



British India (1757-1857):

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Colonialism, Reform and Resistance

Independent Sultanate in Bengal

Husain Shahi dynasty (1494-1538)

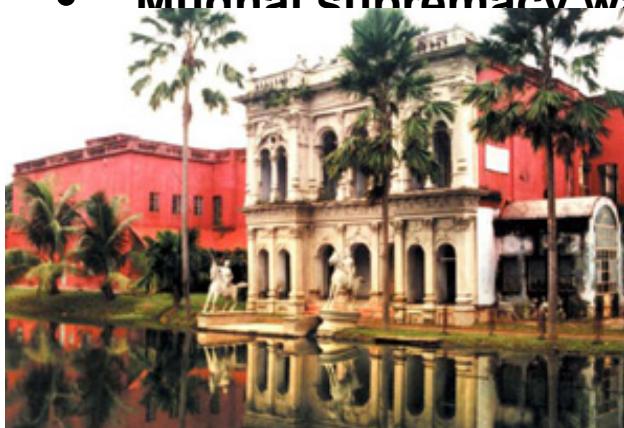
- Established by Alauddin Husain Shah
- Golden Age of Bengal
- Conquered Assam, Kamrup, Teppera, Jajnagar and Chittagong
- Gaur/Lakhnauti, a city of Maldah district, was the capital
- He and his successors promoted the participation of local Hindu people in the administration. His Private Secretary Rupa Goswami and several ministers were from Hindu religion, specially the followers of Vaishnavism
- Religious tolerance and pluralism
- Monoshamongal was written by Vijoy Gupta
- Maha Bharat was translated into Bengali



Coins of Alauddin Husain Shah

Mughal rule in Bengal

- Disintegration of Bengal Sultanate, and North-Indian hegemony
- Rise of Sher Sha Sur and Karrani dynasty
- Babur started Mughal Rule in Delhi in 1526
- Akbar conquered Bengal in 1576, and consolidated Mughal rule in Bengal
- Mughal supremacy was challenged by regional Baro-Bhuiyaans



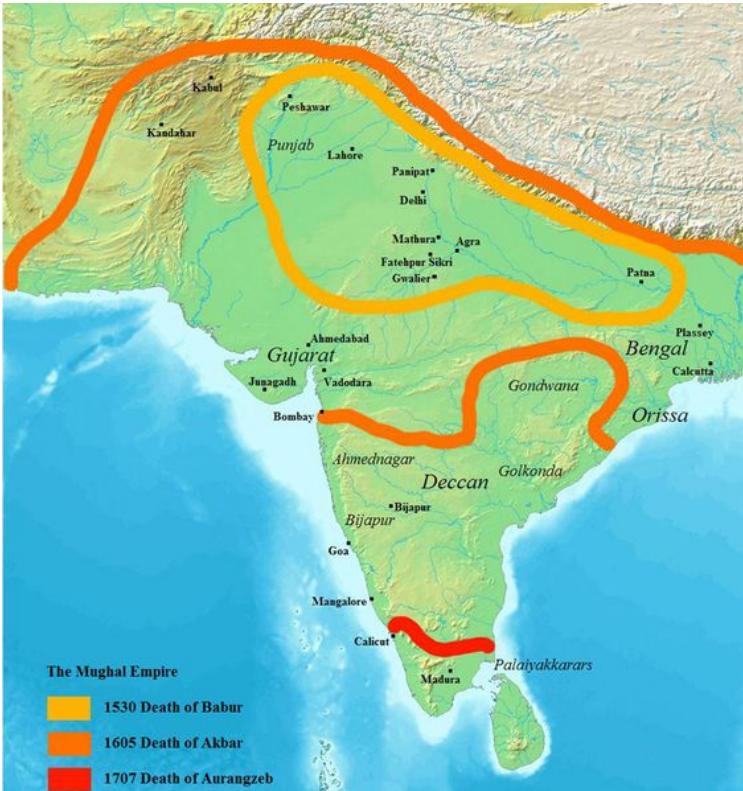
Palace of Isa Khan
at Sonargaon, Narayanganj



Isa Khan, one of the
Baro-Bhuiyaas

Mughal rule in Bengal

The trajectory of Mughal rule in Bengal



Bengal under Mughal Subedar or Governors



Prince Shah Shuja



Mir Jumla



Shaista Khan



Prince Azimuddin

Backdrop of Bengal coming under Nawabs



Murshid Quli Khan

Alivardi Khan

Sirajuddaula

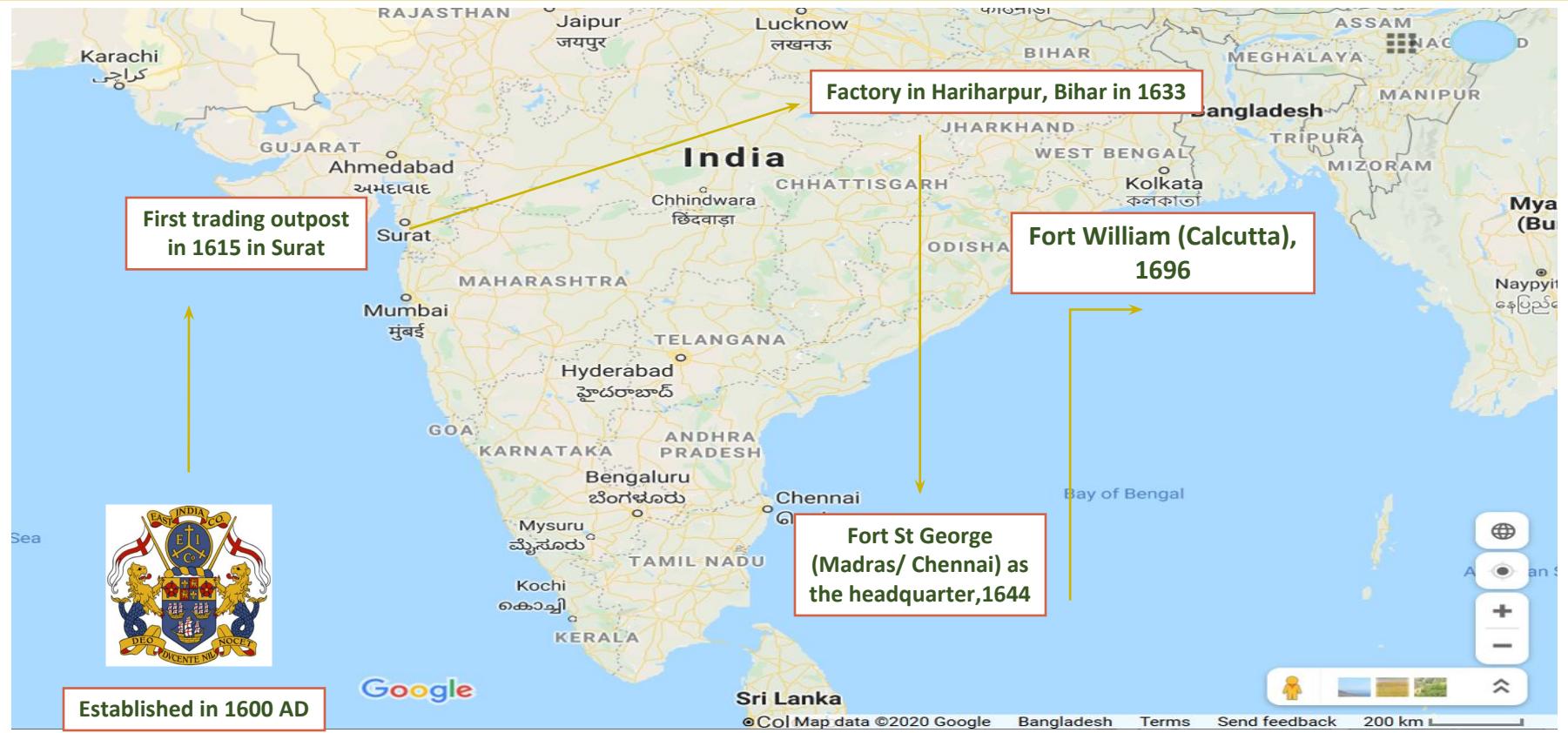
Lalbagh Fort, a Mughal architecture

- Emperor Akbar was one of the greatest rulers in Asia
- Patron of arts, culture and education
- Pluralism in the society and administration, and religious tolerance
- Mughal India was wealthier than contemporary European states
- Bengal turned into one of the wealthiest province of Mughal Empire
- Decay of Mughal central authority after the death of Aurangajeb in 1707

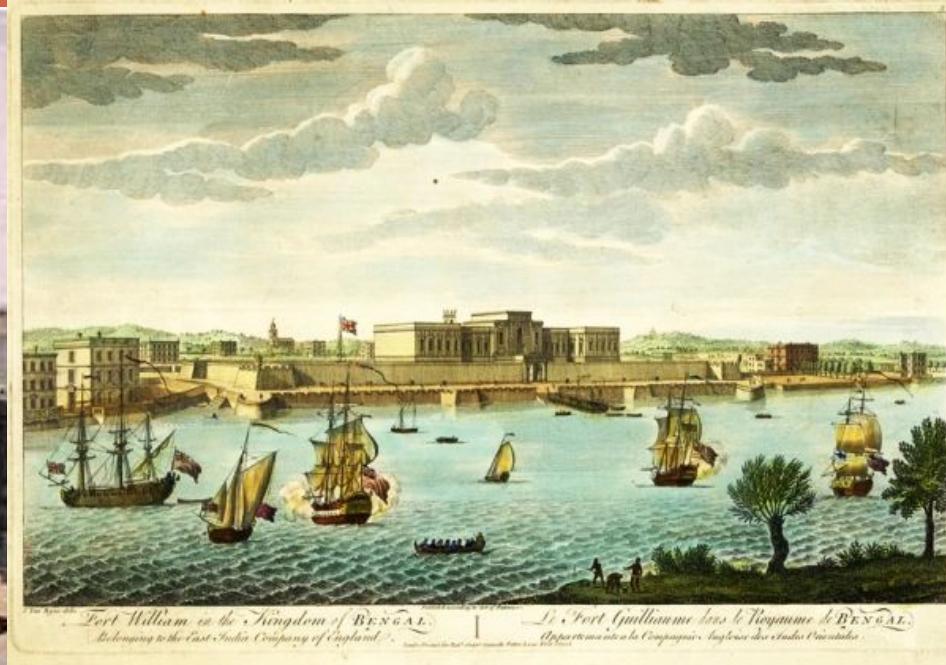
Bengal under Nawabs

- Central Mughal rule contentiously suffered from internal clash and weakness
- European traders took the chance of weakness
- European traders built forts, maintained mercenary army/Sipahi, often took part in the palace conspiracy
- European trade created an affluent and wealthy business class, who also often took part in palace conspiracy
- Battle of Polashy in 1757

British East India Company in India



Fort William in Calcutta



*Fort William in the Kingdom of BENGAL.
Belonging to the East India Company of England.*

*Le Port Guillaume dans le Royaume de BENGAL.
Appartenant à la Compagnie Anglaise des Indes Orientales.*

Timeline: British East India Company Takes over Bengal

First trading outpost at Surat in Gujarat

Established the head quarter of the company's business by building fort St. George at Madras

Purchased 3 villages (Calcutta, Govindapur, Sutanuti) and established Fort William in Calcutta

Nawab Sirajuddaula came to power after the death of his grandfather Alivardi Khan and found himself surrounded by a group of palace conspirators

1615

1644

1696

1756

1600

1633

1651

1717

1757

British East India Company was established with a royal charter of Queen Elizabeth I

Expanded to Bengal in 1633 through establishing a factory at Hariharpur in Bihar

Received permission from Subehdar Shah Shuja to trade in Bengal without any customs duties in lieu of an annual lump sum of Rs. 3000 only

Murshid Quli Khan became the first Nawab of Bengal replacing Subehdari system in 1717

Battle of Polashi and the conquest of British

Overview



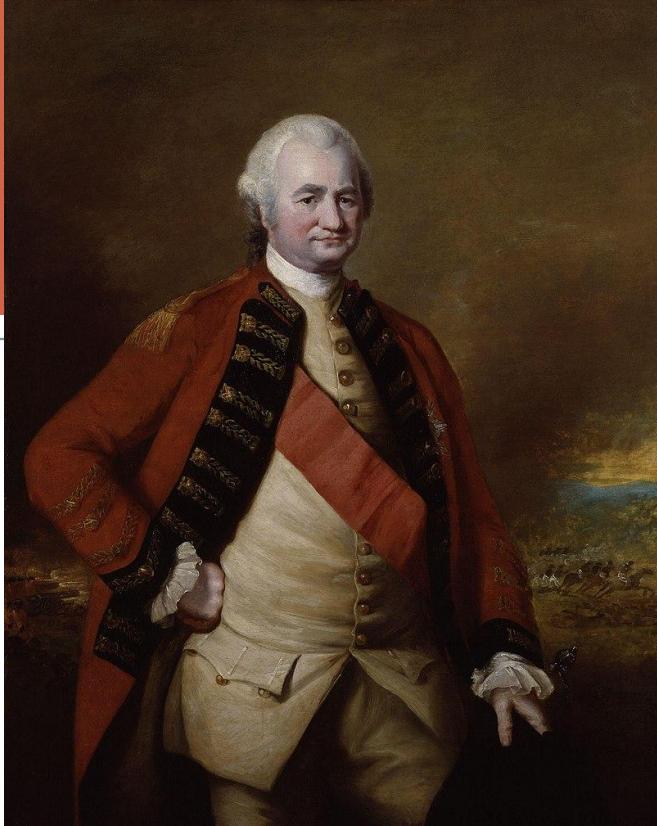
- Nawab Sirajuddaula's reign and the battle of Plassey
- Aftermath of the battle of Plassey
- The battle of Buxar and its significance
- Regulating Act of 1773
- The Permanent Settlement
- Rebellion and Revolution
- The Bengal Renaissance

Nawab Sirajuddaulah (1756-57)



- Last independent nawab before British rule
- Faced opposition from his aunt Ghasiti Begum, cousin nawab of Purnea, and the British in Calcutta
- Ghasiti Begum's anti-Siraj schemes
- Sirajuddaulah inflicted on the British "one of the worst military defeats in their colonial history" (Sengupta, 2011)
- He renamed Calcutta as Alinagar, appointing Manikchand as governor
- Clive and Mir Jafar's betrayal





Robert Clive



Mir Jafar

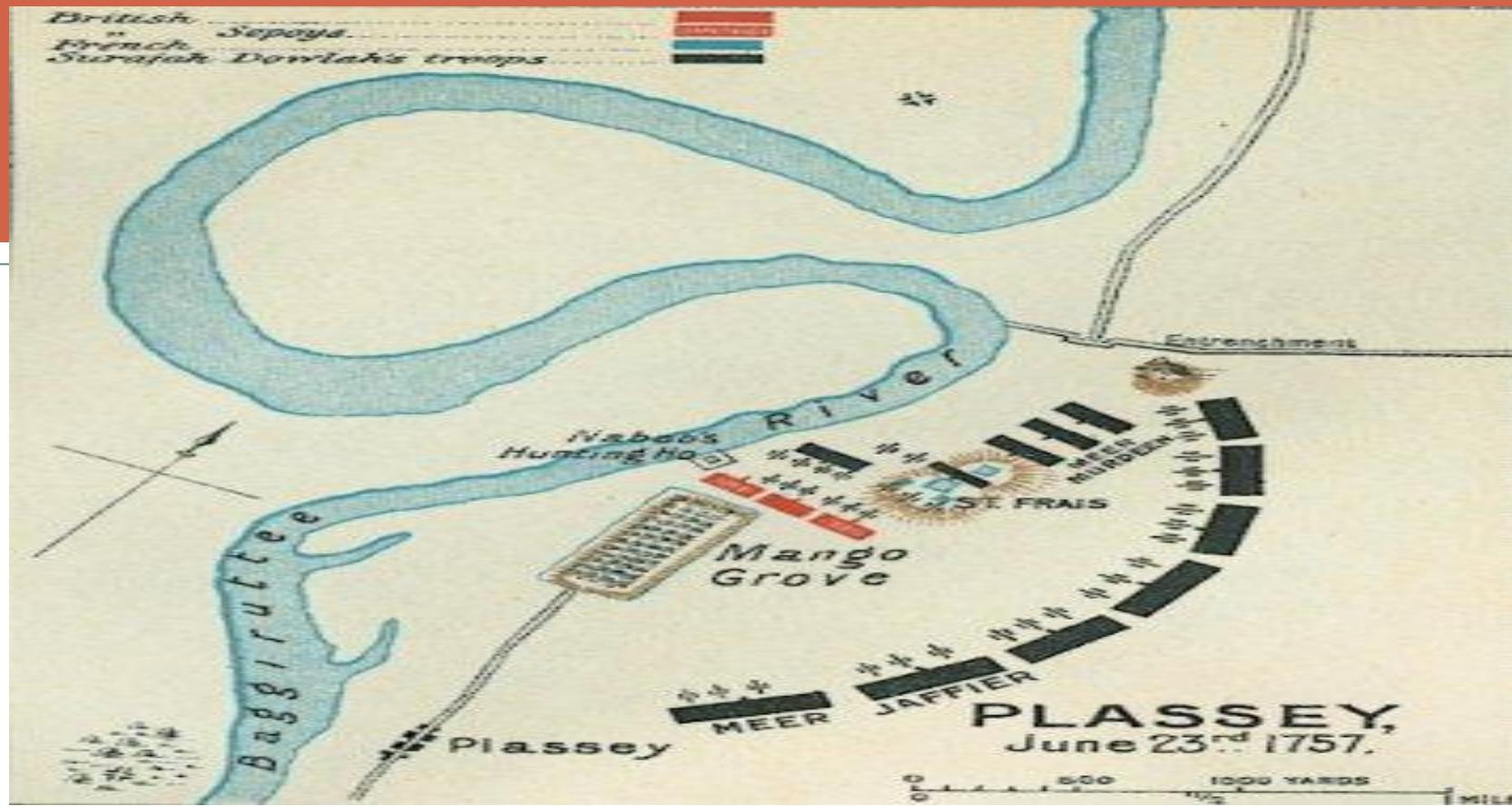
Mir Jafar

The Battle of Plassey



- Considered “one of the most decisive battles in world history” (Sengupta, 2011)
- The battle put an end to Mughal rule
- Led to Mir Jafar’s rise as the subedar of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa; assassination of nawab Sirajuddaulah (he died at the age of 25)
- The British rose as the singular military and political power in the whole of the subcontinent

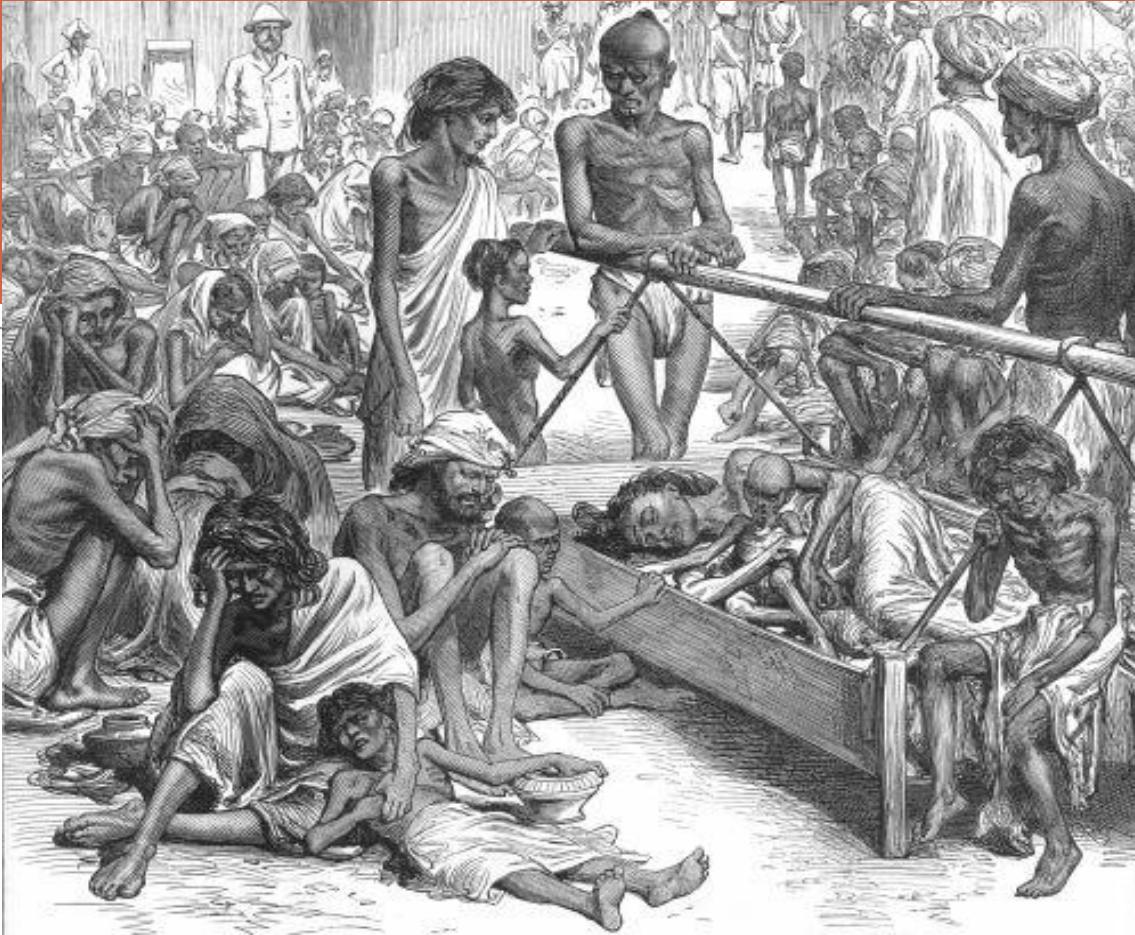




The significance of the Battle of Plassey



- British territorial expansion in the subcontinent.
- Gain power over the rest of India and other parts of Asia.
- Change Bengal's economy to earn more income for themselves
- Drain resources from Bengal
- Not pay any administrative costs themselves
- Administrative and economic experiments on the population of Bengal,
- Great Famine of 1770 [Bengali 1176])- *chhiyattarer manbantar* was an example of a disastrous British experiment. One third of Bengal's population perished



The Great Bengal Famine of 1770

The Advent of the BEIC in Bengal



Fort William in Calcutta
built in 1696



Silver rupee of the Bengal
Presidency, issued in the name
of Mughal Emperor Shah Alam
II in 1784-1785

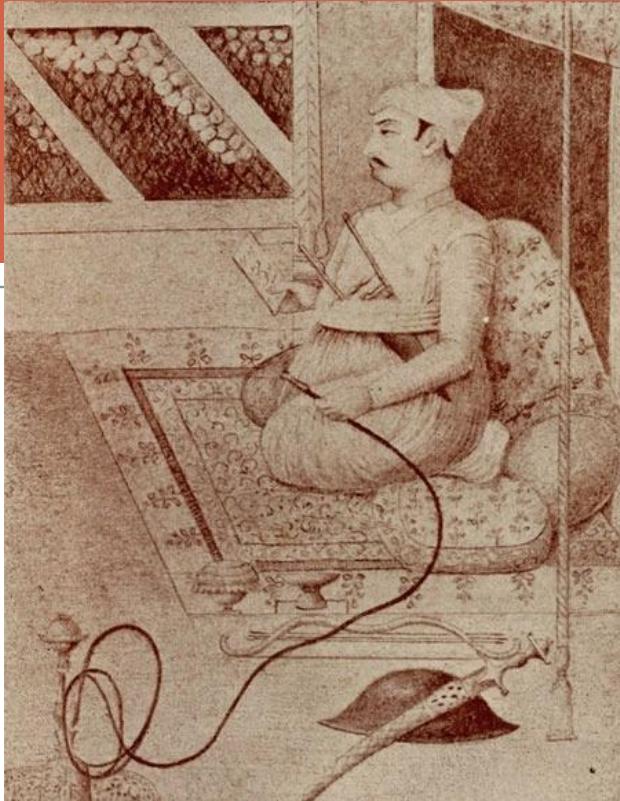


Job Charnock

The Battle of Buxar (1764)



- Battle between British forces led by Hector Munro and combined Mughal army forces of Emperor Shah Alam, Mir Qasim and Shuja-ud-Daula
- Even though Hector Munro was outnumbered, the Mughal army was defeated due to Munro's discipline and effectiveness and the EIC's superior arms, and this acted as the true basis for British conquest of both Bengal and India
- Dewani was transferred to the British East India company and this established the British legally in Bengal (the Dual System)
- The British East India company now had abundant resources for the expansion of trade and military abilities



Mir Qasim



The memorial of the Battle of Buxar, constructed by the British



The granting of
dewani to the
British East
India company
in 1765 by
emperor Shah
Alam II

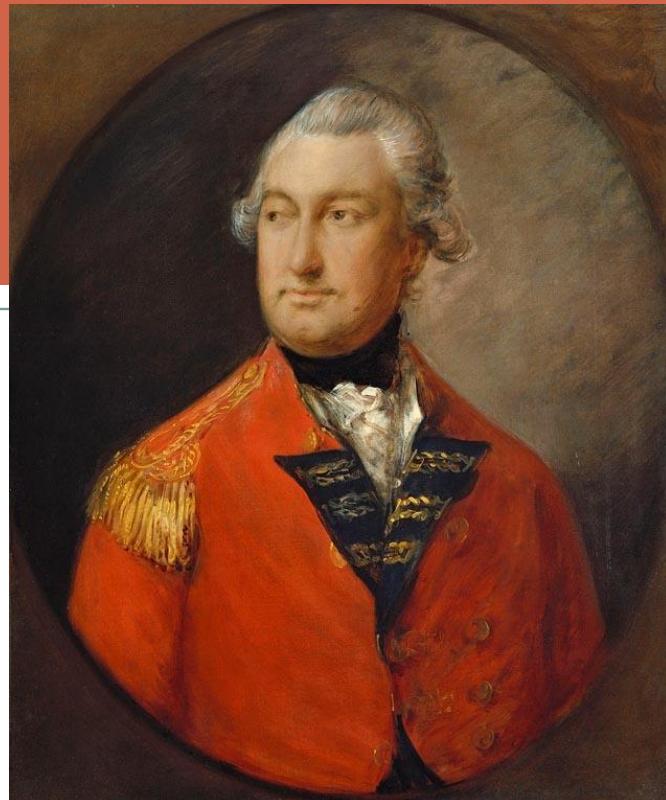
The 1773 Regulating Act



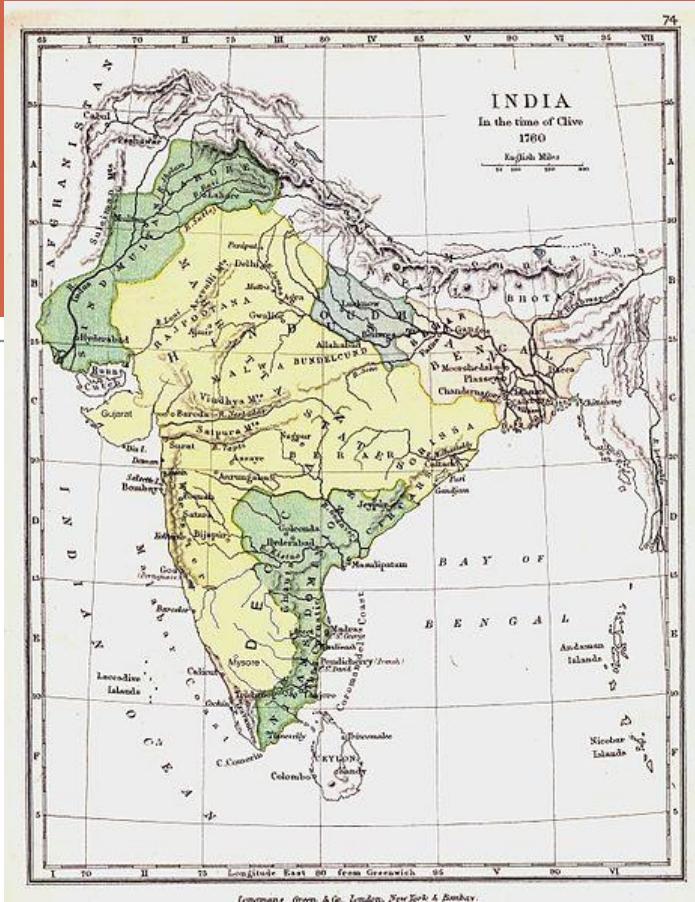
- Under the Regulating Act, Warren Hastings was appointed new Governor General of Bengal
- Hastings attempted to stop corruption among EIC traders. He also tried to stop local EIC agents from abusing indigenous people
- He moved the administrative center of Bengal from the Nawab's court to Calcutta and created a stronghold and further expansion of EIC in India
- Hastings was criminally charged for corruption, accumulation of personal wealth, misdemeanours and the tarnishing of the EIC image in India in 1787 by the Parliament
- Lord Cornwallis was then appointed Governor General in 1786



Warren Hastings



Lord Cornwallis



Growing British Empire in India

The Permanent Settlement Act



- Introduced by Lord Cornwallis in 1793- zamindars were given absolute ownership of land and would hand over a fixed amount of the revenue collected from the land *workers*, on a fixed annual date at sunset (the Sunset Law), causing the peasants to lose even the most basic occupational rights on the land they worked
- Zamindars thus became more powerful and acted as “one of the most stable pillars of British colonialism”
- Newly emerging *baniya*- comprador classes flourished under the Permanent Settlement Act
- Over time, the system caused immense pressure on the peasant class in terms of increased hardship, scarcity, famine and pestilence, causing them to have outbursts that resulted in the form of uprisings against the British

Rebellion and Resistance



- The Fakir-Sannasi Resistance in western and northern Bengal (1760-1800)
- Rebellion by Aga Mohammad Reza in Sylhet (1799)
- Rebellion by the Chakmas in southern Chittagong (1777-1787)
- The Pagalpanthi Rebellion in Mymensingh (1825-1833)
- The Faraizi Uprising (1804-1857)
- Titumir's Rebellion in Jesore-Nadia (1830-1831)
- The Santhal Rebellion (1855-56)
- The Indigo Revolt (1855-1856)
- The Great Sepoy Mutiny of 1857



- The movements had elements of both anti-feudal sentiments and religious sentiments as well, and the process was accelerated by the siphoning off of Bengal's wealth, such as the oppressive revenue collection policies from ryots.
- The primary motive behind these resistance movements was the notion of freeing the common people from colonial rule, and so they are deemed as somewhat 'socialistic' in nature, as they involved not only religious freedom but also social and economic freedom.
- The earliest movement was the Sannyasi Rebellion during Warren Hastings' authority, immediately after which there was the Fakir Rebellion.
- Bands of armed Hindu sanyasis from Bihar and upper India broke into north Bengal and did a 'systematic plundering' of whatever they could get their hands on. They achieved a stronghold after the famine of 1770 and carried out their raiding activities for several years before they left Bengal.

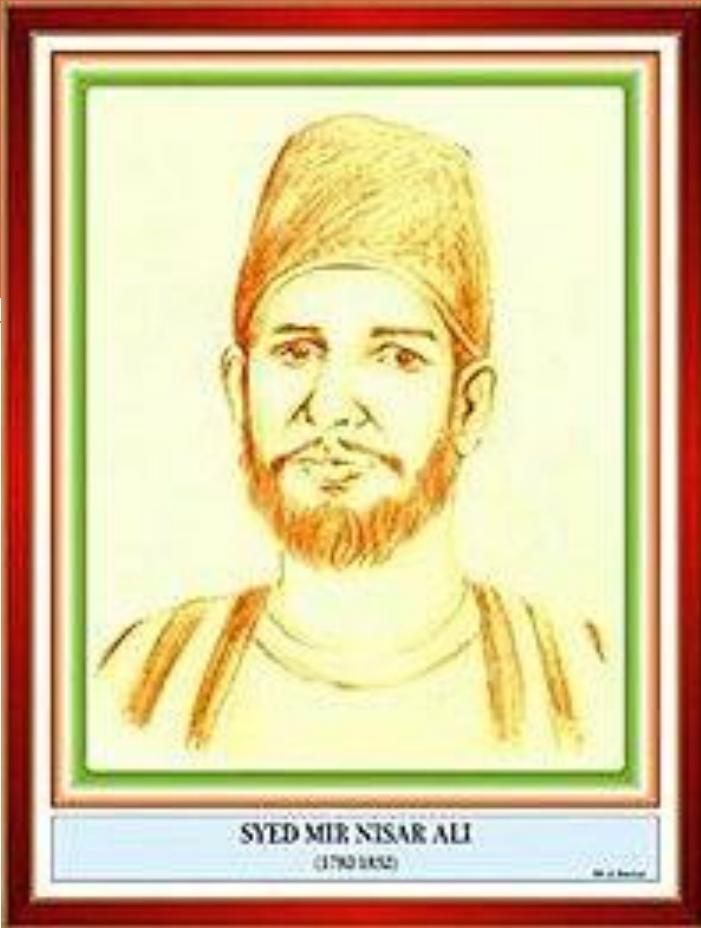


- As the Permanent Settlement Act began to take a devastating turn both for zamindars and more so for the ryots, the anger of the Bengal peasantry rose against both zamindars and colonial rulers and took the form of several peasant revolts.
- The Titumir Rebellion, the Faraizi Insurgency and the Santhal Rebellion are three of the most notable ones.

The Barasat Uprising by Titu Mir



- This movement was a combination of Wahabi fundamentalism and anti-zamindar agitation among ryots. It started in 1827 under Mir Nasir Ali, or Titu Mir, who wanted to incorporate the Wahabi teachings of Syed Ahmad of Bareilly (1785-1831) into the anti-zamindar and anti-colonial sensibility of the peasants.
- Most zamindars were Hindus, and the movement sought to restore Muslim domination in the country and help peasants fight against the exploitation of zamindars. While Hindu zamindars were the prime targets, some Muslim zamindars who refused to participate in the movement were also attacked.
- The movement spread to the districts of 24 Parganas, Nadia and Faridpur.



Titu Mir

The Faraizi Uprising (1838-47)



- The Faraizi sect stemmed out of the Wahabi movement and was founded by Haji Shariatullah of Faridpur, who brought the Muslim peasantry together against the zamindars and the British.
- The straightforward message of equality in Islam moved the peasants and Shariatullah assumed both religious and secular authority over his followers, proclaiming himself as a *pir*.
- The movement started out with the simple message that God was the owner of all lands and so nobody had the right to impose taxes on God's land so he opposed all taxes imposed by Hindu zamindars
- The movement soon acquired a violent characteristic, leading to a serious riot in 1830 that took a communal turn and required the help of British forces to settle it.

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- After Shariatullah's death, his son, Muhammad Mohsin, more popularly known as Dudu Miah, became the leader of the Faraizi sect, and divided East Bengal into different zones, putting a *khalifa* in charge of each zone.
 - He declared that all land belonged to God, and called the zamindars usurpers to whom there was no requirement of paying any taxes.
 - He discouraged ryots from going to the government and told them to go to him for advice and reassurance. Those who did not do so were punished and socially boycotted.
 - Apart from zamindars, Dudu Miah also targeted indigo planters, who ended up complaining to the government against him, and he was arrested a couple of times. In 1846, he burned down the indigo factory of Panchar and was arrested in 1847 and then again in 1857 before he died in 1860.
 - The Faraizi uprising continued for some time after his death before it finally dissolved.

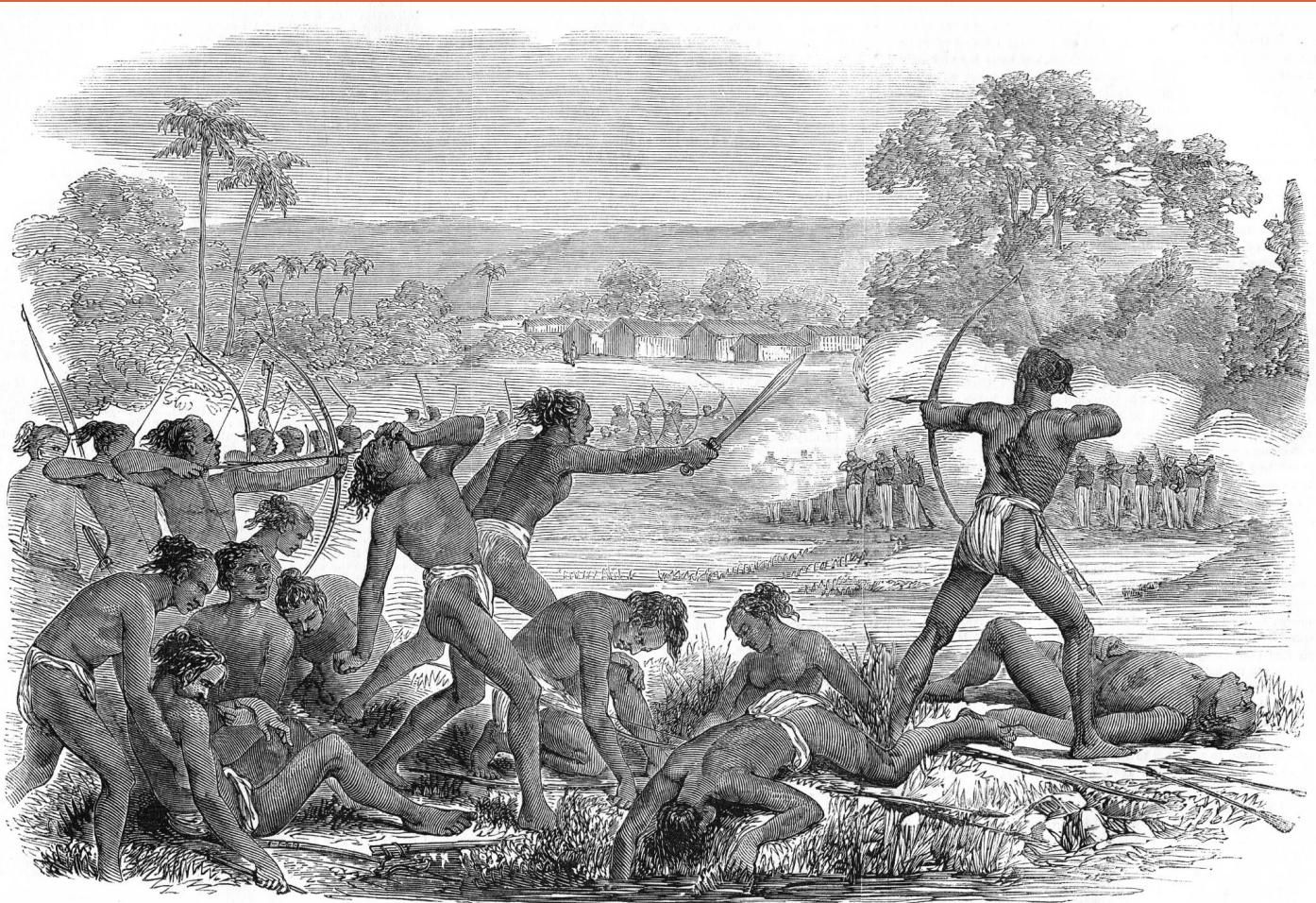


Hazi Shariatullah

The Santhal Rebellion (1855-56)



- This was the last of the civil disturbances.
- The Santhals living in the hills and valleys had no complains against the land assessment system but they harbored animosity against moneylenders, landlord and revenue agents, so they rose against them in rebellion under Sidho and Kanu.
- An army of 30,000, armed with axes and poisoned arrows, formed and attacked Bengalee babus and European bungalows. They murdered all government officials.
- The revolt had far-reaching impacts, and spread over the entire countryside and the greater part of Birbhum district.
- Although the rebellion was inherently a peasant revolt, it came to be a powerful anti-British uprising, which had to be suppresses with all might by the killing of Sidho and Kanu



The Santhal Rebellion

The Sepoy Mutiny (1857-8)



- The Sepoy Mutiny, or Sepoy Rebellion, or also more significantly known as the First Indian War of Independence, was a rebellion of Indian sepoys against the British East India Company. It was more specific than all the other resistance movements that were happening all over Bengal.
- Indian soldiers joined the EIC in hopes of better pay and in general in the hope of a chance to rise in status. But they soon realized the British soldiers' superiority over them and started to revolt.
- The sepoys had a lot of complaints which they felt was not being addressed by the EIC, such as unequal pay, not wanting to serve abroad, institutional racism, and, the most crucial of all, the introduction of greased cartridges for Enfield rifles, which the sepoys suspected was made of animal fats that their religion did not allow them to come in contact with.

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- There were also other resentments against the EIC throughout India besides those of the sepoys.
 - The Mughal Empire collapsed completely in 1857, and the British began to take over the independent princely states whenever they felt like it, on top of extorting ‘protection money’ from some of the princes.
 - Ordinary people of princely states suffered as well, both because of the removal of their princes and the Permanent Settlement Act. On top of that, local artisans suffered from competition with EIC-imported goods.
 - The sepoys were set off at first by the execution of one of their own, Mangal Pandey, in March 1857. He was punished for wounding an EIC officer. But the final outbreak came when the entire sepoy army of Pandey was flogged.
 - The EIC was unprepared for the rising, which saw the sepoys elect the retired Mughal emperor Bahadur Shah II (1775-1862) as their leader. Then the rebellion spread all over India, and not only did sepoys participate, but also landlords, merchants, and peasant farmers of both the Hindu and Muslim faiths.

The Bengal Renaissance



- Settled British rule, Pax Britannica, economic boom from the growth of Calcutta as a major industrial hub, introduction of English education, influence of Western science and philosophy, revival of Sanskrit literature and philosophy, and emergence of a new middle and professional class
- It was mostly an upper-class movement confi, and so it did not touch the common people. Cultural features remained largely elitist Hindu and consisted only a small fraction of Muslims
- Started with Raja Rammohan Roy (1722-1833) and ended with Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941)



- Raja Rammohan Roy vehemently opposed the practice of sati and further pushed for equality in freedom and speech throughout society
- He also took into account the immense destruction the Permanent Settlement had brought into the life of peasants and wrote against it too
- He founded the Brahmo Sabha which was later turned into Brahmo Samaj by Rabindranath Tagore's father
- Vivekananda emerged as the first socialist in Bengal. He was the main disciple of Ramakrishna. He was a true Vedantist and an advocate against the caste system. He also gave women and education tremendous importance
- Formation of British Indian Association in 1851

Armed Revolutionary Movement (Agni Yug)



- An extension of the swadeshi movement was the emergence of armed revolutionaries against the British, who used violent methods such as daocity and bombing and mainly targeted white anti-swadeshi government officials.
- It progressed simultaneously with the Indian National Congress's official non-violent movement, but was equally crucial in the fight for independence, although this movement is not given much merit apart from its violent character.
- It was a nationalist movement influenced by other revolutionaries in the world, such as Ireland and Russia, with the notion that armed struggle was highly necessary to overthrow foreign rule. It is referred to as 'Agni Yug' or Age of Fire, and 'happened in three phases, all of which were led/aided by revolutionaries who played extremely important roles in each phase.



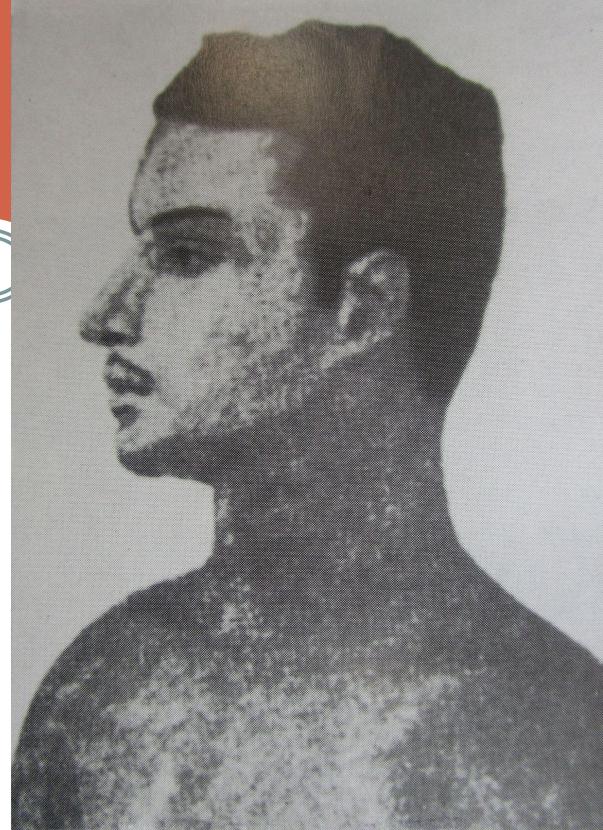
Agni Yug, First Phase

Khudiram Bose (1889-1908) and Prafullo Chaki (1888-1908)



- They are considered the first martyrs of Bengal's independence movement.
- They were members of the Jugantar party that formed around the journal *Jugantar*. Khudiram was from Midnapore while Prafullo was from Rangpur.
- They were involved in the attacks of the first two victims of bombing and dacoity activities of the armed revolutionary movement of Bengal. The first attack was on Lieutenant Governor Andrew Fraser at Naryangarh in Midnapore district and the second one was on Kingsford, the district judge, at Muzaffarpur. The second attack did not go as planned as Kingsford had delayed his return, and so it killed the wife and daughter of Kennedy, who was a lawyer.
- Khudiram and Prafullo managed to flee. Prafullo shot himself at the Mokamaghat railway station when he was about to get arrested. Khudiram trekked 24 miles along the railroad in the opposite direction but was arrested in a shop at Waini railway station after an unsuccessful attempt to shoot himself, and was tried on charge of murder. He showed deep regret at killing two innocent women, but remained fearless till the end.

Khudiram
Bose was
just 18 years
old when he
was
sentenced to
death



Prafullo
Chaki was
19 when
he shot
himself
before he
could be
arrested

Aurobindo Ghosh



- Armed revolutionary sentiments first arose centering two organizations: the Anusilan Samiti and the Jugantar Party.
- Aurbindo was one of the two vice-presidents of the Anusilan Samiti. He also implicitly supported the Jugantar party.
- He was captured shortly after the Muzaffarpur incident and tried and acquitted in the Alipore Bomb Case.
- When Aurobindo's active role in the revolutionary affairs was revealed, he was sent to solitary confinement at the Alipore jail, where he claimed to have found spirituality and spent the rest of his life at Pondicherry pursuing spirituality.
- He was involved in politics for a while after his release, edited the two journals Dharma (in Bengali) and Karmayogi (in English), and then went back to Pondicherry where he settled down into a life of spiritualism and became one of the world's renowned spiritualist.



Agni Yug, Second Phase



- The First World War helped armed revolutionaries to rage a war with the help of German arms. Indian revolutionaries in Germany and USA also assured them full support.
- Revolutionaries maintained the importance of attacking the British at their moment of crisis in order to ensure independence.
- A German ship was set to come to the Bay of Bengal and deliver the arms at a discreet area in the Sundarbans or the Orissa coast.
- An armed uprising was brewed up and its initiation finalized. Bagha Jatin was present there.

Bagha Jatin (Jatindranath Mukherjee, 1879-1915)



- Bagha Jatin, along with other revolutionaries, went to Balasore under disguise as a business person, where the German ship Maverick was scheduled to arrive with arms.
- The plan was extremely flawed, the ship never arrived at its designated place, which was at the mouth of Mahanandi.
- The police raided the undercover business enterprise and encountered the revolutionaries at Mahanandi. Bagha Jatin and four of his comrades fled into the jungles near the Buribalam River, were mistaken as dacoits by villagers and a police party led by Tegart was called.
- Bagha Jatin and his comrades barricaded themselves behind an anthill near Buribalam and was caught in a shootout with the police, where he got seriously injured and died in hospital.



Agni Yug, Last Phase

Master da Surya Sen (1894-1934)

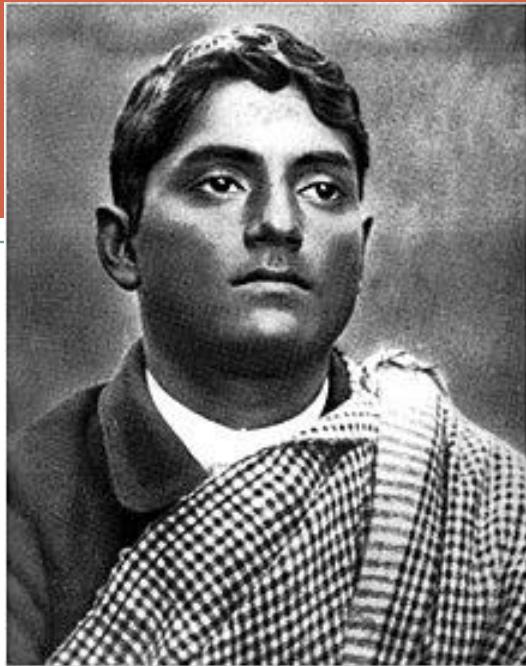


- He was popularly known as Master-da, and he believed fiercely in armed revolution.
- He formed a group named the Indian Republican Army in 1930 and collected arms, bombs, ammunition and funds to launch a daring attack on the British in Chittagong, which is known as the Chittagong Armoury Raid and was the last large scale armed revolutionary movement.
- He was captured in 1933 and was tried and sent to the gallows in 1934.

Pritilata Waddedar (1911-1932)



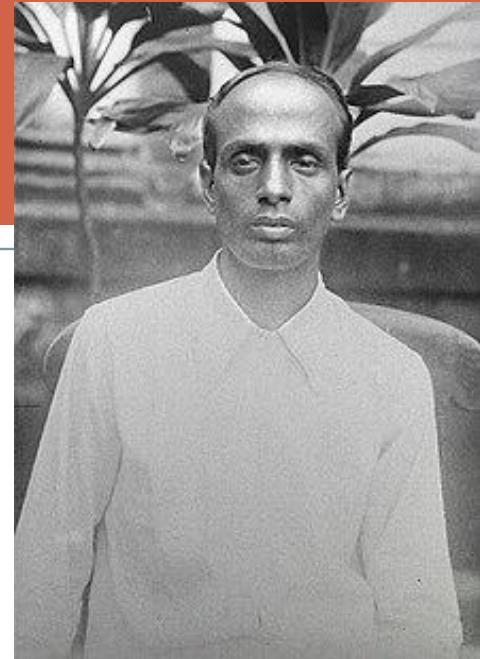
- She is given an honored place in the roll of honours of Bengal's revolutionaries against colonial rule. Kalpana Datta and Manikuntala Sen are also remembered.
- She hid with Surya Sen and other revolutionaries in a house owned by Savitri Devi. When the police raided the house, they both escaped.
- Pritilata led a second attack in September 1932 at the European Club. She was seriously injured and could not run away. Ultimately, she took her own life by swallowing potassium cyanide.



Bagha Jatin



Pritilata Waddedar



Master da Surya Sen

Reading Materials



For an overall understanding: <https://www.worldhistory.org>

For broader understanding and analysis:

1. Land of Two Rivers (Nitish Sengupta)
2. Bangladesh National Culture and Heritage: An Introductory Reader
(Edited by AF Salahuddin Ahmed and Bazlul Mobin Chowdhury)
3. A History of Bangladesh (Willem Van Schendell)

NEXT TOPIC:



The Era of the British Raj in the Indian Subcontinent

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1858-1911