

**DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY**  
**SALTORA NETAJI CENTENARY COLLEGE**  
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**SEMESTER-IV**  
**A/HIS/404/MJC-8**  
**HISTORY OF INDIA (1707-1857)**  
**MODEL QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**

**4 Marks x 5 = 20 (within 100 words)**

**10 Marks x 2 = 20 (within 500 words)**

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## Course Contents:

**Module I:** Coming of the Europeans-Portuguese East India Company, British East India Company, French East India Company. Arrival of the Portuguese and their early settlements. Establishment and expansion of the British East India Company. French East India Company's activities and its rivalry with the British. Comparative analysis of the European trading companies and their impact on Indian politics and economy.

**Module II:** Economy and polity-Land Revenue system and Forest Policy-Commercialization and indebtedness- Famine of 1770, Drain of wealth and deindustrialization. Land Revenue Systems: Zamindari, Ryotwari and Mahalwari. Colonial forest policy and its impact on local communities. Commercialization of agriculture and the resulting indebtedness of peasants. The Bengal famine of 1770: causes, consequences and colonial response. Drain of wealth theory and its implications on India's economy. Deindustrialization: Decline of traditional industries and crafts.

**Module III:** Rural society – changes and continuity- Impact of colonial rule on Bengal's agrarian society. Sanyasi and Fakir Rebellion. Impact of Colonial rule on Bengal's agrarian structure. Changes in land ownership and cultivation patterns. Social and economic consequences for rural communities. The Sanyasi and Fakir rebellions: causes, course and outcomes.

**Module IV:** Popular resistance: Santal and Wahabi movement, Revolt of 1857. Santal rebellion: Background, leadership and impact. Wahabi movement: ideological underpinnings and regional influences. The Revolt of 1857: causes , key events and consequences.

**Marks: 4**

**Question No. 1. Write the importance of the Battle of Buxar.**

**Answer:**The Battle of Buxar took place between the British East India Company and the combined forces of Mir Kasim, the Nawab of Bengal, Shuja-ud-daula, the Nawab Wazir of Oudh and the Mughal Emperor, Shah Alam II in 1764.

Historians have opined that “Buxar deserves far more than Plassey to be considered as the real origin of the British power in India”. The remark is true. Plassey was a mere skirmish and the victory of the English was due more to treachery than the superiority of the English arms. But Buxar was a straight fight in which the English demonstrated their military superiority and established their claim to be considered as the conquerors of Bengal. Plassey was the defeat of an inexperienced Nawab surrounded by conspirators and betrayed by his own officers. But at Buxar, the English defeated Mir Kasim, a veteran statesman supported by the greater power of Oudh. In the result, the English not only tightened their grip over Bengal but ensured the safety of its North-West frontier.

**Marks: 4**

**Question No. 2. What were the defects of the Regulating Act, 1773?**

**Answer:** The Regulating Act, 1773 was the first legislative interference by the British Government in the affairs of India. It subjected the Company to a definite Parliamentary control. The Act, however, was defective in many points.

It was a “half-measure and disastrously vague in many points.” It did not clearly define the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court, nor the law it had to administer, nor its relations to the Council. Hence arose constant conflict between the Council and the Supreme Court.

Another great defect was that the Council had the power to bring about a deadlock in the executive by out-voting the Governor-General who could not do anything if his decision was overruled. This was a serious flaw as no special powers were given to the Governor-General to tide over emergencies.

Lastly, the control given to the Governor-General over the other Presidencies was vague and indeterminate, being subject to certain provisos. It left him in the absurd position of having to support policies in initiating which he had no effective voice.

**Marks: 4**

**Question No. 3. Mention the merits and demerits of the Permanent Settlement.**

**Answer:** On the merits of the Permanent Settlement, opinion is divided. There is no doubt that it gave popularity to the British Government and helped to make Bengal the wealthiest and most flourishing province in India. It improved the position of the zamindars and removed all those checks to industry and improvements, which were inevitable when the Government took away part of the profit. Lastly, it avoided the evils of the periodical settlement which, at however long intervals, produced economic dislocation, evasion and deliberate throwing of land out of cultivation.

Demerits: By recognising the zamindars alone, it ignored the ancient rights of under-proprietors and left them at the mercy of the newly created landlords. As a matter of fact, the status of the tenants was impaired and their position had to be improved by subsequent legislation. Secondly, it caused considerable financial loss in as much as it deprived the Government of a share in the increasing value of the land, i.e., in its unearned increment. Thirdly, the rigid punctuality of the payment of revenue enforced by the sale law caused great hardship and ruined many zamindars. Lastly, the hope that was entertained that the zamindars would improve and develop their estates, had not been realised. To sum up, a settlement for a long term of years might have retained all the advantages of Permanent settlement without its defects.

**Marks: 4**

**Question No. 4. Write a short note on the “Doctrine of Lapse”.**

**Answer:** Lord Dalhousie had no scruples about annexation and he made annexations right and left in total disregard of Indian feeling and susceptibilities. His annexation policy rested on a three- fold basis – right of conquest, Doctrine of Lapse and the desire to extend the benefits of British rule to provinces misgoverned by Indian monarchs.

According to the Doctrine of Lapse, the dependent States passed back or “lapsed” to the paramount power on the failure of natural heirs of the royal line. In other words, Dalhousie refused to recognise the right of adoption in the case of dependent States and held that the failure of natural heirs of the royal line in such States was a legitimate opportunity for annexing them. The States annexed by the application of this doctrine were Satara, Nagpur, Jhansi, Jaitpur in Bundelkhand, Sambalpur in Orissa and Baghat, a Cis-Sutlej State. In one instance, that of Karauli, the annexation was disallowed by the Home government on the ground that it was a ‘protected ally’ and not a ‘Dependent State’ created by the British.

**Marks: 4**

**Question No. 5. Analyse the significance of the Sanyasi movement.**

**Answer:** The disastrous famine of 1770 and the harsh economic order of the British compelled a group of Sanyasis in Eastern India to fight the British yoke. These Sanyasis were joined by a large band of dispossessed small zamindars, disbanded soldiers and rural poor. The Sanyasi revolt (1763-1800) was a late eighteenth century incident which took place in the Murshidabad and Baikunthpur forests of Jalpaiguri under the leadership of Pandit Bhabanicharan Pathak when Warren Hastings assumed the Governor-General ship of Bengal.

The Sanyasi movement is an important episode in the early colonial rule in India. It was the first of a series of revolts and rebellions in the western districts of the province including (but not restricted to) the Chuar Revolt of 1799 and the Santal Revolt of 1855-56. Some refer to it as an early war for India's independence from foreign rule, while others classify it as acts of violent banditry following the depopulation of the province during the Bengal famine of 1770. In fact, the rebellion highlights the theme of sacrifice as the Sanyasis were willing to give up their lives for the cause of independence.

What effect the Sanyasi rebellion had on rebellions that followed is debatable? Perhaps the best reminder of the rebellion is in literature, in the Bengali novels, *Anandamath* (1882) and *Debi Chaudhurani* (1884), written by India's first modern novelist, Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay.

**Marks: 4**

**Question No. 6. What were the military causes for the Revolt of 1857?**

**Answer:** There were several unsatisfactory features in the Indian army that portended a crisis. The discipline in the army had become very lax on account of the system of promotion by seniority only as well as by the transference of able military officers to civil posts. The sepoys were discontented as the constant extension of frontiers involved their service in strange distant countries. In such cases, they demanded extra allowances and when these were refused they became hostile. The Bengal army was particularly difficult to handle from the number of high castes men in its ranks. They disliked menial services and dreaded sea voyage, which endangered their caste. Hence their discontent was greatly intensified when Lord Canning passed the General Services Enlistment Act which imposed on the sepoys the obligation to serve wherever required. The disparity in number between European and Indian troops as well as England's preoccupation in the Crimean War filled the sepoys with confidence in their own power.

**Marks: 10**



### **Question No. 1. What were the causes of French failure in India?**

**Answer:** The collapse of the French power in India was, to a great extent, due to the commercial superiority and better financial position of the English Company. The English never forgot that they were primarily a trading body and all through the war they busily transacted their ordinary commercial affairs. The French figures, on other hand, showed a considerable decline and Dupleix came to the conclusion that for France, the Indian trade was a failure. Hence he devoted his energies to military conquests and territorial expansion. This subordination of mercantile interests to territorial ambition was a cardinal error. It impoverished the French Company which became a burden to the Government rather than a source of profit. Hence the home government in France, entangled as it then was in wars in Europe and America, was not in a position to support the ambitious schemes of Dupleix.

The French had no suitable military base in India, whereas the possession of Bengal, besides being a source of wealth to the English, gave them a firm base of operation on the mainland.

The naval superiority of the English was an important factor in this contest for supremacy. English success on the mainland was seconded by success at sea. Hence the English were in a position to bring a constant supply of men and stores which the French could not.

The French Company lacked the spirit of bold, individual and corporate effort so often exhibited by the English. The English Company being a private corporation, displayed considerable energy and individual initiative and was free from the deadening effects of detailed state interference. The French Company, on the other hand, was nothing more than a subordinate department of the Government. The shareholders being assured a fixed dividend, took no active

interest in the fortunes of the Company. Hence its affairs were badly managed and it never became a flourishing concern. The Government on many occasions had to relieve its financial position but it could not do so indefinitely. The European complications of France proved a heavy drain on the exchequer and the Government had more imperative calls on its purse than financing a bankrupt company. These were the causes which contributed to the ill success of the French and the process of decline was hastened by Lally's mistaken policy. Lally was hot headed and intolerant of advice. Hence he made grave mistakes of policy specially in recalling Bussy from the Deccan. He alienated all by the violence of his temper and so was badly supported by the Pondichery Government. This together with the apathy of the home government in France accounts for the failure of his campaigns as well as the French failure in India. Personally he was brave as a soldier and incorruptible as a man. He was condemned and executed as a traitor, a condemnation wholly unjust and undeserved.

**Marks: 10**

**Question No. 2. Explain the Ryotwari Settlement in Madras.**

**Answer:** Within ten years from 1792, the year in which Tipu Sultan concluded the Peace of Seringapatam, the East India Company acquired the richest and fairest portions of the territory which later formed the Province of Madras.

A new system of land settlement grew up in this newly acquired territories of the British. The land settlement in Madras called the Ryotwari Settlement is as intimately connected with the name of Thomas Munro as the name of Lord Cornwallis is connected with the Zamindari Settlement of Bengal. Formerly the Nawab of the Carnatic settled revenue year to year on the basis of the grains sown. The surveyors in making their reports measured the lands. But they practiced a thousand frauds and their reports were guided by the bribes they received.

When the territory came under the British East India Company, a Revenue Board was established for the purpose of settlement of revenue, the Collectors and members of the Board of Revenue robbed public money, that is, the revenue collected, without any danger of detection. They gave the government a rent roll below the actual rent collected.

Thomas Munro first completed the Ryotwari Settlement of Baramahal. In this system, rent was directly settled with 60,000 farmers that is with the ryots. The result of Ryotwari Settlement was the most encouraging, for the amount collected in the first year was 165,000 Pagodas which left not a single rupee outstanding. The system was a permanent settlement of revenue with the ryots directly instead of Zamindars, i.e. intermediaries. This permanence of settlement was necessary, for there must be fixity of the government demand for the improvement of agriculture and prosperity of the people. Thomas Munro's Ryotwari Settlement was permanent but only additional land reclaimed for cultivation was to be subjugated to additional revenue.

Munro's Ryotwari Settlement found favour with the authorities and gradually Canara, Malabar, Tanjore etc. were brought under this system and the Rajas and Nair Chiefs of Malabar, the Pattakdars of Tanjore etc., were replaced by the ryots in matters of land settlement.

The real motive behind the Ryotwari System was to realise the maximum from the land in shape of revenue. Before the acceptance of this system for the province of Madras as a whole there was an elaborate debate. William Bentick was precisely of the same opinion as Munro had expressed, and recorded that Zamindari Settlement suited Bengal where there were hereditary Zamindars, but did not suit those parts of Madras where such land-lords did not exist.

As already mentioned, Munro desired a settlement with individual ryot and desired it to be permanent, subject to increase or decrease of revenue as more or less land was taken under cultivation. Thus permanent settlement with the ryots directly was the predominant idea of the British administrators and Ryotwari Settlement was acted upon in Madras.

**Marks: 10**

**Question No. 3. Briefly discuss the history of Fakir Movement.**

**Answer:** Fakir Movement was an armed resistance of the Muslim saints against the dominance of the British East India Company in Bengal. The movement began in 1760 and continued for more than four decades. The most important reason behind this movement was regulations of the Company which seriously disturbed the lives of saints. These saints lived on alms provided by their followers mostly in the villages. The Company rulers, who little understood the religious institutions of the country, took their alms collection drive for unauthorised impositions on the village people. The government thus issued decrees banning collection of alms by the organised groups of Fakirs. In response, they started a resistance movement against the Company rulers. The movement received ready support from the peasantry for their religious attachment to the mendicants and also having been hard pressed under the new land revenue policy of the Company rule.

The resisting Fakirs belonged to the Madaria tarika, a Sufi sect which flourished in Bengal under the leadership of Shah Sultan Hasan Suriya Burhan in the second half of the seventeenth century. However, the movement was organized and led by Majnu Shah, a Sufi saint of Madaria Sect. The Fakir Movement began in nebulous form in 1760 and gathered momentum in 1763. Their main target was the Company kuthi, revenue offices of Zamindars loyal to the Company rulers, and the houses of their officials. The rebels used swords, spear and lances, gun, fire throwing devices and even revolving cannons.

The rebels attacked the commercial kuthi of the Company at Bakarganj in 1763 and kept the factory chief, Calley confined for some days. In the same way, they surprised Dhaka kuthi while its English supervisor, Ralph Lester evacuated. The same year, the rebels attacked Company kuthi at Rampur Boalia in Rajshahi, captured the factory chief, Benette, who was sent to Patna as captive, where he was killed.

By 1767, the attack of the rebels intensified in Rangpur, Rajshahi, Jalpaiguri, Coochbehar and Comilla. An army under Feltham suddenly attacked the Fakirs in 1771 on way to Ghoraghat and Govindaganj in Rangpur where they sustained a defeat and were dispersed. In 1772, Majnu Shah raided the establishments of the Company in the Rangpur, Bogra and Rajshahi districts. On one occasion, he along with hundreds of armed followers raided the revenue office of the Company at Rajshahi, captured the accumulated fund and kept the court under his control. The rebels conducted extensive raids in Purnia, Burdwan, Kumarkhali, Jessore, Mymensingh, Sylhet, Dhaka, Midnapur, Birbhum, Rangpur, Dinajpur, Bogra, Jalpaiguri in 1773.

The activities of the rebels took a serious turn in Mymensingh in 1782. After a severe battle at Pakhuria, Majnu Shah receded into the Madhupur jungles with his followers. In 1785, he proceeded towards Mahasthangarh and was defeated in a battle. In the following year, Majnu Shah planned simultaneous attack in eastern Bengal under himself and in north Bengal under his lieutenant, Musa Shah. After 1786, Majnu Shah was not seen to lead an expedition. It appears that he himself was wounded in the battle of Kaleswar and died on 26<sup>th</sup> January 1788.

After the death of Majnu Shah, his able lieutenants like Musa Shah, Chirag Ali Shah, Anup Narayan and others continued the revolt up to 1812. But after the death of Majnu Shah, the movement gradually lost its direction and dynamics. By late 1790s, the revolt began to be subsided only to wither away in the form of stray resistance in the subsequent decade.

**Marks: 10**

**Question No. 4. Analyse the importance of the Wahabi Movement.**

**Answer:** Abdul Wahab of Arab was the founder of the Wahabi movement. Purification of Islam and its revival in original form were the ideals of the Wahabis. Almost at the same time, a similar movement was started at Delhi by Wali Ulla. Wali Ulla was a liberal-minded reformer and did not make any distinction between Shia and the Sunni Muslims. After Wali Ulla, his son Abdul Aziz assumed the leadership of the followers of Wali Ulla and declared that India was not a *Dar-ul-Islam*, i.e. a land fit for those who profess Islam, for it was under the British who were non-Muslims. In order to convert India into a *Dar-ul-Islam*, it was necessary to re-establish Muslim rule in India. Further, as a result of the entry of many Hindu converts into the fold of Islam, many non-Islamic customs have entered into Islam. It was therefore necessary to purify Islam and revive the religion of Prophet Muhammad. Thus this movement became both a religious and political movement.

Syed Ahmad gave leadership to this movement at Rai Breilly. In order to convert India into a *Dar-ul-Islam*, it was necessary to end the Sikh rule in Punjab and the British rule in Bengal. Syed Ahmad began the movement for achieving this purpose. He was deeply influenced by the ideas of Wali Ulla, Abdul Aziz and particularly Abdul Wahab. The movement which began under the leadership of Syed Ahmad is known as Wahabi movement. Many call it Wali Ulla Movement.

The Wahabi movement became very powerful in Rai Bareilly, Meerut, Delhi and Bengal. In Bengal, the movement got mixed up with the Farazi movement and acquired great strength. Syed Ahmad's followers Mir Nasir Ali better known as Titumir, began the movement first at Barasat and gradually spread it to Jessore and Nadia where a large number of the weavers joined the movement. Krishna Roy Zamindar enhanced the land revenue of the ryots who joined the Wahabi movement within his zamindari. Titumir began open hostilities with the zamindar and after constructing a fortress of bamboo poles, declared war

against the Hindu zamindars. His followers attacked the Hindu temple at a village named Purna. They also tortured the Hindus of the village. Even the Muslims of the village who refused to take their side were not spared. After ransacking the village Purna, Titumir declared that the British rule had ended and the Muslim rule re-established. In Twenty Four Parganas, Faridpur and Nadia, the followers of Titumir for the time being became invulnerable. The British government sent a force to suppress the movement. Many of the followers of Titumir lost their lives at the hands of the British troops. Titumir's bamboo fortress at Narkelberia in Barasat was occupied by the British after a fight in which Titumir was killed.

Wahabi movement took communal character in some places and led to communal oppression. But as the objective of the movement was the restoration of the Muslim rule, it became naturally anti-British. For this reason, the anti-British character of the movement received emphasis. At the initial stage, this movement was limited to the lower middle-class Muslims, but gradually well-to-do Muslims also joined the movement and in Malda, Bakharganj etc, the movement received the support of the Muslim saints, Zamindars, merchants, in fact, the Muslim community by and large. At the initial stage, when the Wahabi movement became somewhat communal in character, the Hindu society looked upon it with suspicion and fear. But with the occupation of Punjab by the British, when the Wahabi movement became fully anti-British in character, the Hindu community gave it moral support. The movement thus assumed a political character.

**Marks: 10**

**Question No. 5. Discuss the nature of the Revolt of 1857.**



**Answer:** In 1857 occurred the great rebellion usually known to history as the “Indian Mutiny”. There has a good deal of controversy over the real character of this outbreak. British writers such as G. W. Forest, C. Bell, T. R. Holmes, J. W. Kaye, G. B. Malleson and others have persisted in speaking of it as a “mutiny”. They argue that the native sepoys disobeyed their superior British officers and became rebellious and the civil population did not revolt against their alien rulers. Thus it was nothing more than or less than a sepoy mutiny.

J. B. Norton, Alexander Duff and others are of the opinion that the movement of 1857 although began as a mutiny of the sepoys but it gradually became wide spread and took the character of national movement.

While some Indians at any rate have described this great rising as the “Indian War of Independence”. Patriots like V. D. Savarkar as well as S. B. Chaudhuri inflated the second of the above opinions and went to the extent of calling the revolt of 1857 as the first war of Indian independence. S. N. Sen, the official historian, gives somewhat qualified support to this view in his book *Eighteen Fifty Seven*. Both S. N. Sen and R. C. Majumdar (*The Sepoy Mutiny & The Revolt of 1857*) have considered many new materials through research and have in the ultimate analysis come to more or less similar conclusion that although the revolt of 1857 did not begin as a national movement and was primarily a sepoy mutiny, it took the shape of national movement in certain areas. It became a national movement in most parts of the present Uttar Pradesh, a part of Central Provinces and western part of Bihar.

The truth seems to lie midway between these two extreme views. It was the sepoys of the Bengal Army who began the revolt and did most to sustain it. So far it was a mutiny.

But it was more than a mutiny in as much as it was backed by dispossessed zamindars and talukdars, princes and Nawabs deprived of their estates, titles and

pensions, and by the soldiers and officers of the escheated principalities, whose occupations were gone. Hence Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru has spoken of the rising as a feudal revolt. Thus behind the particular grievances of the Bengal Army lay more deep rooted and impalpable causes of discontent and there were many others besides the sepoy's who were interested in overthrowing the British rule. The conservative section of the people was seriously alarmed at the progressive trends of British rule, which seemed to threaten their ancient social order. Thus there was a widespread feeling of discontent even among those who were not sepoys and the affairs of the polluting greased cartridges set the tinder-box ablaze.

But if the outbreak was more than a military, it was not a national rebellion against foreign rule. None of the rulers of the leading State joined the revolt. The Sikhs who had been subdued very recently, made no attempt to recover their independence. On the contrary they marched out to join the British force at Delhi. All the sepoys did not rise against the British Government. Many fought side by side with the British force. Southern India, on the whole remained quiet. Nepal sent a Gurkha army to put down the revolt in Oudh. It was only in Oudh and Rohilkhand that the revolt took on the character of a national rising.