

## SECTION 2

### Mir Jafar and Mir Qasim

**(A) Mir Jafar**—Mir Jafar was the brother-in-law of Ali Vardi Khan, the Late Nawab of Bengal (who reigned in Bengal from 1740 to 1756). After Ali Vardi Khan's death in 1756, Mir Jafar was raised to the position of Commander of the Bengal's forces under his grandson Siraj-ud-Daulah. But an ambitious man like Mir Jafar could not feel himself contented with merely

the Commander of the Bengal forces. He himself wanted to become the Nawab of Bengal and with this aim in mind he resorted to treachery and entered into an alliance with the English. After the Battle of Plassey he was made the Nawab of Bengal. He paid huge sums to the English so that they might allow him to rule undisturbed, but there he was quite mistaken. The English held all the reign of power in their own hands and wanted the new Nawab to play a second fiddle to them. All the responsibility of running the administration was on his shoulders but he had no powers. He was a Nawab in name only. He was thus in a fix what to do. He could not please the English and his own subjects at the same time, because there was a clash of interests. His treasury was empty and his jewels were sold, but still the English demands, both of the Company and the individuals, were unsatisfied. Things came to such a pass that it became quite difficult for him to pay his troops, and the troops became mutinous. Again the English were instigating the Hindus against Mir Jafar and often giving them shelter.



*Mir Jafar*

At last (in 1759) Mir Jafar was forced to seek the help of the Dutch of Chinsura. But the Dutch were no match to the English and Clive defeated them and compelled them to agree to their terms by which they agreed not to interfere in the political affairs of India. Thus, the Dutch power in India came to an end. In February 1760, Clive returned to England and after him the English officers became more and more avaricious and it became quite impossible for Mir Jafar to meet their demands, especially when the treasury was already empty. On the other hand the administration had so much deteriorated that Mir Jafar was charged with the neglect of administration and was deposed in 1760. Mir Jafar's own son-in-law, Mir Qasim, was then placed on the throne who promised to make big presents to the English and pay heavy sums to the Company. Thus, Mir Jafar fell a prey to his own weapon (viz., of conspiracy).

In 1763, Mir Jafar was once again made the Nawab of Bengal when Mir Qasim was deposed, as he had refused to play the part of a puppet in the hands of the English. But two years later i.e. in 1765, Mir Jafar died without doing anything of importance.

**(B) Mir Qasim, 1760-63 A.D.**—Mir Qasim was the son-in-law of Mir Jafar. He became the Nawab of Bengal in 1760 after the deposition of Mir

Jafar. Some can call him a traitor because in conspiracy with the English he usurped the throne from his father-in-law. But it is also possible that he might have done so under patriotic and nationalistic influences as he was filled with the desire of serving his people by putting an end to the prevailing inefficiency and wholesale corruption. It is also true that he gave huge sums of money and large territories of Burdwan, Midnapore and Chittagong to the English in return for their help in getting the throne. But after paying their fee he did not want the English to interfere in his internal affairs and administrative work. He refused to be a puppet in the hands of the English. He was an energetic man and a capable ruler. He fully knew the miserable plight of the people and wanted to give them every possible relief. He had various qualities of head and heart.



*Mir Qasim*

Soon after his succession to the Nawab of Bengal he tried to improve the situation in which he was put. (1) First of all, he suppressed the rebellious attitude of the Zamindars and forced them to pay all the arrears which were due from them. (2) Then he removed all those officers who were either corrupt or were under the English influence. (3) Again, in order to be away from the English, Mir Qasim changed his capital from Murshidabad to Monghyr, a place which was quite far away from Calcutta. (4) Then he organised the military department after the European fashion and arranged for the manufacture of guns and firelocks at his new capital, i.e. Monghyr. (5) The English merchants had begun to *abuse the trading privileges*. They were carrying on private trade and were paying no duties on their articles to the state. Thus they were growing rich at the cost of both the people and the state. Not only this, the English merchants had also begun to sell their permits to the Indians who had also begun to carry on their trade duty-free. Consequently, the income of the Nawab of Bengal fell considerably. Naturally, he appealed to the Calcutta Council to do away with all this injustice, but to no purpose. Thus forced by circumstances Mir Qasim was obliged to abolish all duties on trade. The English asked Mir Qasim to reimpose all duties but he blankly refused. Enraged at this, the English declared war against him. Mir Qasim was ultimately defeated and he retired to Oudh. The English deposed Mir Qasim in 1763 and once again made his father-in-law (Mir Jafar) the Nawab of Bengal. The poor Mir Jafar reimposed all the abolished duties, promised to make good the losses caused to the English because of their war with Mir Qasim and gave presents once again.

Now Mir Qasim became an open enemy of the English. It is alleged that he took all the English prisoners with him to Patna and got them murdered by a German adventurer (Somru). Then he formed a confederacy with Shuja-ud-Daulah, the Nawab of Oudh, and the Mughal Emperor, Shah Alam II. All the three attacked the English but they were defeated in the Battle of Buxar (1764). Mir Qasim, however, managed to escape, but he died a little later. Thus passed away a great enemy of the English.