

Lecture-2



Foundation of the British Rule in Bengal

The Battle of Plassey

In 1756 Siraj-ud-daula succeeded his grandfather Alivardi Khan as the Nawab of Bengal. The English victory in the Carnatic had already made Siraj-ud-daula apprehensive of the growing power of the East India Company. He wanted to curb their power.

Meanwhile, the English started fortifying Calcutta without obtaining permission from the Nawab. This amounted to ignoring his sovereign power. The infuriated Nawab marched to Calcutta and occupied Fort William in June 1756. Most of the English soldiers fled to Fulta.

Siraj-ud-daula after conquering Calcutta marched back to Murshidabad. Siraj's success, however, was short-lived. Robert Clive arrived with a strong military force and reconquered Calcutta at the beginning of 1757. He compelled the Nawab to concede all the demands of the English including the right to fortify Calcutta.

The English, however, were not satisfied. They wanted to install a puppet Nawab on the throne of Bengal. Clive entered into a conspiracy with Mir Jafar, the commander of the Nawab's army, and others to overthrow Siraj-ud-daula. Mir Jafar would be made the Nawab of Bengal in return of a huge sum of money as reward to the Company.

The British now presented the Nawab with an impossible set of demands. Both sides realised that war was inevitable. The two armies met at the field of Plassey, just over 20 miles south of Murshidabad, on 23rd June 1757.

The fateful battle of Plassey was a battle only in name. The major part of the Nawab's army under Mir Jafar took no part in the fighting. The Nawab was forced to flee. But he was captured and put to death by Mir Jafar's son, Miran.

Results:

The Battle of Plassey made the English the virtual masters of Bengal. It placed the vast wealth of Bengal in the hands of the British. These resources helped them to win battles in the Carnatic.

Mir Jafar was a puppet in the hands of the English. The victory in the battle of Plassey transformed a mere trading company into a political power. It paved the way for the establishment of British rule in India.

Mir Jafar was a weak and inefficient ruler. He had gifted a jagir to Clive and rich presents to others in the Company in return for the Nawab ship. The treasury had become empty and Mir Jafar was unable to meet the ever-increasing demands of the Company and its officials. So Mir Jafar was deposed and his son-in-law Mir Qasim was put on the throne. Mir Qasim handed over the zamindaris of Burdwan, Midnapore and Chittagong as a reward to the Company.

MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTION

1. Where was the first English factory setup in India?

a) Madras

b) Calcutta

c) Surat

d) None of these

2. Which of the following governor introduced Permanent Settlement in Bengal and Bihar?

a) Lord Cornwallis

b) John Shore

c) Sir George Barlow

d) None of these

3. Who was the first British Governor General in India?

a) Warren Hastings

b) John Shore

c) Lord Dalhousie.

d) None of these

4. In which year Calcutta, Bombay, and Madras University were established?

a) 1857

b) 1899

c) 1852

d) None of these

5. Who among the following is remembered for the annulment of the partition of Bengal?

a) Viscount Wavell

b) Lord Chelmsford

c) Lord Curzon

d) None of these