

Importance of the battle of Plassey

- The battle was hardly important from the military point of view. It was a mere skirmish. The English army didn't show military superiority. It was desertion in the Nawab's camp and treason that resulted in the victory of Clive. Clive excelled in the game of diplomacy and used Jagat Seth and Mir Jafar to win without fighting.
- It gave the British the access to the rich resources of Bengal. These were used to win the wars in Deccan including defeating the French in the Third Carnatic war, and also to extend influence over Northern India.
- Company virtually monopolised the trade and commerce in Bengal. The French never recovered their lost position in Bengal; the Dutch made a last attempt, but were defeated in the Battle of Bedara in 1759. From commerce the British proceeded to monopolise political power in Bengal.
- A gradual transformation was brought about in the nature of the East India Company. It no longer was merely a commercial body, but became a military Company having significant landed property, which could only be maintained by arms.

5.3. The Battle of Buxar

After his defeat in 1763 Mir Kasim took refuge under the Nawab of Avadh. Because of a clash of interest between the British and the Nawab of Avadh with each eyeing the territory of Bengal for their expansion a clash was seen to be imminent. As a gesture of gratitude to the Avadh Nawab who had granted him shelter in his territory Mir Kasim had agreed to bear the battle expenses. In May 1765 the combined might of the Nawab of Avadh, Mir Kasim and some French men who had joined the fray just because it was against their traditional rivals was defeated by the British taking away from Mir Kasim and his ilk any trace of will to fight. Therein probably lies the importance of the battle of Buxar which according to some historians 'riveted the shackles of company rule upon Bengal'.

Reasons for the battle of Buxar

Some historians suggest that Mir Kasim was working for political independence. However, available evidence suggests that this was not the case since he did not seek the three assigned districts, or questioned Company's monopoly in saltpetre trade or their share in the chunam trade of Sylhet. The main reason for the exasperation of Mir Kasim was the overstepping of the Company from its legal and political authority. Company deployed the use of gomasthas (an Indian agent in British East India Company) for coercing the population. Mir Kasim wanted restore the jurisdiction of his courts over gomasthas.

Privilege of Dastak which exempted the Company from paying taxes on trade was misused by the Company officials to indulge in private trade, without payment of any duties. This gave an unfair advantage to company's officials over the native traders. Mir Kasim took the desperate measure of abolishing all duties for inland trade, this placing the Indian merchants on the same footing as the British. Though, this was his legitimate right, it wasn't acceptable to the Company. Moreover, Calcutta Council wanted a war because they hoped that the new ruler that they would appoint would present them with lavish gifts and presents. Mir Kasim did not wish to establish his supremacy in administration; he just wanted that the terms of the treaty be followed in letter and spirit.

Significance of the battle of Buxar

It reconfirmed the verdict of the battle of Plassey. If Plassey was won by taking recourse to diplomacy and treachery, Buxar showed the might and the strength of the British. It resulted in Nawab of Awadh becoming a grateful subordinate. Mughal emperor became a pensioner of Company. Doors to Delhi and Agra lay open for the Company. Nawabs of Bengal and Awadh did