to "establish in his reserved dominations such a system of administration, to be carried, into effect by his own officers, as shall be conducive to secure the lives and property of the inhabitants; and His Excellency will always advise with and Act in conformity to the council of the officers of the said Honourable Company.

This third provision was subject to various interpretations and formed the primary basis for annexation of Awadh in 1856.

4.8.3 Decline and Fall of the Awadh Dynasty: 1801-1856

Besides slowly annexing territories from the Awadh rulers the Company was also successfully building an alternative source of authority inside Awadh. Through the right of extending extraterritorial protection, the successive Residents tried to build a substantial constituency for the Company which extended from bottom to the top. The sepoys from Awadh, enlisted in or retired from the Company's armies, represented the lowest rung of it. The *taluqdars* who were displaced by the action of the Nawab and who successfully appealed to the Company for the restoration of their lands formed the middle of the ladder. The friends and relatives of the deposed or unsuccessful were the highest in order to which Company's protection extended. British legitimacy had become so convincingly established by the turn of the 19th century that as high a person as Bahu Begum mother of Asaf-ud-Daula, appealed to it and made a will in Company's name to the effect that all her property would go to the Company after her death, minus selected endowments for a tomb, dependents and the obligatory gift to the holy Shrine at Karbala. When the Nawav, Saadat Ali, objected to this indiscriminate use of protection, the Resident declared "that you Excellency's denial of my title to intercede is, in my judgement, totally inadmissible."

Thus, by creating an alternative and superior political position for itself in Awadh, the Company undermined the legitimacy of the Awadh rulers. It further sought to denigrate the Mughal status by urging the empire's constituent parts, the various regional rulers, to assert their juridical as well as actual independence from him.

Although Awadh had now become virtually dependent on the Company, the latter still needed a show of independence on the part of its rulers for its own large design. The Company official encouraged Ghazi-ud-Din Haider to declare his independence and repudiate the sovereignty of the Mughal Emperor in 1819. By declaring formal independence the Nawab set an example. He unwittingly cleared the coast for the British who were in a position to emerge as an alternative all-India source of authority replacing the Mughals. Now all that remained for the Company was to down-grade and humiliate the Nawab-emperor to prove its superiority. The imperial pretensions of the Awadh rulers were only in name, but they were forced to retract even in these matters. While Ghazi-ud-Din Haider had used the title, Padshah-i-Ghazi (Emperor of the Warriors for Faith) and Shah-i-Zaman (Lord of the Age), his son and successor Nasir-ud-Din Haider was forced by the Company to change these to the more circumscribed Padshah-i-Awadh (Emperor of Awadh) and Shah-i-Jahan (Lord of the World). The latter title was also objected to and the ruler was allowed to use it only domestic correspondences. This way the Company kept on encroaching on the material and moral domains of the Awadh rulers so much so that the annexation of 1856 became a logical conclusion. As we have seen earlier (See Section 11.5) the Resident took over administration of Awadh as the Chief Commissioner.

Check Your Progress 2

1) What wee the sources of weakness of the Awadh regime? (10 lines).

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2) The vast majority of landholders in Awadh:
   a) worked towards integration of the kingdom of Awadh.
   b) worked towards stability of Awadh.
   c) Wanted to unitedly defeat the Company forces
   d) saw themselves as prior to and largely independent the provincial rulers of Awadh.
3) Why did the East India Company thrust on the Awadh Nawab subsidiary Alliance?

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4.9 EXPANSION IN OTHER PARTS OF NORTH INDIA

After the conquest of Etawah and Rohilkhand by Shuja-ud-Daula in 1774 and the incorporation of Rohilkhand in the Company's territory in 1801, only the Punjab, besides Awadh, was left as the major power in north India.

After the death of Maharaja Ranjit Singh in June 1839, the Punjab was beset by political instability and rapid changes in the government. Kharak Singh, Nav Nihal Singh, Chand Kaur, Sher Singh and finally Dalip Singh were brought to the throne a major role in all these changes in the government. Prolonged and bloody battles were generally fought to bring the claimant to the throne or to dislodge the incumbent.

4.9.1 The British Interest in Punjab

Right since the 1830s the British were interested in the Punjab. When Sir Henry Fane, the Commander-in Chief of the British forces was invited to attend the marriage ceremony of Ranjit Singh's grandson, he used this occasion to make an estimate of the forces necessary to overcome the Punjabi army. Again the possibility of a military occupation of the Punjab was discussed by the Governor-General Ellenborough with the Home Government in October 1843. But, because of the weak state of the British Indian army after 5 years' war in Afghanistan, any military action against the powerful Punjab army was considered inadvisable.

4.9.2 The Mode of Conquest of Punjab

The British, however, found their opportunity soon as the repeated changes in the government of the Punjab, the corruption among the officials, general indiscipline in the army and the disenchantment of the mercantile class and Lances population lowered the morals of the rulers and ruled alike. Moreover, they found important allies in the higher rungs of the Punjab government, e.g.,

Prime Minister Raja Lal Singh, the Commander-in-Chief Misar Tej Singh, a leading Sardar of the Lahore durbar Dogra Raja Gulab Singh etc.

This alliance with the high-placed men in the army and the government was to prove crucial for the British, when, the first war between the Company and the Punjab was declared on 13 December 1845. The Company's army was almost routed, but for the spinelessness of Lal Singh. Lal Singh, wrote Cunningham, failed the Sikh army at a critical moment. "When the artillery ammunition of the English had failed, when a portion of their forces was retiring upon Ferozepur, and when no exertion could have prevented the invaders from retreating likewise, if the Sikhs had boldly pressed forward."

Because of such failure of leadership, the formidable Punjab army was defeated in a series of encounters and was forced to sign the humiliating treaty of Lahore on 8 March, 1846. The British annexed the Jalandhar Doab and handed over Jammu and Kashmir to Raja Gulab Singh for a cash payment of five million rupees. The Punjab army was reduced to 20,000 infantry and 12,000 cavalry and a strong British force was stationed at Lahore. Later, another treaty was signed on 16 December 1846 which gave the British Resident at Lahore extensive authority (through a council of Regency) over all matters in every department of the state; the British stationed their troops in Punjab, and the expenses were to be paid by the Lahore government.

All these, however, did not satisfy the British. Their ultimate aim was direct rule over Punjab. So, when the Diwan of Multan rose in revolt (1848) against the every opportunity to spread. And when it did spread and others joined in, they welcomed it. They Governor-General Lord Dalhousie, wrote to the Home Government, "The rebellion of Raja Sher Singh, Followed by his army, the rebellion troops and of the Sikh population everywhere, have brought matters to that crisis I have for months been looking for; and we are now not on the eve, but in the midst of was with the Sikh nation and the kingdom of the Punjab."

In the Campaign of 1849 the Sikh forces were decisively defeated and Punjab was annexed. Thus the British swallowed up the very kingdom they were supposed to protect.

Check Your Progress 3

1) What were the means which the East India Company acquired political control in Awadh?

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2) What were the factors which helped the English to subjugate Punjab?

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3) Write a brief note on *tankhwah* or assignments.

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4.10 LET US SUM UP

We have traced in this Unit the process of political-developments that took place in Bengal between 1757 to 1765. We hope you have understood that the primary interest of the British at the initial stage was to tap the resources of Bengal and to monopolize the commercial potentiality of Bengal in the Asian trade. It was this growing commercial interest of the English East India Company and its officials which brought them indirect confrontation with the Bengal Nawabs. The weaknesses in the prevailing Bengal polity helped the British to win the battle against the Nawabs and the alienation of different groups from the rulers made the system vulnerable to external forces.

We have studied in this Unit the reasons why the English East India Company was able to subjugate two major regional principalities in the North India, Awadh and Punjab. While the ruling powers in Awadh capitulated readily to British pressures and through Awadh was annexed in 1856 by the British, it was not so easy to pacify the people who rose in revolt in 1857. The displacement which the slow penetration of the Company had caused all over the province and the shock which the annexation administered made large sections of Awadh population including the landholders, peasants and sepoys extremely resentful to the Company's rule.

4.11 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

1) Your answer should focus on the dependability of Nawabs on various factions and its limitations, lack of cohesion in the administration etc. See Sec. 4.2. '
2) Your answer should include the clash of interest between the Nawabs and the British the growing interference of the British in the internal affairs of Bengal polity, etc. See Sec. 4.3.
3) i) X ii) X iii) √ iv) √ v) √ vi) X

Check Your Progress 2

1) See Sec. 4.6;
2) d;

3) See Sec. 4.7

Check Your Progress 3

1) See Sub-sec. 4.8.1
2) See Sec. 4.8. You would trace the role played by force, diplomacy and attempts to build an alternate legitimacy.
3) See Sub-sec. 4.9.2.

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UNIT 5 IMPERIAL IDEOLOGIES AND PSYCHE: ORIENTALISTS CONSTRUCTION OF INDIA AND THE UTILITARIANS

Structure

5.0 Objectives

5.1 Introduction

5.2 The Early Images

5.3 Warren Hastings and the British Image of India

5.3.1 William Jones

5.3.2 Hastings in Practice

5.4 Institutionalization

5.5 Evangelicalism and Other New Trends

5.5.1 The Battle for Improvement

5.5.2 Preservation and Munro

5.6 The Utilitarians

5.6.1 The Question of Law

5.6.2 The Question of Land Revenue

5.6.3 The Emerging Vision of the Empire

5.7 Let Us Sum Up

5.8 Key Words

5.9 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

5.0 OBJECTIVES

In this Unit you will get to know about:

- the ways in which the British perception of India was being shaped,
- how the British perception about India changed over the years, and
- some reasons as to why the British perception about India changed over the years.
- How the British Ideas and Ideologies contributed to the consolidation and expansion of the British rule in India

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The mid-18th century saw the transformation of the English East India Company from a trading enterprise to a political power. The English East India Company had remained a commercial body for one and a half centuries. Why did it acquire its political ambitions at this time? The expansion of European production and trade and the emergence of aggressive nation states in Europe lay behind the expansion of the European companies in India from the 1730s. In India, the decline of Mughal authority obviously provided a great opportunity for expansion of influence. The company's need for more revenue from taxation inclined it towards establishing an empire. The company needed money to maintain its trade and pay its troops and so acquisition of territory seemed the best method of meeting this requirement. The failure of indigenous rulers was primarily due to their inability to make naval interventions and inefficiency and efficacy of their armies against the better-equipped professional armies of the British. The existing rivalries among the indigenous rulers and the voltaic political situation provided a favourable ground for political intervention and expansion of the British rule. It took a prolonged struggle for territorial expansion and political consolidation of the British. British fought a number of wars to subdue the local rulers. Internal weaknesses of the Indian states decided the final outcome of this struggle for power. However, it is not our aim to give a detailed chronicle, step by step of the piecemeal conquest of India by the British. Instead of a political narration, our focus in this unit would be on emerging imperial ideologies and traditions that helped in shaping the attempt to consolidate and systematize British rule in India. This was much before when a large colonial bureaucracy occupied itself, especially from the 1860s, with classifying people and their attributes, with censuses, surveys, and ethnographies, with recording transactions, marking space, establishing routines, and standardizing practices.

5.2 THE EARLY IMAGES

The very early images of India in the British mind were in terms of their own Western experience and their travels in the great voyages of discovery. The early travellers to India, Edward Terry and John Ovington described, the Mughal rule in 1689 ‘yet another example of Muslim despotism’ The early British, who had read about the Ottoman and Persian empires in the great traveller Bernier's writings seem to have felt that a closer study of the Mughals would tell them very little that-they did not know. It was believed by people like Sir William Temple in the classical age, that Lycurgus and Pythogaras had been taught by the Indians. However, the general impression was that in 17th century India tradition of learning no longer remained. Terry argued that the Brahmins who

were the ancient repositories of learning had degenerated.

Other signs of this degeneration were detected by the British in their contact with the communities of the West coast of India. It was argued that they were 'industrious, submissive, frugal and cowardly people' who had rigid habits of mind. The caste system was frequently cited as an example of their rigid mind. By and large these images were to persist. However, with the establishment of more permanent stations, the British had to contend with further Indian realities.

5.3 WARREN HASTINGS AND THE BRITISH IMAGE OF INDIA

The prevalent impression that the Indians had degenerated tended to be reinforced by British experience in 18th century India. At the same time the early administrators were keenly aware of India's past glory. To administer this country properly a thorough knowledge of India and ·its past was needed.

Warren-Hastings took this mission rather seriously. To fulfill this mission he was aware that he required a band of dedicated administrators, who would rise above the opportunistic fortune hunters who came from Britain to India. For this purpose, he made strenuous efforts to work towards institutions of learning which would first acquire the knowledge of the golden past of India and then, perhaps, convey it to those who could be involved in the project of administering India. This vision, which has sometimes been called the Orientalist vision, was not confined to Warren Hastings alone.

4.3.1 William Jones

William Jones, an English Jurist, was to commit himself to rediscovering India precisely for this reason. Identifying with the Whig tradition of British politics, Jones set himself the task of making India more intelligible to the British. Jones on coming to India realized that to understand India, individual initiative would not be enough. He gradually came around to the view that it would have to be an organized effort to combine scientific study with the labour and knowledge of a group of dedicated individuals. It was thus that the famous Asiatic Society was formed. The Society was to cover the task of unearthing knowledge about Asia both within and outside Asia.

It is here that Jones' efforts and Warren Hastings' vision were to coincide. The Society received full blessings of the Governor-General and an era of studying India from within close quarters of its social, religious, linguistic and political aspects began. This in itself was a departure from the early travellers who would normally record impressions and go away.

The Asiatic Society contributed in a major way by translating from Persian and Sanskrit works of Grammar, Puranas and the writings of Kalidasa.

Secondly, the Members of the Asiatic Society researched and published a large number of articles on Indian society and religion. As a result, Jones' contribution through the society was to 'infectiously spread the romantic fascination of India and her culture throughout Europe.'

5.3.2 Hastings in Practice

Hastings on the other hand had more practical reasons for promoting the Asiatic Society. By this time he had decided that the 'dual Government' established by Clive should go and the East India Company should take up the responsibility of Bengal. But he was not in favour of introducing English laws and English ways in India. His main idea was to rule the 'conquered in their own way'. He felt that the rapid growth of the British rule had excited various prejudices. These, he felt, needed to be stilled. Secondly, he wanted to reconcile British rule with the Indian institutions. This inevitably meant more intensive investigation into the 'manners and customs' of the/country and an in depth analysis of the literature and laws of the Indians. It is for this purpose that Halhed, one of Hastings' lieutenants, drew up a list of religious and customary laws called the 'Gentoo Laws' which would help in understanding the process of furthering 'the conciliation of natives or ensure stability to the acquisitions'. This, Halhed maintained, would help further in enhancing the prospects of commerce and territorial establishment.

5.4 INSTITUTIONALIZATION

The early quests of rediscovering the rich Indian past then were slowly being subsumed to the practical needs of the British rule. To enable the practical task of training and the orienting future administrators to the goals of this task, in the tradition of Warren Hastings, Wellesley established the Fort William College at Calcutta in 1800.

The Fort William College basically impressed upon its students to study the Indian language so that the future administrator could take on the task of familiarising themselves with the 'vernacular' of the people and with India's past in a more concrete fashion. For example, studying Persian served very practical ends. Most of the Indian states used Persian as the language for maintaining official record and running the day to day business. Thus the vision of learning about India's past glory and the practical needs of the British administration were neatly dovetailed.

One should be careful in not reducing the steps taken to train the future administrators to the visions of the Indian past held by the administrators of the time. The Indian Residents, who were posted at the courts of various submissive Indian rulers, combined both the knowledge and usage of Persian with the cultural life styles of the court. To establish an identity with the Indian courtiers, the British Residents often donned the .Indian dresses and maintained huge establishments like the court nobility. He would often adopt the manners and etiquettes of the court, while having a major say in the decisions of the ruler. The Indian rulers then maintained some kind of cultural independence in spite of being politically subservient to the British.

With the consolidation of the conquests and the need to create a more integrated administrative structure, the British had to step in to realms of Indian institutions like law and landed property. In the meanwhile, the industrial revolution in Britain had forced the need of .market and raw materials outside Britain for the industrialist on the minds of the policy makers in Britain.

5.5 EVANGELICALISM AND OTHER NEW TRENDS

The new needs of the British necessarily meant that the idea of retaining Indian institutions and laws had to be reviewed. If new products were to enter the market there was a need to create a taste for them. This meant the infusion of a new way of life and culture, at least in the top crust of society.

In the early period of establishing institutions which discovered India's past, a neat compromise, of learning and the needs of the Company commerce and administration had been made. That is; 'learn about the Indian society but do not disturb it'. That this compromise was resented is shown in the struggle of the Sreerampore missionaries, who wanted to get on with the task of 'reforming' the current degeneration of the Indian society. While the Sreerampore missionaries were to do this task quietly, respecting the Indian traditions, the later missionaries like Charles Grant were to be openly hostile to 'Indian barbarism'. This hostility, a hall-mark of evangelicalism, was combined with the desire to 'civilize' India. Bringing a Christian zeal into his mission, Grant was to propagate the policy of assimilation of India into the great civilizing mission of Britain.

This attitude was to go hand in hand with the expression of British liberalism, as for example in Macaulay, the liberal British administrator's task was to 'civilize' rather than subdue. The merchant community supported this, firstly, because since they would benefit from the civilizing mission's laws to acquire property etc. in India, and then, under 'free trade' they could work out the problems of creating a market for British goods amongst the Indians. Charles Grant saw a

complementarity between the civilizing process and material prosperity. It was thus that another liberal C.E. Trevelyan, in 1838, was to outline his vision of India as 'the proudest monument of British benevolence'.

Check Your Progress 1

1) How did William Jones differ from the early travellers who wrote about India?

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2) Why did Warren Hastings want to study India's past?

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3) Did the Sreerampore Missionaries and Charles Grant agree with Warren Hastings way of dealing with India?

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5.5.1 The Battle for Improvement

The 'idea of improvement' was to take shape in the late 18th and early 19th centuries as a part of the vision of Britain as a promoter of prosperity and civilization. It was thus, that Cornwallis agreed to settle the revenue permanently on the landed class (Zamindars) in Bengal. Cornwallis's assumption was that since the main source of wealth was agriculture, the 'magic touch of property' will create capital and market in land. A more prosperous landed class with fixed obligation to the state and an English rule of law would create new men of enterprise in land who would also take trade forward. John Shore, who had seen the idea of Permanent Settlement grow and had more experience of the countryside, while agreeing with Cornwallis's vision of improvement, suggested that the improvement should be brought about by slow degrees by experimentally introducing innovations.

5.5.2 Preservation and Munro

Among the critics of Cornwallis were Munro in the South along with

his famous colleagues like Malcolm and Metcalfe. They found the Cornwallis System as **having** no regard for Indian history or experience. They opposed the very idea that a political society could be built on principles derived from an alien English tradition. It was for this reason that they opposed Cornwallis's import of the English rule of law with its strict division of judiciary and executive powers of the government. To Munro, politics was both experimental and pragmatic. The brief period the British had spent in India, he thought, was too short for any permanent solutions. It was thus he argued for periodic revision of the rate of *ryotwari*. He, therefore, argued that the basis of India's stable heritage, the village communities should be conserved. And any law and order problem should be met with a system where the judiciary and executive were fused together. This he felt would enable the preservation of justice to the peasantry as well as the aims of the British rule. In line with this idea' of preserving the varying heritage of India, Munro and his colleagues opposed a centrally imposed rule in India and 'favoured diversity in the Indian government'.

The task 'of transforming the Indian mind was then to become more complex. The task of education in the process was mooted by the liberal Macaulay as a prime responsibility of the British in India. But in the context of both the resistance of Orientalists, and pragmatic Anglo-Indians like Munro wanted to preserve the Indian institutions and culture the role of a western or an Anglicist education became a subject of immense controversy in the middle of the 19th century.

5.6 THE UTILITARIANS

The Utilitarians were not to take the liberal detour to education for the task of 'civilizing' and 'improving' India. They went back to the basic question of reform of law and landed property to create conditions where the market could flourish. They believed, under the guidance of Jeremy Bentham, that, a scientific and logical approach to these two problems of law and landed property could create reforms which would satisfy the principle of 'the greatest good of the greatest number'.

5.6.1 The Question of Law

The utilitarian ideas were to have a fundamental influence in moulding the British attitudes towards India. The question of law as an instrument ofchange was mooted under Bentinck. It was possible, he believed, for judiciary or I.aw to be the instrument of changing Indian practices like Sati and female infanticide.

LETTER

222. *Bentinck's reply to the petition on* sati

14July 1830

The governor-general has read with attention the petition which has been presented to him: and has some satisfaction in observing that the opinions of the pandits consulted by the petitioners confirm the sup- position that widows are not, by the religious writings of the Hindus, commanded to destroy themselves; but that, upon the death of their husbands the choice of a life of strict and severe morality is everywhere expressly offered: that in the books usually considered of the highest authority it is commanded above every other course; and is stated to be adapted to a better state of society; such as, by the Hindus, is believed to have subsisted in former times.

Thus, none of the Hindus are placed in the distressing situation of having to disobey either the ordinances of the government or those of their religion. By a virtuous life a Hindu widow not only complies at once with the laws of the government and with the purest precepts of her own religion, but affords an example to the existing generation of that good conduct which is supposed to have distinguished tl1c earlier and better times of the Hindu people.

The petitioners cannot require the assurance that the British government will continue to allow the most complete toleration in matters of religious belief; and that to the full extent _of what it is possible to reconcile with

reason and with natural justice they will be undisturbed in the observance of their established usages. But, some of these, which the governor-general is unwilling to recall into notice, his predecessor in council, for the security of human life, and the preservation of social order, have, at different times, found it necessary to prohibit. If there is anyone which the common voice of all mankind would except from indulgence it is surely that by which the hand of a son is made the instrument of a terrible death to the mother who has borne him, and from whose heart he has drawn the sustenance of his helpless infancy.The governor-general has given an attentive consideration to all that has been urged by the numerous and respectable body of petitioners: and has thought fit to make this further statement, in addition to what had been before expressed as the reasons, which, in his mind, have made it an urgent duty of the British government to prevent the usage in support of which the petition has been preferred: but if the petitioners , should still be of opinion that the late regulation is not in conformity with the enactments of the imperial parliament, they have an appeal 'to the king in council, which the governor-general shall be most happy to forward.

Bentinck on **Sati**

With the coming of James Mill to the East India Company's London office, a systematic utilitarian attempt was made to combat the Orientalist, Cornwallis and the Munro heritage. A total vision of political reform on the philosophical premises of utilitarianism was sought to be given a concrete shape. We see a series of laws and penal codes enacted under the Benthamite principle of a centrally logically and coherently evolved system which would go down to the grassroots. In the process it would give the direction to the Indian government to function 'with a united purpose.'

5.6.2 The Question of Land Revenue

Mill also supported a restructuring of the land revenue policy in a manner that would be consistent with utilitarian economics. While, on the one hand this meant a direct contact with the mass of cultivators as in Munro's *ryotwari* settlement, on the other hand this meant taxing the landlord along Ricardo's philosophy. This taxation would be in such a manner that the landlord would not enjoy undue benefit at the cost of manufacture and trade just by virtue of ownership of land. This meant that landholder would give to the state as tax on land revenue a certain proportion of the net produce (i.e. the gross produce minus cost of cultivation).

This doctrine of rent was sought to be put into practice by officers like Pringle in Bombay. Elaborate survey methods were used to calculate the 'net produce' from land. Then tax rates were assessed. However, in practise the revenue demand often went very high, sometimes as much_ as fifty to sixty percent of the produce. This led gradually to the abandonment of complex calculations based on the rent doctrine. From 1840s purely pragmatic and empirical methods derived from the tradition of taxation in respective areas were beginning to be adopted.

But, the rent doctrine of the, utilitarian philosophy was not given up in theory. In spite of the purely pragmatic and empirical calculation of rent, the justification of rent theory for the calculation was still given. The justification of the theory though did have practical reasons as over the next decades the idea of defining rights and obligations of the taxpaying cultivators permanently was relegated to the background. But then the scientific calculations of the utilitarianism were again paradoxically submitted to Munro like consideration of lndian heritage and traditions.

The Emerging Vision of the Empire

There was a streak of authoritarianism in English utilitarian thought which developed abroad into fullfledged despotism. Utilitarianism in India despite being born in the tradition of liberalism could never accept a democratic government in India. James Mill consistently opposed any form of representative government in lndia, then or in near future.

The consolidation of the empire under Dalhousie was to take the paradoxes of the various kinds of perceptions of British India still more forward.

Dalhousie took forward Mill's vision of belligerent advancement of Britain's mission, in his policy towards the native Indian States. Again, in the true Benthamite tradition he created ‘all lndia' departments with single heads for Post and Telegraph Services, the Public Work Department, etc. He was thus to give fruition to the idea of efficient administration within the framework of a unitary all India empire. This latter was in direct contrast to Munro's vision of India as loose federation of regional entities.

At the same time Dalhousie was prepared to take a liberal stance in some respects. For example, he was to encourage the development of his legislative council into a forum for the representation of non-official opinion. He also provided it with elaborate rules of procedure taken from the English Parliament. He even favoured the admission of Indian members into the legislative council. He agreed with the Macaulay's view of diffusion of English education and along with his colleague Thomason encouraged a system of vernacular education at mass level.

However this impulse to link the task of changing the Indian society to the tasks of law, landed property or education gradually declined. With the consolidation of law codes revenue administration and education and the all India Empire, the focus shifted to efficiency of governance. Pragmatism with rationality and efficiency now dominated the British administration. Utilitarian arguments were still used for governance, for example in the change of law codes under Macaulay. But the overall spirit of reform declined.

The later British administrators of our period were to emphasise that the British rule ad always been governed by law. However, it was argued then, for efficient administration force had to be used and there was no need to justify it by consideration of political change or reform. The utilitarian task of transforming India then was subsumed under the principle of an efficient and good government held up by the ‘steel frame' of British administration.

Check Your Progress 2

1. Why was Munro critical of Cornwallis?

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2. How did Bentinck want to bring about a social change in India?

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3. Was James Mill in favour of a democracy in India?

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4. How did the Utilitarians try to solve the problem of land-revenue?

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5. Did Dalhousie want to retain the indigenous states?

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5.7 LET US SUM UP

Each regime needs a rationale. We saw in this Unit that, in the era of her expansion in India Britain found hers in a 'civilizing mission'. On the one hand, it served to glorify rather sordid history of greed and aggression and plunder. On the other· hand, it instilled in all manner of men a greater sense of purpose. This purpose was not the same to all men. As we have seen, Orientalists like William Jones, Evangelists like Charles Grant, Utilitarians like James Mill, and again a Munro or a Dalhousie had quite different purposes in mind. There were also substantial differences between the modes of thinking in the Orientalist construction of India, or the Evangelical drive to save 'native' souls, or the Utilitarian calculus of the 'greatest goods' in terms of moral and material improvement. Yet, in this diversity of ideas an over-arching conception of Britain's 'mission' in India provided unity in action. Objectively these ideas and men all served to build the British Empire in India.

5.8 KEY WORDS

Evangelicalism: A Protestant Christian movement in England of 18th century, which in contrast to the orthodox church emphasized on personal experiences, individual reading of gospel rather than the traditions of established church.

Paradox: Self contradictory statement, belief etc.

5.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

2) See Sub-sec. 5.3.1.

2) See Sec. 5.3., Sub-sec. 5.3.2.

3) See Sec. 5.5.

Check Your Progress 2

1) See Sub-sec. 5.5.2.

2) See Sub-sec. 5.6.1.

3) See Sub-sec. 5.6.3.

4) See Sub-section 5.6.2

5) See Sub-section 5.6.3

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UNIT 6: BRITISH ADMINISTRATION AND LAW

Structure

6.0 Objective

6.1 Introduction

6.2 The Background

6.2.1 British Thinking on Administration

6.2.2 British interests

6.3 Institutional Framework

6.3.1 Judicial System

6.3.2 Administrative System

6.3.3 Extent of Indian Participation

6.4 Let Us Sum Up

6.5 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

6.0 OBJECIVES

This Unit talks about how the structure of administration and judiciary were gradually being built up by the British. This would involve looking at the ideological orientation and specific requirements of the rulers on the one hand, and the various changes and innovations made in the field of administration, on the other. In this Unit you will study:

- various ideas and elements that went into the making of the British administrative policy
- the institutional framework that evolved in accordance with that policy, and
- an assessment of the administrative and judicial system introduced by the British in India.

6.1 INTRODUCTION

You have seen in the earlier Units how the British gradually controlled the entire country through a series of conquests. The East India Company was transformed from a mere commercial body into a political force. Mere conquests could not possibly hold the empire together for a long time. It had to be sustained by evolving a comprehensive system of administration. This unit is therefore, concerned exclusively with ideas and institutions. We discuss the British ideas on how to govern India, and than go on to describe the kind of administrative institutions which were evolved in order to govern and control India.

6.2 THE BACKGROUND

The vast territories of India were controlled by a massive administrative structure, and various branches of which were held together by a set of laws. Before we go into the details of this structure, let us look at the background to these administrative innovations. These changes in the field of administration and law were a product of certain ideas which had gained currency in 19th century Britain. There administrative change also catered to certain British interests in India. Let us look at both these aspects.

6.2.1 British Thinking on Administration

The administrative and legal system introduced by the British did not take shape overnight and did not evolve in a vacuum. It was spread well over eighty years, was implanted through a series of measures and acts, and was based on the initiative taken by by British administrators and thinkers. A number of its provisions and schemes continue even today. It did not evolve in a vacuum but should be seen against the background of intellectual movements in the late 18th and early 19th century Britain, which looked upon the British administration of India as on one of its major concerns.

One of the earliest influences that can be seen is the idea of improvement. This influence, evident at the earliest in Cornwallis, looked at the creation of English style aristocracy in land as the best means of developing India. This aristocracy, identified by Cornwallis as the Zamindars was looked upon as trustees who would encourage the growth of trade and production under them. This coupled with English style institution of law and administration- where the object was to separate revenue and judicial function of administration would effectively ensure the improvement of India under the landed aristocracy.

Whereas Cornwallis worked mainly with the ideas and perceptions which came before utilitarianism, Macaulay was a liberal who had grown up in interaction with both the missionary zeal of evangelicalism and the emerging pragmatism of 1830s and 1840s. Thus we see him take up the codification of laws with vigour. However, though he approved of this aspect of institutionalism, he did not at all agree with their goal of reforming India.

Between the concern of Cornwallis and Macaulay came the intellectual current called ‘utilitarianism’ with James Mill, Jeremy Bentham, David Ricardo, John Stuart Mill as were its major exponents showed a special interest in the Indian question, and were largely responsible for the kind of administration and judicial system that came into being in India. The utilitarians reflected on how to govern and control India and their ideas gradually gained acceptance in British perhaps became they represented and combined the interest of the British merchants, manufacturers and missionaries. What were their ideas on India and prescription for the Indian problem?

- Indian society was seen by them as completely devoid of the values of rationalism and individualism, which were seen as the essential principles for building a modern society.

- A traditional and decadent society like India could be improved through proper legislation, which would impart "human justice" as against "divine justice" practised in traditional societies. This meant that "British administration with its principles of justice and uniformity could convert India into progressive and dynamic society.
- However in this scheme the instrumentality of education was rejected by Mill. And so was the Indianisation of the Government structure. Given their character, Indians were seen unfit in the task of their over 'modernisation'. Mill therefore dismissed the idea of giving any power and responsibility to Indians. Utilitarians prescribed a modern machine of government, run by the British.

In other words, from the 19th century onwards when information about India began trickling into the European societies, there began a debate among thinkers, scholars and administrators on the Indain problem and its solution. Among them the utilitarians, with their well defined structure of ideas, a set its of followers, their keenness on India, and the readymade applicability of their concerns (of taxation, forms of government and administration of justice) to India, proved to be the most outspoken and effective. In 1819, James Mill was admitted into the executive government of the East India Company. This made it easier for the utilitarian ideas to be implemented in the Indian situation. Their ideas can be summed up in the format of problems and prescribed solutions.

Problems

- Indian society was backward, decadent, retrograde and despotic. There was degradation of the many by the few and absence of any security for the individual and his rights.
- This resulted in poverty, therefore crime
- Servility and superstition was (characteristic of Indian people)

Solution

- Advancement of society through the establishment of a good government with good laws and sound administration.
- This would lead to freeing of individual initiative from despotism, customs and communal ownership (which Mill saw a sign of a primitive society and inhibiting the making of a civil society).
- This would give a free and full scope for capital and labour and place due emphasis on individual rights and ownership (as against communal ownership, characteristic of Indian society).
- Towards the same and it was necessary to legally define and protect individual right in land.

To put it briefly, the utilitarian thinking was an advocacy of a 'Rule of Law'. Laws were to be scientifically defined and embodies in a written form in codes. They were to be implemented through the creation of a body of local courts to

make law accessible to every man. Only this could create and individualist competitive society.

6.2.2 British Interests

By now you must have become familiar with British ideas on law and its relationship with the society. But at the same time, it would be wrong to overlook the interests, which were also at work behind the introduction of British administration and law in India. It suited the British requirements in India to have a uniform system of administration. And the British need for a new administration and laws varied with the changes in the British interest in India and the combination of interest groups in Britain.

As you are aware, the imperial interest in India did not remain the same throughout. They changed during the different stages of the British rule. They also represented the interests of different social groups in Britain in different stages. During the first stage of the British rule in India till 1813, British interests lay mainly in

- the East India Company's monopoly of trade with India, and the elimination of other European competitors,
- the control over financial resources, through taxation.

Both these objectives could be fulfilled without having to disturb the existing institutions and administrative apparatus. British rulers at this stage were not very different from that of traditional rulers, interested mainly in the appropriation of agricultural surplus. No attempt was, therefore, made to create a uniform administrative structure or even to renovate the old one at this stage. No basic changes were introduced in the judicial system and administration. Whatever little changes were made in the field of administration were only made at the top of the structure of revenue collection and were linked to the objective of smooth revenue collection. A modern judicial system or a uniform administrative structure for India was not seen as necessary at this stage, since it was not considered relevant for the fulfillment of British objectives during the first stage of the British rule in India.

This scenario changed considerably after 1813. As you are aware, the British economy and society were going through a major transformation, caused mainly by the Industrial Revolution. The mercantilist trading corporations were now giving way to the industrial bourgeoisie which had become the dominant force in the British society. The East India Company was gradually losing its monopoly over Indian trade. The British interests in India no longer represented the interests of the company but of the Industrial capitalist class. The interests of the British industrialists by in using India as

- a market for their manufactured industrial good,
- a source of raw material (like Jute, Cotton etc.) for their industries, and foodgrains, opium etc. for export.

All the required much greater penetration into Indian economy and society and control over Indian trade not only with Britain but with other countries also. India

was now expiated to play a new role. It was perhaps not possible to perform the new role with the traditions administrative institutions. They had to be changed and transformed to suit the new requirement s. And hence started the process of transforming Indian administration the details of which you will study in the next section. Similarly, the entire legal structure had to be overhauled to promote modern business, create a market economy, free commercial relations and to regulate the various economic transactions smoothly with the help of modern laws. And hence started the process of the transformation of Indian administration and judiciary, the details of which you will need in the following section.

Check Your Progress 1

1) What according to utilitarians, were the problems of the Indian society, and what was the way out? Write in ten lines.

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2) Why did the British go in for administrative reforms in the 19the century? Write in ten lines.

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6.3 INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

Having discussed the dominant British ideas on the question of law and administration, let us now look at the framework of administrative institutions that evolved in the 19th century, and the extent to which the ideas discussed above, were incorporated into this framework.

6.3.1 The Judicial System

The building up of an adequate structure of administration stared taking shape from 1793 under Cornwallis, and continued, with interruptions, down the 19th century. During Cornwallis Governor Generalship important changes were made in all the branches of administration including the judicial system. These changes involved a divorce of revenue from civil administration, i.e., the separation of judicial from executive functions and the multiplication of judicial courts.

The separation of civil and revenue administration meant, that the collector hitherto the holder of judicial and revenue responsibilities was now deprived of his judicial functions and concerned mainly which revenue. The collection of revenue and the administration of justice were now to be carried out by separate

officials appointed for the purpose. There was now a collector responsible for the collection of revenue and Judge Magistrate with civil and criminal jurisdiction, broadly the structure of the new judiciary was something like this

Civil Courts

Sadar Diwani Adalat

Provincial Court I-IV

District Courts Presided over by a District Magistrate from Civil Services

Registrar's Courts

Subordinate Courts (Presided over by Indian Juges called Munsif and Amins)

Criminal Courts

Sadar Nizamat Adalat (Sardar Fauzdari Adalat in Madras, Bombay)

Court of Circuit (Presided over by Civil servants)

Local Courts (Presided over by Indian Magistrates, called principal Sadar Amin in Madras)

This system of a hierarchy of courts was tried and implemented first in Bengal which had assumed the states of a Laboratory for the British rule where they could make experiments in the field of administration, and they extend it to the rest of the country. Before we proceed further, let us try and understand the chart above. The Sadar Diwani Adalat and Sadar Nizamat Adalat formed the top of the pyramid and were situated in Calcutta. Below there were the provincial courts of appeal (in the case of civil courts) and the courts of circuit (in the case of criminal courts) which were established in the towns of Calcutta, Dacca, Murshidabad and Patna. Below there were the registrar's courts and all those were presided over only by the Europeans. The participation of Indians was confined to subordinate positions such as Munsifs, Amins; the Qazis and the Pandits who merely advised the judges on the existing Mohammedan and Hindu laws.

Thus was laid the foundation of a new judicial structure in India. In the coming years, this structure grew and evolved. Many changes are made in it and it was subsequently applied to other parts of India. Let us at this stage look at some of the important characteristics of the judicial structure developed in India in the 19th century.

One important feature of the system of law that was erected was that enough tolerance was displayed toward the existing traditional and religious laws. The criminal courts did not altogether abolish the Muslim criminal law but applied it in a somewhat modified form, so as to make it less harsh. Similarly the civil courts also did not do away with the customary laws which had been followed by the local people. Evidently at this stage the East India Company was not bent upon an overhauling of the system. Only a partial modification was attempted. The existing institutions of justice and also revenue appropriation were not dismantled.

Another feature of the new judicial system was the establishment of a whole network of laws through the process of enactment of laws and codification of old laws. This was well in keeping with the 19th century British passion for the condification of laws. The traditional system had been based on 1) customary laws based on traditions and social practices, 2) religious laws based on Shastras and Shariat, and 3) laws flowing from the will and authority of the rulers. As against this, the British created a new system of laws. They introduced regulations, codified the existing laws and systematised and the laws were now open to judicial interpretations and subsequent amendment. Through the Charter Act of 1833, all law marking authority was vested in the Governor General-in-Council. In the same year, a law Commission was appointed. Headed by Lord Macaulay, it prepared the Indian Penal Code which was applicable throughout the country. Thus there came into being, for the first time, a set of laws which included into its fold every Indian.

The two main theoretical principles underlying the entire judicial system were the notions of the Rule of Law and Equality before law.

The Rule of law for India was an integral part of utilitarian thinking on law. They posited the Rule of Law as the possible solution to the three main problems:

1) Tremendous discretionary power in the hands of individuals who were likely to misuse it;
2) lack of definition of individual rights, and
3) the existence of a large body of unwritten laws without any clear direction.

The Rule of law meant that the administration was now to be carried out strictly according to certain laws which defined the rights, privileges and obligations of the people, and not according to the personal desires of the rulers. It also meant that in theory at least, nobody was above law, even the officials. And those who supervised law, were in theory, accountable to the same once formulated, could place restrictions on the actions of the rulers. However, the laws formulated and interpreted were such that they contained enough space for the oppression of the people. As it happened, various bureaucratic misdeeds, did not require a violation of law, they could be done well within the legal rights of the officials. Despite the theoretical principle of "rule", there remained domains of action, e.g. by the police or army, which remained unaffected by restrictions which should have followed from the principles. A great deal of extra –legal continued to be exercised by the police and civil-servants. In fact, under the Rule of Law, legality itself became an instrument of power and oppression.

Equality before law meant that in theory all the citizens irrespective of their caste, status etc. were now placed at an equal footing in the eyes of the law. The concept of equality before law did not of course, include Europeans into its fold. Separate courts and laws were set up for them. In criminal cases they could be tried only by the European Judges. In reality total equality before law could not possible by implemented. But it did bring about a national equality among Indians.

In practice, the Indian people had to pay a heavy price for the undeniably laudable principles of the Rule of Law and Equality before Law. Justice became very expensive and therefore out of reach for most people. Now the stamp fee had to be paid which was very costly. It cost Rs. 1,000 to start action in a court on a property worth Rs. 50,000. Moreover, the new laws were quite complicated and most people could not understand or interpret them. Lawyers, therefore, had to be employed and that added to the expenses. To seek justice people now had to come to the district towns or the provincial centres. Also the legal process generally became very lengthy and sometime law suits dragged on for years. To take one example a zamindari in Madras went into litigation in 1832 to settle some inheritance and debt suits. The Judgment was finally delivered only as late as in 1896 i.e. after 64 years.

However, the judicial system introduced in India did have the merit of saving in motion the process of the unification of India. Now it was possible to conceive of India, in judicial terms at least, as one unit. The British formulated and used the idea of legality as an instrument of legality was to be used by the leaders of the national movement to defend civil liberty and right to challenge government authority within the limits of law.

6.3.2 Administrative System

The man aim of the British administration in Indian was the maintenance of law and order and the perpetuation of the British rule. A fairly adequate body of written laws had already been created to facilitate the tasks of administration. The three main pillars of the British administration in India were:

- the Civil service
- the Army, and
- the Police.

Let us briefly se the composition and functions of each of them.

The main job of the civil service was to translate law into action and the collection of revenue. The term ‘civil services’ was used, for the first time by East India Company mainly to demarcate its civilian employees from the military and ecclesiastical counterparts. The service was initially only commercial in nature but was late transformed into a public service.

From the very beginning it was a grade post-the gradations being-Apprentices, writers, factors, junior merchants then finally senior merchants. It was from senior merchants that appointments for higher services including the Governor were made. This system of grading continued till 1839.

The appointed to these services was the sole prerogative of the court of Directors of the East India Company. These nominated civil servants indulged in corruption, bribery and illegal private trade. Cornwallis tried to check this corruption, arising out of apolicy of patronage practised by the court of Directors. He imposed certain restrictions on the civil servants (like forbidding private trade) but increased their salaries as compensation. For instance, the collector of a district was to be paid 1500 a month, besides one per cent commission on the

revenue collected from his district. At this stage, the company's service was perhaps the highest paid service and the world.

All this, however, failed to solve the twin problems of corruption and inefficiency. Lord Wellesly, who arrived in 1798, took significant steps in this direction. He introduced the idea of a suitable training for the civil servants in India. He felt that the foundation of the training of the civil servants should be laid in England and further training imparted in India. This was founded the Fort William College in Calcutta on 24 November 1800, where the civil Services were to receive training in literature, science and languages in India. After five years, an East India College was established at Hailybury for imparting two years, training to young officers for the civil services. Indian Civil Services for the next fifty years or so remained the product of the Hailybury College.

The method of recruitment, however, remained through the system of patronage in the hands of the court of Directors who were free to nominate their sons and nephews for the services.

The idea of 'competition' for recruitment (as against nomination practised earlier) was introduced for the first time by the Charter Act of 1833. But it was to be a very limited competition and could be termed as nomination-cum-competition for recruitment. The Court of Directors was to first nominate four times the number of civil servants required. These nominated candidates had to go through a competitive examination, through which one fourth could ultimately be selected to join the coveted Civil Services.

But gradually the demand for open Public competition started gaining ground. The Charter Act of 1853 ultimately took away the power of the court of Directors to make nominations and made a provision for open completion. For regulations regarding age, qualification and subjects for the competitive examination a committee was appointed headed by Macauly which was to submit its recommendation to the Board of control. Subsequently the college at Hailybury was abolished in 1858 and the competitive examinations became the sole responsibility of the Civil Service Commission. This competitive examination was to be held annually in England and it was therefore, virtually impossible for an Indian to compete in it. In late 19th century there began a demand that the competition examination should be held in Indian.

The officers of the civil service were employed both in the control officer and the district. The chief Officer in the district was the collector who was initially responsible exclusively for the collection of revenue. He had the authority to decide all disputes related to the boundary and the rent. He was assisted by a Tehsildar who was an Indian. After the reforms of 1831 the offices of the Magistrate (you have head about him in sub-section 24.3.1) and the local chief of Police were also transferred to him. This gave him total authority in the district. Given the large size of some of the districts, a post of Deputy Collector placed between the Collector and the Tehsildar in the hierarchy was also aerated after 1831. This was soon converted into an uncovenanted post which meant that experienced Indians could be employed as Deputy Collectors.

The Indian Civil Services in years to come, developed into one of the most efficient and powerful civil services in the world. Its members played a very crucial role in the framing of the British Polices in India and also in maintaining and running the mighty British empire in India. After 1947, independent India inherited this system of Civil Services, which continue in its essentially original form even today.

The Army and the Police

Something needs to be said about the other two pillars of British administration. The bulk of the Company's army consisted of Indian soldiers. In 1857 the Indians constituted about 86% of the total strength of the Company's army. The main reason for this large share of Indians lay in the expense involved in maintaining an exclusively British army. Also, given the Company's expansionary policy, company was required to maintain a large army. How company to rely on an army largely India. However, the officers of the army, as in other branches of administration, were exclusively British. The highest an Indian could reach was the post of a *Subedar*.

The army played a crucial role in the expansion of British dominions over the Indian rulers. However, after the conquest over India was over and the rivalry with foreign powers eliminated; keeping India under subjection became the main task of the army. A secondary task was to fight England's wars wit the Russian, or the French or with Indian neighbouring countries.

Police, the third Pillar of the British administration was created by Cornwallis. So far, the function of the Police was performed-by Zamindar through their armed retainers. They were now striped off their power, their armed retainers were disbanded and in ties place, a police force was set up. This force was entirely at the command of the government of the East India Company. This force was grouped into *Thanas*, headed by a *Daroga* who was an Indian. These *thanas* were initially under the general supervision of the District Judge. Later the post of District superintendent of Police was created to head the police organisation in the district. Finally the organisation of the police force was handed over to the civil service and the collector in the district also controlled the police. The main task of the police was to handle crime and also to prevent conspiracy against the British rule. Later, in the 20th century the police was employed in a big way to suppress the growing national movement.

6.3.3 Extent of Indian Participation

One noticeable feature of the judicial and administrative reforms introduced by the British was the absence of Indians from responsible offices. This was well in harmony with the utilitarian thinking on the Indian question represented mainly by Mill. Moreover Cornwallis, the initiator of these reforms in India did not seem to have much faith in the efficiency and sincerity of the Indians. The field for their employment was therefore, narrowed to subordinate positions such as the *Amin* and Police *Daroga*. This policy of excluding Indians was applied to almost every branch of the government like army, Police, Civil Services, judiciary and

engineering. In fact in had officially been laid down in 1793 that all higher posts in administration worth a salary of 500 a year or more could be held only by an Englishman. This was so mainly because the British were convinced that an administration based on British ideas, institutions and practices could be firmly established only by Englishmen. The dominant British thinking of that time seemed to be in favour of providing good administration for the Indians, not one run by them.

However, after 1813 under Hastings, there started the process of the gradual Indianisation of the lower branches of services, mainly the judiciary. As the judicial system was made more extensive, more Indians were included in it. The argument given was that if justice had to be made locally available then local people should be involved in it. Bentinck advocated the inclusion of Indians on the grounds of orienting administration to the local needs, which could only be defined by the Indians themselves.

A major reason for Indianisation was the expense involved. The wars fought under Hastings, especially the Anglo Burmese war produced a financial crisis. This crisis was compounded with the need to make administration more extensive. The extension of the convenanted services (services held by the Englishmen) was virtually impossible. So, on the one hand there was the need to make the administration more extensive. And on the other hand, was their inability to bear the cost of the extensive administration, by British standards. This did not threaten the British aspirants for the lucrative Indians posts, as they did not want to compete for the subordinate jobs in India.

It was mainly for this reason that the claims of the Indian people for a share in administration were being publically recognised, and the British Government was also providing the justification in terms of justice, moral obligation, and local needs etc. a regulation of 1831 placed in the hand of the Indian Judicial officers a large share of the judicial responsibility. Bentinck was succeeded by Auckland who increased the power and salary of the Indian Judges.

But it must be remembered that the top posts, involving decision-making authority were reserved strictly for the British till the late 19th and early 20th centuries when the Indians started making an entry into the coveted civil services.

Check Your Progress 2

1) **Write five lines on each of the following**
   i) Rule of Law.
   ii) Equality before Law.
   iii) Police
   iv) Army
2) **Read the following statements and mark right(√) or wrong** (×):
   i) Under the new judicial system, the civil and revenue administration were separated from each other.
   ii) The existing traditional and religious laws were abolished from the very beginning under the new system.
   iii) The Indian Penal Code was applicable only in Bengal.

iv) Indian participation in the British Services was confined to lower ranks only.

6.4 LET US SUM UP

In the 19th century India started a process in which new legal and administrative institutions came into being, grew and took a definite shape. This process was a product of certain British ideas on the Indian problems from the early 19th century onwards, as well as certain changes in British interests pressing for administrative reforms. The result was network of laws applicable throughout the country and a vast administrative structure to implement the laws. This structure was truly modern in nature and pan-Indian in its spread. Its impact, clearly visible only in the 20th century was somewhat ambivalent in nature. To the British Government it provided the channels for control over the Indian people, and for greater penetration into India. To the Indians on the other hand, it provided the ground on which a protest could be launched and the authority of the British could be challenged.

6.5 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

1) See Sub-sec. 6.2.1
2) In your answer you should refer to the changes in the British interest thereby necessitating a comprehensive administrative structure in the 19th century. See Sub-sec. 6.2.2.

Check Your Progress 2

1) i) and ii) See-sec. 6.3.1 iii) and iv) See Sub-sec. 6.3.2
2) i) √ ii)× iii)× iv) √

UNIT 7: THE SPREAD OF ENGLISH EDUCATION

Structure

7.0 Objectives

7.1 Introduction

7.2 Colonial Education

7.3 Indigenous Education

7.4 Debate Over Education Policy

7.5 Development of English Education

7.6 An Appraisal

7.7 Let Us Sum up

7.8 Key Words

7.9 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

7.0 OBJECTIVES

This Unit attempts to introduce you to experiments that the British government made in the field of education in India during 1757-1857. In this Unit you will learn about:

- the changing relationship between colonialism and education,
- the characteristics of the indigenous system of education,
- the debate over the education policy,
- the spread of Western education, and
- the significance of the new education system in modern India.

7.1 INTRODUCTION

The establishment of British territorial control over India brought changes in different spheres of life. Education was one of such areas where lot of changes came with the transfer of power to the British. Why and how did the change come? What was the impact of this change? These are some of the major questions that have been discussed in this Unit.

7.2 COLONIAL EDUCATION

It is essential to understand the dynamics of relationship between education and colonialism in order to understand the development of education under colonial rule. Authors like Martin Carnoy and others have argued that education in a colonial country is designed by the colonial rulers to legitimise their domination and to serve their own economic needs.

Economic and political control over the colonial country is essential for the survival of colonial rule and education a new se of values and justification of the colonial rule. Thus education loses its independent identity and becomes subordinate to political power. Colonial education no doubt brings changes and cultural transformation in a colonial country. New idea and experiments undoubtedly enrich the existing knowledge. But the colonial country has to pay a heavy price for it. The real beneficiaries of colonial education are a selected few who had a specific role assigned by the colonial rulers in the continuation of the colonial rule. Colonial education is meant for better control of the colonial country rather than its development. The ultimate outcome of this policy might be different but the desired objective is to 'control' not to 'change' the colonial country.

In the background of this view of many social historians regarding the dynamics of relationship between colonial rule and education we shall look at the development of English education in India. However, before we come to the beginnings of English education, let us take a look at the indigenous system of education in the early 19th century.

7.3 INDIGENOUS EDUCATION

The information that we gather from early British records gives us a very rough idea about indigenous system of education in late 18th and early 19th century India. There were '*Madrasas'* and '*Maktabs'* for the Muslims and '*Tols'* and '*Patshalas'* for the Hindus. These ranged from the centres for higher learning in Arabic and Sanskrit to lower levels of institution for schooling people in Persian and Vernacular languages. Lack of scientific and secular learning was one of the major limitations of the centres for higher learning in those days. However, many Hindus attended Persian schools because Persian schools. Whether it was a '*Tol'* or a '*Madrasa'* there were certain common features in the indigenous system of education.

- Schools were generally run with the help of contribution from Zamindars or from local rich men.
- In the curriculum the main emphasis was on classical language like Sanskrit, Arabic or Persian and subjects of classical Hindu or Islamic tradition like Grammar, Logic, Law, Metaphysics, Medicines, etc.
- Though Sanskrit learning was the exclusive domain of the Brahmans, from the reports available of the early 19th century we find that the non-upper castes and the scheduled castes had also representation in the lower level schools.
- Women were generally debarred from the formal education system.
- In the absence of printing press till 19th century oral tradition and memory of the teachers formed the basis of knowledge and information, supplemented with handwritten manuscripts.
- The state had little or not role in school education though kings would patronize people famous for their learning.

Besides the centres for higher learning which were basically the domain of upper castes there was a large number of elementary schools. Most of the villages in India had this kind of elementary schools. These were each run by an individual teacher with the monetary help of the village Zamindars of local elite. These schools used to teach the students elementary arithmetic and basic literacy to meet the needs of day-to-day life. Students from different sections of society, except the very backward disprivileged castes, attended these schools.

Thus, the education system that existed in India in the early 19th century had its own merits and demerits. The elementary schools provided the opportunity for basic education to rural people and its curriculum was secular in approach and responsive to practical needs. Probably in the higher centres of learning (*Tols* and *Madrasas*) too much emphasis on niceties of grammar, philosophy and religion narrowed down the scope of expansion of secular and scientific knowledge. The colonial rulers discarded the indigenous system and replaced it by a system of education of their own. The potentiality that the indigenous system had as a means of mass education was destroyed. In the following section new would see how controversies started among different group about what should be the role of the East India Company in the development of education in India.

7.4 DEBATE OVER EDUCATION POLICY

Till the second half on 18th century the English East India Company did not face any dilemma about its role in the promotion of education in India. It was basically a commercial corporation, so its basic objective was trade and profit. Before acquisition of territorial power the Company had no role in education, however, there were attempts by the missionaries to establish charity schools and to promote learning. But things began to change with the British occupation of Eastern India in the second-half of 18th century about what should be the role of the company in the promotion of learning in India.

Immediately after the acquisition of political power in India the company officials wanted to maintain neutrality or non-intervention in the sphere of religion and culture of the indigenous society. The reason behind it was partly it was partly the fear of adverse reaction and opposition to their role by the local people. However, constant pressure from different quarters, the Missionaries, the Liberals, the Orientalists, the Utilitarians compelled the company to give up its policy of neutrality and to take the responsibility of promotion of learning.

The second important point around which the opinions were sharply divided was whether the company should promote western or oriental learning. In the Initial stage the company officials patronised oriental learning. It cannot be denied that some of the Englishmen had the genuine desire to acquire and promote oriental learning.

In this context we may mention the establishment of the ‘Calcutta Madrasa’ by Warren Hastings (1781), the ‘Benares Sanskrit College’ by Jonathan Duncan (1791) and the “Asiatic Society of Bengal’ by William Jones (1784). Those who were in of Indian classical tradition were called “Orientalists”. The argument put

forward by the Orientalists was the generally there was a prejudice among Indians against European Knowledge and science, so there might to complete rejection of western knowledge. Some of them were also interested to explore the classical tradition and culture of this ancient civilization. But even if we acknowledge the genuine desire of some of the Englishmen for the promotion of oriental culture, there is no doubt that the Orientalists were guided by some practical considerations. They wanted to teach the British officials the local language and culture so that they would be better at their job. This was the prime objective behind the foundation of the Port William College at Calcutta in 1800. The other motive was to develop friendly relations with the elites of the indigenous society and to understand their culture. This was the main reason behind the establishment of the 'Calcutta Madras and the 'Benares Sanskrit College'.

Extracts from the Diary of H.T. Prinsep Concerning the Dispute between Orientalists and Anglicists

When the subject came under consideration in Council, there was a very hot argument between myself and Mr. Macaulay. The issue was the resolution that was published not abolishing existing colleges, but requiring them to teach English as well as native literature and making the farmer obligatory, also giving some encouragement to vernacular studies, but declaring that all Government pecuniary aid in future should be given exclusively to promote the study of European science through the medium of English Language. Lord W Bentick would not even allow my memorandum to be placed on record. He said it was quite an abuse that Secretaries should take upon themselves to write memorandums: that it was enough for the Court of Directors to see what the Members of Council chose to place on record… Thus ended this matter for the time. The Resolution passed on this occasion was modified afterwards and made a little more favourable for the old native institutions by Lord Auckland, but English has ever since been the study preferentially encouraged by Government in connection with vernacular literature. The study of Sanskrit, Arabic and Persian is, in consequence, less cultivated than heretofore, but none of the old institutions have been altogether abolished" (emphasis added).

Extracts from the Minute of the Hon'ble T.B. Macaulay, dated the 2nd February 1835

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We now come to the gist of the matter. We have a fund to be employed as Government shall direct for the intellectual improvement of the people of this country. The simple question is, what is the most useful way of employing it?

All parties seem to be agreed on one point, that the dialects commonly spoken among the natives of this part of India contain neither literary nor scientific information, and are moreover so poor and rude that, until they are enriched from some other quarter, it will not be easy to translate any valuable work into them. It seems to be admitted on all sides, that the intellectual improvement of those classes of the people who have the means of some language not vernacular amongst them.

What then shall that language be? One half of the committee maintains that it should be the English. The other half strongly recommends the Arabic and Sanscrit. The whole question seems to me to be-which language is the best worth knowing?

I have no knowledge of either Sanscrit orArabic. But I have done what I could to form a correct estimate of their value. I have read translations of the most celebrated Arabic and Sanscrit works. I have conversed, both here and at home, with men distinguished by their proficiency in the Eastern tongues. I am quite ready to take the oriental learning at the valuation of the orientalists themselves. I have never found one among them who could deny that a single shelf of a good and Arabia. The intrinsic superiority of the Western literature is indeed fully admitted by those members of the committee who support the oriental plan of education.

There was a strong opposition to this Orientalist approach by different groups in England- the Evangelicals, the Liberals and the Utilitarians. The new cultural ethos that developed in England with the Industrial Revolution was highly critical of the company's monopoly trade. Post-industrial Revolution saw little of value beyond modern western culture. The Evangelicals had a firm conviction in the superiority of Christian idea and western institutions. Two great exponents of the Evangelical view were Charles Grant and William Wilberforce.

Other who did not share Evangelical faith also were convinced of the superiority of western knowledge and one of the chief promoters of this idea was Thomas Babington Macaulay. He recommended that western learning should be promoted in India through English language and this should be the objective of

education policy in India. James Mill, the chief advocate of Utilitarianism in India, was highly critical of India religion and culture. Instead of support to oriental institutions, he had emphasised Western education. But he believed that education alone was not sufficient to bring desired transformation in India; legislative and administrative reforms were also essential for this purpose.

In brief, all off these groups who may be called 'Anglicists', in general believed that Indians were in a backward stage and Western education given through English language alone was the remedy. But education was expensive. Therefore it was better to educate a group of people who would gradually educate the rest of the society. Education would filter down from the elites to the messes. In this way it would help to develop new cultural values and knowledge in India. This was after called the 'filtration' theory.

The missionaries had a completely different logic for supporting the introduction of English education in India. The motive of the missionaries was to get access to the indigenous society through education and to propagate new cultural values which would help them in conversion of people to Christianity.

The response of Indians to this debate over education policy was a mixed one. Ram Mohan Roy and other favoured introduction of Western education with the belief that it would help Indians to assimilate the knowledge of western science, rationalism, new ideas and literature. This would help in the regeneration of the country. Some other people believed that knowledge of Western education, specially the knowledge of English, would help them in getting jobs and coming close to the ruling elite. So they were in support of Western education. In opposition to this there were many conservatives who were staunch supporters of Indian classical language and culture. They had the apprehension that introduction of Western education would lead to the collapse of indigenous society and culture.

Thus, there were different shades of opinion among the Europeans as well as Indians about the role of the company in the development of education in India. Let us see in the next section what major developments took place in the Indian education during 1757-1857.

Check Your Progress 1

1) Make an assessment of the indigenous system of education in 100 words.
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2) Write in 50 words about the attitude of Indians to the promotion of western learning.
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3) Read the following sentences and mark right (√) or wrong(×): s

   i) In the indigenous system of education mass education was neglected.
   ii) Women in general were deprived of education in the indigenous system.
   iii) In the beginning the company officials avoided any intervention in indigenous education.
   iv) The Anglicists wanted to promote western education because they wanted to modernise India.

7.5 DEVELOPMENT OF ENGLISH EDUCATION

As we have seen in the earlier section, the beginning of English education can be traced only to the early 19th century. Before that the efforts made by the missionaries or by individuals were very limited in nature. We may mention in this connection Schwartzs schools in Tanjore, Rammad and Shivganga, the Baptist Missionaries in Serampore, the London Mission Society, the American Methodists in Bombay, etc. they had pioneering contribution in modern education. These missionary activities and the mounting pressure by some Englishmen like Charles Grant and William Wilberforce compelled the Company to give up its policy of nonintervention in education. For the fist time the British Parliament included in the Company's charter a clause that the Governor-General in Council is bound to keep a sum of not less than one lakh of rupees per year for education. But the Company used this fund mainly to promote and encourage Indian language and literature. The importance of the Charter Act of 1813 was that the Company for the first time acknowledged state responsibility for the promotion of education in India.

In 1823, a General Committee of Public Institution was set up to took after the development of education in India. Most of the members of this committee belonged to the Orientalist group and they strongly advocated the promotion of oriental learning rather than the promotion of Western education. However, as we have discussed in the earlier section, different sections both in England and in India created Mounting pressure on the Company to encourage Western education. Macaulay, the President of the General Committee of Public Instruction and Lord Bentinck, the Governor General, took the side of the Anglicists and Bentinck gave be the promotion of European literature and science among the natives of India; and that all funds appropriated for the purpose of education would be best employed on English education alone."

Some of the important points of the resolution that Bentinck announced in 1835 were as follows:

- Persian was abolished as the court language and was substituted by English.
- Printing and publication of English books were made free and available at a comparatively low price.

- More funds were provided to support the English education, while there was curtailment in the fund for the promotion of oriental learning.

Auckland who came after Bentinck as the Governor-General also believed in the need for the promotion of English education in India. He recommended the opening of more English colleges in Dacca, Patna, Benares, Allahabad, Agra, Delhi and Barreilly. The General Committee of Public Instruction was abolished in 1841 and its place was taken by a Council of Education. The next major landmark in the development of English education in this period was the Wood's Despatch of 1854. Sir Charles Wood, the president of the Board of Control, in 1854 laid down the policy which became the guiding principle of the education programme of the government of India. The Despatch categorically declared:

> "The education that we desire to see extended in India is that which has for its object the diffusion of the improved arts, science, philosophy and literature of Europe, in short of European knowledge."

The major recommendations of the Despatch were as follow:

- the creation of a department of public instruction in each of the five provinces of the company's territory,
- the establishment of university at Calcutta, Bombay and Madras,
- the establishment of a network of graded schools-high schools, middle schools and the elementary schools,
- the establishment of teachers training institutions,
- the promotion of vernacular schools,
- the introduction of a system of grants-in-aid for financial help to the schools, etc.

In 1857 three universities were established in Calcutta, Bombay and Madras. The establishment of universities and the opening of education departments in the provinces provided a basic structure to modern education in India, in fact Wood's Despatch provided the model for the further development in education in India.

Along with this official initiative to promote western learning in India, there was initiative by the missionaries and some individuals to promote Western education. In these missionary institutions did play a role in spreading western knowledge, though their basic object was to attract people to Christianity. Besides the missionaries some individuals played a significant role to promote English education in Calcutta. The Native School and Book Society of Calcutta was established to open schools in Calcutta and to train up the teachers for the indigenous schools. The establishment of Hindu College (later Presidency College) in Calcutta by David Hare and a group of local Hindu notables facilitated the promoted of secular education among Indians. David Hare was against the teaching of religious ideas and Sanskrit and Arabic languages. J.E.D. Bethune who was as ardent advocate of women's education founded a girls' school in Calcutta. Among the Bengalis, Vidyasagar supported the promotion of women's education. All these institutions obtained a positive response from the

local people who strongly pleaded to the British for further expansion of educational opportunities.

Similarly in Bombay and Madras also missionary schools were established. In Bombay notable developments were the Native Education Society and the Elphinstone Institution which played a role similar to the Hindu College of Calcutta. In Madras the Christian College was founded in 1837 and the Presidency College in 853. In Uttar Pradesh the first English-medium College was founded at Agra in 1823. Thus by 1850s we find that in most of the provinces in India the basis of modern education was laid down by the British.

7.6 AN APPRAISAL

The above discussion shows how gradually the English education developed. The government promoted this system while neglecting the indigenous system of education in the 19th century. The spread of English education in India was a long process and before 1857 its spread and depth were limited. Nonetheless the changes that came in education up to 1857 deserve a close scrutiny. There was no doubt that the new education broadened the horizon of knowledge. Specially the establishment of printing press and easy availability of books removed the traditional barriers and made education accessible to more people. The ideas of the western thinkers influenced the younger generation of the indigenous society and they began to question the existing traditional values. A new spirit of rationalism development.

However, these positive contributions have to be balanced against the grave limitations of the education system that developed under colonial sponsorship. The English education system totally ignored the importance of mass education. In the indigenous system the elementary schools provided basic education to a wide section of society. But in the new education the emphasis was to educate a selected few. The Anglicists idea of filtering down education from elites to masses did not work in practice. This system did not provide equal access to education to all and this led to the perpetuation of the backwardness of socially backward castes and communities. The existing divisions in the society widened.

Secondly, in spite of advocacy of western science and technology, in the curriculum of schools and colleges the emphasis was on western literature, philosophy and humanities. Technology and natural science were neglected and without such knowledge the intellectual advancement as well as economic development of a country was hampered.

Another aspect of this new education was the subordination of education of political power. Whether it was Orientalist or Anglicist the basic object of their education policy was to strengthen colonial rule. The Orientalists wanted to do it through indigenisation and the Anglicists wanted to do it through westernization. The basic purpose of the education policy was inseparable from the political interests of the colonial government.

Thus we have seen that education became an issue of debate among various schools of thought. Thus education policy in the first of 19th century was a product of this clash of opinions. On the whole, the colonial administration was keen to promote an education policy which served its own interests.

Check Your Progress 2

1) Discuss the official policy of education between 1835 and 1857. Answer in 100 words.

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2) Write a critical note on the effect of English education in India. Answer in 100 words.

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7.7 LET US SUM UP

In this Unit we have seen how gradually the indigenous system of education was replaced by the British with a new system of education. There were many Englishmen who tried to promote oriental learning but the Anglicists prevailed over such Orientalists. New schools and colleges were established to promote learning. New social, political and economic ideas came through the channel of western education. But the education policy ignored scientific and technical education. Moreover, the beneficiary this education was mainly the upper crust of society. So the transformation that came with the English education was very limited in nature.

7.8 KEY WORDS

Anglicists: The Company officials who were in favour of promotion of western education in India were called Anglicists.

Evangelicals: There was a group of Protestants in English who believed in the supremacy of the Christ and individual initiative. They visualised the progress of human being only through faith in Christ and the Christian culture.

Liberals: In 19th century England a new political party emerged called Liberal party. Members of this party who were called liberals believed in toleration and advocated freedom of though and expression.

Orientalists: The company officials who advocated for the promotion of Indian culture, tradition and languages were called Orientalists.

Utilitarians: A school of thought in Britain that believed in the moral and material improvement of people through legislation.

7.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

1) Your answer should focus on the major features of the indigenous system of education, its merits and demerits, see Sec. 7.3
2) There was a mixed reaction, some favoured western education, some were very critical of it. See Sec. 7.4
3) i)× ii) √ iii) √ iv)×

Check Your Progress 2

1) Your answer should include Bentinck's resolution policy of Auckland, Wood's Despatch, etc. See Sec. 7.5.
2) Here you have to make assessment of the positive contribution of English education and the limitation s of the English education, See. Sec. 7.6.

UNIT 8 THE NEW LAND SETTLEMENTS

Structure

8.0 Objectives

8.1 Introduction

8.2 First Experiments in Land Revenue Management

8.3 The Permanent Settlement in Bengal

8.3.1 A Settlement with Zamindars

8.3.2 The Position of the Cultivators

8.3.3 Effects of the Permanent Settlement

8.4 Disillusionment with Permanent Settlement

8.5 The Emergence of Alternative Systems

8.5.1 Land Assessment Under Ryotwari

8.5.2 The Adoption of Ryotwari in Madras

8.5.3 Ryotwari Theory and Practice

8.5.4 The Ryotwari Settlement in Bombay

8.5.6 Effects of the Ryotwari System in Madras and Bombay

8.6 The Other Alternative Settlement: The Mahalwari System

8.6.1 Mahalwari Theory and Practice

8.6.2 Effects of the Mahalwari Settlement

8.7 Let Us Sum Up

8.8 Answer To Check Your Progress Exercises

8.0 OBJECTIVES

In this Unit we shall study the land revenue settlements made by the British in different parts of India up to 1857. After studying this Unit you will be able to understand:

- the meaning of the term ‘revenue settlement’,
- the aims of the British in their various ‘settlements’,

- the important features of the three main types of settlement, and
- the important effects of each settlement on the rural economy and on the relation of different classes in the country side.

8.1 INTRODUCTION

Agriculture has been the most important economic activity of the Indian people for many centuries. Naturally, therefore, kings and rulers have always drawn a large part of their taxes from agriculture. The British government, as it established itself in various parts of India also imposed very heavy taxes on agriculture. In order to assess and collect these taxes, it instituted various land revenue settlements.

Let us try and understand what this means. Imagine that the British East India Company has just defeated some Indian ruler, and annexed his territories. Now they went to collect taxes from these lands. You many think that this could be done by looting and plundering-and this was in fact often the first thing that was done in newly conquered territory. But it is not possible to continue like this: First of all, because loot is usually kept by the looter, and does not find its way into the government treasury, and secondly, because this sort of activity is likely to cause people to flee to other areas, or to so impoverish them that nothing can be got later on. So it is necessary to institute some regular system of taxation.

Such a system has two requirements: the government has to fix what or how much will be paid. This amount is called the 'assessment; and it has to fix who will have to pay. Now the person who is called on to pay a certain amount must have some connection with, some control over the land from which the tax is to be collected' because he will otherwise be incapable of paying anything from it. So when the government places the burden of payment on somebody, it must also wee that he has some control over the land so that he gets an income from which the tax can be paid. If he does not get anything from the land, he can obviously not pay anything to the government.

8.2 FIRST EXPERIMENTS IN LAND REVENUE MANAGEMENT

After gaining control of Bengal in 1757, the British though that they would retain the administration established by the Nawabs of Bengal, but would use it to collect an ever-growing amount for them. However, the rapacity and corruption of the Company's employees, and their continual interference in the administration led to complete disorganisation, and was one of the causes of the terrible famine of 1769-70, in which it was estimated that one-their of the people of Bengal died.

From 1772 therefore, a new system was introduced: this was the farming system. Under this system the government gave out the collection of land revenue on a contract basis. The contractor who offered to pay the largest amount from a certain district or sub-division was given full powers for a certain number of years. Obviously, such contractors (they were called 'farmers' in those days), would try and extort as much as possible during the period that they held the contract; it would not matter to them if the people were ruined and the production in the later years declined. After all, they would have made their profit. Extortion and opprcession were the obvious results of such a system. Furthermore, many of the contractors had offered to pay very large amounts, and later found that they could not collect so much, even with great oppression. Finally, the system also led to corruption. As with many government contracts even today, profitable contracts on very easy terms were given to the friends and favourites and '*benamindars'* of men in power, leading to loss to the government. In 1786 Lord Cornwallis was sent out to India with orders to clean up and reorganise the administration.

8.3 THE PERMANENTS SETTLEMENT IN BENGAL

Cornwallis realized that the existing system was impoverishing the country-its agriculture was in decline. Furthermore, it was failing to produce the large and regular surplus that the Company hoped for. And it was also becoming difficult for the Company to get the large quantities of Indian goods that it planned to export to Europe, because, as Cornwallis observed, the production of silk, cotton, etc. all depended on agriculture. When agriculture was decaying, handicrafts could hardly be prosperous. And both the London authorities and Cornwallis were agreed that much of the corruption and oppression originated in the fact that the taxation had the character of an 'uncertain, arbitrary imposition'.

It was decided therefore, that the land-tax would now be permanently fixed: the government would promise never to increase it in future. Several effects were expected from this measure. It would reduce the scope for corruption that existed when officials could alter the assessment at will. Furthermore, now that the state would not demand anything extra if the production increased it was hoped that landholders would invest money in improving the land as the whole of the benefit would come to them. Production and trade would increase, and the government would also get its taxes regularly. Finally, Cornwallis believed that even if the land tax was fixed, government could always levy taxes on trade and commerce in order to raise more money if it was needed. In any case, the land revenue was now fixed at a very high level-an absolute maximum-of Rs. 2 crore and 65 lakhs.

8.3.1 A Settlement With Zamindars

So we see that the land revenue was fixed permanently. But from whom was it to be collected? The Nawabs of Bengal had collected taxes from the zamindars. These zamindars were usually in control of large areas: sometimes entire districts. They had their own armed forces, and were termed Rajas. But there were also zamindars who held smaller areas, and either paid directly to the State, or paid through some big zamindar. The actual cultivation was carried on by peasants who paid the zamindars at customary rates fixed in every sub-division (or *pargana*). Oppressive zamindars often added extra charges called '*abwabs'* on top of the regular land revenue rates.

By 1790 British rule had greatly confused this picture. Some zamindars were retained-others were replaced by contractors of officials. The old customary rates were ignored, and every abuse permitted, if it led to an increase in the revenues. By the time Cornwallis arrived on the scene, the situation was one of the complete confusion. The new Governor-General belonged to the landed aristocracy of Britain and was in favour of a settlement that gave the right of ownership to the zamindars, who he hoped, would improve that land as English landlords did. But apart from this preference on his part, it was difficult for the government to make the settlement with any other class.

To understand this you must bear in mind that there must have been about four or five million cultivating families in Bengal, Bihar and Orissa at that time. Collecting from them would have involved the preparation of detailed records of all their holdings, and the calculation of a tax on this basis. This would take several years and large staff to execute. In addition it would give great opportunities for corruption. It was obviously much simpler to collect the revenue from a small number of big zamindar had to pay the tax fixed upon it: if he did so then he was the proprietor, the owner of his zamindari. He could sell, mortgage or transfer it. The land would be inherited by heirs in due course. If however, the zamindar failed to pay the tax due, then the Government would take the zamindari and sell it by auction, and all the rights would vest in the new owner.

8.3.2 The Position of the Cultivators

The actual cultivation of the land was of course, carried on by the lakhs of peasants who were now reduced to the status of tenants of the zamindars: Cornwallis had also decreed that the zamindars should issue written agreements (called *pattas*) to each cultivator, and these should specify what the tenant was to pay. He apparently believed that this would prevent oppression by the zamindars. In practice, however, no such *pattas* were issued, and the peasants were wholly at the mercy of the zamindars.

This was not accidental. As we have note earlier, the permanent assessment was the large sum that could be got from the land. It was a heavy and oppressive assessment. According to the estimate of a knowledgeable official, John Shore, if a piece of land produced crops worth Rs.100, then Rs. 45 went to the government, Rs. 15 to the zamindar and only Rs. 40 was left to the cultivator. Such oppressive taxes could only be collected by oppressive methods. If the zamindars were not allowed to oppress the peasants then would not be able to meet the demand s of the State. By regulations made in 1793, 1799 and 1812, the zamindar could seize, that is, carry away the tenants' property if the rent had not been paid. He did not need the permission of any court of law to do this. This was a legal method of harassment. In addition to this the zamindars often resorted to illegal methods, such as locking up or beating tenants who did not pay whatever was demanded. The immediate effect of the Settlement was, therefore, to greatly worsen the position of the actual cultivators of the soil, in order to benefit the zamindars and the British Government.

8.3.3 Effects of the Permanent Settlement

It may seem that the settlement was greatly in favour of the zamindars but we should not forget that they were also now obliged to pay a fixed amount by fixed dates every year, and any failure on their part meant the sale of the zamindari. Furthermore, many of the zamindaris were rated for large sums that left no margin for shortfalls due to flood, drought or other calamity. As a result, many zamindars had their zamindaris taken away and sold in the decades immediately after the permanent Settlement. In Bengal alone it is estimated that 68 per cent, of the zamindari land was sold between 1794 and 1819. Merchants, government officials, and other zamindars bought these lands. The new buyers would then set about trying to increase the rents paid by the tenants in order to make a profit from their purchases. Raja Rammohan Roy remarked that:

> "Under the permanent settlement since 1793, the landholders have adopted every measure to raise the rents, by means of the power put into their hands."

However, many zamindars still found it difficult to pay the amount demanded by the British. One such zamindar, the Raja of Burdwan then divided most of his estate into 'lots' or fractions called *patni* taluqs. Each such unit was permanently rented to a holder called a *patnidar*, who promised to pay a fixed rent. If he did not pay, his *patni* could be taken away and sold. Other zamindars also resorted to this: thus a process of subinfeudation commenced.

Gradually the population of Bengal increased; waste and jungle land came under cultivation. Rents also increased. On the other hand, the tax payable to government was fixed, so the position of the zamindars improved, and they were able to lead live of indolence and luxury at the expense of their tenants. Only in 1859 did the State take some step to protect the rights of tenant: a law passed that year bestowed a limited protection on old tenants, who were now termed occupancy tenants.

8.4 DISILLUSIONMENT WITH PERMANENT SETTLEMENT

When Cornwallis introduced the Permanent Settlement in Bengal he expected that the same system would be established in the other British territories as well. And the Government of Madras in fact began to introduce it in the lands under its control. However, British officials soon began to doubt the virtues of this system, while its defects became more prominent.

A very important defect, as far as they were concerned, was that it left no scope for increases in taxation, while the expenditure of the Company, fuelled by repeated wars, continued to expand. Lord Wellesley, Governor- General from 1798 to 1806 actually diverted funds sent from England for the purchase of trade goods and used them for his military expenditures. So officials began to think of ways and means of increasing the government's income. Some of the officials though that in 1793 the zamindars had got off too easily, and this mistake should not be repeated in future. As early as 1811 the London authorities warned against the introduction of permanent settlements without 'a minute and detailed survey of the land.

Check Your Progress 1

1) What are the two essential steps that have to be taken in making a land revenue settlement? Answer in four lines.

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2) What were the motives behind the introduction of the Permanent Settlement in Bengal? What was its effect on the position of the cultivators? Answer in 100 words.

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3) Write a short note on the farming system.

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8.5 THE EMERGENCE OF ALTERNATIVE SYSTEMS

Meanwhile other ways of assessing and collecting the land-tax were being devised by British officials. Two officers, Munro and Read were sent to administer a newly conquered region of Madras in 1792. Instead of collecting from the zamindars, they began to collect directly from the villages, fixing the amount that each village had to pay. After this they proceeded to assess each cultivator or *ryot* separately – and thus evolved what came to be known as the '*ryotwari'* system. This early *ryotwari* was a filed assessment system. This means that the tax payable on each field was fixed by a government officer, and then the cultivator had the choice of cultivating that filed and paying that amount, or not cultivating it. If no other cultivator could be found, then the field would not be cultivated: it would lie fallow.

8.5.1 Land Assessment under Ryotwari

You can see that the officer fixing the tax, or settling the revenue, has a difficult task. He has to fix the tax on thousands of fields in sub-division or district, and to fix it in such a way that the burden on each such field is approximately equal. If the burden is not equally distributed, then the cultivators will not occupy the heavily assessed fields, and cultivate only those with a light assessment.

Now, in fixing the assessment of a field, the revenue officer had to consider two things: one was the quality of the soil-whether it was rocky or rich, irrigated or dry etc.; the other was area of the field. It followed, therefore, that this system depended on a survey, that is, a classification of it. Thus one acre of first class rice land should pay the same amount regardless of whether it was located in this village or that one. But how was this amount to be fixed?

Munro usually fixed it by estimating what the usual product of the land was-for example-2600 Ibs. of paddy per acre. He would then claim that the State share of this amounted to one third of this, or two-fifths of this, and thus calculate the amount that the cultivator had to pay the State. This, of course is the theory of *ryotwari*-in practice, the estimates were largely guesswork, and the amounts demanded so high that they could be collected with great difficulty, and sometimes could not be collected at all.

8.5.2 The adoption of Ryotwari in Madras

After some experiments with other ways of managing the land revenue, the Madras authorities were by 1820 converted to the *ryotwari* system, and its triumph was indicated by the appointment of Munro as Governor of Madras. Munro advanced many arguments in favour of this system. He argued that it was the original Indian land tenure, and the one best suited to Indian conditions. Its adoption was due, however, to one main reason-it resulted in a larger revenue than any other system could have produced. This was because there were no zamindars or other intermediaries who received any part of the agricultural surplus-whatever could be squeezed from the cultivator went directly to the State. The Madras government was chronically short of funds, and such a system would naturally appeal to it. So taking advantage of the rejection of the Permanent Settlement, it introduced the temporary *ryotwari* settlement.

8.5.3 Ryotwari Theory and Practice

We have outlined the *ryotwari* system as it was developed by Munro in the districts under his charge. After 1820 however, *ryotwari* was extended to most of the Madras Presidency in forms quite different from those visualized by Munro. His *ryotwari*, you will remember, was a field assessment, leaving the cultivator free to cultivate or give up any particular field. And, as we saw, the working of such a system depended upon the government carrying out a detailed measurement and assessment of each field. But after 1820 the system was extended to many districts where no surveys had ever been carried out. No one knew how much land a peasant cultivated, or what its product might be. His tax came to be fixed on an arbitrary basis, usually be looking at what he had paid in earlier years. This was known as a 'putcut' assessment.

Again, in theory the *ryotwari* allowed the *ryot* to five up any field that he chose. But it soon became clear that if this was freely permitted the tax revenue of the State would fall. So government officers began to compel the cultivators to hold on to (and of course, pay for) land that they did not really want to cultivate. Since cultivation was not voluntary, it was always difficult to collect the revenue and so the use of beating and torture to enforce payment was also widespread. These methods were exposed by the Madras Torture Commission in 1845. After this certain reforms were introduced. A scientific survey of the land was undertaken, the real burden of tax declined, and there was no need to use violent and coercive methods to collect the revenue. However, these improvements occurred after 1860-beyond the period that we are studying at present.

8.5.4 Effects of the Ryotwari System in Madras

There is hardly any doubt that the effects of this system upon the rural economy were distinctly harmful. The peasants were impoverished and lacked the resources to cultivate new lands. The Government of Madras itself noted in 1855 that only 14 ½ million acres of *ryotwari* land were cultivated, while 18 million acres were waste. It confessed: 'There is no room for doubt that an increase of cultivation would follow reduction s of the Government tax.'

Apart from this depressing effect upon the rural economy, the heavy burden of taxation distorted the land market. Land in most districts of Madras had no value in the first half of the 19th century. No one would buy it, because buying in meant that the new owner would have to pay the extortionate land revenue. After paying it, he would have no income from the land, and obviously, in such circumstances, no one would purchase land.

8.5.5 The Ryotwari Settlement in Bombay

Ryotwari in the Bombay Presidency had its beginnings in Gujarat. The British began by collecting the land revenue through the hereditary officials called *desais* and the village headmen (Patel). However, this did not produce as much revenue as the British wanted, so they began collection directly from the peasants in 1813-14. When they conquered the Peshwa's territory in 1818 the *ryotwari* system on the Madras pattern was also introduced there, under the supervision of Munro's disciple Elphinstone. The abuses that characterised the Madras *ryotwari* soon appeared in the Bombay Presidency also, especially as the Collectors began trying to increase the revenue as rapidly as they could.

A regular measurement and classification of the land was commenced under the supervision of an officer named Pringle. This survey was supposed to be founded upon the theory of rent developed by the English economic Ricardo. This theory was hardly applicable to Indian conditions, and, in any case, Pringle's calculations were full of errors, and the resulting assessment was far too high. When the government tried to collect the amounts fixed by Pringle in Pune district, many of the cultivators gave up their lands and fled territory of the Nizam of Hyderabad. This assessment thus had to be abandoned after some years.

It was replaced by a reformed system devised by two officers named Wingate and Goldsmid. Their system did not try to apply any theoretical rules: instead it aimed at moderating the demand to a level where it could be regularly paid. The actual assessment of each field depended upon its soil and location. This new assessment began to be made in 1836 and covered most of the Deccan by 1865. Its effects upon agriculture were beneficial, and the cultivated area expanded as the new assessment was introduced.

8.5.6 Effects of the Ryotwari System in Madras and Bombay

We have seen how the Permanent Settlement established a few big zamindars in a position of dominance over the mass of the peasants. The social effects of the *ryotwari* settlements were less dramatic. In many areas the actual cultivating peasants were recorded as the occupants or '*ryots*, and thus secured the title to their holding. However, as we saw, the tax was so heavy that many peasants would have gladly abandoned at least some of their land, and had to be prevented from doing so. It was also possible for non-cultivating landlords to have their names entered as the occupants (or owners) of particular holding, while the actual cultivation was carried on by their tenants, servants or even bonded labourers. This was particularly the case in irrigated districts like Thanjavur (in Tamil Nadu) where many of the '*ryots'* held thousands of acres of land. There was no limit to the amount of land that a *ryot* could hold, so there could be great difference in wealth and status between one *ryot* and another. However, money-lenders and other non-cultivators were not much interested in acquiring lands because of the heavy taxes that came with them. Hence the small peasants, oppressed though they might be by the tax-collector did not have fear expropriation by the money-lender or landlord.

Under the reformed *ryotwari* system that gradually developed in Bombay after 1836 and Madras after 1858 the burden of the land revenue was somewhat reduced, and land acquired a saleable value. The purchaser could now expect to make a profit from wrong owning land: the State would not take it all as tax. One result of this was that money-lenders began to seize the lands of their peasant debtors and either event them or reduce them of tenants. This process led to considerable social tension, and caused a major rural uprising in the Bombay Deccan in 1875.

8.6 THE OTHER ALTERNATIVE SETTLEMENT: THE MAHALWARI SYSTEM

The aggressive policies of Lord Wellesley led to large territorial gains for the British in North India between 1801 and 1806. These areas came to be called the North-Western Provinces. Initially the British planned a settlement on the Bengal pattern, Wellesley ordered the local officials to make the settlement with the zamindars wherever they could, provided they agreed to pay suitably high land revenue. Only if the zamindars refused to pay, or nor zamindars could be found were the settlements to be made village by village 'giving the preference to the *mokuddums*, *perdhauns*, or any respectable *ryots* of the Village'. Ultimately, the settlement was to be made permanent, as in Bengal.

In the meantime, however, every effort was made to enlarge the revenue collection. The demand in 1803-4 was Rs.188 lakhs-by 1817-18 it was Rs. 297 lakhs.

Such enormous increases provoked resistance from many of the big zamindars and rajas, who had been almost independent in the earlier period. Many of them were therefore driven off their lands by the new administration. In other cases the old zamindars could not pay the amount demanded, and their estates were sold by the Government. Increasingly, therefore, it became necessary to collect from the village directly through its *pradhan* or *muqaddam* (headman). In the revenue records the word used for a fiscal unit was a '*mahal'*, and the village wise assessments therefore came to be called a *mahalwari* settlement. It was however quite possible for one person to hold a number of villages, so that many big zamindars continued to exist. Furthermore, as in Bengal, the confusion and coercion that accompanied the collection of the very land tax created fine opportunities for the local officials, and large areas of land were illegally acquired by them in the early years. Meanwhile, the Government found that its expenditures were always exceeding its revenues, and the idea of a permanent settlement was dropped.

8.6.1 Mahalwari Theory and Practice

In 1819 an English official, Holt Mackenzie, developed the theory that *taluqdars* and zamindars were originally appointed by the State, and the real owners of villages were the zamindars who lived in them, or constituted the village community. He argued that their rights and payments should be clearly established by a survey. His ideas were embodied in a law, Regulation VII of 1822. This required that Government official should record all the rights of cultivators, zamindars and others, and also fix the amounts payable from every piece of land. The Governor-General orders:

> It seems necessary to enter on the task of fixing in detail the rages of rent and modes of payment current in each village, and applicable to each field: and anything short of this must be regarded as a very imperfect Settlement.

In practice, this proved impossible to implement. The calculations made were often quite inaccurate, and the Collector in any case slanted them so as to increase the revenue due to the Government. Far from favouring the village communities, the new *mahalwari* often ruined them by imposing impossible tax assessments. In 1833 it was decided that the detailed effort to regulate all rights and payments should be given up, and that a rough and ready estimate of what the village could pay to the State was adequate. In later years, these estimates came to be guided could pay to the State was adequate. In later years, these estimates came to be guided by the rents paid by the tenants of village lands to the owners. From these rents the Settlement officer would calculate the theoretical amount that all the lands of the village or *mahal* would yield. Then some part-ultimately 50 per cent of this would have to be paid to the Government. All these calculations involved a large amount of guesswork: and, not surprisingly, the guesses tended to be on the high side, increasing the amounts to be paid to the State.

8.6.2 Effects of the Mahalwari Settlement

One of the early effects was that the area under the control of the big taluqdars was reduced. The British officers made direct settlements with the village zamindars as far as possible, and even supported them in the law courts when the supported only because it was planned to extract the highest possible revenue from them. They were freed from *taluqdar's* claims only to subject them to a full measure of government taxation.

The result was often the ruin of the village zamindars. One officer reported that in many villages of Aligarh:

> The *Juma* (land revenue) was in the first place considerably too heavy; and in which the m*algoozars* revenue payers seem to have lost all hope of improving their condition or of bearing up against the burden imposed on them. They are now deeply in debt, and utterly incapable of making any arrangements from defraying their arrears.

The result of this situation was that large areas of land began to pass into the hands of money-lenders and merchants who ousted the old cultivating proprietors or reduced them to tenant as will. This occurred most frequently in the more commercialised districts, where the land revenue demand had been pushed to the highest level, and where the landholders suffered most acutely from the business collapse and export depression after 1833. By the 1840s it was not uncommon to find that no buyers could be found to take land that was being sold for arrears of land revenue. As in the Madras Presidency, the tax in these cases was so high that the buyer could not expect to make any profit from the purchase. Overall, therefore, the *mahalawari* settlement brought impoverishment and widespread dispossession to the cultivating communities of North India in the 1830s and 1840s, and their resentment expressed itself in popular uprisings in 1857. In that year villagers and *taluqdars* all over North India drove off government official, destroyed court and official records and papers, and ejected the new auction purchasers from the villages.

8.7 LET US SUM UP

Thus in this Unit we have seen how the three major land systems devised by the British came into existence. When new areas came under British rule the settlements made resembled either the *ryotwari* or the *mahalwari*. Thus Punjab came under the *mahalwari*, as did a large part of central India under a slightly modified form known as *malguzari*. In Awadh, after the revolt of 1857 the government recognised the *talqudars* as proprietors so as to ensure that they supported it in any future revolt. The assessment itself was *mahalwari*.

An ever-present theme throughout our discussion has been that the drive to collect large revenue was central to British Policy. Sometimes this led to the development of a land market-to the sale and purchase of land. But at other time, the State's demands were so heavy that no purchasers were to be found. The need to collect so much was itself made necessary by the heavy expenditures of the Government in India, and its need to send large sums to Britain for its expense there.

Check Your Progress 2

1) Given three important differences between the Permanent Settlement and the *Ryotwari* Settlement?

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2) In what way did the *Mahalwari* Settlement differ from the *Ryotwari* Settlement? Answer in five lines.

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3) What was the effect of the *Mahalwari* Settlement on the rural economy? Answer in 60 words.

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8.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

1) See Sec. 8.1

2) Your answer should focus on the economic interest that the British had for the introduction of the Permanent Settlement. In the second part of the answer, you should write about the growing dependency of the cultivators on the zamindars and the miseries that the cultivators had to face. See Sec. 8.3

3) See Sec. 8.2.

Check Your Progress 2

1) One was with the zamindars, other was with the *ryots*, for more differences, See Secs. 8.3 and 8.5

2) See Secs. 8.5 and 8.6

3) Growth of money-lenders and merchants in the rural economy, dispossession and impoverishment of the cultivating communities, etc. See Sub-Sec. 8.6.2.

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UNIT 9 THE COMMERCIALISATION OF AGRICULTURE

Structure

9.0 Objectives

9.1 Introduction

9.2 The Range of Commercialisation

9.3 Commercialisation Under the British

- **9.4.1 The Company's Aims**
- **9.4.2 Implications of These Aims**
- **9.4.3 Effect of the Export Trade on Agriculture**
- **9.4.4 The Selection of the Commercial Crops**

9.5 The Commercial Crops

- **9.5.1 Raw Silk**
- **9.5.2 Opium**
- **9.5.3 Indigo**
- **9.5.4 Cotton**
- **9.5.5 Pepper**
- **9.5.6 Sugar**
- **9.5.6 Tea**

9.6 The Effects of Commercialisation

- **9.6.1 Impoverishment**
- **9.6.2 Instability**
- **9.6.3 The Various Markets**
- **9.6.4. Social Structure**

9.7 Let Us Sum Up

9.8 Answers To Check Your Progress Exercises

9.0 OBJECTIVES

This Unit analyses the commericalisation of agriculture in India during the early

phases of British rule – that is, up to the middle of the 19th century. The process of commercialisation that began under the British had far-reaching effects on Indian life, and many of the problems that arose then, are still with us today. After studying this Unit, you will learn about:

- the meaning of the term 'commercialisation;
- the extent of commercialisation before the British conquest;
- the changes that occurred with the introduction of British rule;
- the different ways in which the new commercial agriculture was organised; and
- the effects of this process on the Indian economy, and on the Indian farmers.

9.1 INTRODCUTION

The market is a familiar institution for all of us. You must have frequently gone to a market to make purchases, or sometimes to sell things. This is because we live in a commercialised economy. People work and earn, or produce and sell, because they get money with which they can buy what they want on the market. All sorts of things can be bought on the market-from little things like cigarettes or sweets to expensive things like houses or land. There are even markets for labour- for example, the employment exchanges that are run by the Government are a sort of labour market. But private labour markets also exist: I am sure that you can think of places where you would go if you needed to hire a carpenter or a coolie.

Now, Markets have not always existed. In fact, they are relatively new in human society. Many societies have organised production, distribution and consumption without resorting to buying and selling without the presence of money and markets. Gradually, however different things begin to be bought and sold, and thus markets develop. This is the process of commercialisation. In a society that is undergoing commercialisation, certain things may begin to be sold before others- for example, forest tribes may begin selling wood or

honey and buying salt and iron even when other things are not bought or sold by them.

9.2 THE RANGE OF COMMERCIALISATION

In the same way, when agriculture is commercialised, several different markets may come into operation at different times. We shall try and make a rough list of these markets:

i) Product markets – various agricultural products, such as wheat or rice or wool or ghee begin to be sold:
ii) Input markets – things needed for agricultural production such as tools, seeds fertilizers, bullocks, begin to be sold;
iii) Labour markets-when workers begin to be hired for money;
iv) Land markets-when farmers begin to buy and sell the land, or hire it for money;
v) Market for money itself-as commercialisation develops; the cultivators are often in need of money, to pay taxes or rents in cash, to buy seed or bullocks, or even to feed themselves and their families. A market in loans grows up, and the 'price of the loan is, of course, the interest that the borrower must pay.

Many other kinds of markets exist in a developed market economy, but we do not need to consider them.

Thus we have seen that there are many kinds of markets, and some markets can function even where others do not exist. For example, villagers may begin selling their surplus wheat or cotton even at a time when land is held on the basis of traditional customs and cannot be sold at all. Again, it is quite possible for some of the crop to be sold while another part is disposed of in customary, non-market ways-for example given to the village priest or carpenter or smith. So commercialisation is a slow process, not a sudden or dramatic event.

9.3 COMMERCIALISATION BEFORE THE BRITISH

Markets have been known in India from ancient times, and agricultural products were bought and sold in them. In the Mughal Empire a large part of the land tax was collected in money from the cultivators, and this obviously meant that they were selling

their products for money in order to pay the taxes. It has been estimated that this involved selling about 50 per cent of the agricultural produce. So virtually everyone was involved in exchange as a producer or consumer, usually specialized money-lenders and brokers were to be found, and there is even evidence that some kinds of rights in land (zamindari rights) were bought and sold.

The Mughal Empire broke up in the 18th century, and was succeeded by various regional kingdoms. They sometimes collected lower taxes than the Mughals had done, but they also collected mainly in cash which indicates that the commercial system continued to exist.

9.4 COMMERCIALISATION UNDER THE BRITISH

Among the new powers that took advantage of the decline of the Mughals was the British East India Company. It acquired territories in South India, and also the rich provinces of Bengal, Bihar and coastal Orissa in the East. These areas possessed a rich agriculture as also flourishing trade and handicrafts, and the Company as well as its servants and employees planned to enrich themselves through this conquest. It is the methods adopted by them that gave the commercialisation under their control its distinctive characteristics.

In order to understand this we have to look at the nature of this new ruling power. It was a trading company based in Britain, which had been grated a monopoly of the Eastern trade by the British Government. Its aims and objectives would therefore be different from those of an Indian ruler, or even a raider like Nadir Shah.

9.4.1 The Company's Aims

The Company was mainly concerned with acquiring Indian goods for sale in Europe. Since there was little demand for British goods in India at that time, the Company had to bring gold and silver bullion to India to pay for its purchases. After the conquest of Bengal it hopped that is would no longer have to import this bullion into India: instead, it would collect taxes from its Indian subjects and use the surplus over its local expenditures to buy goods that would be exported to Europe. Then there would be no

need to send out gold and silver from Britain. You can see the under such an arrangement India would, in a roundabout way pay a tribute to the Company in the form of goods to be sold in Europe. The Company would use its political power to make commercial profits for itself.

9.4.2 Implications of These Aims

Now, you will see that for this aim to be realised the Company had to manage to do two things.

i) It must collect taxes so as to yield enough not only to pay its military and administrative expenses in India, but also to provide a surplus for the finance of its trade; and

ii) India should produce at low prices goods for which there was a demand in West so that the surplus revenues could be remitted in the form of these goods.

No sooner had the company acquired the Diwani (revenue control) of Bengal in 1765 than the Directors in London wrote to their employees in India to 'enlarge every channel for conveying to us as early as possible the annual produce of our acquisitions' and to' increase the investment of your company to the utmost extent that you can (The term 'investment' referred to the money spent in buying goods for export to Europe.) more than twenty years later, the Governor General, Lord Cornwallis, had the same aims. The values of Bengal to the British, he stated, depended 'on the continuance of its ability to furnish a large annual investment to Europe'.

We know about the policy of high taxation with land revenue systems, so we shall now concentrate on the second of our two points: that India should produce exportable goods for the 'investment'.

9.4.3 Effect of the Export Trade on Agriculture

When Indian rulers collected taxes, most of the money was spent within the locality or region, and so agriculture was little affected by foreign demand. Indian exports of handicraft and other goods more than covered imports from outside the country. Initially the British also concentrated on exporting Indian manufactures, like textiles, to the West. But a dangerous rival to Indian textiles appeared in the later 18th century, as a cotton mill industry grew

up in Britain. These mills found it difficult to compete with the Indian products and it the 1780s they launched an agitation, claiming that the East India Company was injuring them by its import of Indian fabrics.

The company realised that it needed to promote other lines of export from India, agricultural products were a safe line. They could not compete with British products, and might serve as raw materials for British industry. This strategy had been followed in the case of silk from the 1770s, but with the development of British industry this trend grew stronger. Furthermore, by the 1780s an indirect method of remitting the Indian tribute via China had begun to take shape. The British imported large quantities of tea from China, and had to take shape. The British imported large quantities of tea from China, and had to pay for it in silver as the Chinese did not want Western goods. However, the Chinese bought Indian products like ivory, raw cotton and (later on) opium. If the British controlled this trade, then they would not need to send silver to China-the tea could be got in exchange for Indian products that the British acquired in India. This system became known as 'triangular trade', with the three points being Calcutta, Canton, and London. Wealth circulated through the first but gathered in the Company's treasury in the third.

So, to conclude, The East India Company was interested in producing a controlled commercialisation of agriculture in order to provide commodities for either the Chinese or the Western market.

9.4.4 The Selection of the Commercial Crops

The crops on which the company concentrated were indigo, cotton, raw silk, opium, pepper, and, in the 19th century, also tea and sugar. Of these, raw silk was used by British weavers; it could not be produced in Britain. The same was true of cotton, and it could also be sold to the Chinese. Opium, of course, was smuggled into china despite the Chinese prohibitions on its import. Indigo was a textile dye needed in the West. Tea cultivation was introduced in Assam from the 1840s so that Britain could control its supply, and did not have to depend on China for it. None of these things we may note competed with or replaced any British product. All of them also had another characteristic in common; they were all valuable in relation to

their bulk, which is to say that their price per kilogram or per cubic metre was high.

At this time, we must remember, all goods went over land in carts pulled by horses or bullocks, and over the sea in sailing ships. It took four months or more for a ship to sail from India to Europe, and the ships carried far less than modern cargo vessels. So the cost of transport was high. Now, if cheap, bulky goods had been carried they would have become very expensive after the shipping cost had been paid. This would make them unprofitable for the Company to trade in. so it was necessary for the products to be profitable in relation to their weight, so that the transport costs did not eat up the profits.

Check Your Progress 1

1) Have markets always existed?

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2) Why did the English Company plan for commercialisation of Indian agriculture? Answer in 50 words.

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9.5 THE COMMERCIAL CROPS

Now we will discuss some crops which had great commercial prospects.

9.5.1 Raw Silk

The company was interested in this product almost from the beginning of its rule. In 1770 the Directors wrote from London the Bengal silk, if properly made, could replace the Italian and Spanish silk that the British weavers were then using. So experts were brought in to improve the methods of silk making in India, and to set up workshops (called ‘filatures’) where the cocoons

were spun into silk thread for export. The company through its agents and official also coerced the growers of the mulberry trees (on whose levees the silk-worms feed) and the workers in the filatures, so as to keep price of silk low, so as to allow the contractors to make large profits. Silk remained an important export until the last decades of the 19th century.

9.5.2 Opium

We have already seen that the British found it difficult to pay for tea that they imported from China. However, they soon hit upon the device of selling the Chinese opium. Opium is an addictive drug, like nicotine and alcohol, and once a person had started taking it, he finds it difficult to give up, and will pay high prices in order to get it. The British found it highly profitable to smuggle opium into china.

Opium had long been produced in India in small quantities. It was used a medicine as well as a narcotic. In 1773 Warren Hastings, searching for fresh sources of revenue placed its production and trade under Government control, and appointed contractors to handle the crop. Later on officials known as opium agents were put in charges it. The opium poppy could only be grown under a contract to sell to the Government at a price fixed by it. Any attempt to evade this control was severely punished. The supply was also sought to be controlled so as to maintain a high price on the Chinese market. Great efforts were made to put down the independent producers of opium in the Malwa region of Central India-when they failed the company contented itself by imposing a heavy export duty on the Malwa opium. Thus was see that the development of opium as a commercial crop fulfilled both the objectives of the Company-it gave a large revenue in India, and also created a channel (via China) for the remittance of the that income to London.

9.5.3 Indigo

This a blue dye extracted from a tropical plant. It was used to colour textiles. Up to the 1790s much of the Western supply had come from the Caribbean colonies. But then, production there declined, and Indian indigo found a growing market. The company had been encouraging Europeans to settle in its territory

to produce indigo, and purchasing it from them for export. Production increased rapidly. It was less than 5,000 factory maunds in 1788-9 and reached 133,000 maunds by 1829-30.

Indigo was grown under two systems of production *nij* and *ryoti*. Under the first the planter undertook the cultivation with their own ploughs and cattle, employing hired labour for the purpose. The plant was cut taken to the planter's factory for the day to be extracted. Under the *ryoti* system (also known as *asamiwar*), the peasants cultivated the plant on their own land and had to deliver it to the factory at a fixed price. Almost all the indigo was produced under this system, as it had many advantages for the planter. To begin with, the price paid to the peasant was very low, and yet he could not refuse to grow the indigo. Refusal might lead to a beating or imprisonment and the destruction of the other crops on his land. To further strengthen the planters' power, doctored accounts were maintained which showed the peasant to be in debt to the factory-a debt that was to be cleared by going on delivering indigo. Somehow, the debt was never cleared, but increased from year to year. The planters were Europeans, and maintained excellent relations with the Magistrates and Government officers, so that no complaints against them were ever heeded by officials. So the peasants were compelled to go on growing this plant at a loss to themselves: their accumulated discontent finally found expression in what were known as the 'Indigo Riots' in 1859-60. Thus we see that this important commercial crop was grown under a system of outright coercion.

9.5.4 Cotton

If indigo was the important commercial crop in Eastern India, raw cotton was that of Western India. A significant export to China had developed by the 1780s and the East India Company and Bombay merchants, who enjoyed its favour, sought to control the sources of supply. By 1806 substantial territory had been acquired in Gujarat, and the Company began forcing the cultivators to sell to them at a price lower than that prevailing elsewhere. Now however, the Company came into conflict with private European merchant and were compelled to give up the system and retired from this trade in 1833.

9.5.5 Pepper

Here again the political power of the Company was used to force down the price, and the prevent merchants from selling to the French or them competitors. Here again, the company was forced to hand over to private British merchants in the 1830s.

9.5.6 Sugar

The sugarcane is indigenous to India, and *gur* and *chini* have been produced here for many centuries. It was extensively consumed within India. In the 1830s the indigo planters were faced with a fall in prices and sales, and so capital began to be invested in producing super for the London market, where import duties had been reduced and demand was rising. Large areas of land were given to European speculators who began setting up sugar plantations in eastern Uttar Pradesh. The local peasants had long produced *gur* for local consumption and sale to other parts of India, but they were now made to produce a thickened sugarcane juice (called *raab*) for delivery to the planters who processed it into sugar. As with indigo, the peasants received advances, and were then bound to deliver to the factory at a low, fixed price. Large profits were made by the planters, and exports grew; in 1833-34 Calcutta had sent less than 1,600 tons of sugar to England, but by 1846-7 it sent over 80,000 tons-a fifty fold increase. This prosperity was short lived, and when prices fell after 1848 most of the factories shut down, and exports almost ceased. Indian *gur* merchants and *khandsaris* then took the trade back into the old channel of sale to Mirzapur and central India.

9.5.7 Tea

In the 1830s the Company faced mounting hostility in China because of its insistence on smuggling opium. It feared that its lucrative trade in tea might be interrupted, and began to promote the cultivation of tea within its own territories in Assam. When the experiment proved successful, the gardens where handed over to a private company, the Assam Company. Other tea companies also set up gardens in the 1850s. Since there were no local labourers to be had, the tea gardens brought in indentured or bonded labourers from chota Nagpur and elsewhere in large numbers. This is the only instance in which commercial crops were produced in large

capitalist enterprises. However, the expansion of tea, coffee and other plantations really occurred after 1860, and thus falls outside the period that we are studying now.

9.6 THE EFEECTS OF COMMERCIALISATION

We have now seen in detail how the different commercial crops were produced and sold. It will be obvious to you that each is different from the others in certain ways and it follows that the effects of commercialisation will differ from time to time, place to place, and crop to crop. We cannot expect them to be exactly the same everywhere. However, certain common features, and certain common effects to exist: and it is on these that this section will focus.

9.6.1 Impoverishment

Let us start with the Indian economy as a whole. You will remember that the object of the British was to produce goods for export to Europe, so that funds could be accumulated in the Company's treasury in London. Private English businessmen also wanted to send money back so that they could ultimately retire to a life of comfort in Britain. The exports therefore severed essentially to remit resources out of Indian received no imports in return for these exports. Obviously such a transfer impoverished India. The growth and export of commercial crops thus served to impoverish rather than to enrich India.

9.6.2 Instability

Agriculture in India was exposed to many hazards; drought, flood or other calamity could destroy the crops and ruin the farmers. But with commercial agriculture a new set of dangers appeared. The crops were now going to distant market. If the West Indian sugar crop was good, prices might fall in Calcutta, and the sugar factories in Azamgarh might pay the peasants less than they had promised, and maltreat them if they complained.

Similarly, Bundelkhand region (the northern part of Madhya Pradesh) began to grow a lot of cotton for the China market after 1816. The British officials claimed that the area thus became very prosperous, and increased the land tax. However, the export declined in the 1830s, prices fell-but the taxes were not reduced.

Both zamindars and peasants became impoverished, the land went out of cultivation, and finally in 1842 an uprising, known as the Bundela Rebellion broke out.

Uttar Pradesh also suffered in a similar way in the 1830s the price of cotton and indigo fell, and as Professor Siddiqi describes it: 'Peasants were abandoning their lands, Zamindars had suffered losses. Money-lenders had been ruined because the loans they had made had not been repaid; many of them now refused to lend money to the cultivators. Land had depreciated in value: innumerable cases were reported of estates being up for sale and no buyers coming forward.' The situation in rural Bengal was also similar at this time.

This was not the result of coincidence. Between 1830 and 1833 almost all the big firms connected with the export trade and the finance of commercial agriculture in Bengal, Bihar and U.P. went bankrupt. The reason was that they had gone on dispatching indigo to Britain even though prices were falling, because they wanted to get their money out of India. The Government made matters worse by sending out bullion to London, and thus causing a scarcity of money in India. Businessmen who had borrowed to produce the export crops found that they could not reply the loans, and went bankrupt. Finally, of course the worst sufferers were the peasants who had been drawn by force and persuasion into the production of the commercial crops. Falling prices in London came to ruin cultivators in India. This is what we mean when we say the commercialisation added a fresh element of instability to the rural economy.

9.6.3 The various Markets

We saw in section 9.2 above that commercialisation is to be viewed in terms of different markets. We have also seen how market for various products (silk, opium, indigo etc) grew up. So the product market widened and enlarged itself. But what happened to the other markets that we had listed?

Strange though it may seem, the way that commercialisation developed in India actually tended to check the appearance of the other markets. First of all, except in the case of tea, the crops were not produce by hired labour. As we saw in the case of indigo, the

preferred system was one in which the peasant could be coerced into supplying the require product at a very low price (what was called the *ryoti* system). In such a system, earnings would be very small which was why the peasants had to be coerced into it. They could survive because they and their families could grow food on the rest of their land-but a landless labourer could not do this, and would have had to be paid more. So the planters and businessmen did not like to employ wage labour market did not develop.

The effect on the input market was similar. The peasant had to use his own plough, bullocks, etc. to raise the commercial crop. But he was not paid enough for this-as that would reduce the planters' profits. He could bear the loss because these things were needed to grow his own food supply also, but as in the case with labour, no free market for these inputs could easily arise.

The growth of a land market would also be inhibited. You will realise that land cannot be consumed like rice or *dal*. When we buy land we look forward to getting some income from its yield. But no one will buy it if he is not reasonably sure that he will be allowed to get this income-that an indigo planter or opium agent will not suddenly make some new demand on him. The fear of such action will obviously prevent outsiders from buying land and thus creating land market. The hereditary cultivators may go on tilling the soil: after all, what alternative employment do they have? But the exacting regime of the tax-collector, the zamindar and the planter will check the growth of a market in land.

Finally, there is he credit market, the market for loans. Here also the effects of the system were to check it expansion. The indigo cultivators were given loans by the planters as way of tying them down. An English official observed: 'If a *ryot* once received and advance he could very seldom or never clear himself and thus becomes little better than a bond-slave to the factory'. No one else would lend to a man in this situation. For how could the loan be repaid, because then the peasant would escape from his control. Similarly, in the case of opium, the peasants took the advance to grow the crop at least in part because they feared that a refusal would anger the village headmen and the Government. A free market, with the freedom for each individual to act in this own interest clearly did not exist.

9.6.4 Social Structure

It is sometimes believed that commercialisation necessarily results in growing inequality within the peasantry, with some becoming wealthy and employing wage-labourers, and others losing their land and forced to work from wages. This may happen if the markets for land become active. However, we have been that this was not the case in the commercialisation that we are studying. The continual use of coercion and State power distorted the markets and prevented that appearance of a full labour market. Instead, commercial production fastened itself on the existing structure of small peasant production and impoverished it. Production continued to be carried on by the peasant production and impoverished it. Production continued to be carried on by the peasant and his family on their little plot of land, but now the indigo planter or opium agent forced him to mark off a part of his land for a commercial crop, from which he earned little or nothing. The peasant was impoverished, but neither the method nor the organisation of production was altered. The European businessmen found it more profitable to exploit the small peasant household than to engage in large-scale production with hired labour.

9.7 LET US SUM UP

Thus we see in this Unit that although commercialisation was not completely new to India, the form that it took under early British rule differed in several important ways from that which had existed under the Indian rulers. This commercialisation occurred under the auspices of a trading company whose headquarters lay in England and most of whose employees came from there:

- So the question of remitting or transferring wealth from India to Britain was a central aim,
- So the commercial production of items with a market in the west had to be specifically organised,
- But these items had to be secure at as low a cost as possible, so the Company used, and allowed planters and others to use coercion and violence on the Indian producers so as to keep prices down,

- Products could be got most cheaply by squeezing the peasants rather than by resorting to direct production with wage labour,
- While the product market was commercialised, other markets such as that for land and labour could not develop;
- As a result, small farming based on family labour remained the predominant form in the Indian countryside.

Check Your Progress 2

1) Was commercialisation beneficial for the peasants? Answer in 60 words.

   ……
   ……
   ……
   ……..

2) What was the effect of commercialisation on various markets? Answer in 100 words.

   ……
   ……
   ……
   ……..

9.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

1) See Sec. 9.2
2) Your answer should focus mainly on the commercial interest of the English Company, See Sec. 9.4

Check Your Progress 2

1) See Sub-sec. 9.6.2
2) See Sub-sec. 9.6.3

UNIT 10 DE-INDUSTRIALIZATION IN INDIA

Structure

10.0 Objectives

10.1 Introduction

10.2 What Do We Mean By De-industrialization

10.3 The Pre-British Colony

10.3.1 The Nature of Early Trade with Europe

10.3.2 The Fall Out of the Early Trade with Europe

10.3.3 Trade After Battle of Plassey

10.3.4 The Impact of the European Trade

10.4 De-industrialization

10.5 Conclusions

10.6 Let Us Sum Up

1o.7 Key Words

10.8 Answers To Check Your Progress Exercises

10.0 OBJECTIVES

In this Unit you will get to know, about:

- what is meant by de-inustrialization in our period,
- the impact of European trade on India's Industries, and
- the connection between de-industrialization and the policies of the East India Company.

10.1 INTRODUCTION

The increasing political and economic subjugation of India to Britain since the middle of the eighteenth century had a pronounced impact on the Indian economy. The destruction of traditional Indian craft industries was one of the earliest noticed manifestations of British economic control over India. The process has often been referred to as the 'de-industrialization' of the Indian economy in Indian economic history.

10.2 WHAT DO WE MEAN BY DE-INDUSTRIALIZATION

De-industrialization refers to the process of a continued and marked industrial decline. The proportion of the national income generated by industry and the percentage of population dependent on it are commonly used as quantitative measure of industrial growth or decline. An increase in these proportions suggests industrialization while a decrease indicates industrial decline or de-

industrialization. The entire question of the destruction of Indian industries and the ruralization of the country received a lot of attention both in Colonial India as well as in Britain by the various political and economic interest groups. The Indian Nationalists used the destruction of Indian craft industries under early British rule to substantiate their point that India was being exploited under British rule. The nascent free trade group in Britain attacked the East India Company's monopolistic control over India by criticizing the destruction of the country's traditional crafts under the Company rule.

10.3 THE PRE-BRITISH ECONOMY

The pre-British industrial sector in India has been described as exceptionally vibrant and buoyant by some observers and as stagnant and technically backward by other. The very limited quantitative data on important indicators of industrial change such as output, productivity, capital investment and the size of the workforce prevent any conclusive assessment of pre-colonial India's industrial performance. Qualitative evidence, however, does help us in forming a fairly reliable picture of the state of the industrial sector during this period.

In spite of a highly uneven distribution of income in Mughal India the demand in the home market for essential manufactured consumer goods appears to have been large in absolute terms and exhibited an increasing trend. The rich nobility provided the marked for the production of high class luxury goods.

Cotton textiles which were produced virtually all over India constituted the most important manufacture. Dye stuffs (predominantly indigo) and sugar were the next most important commercial industrial products. The other significant agro-based industries included oils, tobacco, opium and alcoholic beverages. Although the mining industry was inadequately developed, India was self-sufficient in iron. Ship building was another important and developing industry.

In Mughal India, unlike pre-industrial Europe, there was no sharp division between urban centres where industries were concentrated and the countryside which supplied primary produce. Industrial production in India continued to be a largely rural based activity.

The Mughal economy while marked by expanding demand and organizational developments grew very slowly. Relative stagnation in demand, a low rate of capital formation and the absence of rapid technological innovations contributed to the Mughal industrial economy as a whole growing rather slowly.

10.3.1 The Nature of Early Trade with Europe

Early European trade with India was heavily balanced in India's favour. The seventeenth century saw Indian cotton textiles rapidly displacing pepper and other spices to become the most important Asian, import into the west. By 1664, the English East India Company imported more than 750,000 pieces of cotton goods from India, which accounted for 73 per cent of the Company's total trade. In the following two decades the figure further increased to 1.5 million pieces

with cotton textiles now contributing to 83 per cent to the total import value. (Cambridge Economic History of India, hereafter CEHI Vo1.1).

The marked expansion of Indian cotton textile exports substantially accelerated the growth of the textile industry 'which probably employment to a sizeable section of the population.'

This unprecedented growth of Indian textile imports into Europe was accompanied by a steady inflow of bullion into India from the buyer nations, because India continued to enjoy a positive balance of trade vis-à-vis these nations. It has been suggested that the Indo European trade of this period, which has clearly tilted in favour of India could not have sustained at the level for nearly three centuries without the discovery of American mines. The increased European liquidity became a vital prerequisite for permitting the sustained financing of this trade with its highly adverse balance of payments.

Contemporary Western observers who were influenced by mercantilist thinking attributed the instability in national finances of Western counties to their, markedly negative balance of trade. The shipment of large quantities of treasure to Asia by the European companies made them the focus of criticism.

European trade with India up the early years of the nineteenth century was based upon the price differential between Asia and the rest world. That is European merchants bought goods at a low price in India and sold them for a much higher price in the European, African and New World markets. The profits were based on difference between the purchase price and selling price.

The main problem which the European companies faced in their trade with India was the financing of their Indian purchases. Since there was no demand for British or European exports in India the purchases of Indian goods had to be financed by bullion payments.

Although estimating the magnitude of bullion exports to India by European companies has proved to be problematic European trade by the first half of the eighteenth century appears to have had a significant impact on Indian foreign trade and industry.

10.3.2 The Fall Out of the Early Trade with Europe

The same period witnessed the emergence of Bengal as a significant commercial entity. European trade overtook 'country trade' in importance.

The Indian secondary industry responded by increasing localized manufactures to meet the increased demand. However, the European traders do not appear to have stimulated new form of commercial and industrial organization. They latched themselves on to the existing institutions of commercial and industrial production.

The expansion of Indian manufactured exports to Britain and other foreign countries however stopped by the first year of the nineteenth century. In the course of the first half of the nineteenth century India progressively lost its export market in manufactures. The community composition of India's foreign trade

also underwent a radical change, with agricultural products gaining in importance and manufacture declining. This becomes clear from the table below:

Table 1: Commodity Composition and percentage share of selected items in the total value of Indian exports - 1811 to 1850-1 (Source CEHI p.842)

1811-12	18.5	33.0	8.3	4.9	23.8	1.5	90.0
1814-15	20.0	14.3	13.3	8.0	NA	3.0	58.6
1828-29	27.0	11.0	10.0	15.0	17.0	4.0	84.0
1834-35	15.0	7.0	8.0	21.0	25.0	2.0	78.0
1839-40	26.0	5.0	7.0	20.0	10.0	7.0	75.0
1850-51	10.9	3.7	3.8	19.1	30.1	10.0	77.6

10.3.3 Trade After Battle of Plassey

In the pre-1757 period, 80 to 90 per cent of the East India Company's exports from India were finance by bullion imports. Gradually this situation started changing and during the period 1795 to 1812 the East India Company were importing into Bengal goods worth nearly 33 per cent of the exports they made from Bengal.

The first six decades since the Battle of Plassey was a period dominated by the exploitation of India by merchant capital. During this period the East India Company began to establish control in India and monopolized all British trade with the subcontinent.

After the assumption of the Diwani of Bengal the pressure on the East India Company to export bullion into Bengal to finance its investments decreased. The Bengal plunder, profits from the duty free inland trade and the 'surpluses from Diwani revenues were not used to finance the Company's investments. The Company progressively abandoned free competition to secure its goods in the local markets. The producers of these goods were forced to supply their produce to the Company at low prices arbitrarily fixed by the Company. An observation by a contemporary commentator clearly highlights this point "The roguery practiced in this department is beyond imagination: but all terminates in defrauding the poor waver; for the prices which the Company's *gomastas*, and in confederacy with them the *jachendars* (examiners of fabrics) fix upon goods as manufactured would sell in the public bazaar or market upon free sale". (William Bolts "Considerations on India Affairs", 1772).

The years between the Battle of Plassey and 1813 saw the East India Company administration in Bengal in virtual anarchy. The English Company servants

indulged in 'private' trade and stared remitting their money to Europe mainly through foreign companies and clandestine English trade.

10.3.4 The Impact of the European Trade

The pre-1813 British exploitation of India can be termed as exploitation by merchant capital in a context of mercantilism. The East India Company's objective was to buy the maximum quantity of Indian manufactured goods at the cheapest possible price so that substantial profits can be made by selling these goods in Britain and other foreign countries. The reckless and anarchic attempts to increase their purchases while forcing down the price adversely affected the traditional Indian export industry, especially the cotton textile manufacture.

In the absence of reliable quantitative data on the various indices of indigenous industrial production for this period, historians and economists have been forced to rely largely on qualitative evidence on British exploitation of the Indian economy and the disastrous impact that it had on the artisans and the agricultural population.

Apart from the shortsighted, anarchic exploitation of the country's industries by the Company during this period, British textile manufacturers at home had begun to force the British Governments to impose restrictive import tariffs and bans on the import of fine Indian textiles.

As early as 1720 the British manufacturing interests had successfully prohibited the importation of Indian silks and printed calicoes into Britain. The duty for home consumption of Indian calicoes and muslins was very heavy. In 1813 the Parliament again imposed an increased consolidated duty on home consumption of calicoes and muslins.

Thus we find that in the period till 1813 Indian industry, especially the textile industry was being adversely affected in two ways. One the one hand the Company in its eagerness to depress the purchase price of cotton manufactures in India virtually reduced the weavers to the status of indentured labourers, by forcing them to take advance from the Company and sell their products below market prices. By the regulation of 1789, for instance, they were forced to pay a penalty of 35 per cent on the advance taken if they defaulted in supplying the goods. The rapacious private trade of the Company servants and the shortsighted policy of making quick large profits severely affected the textile industry as well as the economy as a whole.

On the other hand, the East India Company, which had a monopoly on the trade with India itself became the focus of attacks from traders who had been excluded from having a share in the Indian trade as well as from the nascent British manufacturers who perceived the manufactures imported by the Company into British to be threatening their own industries.

The Company's own shortsighted exploitation and the free trader inspired sanction against Indian manufactured imports into Britain resulted in a progressive decline in the share of Indian cotton piece goods in the Company's investments from Rs, 92,68,770 in 1705 to Rs,90,51,324 in 1799 and to

Rs.25,50,000 in 1810. The value of cotton piece goods exported on Company account from Bengal declined from Rs.61,67,851 in 1792 to Rs. 3,42,843 in 1823.

The shift in the commodity composition of Indian exports from manufactured goods to primary products since the early nineteenth century is accompanied by a complimentary increase in the share of manufactured goods in Indian imports.

Table 2: Commodity composition of selected imports into India, 1828-1849 (Source: CEHI, p.857)

	Cotton	Yarn	Cotton	Metals	Wines & Woolen		Piecegoods			
	Value	(%)	Value	(%)	Value	(%)	Value	(%)	Value	(%)
1828-29	4.2	7.8	11.8	22.0	8.6	16.0	4.6	8.6	2.6	4.9
1831-32	5.1	11.4	9.6	21.4	8.6	19.1	2.5	5.5	2.1	4.6
1834-35	4.1	9.7	8.9	21.0	6.0	14.0	3.4	8.0	2.2	5.2
1837-38	6.2	12.8	13.6	28.0	5.1	10.6	2.6	5.3	1.4	2.9
1839-40	7.5	13.3	18.3	32.3	6.1	11.0	3.1	5.5	1.2	2.1

Values Expressed in millions of rupees

This general change in the composition of India's foreign trade and the resultant impact that it had on the country's domestic industry led many contemporary observers as well as later historians to describe this phenomenon as one of de-industrialization or the destruction of Indian industry.

Check Your Progress1

Mark the Correct Answers:

1) De-industrialization refers to
   a) using of computers in industry
   b) lack of industry in a country
   c) lack of farming in a country
   d) decrease in the proportion of national income generated by industry and the decrease in percentage of population dependent on it.
2) Discovery of American mines during the early European trade
   a) enabled European to have the means to finance their trade with India
   b) enabled European to stop trading with India
   c) had no impact at all
   d) both b) and c)
3) By 1820s we see
   a) a change in the composition of European trade with Indian
   b) that there was no change in the composition of trade with India
   c) that the share of manufactures exported to Britain decline

d) both a) and c)

10.4 DE-INDUSTRIALIZATION

Early nationalist economist such as R.C. Dutt and subsequently Madan Mohan Malaviya (in his dissent note at the Indian Industrial Commission) argued that India underwent de-industrialization; their evidence was statistics of import of manufactures, particularly import figures of Manchester made cotton cloth. For instance Dutt showed that the value of cotton goods sent from England and its ports east of the Cape of Good Hope mainly to India, increased in value from 156 in 1794 to 108824 in 1813.

In the pre-1813 period it was the excessive exploitation of the Indian industrial sector especially the textile industry by the monopolistic East India Company which led to the progressive degeneration of this industry. Forcible reduction of purchase prices in India was resorted to by the East India Company to increase the different between its buying and selling price and consequently increase its trading profits.

The import restrictions on Indian textiles in England further weakens this industry. The income of weavers and spinners were drastically reduced, thereby restricting any possibility of capital accumulation and technological in this traditional industrial sector.

While India's traditional manufacturing sector was being steadily weakened under the Company, in the same period British had begun its Industrial Revolution and was rapidly expanding its industries by revolutionizing its technology as well as organization along principles of capitalist production.

The growing British textile industry had all the advantage which was dented to its Indian counterpart. The British industry had a rapidly developing technological base, it had the advantage of economies of scale and finally it was carefully protected in its formative years from foreign competition.

Some historians have put forward the view that the export of British machine made yarn and cloth did not harm the indigenous textile industry because under British rule the growth of political stability, better transport facilities and market expansion led to increased per capita agricultural productivity; moreover, it is argued that cheaper machine-made yarn strengthened the indigenous handloom sector, while a growth in per capita real income and new economic activities compensated for the decline in earlier enterprises. However, historical evidence does not bear out these arguments. There is no evidence real income in the nineteenth century.

Further, as Bipan Chandra has argued, the decline in per unit price of cloth was much faster than that of yarn. This combined with the fact that the ratio prevented any benefit accruing to the Indian weaver. However, historical evidence does not bear out these arguments. There is no evidence whatsoever for a growth in the demand for cotton goods or a rise in per capita real income in the nineteenth

century. Further, the decline in per unit price of cloth was much faster than that of yarn.

10.5 CONCLUSIONS

The above discussion and the findings of various local and regional studies, when viewed in the context of an unequal exploitative metropolis-colony relationship, clearly suggest that Indian industry definitely declined in the first century of British rule in India.

Britian's deliberate policy of converting India from manufacturing country to a supplier of primary produce for its industries in very clearly reflected in the following extract from a Petition of the East India Company before the Select Committee in 1840- "this company has in various ways, encouraged and assisted by our great manufacturing ingenuity and skill, succeeded in converting India from a manufacturing country into a country exporting raw produce.. The peculiar state of the relation between this country and India and the necessity for extracting from the latter three millions of money for Home charges and the altered state of Indian industry in its being converted from a manufacturing country into a country exporting raw produce, are circumstances which ought to influence the Legislature to afford every possible protection to its agricultural produce."

Though imperialist rule in the India had a generally crippling effect on traditional Indian industries, he impact varied from industry to industry.

Peasant crafts which were practised as a subsidiary occupation in the agricultural slack seasons, using locally available cheap raw material such as basket weaving and coir work were the most immune to competition from machine –made foreign goods. Minor manufacturing in village by potters, smiths and carpenters were only affected marginally by the substitution of their products by foreign imports.

Workers in leather and cobbles were affected by the exports of hides from the country. Similarly rural crafts with wider markets were affected by the capture of these markets by foreign goods. The traditional urban based luxury crafts were badly hit by their customers (usually the nobility) changing over to patronising foreign goods.

Thus the differential impact of de-industrialization may be mainly explained in terms of

a) failure of imported manufactures to substitute certain varieties of indigenous products,
b) the protection afforded by the lack of market integration at the village level in many areas, and
c) finally the forced continuation of certain crafts in spite of their being uneconomic due to the lack of more viable employment opportunities.

Check Your Progress 2

1) Write a brief comment (100 words) on the view of nationalist economists on de-industrialization.
2) Why were different industries affected in different ways by the British colonial policies? Answer in 100 words.

10.6 LET US SUM UP

Finally on the basis of qualitative official and private observations, trade statistics, employment data (however unreliable it might have been) and a knowledge of the imperative and limits of the colonial economy in India, we can safely conclude that the Indian manufacturing sector did decline in the face of competition from machine-made, technologically superior manufactured imports from Britain during the first century of colonial rule in India.

10.7 KEY WORDS

National Income: Income generated from all the productive activities of the economy of a nation.

Output: By output we mean the final product of an industry.

Capital investment: Money, infrastructure, machinery etc. put in to the production process for the growth of the industry.

Bullion: here mean gold.

Positive balance of trade: A situation where exports exceed imports.

Commondity Composition of trade: Refers to the items of trade in export or import.

Mercantilist: Policies and activities related to trade.

Per capita income: Income per head in the country.

Real income: The actural income after taking into account things like price size etc. That is to say.

Productivity: The level of production in industry or agriculture after the input of capital and human resources.

10.8 ANSWERS OF CHECK YOUR PROGESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

1) d. 2) a. 3) d.

Check Your Progress 2

1) See Sec. 10.4.
2) See Secs. 10.4 and 10.5.

UNIT 11 ECONOMIC IMPACT OF THE COLONIAL RULE

Structure

11.0 Objectives
11.1 Introduction
11.2 Subordination of 'Native' Capital
11.3 Domination-Market and the Producers
11.4 City and Countryside
11.5 Transfer of Funds
11.6 External Trade
11.7 Indian Railways and English Capital
11.8 Let Up Sum Up
11.9 Key Words
11.10 Answers To Check Your Progress Exercises

11.0 OBJECTIVES

This Unit is based on our survey of the British economic impact on India. We take up in this Unit these questions for discussion:

- the changes in the position of the Indian traders and bankers as the English East India Company and English private traders became dominant in India from the 1750's;
- how this domination affected the artisans and peasants whose products were drawn into the 'market' by the English Company and business houses:
- how famines ravaged the countryside and old cities declined;
- what was the system channelising flow of funds from India to England;
- how the pattern of foreign trade changed to convert India from being an exporter of industrial goods to an importer to En8lish manufactured goods and exporter of agricultural goods and raw materials; and
- Why railways were promoted by British businessmen in England and the government in India and what system was devised to encourage British investors.

11.1 INTRODUCTION

"The government of an exclusive company of merchants is perhaps the worst of all governments for any country whatever." That was the opinion of Adam Smith in the Wealth of Nations in 1776.

As you know already Adam Smith's criticism of the monopolist character of the East India Company was part of an attack on its statutory privileges which led to the abolition of these privileges in 1813 and 1833. You have also studied the impact of the Industrial Revolution in Europe and how it led to the rise of 'a new' form of colonialism. Some aspects of the consequent transformation of the colonialism in India have been discussed in connection with the process of

commercialization of agriculture and India's de- industrialization. It remains to be seen how some other developments, not discussed till now, reflect the process of colonialisation of the Indian economy.

11.2 SUBORDINATION OF 'NATIVE' CAPITAL

The European system of merchant capitalist trade provided initially for an important role for the Indian 'native' traders: they were needed for the procurement of goods for export. But, as the English East India Company began to acquire political hegemony and a dominant position as the chief buyer of export goods, the local traders' position was reduced to that o(dependent agents and, in some branches of trade, to the status of servants of the English.

In the middle of 18th century there were flourishing native business communities in many parts of India. These included the Hindu, Jain and Bohra merchants of the Guiarat coast, he Khatris and Lohnai of Punjab and Sind, the Marwari banias of Rajasthan, the Moplas and Syrian Christians and Cochin Jews of present day Kerala, the Chettis and Komtis of Tamil and Andhra region, the Vaniks of Bengal, etc. Some of them, e.g. those in Gujarat or Kerala region, were prominent in overseas trade, and in various degrees all of them played in the internal economy some important roles (in addition to their usual trade functions), in the pre- colonial period.

a) They facilitated tax collection in cash by converting crops into money and sometimes also by paying, on behalf of the landlords or tax farmers, cash to the state in advance: often they were also guarantors of the tax collectors.
b) The traders and bankers also facilitated remittance of revenue. For example by means of a bill of exchange or *hundi* the banking house of Jagat Seth paid the annual revenue payable by the Bengal Nawab to the Mughal empcror.
c) Money-changing was an important function performed by bankers, particularly the *Sarrafs*. This was an important service not only to trade but also the state at a time when numerous regional states each minted currency of its own and coins also came in from foreign countries throu8h trade channels.
d) The State depended heavily on the traditional trading communities for provisioning the army during the wars. From late 17th century, as you know, warfare became quite frequent. For supply of food to the army on the march, for loan of money to pay the soldiers' wages, for sale of plundered goods, etc. the state depended on traders and *banjaras* (migrating dealers in foodgrains, livestock etc.).
e) Finally the traders and ban kers were vitally important to the State and the nobility as source of loans during crises like warfare or the failure of crops, as well as other credit requirements in normal times.

Thus in the pre-colonial period there was close interdependence between the State and the traders and bankers. As the regional States began to wilt before the

onslaught of the British and the East India Company's tentacles began to spread in India, some of these lines of business began to close for Indian business communities. For example, the banking house of Jagat Seth ceased to be the state banker and repository of revenue in 1765 when the Company became Dewan of Bengal: the minting rights of Jagat Seth were gradually taken away by the English: that banking house and other native ones also lost their European clients to English bank and agency houses of Calcutta.

There was much change in the position of the local traders during the late 18th century in the trade in commodities for export. We can look at the example of Bengal trade in cloth, the leading export item. Up to 1753 the English East India Company, like other European companies and private traders, depended on the Indian merchants to procure cloth: these merchants were called *dadni* merchants since they were the agency through which *dadan* or advance was given by the Company to the artisans or weavers. From 1753 the English Company began to replace the independent *dadni* merchants with *gomastas* who were agents of the English and dependent on commission paid by the English as a percentage on value of cloth collected by these agents. After the battle of Plassey the increasing political power in the hands of the English enabled them to swith over to this new *gomasta* system which reduced the Indian merchants to commissioned brokers. In 1775 a variant of this system, known as the 'contract system', consolidated the position of the English in relation to the Indian brokers. Finally, in 1789 the system of 'direct agency' was introduced, dispensing with Indian middlemen altogether. Thus step by step Indian businessmen were reduce to a subordinate position (e.g. in salt, saltpeter business) or virtually excluded (e.g. in raw silk, cotton cloth) by the end of the 18th century.

The decline of export industries in the early half of the 19th century, restricted opportunities for Indian businessmen further. In new lines opening up (e.g. jute and opium), a role subordinate to the English business houses was assigned to Indian businessmen. Petty money lending, maternal trade in agricultural and artisanal products, the sale of imported manufacture s –these were the areas of activity of Indian businessmen in Bengal in the first half of the 19th century.

It is true, however, that within the over all pattern of foreign capital's domination over Indian businessman, there remained spaces for the latter to do well in business and to accumulate capital. For example, the business in raw cotton and opium in western India (commodities produced in large quantities in the princely states outside of Bombay Presidency), allowed considerable accumulation of capital in the hands of Indian businessmen; some of the Parsi businessmen in the first half of the 19th century became major exporters of these commodities. It is the capital accumulation which led to industrial investments in Bombay and the growth of a textile industry which challenged Manchester's hold over the Indian market in the early 20th century.

11.3 DOMINATION-MARKET AND THE PRODUCES

Let us now turn from the realm of traders to that of producers, the farmers and

artisans. Very little is known of the trends in production that could tell us about national income or about the earnings of artisans and farmers. However, we do know about the way production and marketing was organised in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. How was that affected by the activities of the English East India Company, its servants engaged in private trade and English 'free traders' and agency houses?

The essence of merchant capitalist operation is to 'buy cheap and sell dear'. It is good to have a monopoly to enable one to do that. It is even better to be able to use coercion and state power to do that really well. This was the beauty of the position of the East India Company as a government (since 1765 in Bengal and in some other parts of India where the Company extended territorial control.

As you know, by the 1770's and 1780's there had developed a collective monopoly of the English Company and its servants engaged in private trade in respect of certain commodities, particularly cotton cloth in Bengal. That meant that artisans had no option but to sell their products to the Company and its servants. How was such a situation brought about? To a great extent this was the result of use of coercion. A classic instance is provided by the restructuration of the relationship between the weavers on the one hand, and the Company and the servants of the Company on the other, between the 1750's and the 1780's in Bengal.

Up to the middle of the 18th century, the weavers appear to have enjoyed independence and freedom to sell their products to the English, the French or the Dutch or to Indian merchants. From the 1750's, the *gomastas* began to compel weavers to sell their products to the English. The elimination of the French and the Dutch from competition by military means helped the process. Extortion by fraudulent undervaluation of cloth and chicanery in the English Factories became common. The weavers were bullied and harassed by the Factors, through the agency of *gomastas*, to accept advance and to produce cloth. In the 1780's this practice became systematised as the *Khatbandi* system: the artisans were indentured to sell exclusively to the Company under Regulations passed by the Bengal government.

Thus the artisans were reduced step by step to the position of bonded laboureres by the denial of free access to the market, by the use of coercion, and by laws and regulations made by the Company's government. Another instance that you already know of it's the production of indigo: in the *ryotwari* system the peasant was forced to cultivate and to supply indigo at a low price by the English indigo planters. To a lesser degree, opium was also produced under the threat of coercion.

Now, what is the result of this system of semi-monopoly and coercion? It creates a buyer's market, i.e. situation where the buyer can dictate the price, the buyer being the English Company's its servants, and later, English traders, plants and agency houses.

It was, of courses, to be expected that an English Factor in the later 18th century

would pay the weaver as little as possible, or that the English Indigo planter in early 19th century would pay the indigo planter in early 19th century would pay the indigo-grower *ryot* as little as possible, if the Englishman had the advantage of a monopoly position or coercive power. Lower prices paid to the weaver or the indigo farmer would inflate the profit margin of the English traders. Thus, sections of the artisans and peasants were producing under coercion goods which did not fetch a price that would allow more than subsistence to the producer.

Consider this situation where trading capital gets a nice profit margin without having to make any capital investment in the production of cotton cloth or indigo or opium. Why should the trader invest his money in the production process if he is making good money merely by buying the product at a law price? And consider the producer who obtains such a low price the he cannot add to his capital stock for he has scarcely any surplus after feeding himself and his family. How can the artisan or the weaver add to his capital stock, i.e. his tools and implements, if he is forced to sell his product at a price so low as to make accumulation of funds in his hands impossible? Then who will invest and add to the capital stock and generate higher production with new tools and implements and machines? In other words who will invest in technological development and increase in productivity? The answer is no one. Thus the scheme of things outlined above contains one of the explanations of the longstanding stagnation in technology and productivity characterising 19th century India. In fairness one must add that Indian trading and money lending capital played the same role as that of foreign trading interest in this regard; the only difference was that the latter received more firms backing from state power in the initial stages of the establishment of this pattern.

In short, capital remained outside of production process, leaving technology and organization of production by and large where it had been in the 18the century. It is of course true that there are variations from region to region, from industry to industry. In some cases the involvement of the capitalist was greater; e.g. in the raw silk industry in Bengal where wage employment was not uncommon, or in the *nijabadi* system where indigo planters employed people in farms owned by the planters. These are exceptional cases and affected only a small section of producers.

11.4 CITY AND COUNTRYSIDE

In the absence of other measurements of the prosperity and welfare of the people many historians have used the frequency and intensity of famines as a means of gauging economic conditions of the people, particularly the condition of agriculture. As regards intensity of famines, the number of people who died in famines could have been a measure, but such figures are not available in most cases; further, there is no way one can separate in these figures starvation deaths from deaths due to epidemics which usually accompanies famines. We have, therefore, to depend on general accounts of famines, without the aid of statistics.

From the middle of the 18th century a number of major famines occurred in India. North India was affected by famines in 1759 (Sind), 1783 (Present day Uttar Pradesh, Kashmir, Rajasthan), 1800-04 (U.P.), and 1837-387 (U.P., Punjab and Rajasthan). In western India, present day Maharashtra and Gujarat, famine years were 1787, 1790-92, 1799-1804, 1812-13, 1819-20, 1824-25 and 1833-34. Famines of 1770 in Bengal was possibly the most disastrous of all in this period, causing about one crore deaths i.e. one-third of the population of Bengal.

These famines occurred due to a variety of causes not all of which can be traced to British rule; in fact, several of the famines mentioned above struck regions outside of British territories. In the 18th and early 19th centuries an important factor was the devastation caused by frequent warfare between the British there was a tendency in the early days of British administration to push up land revenue demand to a high level. Moreover, the British collected the revenue with greater rigour than was customary in pre-British days. They also refused to reduce revenue as a concession of farmers in a bed season. This inflexibility of revenue policy was certainly a major cause of the Bengal Famine of 1770, apart from failure of seasonal rains. English traders' and their agents' activities might have contributed to the intensity of famines in some cases, e.g. speculation in grain trade by the Company's servants in 1770 in Bengal. In the early 19th century the forced cultivation of commercial crops for export in place of foodgrains may have been a factor. The neglect of the British to maintain or expand the pre-British irrigation works, in the territories that came under their rule, expose agriculturists to their old enemy, drought. From the middle of the 19th century the newly established Public Works Department began to pay some attention to irrigation requirements in British India. The revenue policy also became more flexible and from 1880 famine relief measures were systematised. On balance it may be concluded that if ability to withstand occasional crop failure without heavy famine mortality is a measure of the prosperity and economic well-being of the agriculturist, the achievement of British rule in that regard was no better than that of previous 'unenlightened' administrations.

Turing from the country side to the towns and cities, we notice two trends. The decline and depopulations of old urban centers and, on the other hand, the rapid growth of new cities and town. The latter development was due to he needs of British commerce and administration. The premier examples were the future colonial metropolises, Calcutta, Bombay and Madras. Simultaneously, many hitherto small towns grew in size as administrative centres or central places for the marketing of imported manufacturers and exportable agricultural goods. The noteworthy Feature was that the new urban growth was not oriented towards industrial production, quite unlike the European pattern. Towns and cities which experienced growth in the first half of the 19th century were not places where productive activities were located-their population was engaged predominantly in the service sector i.e. marketing, transport, administration etc.

There is no doubt about the evidence of decline on stagnation of older cities, e.g. the Mughal capital cities of Agra and Delhi, or regional seats of power like Deccan, Murshidabad, Patna, Seringapatam, Hyderabad etc. this trend was partly

due to the shift in the political centre of gravity away from them to new colonial metropolises. It was also due to the decline in the trade marts located in them and re-channeling of trade to new routes and networks. De-urbanization seems to have been particularly marked in the heartland of Northern India, the region around Delhi, and in parts of Western India. Whether, in an all-India perspective, the decline of population in older cities was counterbalanced by population growth in new ones is a difficult question to answer. Perhaps the answer does not matter in one sense: functionally the cites remained what they were in the pre-colonial era, vast pumping stations for the concentration of wealth from the countryside. The colonial metropolises were different only in that these were meant to pump out a substantial part of that wealth. That leads us to another important feature of the colonial economy, the transfer of funds to England.

Check Your Progress 1

1) Explain the reason for the change in position of the Indian merchants in the colonial period. Answer in 60 words.

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2) Did coercion play any role in colonial trade in goods for export? Answer in 5 lines.

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3) How would you correlate the frequency of famine and the colonial rule? Answer in 60 words.

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11.5 TRANSFER OF FUNDS

If you take a look at the 17th and early 18th century account books of the East India Company, you would see that apart from trade goods it used to send to India large amounts of 'Treasure', i.e. gold and silver. This was to buy Indian goods for sale in Europe. The years after the battle of Plassey (1757) and the assumption of Dewani of Bengal by the Company (1765, saw a sharp decline in the import of Treasure' into India. Yet export of Indian goods to Europe

continued. How did the Company buy these goods in India? This was possible because the surplus revenue remaining with the Company (i.e. the land revenue collected minus the dues payable to the Nawab of Bengal) began to be used to buy goods in India for export. Therefore the Company did not need to bring silver and gold from England.

What did that mean? First, it meant that what the Company collected as a government in the form of taxes, the company use as a merchant company to invest in its business. Secondly, it meant that the company was getting Indian goods for sale in Europe for nothing; or that the company was collecting a tribute from its territories in India in the form of goods for sale in Europe. It can be called a 'political tribute'-a 'tribute' because for this India obtained noting in return and thus it was not normal trade, and 'political' because it was the Company's political power that enabled it to collect revenue to invest in its business. This is how there began the 'drain of wealth' or the unilateral (one-sided) transfer of funds.

The Company had a word for it: 'Territorial Revenue' e.g. the revenue surplus from Bengal. Side by side the Company's accounts shoed 'Commercial Revenue', i.e. profits of business. As the Company's territory in India extended, the 'territorial revenue' expanded. The company was able to use the territorial revenue from one region, e.g. Bengal, to pay for the military costs of acquiring other territories. Further, the territorial revenue was used to provide the funds for the business which raked in 'commercial revenue'. It was a perfectly self-contained system, needing no funds from England. In fact, the system was successful not only in financing the Company's exports to Europe, but also to finance the Company's investment in China to buy tea and silk. The latter branch of business involved export of silver to China which caused monetary problems in this country.

This system operated in full swing from 1765 till 1813 when the Company's monopoly was abolished. In the next two decades the business of the Company decline sharply and 'Territorial Revenue' became their mainstay. Private traders, both Company servants and non-officials, now took the lead in export business. They had always been there, as you know, and had been remitting or sending out their profits to England in the form of goods through non-English or through the English Company by means of bills of exchange. Thus, apart from the Company's account, on private account there was transfer of funds to England. Not all that was thus sent out to England was business profit; it included earnings of Englishmen from plunder and lost during wars, bribery obtained from regional principalities, and fraudulent dealings with Indian business partners or underlings. A knowledgeable English businessman, G.A. Prinsep, calculated that between 1813 and 1820 the yearly average private wealth sent out to England from Bengal alone was about Rs. 1 Crore and 8 lakhs.

So, profits of business and other private earnings formed one part of funds remitted to England. Another part was the money paid to shipping companies, banks, insurance companies etc. in England. This amounted to about Rs. 57 lakhs

in 1813-20 annually. A third channel of transfer of funds was the Company's remittance to England. This was to pay for the salary of the Company's employees in England, the interest on loans taken by the Company in England, dividends to the stockholders of the Company etc. this amount varied greatly, from one to three crores of rupees. This became known as 'Home charges' and was the sum total of the money sent to England by the Company's government after it stopped trading in 1833.

While the system, described above, to get funds out of India was being perfected, England was undergoing the Industrial Revolution. Wealth from India added to the capital accumulation England needed for industrialisation; however, it does not follow that this was any more than one of a vast number of factors contributing towards England's industrialisation. At any rate, industrialisation in England radically changed the pattern of Indian's trade. At least that part of India's complex trade history we should look at, for it had important consequences.

11.6 EXTERNAL TRADE

Broadly speaking, the general trend throughout the eighteenth century was that Indian artisanal industries found a steady market abroad, and from the early decades of the nineteenth century there was reversal of that trend. This was accompanied by increase in import of industrial manufactures and export of agricultural goods.

Let us begin with the years following the battle of Plassey. In the years 1758-61 the average value of cotton cloth exported from India by the English EIC was about Rs. 27.4 lakhs (416,000 pieces on the average); this was about 81 per cent of total value of average exports in those years. Raw silk, pepper and saltpeter accounted for the rest, less than twenty per cent of exports.

Now look at the picture of export trade in 1850-51, i.e., at the end of the period we are studying in this course. In 1850-1851 the major export items were opium, raw cotton, indigo and sugar (according for about 30, 19, 11 and 10 per cent respectively of total exports in value). Thus India was now reduced to almost totally an exporter of raw or processed agricultural goods. Of exports only 3.7% was cotton piece goods.

As regards imports into India, in 1850-51 large quantities of English factory manufactures were the major items; 31.5% of total value of imports was mill cotton cloth and 9% was cotton yarn. In 1850-51 India imported Rs. 1.13 crores worth cotton yarn and twist, and Rs. 3.37 crores of cotton cloth, called piece goods. Now look at the picture only two decades earlier: cotton yarn import was only Rs. 42 lakhs, and cotton piece goods only Rs. 1.18 crores, in the year 1828-29. Thus in about twenty years these imports from Manchester mills had gone up about three times. In the same period, the export of Indian cloth dropped to an insignificant quantity. Three was a reversal of roles: India ceased being an exporter of cotton cloth and became an importer of cloth and yarn, while England stopped importing cloth from India and acquired an export market of that

commodity in India. This reversal of the 18th century pattern and the establishment of the new pattern of commodity composition of Indian external trade began in the second and third decades of the 19th century To carry forward this process and to 'open up' India, England needed railways.

11.7 INDIAN RAILWAYS AND ENGLISH CAPITAL

Each age has its favourtie phrases or catchwords. In 19th century Europe it was opening up' India, or China, or some other Africa or Asian country awaiting the wonders to be wrought by European capital and commerce. Opening up meant preparing a country for trade with European countries by removing harriers to trade: such barriers could be the objection of the Chinese government to entry of foreigners, or conflicting claims of various Europeans. In India, after the abolition of the Company's monopoly privileges, opening up meant chiefly railway development.

The objectives are quite obvious: Railways would enable imported English manufactured goods to reach the interior of the country, facilitate the collection and export of raw materials and agricultural goods from the interior, and allow an opportunity for the investment of English capital in railway companies operating in India.

To attain the first two objectives railways had to be laid in a certain pattern viz connecting the interior commercial centres with the sea ports, where imported goods came in and from where exported goods went out. These sea ports like Calcutta, Madras, Bombay and Karachi were also the centres of European business and seats of political power. To serve the first two objectives, it would also be convenient to have a rate of freight charges which would allow cheap transport of manufactured goods from port cities to the interior, and of agricultural goods from the interior to port cities. Such a freight policy and alignment of railways became standard practice in the railway companies. However, these were later development; in the period you are concerned with now the main thrust of British policy was towards the third of the above said objectives.

The railway companies were set up in England as joint stock companies. English capitalists bought shares in these companies in the stock market in London. In order to encourage them to buy shares in a business remote from England and to create confidence in them, the Government of India offered a guarantee of at least 5% interest on their investments. Thus all the Indian railway companies were in reality English companies protected by a 'guaranteed interest contract'.

The outcome was not good for India in a number of ways.

a) A government guarantee of interest means that irrespective of profit or loss the interest had to be paid out of Indian tax payers' money to the English investors. This encouraged over-expenditure and extravagance in railway construction an management.

b) The guaranteed interest had to be paid in England in sterling, thus increasing

India's foreign exchange expenditure in England called the 'Home Charges'.

c) The English railway companies imported into India, the engines, the rails, the machinery and even the coal for the engines (coal was imported for a decade or so). In most other countries railway construction had encouraged auxiliary industries like the engineering industry, iron and steel production, mining etc. (a chain of development called the 'backward linkage' effects). India was denied the benefit of such auxiliary industrial development due to the policy of the railway companies to import almost all that was needed by them.

d) If the railway companies proved to be so expensive a burden on the finances of India, why did the Government of India agree to sponsor them and offer guarantees? Some of these reasons were strategic and political of the railway scheme: the railways would help the government to control the distant parts of India, to move around the army to quell internal disturbance and foreign attack, and to guard the frontiers of India against Russia and other powers. There was pressures on the Indian and British government from interest groups who were economically and politically powerful; e.g. the promoters leading English capitalists interested in investing in these railway companies, the manufacturers of railway engines and machinery seeking a market in India, business groups hopeful of opening up a market for English manufactures in the interior of this vast country.

Check Your Progress 2

1) What do you understand by 'drain of wealth?

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2) Why was the English capitalist interested in the development of Indian railways? Answer in 50 words.

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3) What was the impact of colonial rule on India's external trade? Answer in 100 words.

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You have studied in this Unit some important trends in the late 18th and early 19th century Indian economy in:

- the sphere of internal trade,
- the market for the artisans' and peasants' produce,
- flow of funds from India to England,
- the pattern of external trade, and
- the 'opening up' of India.

Where you look at these development in the perspective of the transition from mercantile to industrial imperialism, the land revenue policy in British India, the commercialisation of agriculture, and de-industrialisation, you can form an idea of the shape of the colonial economy which emerged in a more developed form in the latter half of the 19th century.

11.8 LET US SUM UP

So you saw how the British rule impacted all aspects of the Indian economy.In the process the structural subordination of the Indian economy to the British metropolitan economy had begun in this period.

11.9 KEY WORDS

Bill of exchange: Written order by a businessman or business house (call him 'A') to another ('B') to pay a sum of money on given date to 'B' 'A may pay only to 'B' if the order so specifies, or to another drawer in place of 'B' it not so specified originally.

Commodities: Articles of trade or goods marketed.

Mercantilism: an economic policy which favoured excess of exports over imports for a country

Monopoly: a market which has a single buyer or a single seller

Free Merchant: merchants who were opposed to monopoly rights to the East India Company

Factory: a place where company kept its procured goods before exporting them to Europe.

Free Trade: unrestricted free export and import policy where government does not interfere in market mechanism.

Dadni merchant: Indian traders who acted as middleman and advanced cash to producer (e.g. the weaver) on behalf of the buyer (e.g. the East India Company).

Home Charges: A term, part of Anglo-Indian Jargon, which refers to the British Indian government's expenditure in England ('Home' to the English in India).

Indentured: A person bound by a contract recorded in a document (e.g. in *Khatbandi* System the weaver in Bengal was indentured to deliver his produce to the East India Company).

Piece goods: Textile fabrics woven in standard lengths.

Treasure: A term used in 16th-18th century to mean bullion i.e. gold and silver.

11.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

1) Your answer should refer to the change in the nature of trade in India, the increasing political power of the English etc. See Sub-sec. 11.2.2.
2) See Sec. 11.3
3) Your answer should include frequent warfare, excessive land revenue demands, forceful cultivation crops etc. See Sec. 11.4.
1) See Sec. 11.5
2) To facilitate transport of goods, to build up like between the city and the country side, to invest capital for goods return etc. See Sec. 11.7
3) Your answer should focus on the growing import of manufactured goods in India, increase in export of raw materials from India, unfavourable balance of trade etc See Sec. 11.6.

UNIT 12 SOCIAL DISCRIMINATION AND DISPRIVILEGED GROUPS

Structure

12.0 Objectives

12.1 Introduction

12.2 Pre-Colonial Social Discrimination and the Colonial Impact

12.3 Regional Variations: South India

12.4 Western India

12.5 Northern and Eastern India

12.6 Continuity and Change in Colonial India

12.7 A New Consciousness: Some Regional Examples

12.8 Let Us Sum Up

12.9 Key Words

12.10 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

12.0 OBJECTIVES

After studying this Unit you will be able to:

- learn about various forms of social discriminations in different parts of India,
- understand the impact of Colonial rule on the existing social system and how the changes camein it, and
- explain the growth of a new consciousness among the disprivileged groups and how did they try to change to existing social order.

12.1 INTRODUCTION

Indian society being based on caste gave birth to different kind of social discrimination and created two broad social orders-privileged and disprivileged. In this Unit we have tried to introduce you to various forms of social discrimination and disprivileged groups in different parts of India. Social discrimination existed in India long before the beginning of the colonial rule. But the establishment of colonial rule brought changes in economic and administrative system which to a great extent influenced the existing social system in India. How and to what extent the change came in India social system have been discussed in this Unit. Here we have also touched upon the process of social mobility among the lower and intermediary castes and also the challenge by some disprivileged groups to the age long Brahmanical domination in the society.

12.2 PRE-COLONIAL SOCIAL DISCRIMINATION AND THE COLONIAL IMPACT

There is no doubt that social backwardness and disprivilege emanating from social discrimination predates colonialism. The hierarchical division of society with assigned ranks, functions and distinctions under the *varna* system constituted the structural framework which regulated economic and ritual relationship. Viewed from the economic angle, the *jatis* were hereditary, closed occupation groups and was probably related to efforts to eliminate competition and ensure security of employment and income. Moving up within this hierarchical structure was not completely ruled out but it was rare. Two fixed points marked the extreme ends of the hierarchical orders Brahmans on the one end and untouchables at the other. Most of the marginal groups belonged to the lower orders and were forced to live a precarious existence. By the time colonial rule made its presence felt in the second half of the eighteenth century, the situation had become somewhat fluid, though not to the extent of eliminating social discrimination. But as India became a colonial appendage to a capitalist world economy, new economic relationships began to take shape. The policy of de-industrialisation deprived the rural artisans of their hereditary occupations and, in course of time, undermined the basis of a non-competitive and hereditary system of economic organisation at the rural level. The service castes found if difficult to get their payments in the way they got under the *jajmani* system. In its efforts to maximise the revenue collection, the company resumed various forms of rent-free tenures resulting in the impoverishment of those service groups who were dependent on them. The insistence on contract, enforced by law and law-courts, meant that those who had access to the new system could thereby manipulate its levers and consolidates their position in society. Viewed in this light, the colonial rule denied many of the subordinate social groups their means of subsistence and, in course of time relegating some of them to the degraded level of 'criminal tribes'. But at the same time, by undermining the old economic basis of social organisation colonial rule fuelled an already developing tendency towards mobility. It also indirectly rendered possible the growth of lower caste protests in future. While pliable elements among the rural elites were successfully accommodated within the framework of the British revenue system, the intransigents were rendered powerless by the destruction of forts and disbandment of local militias under British rule. In course of time the dominant groups in different parts of India consolidated their position by manipulating the institutional framework of the colonial rule.

12.3 REGIONAL VARIATIONS: SOUTH INDIA

What then was the position of subordinate groups who were subject to social discrimination? The nature of discrimination differed from region to region in the early years of the nineteenth century. In large parts of the Madras Presidency the bulk of the agricultural labourers, belonging to low caste groups, were said to have been reduced virtually to conditions of slavery. This was evident from the

first major survey of the conditions of agricultural labourers undertaken by the Madras Board of Revenue (1818). The Madras Presidency was divided in three major areas. Of these, the Telugu region was relatively free from bondage system. But in the Tamil country especially in the wet districts – and in the Malabar and Kanara region, a large portion of the laboring class lived in a state of bondage. In districts like Chingleput and Tanjore, the condition of the untouchable's castes called Pallans or Paraiyans was really deplorable. Here the old Hindu institutions were reinforced by the British legal system, giving a fresh lease of life to power and influence of certain higher castes. There was a group of Braham landowners, forbidden most types of manual labour by the rules of their caste, who were letting their lands to tenants or employing hired labourers to do the task they could not do themselves. What is interesting in all this is that what some historians call agricultural servitude was sanctioned by caste system. Likewise, in Malabar the Cherumans, corresponding to the Paraiyans in Tamilnad, were almost exclusively treated as slaves. Buchanan, in course of this travels in early years of the nineteenth century, found that in Palghat by far the greater parts of the work in the fields was performed by Cheruman salves. They could be sold, mortgaged and rented out. From Malabar Buchanan moved to Kanar where he found an equally harrowing situation. Men of low caste occasionally sold their younger relations into slavery in discharge of debts. In short, available evidences on South India suggest that agrarian bondage was quite widespread in the early years of the nineteenth century.

Case-studies of some select subordinate groups outside the agrarian sectors show the same process of social discrimination at work. A recent survey of the Nadars of Tamilnad demonstrates that in the early nineteenth century they were counted among the most oppressed caste. They were economically differentiated between higher ranking Nadars and lowely Shanars or toddy-tappers. Various disabilities were heaped upon the Shanars. They were, of course, forbidden entry into temples. Wells were strictly forbidden to their use; they were denied the right to carry an umbrella, to wear shoes, golden ornaments, to milk cows, to walk in certain streets: and their women were forbidden to cover their breasts. Indeed a Nadar could not even approach a Brahmin within twenty-four paces. A few Shanar families, who settled as minorities in areas north of Tirunelveli, confronted even more humiliating conditions. They were even denied the service of barbers and washermen used by the caste Hindu of the villages. Gradually, among the main body of Shanars emerged a mobile body of traders who traded country liquor and jiggery sugar. When the Poligar Wars ended in 1801 both the trading and toddy-trapping Shanars moved on northwards to the Maravar country and settled in 'Six Nadar Towns of Ramnad'. But the locally dominant castes of the region, the Maravars, Tevars and Kallars associated them with the lowly, polluted, toddy-tapping Shanars. It is not surprising that the Nadars constituted a fertile ground for conversion to the Christianity. They would be in the forefront of the later day anti-Brahman movement in the region.

12.4 WESTERN INDIA

Farther up the western coastline of India there was another striking instance of institutionalised social discrimination in South Gujarat. Recorded in the early nineteenth century British records as *Halipratha*, it was a formalised system of lifelong and often hereditary attachment of the low-caste Publas to the Anavil Brahmans who owned the best and the largest lots of land. In some regions the attached farm servants also included a section of Kolis called gulam Kolis. The condition of service was not contractual. It usually began when an agricultural labourer wished to marry and founded a master ready to pay for it. The debt thus incurred attached the servant to the master for life. It Increased in the course of years thereby rendering repayment virtually impossible. The *Halis* were not sold though their service could be transferred to another master. The ritual domination of the high caste Brahmans over low caste Dublas was consolidated in an exploitative relationship of all-encompassing nature. The master had the right to the labour of the servant and his wife as maid in the household.

In Maharashtra the idioms of dominance and discrimination were no less pronounced. In eighteenth century Maratha kingdom, Brahmanical dominance was backed up by the state power of the Peshwas. There was a strong connection between Maratha polity and caste by the authorities. In the directly administered (*swarajya*) regions of the eighteenth century Maratha kingdom, the state took an active role in maintaining and enforcing rules and economic aspects of caste society. In 1784 the government formulated rules of worship at the holy places of Pandharpur which explicitly stated that the untouchables were not allowed to go near their own shrine close to the main temple. "The place is so narrow and crowded that the visitors are touched to one another and the Brahmins are opposed to this. Therefore the untouchables should perform worship from near the stone lamp (in front) of the image of Chokhmela or from a nearby untouchable hamlet.." In another instance the Mahars of the Konkan region demanded some Brahman priests of the place to officiate their marriage ceremony. Despite the support from the local officials this demand was turned down with a heavy hand. The state offered the untouchables to have their marriage officiated by their own priests and warned, "if they trouble the Brahmin priests in future, no good result will come out." In other words, the Maratha state power mediated caste relationship in the region and ensured the Brahmanical hegemony in society. Baji Rao II, himself a Chitpavan Brahman, distributed generous sums of money to large number of Brahman scholars in Pune, to enable them to devote their time to religious scholarship.

When the Company took over the administration after the fall of the Marathas, the state's active support of the Hindu religious values was withdrawn. This, of course, did not immediately signify any major change in the condition of the lower castes. As the Company's administration engrafted itself on the Indian society, it depended on Indian subordinates at eh lower levels. The upper castes, in view of their earlier access to educational opportunities, gained a strategic mediatory position between the Company's government and the larger masses of

western Indian society. This effectively buttressed their already dominant position in society. But the relatively stagnant position of the lower castes and untouchables made them fertile grounds for missionary propagation. In western India in the nineteenth century the missionaries did their utmost to persuade their audiences that eh Hindu religion had deprived them, as *Shudras*, of their real rights in matters of education and religion. There was a preponderance of higher castes in general and Brahmans in particular in administration, far in excess of their numerical proportions in the populations as a whole. "Far from breaking down inequalities in western Indian society, British rule looked as though it might reinforce them by adding to the older religious authority of Brahmans, a formidable new range of administrative and political powers." Critical observes like Jotirao Phule and his followers drew the natural inference that a rejection of the religious authority of the Brahmans and of the hierarchical values on which it was based, formed the precondition for any real change in their condition.

12.5 NORTHERN AND EASTERN INDIA

The foregoing survey of social discrimination in some selected region is not meant to suggest that elsewhere in India the condition of the lower orders of society was any better. One purpose was to highlight some glaring instances of domination. In fact, some recent surveys of the Chandals in Bengal, the Doms in Bihar, the Bhuinyas in south Bihar or the Chamars in large parts of northern India show how these groups were subjected to similar processes of rigorous discrimination. The Namasudras of Bengal, earlier known as Chandals, formed marginal groups, relegated to the level of *Antyaja*. The barbers, washer men and sometimes even the scavengers refused their services to them. In the social feasts, they were required to sit at a distance from the rest and clear up their own dishes. It has been shown that their lowest position in the purity-pollution scale corresponded to their inferior economic status via-a-vis men of the higher castes. The Maghaiya domes, like the Lodhas of south western Bengal, were marginalised to such an extent that they were ultimately branded as criminal tribes. The Bhuinya oral traditions which record the memory of their subordinates to the mostly Brahman *maliks*, remember their incorporation in the Hindu caste hierarchy as a ritually impure caste. They were initially treated as Kamias providing labour services to the high caste *maliks* ultimately ending up as a kind of bonded labour. The Chamars, including Mochis are found in every part of India, thought they are most numerous in the UP and in the bordering area of Bihar on the east and of the Punjab on the north-west. They occupied an utterly degraded position in the village life. Apart from their customary profession, they were often called upon to perform beggar services by the landlords.

In concluding this section let us recapitulate its basic points. First, there was a very strong linkage between caste and ritually governed entitlement to resources. This obviously implied that low ritual status went together with precarious existence. Moreover, this was an existence wrapped up by multiple badges of low status. Second, while most of these practices predate colonial rule, the latter, in

turn, precipitated certain change in the position of subordinate social groups on different parts of India. Notable among these was the disintegration of the relatively non-competitive structure of the village society.

Check Your Progress 1

1) Write in brief the various forms of social discrimination existed in South India? Answer in 100 words.

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2) 'Politics has a positive role in the continuation of the caste domination'. Explain this statement in 100 words in the light of the castes system existed in Western India.

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3) Read the following statements and mark right(√) or wrong(×).
   i) Mobility within the caste system is not possible.
   ii) The colonial rule by undermining the old economic basis of social organisation helped the social mobility.
   iii) Lower status in the caste hierarchy did not deprive the lower castes from taking part in ritual ceremonies with the higher castes.
   iv) Agrarian bondage was quite widespread in South India in the early years of the 19th century.

12.6 CONTINUITY AND CHANGE IN COLONIAL INDIA

Viewed in retrospect, the first century of the British rule may be termed as a period of gestation. During this period two apparently contradictory developments were taking place. Social discrimination which prevailed in myriad variety of forms in different parts of India initially got a new lease of life. The upper caste elites consolidated their position in many different ways. After some initial reverses in some areas, they adjusted themselves with the new revenue system. They adroitly utilised the new opportunities for administrative and

political power by the use of their skills. A high degree of literacy rendered them extremely useful to the new regime. Their growing familiarity with the Anglo-Indian law and the functioning of the law courts gave them advantage over their low-caste opportunity waiting for them. Finally, the early British attitude of studied non-interference in social matters of the Indians precluded the possibility of any major structural change in society through legislative and other means backed by state-power.

But during the same period a very different kind of development was taking shape which, in course of time was to undermine the ritual and social hegemony of the upper caste elites. The caste system allowed for mobility at the intermediate levels while preserving the top and bottom levels fixed. The fact that upward mobility was not entirely ruled out gave a certain strength and resilience to the system as a whole.

Interestingly, however, in course of the first century of the British rule, the bottom level also began to stir. Some of the idioms of social and ritual dominance which the lower orders had, under the weight of tradition, internalised over time, came to be seriously questioned. Initially, of course, there was predicable opposition from the dominant upper castes. But the material basis of the caste bound system of discrimination began to change. The penetration of market forces at the rural level offered some opportunities in some regions which ran contrary to the occupation-based *jati* system. In some regions it was even possible for members of submerged caste to emerge as zamindars, *taluqdars* or subinfeudated tenure holders. There was a marked tendency among many of them to "sanskritize" their behaviour. It has been pointed out that acquiring symbols of sanskritization need not be taken as meek emulation of the upper castes. It also meant the appropriation of certain symbol and certain codes of conduct which had been the excusive preserves of the upper castes. In some communities missionary activities opened up new possibilities of educational and consequently material advancement. In the changing perspective, the ideology of hierarchically divided society failed to carry conviction especially among the victims of social discrimination. There was indication of the emergence of a new consciousness as a result of which what had earlier been implicitly accepted as 'duty' came to be construed as 'disprivilege'.

12.8 A NEW CONSCIOUSNESS: SOME REGIONAL EXAMPLES

The articulation of this new consciousness, however is a complex phenomenon and therefore can hardly be reduced to simple formulations. Reference has already been made to the growth of sanskritizing tendencies among some caste groups. There were others who found in Christianity a means to escape from the grim realities of their precarious existence. In Travancore education and Christianity had given the Nadars hope of a release from their sufferings under the dominance of the Nair landlords. In response to pressures from the Christian

Nadars and the missionaries, the government issued a proclamation in 1829, permitting native Christian women to cover their breasts in the manner of the Syrian Christians and the Mopla Muslims. This triggered off the famous 'breast cloth controversy' which culminated in the Royal Proclamation of 1869.

This has been regarded as the first major movement among the depressed classes to remove the badge of servility. But regions and among the society groups where proselytisation was not quite successful, the missionary polemic against Hindu social practices informed the ideas of many of the indigenous reformers. Moreover, the humanist content in some Indian social reformers' critique of hidebound Hindu society raised the level of general social consciousness. What was historically more important though was the spirited attempt on the part of some lower caste groups to improve their position by themselves. Although most of such attempts lie beyond the time frame of this paper, some early indications may still be noted. Despite regional variations in the mode of expression and mobilisation, there were some common features. A relatively prosperous group among some of the submerged castes took the lead in regulating the social behaviour of their caste brethren. Having done that, they then began claiming higher ritual status which was generally resisted by the upper castes. It is at this stage that eh ground was prepared for an imminent caste conflict. Occasionally one finds certain sects promoting caste solidarity and thereby helping the process of mobilisation. The gradual introduction of electoral politics and the census operations from the last quarter of the nineteenth century gave a distinctly political touch to the lower caste movements.

A prosperous section among the Namasudras of Bengal, comprising mainly of landowners and rich peasants, initiated the move to sanskritize their caste behaviour and asserted the claims of a higher status. This was predictably thwarted by higher castes, Undaunted by this rebuff, the Namasudra leaders displayed an attitude of defiance to the social authority of the higher castes, organised their caste brethren within the Matua sect and embarked on a policy of protest. Interestingly, while challenging the moral authority of the higher castes, the Namasudras were effusive in their protestations of loyalty of the Raj. In due course the Namausdra protest developed a distinctly 'separatist' overtone. In Tamilnadu, the mercantile upper stratum of Ramnad Nadars set up 'common good funds', which was used, inter alia, for the welfare of the community. They also began to sanskritize their manner of life and asserted a high kshatriya status. Towards the close of the nineteenth century they became powerful enough to challenge the ban on temple entry and in 1895 forced their way into the Sivakasi temple. This was followed by retaliatory attacks on them which were ultimately taken to the courts. Although the judgement went against the Nadars, they gained a good deal of sympathy. Moreover, through litigation and intermittent rioting a sense of communal solidarity was fostered. This solidarity was to yield good divided in the present century. In Travancore, the low caste Iravas had long been subjected to higher caste domination. By the end of the nineteenth century there emerged a sizeable number of educated youth who were deeply satisfied with the treatment meted out to them. Influenced by Sri Narayana Guru and the SNDP

Yogam, the Iravas soon made the temple entry issue a rallying point of the community. The Mahars of Maharashtar, like several claimed Kshatriya status and demanded preferential treatment from the government. They began to organise themselves under Gopal Baba Walangkar towards the end of the nineteenth century and ultimately emerged as the core group in Ambedkar's movement.

Check Your Progress 2

1) What was the impact of the Colonial rule on Indian social system? Answer in 100 words.

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2) How did different disprivileged groups try to move up in the caste hierarchy? Answer in 100 words.

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12.8 LET US SUM UP

Thus in the beginning of the twentieth century, the caste society was on the threshold of a restless future. Although it was too early to visualise the end of social discrimination, it was probably too late to attempt to restore the older inter-caste equations. In many parts of India submerged caste were smarting under multiple disabilities. But there were others in other areas that had begun to form their own identities on the basis of radical redefinitions of their own positions in the system. In the process, caste identities became the most effective rallying point in the lower caste movements for economic and political rights.

12.9 KEY WORDS

Hierarchical Division: In this Unit it is used to explain division of Indian society into various social groups which are placed into different ranks like higher, middle, lower, etc. on the basis of purity-pollution.

***Jajmani* System:** It is a system of economic, social and ritual ties among different caste groups in a village. Under this system some castes are patrons and others are

Purity-Pollution: It is an abstract notion which considers certain activities, objects and occupations ritually purer, for example Vegeterianism is considered purer than non-vegetarianism. Both these concepts are necessarily relative to each other.

Sanskritization: Adoption of social and religious practices of the upper castes by the lower castes in order to move up in caste hierarchy is called Sanskritization.

Social Mobility: Movement or changing of position of any social group in social hierarchy is called social mobility.

12.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check your Progress 1

1) Your answer should focus on deplorable condition of the agricultural labourers, various social disabilities imposed on lower castes, etc. See Sec. 12.3.
2) You have to write in this answer that how the upper caste domination was backed by the state power, how the Maratha policy ensured the Brahmanical hegemony in the society, etc. See Sec. 12.4.
3) i)× ii) √ iii)× iv) √

Check Your Progress 2

1) Your answer should highlight how the Colonial rule on one way helped the continuation of caste system and on the provided avenues for upward social mobility, etc. See Sec. 12.6.
2) You have to write about the process of mobilisation by disprivileged groups along caste lines and how through socio-ritualistic reforms they tried move up in the caste hierarchy. See Sec. 12.7.

UNIT 13: POPULAR RESISTANCE

Structure

13.0 Objectives

13.1 Introduction

13.2 Peasant and Tribal Uprisings: Origins

13.3 Some Important Uprisings

13.3.1 The Sanyasi Rebellion, 1763-1800

13.3.2 Peasant Uprisings of Rangpur, Bengal, 1783

13.3.3 The Uprising of the Bhils, 1818-31

13.3.4 The Rebellion at Mysore, 1830-32

13.3.5 The Kol Uprising, 1831-32

13.3.6 The Faraizi Disturbances, 1838-51

13.3.7 The Mappila Uprisings, 1836-54

13.3.8 The Santhal Rebellion, 1855-56

13.4 Nature of Popular Movements Before 1857

13.4.1 Leadership

13.4.2 Participation and Mobilization

13.5 Let Us Sum Up

13.6 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

13.0 OBJECTIVES

In this Unit you will get to know:

- the background to the tribal and peasant movements which took place before 1857,
- the issues around which these uprising took place, and
- the nature of popular participation and mobilization in these uprisings.

13.1 INTRODUCTION

Earlier in this course we have studied the process of establishment of colonial rule in India and the transformation that came with in the field of economy, law, administration and other spheres of life. What was the reaction of the common people to this new Raj and the changes that it brought? Was the revolt of 1857 and isolated event or was it preceded by protest movements of like nature? An attempt has been made in the Unit to show how the peasants and tribes reacted to alien rule in the late 18th and 19th centuries, till 1857. This Unit covers some major peasant and tribal uprising and the origins and character of such uprisings.

13.2 PEASANT AND TRIBAL UPRISINGS: ORIGINS

In pre-colonial India popular protest against the Mughal rulers and their officials was not uncommon. The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries witnessed many peasant uprisings against the ruling class. Imposition of a high land revenue demand by the state, corrupt practices and harsh attitude of the tax collecting officials, wee some of the many reasons which provoked the peasants to rise in revolt. However, the establishment of colonial rule in India and the various policies of the colonial government had a much more devastating effect on the Indian peasants and tribes. In Block 4 we have discussed in detail how the Indian economy was transformed by the British to suit the East India Company's needs and to enlarge the profits of their own countrymen. Some of the changes in Indian economy brought during this period were:

- Promotion of British manufactured goods in Indian markets leading to destruction of Indian handloom and handicraft industries.
- Huge transfer of wealth from India to England (Drain to Wealth).
- British land revenue settlements, a heavy burden of new taxes, eviction of peasants from their lands, encroachment on tribal lands.
- growth and strengthening of exploitation in rural society along with the growth of intermediary revenue collectors and tenants and money-lenders.
- Expansion of British revenue administration over tribal territories leading to the loss of tribal people's hold over agricultural and forest land.

The overall impact of these changes on the peasant and tribal society was very destructive. The appropriation of peasants' surplus by the company and its agents, the increasing burden of taxes made the peasants completely dependent on the mercy of the revenue intermediaries and officials, the merchants and the money-lenders. Moreover, the destruction of indigenous industry led to migration of large scale workers from industry to agriculture. The pressure on land increased but the land revenue and agricultural policy of the government allowed little scope for the improvement of Indian agriculture.

While the British economic policy led to pauperization and impoverishment of the Indian peasantry, the British administration turned a deaf ear to the peasants' grievances. British law and judiciary did not aid the peasantry; it safeguarded the interest of the government and its collaborators-the landlords, the merchants and the money-lenders. Thus being the prey of colonial exploitation and being deprived of justice from the colonial administration the peasants took up arms to protect themselves. The grievances of the tribal people were not different from those of the peasants. But what made them more aggrieved was the encroachment by outsiders into their independent tribal polity.

13.3 SOME IMPORTANT UPRISINGS

The simmering discontent of the peasants and tribal people broke out into popular uprisings in different parts of India at different points of time in the first hundred years of British rule. Whatever may be immediate cause of each uprising

by and large these protest movements were moulded by a shared experience of oppression in various forms, including colonial oppression. We would discuss in brief some of the important uprising of this period.

13.3.1 The Sanyasi Rebellion, 1763-1800

The East India Company's official correspondence in the second half of the eighteenth century referred many times to the incursion of the nomadic *Sanyasis* and *Fakirs*, mainly in northern Bengal. Even before the great famine of Bengal (1770) small groups of Hindu and Muslim holy men travelled from place to place and made sudden attacks on the store houses of food crops and property of the local rich men and government officials. Though the *Sanyasis* and *Fakirs* were religious mendicants, originally they were peasants, including some who were evicted from land. However, the growing hardship of the peasantry, increasing revenue demand and the Bengal famine of 1770 brought a large member of dispossessed small Zamindars, disbanded soldiers and rural poor into the bands of *Sanyasis* and *Fakirs*. They moved around different parts of Bengal and Bihar in bands of 5 to 7 thousand and adopted the guerilla technique of attack. Their target of attack was the grain stocks of the rich and at later stage, government officials. They looted local government treasuries. Sometimes the wealth looted was distributed among the poor. They established an independent government in Bogra and Mymensing. The contemporary government records describe these insurrections in their own way, thus:

"A set of lawless banditti known under the name of Sanyasis and Fakirs, have long infested these countries and under the pretence of religious pilgrimage, have been accustomed to traverse the chief parts of Bengal, begging, stealing and plundering wherever they go and as it best suits their conveniences to practices. In the years subsequent to the famine, their ranks were swollen by a crowd of starving peasants, who had neither seed no implements to upon the harvest fields of lower Bengal, burning, plundering, ravaging in bodies of fifty to thousand men."

One noticeable feature of these insurrections was the equal participation of Hindus and Muslims in it. Some of the important leaders of these movements were Manju Shah, Musa Shah, Bhawani Pathak and Debi Chaudhurani. Encounter between the *Sanyasis-Fakirs* and the British forces became a regular feature all over Bengal and Bihar till 1800. The British used its full force to suppress the rebels.

13.3.2 Peasant Uprising of Rangpur, Bengal 1783

The establishment of British control over Bengal after 1757 and their various land revenue experiments in Bengal to extract as mush as possible from peasants brought unbearable hardship for the common man. Rangpur and Dinajpur were two of the districts of Bengal which faced all kinds of illegal demands by the East India Company and its revenue contractors. Harsh attitude of the revenue contractors and their exactions became a regular feature of peasant life. One such

revenue contractor was Debi Singh of Rangpur and Dinajpur. He and his agents created a reign of terror in the two districts of northern Bengal. Taxes on the Zamindars were increased which actually were passed on from Zamindars to cultivators or *ryots*. *Ryots* were not in a position to meet the growing demands of Debi Singh and his agents. Debi Singh and his men used to beat flog the peasants, burn their houses and destroy their crops and not even women were spared.

Peasants appealed to the company officials to redress their grievances. Their appeal however remained unheeded. Being deprived of justice the peasants took the law in their own hands. By beat of drum the rebel peasants gathered large number of peasants, armed with swords, shields, bows and arrow. They elected Dirjinarain as their leader and attacked the local *cutcheries* and store houses of crops of local agents of the contractors and government guards. The rebels formed a government of their own, stopped payments of revenue to the existing government and levied 'insurrection charges' to meet the expenses of the rebellion. Both Hindus and Muslims fought side by side in the insurrection. Ultimately the government's armed forces took control of the situation and suppressed the revolt.

13.3.3 The Uprising of the Bhils, 1818-31

The Bhils were mostly concentrated in the hill rages of Khandesh. The British occupation of Khandesh in 1818 enraged the Bhils because they were suspicious of outsiders' incursion into their territory. Moreover, it was believed that Trimbakji, rebel minister of Baji Rao II, instigated the Bhils against the British occupation of Khandesh. There was a general insurrection in 1819 and the Bhils in several small groups ravaged the plains. There were similar types of insurrection quite often by the Bhil Chiefs against the British. The British government used its military forces to suppress the rebels and at the same time tried to win them over through various conciliatory measures. But the British measures failed to bring the Bhils to their side.

13.3.4 The Rebellion at Mysore, 1830-31

After the final defeat of Tipu Sultan the British restored Mysore to the Wodeyar ruler and imposed on him the subsidiary alliance. The financial pressure from the company on the Mysore ruler compelled him to increase revenue demands from the Zamindars. The increasing burden of revenue ultimately fell on the cultivators. The corruption and extortion of local officials added to the existing miseries of the peasants.

The growing discontent of the peasants broke out into an open revolt in the province of Nagar, one of the four divisions of Mysore. Peasants from other provinces joined the rebellious peasant of Nagar and the rebel peasants found their leader in Sardar Malla, the son of a common *ryot* of Kremsi. The peasants defied the authority of the Mysore ruler. The British force regained control of

Nagar from rebel peasants after strong opposition and ultimately the administration of the country passed into the hands of the British.

13.3.5 The Kol Uprising, 1831-32

The Kols of Singhbhum for long centuries enjoyed independent power under their chiefs. They successfully resisted all attempts made by the Raja of Chota Nagpur and Mayurbhanj to subdue them. British penetration into this area and the attempt to establish British law and order over the jurisdiction of the Kol Chiefs generated tensions among the tribal people.

As a result of British occupation of Singhbhum and the neighbouring territories, a large number of people from outside began to settle in this area which resulted in transfer of tribal lands to the outsiders. This transfer of tribal lands and coming of merchants, money-lenders and the British law in the tribal area posed a great threat to the hereditary independent power of the tribal chiefs. This created great resentment among the tribal people and led to popular uprisings against the outsiders in the tribal area. The rebellion spread over Ranchi, Hazaribagh, Palamau and Manbhum. The target of attack was the settlers from other regions whose houses were burnt, and property looted. The insurrection was ruthlessly suppressed by the British militia.

13.3.6 The Faraizi Disturbances, 1838-51

The Faraizi sect was founded by Haji Shariatullah of Faridpur. Originally Faraizi movement was fuelled by the grievances of rack-rented and evicted peasants against landlords and British rulers. The Faraizis under Dudu Miyan, the son of the founder of the sect, became united as a religious sect with an egalitarian ideology. His simple way of teaching and belief that all men are equal and land belongs to god and no one has right to levy tax on it appealed to the common peasants. The Faraizis set up parallel administration in some parts of Eastern Bengal and established village courts to settle the peasants' disputes. They protected cultivators from Zamindar's excesses and asked the peasants not to pay taxes to the Zamindars. They raided the Zamindars' houses and cutcheries and burnt indigo factory at Panch-char. The government and Zamindars forces crushed the movement and Dudu Miyan was imprisoned.

13.3.7 The Mappila Uprisings, 1836-54

Among the various peasant uprisings that posed serious challenges to the colonial rule the Mappila uprising of Malabar occupy an important place. Mappilas are the descendants of the Arab Settlers and some Hindus who had become Muslims. Majority of them were cultivating tenants, landless labourers, petry traders and fishermen. The British occupation tenants, landless labourers, petty traders and fishermen. The British occupation of Malabar in the last decade of the eighteenth century and the consequent changes that the British introduced in the land revenue administration of the area brought unbearable hardship in the life of the

Mappilas. Most important change was the transfer of "Janmi' from that of traditional, partnership with the Mappila to that of an independent owner of land the right of eviction of Mappila tenants which did not exist earlier. Over-assessment, illegal taxes, eviction from land, hostile attitude of government officials were some of the many reasons that made the Mappilas rebel against the British and the landlords.

The religious leadership played an important role in strengthening the solidarity of the Mappilas though socio-religious reforms and also helped in the evolution of anti-British consciousness among the Mappilas. The growing discontent of the Mappilas broke out in open insurrections against the state and landlords. Between 1836 and 1854 there were about twenty-two uprising in Malabar. In these uprisings the rebels came mostly from the poorer section of the Mappila population. The targets of the rebels were generally the British officials, *Janmis* and their dependents. The British armed forces swung into action to suppress the rebels but failed to subdue them for many years.

13.3.8 The Santhal Rebellion, 1855-56

The Santhals were inhabitants of the districts of Birbhum, Bankura, Murshidabad, Pakur, Dumka, Bhagalpur and Purnea. The area of maximum concentration of Santhals was called *Daman-i-koh* or Santhal Pargana. When the Santhals cleared the forest and started cultivation in this area the neighboring Rajas of Maheshpur and Pakur leased out the Santhal villages to Zamindars and money-lenders. Gradual penetration by outsiders (called *dikus* by the Santhals) in the territory of the Santhals brought misery and oppression for the simple living Santhals. In Calcutta Review of 1856 a contemporary writer depicted the condition of the Santhals in the following words:

> "Zamindars, the police, the revenue and court alas have exercised a combined system of extortions, oppressive exaction, forcible dispossession of property, abuse and personal violence and a variety of petty tyrannies upon the timid, and yielding Santhals. Usurious interest on loans of money ranging from 50 to 500 percent; false measures at the haut (weekly market) and the market; willful and uncharitable trespass by the rich by means of their untethered cattle, tattoos (small ponies), ponies and even elephants, on the growing crops of the poorer race; and such like illegalities have been prevalent."

The oppression by money-lenders, merchants, Zamindars and government officials forced the Santhals to take up arms in order to protect themselves. Initial protests of the Santhals were in the form of robbery and looting of Zamindars and money-lenders houses. But violent suppression of these activities and harassment of Santhals at the hands of police and local officials made them more violent. The rebel Santhals found their leaders in two brothers, Sidhu and Kanu, who were believed to have received blessings from the gods to put an end to the ongoing oppression of the Santhals and to restore "the good old days". Several thousand Santhals armed with their traditional weapons of bows, arrows, axes assembled

and took the decision to give an ultimatum to the Zamindars and the government officials to stop oppression immediately. They decided to get back control of their lands and to set up their own government. The authorities however paid no serious attention to this ultimatum. Ultimately the grievances of the Santhals flared up in open armed insurrection against the local government officials, Zamindars and money-lenders. The insurrection spread rapidly in the whole Santh Pargana. Large number of low caste no-Santhals also came out in support of the Santhals. The government and Zamindars started counter-attacking the insurgents. The heroic struggle of the Santhals ultimately failed because of British superiority of arms.

Check Your Progress 1

1) Can you point out some general reasons for the peasant and tribal uprising in this period? Answer in 100 words.

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2) What was Dudu Miyan's message to the Bengal peasantry? Answer in 5 lines.

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13.4 NATURE OF POPULAR MOVEMENTS BEFORE 1857

Peasant and tribal movements have been interpreted differently by different schools of historians. The historians with sympathies towards the British and the established order often regarded these uprisings as a problem of law and order. The range of problems faced by these tribes and peasants from the pre-colonial to the colonial times (see above) were often overlooked as possible causes for these uprisings. The rebels were often portrayed as primitive savages resisting "civilization". The Nationalists tended to appropriate the peasant the tribal history to the purpose of the anti-colonial struggle ignoring certain other facets of the oppressed people's struggle. Those more sympathetic to the cause of the

tribes and peasants however tended to negate very often the logic of peasant and tribal protest in terms of the people's own experience. It is also necessary to understand the domain of peasant and tribal action in its own terms. This effort has scarcely begun yet.

13.4.1 Leadership

In the movements we have studied above the question of leadership, i.e., who led these movements becomes important. Movement in this phase of our history tended to throw up leaders who rose and fell with the movement. The context in which these movements arose gave very little scope for a leadership to make an entry from outside the immediate context of the rebellion. This is quite in contrast to the times of the national movement where leaders from various sections of upper strata consciously, on certain ideological premises, made an intervention into the peasant and tribal movements.

The leadership of these movements often devolved upon men or women who were within the cultural world of the peasants they led. They were able to articulate the protest of the oppressed. The Faraizi rebellion illustrated how holymen as leaders were on the one hand trying to return to a past purity of their religion and on the other, also addressed the peasants' problems. Thus, the notion that all land was god's land and everyone had an equal share in it, mobilised the oppressed peasants and also invoked the sanctity of the 'true' religion.

13.4.2 Participation and Mobilization

Some features of the peasant and tribal protest movements demonstrate a certain level of political and social consciousness. For example, it has been pointed out that the rebels against Debi Sinha in 1783 attacked *Kacharis* in a definite recognition of where the political source of the peasant's oppression lay. Similarly the Kols in 1832 did not attack the tribal population in a clear recognition of who their allies were. In course of the development of a movement it sometimes broadened its ambit to include issues beyond the immediate grievances which started off a protest movement. For example the Moplah rebellions in the nineteenth century Malabar started as struggles against the landlord but ended up as protest against British rule itself. Protest of the oppressed also often involved redefinition of the relationship of the oppressed to the language, culture and religion of the dominant classes. This may take the form of denial of the convention of respect and submission in speech or the destruction of places of worship or of symbols of domination or oppression. Thus protest took myriad forms in many spheres, from everyday life to organised insurgency.

In so far as protest movements took on the character of public and collective acts, have peasants and tribal participant's methods had some specific features. Being public and open, these rebellions were political actions, the rebel's mode of action tell another story. For example the Santhals gave ample warning in advance to the village they attacked. The legitimacy for such public declarations

often came from a higher authority. The Santhal leaders Sidho and Kanho for example claimed in fact that it was the '*thakoor'* (local god) who himself would fight the white fight the white soldiers. It was this public legitimacy which allowed the Rangpur rebellion's leaders to impose a *dhing-kharcha* (levy for insurrection) on the peasantry. The public legitimacy ultimately allowed public conference, planning, assembly and attack. As Sido Santhal put it "all the *pergunnaits* and *manjees* consulted and advised me to fight". Similarly the legitimacy to fight expressed itself in the grand ceremonies of a rebel march. For example the leaders of the Santhal rebellion were carried in a palanquin and their followers wore festive red clothes. Then the public character was reinforced by drawing on the corporate labour activity. For example the Santhal tribals for whom *shikar* or hunting was the main community activity for obtaining food, often characterised a rebellion as a *shikar*. But now the *shikar* gathering was used for wilder political purpose and this was reflected in activities like burning, wrecking and destruction of identified targets to make a political point.

What was the underlying bond uniting the rebels against the perceived enemy? These often existed in varying degrees of tensions between classes, caste or ethnic and religious groups. In Mapilla rebellion for example religion forged a bond between the poorer and more affluent sections of the peasantry to create grounds for a fight against landlord oppression. Similarly ethnicity created bonds of solidarity. For example in 1852 the Dhangar Kols of Sonepur who were the first to rise in that region were promptly given support by the Larka Kols of Singhbhum where no disturbances had yet taken place. Solidarity in the protests above was reinforced by community mobilization, forcing the vacillators to join the rebel ranks and a harsh attitude towards the traitors.

Protest movements of the oppressed peasants and tribals did not emerge in a full-blows form. In the early stages they are form of social action which the state many look upon as plain crime. Most often in the British official records this transition from crime to rebellion is ignored and the two re seen as the same. Also obscured is the fact that crimes ranging from starvation, thefts to murder spring from the violent conditions of living in the countryside. Often an insurgency was preceded by the rise in the rate of rural crimes. For example in 1854, a year before the Santhal rebellion, a number of dacoities were committed against the local money-lenders. The Santhal leaders later justified them on moral grounds to the British court saying that their complaints against the money-lenders were never heeded by the officials.

The regional spread of rebellions of tribal and peasant communities was influence, if not determined, by the community's perception of the region they belonged to, the geographical boundaries within which that community lived and worked as also the ties of ethnicity. For the Santhals it was a battle for their 'fatherland' which had been grabbed by the outsiders. Their fight then was for this land which belonged to them in the good old past and was now snatched away from them. Sometime ethnic bonds extended the territorial limits of a tribal group as we saw in the case of Larka and Dhangar Kols who came together in rebellion.

Likewise the peasants and tribal people's conception of their past went into the making of the consciousness of the rebellious and the insurgent. We have already seen that their notions of their own past inspired rebels to struggle to recover conditions that prevailed before they fell upon bad times, before their oppressors acquired domination over them. The Faraizi and Santhal rebellion provide particularly apt examples. This did not necessarily mean that the protest movements were backward looking; it represents an effort to construct ideal to strive for.

Check Your Progress 2

1) Write five lines on the nature of the leadership in the movement, described above.

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2) Do the peasant and tribal movements of our period demonstrate certain level of consciousness? How?

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13.5 LET US SUM UP

It has been argued that the peasant and tribal movements we have briefly surveyed above were highly localized and isolated. While many of these movements drew strength from ethnic or religious ties, those facts itself become a constraint. Their isolation, due to failure to develop a higher order of integrating consciousness, limited the impact of these movements at the national level. The isolated nature of these episodes of rebellion, besides the technical superiority of the British armed forces and the law and order machinery supporting the established social order, ensured British success. Nevertheless, as the first expression of the protest of the oppressed in the colonial period, these movements are highly significant. At the end of the period you have studied the revolt of 1857 marked a watershed. It was a movement which was fuelled by peasant discontent under British rule as well as the reaction of some other sections of society against British rule; it cut across ethnic and religious and caste

boundaries; and it posed a real challenges to British Raj in many parts of India simultaneously.

13.6 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

1) See Sec. 13.2
2) See Sub-sec. 13.3.6

Check Your Progress 2

1) See Sub-sec. 13.4.1
2) See Sub-sec. 13.4.2

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THE PEOPLE'S
UNIVERSITY

UNIT 14: UPRISING OF 1857

Structure

14.0 Objectives

14.1 Introduction

14.2 Causes of 1857

14.2.1 Exploitation of the Peasantry

14.2.2 Annexation of Princely States

14.2.3 The Alien Rule

14.2.4 Impact on the Sepoys

14.2.5 Threat to Religion

14.2.6 The Immediate Cause

14.3 Emergence of Revolt

14.4 Course of the Revolt

14.4.1 Revolt of the Army

14.4.2 Revolt of the People

14.5 Rebel Institutions

14.6 Suppression and Repression of Colonial state

14.7 Aftermath of Revolt

14.7.1 Landlords

14.7.2 Princes

14.7.3 The Army

14.7.4 British Policy after the Revolt

14.8 Let Us Sum Up

14.9 Key Words

14.10 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

5.0 OBJECTIVES

In the earlier Units you have already been familiarised with the various aspects relating to Imperialism and CoIoniaIism. You are aware that during the period of its rule over the country the East India Company exploited and harassed the Indian people. Although various sections of Indian people defied the English supremacy at different times, it was the great uprising of 1857, often termed as the First War of Independence that posed a serious challenge to the English supremacy at an all India level. After reading this unit you will be able to:

trace the causes of the uprising of 1857,

- know about the various events and conflicts and about the role of various sections of people as well as their leaders,
- determine the reasons for the failure of the revolt,
- and understand its impact and form an opinion about the nature of the revolt.
- .the progress of the revolt between May and June'57 and the months thereafter
- the intensity of the revolt even after the fall of Delhi in September 1857,
- the institutions that the rebels evolved,
- the efforts that went into its suppression,
- the post-'57 restructuring of agrarian relations, and
- Colonial policy towards' princes and Muslims.

14.1 INTRODUCTION

The revolt of 1857 forms one of the most important chapters in the history of the struggle of the Indian people for liberation from the British rule. It shook the foundations of the British Empire in India and at some points it seemed as though the British rule would end for all time to come. What started merely as a sepoy mutiny soon engulfed the peasantry and other civilian population over wide areas in northern India. The upsurge was so widespread that some of the contemporary observers called it - a - "national revolt". The hatred of the people for the ferangis was intense and bitter. Between May and June 1857 it was only some beleaguered cities like Agra, Lucknow, Allahabad and Benares that kept alive evidence of British presence in north India. By then the revolt had spread to Awadh, Rohilkhand, Bundelkhand, Bihar and many parts of central India. This Unit introduces you to the pattern of the progress of the revolt, its manifestations not only in terms of the destruction of symbols of colonial authority but rebel institutions that followed the outbreak.

14.2 CAUSES OF 1857

How did the Revolt break out? What were its causes? The main reason of this was the ruthless exploitation of the Indian people by the British. The British rule which was formally established after the Battle of Plassey in 1757 in Bengal, strove to fill the coffers of the East India Company at the expense of the Indians. The East lndia Company was governed by greedy merchants and traders who could go to any extent to enrich themselves.

14.2.1 Exploitation of the Peasantry

Although the trade monopoly enriched the East India Company considerably, its main source of income was now derived from the land. After entrenching itself in Bengal, it spread its power in India through wars and treaties. To extract as much money as possible it devised new systems of land settlements - Permanent, Ryotwari and Mahalwari -each more oppressive than the other. The Permanent Settlement which was effective in Bengal Presidency and in large parts of north India did not recognise the hereditary rights of the peasants on land, which they had earlier enjoyed. The loyal zamindars and revenue-collectors were now given the propietory rights on land. The cultivators were reduced to the status of simple tenants. But even the newly created landlords were not given absolute rights. Their situation was also deliberately left very precarious. They had to pay to the Company 10/1 lth of the entire rent derived from the cultivators and if they failed to do so, their property was sold to others. The other land settlements were no better. In all of these the peasants had to pay beyond their means and any adverse natural shifts like droughts or flood compelled them to go for loans to the money lenders who charged exorbitant interest. This made the peasants so heavily indebted that they were ultimately forced to sell their land to these money lenders. It is because of this that the money lenders were so hated in rural society. The peasantry was also oppressed by petty officials in administration who extracted money on the slightest pretexts. If the peasants went to the law court to seek redress of their grievances, they were bound to be totally ruined. When the crop was good the peasants had to pay back their past debts; if it was bad, they were further indebted. This nexus between the lower officials, law courts and money lenders created a vicious circle which made the peasantry desparate and ready to welcome any opportunity for change of regime.

14.2.2 Annexation of Princely States

The East India Company did not spare even its former allies. The native state of Awadh was annexed by Dalhousie in 1856 on the pretext that Nawab Wazid Ali Shah was mismanaging the state. Even before this he had annexed Satara in 1848 and Nagpur and Jhansi in 1854 on the pretext that the rulers of these states had no natural heir to succeed them after their death. These annexations embittered the rulers of these states, making Rani of Jhansi and Begums of Awadh staunch enemies of the British. Further the British refusal to pay pension to Nana Sahib, the adopted son of Peshwa Baji Rao I1 worsened the situation. The annexation of Awadh was also resented by the sepoys as most of who came from there.This action hurt their patriotic loyalty and sense of dignity. Moreover, since their relatives had now to pay more taxes on land, it adversely affected the purses of the sepoys themselves.

14.2.3 The Alien Rule

Another important reason of the unpopularity of the British was the alien nature of their rule. They never mixed with the Indian people and treated even the upper class Indians with contempt. They had not come to settle in India but only to take money home. So the Indians could never develop any affinity towards them.

14.2.4 Impact on the Sepoys

The revolt of 1857 originated with the mutiny of the Sepoys. These Sepoys were drawn mainly from the peasant population of North and North-West India. As we have seen, the rapacious policies followed by the East India Company were impoverishing and ruining the peasantry. This must have affected the Sepoys also. Infact, most of them had joined the military service in order to supplement their fast declining agricultural income. But as the years passed, they realised that their capacity for doing so declined. They were paid a monthly salary of 7 to 9 Rupees out of which they had to pay for their food, uniform and transport of their private baggage. The cost of maintaining an Indian Sepoy was only one-third of his British counterpart in India. Moreover, the Indian Sepoy was treated roughly by the British officers. They were frequently abused and humiliated. The Indian Sepoy, despite his valour and great fighting capacity could never rise above the rank of a *Subedar* while a fresh recruit from England was often appointed his superior overnight.

14.2.5 Threat to Religion

Apart from degrading service conditions, another factor inflamed the feelings of the sepoys. An impression was created among them that their religion was being attacked by the British. This belief was also shared by the general civilian population. The proselytizing zeal of the missionaries and some of the British officials instilled fear in the minds of the people that their religion was in danger. At several places conversions to Christianity were reported to be made. The Government maintained the chaplains at its own cost and in some cases also provided police protection to the missionaries. Even the army maintained chaplains at state cost and Christian propaganda was carried among the sepoys. Furthermore, the sepoys were forbidden to wear their caste marks, and in 1856 an Act was passed under which every new recruit had to qive an undertaking to serve overseas, if required. The conservative beliefs of the sepoys were thus shaken and they sometimes reacted strongly. For example in 1824, the 47th Regiment of sepoys at Barrackpore refused to go to Burma by sea-route because their religion forbade them to cross "black water". The British reacted ruthlessly, disbanded the Regiment, and put some of its leaders to death. In 1844, seven battalions revolted on the question of salaries and batta (allowance). Even during the Afghan War from 1839 to 1842 the soldiers were almost on the verge of revolt The Revolt of 1857. Like sepoys, the people of India had also risen in revolt against the oppressive British rule. The most important of these uprisings

were the Kutcha rebellion (1816-32), the Kol uprising in 1831 and the Santhal uprising in 1855-56. The main point with regard to the 1857challenge, however, was that both the military and civilian revolts merged and this made it really formidable.

14.2.6 The Immediate Cause

The atmosphere was so surcharged that even a small issue could lead to revolt. The episode of greased cartridges, however, was a big enough issue to start the rebellion on its own. Dry tinder-box was there and only a spark was needed to set it ablaze. Cartridges of the new Enfield rifle which had recently been introduced in the army had a greased paper cover whose end had to be bitten off-before the cartridge was loaded into rifle. The grease was in some instances made of beef and pig fat. This completely enraged the Hindu and Muslim sepoys and made them believe that the government was deliberately trying to destroy their religion. It was the immediate cause of the revolt

14.3 EMERGENCE OF REVOLT

On 29th March, 1857, a young soldier, Mangal Pandey, stationed at Barrackpore, revolted single-handedly attacking his British officers. He was hanged, and not much notice was taken of this event. But it showed the resentment and anger aroused among the sepoys. Less than a month later, on 24th April, ninety men of the Third Native Cavalary, stationed at Meerut, refused to use the greased cartridges. Eighty-five of them were dismissed and sentenced to ten years imprisonment on 9th May. The rest of the Indian sepoys reacted strongly to this, and the next day, on 10th May, the entire Indian garrison revolted. After freeing their comrades and killing the British officers, they decided to march on to Delhi. This shows that they did have in mind some sort of alternative to the British. Another thing which makes it clear that it was not merely army mutiny was that the people from surrounding areas began to loot the military bazaars and attacked and burnt the bungalows of the British as soon as they heard the shots fired by the sepoys on their officers. The Gujars from the surrounding villages poured into the city and joined the revolt. Telegraph wires were cut and horsemen with warning messages to Delhi were intercepted. As soon as the sepoys from Meerut reached Delhi, the Indian garrison also rcvolted and joined the rebels. They now proclaimed the old Bahadur Shah, as the Emperor of India. lhus in twenty-four hours. What began as a simple mutiny had swelled into full-scale political rebellion. In the next one month the entire Bengal Army rose in revolt. Whole of North and North West India was up in arms against the British. In Aligarh, Mainpuri, Bulandshahr, Etwah, Mathura. Agra. Lucknow, Allahabad, Banaras, Shahabad, Danapur and East Punjab, wherever there were Indian troops, they revolted. With the revolt in army, the police and local administration also collapsed. These revolts were also immediately followed by a rebellion in the city and countryside. But in several places the people rose in revolt even before the sepoys. Wherever revolt broke out, the government treasury was plundered, the magazine sacked, bar'racks and court houses were burnt and prison gates flung

open. In the countryside, the peasants and dispossessed zamindars attacked the money lenders and new zamindars that had displaced them from the land. They destroyed the government records and money lenders' account books. They attacked the British established law courts, revenue offices, revenue records and *thanas* (police stations). Thus the rebels tried to destroy all the symbols of colonial power. Even when the people of particular areas did not rise in revolt, they offered their help and sympathies to the rebels. It was said that the rebellious sepoys did not have to carry food with them as they were fed by the villagers. On the other hand, their hostility to the British forces was pronounced. They refused to give them any help or information and on many occasions they misled the British troops by giving wrong information. In central India also, where the rulers remained loyal to the British, the army revolted and joined the rebels. Thousands of Indore's troops joined in Indore the rebellious sepoys. Similarly, over 20,000 of Gwalior's troops went over to Tantya Tope and Rani of Jhansi. In the whole of north and cent~al India the British power was limited only to the towns of Agra, and Lucknow. Elsewhere the entire British army and administration fell like a house of cards. One of the most remarkable thing about the rebellion was its solid Hindu-Muslim unity. The Hindu sepoys of Meerut and Delhi unanimously proclaimed Bahadur Shah as their Emperor. All the sepoys, whether Hindu or Muslim accepted the suzeranity of the Emperor and gave the call "chalo Delhi" (onward to Delhi) after their revolt. w- Hindus and Muslims fought together and died together. Wherever the sepoys reached, cow-slaughter was banned as a mark of respect to the sentiments of the Hindus.

Check Your Progress 1

1) How and by which sections was the Peasantry exploited? Write in ten lines.

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2) Read the following statements and mark them right (√) or wrong (X).

i) The Peasants joined the zamindars in fighting the British.

ii) The Sepoys perceived a threat to their religion by the British rule.

iii) The middle and upper class Indians were the beneficiaries of British rule.

iv) The exploitation of the most sections of the Indians was the long standing reason but the episode of greased cartridges provided the immediate reason for the revolt to break out

3) Write in about fifty words when, where and how the uprising started.

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14.4 COURSE OF THE REVOLT

In 1857 there were some 45,000 European and some 232,000 regular troops in India. The bulk of European units were concentrated as an army of occupation in the recently conquered Punjab. Thus between Calcutta and Delhi there were only 5 European regiments. On May 11 the Meerut Mutineers crossed over to Delhi and appealed to Bahadur Shah 11, the pensioner Mughal emperor to lead them and proclaimed him Shahenshah-Hindustan. By the first week of June mutinies had broken out in Aligarh, Mainpuri, Bulandshahr, Etawah, Mathura, Lucknow, Bareilly, Kanpur, Jhansi, Nimach, Moradabad, Saharanpur etc. By mid-June and September 1857 there had been mutinies in Gwalior, Mhow and Sialkot and in Bihar, in Danapur, Hazaribagh, Ranchi and Bhagalpur, and Nagode and Jabalpur in central India.

By September-October it was clear that the revolt would not spill across the Narmada. North of the Narmada the main axis of the revolt was represented by the river Ganga and the Grand Trunk Road between Delhi and Patna.

14.4.1 Revolt of the Army

It is important to note that a mere chronology of the mutinies conceals their pattern of diffusion. The mutinies travelled down the Ganga from Meerut and Delhi with a time gap between the various stations required for news to travel from one place to another. There were rumours that 30th May 1857 was the day fixed for a total destruction of white men all over north India. Just as news of the fall of Delhi had precipitated the revolt of the army and civil population, the fall of Lucknow in end of May set off uprisings in the district stations of 'Awadh. There is evidence of a certain element of coordination and communication (response to pre appointed signals etc.) among the mutinous regiments and in their actions though the coordinators themselves remained anonymous. The transmission of rumours (about rebel and British activity) and panic (about religion), which acted as springboards of action was facilitated by the fact that many soldiers were recruited from the same region. Awadh. The pattern of the

mutinies was the destruction of houses used or lived in by the British and the government treasures and jails. In Awadh the sepoys claimed that *Telinga Raj* (sepoy Raj - see Key Words) had arrived.

14.4.2 Revolt of the People

Chapatis were passed from village to village during the winter of 1856-7; it had different meanings for different people. Though by no means a cause of the disturbance, it was perceived as a message of an imminent holocaust. Rumours of greased cartridges, flour polluted with bone, and forcible conversion to Christianity transformed popular grievances against the British into a revolt.

In several places people collected, conferred and planned their attack on government and bahia property. People of neighbouring villages, after connected by kinship and caste ties, got together to make such attacks. Sadar stations were often attacked by people from anything between 30 to 60 villages. The pattern of attack was the same everywhere. Scores were settled with tax collectors, court officials, policemen and *banias*. Treasuries were looted, prisoners set free and bungalows set on fire. Clearly the rebels gave priority to political considerations and did not hesitate to destroy economic resources. For example, the coal mines in Kotah were damaged, canal Pock were destroyed to prevent a British battalion reaching Bulandshahr by boat. Similarly numerous attacks were also made on railways and factories by the United Provinces' rural poor who were dependent on them for their livelihood. In the course of the suppression of the revolt what struck the British was the remarkable solidarity among rebels. Most often pecuniary rewards could not induce betrayal, nor could they play off Hindu against Muslims.

Check Your Progress 2

1. Comment briefly on the geographical extent of the revolt of 1857. Answer in 5 lines.

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2. Mark the main rebel centres on a map of India.

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14.5 REBEL INSTITUTIONS

That the revolt of 1857 went beyond overthrowing the British is borne out by the

Organizational effects of the rebels:

- immediately after the capture of Delhi, a letter was sent to rulers of all the neighbouring states of present day Rajasthan soliciting their support,
- in Delhi, a court of administrators was set up. Of the 10 members 6 were from the

  army and four from other departments. Decisions were taken by majority vote.

Such attempts at organization were made at other centres too. We have supportive details from Awadh where Birjis Qadar, a minor, was crowned price by consensus, immediately after the British &feat at the battle of Chinhat on 30th June 1857. The rebels laid down conditions such as:

- orders from Delhi were to be obeyed
- the wazir would be selected by the army and
- officers of the army would be appointed after the consent of the army.

The Awadh rebel executive structure comprised two separate decision-making bodies:

- one consisting of bureaucrats and court officials to see to organization and payments,
- the 'military cell' composed of sepoys or rebel soldiers and a few court officials

It is significant that at this early stage of the revolt, around July757, there was no *talukdar* in any important decision-making body. In fact orders-were issued to *talukdars* and zamindars, with promises of land or revenue, asking them to join the revolt to end British rule.

Notwithstanding occasional divisions in the rebel ranks, as for example between the followers of Birjis Qadar and Maulvi Ahmadullah in Awadh, it is the efforts

to maintain a semblance of organisation that is remarkable. Guidelines were laid down for sepoys and commanders for their operations. Efforts were made for the regular payment of rebel troops either by the conversion of ornaments into coins or granting remission of revenue to talukdars for them to pay the troops.

14.6 SUPPRESSION AND REPRESSION OF THE COLONIAL STATE

Isolated outbreaks that had occurred in as distant places as Peshawar, Singapore, Kolhapur, Chittagong and Madras were put down with ease. By early July with the core area 01 the revolt emerging clearly, the British moved into mop it up. About 39,000 troops were shipped, on request from London to &d the suppression operation. By the end of November37 troopships crammed the Hughli.

By mid-August the mutineers were driven out of Arrah, Gaya, and Hazaribagh in Bihar. Delhi fell on 21st September after an attack with heavy casualties. Thereafter many rebels shifted to Lucknow. In Awadh, Lucknow was the chief focus of fighting. Rebels were supplied with ammunition from the districts and a workshop was set up in Faizabad to repair heavy guns. Many talukdars fought personally. According to one estimate 100,000 of the 150,000 who died in Awadh were civilians. After the fall of Lucknow in March 1858, the rebels dispersed into the countryside and enclaves of resistance emerged to the south and south-east and the west and north-west of Lucknow. Till September-October 1858 the rebels believed that one combined, well planned attack could still dislodge the British from Awadh and tried to coordinate campaigns in this direction.

- Prominent among the leaders of the revolt were
- the Rani of Jhansi who died fighting in June 1858,
- Nana Saheb, the adopted son of the last Peshwa, Baji Rao 11, who led the mutiny

  at Kanpur and escaped to Nepal in the beginning of 1859,
- Kuer Singh of Arrah who had carved a base of himself in Azarngarh and Ghazipur

  and died fighting in May 1858.
- Begum Hazrat Mahal who escaped to Nepal,
- Maulvi Ahmadullah who carried on the revolt around the borders of Awadh and

  Rohilkhand till his death in June 1858,
- Tantia Tope, uprooted from his base on the Jumna at Kalpi, reached Gwalior in

June 1858, crossed the Narmada in October and was captured and put to death in

1859.

For more than a year the rebels had struggled with limited supply of arms and ammunitions and a poor system of communication. Many sepoys were amazed at the resources of the British and had expected that the British would need French help to put them down. On their part, the British surrounded Awadh, tackled Delhi and the Jumuna area, and then concentrated on Awadh.

Check Your Progress 3

1) Give two examples of rebel institutions with brief details.

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2) To what extent does the defence of Lucknow indicate the intensity of the revolt?Answer in 50 words.

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14.7 AFTERMATH OF THE REVOLT

The suppression of the revolt of 1857 was accomplished by a two pronged approach of military strategy and the submission of *talukdars*. The reassertion of British control was thereafter reinforced with princely support based on an assurance of non-interference in adoption question.

14.7.1 Landlords

In the North Western Provinces the British made widespread confiscation and redistribution of land. Some incomplete figures show that land assessed at Rs. 17 lakhs was confiscated and land assessed at Rs. 9 lakhs was given in reward. In making land rewards it was the larger landholders who were preferred.

After the fall of Lucknow a proclamation was issued confiscating proprietary right in land in the whole of Awadh except six specific estates. Some 22,658 out of 23,543 villages were restored to *talukdars* in return for submission and loyalty in the form of collection and transmission and loyalty in the form of collection and transmission of information. Village proprietors in Awadh were to remain under-proprietors or tenants-at-will. There was, however, fierce opposition to the *talukdari* settlement among the villagers in several Awadh districts in 1859-60. Faced with agrarian strife the government had to limit the rental demand of the *talukdars* against inferior holders to a fixed amount (1866). It was also decided that underproprietary rights enjoyed at any time during 12 years prior to annexation were to be protected.

14.7.2 Princes

It may be recalled that the British policy of annexing states had been one of the many accumulating grievances as is evident both from the leadership provided to the rebels by the Rani of Jhansi, Nana Saheb and Begum Hazarat Mahal, and the proclamations of the rebels.

At one point during the revolt Canning had observed that had it not been for the 'patches of native government' like Gwalior, Hyderabad. Patiala, Rampur and Rewa serving as 'break-waters to the storm of 1857' the British would have been swept away.

Therefore, the Queen's proclamation of 1858 declared that the British had no desire to extend their existing territorial possessions. To perpetuate dynasties Canning dispensed with the doctrine of lapse and allowed all rulers the right of adoption.

Territorial and monetary awards were bestowed on princes who had remained loyal i.e. those of Gwalior, Rampur, Patiala and Jind.

In 1861 a special order of knighthood, the star of India, was instituted, of which the recipients were the rulers of Baroda, Bhopal, Gwalior, Patiala and Rampur.

However, if the princes were given security from annexation it was made clear that in the event of 'misgovernment' or 'anarchy' the British would step in to take temporary charge of a native state.

14.7.3 The Army

A despatch from Charles Wood, Secretary of State for India to Canning in 1861 sums up the thrust of British policy towards the army in the post-mutiny years. 'If one regiment mutinies I should like to have the next regiment so alien that it would be ready to fire into it.'

Soldiers from Awadh, Bihar and Central India were declared to be non-martial and their recruitment cut down considerably.

Sikhs, Gurkhas and Pathans who assisted in the suppression of the revolt were declared to be martial and were recruited in large numbers. Briefly, community,

caste, tribal and regional loyalties were encouraged so as to obstruct the forging of the solidarity that was evident among the sepoys from Awadh in 1857.

14.7.4British Policy After Revolt

In 1858, as a consequence of the revolt of 1857, a Government of India Act abolished the East India Company. India was to be governed directly in the name of the Crown of England. The November 1858 royal proclamation gave out:

- that those who laid down arms by 2 January 1859 would be pardoned except those

  directly involved in the murder of British subjects,
- that official service would be open to all and
- due regard would be given to ancient usages and customs of India.

To the British, the appeal to Bahadur Shah II to head the revolt was confirmation of the theory of a Muslim plot to restore the Mughal regime at Delhi. This belief in official circles in fact explains the official attitude towards the community in the post-revolt years.

So marked was the anti-Muslim attitude that Saiyid Ahmad Khan felt the need to -write a pamphlet titled 'who were the Loyal Musalmans?' In that he quoted numerous instances of Muslim collaboration with the British.

Check Your Progress 4

1) How did the British tackle the landlord rebels? Answer in 5 lines.

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2) Comment on the change in British policy towards the native states after the revolt. Answer in 50 words.

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3) Explain British attitudes towards the Muslims after the revolt. Answer in 50 words.

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14.8 LET US SUM UP

This Unit tried to establish that

- the core area of the revolt was to the north of the Narmada,
- there was a pattern in the diffusion of the revolt down the Ganga,
- the pattern of revolt in the army and of the people,
- all was not chaos when the rebels took over,
- it took the British a year to suppress the revolt.

The events of 1857, which we have discussed in the Unit are important not only because they represented the crystallisation of popular feelings against the alien rule but also because of the many changes that they produced in the country. These changes pertained not only to the policy formulation and the political structure but also to popular beliefs, ideas, and attitude regarding the nature of British rule. The invincibility of the British rule was shattered once for all and the stage was set for an organised and long drawn out struggle against the alien rule. This led to the beginning of the National Movement which ultimately, ended the foreign rule and brought independence to the country in 1947. After 1858 the British saw themselves with a 'halo of permanence', ruling with the strength of having overcome a revolt of the dimensions discussed above.

14.9 KEY WORDS

Bania - Money-lender

Ilaqa - Area of land

Lineage - Ancestral

Pattidar - Joint ownership of village

Talukdar - Holder of a taluk (estate in which the holder is responsible for revenue collection from a number of dependent villages)

Telinga Raj - originates from the practice of calling sepoys Telingas from the time Clive brought Telugu speaking sepoys from Madras in 1756-7.

14.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

1) (a) √ (b) √ (c) x (d) √

2) See Sub Sec. 14.2.1 3) See Sub Sec. 14.3

Check Your Progress 2

1) See Sec. 14.3

2) In an outline Map of India mark the places

Check Your Progress 3

1) See Sec. 14.5

2) See Sec. 14.6

Check Your Progress 4

1) See Sub-sec. 14.7.1

2) See Sub-sec. 14.7.2

3) See Sub-sec. 14.7.4

UNIT 15 THE BEGINNINGS OF INDENTURED LABOUR

15.0 Objectives

15.1 Introduction

15.2 Transition from Slavery

15.3 The Recruitment and Transportation of the Indentured Labour

15.4 Life and Work on the Plantations

15.5 Let Us Sum Up

15.6 Keywords

15.7 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

15.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit you should be able to:

- Understand how the beginnings of indentured labour was a direct consequence of the territorial expansion of the British empire and foundation of its economic interests
- Understand how the establishment of the indentured labour system came about with the abolition of slave labour in the British colonies stimulating the demand for labour
- Understand some aspects of recruitment and transportation of the indentured labour to the colonial plantations
- Understand some aspects of their life and work on the plantations and the plantation economies

15.1 INTRODUCTION

The beginnings of the indentured system of labour can be traced back to the period in which the British empire was expanding and consolidating its territories and settlements.In this period in ie the the late eighteenth and the early nineteenth century the British mercantile and commercial interests established large plantations of commercial crops such as sugar in the island colonies of Mauritius,West Indies and Surinam etc. The early plantation economies were mostly worked upon by slave labour brought from African slave trade.However with the growth of slave abolition movements in Britain in the early nineteenth century the British government was forced to abolish slave labour.But the plantation economies continued to demand labour.According to the then current wisdom developing under the industrial revolution this labour had to be free or contract labour.But given the overall colonial conditions prevailing it turned out that this labour which was sought to be supplied from the older colonies like

India it could be anything but free. The British turned to recruit labour mainly from the economic crisis ridden tracts of Eastern India(mainly today's Bihar and U.P.) or to certain tracts of the Madras and Bombay Presidency.It must be at the outset be clarified that the indenture system in the Assam tea plantations,Sri Lanka or some parts of Africa like Kenya is not being discussed here as it began at a later date ie. after 1860s.And as Rana Behal points out that the Assam tea plantations did not have a background of slave labour.

15.2 TRANSITION FROM SLAVERY

The plantation economies of Mauritius etc. relied extensively on slave labour in the early period.In Mauritius as Richard Grove points out the early planters were given land or concessions so as to build their plantations.Gradually a social, economic and legal system was built up to maintain and develop the sugar colony.The slave labour was kept in control by this complex system.Any attempt to deviate from the requirements of labour was met with a swift attack.The slaves resorting to escape this system were declared marrons or absconders and quickly rounded up and subjected to severe beatings by a whip called cat'o nine tails.In many cases they were subjected to long sentences in prisons where many of them perished. Thus practices of ill treatment of the labour were established which became a part of the legacy of these plantation colonies.

Subsequently with the growth of abolitionist movements in Britain and elsewhere the system of slave labour was abolished by 1833.Then after that there was an attempt to retain the slave labour by an apprentice system in the West Indies and Mauritius.The erstwhile slaves were brought back as apprentice workers in the plantations to fulfil the ever growing demand of labour by the plantations. The end of slavery had a rather severe impact on the plantation dominated economies; especially with the reluctance of the former slaves to work at the wages offered by the planters. Interim measures were tried in terms of this 'apprenticeship' system which allowed cultivation to continue by having former slaves to work as apprentices. The scheme was basically a forced apprenticeship of four to six years for the former slaves above age six and a half. It was actually a form of compensation to the planters, mandating the emancipated slaves to provide 40V2 hours a week of unpaid labour to their former masters over the six years of apprenticeship following emancipation. It was also expected that by this the freed persons would be familiarised to become wage labour since the apprentices were supposed to be paid for any extra labour. But, in effect many planters used the apprenticeship laws to exploit as much unpaid labour as possible and simultaneously reducing some customary distributions of food and clothing to the prevailing plantation workers, thus turning 'apprenticeship' into 'little more than a mitigated form of slavery' . The reluctance of ex-slaves to continue forced the West Indian legislatures finally to terminate apprenticeship in 1838, earlier than was initially planned. This finally brought the complete emancipation of former slaves on 1 August 1838 in the British West Indies and nine months later in Mauritius.

These were early attempts to foster a move towards wage labour in the plantation colonies.But it soon became clear that the slave labour could not be thus retained so then moves began to explore fresh sources of labour in the British empire.The plantation owners turned to the British government for this purpose.The British government then initiated the moves to recruit and hire labour from the Asian colonies. It was thus that in 1834 the first batch of labour from Eastern India called the dhangurs were moved to Mauritius for work in the plantations.Before that the British also experimented with moving convict labour to Mauritius for building infrastructure in the colony of Mauritius.

However the demands of the time were to hire wage labour.For this the indentured system was devised as a form of contract labour who would sign the contract for a period of five years to serve in the plantation colonies.Attempts were also made to recruit Chinese labour as Brij Lal tells us.The Chinese workers were considered as:

‘ well made, robust, and active, inured to field labour, and able to work during the heat of the day, in fact, they are equal to our best Creole field labourers; they are eager for gain, and will do anything for money; they are quiet and very intelligent for their class, and not lazy. They value money, and are shrewd; and I do think no class of men can be better adapted to our wants than they are.’(Colonial Report)

But the Chinese were considered to be unfit for long term labour on plantations as with the first opportunity they would move out of the plantations for making money out of trade and allied activities.

As Brij V. Lal points out ‘’these failures focused attention on India as a reliable and enduring source of labour. In the nineteenth century, India remained the principal source of labour supply to the sugar colonies of the British Empire. An important attribute of the Indian indenture was that it was state regulated, not privately contracted. It was conducted on the basis of a written and supposedly voluntarily accepted contract or ‘agreement’ (dubbed girmit in Fiji), which the emigrants signed (or, more commonly, affixed their thumbprints to) before leaving India. In the early years of indentured emigration, the terms and conditions were not uniform; indeed, they varied widely in content and application. But by the 1870s, a more or less uniform document was in place for all the indentured labour-recruiting colonies. The contract stipulated, among other things, the nature and conditions of employment (dealing principally with work related to the manufacture of sugar cane), remuneration for labour on the plantations, entitlement to medical and housing facilities and, above all, the availability of a return passage to India after a period of ‘industrial residence’ in the colonies, usually 10 years after the date of arrival. There can be little doubt that the majority of the emigrants intended their excursion out of India to be a brief sojourn, a temporary expedient to cope with their fluctuating economic fortune at home. Many did return: up to 1870, 21 per cent of the emigrants had returned, and in the decade after 1910, one emigrant returned for every two who had embarked for the colonies.”

Lord Salisbury the Colonial Secretary of State in fact saw the recruitment of indentured labour from India as a humanist enterprise and stated:

" While, then, from an Indian point of view, emigration, properly regulated, and accompanied by sufficient assurance of profitable employment and fair treatment, seems a thing to be encouraged on grounds of humanity, with a view to promote the well-being of the poorer classes; we may also consider, from an imperial point of view, the great advantage which must result from peopling the warmer British possessions which are rich in natural resources and only want population, by an intelligent and industrious race to whom the climate of these countries is well suited, and to whom the culture of the staples suited to the soil, and the modes of labour and settlement, are adapted. "

Indeed it was thus the system of indentured labour was sought to be rationalized.The unfreedom which occurred in the working out of this system(see below) too was rationalized away. It was the overall goal of attaining free trade and a perceived free movement of people that was used to rationalize the recruitment and deployment of the indentured labour.

Check Your Progress 1

1. What was the 'apprentice system'? Discuss.

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2. Comment on the nature of the contract signed by the indentured labour.

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15.3 THE RECRUITMENT AND TRANSPORTATION OF THE INDENTURED LABOUR

As was required by the emerging demands about wage labour the process of recruitment and transportation of the indentured labour was subjected to an elaborate process of creating records of the details of the labour so recruited and sent on ships from India to the distant plantation colonies.The recruitment system

had an ensemble of emigration agents and local recruiters in small towns and villages of Eastern India,Western India and Southern India.The local recruiters also relied on the group leaders of laboring men called sirdars who offered to facilitate the recruiters and the emigration agent as described by Marina Carter in her work ‘’Sirdars Servants and Coolies’”. Besides the labour which turned up at the Emigration Depot looking for work was also recruited.We also have accounts of fraudulent recruiting where labour was beguiled in to emigrating to the plantation colonies.It was reports such as these which initiated the arguments about unfree labour in the context of the plantation colonies.Initially the labour which went to these colonies migrated as single person labour.As Marina Carter pointed out in the case of Mauritius the migration of families begins only by 1870s.Recent research has criticized Grierson’s view that only the lower castes migrated to the plantation colonies.As Brij Lal points out’from the data on the indentured migrants from Fiji, it can safely be assumed that the pattern for Fiji obtained in other sugar colonies as well. Of Fiji’s 45,000 North Indian migrants, Brahman and allied castes numbered 1,686; Kshattriya and allied castes 4,565; Bania 1,592; middling agricultural and artisan castes (Kurmi, Ahir, Jat, Lodha) 15,800; menial and low castes (Chamar, Pasi, Dusadh) 11,907; and Muslims 6,787.28 In other words, the emigrating indentured population represented a fair cross-section of rural Indian society. And this is not surprising, for it was the cultivating castes, without social or institutional protection, that bore the brunt of the deteriorating economic situation in the country in the late nineteenth century: increases in land rent, often demanded in cash rather than kind, increasing fragmentation of ownership rights and subdivision of property, which particularly affected the lower-order cultivators, while the widespread decline in the handicraft industry in UP was ruinous to the artisan class. To many in distress and despair, migration offered a way out. Prolonged absence was not contemplated, but in time an intended sojourn was transformed into permanent separation.”

It has been pointed out in recent researches that single women too migrated in large numbers.Often the practice was to contract depot marriages and separate after reaching their destinations.Indenture was seen as some kind of liberation from the oppressive economic and patriarchal conditions by these women as recent feminist writings point out.However the Mauritian records point to immense tensions in the Indian communities in Mauritius. Police records of the 1880s evidence large numbers of murders of women in the Indian communities which the Mauritian police called ‘wife murders’.

The journey undertaken by the newly recruited indentured labour in the ships to the plantation colonies was another defining factor in the movement of this labour to the plantation colonies.A prescribed diet as detailed in the Protector of Emigrant’s reports points to the tough conditions of travel.The travel itself was arduous lasting months and with little medical or health support.Many migrants died in the voyage itself.On the other hand lasting bonds were formed during the course of the journey between the migrants who often called each other ‘jehaji

bhai'or ship brothers as Richard Allen points out and helped them to generate an extensive network of friends and we

ll wishers in the difficult days to be spent on the plantation colonies.

The British government on its part undertook an extensive documentation of the emigrants leaving the shores of India.The National Archives in India and the Mahatma Gandhi Institute in Mauritius for example have a large collection of registers called the ship registers.In this register there are detailed records of each migrant coming on particular ships.These details include the names of the emigrant,age,district and village of origin.In fact these records are still used by the current descendants of the migrants to trace their roots back to India.Besides these registers there are marriage registers in these archives in Mauritius which detail the court marriages contracted by these migrants while in Mauritius.These records were all compiled under various laws and regulations passed by the British government.IM Cumpston puts the number of Indian immigrants to the different colonies of Britain on the basis of these records as follows:

Indians in British Colonial Territories- 1870: Mauritius - 351,401 British Guiana - 79,691 Trinidad- 42,5 I9 Jamaica - 15,I69 Other W.I. islands -7,02I Natal(South Africa)- 6,448 (IM Cumpston, A Survey of Indian Immigration to British Tropical Colonies to 1910,Population Studies,1956)

15.4 WORK AND LIFE ON THE PLANTATIONS

Upon arrival in the plantation colonies the workers were allotted to different estates both singly and in groups.Here they were subjected to a brutal regime of work.The work of the labour was either time work or task work.The schedule was grueling. After being woken up at 5.00AM in the morning and after a hurried breakfast they were off to the fields till 4.00PM.The work varied according to the stage of the sugarcane crop production.In the initial stage they would be planting the young plants and later looking after the irrigation etc. and then later the work of harvesting.As Bisoondoyal puts it most of the work involved'ploughing, hoeing, weeding, harvesting and planting cane.'Brij Lal points out that the newly arrived workers would be given time work and then details 'The labourers were promised that they would do either 'time work' or 'task work'. The new arrivals were usually allotted time work but as they became accustomed to the working conditions on the plantations, they were assigned task work—a task being defined as six hours of continuous work that an able-bodied man could be expected to accomplish. In Trinidad, by 1913, almost 90 per cent of the work was by task. In most cases, it was the overseer who decided what task was appropriate. Sometimes, tasks were defined on the basis of what a few chosen men could accomplish. And the task could be varied. If a worker accomplished his work in good time, he could return the next day to find his task extended. Sometimes, the standard from one plantation could be applied to another without considering the topography of the fields. And sometimes the workers would be paid nothing at all for a partially completed task.'

While on plantations the workers were governed by a strict and brutal regime of regulations for work.There were strict penalties for different offences. The labour ordinances provided a very large number of offences for which the employers could punish their labourers. In Trinidad between 1910 and 1912, the most important offences included desertion (1,668); absence from work without a lawful excuse (1,466); refusing to begin or finish work (1,125); and vagrancy (983).36 Other offences included malingering, using threatening words and breach of hospital regulations. In Fiji, the employers were able to obtain prosecutions for 82 per cent of all the cases that they brought before the courts. Indentured labourers were also punished for not registering their marriages, when they had no idea about such a process. , Most of their their marriages were carried out according to Hindu and Muslim rituals. And the labourers knew that they could have a week's pay cut or face a month in prison if they spread waste within 60 yards of a stream running through a plantation. Indentured labourers convicted of violating the labour ordinance could either be fined or imprisoned. The planters could legally recover lost work by extending the contract by the number of days they were absent from the plantations.

Besides the indentured labour on the plantations were also subjected to practices of their employers carried over from the days of slave labour.Often they were subject to beatings and whipping for their perceived lack of work.Moreover as Marina Carter points out even the laws curtailing their movement were executed in ways which were a throwback to the days of slavery.The most famous of these were the anti-vagrancy laws and ordinances passed in Mauritius.These laws and ordinances were passed to prevent the labourers moving from one plantation to the other or for taking up trades of hawkers or vegetable sellers to supplement their meager incomes.The in stitutional mechanisms of courts and the police carried in to effect these laws in the way the slaves were treated in the early era.The police organized vagrant hunts in the manner of absconding slave(marron) hunts to track down the labour which absconded from work or the plantations.The most affected were the time expired immigrants whose contract for work on the plantations was over and they were either waiting to reengage or settle in nearby villages or waiting to go back to India.

So severe was the implementation of these anti vagrancy laws was that even a plantation owner in Mauritius(De Plevitz) was moved to draft a petition for these immigrants to the government for appealing against these laws.Following is a description of the petition and some of the testimonies from this petition:

"The Indian Immigrants were helpless before the harshness of the Labour Law of 1867 and the Ordinance and Regulations of 11th Nov 1868. They could expect no mercy from the police. Rarely, if ever, they had justice at the hands of the local magistrates. They had many grievances to complain of but to whom to do so? They were not conversant with English and French and must have had a very poor command of Creole. Worst of all they were in an alien land where the people from whom they might expect justice were the most interested in making them the victims of their grabbing selfishness.

Fortunately for them they found De Plevitz taking interest in their cause not because he had anything to gain from this but because he was imbued with feelings of humanity among inhuman employers. As soon as they came to know that he sympathised with them, the Indians began to come to him with the stories of the atrocities perpetrated on them. At last they had found a man who could guide them to formulate their grievances. At the request of these Indians, De Plevitz, as he himself said later, drew up the petition which was translated into Tamil and the Nagri dialects. Copies of these translations were circulated throughout the island through agents who undertook the task, not for lucre, but convinced of the noble nature of their sacrifice. De Plevitz also went about the island accompanied by an Indian boy who explained the contents of the petition to those Indians who showed interest in it.

In spite of everything done to discourage De Plevitz, the petition was signed by nearly 10,000 a fact which in itself shows the utter despair in which the Indians found themselves. The value of the petition lies in the fact that apart from the complaints of a general nature made by the Indians against the police, the local magistrates and the Protector of Immigrants, De Plevitz had taken care to append to it individual cases in which the petitioner gave a detailed account of his being victimised on some occasion lately. To give an idea of these cases, we think it relevant to mention the following two cases:

(I) Suroop, Old Immigrant, No 18 682, gardener at Mr Bouquet's estate, Nouvelle Decouverte

In the month of January 1871, I was informed that my friend Lalchurn at Poudre D'or, was very ill – accordingly I started to go and see him. I was near Mr De Chazal's estate, when I met a Sergeant of Police, who arrested me, locked me for the night, and brought me next day before the magistrate at Poudre d'Or. I showed my ticket and police pass to the magistrate, but the pass being for the district of Pamplemousses, I was condemned as a vagabond to one month's imprisonment with hard labour.

(sgnd. Suroop)

(2) Rajchunder, Old lmmigrant No 138,928

In December 1865 I went in the Depot to have my photograph taken. I had to go on five successive days, and was each day turned out with violence. There were peons there with rattans, who struck me with them and turned me out; I remonstrated against this. I had to travel 100 miles backwards and forward, and pay 4s before I could obtain the photograph.

(sgnd. Rajchunder)

The Chamber of Agriculture watched with indignation every move of De Plevitz. The president of that body Dr lcery, wrote to the Governor that a monster meeting had been held at Montagne Longue, which De Plevitz had presided. In fact it was not a meeting at all. What was imputed as such was only the

considerable number of Indians who came at a shed or 'hangar' adjoining Mr De Plevitz's house and whose grievances were taken down in writing either by Plevitz himself or one of his assistants. The Chamber of Agriculture was not always impartial.

Commenting on the clamour of Dr lcery for the application of the rigour of the law against De Plevitz, the Royal Commissioners of 1872 bring out that 25 years earlier a president of the Chamber of Agriculture, Mr Currie, denounced the application of the same law when Governor Sir William Gomm attempted to restrict some of the meetings and proceedings of the Merchants' and Planters' Association.

On the occasion Mr Currie wrote: "You will not fail to mark the extreme illiberality of that law and its flagrant opposition to the spirit of British legislation…

"But however illiberal that law may be, and inconsistent with British freedom, Sir William Gomm's interpretation of it goes still deeper into arbitrary rule, and aims at the total prohibition of anything like associations. Indeed, His Excellency is evidently desirous of extinguishing in this colony every means of collective representation on the measures of the local government." "(From Glimpses from Mauritian History)

This account shows the pathetic conditions prevailing in the 19th century Mauritius.Freedom of movement and freedom of association were both curtailed by these draconian laws and ordinances.Inspite of these constraints however the lives of the indentured labour were seen by some scholars s as constituting both constraining and liberating experiences.The old hierarchies of caste and religion had dissolved to a certain extent but the new ways of a freer life were gradually emerging.As Brij Lal puts it:

" It was simultaneously an enslaving as well as a liberating experience for many. There were many in the indentured population whose birth had confined them to the lower stratum of Indian society, a fate ordained by divine injunction, it was said, from which there was no escape in this life or the next. To them, migration and indenture offered the possibility of realising their individual humanity. Everywhere they grabbed the opportunity with relish. Indenture was a crucible in which was forged a new society. Old notions of purity and impurity, taboos regarding food, diet, social space, the rituals of prayer and worship collapsed over time to be replaced by new norms and conventions. Caste, as a social institution, became anachronistic; its protocols of approved behaviour unenforceable. Remuneration during indenture was based on the amount of work accomplished, not on social status. The paucity of women necessitated marriages across caste and sometimes religious lines. Everywhere, people continued to 'play' at caste long after indenture had ceased, but its relevance and legitimacy were gone. Fragmentation was accompanied by the process of reconstitution."

The changes in the lives of the indentured labor occurred also when they moved out of the plantations to settle in the nearby villages after the expiry of their indenture.As their number increased new settlements arose where the immigrants combined their old ways of life brought from home and the new experiences they had gathered while working in the plantation economies.The sugar economies they were working in also went through periods of turmoil in the second half of the 19th century. Consequently the plantation owners started selling portions of their lands. Some of these lands were bought by the time expired indentured labour since the 1850s.This process initially called petit morcellement(or small parceling of lands by plantation owners) in Mauritius expanded in to a process of grand morcellement(or large scale parceling of lands by the plantation owners).Subsequently by the late nineteenth century we see the emergence of the Indians as small scale plantation owners who supplied raw sugarcane to the plantation sugarmills.In the process they became stakeholders in the sugar economy as planters rather than wage labourers.This initiated a process of social,economic and political change in the plantation economies where the Indians came to dominate all aspects of life in these plantation colonies.

Check Your Progress 2

1. Did only lower caste migrants go to the plantation colonies? Discuss.

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2. Comment on the nature of plantation work done by the indentured immigrants.

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15.5 LET US SUM UP

After reading this unit you saw how the beginnings of the indentured labour system made a transition from slavery.The pressures to abolish slavery in Britain made the colonial administrators and the plantation owners look for a system of free labour.But the rigidities of contract and the legacy of slavery led to what Hugh Tinker called 'a new system of slavery'. The recruitment processes and the treatment of the migrant indentured labour in fact created another system of unfree labour which was still justified as better than slavery by the notions of freedom and free labour upheld by the economists and administrators of that time.

15.6 KEYWORDS

Abolitionist movements: movements to abolish slavery in the British colonies in Britain.

Free trade: the notion under capitalism which advocated free movement and exchange of goods , services and manpower across countries to facilitate the growth of capitalism.But as various historians have shown the colonial context invariably led to regulations and fetters which did not allow the actual free trade to happen

Morcellement: In Mauritius the portioning and selling off of estates in times of global financial crisis in the second half of the 19th century.These lands were mostly sold to Indians who by the late 19th century emerged as sugar growers in their own right.

15.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress1

1. See Section 15.2 for your answer.
2. See Section 15.2 for your answer.

Check Your Progress2

1. See Section 15.3 for your answer.
2. See Section 15.4 for your answer.

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