



A STUDY OF BATTLE OF PLASSEY

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Abstract

Siraj knew or suspected there was a conspiracy against him, despite Clive's earnest protestations to the contrary, and moved south to Plassey . On June 13th, Clive moved north with some 2,000 Indian sepoy and 600 British infantry of the Thirty-Ninth of Foot plus close to 200 artillerymen with ten field pieces and two small howitzers. Ambiguous messages were coming in from Mir Jafar and Clive was moving into a dangerous situation against heavy odds. He seems to have had a crisis of confidence and summoned his officers to a council of war on June 21st. The majority, including Clive, voted against action. At that point, according to his friend Robert Orme, Clive retired into a grove of trees where he stayed for an hour in meditation.

Keywords: - *Siraj, Clive, Ambiguous, situation*



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Introduction:-

Though it was more of a skirmish than a battle, the British victory under Robert Clive at Plassey in Bengal was a crucial event in the history of India. The young Nawab of Bengal, Siraj-ad-daula, had taken Calcutta from the East India Company with a huge army in June 1756, when the notorious 'Black Hole' episode occurred. It was not until August that the news reached the Company in Madras and not until October that Clive, now thirty-two years-old, left for Calcutta

at the head of a mixed European-Indian force of some 2,500 men. He drove Siraj's army out early in January 1757. Clive decided that the best way to secure the Company's interests in Bengal was to replace Siraj with a new and more pliant nawab. He found a candidate in a discontented elderly general named Mir Jafar. After complicated conspiratorial discussions and the promise of enormous bribes to all concerned, a secret agreement was smuggled into the women's quarters of Mir Jafar's house, which was being watched by Siraj's spies, and Mir Jafar signed it.

Siraj knew or suspected there was a conspiracy against him, despite Clive's earnest protestations to the contrary, and moved south to Plassey . On June 13th, Clive moved north with some 2,000 Indian sepoy and 600 British infantry of the Thirty-Ninth of Foot plus close to 200 artillerymen with ten field pieces and two small howitzers. Ambiguous messages were coming in from Mir Jafar and Clive was moving into a dangerous situation against heavy odds. He seems to have had a crisis of confidence and summoned his officers to a council of war on June 21st. The majority, including Clive, voted against action. At that point, according to his friend Robert Orme, Clive retired into a grove of trees where he stayed for an hour in meditation. On his return he gave orders for the army to move on to Plassey.

The confrontation came on a cloudy morning north of the village of Plassey on the bank of the Hughli river. Clive's army was drawn up in three divisions, as was the Nawab's army of perhaps 40,000 men with its war-elephants and more than 50 cannon. One division was commanded by Mir Jafar. After an opening cannonade, a crash of thunder at noon heralded a torrential downpour of rain that lasted half an hour. The British artillerymen quickly covered their cannon and ammunition with tarpaulins, but the enemy failed to do the same and their artillery was put out of action, so that when the Nawab's army moved forward, assuming that Clive's cannon were also out of action, it was met with a withering storm of fire. The enemy withdrew and Siraj, who distrusted his generals and had already been warned of impending defeat by his astrologer (who had possibly been bribed), lost his nerve when Mir Jafar advised retreat. When Clive's army attacked again, Siraj fled on a fast camel. His demoralized army followed suit and when the British entered the enemy camp at about 5pm, they found it abandoned. According to Clive, he lost eighteen men killed, while he estimated the nawab's dead as around 500. Siraj-ad-daula was killed by his own people and Mir Jafar replaced him. Clive, who was now effectively master of Bengal, skilfully bolstered Mir Jafar's apparent authority

while keeping him on leading strings. The skirmish at Plassey was critical to the East India Company's triumph over its French rivals and, in the longer term, to the establishment of British rule in India.

Significance of Battle of Plessey:-

The victory of British East India Company in the Battle of Plassey is one of the important landmarks in India History. The Battle of Plassey revealed the utterly corrupt political situation in Bengal. Watson had himself stated this victory to be of extraordinary importance not only to the company but also to the British nation in general. Mir Jafar became a mere 'puppet ruler' and the power rested with the British. On every matter he depended on the English. The Battle of Plassey paved the way for beginning of their empire. The British enjoyed the tax benefits, had to compete with no rival foreign merchants and began to use the revenue of Bengal for protecting their military and trade interest. Mir Jafar gave 24 Parganas and one crore of rupees to the Company and valuable Siraj presents to the English officers including Clive. It depleted the state exchequer. So much wealth was drained from Bengal that the economy was completely shattered. This is known as the Plassey Plunder. With the wealth of Bengal the British secured their business and political supremacy.

Aftermath:-

The Battle of Plassey is considered as a starting point to the events that established the era of British dominion and conquest in India.

Mir Jafar's fate:-

Mir Jafar, for his betrayal of the Nawab Siraj Ud Daulah and alliance with the British, was installed as the new Nawab, while Siraj Ud Daulah was captured on July 2, in Murshidabad as he attempted to escape further north. He was later executed on the order of Mir Jafar's son. Ghaseti Begum and other powerful women were transferred to a prison in distant Dhaka, where they eventually drowned in a boat accident, widely thought to have been ordered by Mir Jafar. Mir Jafar as Nawab chafed under the British supervision, and so requested the Dutch East India Company to intervene. They sent seven ships and about 700 sailors up the Hoogley to their settlement, but the British led by Colonel Forde managed to defeat them at Chinsura on November 25, 1759. Thereafter Mir Jafar was deposed as Nawab (1760) and they appointed Mir Kasim Ali Khan, (Mir Jafar's son-in-law) as Nawab. Mir Kasim showed signs of independence

and was defeated in the Battle of Buxar (1764), after which full political control shifted to the Company.

Mir Jafar was reappointed and remained the titular Nawab until his death in 1765, while all actual power was exercised by the Company.

Rewards:-

As per their agreement, Clive collected £2.5 million for the company, and £234,000 for himself from the Nawab's treasury. In addition, Watts collected £114,000 for his efforts. The annual rent of £30,000 payable by the Company for use of the land around Fort William was also transferred to Clive for life. To put this wealth in context, an average British nobleman could live a life of luxury on an annual income of £800.

Robert Clive was appointed Governor of Bengal in 1765, for his efforts. William Watts was appointed Governor of Fort William on June 22, 1758. But he later resigned in favour of Robert Clive, who was also later appointed Baron of Plassey in 1762. Clive later committed suicide in 1774, after being addicted to opium.

Terms of agreement:-

These were the terms agreed between the new Nawab and the Company:

1. Confirmation of the mint, and all other grants and privileges in the Alinagar treaty with the late Nawab.
2. An alliance, offensive and defensive, against all enemies whatever.
3. The French factories and effects to be delivered up, and they never permitted to resettle in any of the three provinces.
4. 100 lacs of rupees to be paid to the Company, in consideration of their losses at Calcutta and the expenses of the campaign.
5. 50 lacs to be given to the British sufferers at the loss of Calcutta
6. 20 lacs to Gentoos, Moors, & black sufferers at the loss of Calcutta.
7. 7 lacs to the Armenian sufferers. These three last donations to be distributed at the pleasure of the Admiral and gentlemen of Council.
8. The entire property of all lands within the Mahratta ditch, which runs round Calcutta, to be vested in the Company: Also, six hundred yards, all round, without, the said ditch.

9. The Company to have the zemindary of the country to the south of Calcutta, lying between the lake and river, and reaching as far as Culpee, they paying the customary rents paid by the former zemindars to the government.

10. Whenever the assistance of the British troops shall be wanted, their extraordinary charges to be paid by the Nawab.

11. No forts to be erected by the Nawab's government on the river side, from Hooghley downwards.

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