

Rise of British Supremacy: Carnatic, Plassey, and Buxar

After the death of Aurangzeb, the Mughal Empire witnessed decline and decentralisation of power evident in the emergence of several autonomous states. The English and the French companies began to see political future in India. By the early 18th century, the English and the French companies had already settled down with a profitable trade. The two had already become rivals in Europe and North America. The stage was therefore set for Anglo-French rivalry in India which began in the 1740s and ended in an eventual victory of the English and then began the conquest of India beginning with Bengal from the Battle of Plassey in 1757. In the words of Rabindranath Tagore, 'darkness settled on the face of the land and the weighing scales in the merchant's hand changed into the imperial scepter'.

The struggle with the French for supremacy marked the first phase of the rise of the British power. The conquest of Bengal was the second and decisive step. Thus in this chapter, you will read about the Anglo-French rivalry, taking the form of the Carnatic Wars and leading to the elimination of the French as main contenders of power in India. You will also read about the British conquest of Bengal, through the gradual transfer of power from the Nawabs to the British in Bengal during the period 1757 to 1765 with the Battle of Plassey and Buxar emerging as major landmarks. The British initially ruled through indigenous institutions but introduced constitutional changes from 1773 onwards. British power in India was integrated into Britain's worldwide imperial system.

ENGLISH EAST INDIA COMPANY: FROM TRADING COMPANY TO POLITICAL POWER

The mid-18th century saw the gradual transformation of the English East India Company from a trading company into a political power. During the period 1600 to 1744, the Company slowly expanded its trade network in India, simultaneously easing out the rivals through a strategy combining diplomacy and war. Though the rise of British supremacy in India is usually traced to 1757 with the British victory in the Battle of Plassey, the ground for the victory was laid in South India where the British might was successfully tested out against the French Company.

ANGLO-FRENCH STRUGGLE FOR SUPREMACY: THE CARNATIC WARS

When the declining Mughal authority and the weak regional powers proved incapable of safeguarding the interests of European Companies in India, they saw the necessity to empower

themselves militarily. Further, they were commercial entities, seeking to maximise their profit margins, which necessitated the elimination of competition and establishment of monopoly. Nay, they not only wanted to monopolise their trade and sell dear, they also wanted to buy their commodities cheap, necessitating acquisition of some political control over the country they traded with.

In this context, emergence of hostilities between the English and the French was but natural. South India emerged as the arena of Anglo-French rivalry as it had become the main centre of French activities with Pondicherry as capital. The French had also begun to wield great influence in the neighbouring states of Hyderabad and Mysore. Besides, there was not much scope in western India because of the powerful Marathas, while Eastern India was under the strict control of Alivardi Khan. It was only in Southern India that conditions became favourable, especially after the death of Nizam-ul-Mulk in 1748.

Thus, for nearly 20 years from 1744 to 1763, the English and the French remained embroiled in a bitter war in south India, a series of conflicts popularly known as the Carnatic Wars (1740–63).

First Carnatic War (1740–48)

Austrian War of Succession (1740)

The immediate context for conflict between two European rivals in India was provided by the War of Austrian Succession in Europe which broke out in Europe in 1740 between Austria and Prussia. In this war, Britain and France joined opposite camps. Perhaps conscious of their relatively weaker position, the French tried hard to prevent the extension of war to India and Dupleix advised his English counterpart to maintain neutrality. But the English did not agree, instead deliberately adopted aggressive stand and seized some French ships off the south-eastern coast of India. The French had no fleet in India, hence Dupleix (the French Governor General) messaged *La Bourdonnais* (the French Governor of Mauritius) for reinforcements. *La Bourdonnais* immediately left with a squadron of 3,000 men towards the Coromandel Coast. As soon as the help arrived, the French attacked the English and captured the British possessions in Fort St George, Madras and other nearby areas (21 September 1746). Included among the prisoners of war was Robert Clive. The First Carnatic War had begun.

The English Seek Protection from the Nawab of Carnatic, Nawab Anwaruddin

Anwaruddin, the Nawab of Carnatic, disapproved of hostilities in his kingdom. Thus, when the English appealed to him for protection, the Nawab asked the French to quit Madras. But the French were now in no mood to retreat and neglected the advice just as the English had done earlier.



Dupleix, governor of French India from 1742 to 1754.

Battle of St. Thomas (or St. Thome, 1746)

The Nawab now sent a large army to fight against the French. A large Indian army of 10,000 under Mahfuz Khan met a small French army consisting of 230 Europeans and 700 Indian soldiers under Capt. Paradise on the banks of **River Adyar** at Mylapore near St. Thomas in 1746. But to everyone's surprise, a handful of properly trained soldiers of the French army routed Anwaruddin's vast army. This amply demonstrated the superiority of the European troops and exposed the military weakness of the Indian rulers.

Dupleix learnt the lesson that in any quarrel between Indian princes, his disciplined army would be very useful. And in the 18th-century political chaos, there was no dearth of Indian princes who would invite Dupleix's assistance to turn the scales in their favour. At that time, Indian rulers were not guided by patriotism and did not hesitate in inviting foreigners in settling accounts with their rivals. In this way, it was Dupleix who first showed the way of intervening in disputes of the Indian rulers and thereby acquiring political control—a technique which was later perfected by the English Company.

Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle (1748)

Even as the French continued the siege, the War of Austrian Succession came to an end by the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle (1748) on the basis of mutual restitution of conquests. This brought an end to the first round of Anglo-French conflict in India as well. Madras was restored to the English and the French got Louisburg in North America. The first round of conflict had ended in a draw.

Second Carnatic War (1749–54)

Dynastic feuds in South India provided the context for the second round of Anglo-French conflict in the south. The succession disputes at both Carnatic and Hyderabad provided the French Governor General Dupleix an opportunity to intervene in Indian politics.

Flashback: In the 18th century, the Mughal subah (province) of Carnatic came under the authority of Governor of Deccan (Nizam of Hyderabad). But just as in practice the Governor of Deccan had freed himself from the control of the Mughal Emperor, the Deputy Governor or the Nawab of Carnatic, had also established his independent authority. Accordingly, the Nawab Saadatullah Khan of Carnatic, headquartered at Arcot, appointed his nephew Dost Ali as his successor, without the prior approval of his superior, the Nizam. However, in 1740, the Marathas invaded the Carnatic, killed Nawab Dost Ali and took his son-in-law Chanda Sahib as prisoner to Satara. Thereafter, the affairs of the Carnatic deteriorated and this provided an opportunity to the European trading companies to directly interfere in Indian politics.

Succession Disputes in Carnatic and Hyderabad

In 1740, the Marathas had invaded the Carnatic and killed Nawab Dost Ali and took his son-in-law Chanda Sahib as prisoner to Satara. In 1743, the Nizam of Hyderabad felt prompted to come to the Carnatic and appoint Anwaruddin Khan as the Nawab of Carnatic. But in 1748, Chanda Sahib was set free by the Marathas and the same year, Nizam of Hyderabad Nizam-ul-Mulk Asaf

Jah passed away. He was succeeded by his son Nasir Jung but his grandson, Muzaffar Jung laid claim to the throne. Muzaffar Jung now allied with Chanda Sahib to gain their respective seats in Hyderabad and the Carnatic.

Intervention by Dupleix

In this way, Dupleix soon got his opportunity and astounding success awaited his plans. He was able to interfere in the wars of succession that started after the death of Asaf Jah (1748). He pledged French support to Muzaffar Jung and Chanda Sahib. Thus, a tripartite understanding was developed among the **French, Chanda Sahib** and **Muzaffar Jung**.

French Install their Protégé, Chanda Sahib, in Carnatic (1749)

In August 1749, the three allies ambushed and killed Anwaruddin at the **Battle of Ambur**, near Vellore. His son Muhammad Ali fled to Trichinopoly and Chanda Sahib became Nawab of Carnatic. He rewarded the French with a grant of 80 villages near Pondicherry.

Feeling the extension of French influence, the British decided to support Nasir Jung for the throne of the Nizam and Muhammad Ali for the Nawabship of the Carnatic. Thus, began the second phase of the Anglo-French War, also known as the Second Carnatic War.

French Install their Protégé, Muzaffar Jung, in Hyderabad

Soon the French and their allies marched to the Deccan. The French army surprised and killed Nasir Jung and installed French protégé Muzaffar Jung as the Nizam of Hyderabad. Muzaffar Jung amply rewarded Dupleix by appointing him **honorary governor** of all the Mughal Dominions south of the River Krishna. Territories near Pondicherry as well as the famous market town of Masulipatam in Orissa were also ceded to the French. In return, Dupleix placed at the disposal of Muzaffar Jung the services of his best officer—**Marquis de Bussy**, with a French army. This was also the best way of safeguarding French interests at the Hyderabad court.

Dupleix was now at the height of his political power and his dream of an empire now seemed likely to be realized. Soon afterwards, Muzaffar Jung was killed in an accidental skirmish (February 1751). However, Bussy maintained French influence in the Deccan by quickly placing his nominee Salabat Jung on the throne. In this way, Bussy went on to control the political fortunes of the Deccan for seven years and even induced the Nizam to grant him four rich districts on the Coromandel Coast known as the **Northern Circars** (or Northern Sarkars), comprising Mustafanagar, Ellore, Rajamundry and Chicacole. The French power in south India was now at its height but not far away from its fall.

Emergence of Robert Clive

Meanwhile, Muhammad Ali (the son of the late Nawab Anwaruddin) had taken refuge in the fortress of Trichinopoly and the repeated attempts of Chanda Sahib and the French to capture the fortress had failed. The British, realising that the situation implied a serious threat to their position in Southern India, now decided to put their entire strength behind Muhammad Ali.



Robert Clive

At this crucial juncture, there appeared a man on the scene endowed with a daring genius, whose intelligence and bravery saved the fortunes of the English. He was a young clerk of the Company, Robert Clive. He suggested that French pressure on Muhammad Ali could be released by attacking Arcot, the capital of Carnatic. Thus, attack upon Arcot was to be used as a diversionary tactic. Chanda Sahib would have to divert an effective part of his army for the protection of Arcot.

Siege of Arcot (August 1751)

Clive's plan seemed well conceived and once it was approved, Clive stormed Arcot with a small force of only 210 men and captured it (August 1751). The plan had the desired effect and Chanda Sahib, alarmed by the fall of his capital, sent a large portion of his force from Trichinopoly which comprised of 4,000 men to recapture Arcot. Clive successfully sustained the famous siege for 53 days (23 September to 14 November). In the meantime, Clive received help in the form of reinforcements from Madras and some Indian allies (rulers of Mysore, Tanjore and the Marathas). Clive then came out of the besieged town, attacked and defeated Chanda Sahib at several important battles including one fought at Kaveripak.

Meanwhile, encouraged by the capture of Arcot, a strong English force led by Stringer Lawrence relieved Trichinopoly following the surrender of French forces (June 1752). Chanda Sahib was **treacherously captured and beheaded** by the Raja of Travancore. Mohammad Ali then became the undisputed Nawab of the Carnatic. Dupleix's high hopes were thus dashed to the ground.

Recall of Dupleix, 1754

The French defeat at Trichinopoly sealed the fate of Dupleix. The Directors of the French Company did not appreciate his political ambitions and disapproved of the expenses they involved and recalled him. On 1 August 1754, **Godeheu** succeeded Dupleix as French Governor General in India. Recall of Dupleix proved to be a big blow to the fortunes of the French Company in India.

Treaty of Pondicherry, 1755

In complete reversal to Dupleix's policy, Godeheu signed a peace treaty, the Treaty of Pondicherry, with the English in 1755. As per this treaty, both the companies agreed not to interfere in the quarrels of the Indian princes. The second round of conflict had also proved inconclusive.

Nevertheless, after this treaty, though the French continued to maintain their hold over Hyderabad for some time, they had lost much of their prestige and their predominant position in the Deccan had been definitely undermined. On the other hand, English influence had been established in Carnatic, with their candidate Mohammad Ali installed as the Nawab of Carnatic.

Third Carnatic War (1757–63 AD)

Context of Seven Years' War, 1756

Like the first Carnatic war, even this war was an echo of the hostilities in Europe. In 1756 A.D. the Seven Years' War broke out in Europe. In this War, England and France joined opposite camps which ended the short peace between the European companies in India as well.

Arrival of Count de Lally (April 1758)

This time the French Government made a determined effort to oust the English from India. For this purpose, the French sent an impressive French army headed by Count de Lally, who reached India after a long voyage of 12 months in April 1758. By this time, the English had already won the **Battle of Plassey** and they returned to India with fresh reinforcements of men and material.

Problems Faced by the French Army

Lally started his work vigorously. He attacked **Fort St. David** and captured it and other small English possessions in this region. But the French victory was only short-lived as problems of varying nature began to surface on the horizon. Lally's attack on Madras ended in failure as he could not get naval support in time. The French Company also faced shortage of ammunition as well as lack of funds to pay the troops. Lally was rude and overbearing in his conduct with the subordinates, i.e. the Company's servants of Pondicherry. He held a very low opinion of them and looked down upon them as dishonest rogues to be set right with threats and punishment. In such circumstances, both Lally and his soldiers distrusted each other and the French troops felt badly demoralised.

At this critical juncture, rash and headstrong Lally committed another great blunder of prevailing upon Bussy and recalling him from the Nizam's court, leaving the French army under incompetent commanders. Having assessed the situation, the English sent an army from Bengal to the Northern Circars. They occupied Rajamundry and Masulipatam and also concluded a favourable treaty with Nizam Salabat Jung. French influence in Deccan was thus irrevocably lost.

Battle of Wandiwash (1760)

The battle still continued and Lally was eventually defeated decisively at the Battle of Wandiwash or Vandvasi now in Tamil Nadu (22 January 1760). The English army led by General **Eyre Coot** totally routed the French army under Lally and Bussy was taken prisoner. Defeated, the French retreated to Pondicherry. But, the English soon laid siege to Pondicherry as well, forcing Lally to ask for help from Nawab **Hyder Ali** of Mysore. However, due to lack of coordination, the contingent sent by Hyder returned to Mysore without fighting even a single battle.

The French capital of Pondicherry finally surrendered on 16 January 1761. The fall of Pondicherry sounded the death knell of French dominions in India. Shortly thereafter Jinje and Mahe on the Malabar Coast also surrendered to the English, leaving the French without even a toehold in India.

Peace of Paris, 1763

The Third Carnatic War ended officially in 1763 with the conclusion of the Peace of Paris, at the end of the Seven Years' War. As per the treaty, Pondicherry and some other French settlements were no doubt returned to France, but these were never to be fortified again and could only function as mere trading centres. The worst fate awaited Lally. He was detained as a prisoner of war for two years, after which he was allowed to return to his home country, where, far from receiving any kind treatment, he was first imprisoned and then executed.

Thus, the Third Carnatic War brought down the curtain to the Anglo-French rivalry in India and cleared the way for the establishment of the British Empire.

Reasons for Defeat of the French Against the English

Various factors are held responsible for the defeat of the French in India and the victory of the English, some of which are enumerated as follows:

Continental Ambitions of France

France in the 18th century remained preoccupied with its continental ambitions, which considerably strained its resources. The French monarchs of the time were fighting for the 'natural frontiers' of their country, which meant acquisition of territory towards Rhine and towards Italy. Such an expansionist policy of France kept it perpetually trapped in the wars of Europe and diverted its energies away from colonial acquisitions. In the end, the French gained almost nothing on the continent and even lost its colonial possessions. On the other hand, England did not covet an inch of European territory but followed its single-minded objective of colonial expansion, an objective in which it achieved considerable success.

Different Systems of Government

Several historians have attributed the failure of France to its inferior system of government as compared to England. While the French government of the time was autocratic and suffered from corruption and inefficiency, the English government was run by an enlightened oligarchy, under which it was making immense progress towards a constitutional set up. Emphasising on the rottenness of the French system of government, historian **Alfred Lyall** wrote, 'It was the short sighted, ill managed European policy of Louis XV, misguided by his mistresses and by incompetent ministers, that France lost her Indian settlements.'

Difference in the Organization of the two Companies

The French Company had been formed with a majority of capital contributed by the monarch with a guarantee of dividend to the shareholders. As a result, the directors of the Company, nominated by the king himself, took very little interest in the progress of the Company. Naturally, the financial position of the Company suffered badly and many times it was revived by government subsidy. Such a body was ill-equipped to support the ambitions of Dupleix and his expensive wars. On the contrary, the English Company was an independent commercial corporation with a court of Directors who were greatly interested in the welfare of the Company. The Company mostly maintained good financial health and was at one time seen as the milch-cow of the British government.

Responsibility of Dupleix

Despite Dupleix's political capabilities, he could never escape the responsibility for French defeat. He was so gripped by his political ambitions that he put a blind eye to several other aspects of the struggle. For instance, in his zeal for political conquests, he failed to attend to the fast

deteriorating financial and trading aspects of the Company. Hence, Dupleix is also held partly responsible for the French defeat at the hands of the English.

Impact of British Success in Bengal

Some historians consider the British success in Bengal as the most significant factor for French defeat and English victory in India. According to them, what really turned the tide in Britain's favour was its recent access to the **rich resources of Bengal**. British had occupied Bengal and its resources were liberally used in the Third Carnatic War. It was rightly said by VA Smith that no General could have won the empire of India by starting from Pondicherry as a base and contending with a power which held Bengal and command of the sea.

Other Factors

- **Recall of Dupleix:** Recall of Dupleix proved to be a mistake of the French.
- **Rashness and Arrogance of Lally:** Count de Lally was rash and arrogant. His behaviour so greatly alienated his subordinates that they openly rejoiced when he was defeated by the English.
- **Absence of Permanent naval Presence:** The French had no permanent naval presence in India while the British had a formidable naval presence. The British Navy was also superior.

Marriot wrote, 'Dupleix made a cardinal blunder in looking for the key of India in Madras, Clive sought and found it in Bengal.'

In this way, the English Company proved to be the superior force in many ways. It was wealthier, had a vastly superior infrastructure with larger fleets. The English Company conducted more frequent voyages and had superior knowledge of commerce. The English Company was a great private corporation, not dependent on any way on the state. In fact the state was in its debt. While Pondicherry grew as strong and impressive as the English settlement in Madras, it could not match the latter in extent and variety of commerce. Chandernagore in the east proved no match for Calcutta. Such were the qualitative differences between the two companies that ultimately led to the defeat of the French at the hands of the English in India.

Prelim Capsule

The Carnatic Wars (1740-1763)

Wars	Period	Important Details
First Carnatic War Dupleix	1740-48	Immediate context- War of Austrian Succession in Europe in which England and France had joined opposite camps. Main battles fought- Battle of St. Thomas . Ended with the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle in Europe. Result- it was a drawn struggle.

Second Carnatic War Dupleix, Godeheu	1749-54	Immediate context- succession disputes at Carnatic and Hyderabad. Main battles fought- Battle of Ambur and Arcot . Ended with the Treaty of Pondicherry . Result- Though inconclusive, the English had an edge over the French.
Third Carnatic War Count de Lally	1757-63	Immediate context- Seven Years' War in Europe. Once again, England and France joined opposite camps, ending the short peace between the European companies in India as well. Main battle fought- Battle of Wandiwash . The English army led by General Byre Coot totally routed the French army under Lally. Ended with the Treaty of Paris signed at the end of Seven Years War. Result- the British decisively defeated the French in India.

BRITISH CONQUEST OF BENGAL-PLASSEY TO BUXAR (1757-65)

The beginning of British conquest in India may be traced back to the Battle of Plassey in 1757, in which the English Company's forces defeated the Nawab of Bengal Siraj-ud-Daulah. In fact, the history of British conquest of Bengal is the history of gradual transfer of power from the Nawabs to the British during the short period of eight years, from 1757 to 1764, the main cause of conflict being the commercial rivalry between the British and the Bengal Nawabs.

Francois Bernier, a traveller who visited India during the reign of Aurangzeb, wrote about Bengal- 'A popular proverb among the Europeans goes that the kingdom of Bengal has hundred gates open for entrance, but not one for departure.'

Backgrounder

- Since the 17th century, Bengal had emerged as a happy hunting ground of the Dutch, the English and the French Companies who were attracted to Bengal mainly owing to its rich resources.
- In 1651, at **Hugli**, the first English factory was set up upon receiving permission from **Sultan Shuja** (second son of Emperor Shah Jahan), the subahdar of Bengal.
- In 1651 itself, Shuja also granted the English East India Company the **privilege of free trade** in Bengal, Bihar and Orissa in return for lump sum payment of ₹3,000 (350 pounds) at a time when the Company's exports from Bengal were worth more than 50,000 pounds a year. This was because Sultan Shuja was pleased by the services of one Mr. Boughton, who had successfully cured a royal lady of a disease. Thereafter, English factories sprang up at **Kasimbazar**, **Patna** and other places.
- In 1698, the English Company obtained the zamindari of the villages of **Sutanuti**, **Kalikata** and **Gobindapur** from Subahdar Azim-us-Shan, on payment of ₹1,200 to the

previous proprietors. In 1700, the Bengal factories were placed under **Fort William**. Soon the villages grew into a city known as Calcutta.

- In 1717, Emperor **Farrukhsiyar** confirmed the **trade privileges** granted to the Company by earlier subahdars. By early 18th century, exports from Bengal consisted of nearly 60 per cent of the English Company's imports from Asia, comprising of products such as cotton and silk textiles, handicrafts and raw products such as saltpeter, rice, indigo and pepper.
- In 1717 itself, Farrukhsiyar appointed **Murshid Quli Khan**, the Diwan of Bengal, as Subahdar or Governor (Nizam or Nazim) of Bengal, thus holding the post of Subahdar and Diwan at the same time. Taking advantage of his position, Murshid Quli now declared himself as the Nawab of Bengal and became the first independent Nawab of Bengal.
- In 1740, **Alivardi Khan**, the Deputy Governor of Bihar, deposed and killed Nawab Sarfaraz Khan grandson of Murshid Quli). Alivardi Khan rightly did not allow fortifications of French and English factories at Chandernagore and Calcutta. In 1756, Alivardi died, nominating his grandson Siraj-ud-Daulah as his successor.

Battle of Plassey (23 June 1757)

The English Company first acquired a foothold in Bengal politics through Plassey conspiracy of 1757 which ended the rule of Siraj-ud-Daulah and inaugurated a new phase of British relations with India. Several developments converged to culminate into the Battle of Plassey which marked the beginning of British conquest of India.

Siraj-ud-Daulah (April 1756-June 1757)

Siraj's succession was challenged by two other contenders for the throne, Shaukat Jung (Faujdar of Purnea) and Ghaseti Begum (Alivardi's daughter). This resulted in intense court factionalism and support was offered to different warring groups by a dominant group in the Nawab's court comprising **Jagat Seth**, **Umichand (or Amir Chand)**, **Raj Ballabh**, **Rai Durlabh**, **Mir Jafar**, zamindars and others who were also opposed to Siraj. This seriously destabilised the administration of Bengal and the advantage was taken by English East India Company.

Main reasons for conflict between the Nawab of Bengal and the English Company were:

- **Farman of 1717:** In 1717, the Mughal Emperor Farrukhsiyar issued a farman (royal order) granting the British East India Company many trading privileges. This farman became a perpetual source of conflict between the Bengal Nawabs and the English Company. For one, it meant loss of revenue to the Bengal government and second, dastaks were misused by the Company's servants to evade taxes on their private trade.
- **Shelter to Krishna Das:** The English Company had given shelter to Krishna Das, son of Raj Ballabh, who had fled with immense treasures against the Nawab's will.
- **Support to Ghaseti Begum:** The Company had also offended the Nawab by giving support to the claims of Ghaseti Begum.



Siraj-ud-Daulah
(Nawab of Bengal)

- **Immediate Cause:** The breaking point came when the English Company, anticipating another round of Anglo-French struggle, began to strengthen the **fortifications of Fort William** and mounted guns on its walls. Siraj pleaded repeatedly with the English to desist from further fortification, but to no avail. Seeing his own authority flouted in his own dominion, Siraj-ud-Daulah decided to launch an offensive.

Black Hole Tragedy

On 15 June 1756, Siraj-ud-Daulah surrounded Fort William and the siege lasted for five days. During this while, Governor Roger Drake and some of his men escaped through the back door down the Hooghly River, took refuge at **Fulta** near the sea and waited for help from Madras. They left behind 146 persons, including some women and children, under the command of John Zephinah **Holwell**. After the fort fell on 20 June, the Nawab renamed **Calcutta as Alinagar**, placed it under the charge of Manik Chand, and himself returned to Murshidabad.

Subsequently, Holwell and others were imprisoned in a small room of the fort popularly known as Black Hole (18 feet long and 14 feet 10 inches wide) in conditions of excessive heat and crowding owing to summer solstice. It is believed that out of **146 persons** imprisoned in that room, only 26 survived the next morning, the rest were probably trampled down by the others for places near the window. The incident came to be known as the 'Black Hole Tragedy'.

The incident was held up as an example of British heroism and Nawab's callousness. Siraj-ud-Daulah was portrayed a cruel monster and held directly responsible for the deaths. The English Company used the episode to sway British public opinion and sympathy in favour of the wars of aggression it intended to wage.

Meanwhile, help came from Madras in the form of a strong naval force under the command of **Robert Clive**. Manik Chand, the Nawab's officer in charge of Fort William, was bribed and he surrendered after a brief pretence of resistance.

Treaty of Alinagar (February 1757)

Consequently, in February 1757, the Nawab had to make peace with the English and sign the humiliating Treaty of Alinagar. As per the treaty, the Nawab had to restore to the English their former privileges of trade, grant permission to fortify Calcutta and even pay compensation amount for the losses suffered by the English.

In this way, Clive had regained Calcutta and even forced the Nawab to concede to all English demands. Still, the English were not satisfied. They had decided to replace the Nawab with Mir Jafar. With this in mind, they placed an impossible set of demands before the Nawab, thus making a war inevitable. Clive organised a web of intrigue with the leaders in the Nawab's court. Chief among these were:

- **Mir Jafar:** the Mir Bakshi (Commander-in-Chief of the Nawab's army)
- **Manik Chand:** the Officer incharge of Calcutta
- **Amir Chand:** a rich merchant
- **Jagat Seth:** the biggest banker of Bengal
- **Khadim Khan:** commanded a large number of the Nawab's troops

These disaffected nobles of Siraj's court joined hands with the English to oust Siraj and install their protégé, leading to the **Plassey Conspiracy of 1757**.

The Battle (23 June 1757)

On 23 June 1757, both armies met at **Plassey, 30 km south of Murshidabad**. The English force comprised of 950 European infantry and 2100 Indian sepoys, while that of the Nawab comprised of 50,000 commanded by the treacherous Mir Jafar. Only a small group of Nawab's soldiers fought bravely. They were led by **Mir Madan** and **Mohan Lal**. After Mir Madan was killed by a stray shot from the English side, Mir Jafar played upon the fears of the Nawab and advised him to retire from the battlefield, leaving the command in the hands of his generals. The trick was well played. Once the Nawab retired with 2,000 horsemen, a large part of the Nawab's army led by Mir Jafar and Rai Durlabh merely looked on, as Clive routed the rest of Nawab's forces. As a result, the Nawab had to flee but was captured and put to death by an assassin, Mohammad Ali Beg, on the orders of Mir Jafar's son, Miran.

KM Panikkar- 'Plassey was a transaction in which the rich bankers of Bengal and Mir Jafar sold out the Nawab to the English.'

Consequences of Battle of Plassey

- Mir Jafar was proclaimed as Nawab of Bengal (he was promised the Nawabship by Clive even before the Battle of Plassey).
- Robert Clive was confirmed as the Governor of Bengal (Clive's First Governorship: 1757-60).
- The Company was granted undisputed right to free trade in Bengal, Bihar and Orissa.
- It was also understood that British officials would no longer need to pay any taxes on their private trade.
- The Company received the **zamindari of 24-Parganas** near Calcutta.
- Mir Jafar paid out a sum of ₹50 lakh as gift or bribe to the Company's officials, besides a large amount as personal present to Clive and compensation for the Company's losses.
- All the French settlements in Bengal were surrendered to the English.

Significance of the Battle of Plassey

The battle was hardly significant from the military point of view as the English army showed no military superiority. It was a mere skirmish, resulting in 65 casualties on the English side and 500 on the Nawab's side. More than the might of the English, it was the treachery of the Nawab's confidants that decided the fate of the battle of Plassey.

However, the battle turned out to be of great historical significance because of the events that followed.

- **The British emerged as kingmakers in Bengal:** The British now appointed their man, Mir Jafar, as the new Nawab. Jafar was completely dependent on the English for maintenance of his position in Bengal. Hence, an English force of 6,000 troops was stationed in Bengal for Nawab's protection with the natural consequence that all

real power passed into the Company's hands and **Mr. Watts**, the British Resident at Murshidabad, began to wield considerable influence.

- **Transformation in the position of the English Company:** The victory in Plassey brought about a great transformation in the position of the English Company in Bengal. Until now the English Company was just one of the European companies trading in Bengal. After Plassey, the Company emerged supreme and established its monopoly over Bengal trade by marginalising the French and the Dutch Companies. The English also emerged as powerful contenders in Bengal politics.
- **Vast resources of Bengal placed at British disposal:** The victory in the battle placed vast resources at the disposal of the British. The first instalment of wealth paid to the Company immediately after Plassey was paid in silver coins, carried in more than 100 boats. Bengal then was the most prosperous province of India—its manufactures were in huge demand not only in India but also in world outside. Victory in Bengal played a decisive role in Anglo-French struggle. In fact, with the revenues of Bengal, the English were able to meet the cost of conquest of rest of the country.

Thus, the 'Plassey Revolution' as it is called, proved to be a battle with far-reaching consequences. The British victory in Plassey marked the beginning of British conquest of Bengal and later of India. It helped the Company and its servants to amass unimaginable wealth at the cost of the people of Bengal.

Col. Malleon: 'There never was a battle in which the consequences were so vast, so immediate and so permanent.'

In the words of the Bengali poet **Nabin Chandra Sen**, the battle of Plassey was followed by, 'a night of eternal gloom for India'.

Mir Jafar (June 1757–October 1760)

Immediately after his succession, Mir Jafar began to face some serious problems—

- Some zamindars like Raja Ram Sinha of Midnapore and Hizir Ali Khan of Purnea refused to accept Mir Jafar as their ruler.
- Mir Jafar also suspected the loyalty of some of his soldiers, who had not been receiving their regular salary, as well as that of his officials like Rai Durlabh.
- There was also an attempt by the Mughal Emperor's son, who later on became Shah Alam, to capture the throne of Bengal.
- Mir Jafar's growing dependence on the Company for military support was used by the Company to demand more finances and other privileges from the Nawab. But the Nawab failed to meet the growing demands of the Company which brought about his ruin.

Mir Jafar, who had played the role of '**Clive's Jackal**', soon began to repent the deal he had struck and in order to shed off the British yoke, Jafar began intriguing with the Dutch against the British. Clive, however, thwarted this design by defeating the Dutch in the decisive **Battle of Bedra** (November 1759). But by now the English Company had grown considerably suspicious of the Nawab and had begun to look for a suitable replacement. From the Company's perspective, its

role had considerably changed since Plassey, and it now had to play the role of a commercial-cum military-cum political power. How was it going to fund its new responsibilities? The Nawab was unable to pay the stipulated payments and by 1760, he was in debt to the Company to the tune of ₹25 lakh. The Company had lost its confidence on Mir Jafar.

Meanwhile, Mir Jafar's son, Miran, died and once again conflict over succession followed. The conflict was between Miran's son and Mir Qasim, the son-in-law of Mir Jafar. Mir Qasim secretly promised **Vansittart** (who had succeeded Clive as the Governor of Bengal in 1760) the necessary funds if the English Company agreed to support his claims to the Nawabship. Accordingly, Vansittart decided to take the side of Mir Qasim and in October 1760, Mir Jafar was ultimately forced to abdicate in favour of his son-in-law, Mir Qasim. In this way, Mir Jafar sowed as he had reaped, got betrayal in return for betrayal.

Mir Qasim or Itmad-ud- Daulah (October 1760–63)

Mir Qasim rewarded his benefactors by granting the Company the zamindari of **Burdwan, Midnapore and Chittagong**. He promised to give the Company half the share in chunam trade of Sylhet. He also heavily bribed his kingmakers namely, Vansittart, Holwell and other English officials with handsome presents totalling 29 lakh rupees.

The first few months of Mir Qasim's reign went very well. But soon the relationship with the British embittered due to several reasons. But Mir Qasim belied English hopes. He was able and efficient ruler and wanted to free himself from foreign control.

- He shifted the capital from **Murshidabad to Monghyr** in Bihar, away from the influence of the Company at Calcutta and court intrigues of Murshidabad.
- He also majorly overhauled the bureaucracy by men of his choice and sought to improve the finances of the state.
- He sought to **modernise his army** along European lines and preparations were made for the manufacture of guns at Monghyr.
- **Ram Narayan**, the Deputy Governor of Bihar, had shown refractory behaviour since the days of Mir Jafar and continued to do so, banking on English support as he had received in the past. In spite of repeated reminders, he failed to submit the accounts of Bihar. In fact, this time he went on to proclaim himself as independent ruler. Mir Qasim decided not to tolerate such open defiance of his authority and ordered his dismissal and execution.
- The **misuse of the Company's dastaks** for private trade was a perpetual cause of tension between the English Company and the Nawab. The Company's servants were not paying any duty on their goods, whereas the local merchants had to pay duty with the following consequences:
 - The Nawab lost tax revenue
 - The local merchants faced unequal competition



Portrait of an East India Company Official by artist Dip Chand (The pictures made by Indian artists for the British in India are called Company paintings.)

- Further, the Company's servants even sold the dastaks to Indian merchants for a commission.
- The Company's servants were not even content with duty free trade and used coercive methods to get things at cheaper rate. They ignored the officials of the Nawab and forcibly took away the goods and commodities of the peasants and merchants for a fourth part of their value. They also used violence and oppression to force the peasants into buying goods at prices many times higher their value.

In such conditions, though Mir Qasim did not seek independence from the British, he did seek to limit the fast expanding encroachments of the English on his jurisdiction, which were driving him to desperation. He wrote a letter to the Governor Vansittart and pleaded with him for justice and reason. Following the receipt of the desperate plea, Vansittart and Warren Hastings, another member of the Calcutta Council, met the Nawab at Monghyr and concluded a compromise. It was agreed that the Nawab would give the English traders a share in the inland trade provided they paid 9% duty. It was also agreed that the Nawab alone would be competent to grant dastaks and his authority would be ultimate in the resolution of disputes regarding trade.

Unfortunately, the agreement was disproved by the Calcutta Council. Most of the Council members themselves participated in inland trade and instead of the compromise they rather favoured the deposition of Mir Qasim, which would provide them with yet another opportunity for receiving bribes.

Out of desperation, Mir Qasim abolished all inland duties to bring the Indian merchants on the same footing as the English, provoking hostilities by an attack on Patna town. In this way, war between the Nawab and the English broke out in 1763 and the Nawab was defeated in a series of battles that year. Subsequently, he fled to Awadh and formed an alliance with Shuja-ud-Daulah (Nawab of Awadh) and Shah Alam II (the fugitive Mughal Emperor) in a final bid to overthrow the English.

Ghulam Hussain, a prominent contemporary writer and author of 'Siyar-ul-Mutakherin' praised Mir Qasim profusely for his administrative achievements.

HH Dodwell had rightly remarked that the war between the Nawab and the Company was, 'a war of circumstances rather than intentions.'

Battle of Buxar (22 October 1764)

Immediate Cause: The abuse of dastaks (duty free trade permits) by the Company's servants for their private trade became the immediate cause of the war of 1764.

The Battle

The three allies clashed with the Company's army at the battlefield of Buxar on 22 October 1764. The allies' forces stood at nearly 40,000 to 60,000, whereas the English forces stood at nearly 7,000 commanded by Major Munro. It was a closely contested battle with heavy casualties on both sides and ended in the victory of the superior military power, the British.



Shah Alam II

This was one of the most decisive battles in Indian history. It firmly established the British as masters of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. Awadh was placed at their mercy.

Prelim Capsule

Battle of Plassey (1757) and Battle of Buxar (1764)

Period	Bengal Nawabs	Important Events
1756-57	Siraj-ud-Daulah	<p>The English Company came in conflict with the Nawab mainly due to the Farman of 1717 and misuse of dastaks by the Company's servants. Fortification of Fort William by the English Company became the immediate cause of the battle of Plassey.</p> <p>When Siraj-ud-Daulah surrounded Fort William, some Englishmen escaped to Fulta and waited for help from Madras.</p> <p>After the Fort fell, the Nawab renamed Calcutta as Alinagar and placed it under the charge of Manik Chand.</p> <p>Several Englishmen imprisoned in the fort died in the Black Hole Tragedy.</p> <p>Help came from Madras in the form of a strong naval force headed by Robert Clive who bribed Manik Chand and recaptured the fort.</p>
		<p>The Nawab had to sign the humiliating treaty of Alinagar.</p> <p>English decided to replace the Nawab with Mir Jafar and organised the Plassey Conspiracy of 1757.</p> <p>In the Battle of Plassey (23 Jun 1757), the English forces led by Clive easily defeated the Nawab's army as Mir Jafar (CnC of the Nawab's army) and others had joined the conspiracy and did not participate.</p> <p>Only a small group of Nawab's soldiers fought bravely led by Mir Madan and Mohan Lal.</p> <p>The Nawab was captured and killed by assassin Mohammad Ali Beg on the orders of Mir Jafar's son, Miran.</p>
1757-60	Mir Jafar	<p>The English raised Mir Jafar as the new Nawab of Bengal. He was known as Clive's Jackal.</p> <p>Soon, Jafar began intriguing with the Dutch against the British. Clive, however, thwarted this design by defeating the Dutch in the decisive battle of Bedra (Nov 1759).</p> <p>But the English had grown considerably suspicious of the Nawab and decided to replace him.</p> <p>Vansittart (the then Governor of Bengal) decided to support the claim of Mir Qasim (son-in-law of Mir Jafar) to the throne and Mir Jafar was forced to step down.</p>

1760-63	Mir Qasim or Itmad ud-Daulah	<p>Mir Qasim granted the Company the zamindari of Burdwan, Midnapore and Chittagong. Soon his relationship with the British embittered due to the following reasons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He shifted the capital from Murshidabad to Monghyr in Bihar. • He sought to modernise his army along European lines. • He dismissed Ram Narayan (the Deputy Governor of Bihar) and a protégé of the British. • Misuse of dastaks (became the immediate cause of the Battle of Buxar). <p>Vansittart and Warren Hastings met the Nawab at Monghyr and concluded a compromise. But the agreement was disproved by the Calcutta Council. Out of desperation, Mir Qasim abolished all inland duties to bring the Indian merchants on the same footing as the English. This led to an open war. Mir Qasim fled to Awadh and formed an alliance with Shuja-ud-Daulah (Nawab of Awadh) and Shah Alam II (the fugitive Mughal Emperor) in a final bid to overthrow the English. The three allies were defeated by the Company's army (led by Major Munro) in the Battle of Buxar (22 Oct 1764).</p>
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Consequences of Battle of Buxar

- Buxar sealed the fate of the Bengal Nawabs and, for all practical purposes, power was transferred into the hands of the English Company.
- Mir Jafar was brought back to the throne of Bengal, this time on much harsher terms. Mir Jafar agreed to hand over the districts of Midnapore, Burdwan and Chittagong to the English and permitted them duty free trade in Bengal (with the exception of 2% duty on salt). He and his successors had to pay ₹5 lakh per month to the English Company, allow Company's intervention in matters of appointments and reduce military establishments.
- Mir Jafar died shortly thereafter and his minor son, **Najim-ud-Daulah** was appointed as Nawab.
- Clive was resent as Governor and Commander-in-Chief of Bengal (Clive's Second governorship: 1765-67). First and foremost, he took up the tasks of defining relations with the defeated powers and showed considerable practical wisdom in his settlements with them-
- **Settlement with Nawab of Awadh:** Clive went to Awadh, met Shuja-ud-Daula at Allahabad and concluded with him the **First Treaty of Allahabad** (16 August 1765). As per the treaty,
 - The Nawab of Awadh was made to pay a war indemnity of ₹50 lakh to the Company.
 - The Nawab was made to surrender Allahabad and Kora to Emperor Shah Alam and confirm Balwant Singh, the zamindar of Banaras, to his estate.

- The Nawab was made to enter an offensive and defensive treaty (**subsidiary alliance**) with the Company. The Company promised to support the Nawab against an outside attack, provided he paid for the services of the troops. In this way, the Nawab of Awadh became dependent on the Company. (In this way, Clive did not annex Awadh since annexing would have placed the Company under an obligation to protect extensive land frontier, which was vulnerable to attack by the Afghans under Ahmad Shah Abdali and the Marathas. Instead, Clive converted Awadh into a friendly **buffer state** between the British territories in Bengal and the Maratha possessions).
- **Settlement with Mughal Emperor, Shah Alam II:** Clive concluded the **Second Treaty of Allahabad** (August 1765) with the Mughal Emperor Shah Alam II. As per the treaty:
 - The Emperor was taken into Company's protection and given the districts of **Kora and Allahabad** ceded by Awadh (the Emperor resided in the fort of Allahabad for 6 years as a virtual prisoner of the English).
 - In return, the Emperor issued a farman dated 12 August 1765 granting to the Company the **Diwani** (right to collect revenue) of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa in return for the Company making an annual payment of ₹26 lakh to him and providing for the expenses of the Nizamat of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa which was fixed at ₹53 lakh. (In this way, the farman legalized the Company's gain in Bengal; it established a 'dual system' in Bengal in theory and converted the Emperor into a useful 'rubber stamp' of the Company).
- **Settlement with Nawab of Bengal:** After the death of Mir Jafar, **Najm-ud-Daulah** was allowed to succeed his father (February 1765) on the following conditions:
 - The Nawab would surrender Defence and Foreign Affairs (both were nizamat functions) into the hands of the Company and civil administration into the hands of a Naib-Subahdar nominated by the Company and not removable without their consent.
 - (Clearly, the Company gained Diwani from the emperor and nizamat functions from the Nawab of Bengal. In this way, the infamous dual system was 'dual' only in theory; while in practice the Company acquired all real power in Bengal. The Nawab lost all independent military or financial power and became a mere figurehead).
- **Dual System of Administration (Dual/double governance or Dyarchy) was established in Bengal:** In theory, Dual System meant the system of governance where the Company exercised Diwani functions (revenue collection) while the Nawab of Bengal exercised the Nizamat functions (defence, law and order and administration of justice). However, Njam ud-Daulah was allowed to succeed as Nawab of Bengal only on the condition that he surrendered the Nizamat functions. Hence, in reality, the 'dual system' was only a sham as it was the Company that exercised all political power and merely used the Nawab and his administration as an instrument for its purposes. Thus, in practice, the dual system referred to the system of government whereby the Company acquired all real power while the 'responsibility' for administration rested on the shoulders of the Nawab. A fatal divorce of power from responsibility was inherent in this dual system.
- The advantage of this system was that the British had **power without responsibility**. This had adverse consequences for the people of Bengal, as neither the Company nor the Nawab cared for their welfare. In the words of Clive himself, 'Such a scene of anarchy,

confusion, bribery, corruption and extortion was never seen or heard of in any country but Bengal.'

- Thus, began the **drain of wealth from Bengal**. The Company stopped sending money from England to buy Indian goods. These goods were now purchased from the revenues of Bengal and sold abroad.
- This drain of wealth greatly impoverished Bengal and was a major factor responsible for the terrible Bengal famine of 1770. Though the famine was caused by failure of rains, its devastating effects were accentuated by the Company's policies.
- The Company had to pay a handsome sum per year to the British Government as its share of the rich prize.

Why did Clive go for Dual System?

- Clive wanted to maintain Nawab as a shadow authority which the Company should seem to venerate. Open assumption of authority would have shown the true colours of the Company and might have resulted in uniting Indian princes against it.
- The Company did not wish to generate England's interest regarding the functioning of the Company. It wanted to avoid interference of the British Parliament.
- It was also doubtful whether other European companies would acknowledge the Company's subahship and pay duties that they paid to Nawabs of Bengal.
- Open assumption of political power would have attracted the attention of other European powers.
- The Company did not have adequate personnel to run the administration of Bengal.
- Directors of the Company were more interested in financial and commercial gains rather than territorial acquisitions. A dual system would serve the Company's interests well.

As a result of the system of Dual Government, the English Company acquired real power without any responsibility while the position of Nawab was virtually reduced to a cipher.

Adverse Impact of Dual System

The dual system proved to be a total failure and had the following evil effects:

- It led to complete **breakdown of administration** and law and order in Bengal. While the Nawab had no real power to enforce law, the Company also shunned all responsibility in this regard.
- Bengal, once the granary of India, now faced the specter of famines. The Company appointed two Naib-Diwans, Mohammad Reza Khan and Raja Sitab Roy for Bengal and Bihar respectively, and directed them to collect as high revenue as possible (Reza Khan was also the Naib-Nazim). The Bengal peasant faced some of the worst exactions by the revenue officials and many of them ran away into the jungles or simply joined the ranks of the robbers. Clearly, the Company's policies in Bengal greatly contributed to the terrible Bengal famine of 1770.
- Dual government led to **disruption of trade and commerce** in Bengal. The Company's merchants exercised strict monopoly and would undersell the Indian merchants in Bengal, pushing many of them into destitution and beggary.

- It also **ruined indigenous industry and skill**. The Company used its political power to compel the cotton weavers of Bengal to buy raw material from and sell woven cloth to the Company exclusively at arbitrary prices. The Company also encouraged the industries selectively. For instance, as per an order of 1769, the Company was asked to encourage production of raw silk but discourage woven silk fabrics as they competed with silk fabrics manufactured in England. Even the Company's factories where raw silk was produced, the silk winders were compelled to work under oppressive conditions; many even cut-off their thumbs to escape the miseries of factory life.
- The Company's avaricious policies in Bengal vitiated the entire atmosphere and led to an overall **moral degradation** and decay of Bengal society. The Indian servants of the Company followed the example of their corrupt masters. The peasants and artisans, unsure of receiving fair price for their labour, lost incentive for good work.

KM Panikkar aptly remarked, 'During 1765-72, the Company established a 'robber state' in Bengal and plundered and looted Bengal indiscriminately.'

Significance of Battle of Buxar

Buxar confirmed the result of Plassey and the British had once again emerged as the supreme power. Now the Nawab of Bengal was their puppet, the Nawab of Awadh a pliant ally and the Mughal emperor their pensioner. Lands from Bengal up to Allahabad lay at their feet and the road to Delhi open. While Plassey had made the British a powerful factor in Bengal politics, Buxar made them a powerful factor in politics of north India. In fact, the British now emerged as strong contenders for the India Empire.

Evaluation of Political Events in Bengal, 1757-65

The political events in Bengal from 1757 to 1765 have been termed by many historians as a '**political revolution**'. Reasons behind this revolution go beyond the arrogance of Siraj, the treachery of Mir Jafar or individual limitations of Mir Qasim. The English Company and its officials played a significant role in shaping these events. An equally significant role was played by their Indian collaborators including the House of Jagat Seths, zamindars, merchants and local officials who felt alienated owing to civil and military reorganisation by Siraj, and conspired to replace him by their own man. The British were also in search of a more pliant Nawab for their own commercial ends and found allies in this Indian group. Thus their common objective was to replace the present Nawab by a man of their common choice.

To sum up, the economic interests of the Company and political interests of their Indian collaborators together lead to the Plassey Conspiracy of 1757. The political transformation of Bengal began with the British victory at Plassey and culminated with their victory at Buxar. The victory at Buxar was not merely a victory against the Nawab of Bengal but also against the Mughal Emperor and the Nawab of Awadh. Hence, the British victory at Buxar not only indicated the rise of the British power in Bengal but also indicated the impending rise of the British power in the rest of India.



Previous Years' Questions – Preliminary Exam

- Which one of the following pairs is correctly matched? **[UPSC 1995]**
 - Battle of Buxar : Mir Jafar vs Clive
 - Battle of Wandiwash : French vs East India Company
 - Battle of Chillianwala : Dalhousie vs Marathas
 - Battle of Kharda : Nizam vs East India Company
- Who among the following was the first European to initiate the policy of taking part in the quarrels of Indian princess with a view to acquire territories? **[UPSC 1996]**
 - Clive
 - Dupleix
 - Albuquerque
 - Warren Hastings
- Consider the following statements: **[UPSC 2004]**
 - In the third Battle of Panipat, Ahmad Shah Abdali defeated Ibrahim Lodi
 - Tipu Sultan was killed in the Third Anglo Mysore war
 - Mir Jafar entered in a conspiracy with the English for the defeat of Nawab Siraj-ud-Daulah in the Battle of Plassey

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

 - 1, 2 and 3
 - 3 only
 - 2 and 3
 - None
- Which of the following is the correct chronological order of the battles fought in India in the 18th century? **[UPSC 2005]**
 - Battle of Wandiwash, Battle of Buxar, Battle of Ambur, Battle of Plassey
 - Battle of Ambur, Battle of Plassey, Battle of Wandiwash, Battle of Buxar
 - Battle of Wandiwash, Battle of Plassey, Battle of Ambur, Battle of Buxar
 - Battle of Ambur, Battle of Buxar, Battle of Wandiwash, Battle of Plassey



Practice Questions – Preliminary Exam

- Which of the following were among the consequences of the Battle of Buxar in 1764?
 - Mir Jafar was raised as Nawab of Bengal
 - Clive was appointed Governor and Commander-in-Chief of the Company
 - System of Dual government in Bengal

Select the correct answer from the options that follow:

 - 1 and 2
 - 2 and 3
 - 1 and 3
 - 1, 2 and 3
- Which of the following were the causes for the failure of the French in establishing political control over India?
 - The English Navy was superior to that of the French navy.
 - The French officers lacked coordination.
 - In Europe, the position of England was much stronger than that of France.
 - The French Company lacked government support.

Select the correct answer from the options that follow:

 - 1, 2 and 3
 - 2, 3 and 4
 - 1, 3 and 4
 - 1, 2, 3 and 4
- Arrange the following battles in correct chronological order as they took place in India in the 18th century-
 - Battle of Wandiwash

- Battle of Plassey
- Battle of Buxar

Select the correct answer from the options that follow:

- 1, 2 and 3
 - 2, 1 and 3
 - 2, 3 and 1
 - 3, 1 and 2
- Who were Mir Madan and Mohan Lal?
 - Leading soldiers in the army of the Nawab of Bengal
 - Leading bankers of Bengal
 - Big zamindars of Bengal
 - Officers in charge of Calcutta treasury
 - What was Black Hole Tragedy?
 - death of French prisoners by the army sent by Nawab Anwaruddin.
 - death of English prisoners at Fort William, captured by Nawab of Bengal.
 - treachery done with the Nawab by the leading men of his court.
 - none of the above
 - Consider the following statements about the Battle of Plassey-
 - As a result of this battle, the Company received zamindari of some regions.
 - After the battle, the private trade of the Company's officers ended.
 - The resources from Bengal were used by the British in the South.

Which of the statement above is/are correct?

- 1 and 2 only
 - 1 and 3 only
 - 2 and 3 only
 - all of the above
- What were the causes of the First Carnatic war?
 - Austrian War of Succession in Europe.
 - Expansion of colonies in America by the French and the English
 - Control over Indian trade.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- 1 and 2 only
 - 2 and 3 only
 - 1 and 3 only
 - 1, 2 and 3
- Which of the following factors contributed to the victory of the British in the Battle of Plassey?
 - Desertion in the Nawab's camp
 - Show of might by the British forces
 - Failure of the Nawabs of Bengal in understanding the true nature of the English Company
 - Consider the following statements-
 - The East India Company got Bombay from the Portuguese by defeating them.
 - In 1609, Hawkins reached the Mughal court as the ambassador of King James I.

Which of the above statements is/are incorrect?

- 1 only
 - 2 only
 - both
 - neither
- Which of the following were among the consequences of the Battle of Plassey in 1757?
 - Mir Qasim was proclaimed Nawab
 - The English Company was granted undisputed right to free trade in Bengal, Bihar and Orissa.
 - The English Company was granted the zamindari rights of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa

Select the correct answer from the options that follow:

- 1 and 2
- 2 and 3
- 2 only
- 1, 2 and 3



Practice Questions – Main Exam

1. Why did the English East India Company acquire political dimension? What factors stood behind the expansion of European companies in India? Discuss.
2. 'It was rightly said that no General could have won India by starting from Pondicherry and compete with a power which held Bengal.' Analyse the statement.
3. The Battle of Plassey was 'not a great battle but a great betrayal'. Comment.
4. 'On 23 June 1757, the middle ages of India ended and her modern age began.' Comment.
5. 'Dupleix made a cardinal blunder in looking for the key of India in Madras; Clive sought and found it in Bengal.' Critically examine.

Answers

Previous Years' Questions – Preliminary Exam

1. (b)
2. (b)
3. (b)
4. (b)

Practice Questions – Preliminary Exam

1. (d)
2. (d)
3. (b)
4. (a)
5. (b)
6. (b)
7. (d)
8. (c)
9. (c)
10. (c)