CHAPTER 4: ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE, POLICY AND IMPACT OF BRITISH RULE

THE ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE

▪ Misrule by Company’s Officials
  The commercial officials of the Company were the earliest British administrative officials also and in the beginning their job was to collect revenue and do a few other civic, duties. They were ignorant of the problems and methods of Indian administration the Company richer as well as for building up their personal fortunes, the officials practically plundered Bengal and brought it on the verge of ruin.

▪ The Regulating act 1773

  ✓ Regulating Act of 1773 was the first landmark in the constitutional development of India.

KEY PROVISIONS

❖ Creation of Office of Governor of the Presidency of Fort William
❖ The presidencies of Bombay and Madras were made subordinate to the Presidency of Calcutta.
❖ The Governor of Bengal was designated the Governor of the Presidency of Fort William. This Governor General was to be assisted by an executive council of four members.
❖ The regulating act provided for establishment of a Supreme Court of Judicature at Fort William comprising one chief justice and three other judges.
❖ East India Company was kept under the Control of the King of England.

DEFECTS IN THE REGULATING ACT 1773

❖ The act rendered the Governor General powerless before his colleagues because he had no veto power.
❖ The provisions regarding the Supreme Court at Fort Williams were vague and defective.
❖ The presidencies of Bombay and Madras continued to act on their discretion on pretext of emergencies. They also continued wars and alliances without caring in the least bit to Presidency of Bengal.
❖ The parliamentary control ineffective in the sense that there was no concrete arrangements to study and scrutinized the reports sent by Governor General in council.
❖ There was nothing in the act which could address the people of India, who were paying revenue to the company but now were dying in starvation in Bengal, Bihar and Orissa

▪ Pitt’s India Act 1784

  Pitt’s India Act 1784 was passed in the British Parliament to rectify the defects of the Regulating Act 1773. It resulted in dual control or joint government in India. The Pitts India act made the company directly subordinate to the British government.

  ❖ For the purpose of Joint Government, a Board of Commissioners for the Affairs of India called Board of Control was created. The Secretary of the State was entitled as the President of the Board of Control.
  ❖ The Governor General’s council was now reduced to 3 members, one of whom was to be the commander-in-chief of the King’s army in India.
  ❖ Severe punishment was provisioned for corrupt officials.
One of the provisions of Pitt's India Act forbade the policy of conquest. But this provision was seldom observed

### Organization of Police

- Lord Cornwallis organised a regular police force to maintain law and order by going back to and modernizing the old Indian system of THANAS (circles) in a district under a DAROGA and superintendent of police (SP) at the head of the district. He relieved zamindars of their police duties.
- The daroga thus became a new instrument of control for the Company's government in the diwani provinces, or as the peasants looked at them, as the local representatives of the "aura and authority of the Company Bahadur."
- By the nineteenth century the daroga-zamindar nexus thus emerged as a new instrument of coercion and oppression in Bengal rural life.

### Organization of the Civil Service

- The "steel-frame" of the British administration was its civil service. The miserable failure of the Company's commercial officials to do administrative jobs because of their corrupt practices, forced Olive and Warren Hastings to adopt some corrective measures.
- But it was Cornwallis who was the real founder of the British civil service in India.
- He tried to check corruption through raising salary, strict enforcement of rules against private trade, debarring civil servants from taking presents, bribes etc., enforcing promotions through seniority.
- He separated the commercial and revenue of administration.
- Indians were not allowed to enter the civil service. In fact, in 1793 a rule was made that no Indian would be eligible for posts carrying £ 500 or above as salary.
- In 1800, Wellesley (governor-general, 1798-1805) set up the Fort William College for training of new recruits. But the college did not continue for long, as Wellesley soon lost the favour of the Court of Directors, and the latter feared that such a training programme might result in the loyalties of the civil servants shifting from London to Calcutta.

### Administration of Justice

- The British continued for some time with the laws which were then current in India. According to the Indian tradition personal laws, i.e., laws regarding marriage, inheritance etc. inheritance, etc., were governed according to customs and scriptures.
- The revenue and criminal cases were decided by rulers or judges appointed by them.
- For a while the English judges of the Supreme Court which was established in 1774 tried to apply English law. An Act of 1781 restricted the application of English law to Englishmen only. This need was met by the Bengal Regulation of 1793. This Regulation bound the courts to take decisions on the rights of persons and property of the Indians according, to the provisions contained in it.
- In 1833, the Indian law commission appointed codify the Indian system of law and court procedure. Courts to administer justice were set up in every district. The establishment of 'rule of law' by draining laws.

### Growing Control of British Government

- In 1813 the Company lost its monopoly of trade in India which was now open to all British people by the Charter Act of 1833, the company lost its monopoly of trade with China which it had enjoyed even after 1813. The Company was also asked to wind up its commercial activities in India. Thus, the commercial functions of the British Indian administration were done away with.
- This centralized system of administration established the complete domination of the Governor General-in-Council over the entire British Indian administration.
BRITISH ECONOMIC STRUCTURE

▪ **IMPACT ON VILLAGE ECONOMY**
When the British established their rule, they allowed the old system to continue under the supervision of their own officials and their Indian agents. But the peasants and the landholders were harassed and oppressed by the officials. Villages which were self-sufficient before were left ruined by British policies, as discussed further.

▪ **NEW SYSTEMS OF LAND-HOLDING AND LAND REVENUE**

➢ **PERMANENT SETTLEMENT**
- The Permanent Settlement of Bengal was brought into effect by the East India Company headed by the Governor-General Lord Cornwallis in 1793.
- This was basically an agreement between the company and the Zamindars to fix the land revenue. First enacted in Bengal, Bihar and Odisha, this was later followed in northern Madras Presidency and the district of Varanasi.
- Cornwallis thought of this system inspired by the prevailing system of land revenue in England where the landlords were the permanent masters of their holdings and they collected revenue from the peasants and looked after their interests. He envisaged the creation of a hereditary class of landlords in India. This system was also called the Zamindari System.

➢ **RYOTWARI AND MAHALWARI SYSTEMS**

**Ryotwari system**
- This system of land revenue was instituted in the late 18th century by Sir Thomas Munro, Governor of Madras in 1820. This was practised in the Madras and Bombay areas, as well as Assam and Coorg provinces.
- In this system, the peasants or cultivators were regarded as the owners of the land. They had ownership rights, could sell, mortgage or gift the land. The taxes were directly collected by the government from the peasants.
- The rates were high and unlike in the Permanent System, they were open to being increased. If they failed to pay the taxes, they were evicted by the government.

**Mahalwari system**
- The government of Lord William Bentinck, Governor-General of India (1828 to 1835) introduced the Mahalwari system of land revenue in 1833. This system was introduced in North-West Frontier, Agra, Central Province, Gangetic Valley, Punjab, etc.
- This system divided the land into Mahals. Sometimes, a Mahal was constituted by one or more villages. Tax was assessed on the Mahal. Each individual farmer gave his share. Here also, ownership rights were with the peasants.
- Revenue was collected by the village headman or village leaders (lambardar).

▪ **Industry and Trade**
- The Industrial population of India before modern methods of production were introduced, were of two types, the village artisans and those engaged in specialised crafts in the towns. The ordinary village artisans were the weavers of coarse cloth, carpenters and smiths producing implements, and potters making domestic vessels.
- The cotton textiles formed the chief material among these specialised products.
The ship-building industry of India in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries had earned fame and the most important ship-building yards were at Goa, Surat, Masulipatnam etc.

- **Decline of Indian Industries**

  **Reasons**
  
  - With the gradual abolition of the princely order in the British territories, demand for finer varieties of Indian industrial products went on declining.
  - The British officials who replaced the nobles did not patronize the Indian craftsmen to an equal degree.
  - Passing of laws in Britain in the year 1700 and again in 1720 prohibiting the entry of many varieties of the Indian textiles. These restrictions Europe naturally affected the Indian textile industry very adversely but still the export trade in cotton and silk products and other commodities.
  - In order to increase the Company's profits, its agents forced the producers of cotton cloth and other commodities to charge for their goods 20 to 40 percent less than the price these fetched in the open market.
  - Another oppressive practice used by the Company's officials was to manipulate the prices of raw cotton.
  - The appearance of the machine-made cloth which was cheaper than hand-made products of India struck the greatest blow to textile industry.

**Social Legislation**

- The most significant social legislation of the British government in India was the banning of this barbarous practice in 1829. This happened when William Bentinck was the Governor-General.
- Through the efforts of India reformer, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar the government passed the Widow Remarriage Act in 1856. This Act made it lawful for a Hindu widow to marry again.
- A law was passed in 1843 which made slavery illegal in India.

**Beginning of Modern Education**

- A few new types of schools giving instruction in English language and other branches of western learning had started functioning first in the Madras region and then in Bengal and Bombay.
- The first educational institutions supported by the government were the Calcutta Madrassa and Benaras Sanskrit College established in 1781 and 1791 respectively. The purpose of opening them was to train Indians so that they could help the Company's British officials in administration.
- The Fort William College was started in Calcutta in 1801 and a handful of Indian scholars under a British principal were engaged there to acquaint the British civilians with the languages, history, law and customs of India.
- The first step towards the educational development in India by the British was taken after the charter act of 1813. This Act sanctioned one lakh of rupees for the purpose of education in India.
- In 1835, the government decided in favour of the promotion of European literature, and sciences among the natives of India.