**Emergence of Bangladesh**

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**Research Paper**

**“ The Last Battles Against East India Company : Battle of Plassey & Buxar ”**

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**The Last Battles Against East India Company : Battle of Plassey & Buxar**

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**Abstract:** There were numerous battles fought in India and Bengal's history, but The Battle of Plassey (1957) and The Battle of Buxar(1764) was more pivotal than the rest of the battles. These battles turned ‘The Traders’ into ‘The Rulers’ and caused sunset in the history of independent Bengal. In this research paper, I am going to present the significance and difference of The Battle of Buxar in comparison to The Battle of Plassey. Hence, by the end of this research, it is found that The Battle of Buxar could bring the sovereignty of Bengal and both wars had their differences.

**Introduction:**

The British East India Company was founded in 1600 to trade in the East Indian Spice trade and later settled down to a trade in cotton, silk, indigo and so on. The company landed on India in 1608, at the port of Surat but later ended up involving in local politics. The company took advantages in every step starting from not giving taxes like other companies to building forts and involving in local politics. In the meantime, After Nawab Alivardi Khan, the young an only surviving grandson was formally declared as the crown prince in 1754 which caused family dissatisfactions as Ghaseti Begum’s generous and popular husband Nawazish Khan would have been the perfect choice as Nawab. Since then, The Nawab’s aunt Ghaseti Begum was ranged against his Nawabi.

**Thesis Statement:** Although, The Battle of Plassey is known as the last battle of Bengal but the Battle of Buxar which took place after the Battle of Plassey was the actual last and more significant battle which had the potential of bringing back the sovereignty of Bengal thus there are imparities even though the major factor of defeat was betrayal in both wars.

**Methodology:** This research paper is written on the history of Bengal, for collecting and analyzing the events; I am using information from various types of newspapers, articles, journals and some other secondary sources which are reliable and available in online.

* **The Rise of The Rivals**

The British East India came here to trade but the market of India was already popular among the Dutch, Portuguese, and French. There were chances of other British companies to come here too. So, the company needed some advantages. For this reason, the company got the sole right to trade with the east. But there were other companies from other countries. The competition between these companies created conflicts and to protect the goods from rivals the company got permission of fortification in India and trade was carried on with arms. That is not all. In 1671, the company acquired Zaminadari Rights. Zamindari Right means the Right to collect tax. Though the Mughal officials had the power to collect tax in the Mughal Ruled country, the company bribed the Mughal officials to take over tax collection control. Later they persuaded Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb to issue a Farman to grant the right to trade duty free for the company. The notable thing here is that the rule passed for the company trades, but the company officials were using it for their personal benefits. So far, the intention of the company was to trade and make profit. Whatever they did so far was to make their business.

After Nawab Aurangzeb's death, First Murshid Quli Khan then Alivardi Khan and later Siraj-Ud-Daula became the Nawab of Bengal at the young age of 23 in 1756. It was considered that the young Nawab was short tempered and ruthless even before he became the Nawab. One notorious example of his temper was his slapping of one of the richest and most powerful bankers of The Bengal, Jagat Seth. The Nawab slapped him in front of all the people present in the court. Nawab Alivardi Khan had no other successor left after the death of his only grandson except the young Nawab Siraj-Ud-Daula. Though there were hope that his son-in-law Nawazish Khan would have been perfect for being the Nawab, Siraj was declared as the Nawab in 1754, right after the death of Nawab Alivardi Khan. Thus, Siraj became the youngest Nawab in the history of Bengal and his Aunt Ghaseti Begum, Jagat Seth and some other people were ranged against his behavior.

* **Rise of Conflicts and Palace Conspiracies**

The young nawab had grievances against the company. First of all, the British company was misusing the Farman and using it for their own benefits, they strengthened the fortification around the Fort William without the permission of the nawab. The misuse of the farman was causing heavy loss of customs and revenue for the Bengal. And by that time the Bengal Nawabs were independent and for this reason The British East India company was asked to pay taxes again but rather they complained that the nawab was very strict and the company gave shelter to some officers who fled Dhaka after misappropriating government funds. Even though all these incidents The Nawab informed them of his intention to forgive them if they removed his complaints and agreed to trade on Nawab’s terms. But their disagreement and further disobeying the order of stopping military enhancements made the young Nawab angrier. So, The Nawab gathered his 30,000 troops and took Fort William from the company and put 146 British people in a small prison meant for only 6 people. This event is known as the Black Hole Incident where 123 of the prisoners died from suffocation and heat. These incidents intensified the conflict between The Nawab and the company which made the British more vigorous. The Main things that The Nawab wanted were –

1. Stop interfering in political affairs

2. Paying the taxes and revenues

3. Stop fortifications

The incidents made the British angrier. They needed company to win a battle against the Nawab. There was no other way to win against nawab except using his own trustworthy people against him. The cunning British chose the only available way and gathered Mir Jafar, Ghasheti Begum, Manikchand, Rai Durlabh, Jagat Sheth and other powerful people of the Nawab. The company promised the commander-in-chief of Nawab’s army, Mir Jafar of the Nawabi of Bengal and bribed the others. Even though this conspiracy got leaked to the Nawab, Siraj failed to take strong action against him because the other people on the court who were on Mir Jafar’s side convinced Siraj to give him one last chance as he was the commander of the force and so far he was one of the most trustworthy people of the Nawab. The Nawab had to think about this too, he could not let go of his commander in that situation. So, the Nawab made all of them sworn on the Quran and he promised to be faithful and to fight for Bengal to the last breath of his life. The Nawab believed all these and spared his life yet this could not stop the unavoidable battle of Plassey.

* **The Battle of Plassey**

On 12 June, 1757 Robert live was joined by Kilpatric with the army from Calcutta. The combined force had 2100 sepoys, 150 sailors and 600 Europeans. The army set out for Murshidabad on 13 June. On 14 June, Robert Clive sent a declaration of war to Nawab Siraj-Ud-Doula. By 16 June, the British force had reached Plassey but the Nawab’s army reached Plassey on 21 June. The main battle took place on June 23. The Bengal army started toward the grove. The Bengal army had 30,000 armed soldiers including swordman, 20,000 cavalry. Then there were the French and behind them there were 5000 cavalry and 7000 infantry commanded by general Mir Jafar and Mohonlal. The rest 45,000 army formed an arc to surround Clive’s small army waiting for news from Mir Jafar. The British had only 2100 sepoys, 100 European infantries, in total of 3000 soldiers. The Nawab easily beats the British by number. The battle started at 8:00 and the British had lost 30 of their sepoys by 8:30. But the luck did not favour the Bengal. After 3 hours, a heavy rainstorm occurred which changed the battle. The British used tarpaulins to protect their gunpowder and other ammunitions but the Nawab Army had not taken any precautions. As a result, the Bengal ammunitions got drenched, resulting in a slow rate of fire, but the British fire rate did not slow down. In the meantime, Mir Mardan khan led his cavalry to a charge thinking the rain had caused damage to the opponent army, but they were wrong, and Mir Mardan got wounded and died soon after. Noubre Singh, Bodri Ali and other troops died. As Mir Jafar planned with the British, the troops under Mir Jafar did not join Mir Mardan let alone participating in the battle. The battle of Plassey was led by the traitors thus true Bengal soldiers were defeated. As promised by the British, Mir Jafar became the Nawab of Bengal in 1957 after Siraj was murdered.

* **The battle of Buxar**

Mir Jafar, The Puppet Nawab got his reward from the company but immediately after his accession he faced various internal problems – Raja Ram Sinha and some other zamindars refused him as their ruler, Mir Jafar had doubts about his officials who joined him in the betrayal and most importantly the rule of Mir Jafar could not satisfy the British and they felt it was difficult to work with Mir Jafar. Even though Mir Jafar was the puppet, he had to maintain the region. The company had to maintain basic appearance of sovereignty and Mir Jafar was not as helpful as they thought he would be. Mir Jafar protested for his people at times which became an issue for the British. So, the British murdered Mir Jafar’s son and removed him as the Nawab in 1760 and his son-in-law Mir Quasim became the new Nawab. The British had no idea that their own plan would backfire them. Soon after becoming the Nawab, Mir Quasim started fixing the ruling. He started enhancing Nawab’s army with modern weapons. He furthered cut down reserved money for Nawab’s fort and increased taxes to make his position stronger and finally he declared Murshidabad as the capital of Bengal. But the main thing that stood against the British is the Nawab’s decision to withdraw ‘Dastak Pratha’ or the Farman of Nawab Aurangzeb that gave the British company right to trade in return of little fixed money. The Nawab declared either to pay the taxes or apply the rule for all traders. The British did not agree to this and this lead to the battle between Mir Quasim and the British. From June to September, 3 battles took place and Mir Quasim lost in all of them but he succeeded to flew away to Elahabad. He planned with the Nawab Suja-Ud-Daula of Elahabad and bonded with the Mughal Emperor Shah Alam II who wanted to get back Bengal, Bihar and Urishya. Their intention was to get the sovereignty of Bengal back. The called war in October, 1763. The Bengal army had 40000 soldiers in opposite of 10000 advanced British soldiers. At first the British had to move back and The Mughal-Nawab force took control of a village for a period of time but again lost their hold. After that the British again offered Suja-Ud-Dauxla for betrayal and succeeded. The betrayal led to the defeat of Mir Quasim. Suja-Ud-Daula portrayed Mir Jafar of the Battle of Plassey. Soon after defeat, Mir Quasim committed suicide and the hope of the independent Bengal died with him in a war of only 8 hours.

* **Differences in The battle of Buxar & why it was more significant**

There were many similarities in both wars but The battle of Buxar was quite different compared to the Battle of Plassey. ­In the battle of Plassey, The Nawab was in power and he wanted to teach the company a lesson but in the battle of Buxar, it was the only chance to bring back the sovereignty of the Bengal, the Bengal forces fought to bring the glory and independence back. Nawab Siraj-Ud-Daula had his own army of Bengal but there were combined force in the battle of Buxar. The battle of Plassey turned the company into rulers, but they had to maintain The Puppet Nawab and it was their firm establishment in Bengal. The Battle of Buxar was more significant because as seen earlier, the company defeated the combined forces of the Nawabs of Awadh, Bengal and the Mughal Emperor of Delhi. The victory gave the full control over Bengal, Awadh and Delhi. The company defeated The renowned Mughal Emperor which exposed the weakness of the Indian Rulers thus The East India Company or The British became the supreme power in Bengal and the ruler of Bengal.

Even though the battle of Plassey Bengal’s sovereignty was lost but the battle of Buxar could be the turning point. In this battle, the British company was already in pressure and the Bengal combined force had the potential to defeat the enemy and bring back the independence. It could be the revenge of betrayal. But with the defeat of battle of Buxar, Bengal lost her last and only hope. The battle of Buxar could be the history changer battle and had many important factors thus The Battle of Buxar was more significant and important.

**Conclusion:**

The Battle of Plassey is known as the last battle of Bengal and most significant as well. But the actual last Battle of Bengal was The Battle of Buxar. The battle of Plassey was a battle between Nawab and The company where Nawab wanted to prove his power but The battle of Buxar was the battle of independence. The Bengal lost both the wars because the major reason was betrayal but there are many differences between the battles from the reason to the end of the war. Thus, The Battle of Buxar was more significant than The Battle of Plassey.

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