

## BRITISH INDIA 1790s–1947

Days of special worship for the whole of British India could be ordered by the governor-general, acting under the general terms of the East India Act, 1793, and, after the Government of India Act 1853, by the viceroy. Governors of particular presidencies and (later) provinces might also order special worship, in some cases to apply or reinforce the orders of the governor-general or viceroy. Dioceses of the Church of England were established in Calcutta (1814), Madras (1835), Bombay (1837), Colombo (1845), and Rangoon (1877), with the bishop of Calcutta acting as metropolitan; their bishops would act on the orders or requests by governors or the viceroy, but on occasion they acted independently, appointing acts of special worship by instructions to their clergy. The bishops sometimes issued their own forms of prayer, but they also used (or modified) forms issued by the archbishops of Canterbury: the first known use of these English forms is in 1802 (thanksgiving for peace, in Madras). In 1930 the dioceses were re-constituted as the Church of India, Burma and Ceylon. Other churches in the sub-continent usually participated in the acts of worship. Government records and newspaper reports also describe participation by members of some non-Christian religions in the sub-continent, and from the 1850s governors-general and viceroys explicitly appealed to all religious communities.

Many acts of special worship organized in India were related to occasions which had been or were being observed in Britain, or which were ordered or encouraged from London for observance in the whole empire. Details of these British occasions and communications with the Indian authorities are given in *National Prayers* vols 2 and 3. These occasions are indicated in the list as follows:

† occasions ordered on receipt of information of an occasion ordered in the UK. The Indian observance could be later because of slow communications from London, and in some cases from a decision to selection a different date, which would avoid monsoons or hot weather.

\* indicates occasions ordered or encouraged from London for observance in the overseas colonies and dominions. These too might be at a different date to the UK observance.

The annual English ‘state’ religious commemorations would have been observed in places of worship of the Church of England, and all churches observed Armistice day and Remembrance Sunday: see the list of ‘Anniversary commemorations in the empire’.

Unless otherwise stated, the area of observance is all of British India (a territory which expanded considerably during the 19th century). Calcutta, Bombay and Madras refer to the dioceses. For gazette and newspaper references, the year of publication is the same as the year of observance, unless otherwise stated. The series of sources which are available online are not always continuous, so it is likely that some occasions have been missed.

*Allen’s Allen’s Indian mail*

asap as soon as possible; indicates where allowance was made for late receipt of orders in particular territories.

BL British Library

BT *Bombay Times*

G *Gazette*

metropolitan form form of prayer issued by bishop of Calcutta as ‘metropolitan’ for use in all Anglican churches

Tol *Times of India*

Wilson *The Journal of Bishop Daniel Wilson of Calcutta, 1845–1857*, ed. Andrew Atherstone (Woodbridge, 2015)

	Date	area (if not all)	type	authority	Cause	sources
1799	Tu 4 June	Madras	thanksgiving day	gov-general proclamation	victory at Seringapatam	<i>Calcutta G</i> , 20 June
1800	Th 6 Feb		thanksgiving day	gov-general proclamation	victory over Mysore, and general peace	<i>Calcutta G</i> , 15 Jan
1802	Th 7 October † Wed 1 Dec or asap † Wed 19 Jan 1803	Madras Fort William	thanksgiving day	gov proclamation gov-general proclamation gov-general proclamation	peace treaty of Amiens  (revised date)	<i>Bombay Courier</i> , 6 Nov <i>Calcutta G</i> , 20 Sept <i>Bombay Courier</i> , 19 Feb
1815	Th 13 Apr or asap †		thanksgiving day	gov-general proclamation	peace in Europe	<i>Calcutta G</i> , 5 Mar

1840	Suns 1+7 Sept or asap †	Bombay	thanksgiving prayers	bishop order	failure of attack on Queen Victoria	<i>BT</i> , 29 Aug
1842	Sun 16 Oct	upper provinces	thanksgiving prayers	gov-general letter to clergy	relief of drought + victories in Afghanistan	parliamentary report, in <i>Times</i> (London), 10 Mar 1843
1846	Sun Jan asap Sun 22 Feb Sun ? June	Bombay Bombay Ceylon	thanksgiving prayers thanksgiving prayers thanksgiving prayers	govt request/metropolitan order governor order bishop order	victory over the Sikhs victory over Sikhs at Ferozepore victories in India	<i>BT</i> , 10 Jan <i>BT</i> , 21 Feb <i>BT</i> , 1 July
1847	Sun 13 June or asap †		day of humiliation	metropolitan order	famine in Ireland and Scotland	Wilson, 159
1849	two Suns from 9 Mar Sun 6 May	Calcutta	thanksgiving prayers day of thanksgiving	bishop order gov-gen request to metropolitan	victory at Gujrat victory against Sikh and Afghan armies	<i>BT</i> , 28 Mar <i>Allen's</i> , 25 May
1854	Sun 16 July † Fr 24 July	Ceylon	day of humiliation	gov-general proclamation	Crimean war	<i>Bombay G</i> , 26 June form of prayer BL
1855	Sun 10 June Sun 2 Dec †		day of humiliation thanksgiving day	gov-general proclamation gov-general proclamation	Crimean war capture of Sebastopol	Wilson, 307, 308, 309 <i>BT</i> , 14 Nov
1856	Sun 20 July †		thanksgiving day	gov-general proclamation	peace treaty of Paris	<i>BT</i> , 13 July
1857	Fr 24 July Th 20 Aug Sun 4 Oct	Madras	day of humiliation day of humiliation day of humiliation	metropolitan request bishop order gov-general proclamation	Indian rebellion	Wilson, 347 <i>Allen's</i> , 16 Oct Wilson, 349
1859	Th 28 July		thanksgiving day	viceroi proclamation	defeat of Indian rebellion	<i>BT</i> , 13 July
1872	Sun 4 Feb Tu 27 Feb		thanksgiving prayer thanksgiving day	metropolitan order viceroi proclamation	recovery of prince of Wales from illness recovery of prince of Wales	<i>ToI</i> , 3 Feb <i>G of India</i> , 20 Feb
1873	? Dec + duration	Calcutta	prayers	bishop form	famine	<i>Homeward Mail</i> , 15 Dec
1874	daily from November	Calcutta	thanksgiving prayers	bishop form	end of famine	<i>The Pioneer</i> , 1 Dec
1876	daily from November	Madras	prayers	bishop order	during drought and distress	<i>Madras Mail</i> , 18 Nov
1877	Weds+Frs from 22 Aug Sun 25 November	Madras Madras	days of humiliation thanksgiving services	bishop order bishop order	drought for rain and the end of famine	<i>ToI</i> , 16 Aug <i>Madras Mail</i> , 16 Nov
1887	Wed+Thu 16–17 Feb * Tu 21 June *		holidays/services holidays/services	govt orders and church leaders	Queen Victoria jubilee	<i>ToI</i> , 4, 5 Feb <i>ToI</i> , 22 June
1897	Sun 20 June *		thanksgiving day	govt order and church leaders	Queen Victoria diamond jubilee	<i>G of India</i> , 17 Apr
1899	Wed 24 May		thanksgiving services	metropolitan request	Queen Victoria 80th birthday	<i>Times</i> (London) 24 May
1901	Sat 2 Feb		day of mourning	govt order and church leaders	Queen Victoria funeral	<i>G of India</i> , 2 Feb
1902	Sun 8 June Sat 9 Aug		thanksgiving services services	metropolitan instruction gov-gen notice	peace treaty, after South African war coronation: Edward VII and Alexandra	<i>ToI</i> , 6, 9 June <i>ToI</i> , 11 Aug
1910	Fr 20 May		day of mourning	gov-gen proclamation/request	Edward VII funeral	<i>G of India</i> , 14 May
1911	Th 22 June		holiday and services	gov-gen notice	coronation: George V and Mary	<i>ToI</i> , 9 June
1914	Sun 23 Aug † Sun 6 Sept †		day of intercession	church leaders viceroi request/bishops order	outbreak of First World War	<i>ToI</i> , 24 Aug <i>ToI</i> , 24 Aug
1915	Sun 3 Jan † Wed 4 Aug †		day of intercession day of prayer	king's approval/church leaders church leaders	war 1st anniversary of outbreak of war	<i>ToI</i> , 23 Dec 1914 <i>ToI</i> , 5 Aug
1916	Sun 2 Jan † Sun 4 Aug †		day of intercession day of prayer	king's approval/church leaders king's approval/church leaders	war 2nd anniversary of outbreak of war	<i>ToI</i> , 3 Jan <i>ToI</i> , 1, 5 Aug
1917	Sun 5 Aug †		day of prayer	church leaders	3rd anniversary of outbreak of war	<i>ToI</i> , 26 July, 6 Aug
1918	Sun 6 Jan *		day of prayer	king's appeal	First World War	<i>Calcutta G</i> , 2 Jan

	Sun 4 Aug † Sun 17 Nov		day of prayer thanksgiving services	king's desire/church leaders church leaders	4th anniversary of outbreak of war armistice	<i>ToI</i> , 5, 6 Aug <i>ToI</i> , 15–20 Nov
1919	Sun 6 July * Sun 14 Dec		thanksgiving services thanksgiving day	king's proclamation viceroy order	peace treaty of Versailles peace celebrations	<i>ToI</i> , 7 July <i>ToI</i> , 15 Dec
1929	Sun 7 July *		thanksgiving services	king's desire + viceroy request	king's recovery from illness	<i>ToI</i> , 24 June
1935	Mon 6 May *		thanksgiving services	government encouragement	George V silver jubilee	<i>ToI</i> , 7 May
1936	Tu 28 Jan *		memorial services	viceroy request	George V funeral	<i>ToI</i> , 24 Jan
1937	Wed 12 May*		holiday and services	viceroy order and request	coronation: George VI and Elizabeth	<i>ToI</i> , 13 May
1939	Sun 1 Oct *		day of prayer	king's desire + church leaders	outbreak of Second World War	<i>ToI</i> , 2, 3 Oct
1940	Sun 26 May * Sun 8 Sept*		day of prayer day of prayer	king's desire + viceroy appeal king's desire + viceroy appeal	war anniversary of outbreak of war	<i>ToI</i> , 26 May <i>ToI</i> , 4 Sept
1941	Sun 23 Mar* Sun 7 Sept*		day of prayer day of prayer	king's desire + viceroy appeal king's desire + viceroy appeal	war 2nd anniversary of outbreak of war	<i>ToI</i> , 8 Mar <i>ToI</i> , 8 Sept
1942	Th 1 Jan* Sun 29 Mar* Sun 19 July: see note <sup>1</sup> * Sun 6 Sept* Sun 22 Nov†		prayers day of prayer prayers day of prayer thanksgiving day	king's desire + viceroy appeal king's desire + viceroy appeal church leaders king's desire + viceroy appeal king's desire + viceroy appeal	association with USA day of prayer war remembrance and thanksgiving for navy 3rd anniversary of outbreak of war victory at battle of El-Alamein	<i>ToI</i> , 31 Dec 1941 <i>ToI</i> , 21 Mar 1942 <i>ToI</i> , 18 July <i>ToI</i> , 22 Aug <i>ToI</i> , 19 Nov
1943	Fr+Sun, 21+23 May * Sun 14 June * Sun 5 Sept*		thanksgiving prayers day of prayer day of prayer	king's desire + viceroy appeal king's desire + viceroy appeal king's desire + viceroy appeal	victory in North Africa United nations day 4th anniversary of outbreak of war	<i>ToI</i> , 17 May <i>ToI</i> , 10 June <i>ToI</i> , 13 Aug
1944	Sun 3 Sept*		day of prayer	king's desire + viceroy appeal	5th anniversary of outbreak of war	<i>ToI</i> , 30 Aug
1945	Sun 13 May* Sun 19 Aug*		thanksgiving day thanksgiving day	government request government request	victory in Europe victory over Japan	<i>ToI</i> , 9 May <i>ToI</i> , 16 Aug

1. Special prayers 'in thankful remembrance' for the navy and other sea services were repeated on a Sunday each year (from 1943 at the viceroy's request) until 1946, as follows: 11 July 1943, 9 July 1944, 8 July 1945, 21 July 1946: *ToI*, 12 July 1943, 6 July 1944, 3 July 1945, 13 July 1946