



QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

EAST INDIA COMPANY(EIC)

Q: Explain why the East India Company became involved in the Sub-Continent during 17th century? [7]

ANS: India was a source of several products that were sold all over the world by wealthy people in Europe. For example: Spices, cotton goods, yarn, sugar, silk and potassium. The thing that the British mostly wanted was cotton yarn. Cotton cloth was particularly in more demand as the cotton clothing was much more comfortable than the woolen clothing that most of the English people wore and cotton was grown in India. They wanted the control of that trade. India was known as golden sparrow due to its immense wealth and rich agriculture. It was land of golden fiber (jute) and silver fiber (cotton). The British wanted to gain as much profit from trade as possible. So they turn their envious eyes towards India. Another reason was that the East India Company was given a monopoly in trade between Britain and some areas of East Africa. That meant that no other British company could trade in that area. The merchants were hoping to break into the spice trade in Indonesia. But the Dutch had already won the control of spice trade and would not allow any other European company share it. The India was also very important because of its strategic importance. India has remained very important from the strategic point of view it has clear routes to Russia, Middle East and Eastern countries. So the East India Company turned to India for taking benefit of its strategic importance and for trading.

Q: What was the East India Company? [4]

ANS: East India Company was a private trading company which was given a monopoly in trade between the areas of Britain and some areas of East Africa. In 1600 the Queen Elizabeth I granted permission to a group of merchants to set up the East India Company (EIC). English merchants set up the East India Company in 1600 to trade with East, not to conquer India. They established trading settlements known as factories. At first the company was only interested in trade

and not in any kind of political control. But the decline of Mughal Empire, clashes with Marathas, and the lack of any central government can led to conflict between the company and the ambitions of local Princes. The British had to protect themselves against the attack from the French. In the end, drawn into local politics to maintain and enhance their business, the East India Company had the unusual distinction of ruling an entire country.

Q: How successful was the Indian resistance to British attempts to take control of lands in the Sub-Continent? Explain. [14]

ANS: British in the form of EIC came to India for trading. But with the passage of time the weakness of the Emperors invited them to make armed efforts to capture different parts of Sub-Continent.

In 1756, encouraged by French Nawab Siraj-ul-Daula attacked British base at Calcutta to stop their increasing influence. He won but was unable to take control of it. In 1757, British hit back strongly and capture whole of Bengal Killing the Nawab. The first major attempt of Indians failed badly.

Even Before this in 1686, Aurangzeb sent forces to treat the British for their ill crimes. The forces defeated British and had to pay heavy fine.

In 1764, Nawab of Oudh, Mir Qasim and Shah Alam II were defeated after they tried to force the British to retreat. After the battle, Bihar and Orissa also fell into the hands of British. Another attempt failed.

In 1782, British were forced to sign a treaty with Marathas after first Maratha war. This treaty helped British influence to increase and later on in 1818 Marathas were defeated in 3rd Maratha war. The attempt from a non-Muslim community also received the same fate as that of Muslim ones.

In 1799, British GG Wellesley attacked Mysore and captures it by defeating Tipu Sultan. Before Tipu, the resistance which came from his father, Haider Ali from Mysore also received the same treatment.

In 1843, British capture Sindh. The resistance of Amir's of Sindh was of no use as the British eased passed them.

In 1838, British signed a treaty of perpetual friendship with Ranjit Singh in Punjab who they dared not to bring to a war. The following year Ranjit died and it was after his death that the British were able to capture Punjab and N.W.F.P up to 1849. Eight years later, however the major resistance by the Indians to stop British capturing lands came in 1857. The Indian revolt was featured by disunited people fighting against British for their own interests. Except a few areas, where Muslims had joined their hands, all other areas kept their interest under consideration. Even

many state rulers helped British win over their neighbors. Although this revolt failed but it has far reaching impacts. This showed the British that, if headed by capable leaders, Indians could united together put great resistance against them. This was happened a century later when the leaders of ML and Congress forced the British to leave India.

Thus the Indians attempts to resist the British from capturing lands failed badly without achieving anything solid except the lesson that they learnt from the war of Independence in 1857. This failure was due to lack of unity, leadership and common cause and also due to the superiority of British which meant that Indians were destined to fail.

Q: Why did the British government take control of the East India Company in early 19th century? Explain. [7]

ANS: With the expanding horizons of the East India Company (EIC) in the 18th and the early 19th century the British government involved itself in the affairs of the Sub-Continent under the control of EIC for many reasons.

- 1) Huge trading volume.
- 2) Strategic importance.
- 3) Soviet expansion.

One of the factors was the huge trading volume and the profits earned with this trade. The company had earned too much and the British government felt necessity to take over all the trade under the control of EIC to get some benefits.

Another reason was the strategic importance of the Indian Sub-Continent. Historically India has remained very important from strategic point of view. It had clear routes Russia, Middle East and Eastern countries. British government wanted to take advantage of these routes under the control through EIC.

Also the fear of Soviet expansion was also causing a tension to the Britain. The Soviets were planning to reach warm waters through Afghanistan to the Indian Ocean (Arabian Sea). The British government gave a serious thought to this issue and finally decided to take steps to stop Soviet aggression and its access to warm waters. Hence, the British's government took control of EIC'S affairs in the mid of 19th century.

Q: Why was the Britain so successful in expanding its control of the Sub-Continent between 1750 and 1850? [7]

ANS: Main reasons for expanding their control in the Sub-Continent were:

- 1) No central power strong enough to face the British.



2) India was divided into many small states after the decline of Mughal Empire.

3) British superiority in military power.

After the death of Aurangzeb (1707), the Mughal Empire declined and got divided into many small states. The rulers of the states were not strong enough to face the British, and many states even sought British protection.

Main reason was British superiority in military power. The British Indian army was equipped with better and improved weapons which were supplied from England. Proper training of the army and better methods of warfare always gave the British an upper hand. In all successive wars between 1750 and 1850 the British were victorious and the British expanded their possessions gradually. After the battle of Plassey 1757 and battle of Buxar 1764, Bengal and Bihar came under British control. In 1799 Tipu Sultan of Mysore was defeated and killed; and later Marathas were defeated in 1818, and whole of South India came under British control. Sindh was also annexed in 1843 and in 1849 Punjab also came under British control after the defeat of Sikh army. Thus the British gradually expanded their control of the Sub-Continent between 1750 and 1850.

Q: Why did the Sub-Continent attract the European traders in the late 16th and early 17th century? [7]

ANS: India was a source of several products that were sold all over the world by wealthy people in Europe. For example: Spices, cotton goods, yarn, sugar, silk and potassium. The thing that the British mostly wanted was cotton yarn. Cotton cloth was particularly in more demand as the cotton clothing was much more comfortable than the woolen clothing that most of the English people wore and cotton was grown in India. They wanted the control of that trade. India was known as golden sparrow due to its immense wealth and rich agriculture. It was land of golden fiber (jute) and silver fiber (cotton). The British wanted to gain as much profit from trade as possible. Another reason was the strategic importance of Indian Sub-Continent. India has remained very important from strategic point of view. It has clear routes to Russia, Middle East and Eastern countries. So British turn their envious eyes towards Indian Sub-Continent.

Q: How important was Robert Clive in the British expansion over Sub-Continent? [7]

ANS: The East India Company did not recognize the contribution that their employee Robert Clive made to their power and profits. In the 1750s the company began to fortify their important post at Calcutta. This against an agreement they

made with the Nawab of Bengal Siraj-ud-Dullah. An angry Siraj marched towards Calcutta and seized the company's fort William. It was June 1756 at the peak of summer that the tragedy of "Black hole" took place. When captured British residents were locked up in a small room and by morning 23 of the 64 were found dead. This was used to whip up the anger against Siraj.

At the Battle of Plassey in June 1757 an English army led by Robert Clive succeeded in defeating the much larger army of Siraj. Clive had bribed one of Siraj's key men, Mir Jafar, to side with the British. In return the victorious British made him the new Nawab of Bengal. It was a great success for the British who were now guaranteed the control of profitable trade in Bengal. Valuable goods like salt, betel nut, tobacco and salt-peter were now shipped to Britain. Clive and the other's working for the company amassed immense fortunes. The people of Bengal remained very poor. In 1764 another Bengal ruler made a desperate attempt to stop the British from plundering his kingdom. However, his defeat at the Battle of Buxar made certain that the British, thanks to Clive, were firmly in control of Eastern India.

The company rewarded Clive by appointing him as the first Governor of Bengal. He demanded and received huge payments from the Nawab and other princes for himself and the company. It was Clive who laid the foundations of British rule in India.

Q: Did the British face any problem in getting successes in India? [7-14]

ANS: Since the Portuguese and other European nation had got a lot of benefits from their trade and other relations with eastern wealth. The British also decided to try out their luck in an area with immense wealth. So they turn their envious eyes towards Indian Sub-Continent. They came here for trade purpose in the form of EIC. But soon after its strong trade development relations, it started to interface in the political matters of the country. They soon had enough army to perfect their resiliencies.

The army's first target was Bengal. Bengal was a very wealthy Province of India ruled by a Muslim, Nawab Siraj-ud-Dullah. The growing influence of EIC led Nawab to attack its residency in 1756 which gave rise to clear enmity b/w the two. The EIC army under Sir Robert Clive, marched ahead to capture the province of Bengal. A battle, a battle of Plassey was fought by the help of the traitor of Nawab Siraj-ud-Dullah, British were able to defeat and kill him and his army in numbers. The Nawab's body was found in a river. Mir Jafar was rewarded with the Nawabship of Bengal while Robert Clive became the Governor General. Later on,

EIC also occupied Oudh, Bihar and Orissa with ease. The British captured Mysore in 1799 by killing Tipu Sultan and completed their control in Southern India. British entered Delhi in 1803 and annexed it.

After the failure of British attempt to take control over Afghanistan in 1841, the British now turned to restore their lost prestige by capturing Sindh. The fear of Sikh expansion also forced them to turn their envious eyes towards Sindh. Sindh was ruled by Amir's at that time who signed a treaty with British in 1809. The Amir's encouraged by their people attacked British residency and this was what the EIC was waiting for. They quickly reacted and capture the province of Sindh in 1843. The British general himself stated it to be a shameful British act but it was necessary to restore their high prestige.

In case of Punjab, the British had hoped Punjab leader, Ranjit Singh to help them in installing a pro-British ruler in Afghanistan but Ranjit didn't do so. Ranjit had signed a treaty with the British in 1838 so the British were not in Position to attack, Punjab. After Ranjit's death in 1839, British now planned to fulfill their dreams and even to extend it to N.W.F.P. The British were attacked by local people down to Sutlej and now the British moved ahead to capture it in 1846 but they were unable to enter Lahore before 1849. Hence Punjab also fell into British hands within 3 years.

Thus, we can say that British faced no problem in getting successes in these areas and faced no counter attack of strong force in these major areas of India.

Q: Why were the British able to conquer India? Explain. [14]

ANS: The British first arrived in India in the early 17th century. English merchants set up the East India Company in 1600 to trade with India not to conquer India. They set up their trading settlements known as factories. At first the company was only interested in trade and not in any kind of political control. But the decline of Mughal Empire, clashes with Marathas, and the lack of any central government can led to conflict between the company and the ambitions of local Princes. The British had to protect themselves against the attack from the French. In the end, drawn into local politics to maintain and enhance their business, the East India Company had the unusual distinction of ruling an entire country.

Battle of Plassey:

In 1756, the French encouraged the Nawab of Bengal, Siraj-ud-Dullah to attack the EIC base at Calcutta. He captured the city but was unable to keep control of it. In 1757 Clive arrived with the force EIC soldiers and defeated Siraj-ud-Dullah troops in the battle of Plassey. The Nawab's body was found in a river after the battle.

Clive's victory had been made easy by the treachery of Siraj-ud-Dullah's general Mir Jafar. The EIC rewarded him by making him the new Nawab of Bengal.

Battle of Buxar:

In 1764 Mir Jafar's son Mir Qasim joined forces with the Nawab of Oudh and the Mughal emperor Shah Alam II to drive British out of Bengal. They were unsuccessful and after their defeat in the battle of Buxar in 1764 British influence actually increased.

Pitt's Indian act, 1784:

This parliamentary act was moved by the Prime Minister William Pitt. The Indian act of 1784 made the Government General of India a royal appointment and replaced the company's board of Directors with the board of control comprising six men including the Secretary of state and the chancellor of exchequer. This began a new era raising the company from a trading concern to sovereign body.

Annexation of Sindh:

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Annexation of Punjab and N.W.F.P:

In case of Punjab, the British had hoped Punjab leader, Ranjit Singh to help them in installing a pro-British ruler in Afghanistan but Ranjit didn't do so. Ranjit had signed a treaty with the British in 1838 so the British were not in Position to attack, Punjab. After Ranjit's death in 1839, British now planned to fulfill their dreams and even to extend it to N.W.F.P. The British were attacked by local people down to Sutlej and now the British moved ahead to capture it in 1846 but they were unable to enter Lahore before 1849. Hence Punjab also fell into British hands within 3 years.

Why were they successful?

It may seem incredible that Britain with the population of 10 million in 1800 should able to take over a huge land of 350 million people. Many Indians saw benefit in cooperating with the British. The British trading network meant that they could sell their goods not only to Europe but as far to Americas. To assist the trade and control the land, British built a network of roads and later thousands of miles of

railways. They irrigated 20 million acres of land and gradually established schools and universities that were greatly appreciated by better of Indians. But the final and the most important reason was that, India was a much divided land not only religious divisions were there but people were also divided by distance, language, customs and economic circumstances.

