



Governor-General of India



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Governor-General of India

The **Governor-General of India** (or, from 1858 to 1947, officially the **Viceroy and Governor-General of India**, commonly shortened to **Viceroy of India**) was originally the head of the [British administration in India](#) and, later, after [Indian independence](#) in 1947, the representative of the [Indian head of state](#). The office was created in 1773, with the title of *Governor-General of the Presidency of Fort William*. The officer had direct control only over Fort William, but supervised other [East India Company](#) officials in India. Complete authority over all of [British India](#), was granted in 1833, and the official came to be known as the "Governor-General of India".

In 1858, as a consequence of the [Indian Mutiny](#) the previous year, the territories and assets of the East India Company came under the direct control of the [British Crown](#); as a consequence the [Company Raj](#) was succeeded by the [British Raj](#). The Governor-General (now also the Viceroy) headed the central government of India, which administered the [provinces of British India](#), including the [Punjab](#), [Bengal](#), [Bombay](#), [Madras](#), the [United Provinces](#), and others. However, much of India was not ruled directly by the British Government; outside the provinces of British India, there were hundreds of nominally independent [princely states](#) or "native states", whose relationship was not with the British Government or the [United Kingdom](#), but rather one of [homage](#) directly with the British Monarch as sovereign successor to the [Mughal Emperors](#). From 1858, to reflect the Governor-General's new additional role as the Monarch's representative in re the fealty relationships vis the princely states, the additional title of Viceroy was granted, such that the new office was entitled *Viceroy and Governor-General of India*. This was usually shortened to *Viceroy of India*.

The title of Viceroy was abandoned when British India split into the two independent [dominions](#) of [India](#) and [Pakistan](#), but the office of Governor-General continued to exist in each country separately—until they adopted republican constitutions in 1950 and 1956, respectively.

Until 1858, the Governor-General was selected by the Court of Directors of the East India Company, to whom he was responsible. Thereafter, he was appointed by the Sovereign on the advice of the British Government; the [Secretary of State for India](#), a member of the [UK Cabinet](#), was responsible for instructing him or her on the exercise of their powers. After 1947, the Sovereign continued to appoint the Governor-General, but thereafter did so on the advice of the newly-sovereign [Indian Government](#).

Governors-General served at the pleasure of the Sovereign, though the practice was to have them serve five-year terms. Governors-General could have their commission rescinded; and if one was removed, or left, a provisional Governor-General was sometimes appointed until a new holder of the office could be chosen. The first Governor-General of [British India](#) was [Lord William Bentinck](#), and the first Governor-General of [independent India](#) was [Louis, Lord Mountbatten](#).

History

Many parts of the Indian subcontinent were governed by the East India Company, which nominally acted as the agent of the [Mughal Emperor](#). In 1773, motivated by corruption in the Company, the British government assumed partial control over the governance of India with the passage of the [Regulating Act of 1773](#). A Governor-General and [Supreme Council of Bengal](#), were appointed to rule over the Presidency of Fort William in [Bengal](#). The first Governor-General and Council were named in the Act.

The [Charter Act 1833](#) replaced the Governor-General and Council of Fort William with the Governor-General and Council of India. The power to elect the Governor-General was retained by the Court of Directors, but the choice became subject to the Sovereign's approval.

After the [Indian Rebellion of 1857](#), the East India Company's territories in India were put under the direct control of the Sovereign. The [Government of India Act 1858](#) vested the power to appoint the Governor-General in the Sovereign. The Governor-General, in turn, had the power to appoint all lieutenant governors in India, subject to the Sovereign's approval.

India and Pakistan acquired independence in 1947, but Governors-General continued to be appointed over each nation until republican constitutions were written. [Louis Mountbatten, 1st Earl Mountbatten of Burma](#) remained Governor-General of India for some time after independence, but the two nations were otherwise headed by native Governors-General. India became a secular republic in 1950; Pakistan became an Islamic one in 1956.

Functions

The Governor-General originally had power only over the [Presidency of Fort William in Bengal](#). The Regulating Act, however, granted them additional powers relating to foreign affairs and defence. The other Presidencies of the East India Company ([Madras](#), [Bombay](#) and [Bencoolen](#)) were not allowed to declare war on or make peace with an Indian prince without receiving the prior approval of the Governor-General and Council of Fort William.

The powers of the Governor-General, in respect of foreign affairs, were increased by the India Act 1784. The Act provided that the other Governors under the East India Company could not declare war, make peace or conclude a treaty with an Indian prince unless expressly directed to do so by the Governor-General or by the Company's Court of Directors.

While the Governor-General thus became the controller of foreign policy in India, he was not the explicit head of British India. That status came only with the Charter Act 1833, which granted him "superintendence, direction and control of the whole civil and military Government" of all of British India. The Act also granted legislative powers to the Governor-General and Council.

After 1858, the Governor-General (now usually known as the [Viceroy](#)) functioned as the chief administrator of India and as the Sovereign's representative. India was divided into numerous [provinces](#), each under the head of a [governor](#), [Lieutenant Governor](#) or [Chief Commissioner](#) or [Administrator](#). Governors were appointed by the [British Government](#), to whom they were directly responsible; Lieutenant Governors, Chief Commissioners, and Administrators, however, were appointed by and were subordinate to the Viceroy. The Viceroy also oversaw the most powerful [princely rulers](#): the [Nizam of Hyderabad](#), the [Maharaja of Mysore](#), the [Maharaja \(Scindia\) of Gwalior](#), the [Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir](#) and the [Gaekwad \(Gaekwar\) Maharaja of Baroda](#). The remaining princely rulers were overseen either by the [Rajputana Agency](#) and [Central India Agency](#), which were headed by representatives of the Viceroy, or by provincial authorities.

The [Chamber of Princes](#) was an institution established in 1920 by a [Royal Proclamation](#) of King-Emperor [George V](#) to provide a forum in which the princely rulers could voice their needs and aspirations to the government. The chamber usually met only once a year, with the Viceroy presiding, but it appointed a Standing Committee, which met more often.

Upon independence in August 1947, the title of Viceroy was abolished. The representative of the [British Sovereign](#) became known once again as the Governor-General. [C. Rajagopalachari](#) became the only [Indian](#) Governor-General. However, once India acquired independence, the Governor-General's role became almost entirely ceremonial, with power being exercised on a day-to-day basis by the Indian cabinet. After the nation became a republic in 1950, the [President of India](#) continued to perform the same functions.

Viceroy and Governor-General of India



Standard of the Viceroy and Governor-General of India (1885-1947)



Flag of the Governor-General of the [Dominion of India](#) (1947-1950)



[Lord Mountbatten](#), the last Viceroy of India & the first Governor-General during the dominion period

Style	His Excellency
Residence	Viceroy's House

Appointer	<ul style="list-style-type: none">
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Formation	20 October 1774
First holder	William Bentinck
Final holder	Chakravarthi Rajagopalachari
Abolished	26 January 1950



[Warren Hastings](#), the first Governor-General of [Fort William](#) from 1773 to 1785.

Council

The Governor-General was always advised by a Council on the exercise of his legislative and executive powers. The Governor-General, while exercising many functions, was referred to as the "Governor-General in Council."

The Regulating Act 1773 provided for the election of four counsellors by the East India Company's Court of Directors. The Governor-General had a vote along with the counsellors, but he also had an additional vote to break ties. The decision of the Council was binding on the Governor-General.

In 1784, the Council was reduced to three members; the Governor-General continued to have both an ordinary vote and a casting vote. In 1786, the power of the Governor-General was increased even further, as Council decisions ceased to be binding.

The Charter Act 1833 made further changes to the structure of the Council. The Act was the first law to distinguish between the executive and legislative responsibilities of the Governor-General. As provided under the Act, there were to be four members of the Council elected by the Court of Directors. The first three members were permitted to participate on all occasions, but the fourth member was only allowed to sit and vote when legislation was being debated.

In 1858, the Court of Directors ceased to have the power to elect members of the Council. Instead, the one member who had a vote only on legislative questions came to be appointed by the Sovereign, and the other three members by the [Secretary of State for India](#).

The [Indian Councils Act 1861](#) made several changes to the Council's composition. Three members were to be appointed by the Secretary of State for India, and two by the Sovereign. (The power to appoint all five members passed to the Crown in 1869). The Viceroy was empowered to appoint an additional six to twelve members (changed to ten to sixteen in 1892, and to sixty in 1909). The five individuals appointed by the Sovereign or the [Indian Secretary](#) headed the executive departments, while those appointed by the Viceroy debated and voted on legislation.

In 1919, an Indian legislature, consisting of a Council of State and a Legislative Assembly, took over the legislative functions of the Viceroy's Council. The Viceroy nonetheless retained significant power over legislation. He could authorise the expenditure of money without the Legislature's consent for "ecclesiastical, political [and] defense" purposes, and for any purpose during "emergencies." He was permitted to veto, or even stop debate on, any bill. If he recommended the passage of a bill, but only one chamber cooperated, he could declare the bill passed over the objections of the other chamber. The Legislature had no authority over foreign affairs and defence. The President of the Council of State was appointed by the Viceroy; the Legislative Assembly elected its President, but the election required the Viceroy's approval.

Style and title

Until 1833, the title of the position was "Governor-General of Bengal". The [Government of India Act 1833](#) converted the title into "Governor-General of India." The title "Viceroy and Governor-General" was first used in the queen's proclamation appointing Viscount Canning in 1858. It was never conferred by an act of parliament, but was used in [warrants of precedence](#) and in the statutes of knightly orders. In usage, "viceroy" is employed where the governor-general's position as the monarch's representative is in view. The viceregal title was not used when the sovereign was present in India. It was meant to indicate new responsibilities, especially ritualistic ones, but it conferred no new statutory authority. The governor-general regularly used the title in communications with the [Imperial Legislative Council](#), but all legislation was made only in the name of the Governor-General-in-Council (or the Government of India).

The Governor-General was styled *Excellency* and enjoyed precedence over all other government officials in India. He was referred to as 'His Excellency' and addressed as 'Your Excellency'. From 1858 to 1947, the Governor-General was known as the Viceroy of India (from the French *roi*, meaning 'king'), and wives of Viceroys were known as Vicereines (from the French *reine*, meaning 'queen'). The Vicereine was referred to as 'Her Excellency' and was also addressed as 'Your Excellency'. Neither title was employed while the Sovereign was in India. However, the only reigning British Sovereign to visit India during the period of British rule was [King George V](#), who accompanied by his [consort Queen Mary](#) attended the [Delhi Durbar](#) in 1911.

When the [Order of the Star of India](#) was founded in 1861, the Viceroy was made its Grand Master *ex officio*. The Viceroy was also made the *ex officio* Grand Master of the [Order of the Indian Empire](#) upon its foundation in 1877.

Most Governors-General and Viceroys were [peers](#). Frequently, a Viceroy who was already a peer would be granted a peerage of higher rank, as with the granting of a [marquessate](#) to [Lord Reading](#) and an [earldom](#) and later a marquessate to [Freeman Freeman-Thomas](#). Of those Viceroys who were not peers, [Sir John Shore](#) was a [baronet](#), and [Lord William Bentinck](#) was entitled to the [courtesy title 'Lord'](#) because he was the son of a [Duke](#). Only the first and last Governors-General – [Warren Hastings](#) and [Chakravarti Rajagopalachari](#) – as well as some provisional Governors-General, had no honorific titles at all.

Flag

From around 1885, the Viceroy of India was allowed to fly a [Union Flag](#) augmented in the centre with the 'Star of India' surmounted by a Crown. This flag was not the Viceroy's personal flag; it was also used by Governors, Lieutenant Governors, Chief Commissioners and other British officers in India. When at sea, only the Viceroy flew the flag from the mainmast, while other officials flew it from the foremast.

From 1947 to 1950, the Governor-General of India used a dark blue flag bearing the royal crest (a lion standing on the Crown), beneath which was the word 'India' in gold [majuscules](#). The same design is still used by many other Commonwealth Realm Governors-General. This last flag was the personal flag of the Governor-General only.

Residence

The Governor-General of Fort William resided in [Belvedere House, Calcutta](#), until the early nineteenth century, when [Government House](#) was constructed. In 1854, the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal took up residence there. Now, the [Belvedere Estate](#) houses the [National Library of India](#).

[Lord Wellesley](#), who is reputed to have said that 'India should be governed from a [palace](#), not from a [country house](#)', constructed a grand [mansion](#), known as Government House, between 1799 and 1803. The mansion remained in use until the capital moved from Calcutta to [Delhi](#) in 1912. Thereafter, the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, who had hitherto resided in [Belvedere House](#), was upgraded to a full Governor and transferred to Government House. Now, it serves as the residence of the Governor of the Indian state of [West Bengal](#), and is referred to by its [Bengali](#) name [Raj Bhavan](#).

After the capital moved from Calcutta to Delhi, the Viceroy occupied the newly built Viceroy's House, designed by [Sir Edwin Lutyens](#). Though construction began in 1912, it did not conclude until 1929; the palace was not formally inaugurated until 1931. The final cost exceeded £877,000 (over £35,000,000 in modern terms) – more than twice the figure originally allocated. Today the residence, now known by the Hindi name of '[Rashtrapati Bhavan](#)', is used by the [President of India](#).

Throughout the British administration, Governors-General retreated to the [Viceregal Lodge \(*Rashtrapati Niwas*\)](#) at [Shimla](#) each summer to escape the heat, and the government of India moved with them. The Viceregal Lodge now houses the [Indian Institute of Advanced Study](#).

Insignia



Badge of the Viceroy and Governor-General (1885-1947)



Standard of the Viceroy and Governor-General (1885-1947)



Standard of the Governor-General (1947-50)



[Lord Curzon](#) in his robes as Viceroy of India, a post he held from 1899 to 1905.



[Lord Mountbatten](#) addressing the [Chamber of Princes](#) as Crown Representative in the 1940s



The [Viceregal Lodge](#) in [Simla](#), built in 1888, was the summer residence of the Viceroy of India



Viceregal Lodge, Delhi, where Viceroy Lord Hardinge stayed (1912-31), now the main building of the [University of Delhi](#)



Flag of the Governor General of India (1947-50)



[Government House](#) served as the Governor-General's residence during most of the nineteenth century.

See also

- [List of governors-general of India](#)
- [Commander-in-Chief, India](#)

- [British Empire](#)
- [Emperor of India](#)
- [Indian independence movement](#)
- [Council of India](#)
- [British Raj](#)
- [Secretary of State for India](#)
- [India Office](#)
- [Indian Civil Service](#)
- [Partition of India](#)
- [History of Bangladesh](#)
- [History of India](#)
- [History of Pakistan](#)

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1. [↑] The term [British India](#) is mistakenly used to mean the same as the British Indian Empire, which included both the provinces and the [Native States](#).
2. [↑] ["Imperial Impressions"](#). Hindustan Times. 20 July 2011. Archived from [the original](#) on 17 July 2012.
3. [↑] [Queen Victoria's Proclamation](#)
4. [↑] H. Verney Lovett, "The Indian Governments, 1858-1918", *The Cambridge History of the British Empire, Volume V: The Indian Empire, 1858-1918* (Cambridge University Press, 1932), p. 226.
5. [↑] Arnold P. Kaminsky, *The India Office, 1880-1910* (Greenwood Press, 1986), p. 126.

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How the Governor Generals and Viceroys were involved in India? You probably try to know their involvement in the field of Indian administration policies, social activities and cultural activities. So dear aspirants, let's find out in the bellow. Governors of India (1757 – 1774). Names. Year. Lord William Bentinck (1828 – 1833): He is the most liberal and enlightened Governor General of India: He abolished Sati rites in 1829 and eliminates Thugs in 1830. He passed the Charter Act of 1833. Governor Generals of India (1833 – 1858). Lord William Bentinck (1833 – 1835): He is the first governor-general of India and regarded as the 'Father of Modern Western Education in India'. Sir Charles MetcalFe (1835 – 1836). Abolished all restriction on vernacular press called Liberator of the press.

Governor Generals of India. General awareness is an important part of any entrance examination but is often ignored by candidates as they tend to focus more on other subjects like Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, and Analytical Reasoning. In any competitive examination, around 25% of the paper features questions that are based on General Knowledge. The Regulating Act of 1773 created the office with the title of Governor-General of the Presidency of Fort William, or Governor-General of Bengal to be appointed by the Court of Directors of the East India Company (EIC). The Court of Directors assigned a Council of Four (based in India) to assist the Governor General, and decision of council was binding on the Governor General during 1773-1784.