

# Doctrine of Lapse

The '**doctrine of lapse**' was an annexation policy adopted by the East India Company and was used until 1858. It was initially established by the East Indian Company in 1847 and applied on a large scale by Lord Dalhousie, which was why he was vastly linked to it.

The doctrine of lapse was mainly a narrative of the rules of succession for the Indian Hindu princely states. As the East India Company was largely influenced and controlled by the British then, all the decisions related to the succession of a kingdom were to be run through the British government.

The doctrine of lapse policy was majorly a product of the 'lapse of paramountcy', closely followed by the British rulers while ruling over India. Lord Dalhousie believed that Western rule was much more effective than Eastern rule and, therefore, should be enforced wherever possible.

## Important Features of the Doctrine of Lapse

The doctrine of lapse was majorly looked upon as an imperialistic approach by the Indian rulers. They did not favour this policy as it assigned more power to the British government. The key features of the doctrine of lapse were as follows:

- The doctrine of lapse policy applied to the states that did not have a competent ruler or a legal heir to the throne.
- It automatically implied the removal of the princely status of the states and coming under the control of Lord Dalhousie and his administration.
- The Doctrine of Lapse policy asserted that if a state does not have a legal heir, it has to seek permission from the British government to adopt a son for succession to the throne.
- The British government had the right to deny a son's adoption for succession outright.
- It was advertised that the doctrine of lapse was based on Hindu law, but that was not the case, unfortunately. The Hindu law permitted the adoption of a son for succession, but the annexation policy did not favour it.
- According to this doctrine policy, the adopted son will also not be entitled to any kind of benefits, including the pension and titles that his father might have received earlier.
- Nana Sahib, the adopted son of Maratha Peshwa Baji Rao II, was also denied his father's pension and titles.

## Doctrine of Lapse: Causes and Effects

The British government's forceful seizure or annexation of the Indian states under the doctrine of lapse was looked down upon by the Indian rulers. It was made to appear as an administrative decision but was a secret mission for Dalhousie to gain more power over the Indian territory. It also had major effects later.

## Causes behind the Doctrine of Lapse Policy

The doctrine of lapse was put forward as an administrative decision during the British raj in India. There were several reasons behind this move of Lord Dalhousie & the East India Company, such as

- The hidden motive of the East India Company & Lord Dalhousie was to gain more power & increase their territory.
- It was directly proportional to the British government's increased revenue.
- The doctrine of lapse policy was a solution to the ever-increasing debts of the East India Company and for fulfilling the requirement of funds for various other purposes.
- This move appeared as a corrective measure for the princely states that did not have a proper heir to the throne or appeared to be incompetent.

## Effects of Doctrine of Lapse

The annexation policy of the 'doctrine of lapse' had several negative and extensive effects. There was large opposition from the Indian rulers to this policy as it increased power and control of the Indian territory for the East India Company. There were certain effects of the doctrine of lapse that were majorly noticed.

- Firstly, the policy enforcement led to several states' heavy annexation.
- The acquisition of the princely Indian states led to an increase in the territory, revenue, and power of the East India Company.
- The states annexed by the doctrine of lapse lost their freedom to operate and eventually converted into British colonies.
- The policy also led to heavy resentment among the Indian princes of all the states, eventually leading to a major outbreak of Indian mutiny and the revolt that followed.
- The adopted son of the famous Jhansi ki rani was also denied succession to the throne which led to a major fallout.

## States Annexed under Doctrine of Lapse

The 'doctrine of lapse' by Lord Dalhousie aimed at regulating the succession of Indian princely status and bringing it under the control of the East India Company. It aimed to annex the states that did not have a competent ruler or an immediate legal heir.

Satara was the **first state annexed under the doctrine of lapse** in 1848 as the state's ruler died, and no male heir was present. Here is a list of the states annexed by the doctrine of lapse.

States	Year of Annexation
Satara	1848
Angul	1848

Arcot	1855
Awadh	1856
Assam	1838
Banda State	1858
Jaitpur	1849
Jalaun	1840
Jaswan	1849
Jhansi	1853
Kachar	1830
Kangra	1846
Kannanur State	1819
Kittur	1824
Kodagu	1834
Kozhikode (Calicut)	1806
Ballabgarh	1858
Kullu State	1846
Kurnool	1839
Kutlehar	1825
Makrai	1890

Nagpur	1853
Nargund State	1858
Punjab	1849
Ramgarh State	1858
Sambalpur	1850
Surat	1842
Siba	1849
Tanjore	1855
Tulsipur	1854
Udaipur	1852

