

## From Trade To Territories

Things to Answer after reading the context:

- a. Who were the rivals of the British?
- b. How did Aurangzeb help the British trade in India?

### Introduction: Demise of Aurangzeb and the entry of the British, the traders

The chapter deals with the most important part of modern Indian history, the coming of British. As the title suggests, you will get an insight about how the British who came to India as trading units, started spreading their control over the territories of India. The Mughal rule had started to come to an end with the demise of Aurangzeb, who was the last Mughal ruler, who had established his control over his memoir through his brutal yet strong policies. After his death in 1707, Delhi as a centre started falling down and small independent kingdoms had emerged, as the Mughal governors known as subedars started asserting control over small regional kingdoms, thereby dividing the whole empire and making it weak.

In the second half of the eighteenth century, British appeared in the political scene in India. India was always a great country, and British had come here as traders to deal with spices and stuff. They saw an opportunity here in India, as there were less powerful rulers in the country, and realised that they could get control of India's wealth if they started ruling it. They planned to make India their colony.

### East India Company and Other Competitors:

Mercantile business was one famous business idea at that time where different companies would buy products at a cheap rate and sell them at higher prices. East India Company, a trading company from England, wanted to take hold over the mercantile business in the east and to erase all competition, it acquired a Royal Charter in the year 1600 from the ruler of England, Queen Elizabeth I, that no other company from England could trade with the countries in the East, thus removing all sorts of competitors from the country.

However, it was not really that they had no competitors, as the Royal Charter could only exclude the companies of England, and not the rest of Europe. It seems that the competition for the East India Company was waiting at the shore as the Portuguese had already established their control in Goa, as Vasco da Gama was the first person to discover the sea route to India. However, the Dutch and then the French Traders too arrived in the scene by the early seventeenth century.

What really affected the profit of the mercantile business was the buying and selling of the same things, like silk, cotton, spices like cinnamon, cardamom, cloves and pepper, as they had a huge market in Europe. This led to increase in prices of these items, thereby cutting the maximum profit

range. So, the hustle for eliminating the competitors from India started which led to a series of battles. Also, the trading companies started building their trade posts, fortified them and kept arms and ammunition for protection, which also sometimes led to conflict with the local rulers. They also indulged in activities as they sunk the rival's ship, blocking routes and also did not let the ships reach with the goods of trade.

As mentioned earlier, the rivalry had led to conflict with the local rulers, and therefore, they started having interactions with the local rulers. This led to the involvement of the British in the politics of India. Let's see what happened next.

- ❖ Do you think Battle of Plassey can be considered the war of independence? Why or why not?
- ❖ What could be the most possible reasons for Siraj's loss in the war?
- ❖ Who were the "Nabobs"? Were they respected?
- ❖ How did the Diwani of Bengal profit the British?

## **Battle Of Plassey: The Story Behind It**

### **Part I: Setting of the stage**

The East India Company's first factory was set up on the banks of River Hugli in 1651. Factories were basically the places where the items of exports were stored, and had offices for the Company official. It was also the place of operation for the "factors" who were the Company traders. The factories were unlike that of today, as the items were just stored for export.

In no time of their trade expansion, the merchants and traders too started settling near the factories in Hugli, and they started building a complete fortified settlement by 1696. Also, they started demanding a duty free trade from Aurangzeb, by asking him to issue a farman of such. They did not stop here, as they bribed the Mughal officials to have control over the Zamindari rights of three villages in 1671, one among them was Kalikata, the one we call Kolkata: The City Of Joy.

The farman which was issued by Aurangzeb only allowed the Company to trade duty free, but the private traders, who were not associated with the Company, had to pay the duty. The private traders thereby refused to pay the duty tax, and this led to heavy revenue loss for Murshid Quli Khan, the Nawab of Bengal, who then protested.

### **Part II: Tensions Between Nawabs and The Company**

The Company started facing problems in trade as soon as Aurangzeb died, for the Nawabs had started asserting their complete authority in Bengal. Murshid Quli Khan, Alivardi Khan and then Siraj Ud Daulah as the Nawab of Bengal, were three strong rulers who did not let the Company have a duty free trade, denied their demands of free concessions, did not allow the Company to mint their own coins and also demanded huge tributes of revenue in return of trade. The Company was accused

of deceit, they had written mean and disrespectful letters to the Nawab. Matters intensified with confrontations, as the Company said it was important for them to enlarge settlements and buy villages. This whole confrontation and discussions intensified which led to the “Battle of Plassey”.

### **Part III: Final Stage: Battle of Plassey**

**The Battle Of Plassey is an important aspect in Modern Indian History, as it was the first war of the Company with the Indian rulers, which they won. With this war, a series of events started which led to the Company’s decision of colonising India. Lets learn about the Battle of Plassey. And by the way, the word “Plassey” is actually “Palashi” a place where palash trees are found, the flowers of which are used to make gulal.**

The Company initially was not interested in having a control over the territories as it was busy expanding its trade and making money. They thought taking up administration would be too much load and so just wanted a puppet ruler, someone who would help them gain duty free trade, concessions and other stuff. The Company had already destroyed its relations with the Nawabs of Bengal. Siraj Ud Dulah was the Nawab at that time, and he was in no mood to be the country’s puppet. This made the British come up with a plan to make a rival of Siraj Ud Dulah, the Nawab of Bengal, in which they terribly failed. Siraj Ud Dulah had to warn the company officials to stop with the interference in his horizon, and asked them to pay revenues and halt their fortifications.

**Failed negotiations led to Siraj Ud Dulah’s action of capturing the Company’s officials, blockading the ships and locking the warehouse at Kasimbazar and later went on to raid the Company’s warehouse at Calcutta.**

Robert Clive was sent with forces by the Company to lead on with the negotiations which were obviously a fail. This led to the Battle of Plassey in 1757, an army of Siraj Ud Dulah against the East India’s Company’s army led by Robert Clive. Mir Jafar, who had promised to fight for Siraj, was bribe promised by the officials that he would become the Nawab. Siraj’s army lost because of betrayal by his own countrymen, and was assassinated.

*Taking up the administration of the country was not something that the Company wanted, and so made puppet kings as their weapon. But soon they realized that it was a bad idea for even those kings protested and did not allow easy concessions. Mir Jafar was made the Nawab of Bengal, and then replaced by Mir Qasim, who fought the Battle of Buxar with the British and was defeated. Mir Jafar was made the Nawab again, and by the time he died, the Company decided to take hold over the territories of the country, for their trade.*

### **The New Diwans of Bengal**

The Company had come with enough fortune in their hands as in 1765, they were made the Diwans of Bengal, and had the permission to use the revenue and resources of Bengal. They used them to

build their fortifications, maintain purchases and their expenses in India. They had no worries of importing gold and silver from Britain to buy products in India.

### **The Nabobs of Britain**

The term “Nabob” became famous in Britain. With the Diwani in hand, the British officials started dreaming and demanding masses of wealth and land from the Nawabs of Bengal, and earned fortune in India. Robert Clive, who had committed suicide in 1774, was charged of corruption because he had earned a vast amount of wealth that was worth £401,102. Many people were honest, who just earned and left India to live a comfortable life. There were others, who earned a massive amount, and left for their country and left flashy lifestyles. These people were called “nabobs” and anglo version for Nawabs.

### **Expansion Policies of the British**

You know the British were rarely into attacking and plundering kingdoms for the control of the territories, but rather used diplomatic, economic and political ways of asserting control over the territories.

The first thing they did was appoint Resident Officials in the kingdoms after the Battle of Buxar in 1764, who had the job of maintaining the Company’s interest. These officials then started meddling with the affairs of the kingdom, forcing opinions on the successors and other decisions. It was at this point of time that “Subsidiary Alliance” came into the scene which banned the maintenance of the king’s own army and said that they were to be protected by the Company. Not only this, the Company’s forces were to be paid by the king. In case of failure of the payment, a part of the empire was taken away as penalty. *Sounds like the modern bank system, right? What do you think about it? In 1801, the Nawab of Awadh had to give away a part of his territory as penalty to Governor General Richard Wellesely.*

- ❖ *What do you think about the “subsidiary forces?” How do you think they helped the Company gain profit?*
- ❖ *Why was Tipu Sultan a problem for the Company?*
- ❖ *Discuss about the bravest anti British resistances.*

### **Tipu Sultan: The “Tiger of Mysore”**

Not all kings could be fooled by the diplomatic policies of the British, and it was because of such kings, that the British were forced to resort to military confrontation. Do you know that India could be taken in control of the British because of one major reason: it was divided into small kingdoms, who just had the greed for power and money.

Haider Ali( 1761 to 1782) and his son Tipu Sultan (1782 to 1799) were problematic kings for the British. Mysore had the profitable trade of Malabar Coast in its control. Tipu Sultan, observing the Company's activities, had denied the local merchants to trade with the Company, and had stopped the export of sandalwood, pepper and cardamom. He dealt with the Company in their own way, by joining hands with their rivals: The French. They helped him modernise his army.

Foresighting no future in trade under the rule of the Mysore kings, the British decided to take up the war, and this led to four battles from 1767-69, 1780-84, 1790-92 and 1799. It was the fourth and the last war which made the British victorious. The last battle was the Battle of Seringapatam. Tipu Sultan was killed and Mysore came under the rule of its former dynasty, the Wodeyars. Subsidiary Alliance was also imposed on Mysore.

*Here is a simple question for you: Do you think any other forces joined hands with the British to defeat Tipu Sultan? If yes, find out who they were. And also, why was Tipu Sultan called the "Tiger of Mysore"?*

### **British Gaining Lands In The South Of Vindhya: The Marathas**

The Marathas were divided into small states of different dynasties like Sindhia, Holkar, Gaikwad and Bhonsle after their defeat at the Third Battle of Panipat in 1762. They were held in a confederacy, an alliance under a Peshwa, the Principal Minister and the most famous amongst them were Mahadji Sindhia and Nana Phadnis.

The British and the Marathas came face to face in a series of wars, where the British were victorious. The first war ended with the Treaty of Salbai and no one was actually victorious. The next war, The Second Anglo Maratha War turned out to be happening for the British in 1803-05 where the British gained Orissa and the territories north of the Yamuna river including Agra and Delhi. In the Third Anglo Maratha War of 1817-19, the Maratha power was completely defeated, leading to which the Company had secured control over the lands of South of the Vindhya. The Peshwa was sent to Bithur with pension.

*You now understand it very well that the British were determined to take up any step for their Company's interest and by the early nineteenth century, they followed an aggressive policy of territorial expansion, and subdued the Indian kings with their diplomatic policies.*

### **The Claim To Paramountcy**

As mentioned earlier, the British claimed through its activities that the Company's interests and their power was supreme than anyone or anything else, and that they were ready to resort to any activity which would profit them. This policy of paramountcy was carried out aggressively under the then Governor General, Lord Hastings who served from 1813 to 1823. This whole idea of supreme power helped them shape their policies in India.

Not only Tipu Sultan, but there were other kings and queens who did not let the British have an easy way in India. They resisted in their bravest form, posing problems for the British.

- Rani Channamma resisted the British when they tried to take control over the small region of Kittur, that is in present day Karnataka. It was a brave resistance but was suppressed with her arrest in 1824. It is said that she died in 1829 in prison. The resistance in Kittur was continued by Rayyanna, a chowkidar who was successful in destroying a number of British camps. He was also suppressed and hanged by the British in 1830.

### Expansion Policies of The North West

A fear of rivalry prevailed when the British thought that Russia too wanted to have control over the mercantile trade, and that is why they sought aggressive policies in the north west by fighting wars with Afghanistan between 1838 and 1842, and in the year 1843 Sindh was taken over. Punja could not be annexed because of one of the most strongest Punjabi rulers, Maharaja Ranjeet Singh. Two wars were fought with the Sikh kingdom after his death, leading to annexation of Punjab in 1849.

- ❖ Why was “Doctrine of Lapse” a master move?
- ❖ Discuss about the new system of administration by the British.
- ❖ How many words in the British dictionary are anglicized versions of the Hindi words?

### Doctrine Of Lapse: Dalhousie’s Master Move For Annexations

Lord Dalhousie, who was the Governor General of India from 1848 to 1856, came up with his master policy of annexations, known as the “Doctrine of Lapse”. According to this policy, any king who died without his natural male heir, his kingdom would “lapse” which meant it would become a part of the Company’s territory. The kingdoms which were annexed were Satara (1848), Sambalpur (1850), Udaipur (1852), Nagpur (1853) and Jhansi (1854).

*One of the most important annexations under the Doctrine was that of Awadh, as it was taken away by humiliating the king, putting forward the argument that it was ruled with misgovernment. The people protested and took part in one of the most important wars in the history of modern India. Can you tell me what that war was called?*

### A New System Of Administration

For its efficient administration, the British came up with a new system of administration. Lets learn about it in this manner.

- *Administrative Territories of the British: Madras, Bombay and Bengal (Presidencies)*
- *A Governor ruled them , a Governor General being the supreme head*

→ *System of Justice as established by Lord Hastings, the first Governor General of India*

- a. *Two courts in each district: a criminal court known as faujdari adalat and a civil court diwani adalat*
- b. *Criminal Courts were under a qazi and mufti, under the guidance of the collector*

*The Muslim Maulavis and Brahmin Pandits interpreted the local laws for the British. There were, however, differences between the local laws of both the religious figures, as Brahmin Pandits had different interpretations of the local laws based on "Dharmashastra". The British ordered eleven pandits to compile a Hindu law digest for them in 1775, which was translated into English by N.B Halhed. A Muslim Law digest was also compiled in 1778.*

*Sardar Nizamat Adalat: Set up in Calcutta, it was a court of appeal under the Regulating Act of 1773.*

*Collector: collected revenues and taxes and maintained law and order*

### **The Sepoy Army: Company's Army**

The Company too had started maintaining its own army in India, with a uniformed culture. They trained them and kept in pace with the technology of warfare as they had come in terms with the technology of matchlocks and muskets. The army was called the "sepoy army", an anglicized version of the word "sipahi".

The recruitments were mostly done in India, but they were rarely given higher positions in the army. They were trained in European style, and had to dress like one. This meant a change in their Indian lifestyle. *Do you think this created a problem for these people?*

### **Conclusion**

*So, now you see, the traders who had come to India for a mere mercantile trade, were into territorial expansion and gaining control. Why do you think they could take control of a vast country like India so easily?*

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