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Overviews of British Expansion in India (1757 to 1856)

Q. 1. Trace the growth of the British power in India from 1757 to 1856.

Ans. Growth of the British Power in India

1. *Beginning and end of the British rule in India.* With their victory in the Battle of Plassey on June 23, 1757, the British started their process of conquering India and completed it on February 7, with the annexation of Oudh by Lord Dalhousie. (1848-1856)

Lord Clive (1757-1760 and 1765-1767) who won the Battle of Plassey was the founder of the British rule in India and was the first Governor of Bengal which at that time comprised Bengal, Bihar and Orissa.

Lord Mountbatten (1900-1979) was the Past Viceroy of India (1947-48). He had taken over as viceroy from Lord Wavell in March 1947.

2. *Extent of East India Company's Territories (1772-1790).* In 1785, the British Dominion in India extended over Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, Banaras, and Ghazipur, Northern Sarkars, part of Salsette (acquired from the Marathas from the Treaty of Purandhar in 1776), apart from the harbours of Madras, Bombay and some minor ports.

By the Treaty of Faizabad (1775), the East India Company, had acquired Banaras and Ghazipur from the Nawab of Oudh.

3. *Extension of British Rule (1790-1804).* *Territorial agains from Anglo wars.* After the third Anglo-Mysore War (1790-92), the English acquired Malabar on the west, Dindigul and the surrounding districts in the south and Baramahal districts in the east.

After the Fourth Anglo-Mysore War (1799), the English annexed the south Kanara Coast, Wynand in the southwest, Coimbatore and Dayapuram in the south-east besides Serirangapanam.

Gains from Nizam. In 1800, the Nizam of Hyderabad ceded to the company the districts of Bellary and cuddaph by the subsidiary Treaty.

Gains from Oudh. In 1801, the Nawab of Oudh surrendered the territories of Rohilkhand, Farrakhabad, Mainpuri, Etawah, Fatehgarh, Allahabad, Azamgarh, Basti and Gorakhpur to the Company.

Territorial gains from the second Anglo-Maratha war (1802-03). The Company's gains included the Upper Doab (territory between the Ganges and the Jamuna), all territories north of the Rajput states of Jaipur, Jodhpur, the part of Broach, the forts of Ahmednagar, district of Cuttack in Orissa.

In 1805, the Company's dominion extended along the whole seashore of India from Sind frontier at the mouth of the Indus down to western coast upto the Cape Comorin and then east ward along the Bay of Bengal to the Frontier of Burma. In northern India, the Company's political jurisdiction extended from Bengal to the deserts bordering upper Sind and Punjab.

The princely states of Oudh, Nagpur, Gwalior, Indore, Baroda, Hyderabad, Mysore, Travancore and others accepted the protection of the East India Company.

4. *Extension of British Dominion (1805-1817).* (i) *Political influence of the Company in Punjab (1809).* The East India Company declared its protectorate over all cis-Satluj states by a treaty with Maharaja Ranjit Singh.

(iii) *Gains from Anglo-Maratha war (1814-16)* The Gurkha ruler surrendered the territories of Kumaon and Garhwal to the Company. The Company now acquired sites for the development of hill stations like Simla, Mussoori, Ranikhet, Ladour and Nainital.

(iii) *Gains from the Third Anglo-Maratha war (1817-18).* The Peshwaship was abolished. The entire dominion belonging to the Peshwa in western India was acquired by the Company and merged in the Bombay Presidency. The Company also acquired the Peshwa's political rights over Bundelkhand and Malwa.

The Maratha Chiefs like Scindhia, Bhonsale and Holkar ceded important territories north and south of the Narbada, besides Ajmer.

Within the natural boundaries of India bounded by the ocean and the mountains, the British sovereign influence extended from Assam in the east to the river Sutlej and the upper Sind desert in the west and from the Himalayas in the north to Cape Comorin in the south.

5. *Growth of British Power in India (1818 to 1856).* (i) *Gains from the First Anglo-Burmese war (1824-26).* The English got Assam, Arakan and the coastal strip of Tenasserin.

(ii) *Victory over Jat ruler.* The English made the best use of the struggle over the succession issue of Bharatpur. In 1826, the fort of Bharatpur regarded as impregnable, was captured by the British.

(iii) *Annexation of Cachar and Coorg.* The British annexed Cachar in 1832 and Coorg in 1834.

(iv) *Annexation of Punjab (1845 to 1849).* After the First Anglo-Sikh War (1845-1846), the Company acquired the Jullundur Doab (territory between the river Beas and the Satluj) besides hill areas situated between the Satluj and the Indus.

After the Second Anglo-Sikh War (1848-49), the entire territory of Punjab was annexed.

(v) *Second Anglo-Burmese War* (1852). After their victory, English annexed Lower Burma (Pegu).

(vi) *Annexation of Sind* (1843). The English annexed Sind by defeating the Amirs of Sind. This was in violation of all treaties entered into between the Amirs and the Company.

(vii) *Annexation of territories by Lord Dalhousie*. Lord Dalhousie (1848-56) was an expansionist and an imperialist. He took recourse to every means, fair or foul to expand the boundaries of the British empire. Under him, the British dominion in India reached its pinnacle.

He followed the following policies in this regard.

(a) *Expansion through the policy of Doctrine of Lapse*. Lord Dalhousie annexed the following states. (i) Satara (1848). (ii) Jaitpur (1849). (iii) Sambalpur (1849). (iv) Baghat (1850). (v) Udaipur (1852). (vi) Jhansi (1853) and (vii) Nagpur (1854)

(b) *Expansion by Conquests*. (i) Punjab (1849). (ii) Lower Burma (1850). (iii) Sikkim (1850).

(c) *Expansion on account of default in payment*. Berar (1853) from the Nizam of Hyderabad.

(d) *Expansion on ground of maladministration*. Oudh (1856)

Summing up. The Company was able to exercise its control over India on account of its superior diplomacy and statesmanship (Divide and Rule Policy), lack of unity among Indian rulers and use of new war weapons and techniques. After the Revolution of 1857, the rule of the East India Company came under the direct domination of the British Government in Britain.