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RISE OF THE BRITISH POWER IN RAMNAD

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ABSTRACTS

The English East India Company built factories in several parts of India. Initially their prime intention was commercial. The supremacy in trade secured by superseding the other European companies such as Portuguese, Dutch, French, etc. In course of time the commercialistic ideology of British changed into capitalism which guided to imperialism. The British Empire in India established after the Battle of Plassey which brought Bengal to them. After that political hegemony was maintained by the British by subduing Mughals, Marathas, Sultan of Mysore, Sikhs, etc.¹ The Marava Country situated in the southern part of the subcontinent was also not spared by the British.



KEY WORDS : *built factories , commercialistic ideology , British Empire.*

INTRODUCTION

Muthuramalinga Thevar made as a king called Sethupathi of Ramnad kingdom when he was just two months old in 1762. As per the treaty of 1767 the Dutch East India Company promised to help the Sethupathi from external threats. Meanwhile, conflict broke out between Ramnad and Tanjore. The Nawab of Arcot was not ready to permit fighting among the rulers whom he considered his tributaries. Hence the Nawab sent a formidable force first to Tanjore.¹

The British forces easily defeated the Maravas and took the infant Sethupathi and Muthu Tharuvaya Nachchiyar, Queen Regent as prisoners to Trichirappalli.² Mohammed Ali was not able to manage the situation who released the infant Sethupathi, Muthuramalinga Thevar and restored him to the throne of Ramnad on April 1781, on condition to pay Rs. 1,75,000 as annual tribute.³

EARLY PHASE OF BRITISH HEGEMONY

Mohammad Ali, Nawab of Arcot, had cordial relations with the British East India Company who was not able to pay the dues to Company so he handed over the administration of his territories to the British in 1790. This marked a new phase in the relationship between the Company and the Marava Country.⁴ McLeod seemed to increase the tribute was raised from Rs.1,75,000 to 2,20,000.⁵ Being cognizant of his economic incapability, he surrendered the right to collect the revenue of Ramnad to the British by a treaty in 1792. But he retained the administrative control.⁶ Muthurulappa Pillai was the

Praghani in charge of the administration. He was loyal to the British and hence he won the favor of Colonel Martinz. He became haughty and arrogant and created problems in the region of Sethupathi. Hence Sethupathi dismissed Muthurulappa pillai and appointed Muthukumarappa pillai.⁷ The Nawab of Arcot complained to the clashes between Ramnad and Sivagangai.⁸ When the British brought this matter to the notice of the Rajah of Ramnad, he cleared that neither the Nawab nor the British had any authority to direct him.⁹ Mangaleswari Nachchiar claimed the right to rule as she was the daughter of Vijaya Ragunatha Thevar.¹⁰ She made a representation to the Madras Council alleging oppression of the people by Muthuramalinga Sethupathi.¹¹ The madras council decided to take military action against Ramnad.¹³ In February 1795, the British forces entered Ramnad under the leadership of Major Stevenson. The Sethupathi was taken aback on this unexpected development. Muthuramalinga Sethupathi was deposed and sent to Madras via, Tiruchirappalli, where he died in 1801.¹⁴

BRITISH AMBITION

To bring the Southern poligars under proper control and to create a peaceful atmosphere in the Southern Poligar region (The southernmost part of erstwhile Madras Presidency), the British undertook a number of military expeditions and pursued diplomatic moves in the Carnatic region since 1751. When the British were determined to take over the entire region from the Nawab of Carnatic, the British pursued certain diplomatic treaties. "Carnatic Treaty of 1781". Then they found the Third Anglo-Mysore War, as a proper excuse, to assume the administration of the Southern Poligar region. It led the British to set up a Collectorate for the effective administration. As this Collectorate had its headquarters at Ramnad for the first time in the history of the Poligars, it was popularly known as the "First Collectorate of Ramnad".

CARNATIC TREATY OF 1792

The short duration of Third Mysore War and its end with the Treaty of Srirangapatnam, on March 1792, forced the Madras Government to restore the administration of Southern Poligar region to the Nawab of Carnatic. The Nawab also appealed to the Madras Government to Surrender the assumed administration over Southern Poligar Region* for the security of his interests and as per the Carnatic Treaty of 1787. Accordingly the British surrendered the assumption but under a new settlement. On 12th July 1792, the Madras Government signed the treaty known as Carnatic Treaty, with Mohammed Ali, the Nawab. The Carnatic Treaty of 1792 marked a high water mark in the expansion of British authority in the Carnatic region. As a result of the Treaty of Carnatic 1792, a new commission was issued to B.Torin on 12th July, 1792.¹⁵

BRITISH ADMINISTRATION

An interregnum of eight years (1795-1803) following the deposition of Sethupathi, witnessed direct administration of Ramnad by the British. During this period, the British created factions among the Sethupathis with the expectation that the loyalty of the dynasty to the British would be increased. This period also was marked by most sanguinary revolts against the British. One such revolt was the revolt of the poligars who previously enjoyed autonomy under the Nayakas. They were reluctant enough to submit themselves to the control either of the Nawab of Arcot or of the Company. Due to the military might of the British the refractory poligars were subdued. Simultaneously, the Maravas of Muthukulathur and Kamudhi were engaged in continuous struggle, under the able leadership of Mailapan alias Viramaravan against British control over Ramnad.¹⁶ He was formerly a general under Muthuramalinga Sethupathi. Hence he was a popular hero among the Maravas and had the backing of a group of people. The revolts disturbed the British officials and their survival in Ramnad became problematic. The British Collector, S.R.Lushington took serious efforts to suppress the revolt. The revolters fought furiously with patriotic vigour. The Company ultimately realized that the revolts were just manifestation of discontentment of the people due to the deposition of the Sethupathi and the take over of the administration of Ramnad. The British also realized that the motive behind these raids was not just plunder but a deeper one. The scarcity of food grains, due to the failure of Monsoon,

compounded the problems. To set right the situation, the government on the advice of Lushington, decided to restore Mangaleswari Nachchiar of the Sethupathi Dynasty, acknowledging her hereditary right. The British expected that she would serve as a tranquilizer to the war-torn country. Hence in 1803, Mangaleswari Nachchiar was reinstated as Sethupathi of Ramnad.¹⁷

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