

- Decline of Mughal Empire and Emergence of Regional Powers
- British East India Company and European Competition
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- Conflicts Between East India Company and Bengal Nawabs
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Decline of Mughal Empire and Emergence of Regional Powers

Aurangzeb was the last powerful Mughal ruler who controlled a large part of India. After his death in 1707, many Mughal governors (subadars) and zamindars began asserting their authority, establishing regional kingdoms. As these kingdoms grew stronger, Delhi lost its effectiveness as a central power.

By the second half of the eighteenth century, the British emerged as a new power. Originally a small trading company, the British East India Company gradually expanded its influence to become masters of a vast empire.

Exam Questions

Q1: Who was the last powerful Mughal ruler and what happened after his death?

A1: Aurangzeb was the last powerful Mughal ruler. After his death in 1707, many Mughal governors and zamindars asserted their authority and established regional kingdoms, weakening the central power of Delhi.

Q2: How did the British East India Company begin its presence in India?

A2: The British East India Company began as a small trading company reluctant to acquire territories but gradually expanded its power to control large parts of India.

British East India Company and European Competition

In 1600, the East India Company received a royal charter from Queen Elizabeth I granting it exclusive rights to trade with the East. This monopoly allowed it to buy goods cheaply and sell them at higher prices in Europe.

However, other European powers like the Portuguese, Dutch, and French also competed for trade in India. This competition led to conflicts, battles, and fortifications to protect trading

posts.

The Company found it difficult to separate trade from politics due to conflicts with local rulers and rival European powers.

Exam Questions

Q1: What was the significance of the royal charter granted to the East India Company?

A1: The royal charter gave the East India Company exclusive rights to trade with the East, preventing competition from other English companies and allowing it to buy goods cheaply and sell them at higher prices.

Q2: Why did the East India Company face conflicts with local rulers?

A2: The Company's efforts to fortify settlements and protect trade led to conflicts with local rulers who saw these actions as threats to their authority.

Establishment of East India Company Factories and Trade

The first English factory was set up on the banks of the river Hugli in 1651. It served as a base for trade and included warehouses and offices. The Company persuaded merchants to settle nearby and began fortifying the settlement.

By 1698, the Company obtained zamindari rights over villages including Kalikata (later Kolkata) and secured a farman from Emperor Aurangzeb granting duty-free trade rights.

However, Company officials often refused to pay duties on private trade, causing revenue losses and protests from local rulers like Nawab Murshid Quli Khan of Bengal.

Exam Questions

Q1: What was the significance of the farman issued by Aurangzeb to the East India Company?

A1: The farman granted the Company the right to trade duty-free, giving it a significant advantage in commerce.

Q2: Why did the Nawab of Bengal protest against the Company?

A2: The Company officials refused to pay duties on private trade, causing revenue loss to Bengal, which led the Nawab to protest.

Conflicts Between East India Company and Bengal Nawabs

After Aurangzeb's death, Bengal nawabs like Murshid Quli Khan, Alivardi Khan, and Sirajuddaulah asserted their power and autonomy. They demanded tributes, denied the Company rights to mint coins, and opposed fortifications.

The Company accused the nawabs of ruining trade by imposing unjust demands. The conflict escalated, culminating in the Battle of Plassey in 1757.

Exam Questions

Q1: What were the main causes of conflict between the East India Company and the Bengal nawabs?

A1: The nawabs demanded tributes, denied minting rights, and opposed fortifications, while the Company refused to pay taxes and sought to expand trade and settlements.

Q2: What was the outcome of these conflicts?

A2: The conflicts led to confrontations and the Battle of Plassey, marking a turning point in British control over Bengal.

Battle of Plassey

In 1757, Robert Clive led the Company's army against Nawab Sirajuddaulah at Plassey. The battle was won largely due to the betrayal of Mir Jafar, one of Sirajuddaulah's commanders, who did not fight.

After the battle, Mir Jafar was installed as the puppet nawab. This victory marked the beginning of British dominance in India.

Exam Questions

Q1: Who was Robert Clive and what role did he play in the Battle of Plassey?

A1: Robert Clive was a British officer who led the East India Company's army to victory at the Battle of Plassey in 1757.

Q2: Why was the Battle of Plassey significant?

A2: It was the first major victory for the Company in India and marked the start of British political control.

Expansion of Company Power and Administration

After Plassey, the Company expanded its power through political and military means. It appointed Residents in Indian states to influence internal affairs and imposed subsidiary alliances restricting Indian rulers' military independence.

The Company also annexed territories using policies like the Doctrine of Lapse, which allowed annexation if a ruler died without a male heir.

Exam Questions

Q1: What was the role of Residents appointed by the East India Company?

A1: Residents were agents who influenced Indian states' internal affairs to serve Company interests.

Q2: Explain the Doctrine of Lapse.

A2: It was a policy that allowed the Company to annex any Indian kingdom if its ruler died without a male heir.

Resistance to Company Rule

Several Indian rulers and leaders resisted British expansion. Rani Channamma of Kitor led an armed rebellion but was arrested. Rayanna continued resistance until his execution. Tipu Sultan of Mysore fought four wars against the Company and died defending his capital.

Maratha power was subdued after a series of wars, ending with the Third Anglo-Maratha War (1817–19).

Exam Questions

Q1: Who was Tipu Sultan and why is he significant?

A1: Tipu Sultan was the ruler of Mysore who resisted British expansion and fought four wars against the Company.

Q2: What happened to the Maratha Confederacy?

A2: The Marathas were defeated in a series of wars, culminating in the end of their power after the Third Anglo-Maratha War.

Administration and Judicial Reforms under Company Rule

Warren Hastings, the first Governor-General, introduced administrative reforms including the establishment of criminal and civil courts in districts. Hindu and Muslim laws were codified for European judges.

The Collector became the principal district official responsible for revenue collection and law enforcement.

Exam Questions

Q1: What judicial reforms did Warren Hastings introduce?

A1: He established criminal and civil courts in districts and codified Hindu and Muslim laws for European judges.

Q2: What was the role of the Collector?

A2: The Collector was responsible for collecting revenue and maintaining law and order in the district.

Company Army and Military Changes

The Company's army evolved from cavalry-dominated forces to include more infantry trained in European military techniques. The sepoy army was formed, but changes in training and disregard for caste and religious sentiments caused tensions.

The Revolt of 1857 reflected some of these tensions among sepoys.

Exam Questions

Q1: What was the sepoy army?

A1: The sepoy army was the East India Company's army composed mainly of Indian soldiers trained in European military methods.

Q2: Why did changes in the Company army cause problems?

A2: The disregard for caste and religious feelings among soldiers created tensions and contributed to unrest.

Conclusion and Impact of Company Rule

The East India Company transformed from a trading company to a territorial colonial power aided by new technologies like steamships. By 1857, it controlled about 63% of India's territory and 78% of its population, with indirect influence over the rest.

Solved Examples

Example 1: Explain how the Battle of Plassey changed the course of Indian history.

Solution: The Battle of Plassey in 1757 was a decisive victory for the East India Company over Nawab Sirajuddaulah. It marked the beginning of British political control in India, allowing the Company to expand its power beyond trade to territorial rule.

Example 2: Describe the Doctrine of Lapse and its significance.

Solution: The Doctrine of Lapse was a policy by which the Company annexed Indian states if their rulers died without a male heir. It was significant because it led to the annexation of several states and increased British territorial control.

Practice Set

Easy:

- Who was the last Mughal emperor?
- What was the main objective of the East India Company initially?

Moderate:

- Explain the causes of the Battle of Plassey.
- What role did Residents play in Indian states?

Challenging:

- Discuss the impact of the Doctrine of Lapse on Indian princely states.
- Analyze the reasons for resistance against the East India Company by rulers like Tipu Sultan and Rani Channamma.

Answer Key

Easy:

- Bahadur Shah Zafar was the last Mughal emperor.
- The East India Company's main objective was trade.

Moderate:

- The Battle of Plassey was caused by conflicts over trade privileges, refusal to pay taxes, and political rivalry between the Company and Nawab Sirajuddaulah.
- Residents were Company agents who influenced the internal affairs of Indian states to serve British interests.

Challenging:

- The Doctrine of Lapse led to the annexation of several states, undermining traditional succession and sovereignty, increasing British control.
- Rulers resisted due to loss of sovereignty, unfair treaties, and cultural and political domination by the Company.

Quick Reference

- **Aurangzeb:** Last powerful Mughal emperor.

- **East India Company:** British trading company turned colonial power.
- **Farman:** Royal edict or order.
- **Battle of Plassey (1757):** Marked start of British political control.
- **Doctrine of Lapse:** Policy for annexing states without male heirs.
- **Residents:** British agents in Indian states.
- **Sepoy:** Indian soldier in Company army.
- **Subsidiary Alliance:** Treaty restricting Indian rulers' military independence.

Glossary

- **Subadar:** Mughal provincial governor.
- **Zamindar:** Landowner or tax collector.
- **Mercantile:** Business based on trade for profit.
- **Puppet:** A ruler controlled by another power.
- **Impeachment:** Formal accusation of misconduct.
- **Qazi:** Muslim judge.
- **Mufti:** Muslim jurist who interprets law.
- **Dharmashastra:** Ancient Hindu legal texts.
- **Sawar:** Cavalry soldier.
- **Confederacy:** Alliance of states or groups.

Chronology Table

Year	Event	Significance
1707	Death of Aurangzeb	Start of Mughal decline and rise of regional powers
1600	East India Company chartered	Start of British trade in India
1757	Battle of Plassey	Beginning of British political control in India
1764	Battle of Buxar	Consolidation of Company power in Bengal
1799	Death of Tipu Sultan	End of Mysore resistance
1817-19	Third Anglo-Maratha War	End of Maratha power

1848-56	Doctrine of Lapse applied	Annexation of several Indian states
1857	Indian Revolt of 1857	Major uprising against Company rule

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