

# UPSC Mains – GS Paper 1

## Chapter 1: *Transition of the Eighteenth Century*

*Based on **From Plassey to Partition** by Sekhar Bandyopadhyay*

**Q.1 [Mughal Decline and Regional Powers].** "The decline of the Mughal Empire did not result in a political vacuum, but in the rise of regional powers with their own legitimacy." Discuss with examples.

**Q.2 [Historiography of the 18th Century].** Critically analyze the nature of the eighteenth century in India: was it a period of decay or transformation?

**Q.3 [Economic Resilience].** How did the economic structure of India sustain itself despite political fragmentation after Aurangzeb?

**Q.4 [Role of the Marathas].** Evaluate the role of the Marathas in shaping the political landscape of eighteenth-century India.

**Q.5 [Agrarian Structure and Revenue].** How did the weakening of Mughal central authority impact agrarian society and revenue collection?

**Q.6 [Battle of Plassey].** "The Battle of Plassey was less a battle and more a betrayal." Examine in the context of the East India Company's rise.

**Q.7 [European Trading Companies].** Discuss the impact of European trading companies on Indian politics during the first half of the 18th century.

**Q.8 [Successor States].** What were the key features of successor states like Awadh, Bengal, and Hyderabad? How did they maintain autonomy?

**Q.9 [Dark Age Debate].** Was the eighteenth century truly a "dark age" in Indian history? Discuss with reference to recent historiography.

**Q.10 [Urban Economy].** Describe the socio-economic profile of urban centres like Murshidabad, Surat, and Delhi in the 18th century.

**Q.11 [Company's Political Rise].** Examine the transformation of the East India Company from a trading body to a political power in the 18th century.

**Q.12 [Regionalism and Colonial Resistance].** How did regional politics in the 18th century affect India's resistance to colonialism?

**Q.13 [Succession Policies].** To what extent did the failure of succession policies under the Mughals contribute to the decline of imperial control?

**Q.14 [Carnatic Wars].** Assess the nature and significance of the Carnatic Wars in the context of Anglo-French rivalry in India.

**Q.15 [Forces of Political Transformation].** Examine how internal and external forces together contributed to the transformation of Indian polity in the 18th century.

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## Chapter 2: *British Empire in India*

*Based on **From Plassey to Partition** by Sekhar Bandyopadhyay*

**Q.1 [Imperial Ideology].** How did the British justify their rule in India? Critically examine the ideological foundations of the British Empire.

**Q.2 [Role of Parliament and the Company].** Discuss the evolution of British parliamentary control over the East India Company's administration in India.

**Q.3 [Permanent Settlement].** Evaluate the economic and social impact of the Permanent Settlement on Indian society.

**Q.4 [Revenue Systems].** Compare and contrast the major land revenue systems introduced by the British in India.

**Q.5 [Administrative Structure].** How did the British administrative apparatus evolve between 1765 and 1857?

**Q.6 [British Policy and Indian Peasantry].** Discuss the impact of British land revenue policies on the Indian peasantry in the 18th and early 19th century.

**Q.7 [Doctrine of Lapse and Subsidiary Alliances].** Analyze the role of Doctrine of Lapse and Subsidiary Alliances in the expansion of British territory.

**Q.8 [Colonial Economy].** To what extent did British economic policies transform India into a colonial economy?

**Q.9 [Impact on Artisans and Trade].** How did the British rule affect India's traditional industries and artisan classes?

**Q.10 [Judicial and Legal Reforms].** Discuss the nature and consequences of the British introduction of Western legal and judicial institutions in India.

**Q.11 [Education Policy].** How did the early British education policy serve colonial interests? Was it merely a tool of cultural imperialism?

**Q.12 [Ideological Hegemony].** Explain how the British established ideological hegemony in India using law, education, and institutions.

**Q.13 [Colonial Knowledge Systems].** Discuss how the British production of knowledge (gazetteers, surveys, censuses) contributed to imperial control.

**Q.14 [Company to Crown].** Trace the administrative and institutional changes between 1757 and 1858 that enabled the transition from Company rule to Crown rule.

**Q.15 [Fiscal Drain].** Critically evaluate the theory of “economic drain” under British rule and its implications for Indian development.



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## Chapter 3: *Early Indian Responses — Reform and Rebellion*

Based on ***From Plassey to Partition*** by Sekhar Bandyopadhyay

**Q.1 [Social Reform Movements].** Discuss the role of Raja Rammohan Roy in the emergence of social reform in 19th-century India.

**Q.2 [Religious Reform and Modernity].** To what extent did religious reform movements of the 19th century reflect the tension between tradition and modernity?

**Q.3 [Brahmo Samaj and Arya Samaj].** Compare and contrast the objectives and approaches of Brahmo Samaj and Arya Samaj.

**Q.4 [Peasant Resistance].** Examine the causes and consequences of major peasant revolts in early colonial India, such as the Indigo revolt and Pabna uprisings.

**Q.5 [Tribal Uprisings].** What were the major tribal uprisings during the early colonial period? Analyze their causes and leadership patterns.

**Q.6 [Role of Religion in Rebellion].** How did religion influence the mobilization during the Revolt of 1857?

**Q.7 [Revolt of 1857: Nature].** Was the Revolt of 1857 a sepoy mutiny, a civil rebellion, or the first war of independence? Justify your answer.

**Q.8 [British Response to 1857].** How did the British respond administratively and militarily after the Revolt of 1857?

**Q.9 [Socio-Economic Background of 1857].** Analyze the social and economic grievances that contributed to the Revolt of 1857.

**Q.10 [Leadership in the Revolt].** Evaluate the role of both military and civilian leadership in the Revolt of 1857.

**Q.11 [Limits of the Revolt].** What were the key reasons for the failure of the Revolt of 1857?

**Q.12 [Intellectual Awakening].** How did early Indian thinkers interpret colonial rule? Comment with reference to Derozio and the Young Bengal movement.

**Q.13 [Women in Reform Movements].** Discuss the role of women in 19th-century reform movements.

**Q.14 [Education and Reform].** How did Western education influence the reformist agenda in colonial India?

**Q.15 [1857 in Historical Memory].** How has the Revolt of 1857 been remembered in nationalist historiography?

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## Chapter 4: *Emergence of Indian Nationalism*

*Based on **From Plassey to Partition** by Sekhar Bandyopadhyay*

**Q.1 [Historiography of Nationalism].** Discuss the different historiographical interpretations of Indian nationalism.

**Q.2 [Economic Critique of Colonialism].** How did early nationalists use economic critique as a tool against colonial rule?

**Q.3 [Rise of Middle Class].** Analyze the role of the newly emerging Indian middle class in shaping early nationalist consciousness.

**Q.4 [Formation of Indian National Congress].** Examine the circumstances leading to the formation of the Indian National Congress in 1885.

**Q.5 [Role of Moderates].** Assess the achievements and limitations of the Moderate phase of the Indian National Congress (1885–1905).

**Q.6 [Early Nationalist Methods].** Why did the early nationalists prefer constitutional agitation over mass movements?

**Q.7 [Economic Nationalism].** Explain the concept of economic nationalism and its role in building a national identity in colonial India.

**Q.8 [Class and Caste in Nationalism].** To what extent did caste and class affect the reach and appeal of early nationalism?

**Q.9 [Swadeshi Movement: Roots].** How did the Partition of Bengal in 1905 transform Indian nationalism into a mass-based movement?

**Q.10 [Pre-Gandhian Nationalism].** Discuss the strengths and weaknesses of Indian nationalism before the advent of Mahatma Gandhi.

**Q.11 [Vernacular Press and Political Awakening].** Examine the role of vernacular press in shaping nationalist sentiment during the late 19th century.

**Q.12 [Education and Political Consciousness].** How did Western education contribute to the emergence of political consciousness in colonial India?

**Q.13 [Communalism and Nationalism].** How did early nationalist politics deal with the challenge of communalism?

**Q.14 [Role of Provincial Associations].** Evaluate the significance of regional political associations before the formation of the Indian National Congress.

**Q.15 [Leadership and Ideology].** Assess the role of leaders like Dadabhai Naoroji, Gopal Krishna Gokhale, and Surendranath Banerjea in shaping early nationalism.

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Chapter 5: *Early Nationalism – Discontent and Dissension*

Based on *From Plassey to Partition* by Sekhar Bandyopadhyay

**Q.1 [Moderate-Extremist Split].** What were the major ideological and strategic differences between the Moderates and Extremists in the Indian National Congress?

**Q.2 [Swadeshi Movement and Boycott].** Evaluate the impact of the Swadeshi and Boycott movements on Indian nationalism after the Partition of Bengal (1905).

**Q.3 [Extremist Ideology].** What were the key features of the Extremist approach to nationalism? How did it differ from earlier nationalist methods?

**Q.4 [Hindu Revivalism].** Analyze the role of Hindu revivalist movements in shaping nationalist politics in the early 20th century.

**Q.5 [Muslim Politics].** Trace the evolution of Muslim political consciousness leading to the formation of the All India Muslim League in 1906.

**Q.6 [Partition of Bengal].** How did the Partition of Bengal (1905) become a turning point in Indian politics?

**Q.7 [Dadabhai Naoroji's Contributions].** Discuss the economic ideas and political role of Dadabhai Naoroji in the national movement.

**Q.8 [Role of Tilak].** Critically examine Bal Gangadhar Tilak's role in transforming Indian nationalism during the Extremist phase.

**Q.9 [Surat Split].** What led to the Surat Split of 1907? What were its implications for the national movement?

**Q.10 [Revivalist vs Reformist Trends].** Compare the reformist and revivalist strands of nationalism in the early 20th century.

**Q.11 [Cultural Symbols and Nationalism].** How did early nationalists use religious and cultural symbols to build a collective political identity?

**Q.12 [Press and Nationalism].** Assess the role of Indian language newspapers and journals in mobilizing nationalist sentiments during the Swadeshi era.

**Q.13 [Women's Participation].** How did women engage in the Swadeshi movement? What was the impact on gender roles?

**Q.14 [Impact on Rural India].** To what extent did the early nationalist and Swadeshi movements succeed in reaching beyond the urban intelligentsia?

**Q.15 [Legacy of Early 20th Century Movements].** Evaluate the long-term contributions of early 20th-century movements to the later phases of the freedom struggle.

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# UPSC Mains – GS Paper 1

## Chapter 6: *The Age of Gandhian Politics*

*Based on **From Plassey to Partition** by Sekhar Bandyopadhyay*

**Q.1 [Gandhi's Ideology].** What were the core principles of Mahatma Gandhi's political philosophy, and how did they shape the Indian freedom struggle?

**Q.2 [Non-Cooperation Movement].** Discuss the significance of the Non-Cooperation Movement (1920–22) in transforming Indian nationalism into a mass movement.

**Q.3 [Role of Khilafat Movement].** Evaluate the role of the Khilafat Movement in fostering Hindu-Muslim unity during the early Gandhian phase.

**Q.4 [Constructive Programme].** What was Gandhi's Constructive Programme, and how did it relate to his vision of Swaraj?

**Q.5 [Civil Disobedience Movement].** How was the Civil Disobedience Movement (1930–34) different from the Non-Cooperation Movement in terms of strategy and mass participation?

**Q.6 [Salt March and Symbolism].** Why was the Salt March chosen as the launchpad for Civil Disobedience? Comment on its symbolic and practical significance.

**Q.7 [Gandhi-Irwin Pact].** What were the terms and political implications of the Gandhi-Irwin Pact (1931)?

**Q.8 [Limitations of Mass Movements].** To what extent were Gandhi's mass movements inclusive of peasants, workers, women, and marginalized castes?

**Q.9 [Round Table Conferences].** Assess the objectives and outcomes of the Round Table Conferences (1930–32) with regard to Indian self-governance.

**Q.10 [Role of Congress under Gandhi].** How did Mahatma Gandhi change the character and organisation of the Indian National Congress?

**Q.11 [Quit India Movement].** What made the Quit India Movement (1942) more radical and widespread compared to earlier Gandhian movements?

**Q.12 [Limits of Gandhian Strategy].** Critically assess the limitations of Gandhi's methods in achieving complete independence from British rule.

**Q.13 [Role of Women in Gandhian Politics].** Examine how Gandhian politics influenced the participation and visibility of women in the freedom struggle.

**Q.14 [Gandhi's Relationship with Ambedkar].** Discuss the ideological differences between Gandhi and Ambedkar with reference to the Poona Pact.

**Q.15 [Legacy of Gandhian Politics].** What is the long-term legacy of Gandhian politics in post-independence India?



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Chapter 7: *Many Voices of a Nation*

*Based on **From Plassey to Partition and After** by Sekhar Bandyopadhyay*

**Q.1 [Muslim Alienation].** What were the major reasons behind Muslim alienation from the Congress-led national movement in the early 20th century?

**Q.2 [Communal Identity and Politics].** How did socio-religious identity shape political mobilization among Indian Muslims?

**Q.3 [Non-Brahman Movement].** Evaluate the ideological foundations and political strategies of the Non-Brahman movement in South India.

**Q.4 [Ambedkar and Dalit Protest].** How did Ambedkar's vision for Dalit empowerment differ from the Congress approach to upliftment?

**Q.5 [Depressed Classes and Nationalism].** Analyze the participation and representation of the 'Depressed Classes' in the national movement.

**Q.6 [Business and Politics].** What role did Indian business elites play in the nationalist struggle? Were their interests always aligned with the freedom movement?

**Q.7 [Class Collaboration or Conflict].** Did the nationalist leadership effectively address the class concerns of capitalist and working classes?

**Q.8 [Working Class Mobilization].** Discuss the emergence and limitations of working-class movements in the context of Indian nationalism.

**Q.9 [Leftist Influence].** How did socialist and communist ideologies shape the working-class movements during the colonial period?

**Q.10 [Women and Nationalism].** How did the Indian nationalist movement transform the political and social role of women?

**Q.11 [Women's Organizations].** Examine the contributions of early women's organizations to both gender reform and anti-colonial resistance.

**Q.12 [Gendered Politics of Inclusion].** Was women's participation in the nationalist movement merely symbolic? Evaluate critically.

**Q.13 [Intersectionality].** Analyze the interplay of caste, class, and gender in shaping participation in the nationalist movement.

**Q.14 [Subaltern Voices].** How did subaltern groups assert their agency within the broader framework of elite-led nationalism?

**Q.15 [Limits of Congress Inclusion].** To what extent did the Indian National Congress accommodate the voices of diverse social groups?

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## Chapter 8: *Freedom with Partition*

*Based on **From Plassey to Partition and After** by Sekhar Bandyopadhyay*

**Q.1 [Quit India Movement].** Critically analyze the Quit India Movement in terms of mass participation and its limitations.

**Q.2 [Leftist Role in the 1940s].** Evaluate the role of the Communist Party and other Leftist groups in India's anti-colonial struggle during the 1940s.

**Q.3 [INA and Subhas Chandra Bose].** Assess the significance of Subhas Chandra Bose and the Indian National Army in the final phase of India's independence struggle.

**Q.4 [Naval Mutiny and Revolts].** To what extent did the 1946 Royal Indian Navy Mutiny reflect popular discontent with British rule?

**Q.5 [Communal Politics in the 1940s].** Discuss the rise of communalism in the 1940s and its effect on the unity of the nationalist movement.

**Q.6 [Wavell Plan and Simla Conference].** What were the objectives and outcomes of the Wavell Plan and the Simla Conference of 1945?

**Q.7 [Cabinet Mission Plan].** Examine the provisions of the Cabinet Mission Plan. Why did it ultimately fail to prevent Partition?

**Q.8 [Direct Action Day].** Analyze the events and consequences of Direct Action Day (August 16, 1946). How did it change the trajectory toward Partition?

**Q.9 [Mountbatten Plan].** Explain the key features of the Mountbatten Plan. Why was it acceptable to both the Congress and the Muslim League?

**Q.10 [British Policy and Withdrawal].** Was the British withdrawal from India a planned transition or a hasty exit? Substantiate your answer.

**Q.11 [Partition and Communal Violence].** Discuss the patterns, scale, and causes of communal violence during Partition. How did it affect post-independence nation-building?

**Q.12 [Gender and Partition].** Critically examine the gendered nature of Partition violence. How did women experience the trauma differently?

**Q.13 [Refugees and Rehabilitation].** How did the Indian state respond to the refugee crisis generated by Partition? Evaluate the effectiveness of rehabilitation policies.

**Q.14 [Popular Memory and Narratives].** How has Partition been remembered in Indian popular memory, oral histories, and literature?

**Q.15 [Was Partition Inevitable?].** Was the Partition of India inevitable by 1947? Discuss with reference to political, communal, and administrative developments.

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## Chapter 9: *After Independence and Partition*

*Based on **From Plassey to Partition and After** by Sekhar Bandyopadhyay*

**Q.1 [The Transition].** Discuss the key political and administrative challenges faced by the Indian state immediately after independence.

**Q.2 [Partition and Refugees].** Analyze the demographic, economic, and social consequences of the refugee crisis following Partition.

**Q.3 [Princely States – Kashmir and Hyderabad].** Evaluate the process of integration of princely states, with special focus on Kashmir and Hyderabad.

**Q.4 [The Communist Challenge].** How did the post-independence Indian state respond to Communist-led movements and opposition?

**Q.5 [Constitutional Framing].** What were the foundational principles of the Indian Constitution? How did it address diversity and inequality?

**Q.6 [Democratic Institutions].** Assess the strengths and limitations of India's early democratic institutions during the Nehruvian era.

**Q.7 [Nehruvian Economic Model].** Examine the ideology and structure of the Nehruvian model of state-led development.

**Q.8 [Planning Commission and Five-Year Plans].** To what extent did the Planning Commission achieve its intended goals in the first two decades?

**Q.9 [Social Reform and Law].** Discuss how the post-colonial state used legal reforms to address caste and gender inequalities.

**Q.10 [Foreign Policy and Non-Alignment].** Analyze the evolution of India's foreign policy under Nehru, with a focus on non-alignment and internationalism.

**Q.11 [Centre-State Relations].** Critically evaluate the balance of power between the Centre and States in independent India's early decades.

**Q.12 [Emergency and Authoritarianism].** Was the Emergency (1975–77) an aberration or an outcome of deeper institutional weaknesses?

**Q.13 [Decline of Congress System].** What were the major factors behind the decline of the Congress system by the late 1960s and 1970s?

**Q.14 [Popular Movements and Political Realignment].** Discuss the emergence of regional and caste-based parties in the context of the decline of the Congress.

**Q.15 [Continuity and Change].** To what extent did the post-independence Indian state break away from colonial structures in its political, economic, and social vision?

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