

P.R. GOVERNMENT COLLEGE (A), KAKINADA
NAAC Accredited “B++” Grade Institution (CGPA
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DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

Study Material for students



Prepared by B V V SESHADRI AKULA

TOPIC: Lord William Bentinck.

Lord William Bentinck.

William Bentinck, the second son of Prime Minister William Bentinck, enjoyed early privilege and influence. He joined the British army at 16, rising to the rank of colonel by 1798. He also served as a Member of Parliament for over 30 years.

Governor of Madras: In 1803, Lord William Bentinck was appointed Governor of Madras. He faced significant challenges, including the Vellore Mutiny of 1806. Bentinck was held responsible and recalled from his post in 1807.

First Governor-General of India: Lord William Bentinck was appointed Governor General of Bengal in 1828. He became the first Governor General of India after the passage of the Charter Act of 1833.

Major Reforms by Lord William Bentinck.

1. Educational Reforms by Lord William Bentinck.

- **Introduction to English Education:** In 1835, Bentinck passed the English Education Act, making English the medium of instruction. English replaced Persian as the language of the higher courts.
- **Calcutta Medical College:** Lord William Bentinck founded Calcutta Medical College in 1835. It was the first medical college in Asia and was the first to focus on a curriculum and teaching methodology based on Western medical practices.

2. Social Reforms by Lord William Bentinck.

- **Abolition of Sati:** Lord William Bentinck is best remembered for his efforts to abolish the inhumane Practice of Sati, the ritual burning of widows on their husbands' funeral pyres.
- **The Regulation XVII of 1829,** which Bentinck enacted, made Sati illegal and punishable as a criminal offence. The Regulation was expanded to include the presidencies of Madras and Bombay in 1830.
- **Abolition of Thuggee:** Bentinck took strong measures to suppress the practice of Thuggee, a network of criminal gangs involved in robbery and murder under the guise of religious duty.
- **Under his administration,** Captain William Sleeman led extensive campaigns to apprehend and punish the Thugs, significantly reducing their activities.
- **Ban on Female Infanticide:** Lord William Bentinck prohibited female infanticide, the practice of killing certain newborn girls, and human sacrifices. He not only prohibited female infanticide but also made it a criminal punishable offence.

3. Administrative Reforms by Lord William Bentinck.

- **Judicial Overhaul:** The four Circuit Courts were abolished, and their functions were transferred to collectors overseen by the Commissioner of Revenue and Circuit.

- **Codification of Laws:** Bentinck initiated the process of codifying Indian laws, which laid the groundwork for the development of a unified legal system in British India.
- A Law Commission was established under Macaulay to codify Indian laws. As a result, in later years, the Civil Procedure Code (1859), Indian Penal Code (1860), and Criminal Procedure Code (1861) were drafted.
- **Police Reforms:** Bentinck abolished the office of the Superintendent of Police (SP). The magistrate was now to lead the police force in his jurisdiction, with the commissioner in each division serving as the SP. This arrangement resulted in a disorganised police force, placing a significant burden on the collector/magistrate.

Financial Reforms by Lord William Bentinck.

- **Officer Measures:** Bentinck reduced officer salaries and allowances, reduced the number of officers on payroll and eliminated the double battalion system in the military department.
- **Land Revenue Measures:** Bentinck improvised the Mahalwari System in parts of Northern India to improve land revenue collection. This system assessed revenue based on the collective responsibility of villages (mahals) rather than individual landowners.

Significant Events under Lord William Bentinck.

- **Mysore Annexation (1831):** In the late 1820s, there was a civil uprising in Mysore due to either the Maharaja's poor governance and high taxation or the financial exploitation of British residents.
- **Charter Act of 1833:** The Charter Act of 1833, passed during Bentinck's tenure, marked a significant change in the governance of British India.
- **Coorg War of 1834:** The Coorg War was a short but bloody conflict in 1834 between the British East India Company and the State of Coorg.
- **Annexation of Cachar (1834):** The British East India Company, under Governor-General Lord William Bentinck, annexed Central Cachar in 1834 after the death of its ruler, Govinda Chandra.
- Lord William Bentinck's tenure as Governor-General of India was defined by progressive reforms aimed at modernizing administration and addressing social injustices.