

# Famine

## Background:

The British had a ruthless economic agenda when it came to operating in India. After the Treaty of Allahabad a famine struck Bengal. But the company didn't even address the issue. More ironically, they were irritated with the conflict in their revenue generation because of famine. Such famines also struck in 1788, 1876, 1943-44 and many more times. But none of them was as severe as the one in 1770. Previously when a problem or issue occurred the indigenous ruler took steps instantly and solved the issue but this was not the case this time. The company totally neglected the well being of Bengali people.

"I hate indians. They are a beastly people with a beastly religion. The famine was their own fault for breeding like rabbits."  
— Winston Churchill.

### Cause of Famine:

1. Under the treaty of Allahabad the British gained the diwani rights.
2. They started imposing various rules and regulation in name of tax collection.
3. Previously, the revenue was 10-15% of the annual harvest. But it increased to 50% overnight.
4. There were a minor shortage of crops in 1768.
5. In 1769, there was severe drought and starvation deaths started to occur. The company totally ignored this situation.



6. The death rose to millions in 1720. The company was irritated at the low revenue being generated.

7. Furthermore, they forced farmers to harvest cash crops like indigo, poppy to make up for the loss in revenue collection.

8. Farmers were not allowed to store harvest

9. They further increased the revenue to 60% to the farmers who could pay.

10. Dual administration of the British East India Company came into play. Role.

**Result of Famine:** The situation soothed with heavy rainfall till 1721 but not before taking the lives of 10 million people. Millions more than the total death of the world war two. The economy of India was devastated. Many areas

became jungles and empty. Bengal was the worst hit. Ironically, the net profit of the British increased from 15 million to 30 million rupees but they were still struggling financially. So they passed the Tea act (1723) to the British parliament which allowed them to export tea free of tax.