

# Battle of Plassey

## [UPSC Notes]

### What was the battle of Plassey?

The Battle of Plassey was fought between the East Indian Company forces under the command of Robert Clive and Siraj-ud-Daulah, Nawab of Bengal on June 23, 1757. Since East India Company was Imperial and mercantile in nature, they drastically misused the trade privileges that adversely affected the Nawab's financial status which infuriated Siraj-ud-Daulah.

### Causes of Battle of Plassey

The major causes of the battle of Plassey can be classified into two parts i.e.

- 1) Immediate reason was the attack of East India company on Chandranagor, a French settlement that was taken by Siraj as a violation of the Treaty of Alinagor and;
- 2) The other long-term reason was -
  - Siraj-ud-Daulah was unhappy with the drastic misuse of its trade privileges that adversely affected Nawab's finances.
  - The East India Company gave asylum to political fugitives like Krishna Das son of Raj Vallabh who fled after taking a large number of treasures against the nawab's will.
  - Siraj-ud-Daulah attacked and captured the British fort at Calcutta.
  - East India Company made a conspiracy with those officers of Siraj-ud-Daulah who are not satisfied with Nawab. For example
    - Mir Jafar, who was the chief military commander of Siraj-ud-Daulah
    - Jagat Seth was a banker of Bengal.
    - Rai Durlabh, an official in the court of Nawab.
    - Omichand, an officer in charge of Calcutta.

Under the deal, Mir Jafar was to be made the Nawab of Bengal, who in return would reward the company for its services. With this English Company's position strengthened more which shows the English victory in the battle of Plassey was decided before the battle was even fought.

And, the Siraj-ud-Daulah although having the 50,000 strong force was defeated by the handful of a clive's 3,000 forces.

### Personalities involved in the Battle of Plassey-

The Battle of Plassey was fought between many people-

### 1. Siraj-ud-Daulah:

- Siraj-ud-Daulah was the Nawab of Bengal
- Siraj-ud-Daulah is believed to have imprisoned 146 English people who were put in a very tiny room due to which out of 146, 123 died out of suffocation.
- Siraj-ud-Daulah attacked and seized the English fort at Calcutta, Calcutta was under the control of the British.

### 2. Robert Clive-

- Robert Clive was the commander in chief of the East India Company in Bengal.
- Robert Clive gave asylum to Krishna Das son of Raj Vallabh who was an economic fugitive and that disappointed the Siraj-ud-Daulah.
- He misused the trade privilege given to East India Company.
- He fortified the fort at Calcutta without the permission of Nawab.

### 3. Mir Jafar-

- He was a brilliant commander-in-chief of the Nawabs army.
- East India Company bribed him for cheating Siraj-ud-Daulah.
- He conspired with East India Company in desire of becoming Nawab of Bengal.

### 4. Rai Durlabh-

- He was an official in the courts of the nawab.
- Although he joined the army of Siraj-ud-Daulah but did not help in battle, thus betraying Siraj-ud-Daulah.

### 5. Jagat Seth-

- He was a banker.
- His involvement in the conspiracy resulted in Siraj-ud-Daulah's imprisonment and killing of Siraj.

### 6. Omi Chand-

- He was an officer in charge of Calcutta.
- He was responsible for a signatory to the treaty negotiated by Clive before the Battle of Plassey.

## Chronology of events in Battle of Plassey

The British were misusing Dastak and started fortification and Nawab was warned but the British had not responded.

- When the company did not comply with its instructions of Nawab, regarding the prevention of misuse of Dastak and stopping the fortification of Fort William, then Nawab, as a measure of warning, attacked and captured the company's factory at Kasim Bazar. In retaliation, the company looted and plundered Hooghly. This further provoked the new Nawab and in June 1756 Nawab attacked Fort William. The company's officials were taken by surprise and were defeated, some of them surrendered and were captured and some of them escaped through the back gate into the river Hooghly. And they took shelter at the tidal Island called Fulta in river Hooghly along with Governor Drakes, and from Fulta, they sent a message to Madras.
- Nawab ordered the English Prisoners to be put behind bars. He changed the name of Calcutta to Alinagar and gave the administrative charge of Alinagar to Manik Chand and he returned to Murshidabad. Meantime by December 1756, a large British force under the leadership of Robert Clive and Admiral Watson arrived in Bengal from Madras.
- When Nawab got to know this, he developed fear and he decided to try a compromise with the English also due to the fear of attacks by Ahmed Shah Abdali and the Marathas. Meanwhile, Manik Chand had handed over Calcutta to the English without a fight. The negotiation started between Nawab Siraj-ud-Daulah and Robert Clive which resulted in the Treaty of Alinagor in February 1757. According to which Nawab agreed to restore the trading privileges of the company, he allowed the company to undertake the fortification of Fort William, he agreed to pay a war indemnity to the company and in return, Clive promised that company would not attack the French at Chandra Nagar.
- But in April 1757, the company attacked Chandranagar and the French were defeated. Nawab talked with Clive and came to Calcutta with a small army and he was next going to the farmhouse of Omichand. Britisher felt that Nawab wanted to fight and attacked. Both sides attacked each other at Plassey in Nadia of West Bengal. Britishers were 3000 and Nawab had almost 65000 soldiers but due to the conspiracy between Mir Jafar and Robert Clive the Nawab Siraj-ud-Daulah was captured and put behind bars and Mir Jafar's son- Miran killed Nawab.

## Impact of the Battle of Plassey

The impacts of the Battle of Plassey are as follows:

### **Political Impact -**

- The Battle of Plassey started the process of colonialization of India by the British Company.

- The British Company established its political influence over Bengal not directly but indirectly by putting Nawab Mir Jafar as a puppet on the throne of Bengal.
- British Company started using Bengal as a launching pad to manifest his Imperial ambition.

### **Economic Impact-**

- The drain of wealth started first by plundering then misuse of privileges etc.
- Mir Jafar gave the Diwani right 25(twenty-five) paragana to the British Company. And now the revenue from this region was to go in the favor of British Company.
- Mir Jafar also rewarded a huge amount of money not only to lord Clive but also to other British officers.
- After the Battle of Plassey British company maintained a monopoly over trade and commerce in Bengal.
- Thus Bengal once a rich province of the Mughals' Empire started beginning a region of Hunger, Famine, and Deprivation.

### **Cultural Impact-**

The Battle of Plassey exposed the moral weakness of the Indian people and made it clear to the British Company that India could be conquered with help of the Indian people because they had no conception of nationalism.

### **Transfer of power-**

After the Battle of Plassey, Mir Jafar became a Nawab of Bengal. Mir Jafar was a puppet Nawab, he was used by the company just to meet its financial demand of the company. So that company could promote its colonial interest very soon. Mir Jafar was not in a position to meet the greedy demands of the company because the company itself was Imperial in nature.

As a result, Mir Jafar started losing his relevance in the imperial game of the company. Thus an allegation was raised against him that he was making a conspiracy with Dutch, but the reality was that he failed to pay the huge amount of revenue demanded by the company. As a result British company made a compromise with Mir Kasim thereby the transfer of power took place in September 1760. This transfer of power was considered a kind of revolution in Bengal by some historians.

### **The scenario of Bengal after the historical Battle of Plassey:**

- The event led to the Battle of Buxar in 1764.
- Transfer of power from Mir Jafar to Mir Kasim.
- Mir kasim was then the new Nawab of Bengal.

