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## BRITISH IN THE WALLAJAH - MYSORE STRUGGLE FOR TIRUCHIRAPPALLI

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**Abstract:-** Mohammed Ali, the Nawab of Arcot had sought the alliance of Mysore against Chanda Sahib on condition that he would cede Tiruchirappalli to Mysore if he succeeded in the conflict. But Mohammed Ali flagrantly violated his solemn assurance and refused the cession of Tiruchirappalli to Mysore. However, Srirangam was left to be occupied by the Mysorean. In 1752, there ensued a struggle between the two groups of native power over the region of Tiruchirappalli. The British involved in the struggle in favour of Mohammed Ali to drive away the Mysoreans from the soil of the Tiruchirappalli. Mohammed Ali at first told the Mysore Rajah that he would consider the Rajah's demand after two months. When the Mysore King, Nanja Rajah pressed, Mohammed Ali said that the territory belonged to the Mughals and he could not alienate the Mughal's property. He was supported by the British and the native powers of Pudukkottai and Tanjore. On the other hand, the Mysore king got the assistance of Murari Rao, the Maratha Chief, the French and the Maravars. Eventually in the Wallajah - Mysore conflict over Tiruchirappalli region, the cause of the Nawab's was won with the military aid and assistance of the British. However the growing influence of the British in Tiruchirappalli region eroded the power of the Nawab Wallajah there. The introduction of assignment and assumption brought the Tiruchirappalli region under the direct control of the British.

**Keywords:** British , Wallajah, Nawab, Carnatic, Tiruchirappalli, Mysore, Ariyalur, Udaiyarpalayam, Tanjore, Hyder Ali.

### INTRODUCTION :

All the attempts to an amicable settlement regarding the dispute over the Tiruchirappalli region between Muhammed Ali , the Nawab of Carnatic and Nanja Rajah , the Mysore King was ended in fiasco. Hence , the Mysore King decided to fight out the issue in an open front. The Mysoreans and their allies converted the island of Srirangam into a base of their military operation. In the end of the battle, the French and Murari Rao withdrew their support to the Mysore King. After the withdrawal of the French, there remained no serious threat to the security of Tiruchirappalli fort. Thus ended the attempt of Nanja Rajah of Mysore to capture Tiruchirappalli fort.

While the Wallajah-Mysore war for Tiruchirappalli did not come to a finality, Jalabat Jung, the Nizam of Hyderabad, threatened to invade Tiruchirappalli in support of the French. Nizam's threat gave an indirect but quick remedy to the tussle at Tiruchirappalli. Though the Madras Council feared that Jalabat Jung would invade the Carnatic, what happened was that he, assisted by Bussy, a French General, attacked the ill-defended country of Mysore. Hence, he left the army at Srirangam and Tiruchirappalli and rushed to Mysore, virtually abandoning their claim for Tiruchirappalli. On the night of 8th April, 1755, Nanja Rajah with his forces returned to Mysore ceding Srirangam to the French, though the latter already stopped helping the Rajah and then joined Jalabath Jung to attack, Mysore. As he reached Mysore, Jalabath defeated Nanja Rajah and forced him to purchase peace for fifty two lakhs of rupees. Nanja Rajah's claim of either Tiruchirappalli or the expenses incurred by him to terminate the Nevayets in alliance with Mohammed Ali and the British could not fructify. Tiruchirappalli remained in the undisturbed possession of the Wallajahs.

It is difficult to ignore the significance of the conflict at Tiruchirappalli and the related events. Their immediate results were that they enhanced the prestige of the Wallajahs who were backed by the British and shattered the influence of the Wodayars of Mysore. Mohammed Ali emerged triumphant as Tiruchirappalli came into his possession. Before long, the Mughal Emperor extended recognition to his title as Nawab of the Carnatic. Finding his position at Tiruchirappalli unassailable, Mohammad Ali left the fort on 21 August 1755 on victorious march to the Capital, Arcot. Yet it cannot be denied that his triumph was the product of the flagrant violation of his obligations to Mysore and the devoted services of the British<sup>1</sup>. In Mysore, taking advantage of the confusion in the country, Hyder Ali, who fought for the King in Tiruchirappalli as a general, usurped the throne in 1761. In later years, Hyder Ali determined to wreak vengeance upon Mohammed Ali for his betrayal of Mysore, ravaged the Carnatic.

The Mysore wars of the subsequent times not only weakened the Wallajahs but also made them more dependent upon the British. Besides, the assistance which the Nawab secured from the British for the defence of Tiruchirappalli, so much overburdened his debt that he found it difficult to get out himself. This process together with the Nawab's practice of obtaining loans, continued. If the Wallajahs had ceded Tiruchirappalli to Mysore, they would have, no doubt, lost a large territory, but, perhaps they could have preserved their independence in Arcot for an indefinite period by keeping a balance between Mysore and British in South India. The subsequent conflict which were in reality the offshoots of the struggle for Tiruchirappalli so much weakened the Carnatic and Mysore that both powers fell easy prey to British expansionism.

#### BRITISH -FRENCH RIVALRY

The centre of political activity has been shifted to Madurai from Tiruchirappalli in 1755. After his triumph over Chanda Sahib the principal task which faced Mohammed Ali was the consolidation of his authority. Meanwhile in European political scene a war between England and France was declared which had its repercussions on the Anglo-French relationship in Tamil Nadu. Tiruchirappalli was guarded by the British troops under the command of John Caillaud. John Caillaud, the British Commander at Tiruchirappalli left for Madurai in an expedition to consolidate the Nawab's position there in the year 1757. This weakened the garrison at Tiruchirappalli. The French found in it an opportunity to attack Tiruchirappalli. On the way to the town, the French army exacted a promise of tribute from the Zamindar of Udaiyarpalayam. On receiving information that the French troops were moving from Pondicherry towards Tiruchirappalli, Caillaud rushed to Tiruchirappalli and saved the town from falling into the hands of the French.

Since the evacuation of Mysore forces in 1755, Srirangam had been in possession of the French. But, in May 1758, the French garrison was withdrawn from Srirangam to join the siege of Cuddalore and handed over the islands back to the Mysoreans. But, the English Captain Joseph Smith captured the island from the Mysore army<sup>4</sup>. In 1758, when Lally, the French Governor was attacking Tanjore, the British garrison at Tiruchirappalli went to the rescue of the King of Tanjore and the attempt of the French Governor to subdue the King of Tanjore was foiled.

In 1758, the Nawab established his sway over Thuraiyur, a principal Pollam of Tiruchirappalli, taking advantage of a succession dispute. The ruling chief was Varadaraja Reddy but his claims were contested by his cousin Venkatachala Reddi. At the request of Venkatachala Reddi for military aid, a body of the British forces led by Khan Saheb, Maphuz Khan, elder brother of Nawab Mohammad Ali and Joseph Smith marched to Thuraiyur in September 1758. The ruling chief now withdrew to the woods from where he prepared for resistance. The invading forces captured the barriers erected by the Poligar while the latter was allowed to take his flight to Mysore with his followers.<sup>5</sup> Venkatachala Reddy now assumed management of the Pollam and it seemed that the expedition was a success. However, in March, 1759, soon after the withdrawal of the forces of the British, the expelled chief descended upon the district. The ruling chief Venkatachala Reddy now fled and a body of troops which had been stationed by Khan Saheb surrendered. Varadaraja Reddy, however, permitted the forces of the British to return to Tiruchirappalli. Subsequently, he offered terms which the Nawab accepted for fear of the Poligar joining the French. Mohammed Ali recognized the title of Varadaraja Reddy and received tribute. Thus, the Nawab, despite a setback, established his influence over this Thuraiyur pollam with the support rendered by the British.

In 1760, Hyder Ali, the Mysore ruler and the French entered into an alliance against the Nawab and the British. They decided to conquer the Carnatic and to divide between themselves. Hyder Ali was to get Southern Carnatic including Tiruchirappalli and the western part of Carnatic while the French were to get the rest. On 4th June 1760, Hyder Ali arrived at Tyagadurg on the southern borders of Mysore but he could not be joined by the forces of Lally, the French Governor, owing to financial difficulties. Hyder Ali raided the province of Tiruchirappalli, advanced up to Natham and cut off the Nawab's communication with Madurai. In a counter move, the Nawab and the British sent forces to occupy Karur and Dindigul, then formed Mysore territories. A British army under the command of Richard Smith advancing from Tiruchirappalli won a series of victories culminating in the reduction of Karur to submission in August 1760. The Mysore forces withdrew from Natham and Tyagadurg. Among the generals who were in the forefront in the Nawab's and the British side, the name of Yusuf Khan or Khan Sahib deserves special mention.<sup>6</sup>

Yusuf Khan, when he turned hostile to the British and the Nawab sought the alliance of several powers. He

also entered into correspondence with Hyder Ali, the Nizam and the French. Hyder Ali agreed to send forces in support of him. Mohammed Ali feared that Hyder Ali and Yusuf Khan would attack Tiruchirappalli and Arcot simultaneously. But, this did not happen, as Yusuf Khan could not win the support of the Nizam.

Mohammad Ali annexed the two pollams of Ariyalur and Udaiyarpalayam, located within the present Tiruchirappalli district. They captured the fort of Ariyalur. The young poligar together with his followers, thereupon, fled to Udaiyarpalayam. Udaiyarpalayam. The poligars' pollam gave the Nawab uninterrupted Tiruchirappalli.

The first Anglo-Mysore war broke out when Hyder Ali led an expedition to the Carnatic in August 1767. Tiruchirappalli region received the impact of the war in January 1769 when Hyder Ali advanced as far as Thuraiyur. He carried fire and sword to Tiruchirappalli and Tanjore. However, the First Anglo-Mysore war came to an end in 1769 with the peace settlement at Madras.

The triumph of Wallajah expansionism imparted the greatest activity to Mohammed Ali's endeavour to assert his complete independence and sovereignty. He appointed his second son Amir- ul- Umara as the deputy at Tiruchirappalli and entrusted with him not only the administration but also the command of all his forces. The Madras Council considered the concentration of vast powers upon Amir Ul Umara as a dangerous trend to the British influence. When the British requested the Nawab to decentralize powers, Mohammed Ali refused saying that he was the absolute lord of the country and the best judge of his own affairs. This direct confrontation of the Nawab with the British was to a considerable extent the logical sequel to the liquidation of these states.

#### SECOND ANGLO-MYSORE WAR - 1780 AND EFFECTS IN TIRUCHIRAPPALLI

In July 1780, Hyder Ali descended upon the Carnatic. After making a futile attempt to storm Tiruchirappalli, he advanced to the south. For the next two years, the forces of Mysore held an undisturbed possession of most of Tanjore and Srirangam and part of Madurai. The British forces made repeated efforts to expel the forces of Mysore from Southern Carnatic. In 1780, Colonel John Braithwaite sought to check the advance of the Mysoreans to the province of Tiruchirappalli. The poligars of Udaiyarpalayam and Ariyalur who had taken shelter in Tharangambadi returned to their pollams with the help of Mysore forces and began to rebel. It was the oppressive administration of the Nawab's amuldars that assisted in the return of the chiefs of Udaiyarpalayam and Ariyalur. The amuldars increased the taxes four times of what the inhabitants had paid to the poligars and mercilessly tortured or killed those who did not yield to exactions. The inhabitants, therefore, exclaiming against avarice and cruelty of the Nawab's administration, rose in rebellion and demanded the restoration of poligar system. Hyder Ali, understanding the favourable situation, sent the former poligars with small bodies of troops to their pollams. Supported by the inhabitants, the chiefs expelled the Nawab's troops and established their authority. Thus the Nawab lost control of Ariyalur and Udaiyarpalayam of the Tiruchirappalli Province.

The second Mysore war virtually came to an end soon after Hyder Ali died in 1782. The Treaty of Mangalore was signed on the 7th March 1784 between the British and Tipu Sultan, the brave son of Hyder Ali. But the signatories agreed to mutual restitution of conquered territories and return of the prisoners.

A result of the war which endangered the Nawab's territory was the assignment of revenues to the company by the Nawab. At the request of the Madras Council, the Nawab agreed to make over the revenues of the province of Tiruchirappalli for the duration of the war. The Nawab gave his consent either because he found it impossible to collect taxes or because he did not grasp the implications of the Company's intervention, or both. By an agreement made in February 1781, the Company appointed receivers in Tiruchirappalli for the collection of revenue from the Nawab's amuldars. As this dual system did not work smoothly, the British constituted a committee for the administration of the assignment consisting of a Senior Member and five Members. It functioned through native officers called company's Collectors, who resided at the taluk or district offices. The committee appointed its own nominees in the place of corrupt renters. Anxious to conciliate the poligars, it appointed the former chiefs of Udaiyarpalayam and Ariyalur as the renters of their respective countries. These chiefs in consequence, abandoned their alliance with Tipu Sultan and joined the British.

In the province of Tiruchirappalli, the Superintendent of Revenue, strengthened the Company's administration. As the Chiefs of Udaiyarpalayam and Ariyalur did not pay the rent, he imprisoned them at Tiruchirappalli and established direct administration of the British.

To conclude, the decade that followed the "assignment" of revenue to the British witnessed the phenomenal growth of British influence in Madurai. The Treaties of 1785 and 1787 defined the British relations with the Nawab, and furnished vast scope for the extension of the sphere of activity.

**END NOTES**

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