

Important Acts during East India Company Rule - Complete List since 1600

Indian history constitutes a very important part of most **government and Banking exams**. India was a British colony for a very long time and the process India's acquisition by the Crown itself is very significant in terms of understanding the course of historical events. If you are preparing for **UPSC, SSC CHSL, SSC MTS, SSC CGL, IBPS PO, IBPS Clerk, IPPB or any exam of similar level**, you need to learn and remember the entire **timeline of events and acts** during the East India Company rule. This article will step-by-step trace the **Acts, Charters** and events that took place **ever since East India Company took over the country's land and people**.

Read carefully to know more about the Charters and Acts during East India Company Rule. If you find this article helpful, you can download it as PDF and make it a part of your history notes.

East India Company's Advent

The English East India Company was established on 31 December **1600** as per the Royal Charter issued by the Queen Elizabeth II. After defeating the Portuguese in the ***Battle of Swally in 1612***, the East India Company gained a foothold in India. They were **allowed to start a trading post in Surat in 1613** by Emperor Jahangir whom they approached with an appeal to start a factory in Surat in 1608.

Eventually, East India Company began to spread across the country. In **1651**, the East India Company established a factory in Bengal and slowly the **conflicts between Nawab of Bengal and the Company** increased and resulted in the ***Battle of***

Plassey in 1757. The victory in the Battle of Plassey helped the Company gain power and authority and the Nawabs of Bengal had to obey them.

After the victory in the **Battle of Buxar in 1764** between the Company and the combined forces of Mughal Emperor Shah Alam II, Mir Qasim (Nawab of Bengal) and Shuja-ud-daula (Nawab of Awadh), the Company extended its reign and started to interfere with the internal affairs of Indian princely states mainly by introducing **subsidiary alliance**.

*****Note:** Subsidiary alliance is a system of ruling a dominated nation. Introduced by Lord Richard Wellesley, in the 19th century, the system worked as follows: The British would enter into a contract with a local ruler. This ruler had to accept many conditions; among them was that he would only deal with the British, and no other European forces, that he must allow British forces in the territory he ruled, and that he would not declare war without asking the British first.***

During the Company Rule till 1858, they framed many acts and regulations which still have an influence over the Indian governance. Let us look at all those Acts in chronological order.

List of Acts during East India Company Rule

#1. Regulating Act of 1773: Towards a central administration

1. Through this act, the **Parliament of British government** established many economic and administrative reforms.
2. This act brought India **formally under the rule of Crown through the East India Company**.
3. It laid the foundation for the **central administration** in India.
4. It designated the Governor of Bengal as the Governor-General of Bengal and governors of other presidencies - Madras and Bombay - were made subordinates to him. (*First GGB: Lord William Hastings*)

5. It provided for the **establishment of a Supreme Court at Calcutta**.
6. It **established an Executive Council** to assist the Governor-General and Court of Directors as the governing body of the Company.

#2. The Settlement Act of 1781: Separation of Executive and Judiciary

Also known as the **Amending Act or the Declaratory Act** of 1781, it intended to rectify the shortcomings of the **Regulating Act of 1773**.

1. Earlier, the Company employees were under both the GGB and the Supreme Court, SC. Through this act, the powers of the SC was limited.
2. The geographical **jurisdiction of the SC got limited to Calcutta**, and thus also, limiting its appellate jurisdiction and required appeals to be taken to the GG in council.
3. Religion based laws were established and **separate Hindu and Muslim law systems** came into existence.
4. Though the **GG could issue rules, ordinances and regulations**, they were to be registered in the SC. *(But this doesn't mean Judicial Review in Indian Constitution was adopted from the British, it was adopted from the United States)*

#3. Pitt's India Act of 1784

1. The Company's territories were called the British possessions in India for the first time.
2. **A dual system of control:** It created a Board of Control to manage political affairs of India and limited the responsibilities of the Court of Directors to commercial affairs.
3. Named after the British Prime Minister William Pitt, the Act provided for a **joint government of British India by the Company** and the Crown with the government holding the ultimate authority.

4. The Act differentiated Company's political activities from commercial ones.

#4. Charter Act of 1786

1. This Act drew a clear line of distinction between the Crown and the Company. The Company became more accountable to Crown.
2. In special cases, the GG could now override the majority of his Council and act on his own special responsibility.

#5. Charter Act of 1793

1. As compared to the rest of the acts during East India Company Rule, the 1793 Act was not particularly controversial measure. The company's charter was renewed for a further 20 years by this Act.
2. The only major change was that this Act empowered the East India Company to grant licenses to both individuals and Company employees to trade in India, which paved the way for **shipments of opium** to China.
3. Also, the Senior officials could not leave the country without permission.

#6. Charter Act of 1813

1. This Act opened India to **missionaries**.
2. Renewed the charter of the company for a **further 20 years**, but **deprived the company of its Indian trade monopoly** except for trade in tea and the trade with China.

#7. Charter Act of 1833

1. It made the Governor-General of Bengal the Governor-General of India (*First GGI: Lord William Bentinck who prohibited sati system*)
2. It deprived the governors of Bombay and Madras of their legislative powers.

3. It proposed to conduct an open competition for the selection of civil servants to include Indians as well, but because of the strong opposition from the Court of Directors, it got cancelled.

#8. English Education Act of 1835

1. Of all the Acts during East India Company rule, this one had just one important point about it. This Act by the Council of India reallocated funds from the Company for spending on education & literature in India.

#9. Charter Act of 1853: Separation of Legislative and Executive

1. It established the Indian (Central) Legislative Council, which functioned as mini-parliament.
2. It introduced a local representation in the LC and appointed four members selected by the governments of Madras, Bengal, Agra and Bombay. (*Do not confuse this with Indian representation*)
3. It introduced the open examination for the selection of civil servants.

#10. Government of India Act of 1858

1. After the sepoy mutiny of 1857, the Crown took over from the East India Company. India was now to be governed by the Queen.
2. A **council of 15 members** was set up to be headed by the **Secretary of State**.
3. The Crown was empowered to appoint a Governor-General and the Governors of the Presidencies.

After the GOI Act of 1858, the Crown assumed supremacy over India. At this point, the **Company rule ended** in India and **British Raj** started.

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