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EARLY UPRISING AGAINST BRITISH RULE

Introduction

- The conquest of territories and the expansionist policy of the British East India Company led to a series of rebellions of deposed kings, or their descendants, uprooted *zamindars*, and *palayakarars*. Historians describe this as primary resistance. Independent of such revolts were the uprisings of the dispossessed peasants and tribal.
- The rapid changes introduced by the British in the agrarian relations, land revenue system, and judicial administration, elaborated in the previous lesson, greatly disrupted the agrarian economy, resulting in widespread misery among various sections of the society.
- Therefore, when the aggrieved erstwhile ruling class raised a standard of revolt, the support of the mass of peasants and artisans was not lacking.

Mysore Sultans and their Resistance

Rise of Haider Ali

- Mysore was a small feudatory kingdom under the Vijayanagar Empire. After Vijayanagar fell in 1565, the ruling dynasty of Wodeyars asserted their independence and the Raja Wodeyar ascended the throne in 1578. The capital moved from Mysore to Srirangapatnam in 1610.
- Wodeyar dynasty continued to reign until 1760, when the real power changed hands to Haider Ali who was appointed Dalwai or prime minister. Haider's father Fateh Muhammad was the Faujdar (garrison commander) of Kolar. After his death Haider's soldierly qualities helped him to rise through the military ranks.
- By 1755 he had secured a powerful position, commanding 100 horsemen and 2000 infantry men. Haider suppressed an army mutiny in Mysore and restored

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the places of the Mysore kingdom occupied by Marathas. He received the title of “Fateh Haider Bahadur” or “the brave and victorious Lion”.

- In 1760 Haider allied himself with the French at Pondicherry against the English, but his position at home was endangered by the plot engineered by the Marathas. As Haider successfully handled the situation and there after he became not only Dalawai but the de facto ruler of Mysore.
- In 1770 the Mysore king Nanjaraja was poisoned to death and Haider’s hand was suspected. Thereafter Wodeyar kings functioned only as nominal rulers. The real royal authority vested in Haider.

Haider Ali and the British

- After obtaining Diwani right (right to collect taxes on behalf of the Mughal emperor from Bengal, Bihar and Orissa), the Company had to safeguard its territories. As the Company was not strong enough, it avoided interfering in the internal affairs of the Indian states.
- Warren Hastings maintained buffer states to live within a “Ring Fence”. The Company was, however, drawn towards the affairs of the Carnatic, due to the successive struggles for its Nawabship.
- The English traders saw in this a great opportunity to directly interfere in Indian politics. However, there were threats from two strong powers represented by Haider Ali and the Nizam of Hyderabad.

First Mysore War (1767-69)

- In the third Carnatic War Colonel Forde while conducting the forces from Bengal captured Masulipatnam in 1759. This led to a treaty with Salabad Jung, who ceded the Northern Sarkars to the British (districts of Ganjam, Vizagapatnam, Godavari, Krishna and Guntur).
- English acquisition of the Northern Sarkars was legalized by the Mughal emperor in 1765 by the treaty of Allahabad. In 1766, trouble arose when the English occupied those districts. Yet a treaty was signed with Nizam Ali who acquiesced in the session. In return the English promised to help out in case of

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any danger from the enemies. This promise meant English help to the Nizam against Haider Ali. Here lay the genesis of the later Subsidiary System.

- Despite the treaty, Nizam came to an understanding with Haider in 1767 and the British therefore declared a war against Haider. This is called First Anglo Mysore War or First Mysore War.
- An English army from Bombay captured Mangalore and other surrounding places on the West Coast. But Haider succeeded in recovering both. The English made an attempt to capture Bangalore but to no avail.
- In 1768 Haider pounced on Baramahal (Salem district) and marched on Karur and then Erode and took over both by defeating Captain Nixon. Meanwhile, his general Fazlullah Khan marched on Madurai and Tirunelveli. Haider advanced to Thanjavur and from there to Cuddalore. Though Haider did not want stop his offensive against the English, the threat of Maratha invasion forced him to negotiate peace with the English.

The terms of Treaty of Madras were as follows:

- the conquered territories to be restored to each,
- excepting Karur which was to be retained by Haider.
- Mutual assistance was to be rendered in wars of defence.
- This meant the English were under obligation to help Haider against the Marathas.

But when assistance from English was not forthcoming, Haider turned against the English.

Haider and the Second Mysore War (1780)

- After the American War of Independence, France had signed a treaty of friendship with America (1778) and so Britain declared war against France. In a similar context of Spain reaching an agreement with America, and thereby being dragged into the war against England (1779) England remained isolated.
- In India the coming together of the Nizam and the Marathas, supported by the French aggravated the situation further. Haider Ali wanted to turn England's difficulty to its advantage and marched on Karnataka. Colonel Baillie, who was

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to join the force led by Hector Munro, was badly wounded in a sudden attack by Haider.

- This forced Munro to move Madras. Haider captured Arcot (1780). Now on request from Madras government Sir Eyre Coote, the victor of the Battle of Wandawash, was sent from Calcutta to besiege Madras by sea. Having scored a victory against Haider, Coote proceeded to Pondicherry.
- Haider in the meantime overran the kingdom of Thanjavur. Coote reached Porto Novo and won a decisive victory over Haider. Haider narrowly escaped capture. Colonel Braithwaite was thoroughly defeated near Kumbakonam by Haider's son Tipu and taken prisoner.
- In order to divert the attention of the Mysore Sultan, an expedition was undertaken by General Mathews to capture Mangalore. Expectedly Tipu abandoned Karnataka and moved to West Coast. The death of Haider due to cancer in 1782, the signing of Treaty of Paris (1783) at the end of American War of Independence, and the protracted siege of Mangalore enabled the English to be aggressive against Tipu.
- Karur and Dindigul were captured by Colonel Lang, Colonel Fullerton seized Palghat and Coimbatore but this advance on Srirangapatnam was pre-empted by Tipu with his proposal for peace. The Treaty of Mangalore was signed in March 1784, according to which both parties agreed to give up their conquests and release the prisoners.

Third Mysore War (1790-92)

- In the meantime Lord Cornwallis had become governor general. Cornwallis wanted to deal with Tipu in a revengeful manner. The two great southern powers, the Nizam of Hyderabad and the Maratha confederacy, supported the British as its allies. The Nizam of Hyderabad supplied resources and even troops for the British.
- The Marathas, who had signed the Treaty of Salbai with the English after the First Anglo-Maratha war in 1782, also joined the British. The British position was thus greatly strengthened.

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- Tipu sent an embassy to Constantinople and another in 1787 to Paris. These diplomatic efforts of Tipu were intended to strengthen him against the English. The French Monarch Louis XVI was hospitable, but could give only vague promises of support to the Sultan.
 - Tipu's attack on Travancore which was an ally of the British and his capture of Cranganore was treated as a declaration of war on the Company government. Hence the third Anglo-Mysore War broke out.
 - Colonel Hartley defeated Tipu's general Husain Ali at Calicut. In response Tipu captured Tiruvannamalai. His effort to get the support of French Pondicherry Governor did not materialise. Cornwallis himself marched from Vellore and reached Bangalore. On his way he encountered Tipu and defeated him near Srirangapatnam. But lack of provisions compelled Cornwallis to retreat.
 - At this juncture the Marathas helped the British in supplying the required provisions. The reinforced army of the English marched on Srirangapatnam again and besieged it. Unable to withstand the onslaught of the British forces Tipu offered peace and accepted the terms imposed by Cornwallis.
 - According to the treaty of Srirangapatnam, the Tipu was to give up half of his dominions, pay three crores of rupees as indemnity, and pledge two of his sons as hostages. The allies were given equal shares of the indemnity and of the ceded territories. The English got Malabar, Dindigul and Barmahal. Tipu lost Coorg (Kudagu), whose raja became a feudatory to the Company.
 - Tipu's power was greatly reduced. And after their stay at Madras as hostages the boys returned to Srirangapatnam on 29 May 1794 when their father had paid all the dues to the English. Tipu could hardly forget his humiliation and the heavy territorial and monetary losses suffered.
 - The Mysore king Chamaraj IX died in 1796. Tipu resolved not to observe the formality of appointing a king. Synchronizing with this resolve came the announcement of the French colonial Governor of Mauritius General Malartic that, after obtaining French help, he would declare war on the English.
 - In July 1798 Tipu's correspondence with the French Directory and later with Napoleon and his evasiveness in his correspondence with Wellesley led to his declaration of war against Tipu.



Fourth Mysore War (1799)

- Tipu made all out efforts to strengthen his military and financial resources. In 1796 Tipu sent emissaries to Paris again. In 1797 he received a French emissary to confirm French support from Mauritius. A Jacobin club was started in Srirangapatnam and the flag of the French Republic was hoisted to mark the cordiality established between the French and the Sultan of Mysore. Irked by Tipu's alliance with the French Wellesley, now the new Governor General, insisted on a standing army at Mysore under the Subsidiary System. Tipu turned down Wellesley's proposal and the British declared the fourth Anglo-Mysore war in 1799.
- General David Baird stormed Srirangapatnam. Tipu's offer of peace was rejected and in the eventual battle Tipu was wounded and soon after shot dead by a European Soldier. The elimination of Tipu and the restoration of the old Wodeyar dynasty to the Mysore kingdom marked the real beginning of Company rule in south India.
- The sons of the slain Tipu were interned first at Vellore, and later, after the Vellore Revolt of 1806, shifted to Calcutta. Thus, ended the valiant fight of Mysore Sultans against the British.

Early Resistance of Southern Palayakkarars against the British:

- After the decline of Vijayanagara Empire, Nagama Nayak who arrived as a viceroy to Madurai and his son Viswanatha Nayak asserted themselves as independent rulers of Madurai and Tirunelveli. Under the able guidance of prime minister Ariyanayaga Mudaliyar, all the little kingdoms of the former Pandian Empire were classified and converted into 72 palayams.
- Viswanatha Nayak constructed a formidable fort around Madurai city, which consisted of seventy-two bastions. Each of them was placed under a chief. A Palayakkarar was bound to pay a fixed annual tribute or supply troops to the king and to keep order and peace over a particular area. In order to enable him to perform these duties and attend to other services, a certain number of villages were granted for revenue collection. In addition, he was presented with several

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titles and privileges. Palayakkarars had judicial powers and dispensed justice over civil and criminal cases.

- Based on the topographical distribution they are classified as western palayams and eastern palayams. The palayams held by Maravar chieftains were mostly in the western parts of Tirunelveli. The settlement of Telugu migrants in the black soil tracts, lying in the eastern part of Tirunelveli, left those parts under Nayak Palayakkarars.

Revolt of Palyakkarars

- The Nawab of Arcot, who had borrowed heavily by pledging the villages in several parts of Tamilnadu, entrusted the task of collecting land revenue arrears to the Company administration. Yusuf Khan, remembered as Khan Sahib, had been employed as commander of the Company's Indian troops.
- He was entrusted not only with the command of the forces, but also with the collection of revenue. At the request of the Nawab, a force of 500 Europeans and 200 sepoy was (1755), ordered to proceed into the "countries of Madurai and Tirunelveli" to assist him.
- The encroachment of East Indian Company administration into palayakkarar's authority aroused stiff resistance. Mafuzkhan (Arcot Nawab's elder brother) was appointed by the Nawab as his representative in those territories.
- Mafuskhan along with Colonel Heron proceeded towards Tirunelveli. They easily took Madurai. An expedition was sent to reduce Kattabomman, the palayakkarar of Panchalamkurichi but had to be recalled.
- While returning Colonel Heron was urged to storm the fort of Nel-Kattum-Seval. Its palayakkarar Puli Thevar wielded enormous influence over the western palayakkarars. For want of cannon and of supplies and pay to soldiers, the attack of Colonel Heron had to be abandoned and the force retired to Madurai.
- Three Pathan officers, Nawab Chanda Sahib's agents, named Mianah, Mudimiah and Nabikhan Kattak, commanded the Madurai and Tirunelveli regions. They supported Tamil palayakkarars against Arcot Nawab Mohamed Ali. Puli Thevar had established close relationships with them.

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- The palayakkarars of Uthumalai, Surandai, Thalaivankottai, Naduvakurichi, Singampatti, Urkad, Seithur, Kollamkondan and Wadakarai joined Puli Thevar's confederacy. With the promise of restoring Kalakkadu, Puli Thevar had already won over the ruler of Travancore to his confederacy. Nawab, on his side, sent an additional contingent of sepoy to Mahfuz khan and the reinforced army proceeded to Tirunelveli.
 - Besides the 1000 sepoy of the Company, Mahfuz khan received 600 more sent by the Nawab. He also had the support of cavalry and foot soldiers from the Carnatic. Before Mahfuz khan could station his troops near Kalakadu, 2000 soldiers from Travancore joined the forces of Puli Tevar.
 - In the battle of Kalakadu, Mahfuz khan's troops were trounced. The organized resistance of the palayakkarars under Puli Thevar gave an opportunity to the British to interfere directly in the affairs of Tirunelveli.
 - From 1756 to 1763, aided frequently by Travancore, the palyakkarars of Tirunelveli led by Puli Thevar were in a constant state of rebellion against the authority of the Nawab. Yusuf Khan who had been sent by the Company would not venture to attack Puli Thevar unless the big guns and ammunition from Tiruchirappalli arrived.
 - As the English were involved in a war with the French, as well as with Haider Ali and Marathas, big guns arrived only in September 1760. Yusuf Khan began to batter the Nerkattumseval fort and this attack continued for about two months.
 - On 16th May 1761 Puli Thevar's three major forts namely Nerkattumseval, Vasudevanallur and Panayur came under the control of Yusuf Khan. After taking Pondicherry the English commanded respect, as they had eliminated the French from the picture.
 - Consequently, the unity of palyakkarars began to break up as French support was not forthcoming. Travancore, Seithur, Uthumalai and Surandai switched their loyalty. Yusuf Khan, who was negotiating with the palayakkarars without informing the Company administration, was charged with treachery and hanged in 1764.
 - Puli Thevar, who had taken asylum elsewhere after the forts were taken over by Yusuf Khan, returned and began to organize against the British. Captain

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Campbell who was sent this time by the British, laid siege and captured Nerkattumseval in 1767. Nothing is definitely known about the last days of Puli Thevar.

Velu Nachiyar

- The Sethupathys ruled the area that covered Ramanathapuram, Sivagangai, Virudhunagar, and Pudukkottai districts of the present day. Velu Nachiyar was the daughter of Chellamuthu Sethupathy, the raja of Ramanathapuram. She married Muthu Vadugar Periyaudayar, the Raja of Sivagangai, and had a daughter named Vellachi Nachiar. When her husband was killed by the Nawab's forces, Velu Nachiyar escaped with her daughter and lived under the protection of Haider Ali at Virupachi near Dindigul for eight years.
- During this period she organized an army and succeeded in securing an alliance with Gopala Nayaker and Haider Ali. In 1780 Rani Velu Nachiyar fought the British with military assistance from Gopala Nayaker and Haider Ali and won the battle.
- The Nawab of Arcot placed many obstacles to the advancement of the Rani's troops. However she overcame all the hurdles and entered Sivagangai. The Nawab of Arcot was defeated and taken captive. Velu Nachiyar recaptured Sivagangai and was again crowned queen with the help of Marudu brothers.
- After ascending the throne Velu Nachiar appointed Chinna Marudu as her adviser and Periya Marudu as commander. In 1783 the English forces invaded Sivaganagai again. This time the Marudu Pandiyan saved the place by some diplomatic moves.
- In 1790, Vellachi Nachiyar, daughter of Velu Nachiyar who was married to Vengan Periya Udaya Tevar who became the king of Sivagangai state due to compromise formula of the Englishmen, died under mysterious circumstances. Velu Nachiyar became sick and died in three years later in 1796.

Veera Pandiya Kattabomman

- While Velu Nachiyar was fighting the British and engaging their complete attention on Ramanathapruam and Sivagangai, Veera Pandiya Kattabomman's

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resistance against the British was on progress. Kattabomma Nayak was the playakkarar of Panchalamkurichi. Kattabomman Nayak was a family title.

- The chieftain of the Colonel Heron's time was Jagaveera Kattabomman Nayak, the grandfather of Veera Pandiya Kattabomman. This Veera Pandiya Kattabomman, born in 1761, became the palayakkarar on the death of his father, Jagaveera Pandiya Kattabomman. The collection of tribute continued to be a problem as there was a constant tussle between the Company and the southern palayakkarars.
- In September 1798 as the tribute from Panchalamkuriuchi fell into arrears, Collector Jackson wrote to Veera Pandiyan in his characteristic arrogance. The country experienced a severe drought, in consequence of which the palayakkarars found it difficult to collect taxes.
- Collector Jackson wanted to send an expedition to punish Veera Pandiyan but the Madras administration did not agree. The Company had already withdrawn its forces from Tirunelveli to be employed in the war against Tipu Sultan of Mysore, and did not desire to risk a conflict in the far south at this juncture.
- It directed the collector to summon the Palayakkarar at Ramanathapuram and hold a discussion. Accordingly, on the 18 August 1798 Jackson despatched an order directing Veera Pandiyan to meet him at Ramanathapuram within two weeks. After sending the summons, the collector started on a tour of Tirunelveli.
- When Jackson halted at Chokkampatti, Sivagiri, Sattur and Srivilliputhur to receive tribute from the Palayakkarars, Veera Pandiyan sought an interview but was told that he could meet the collector only at Ramanathapuram.
- Despite this humiliation, Kattabomman followed the Englishman for twenty three days over 400 miles through the latter's route and reached Ramanathapuram on 19th September. An interview was granted the same day and the collector expressed his satisfaction that the Palayakkarar had behaved properly and thereby "saved himself from ruin". Upon a verification of accounts Jackson was convinced that Kattabomman had cleared most of the arrears, leaving only 1080 pagodas as balance to be settled.
- Denied of courtesy, the palayakkarar and his minister Sivasubramania Pillai had to stand before the arrogant collector. Finally, he directed them to stay inside the

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Ramanathapuram fort. Now a few sepoys appeared, apparently to arrest Kattabomman. But they escaped. At the gate of the fort a clash occurred, in which some including Lieutenant Clarke were killed. Siva Subramania Pilai was taken prisoner but Kattabomman made his escape.

- After his return to Panchalamkurichi, Kattabomman wrote to the Madras Council blaming the attitude of Jackson for the scuffle. In the meantime Governor Edward Clive had issued a proclamation, inviting the palayakkarar to submit to the authority of the Company.
- In the event of surrender he assured a fair investigation into the Ramanathapuram incident. If he refused, he threatened Kattabomman with dire consequences. In response Kattabomman appeared before the committee which acquitted him of the charges of rebellion and condemned the conduct of the collector. S.R. Lushington was appointed collector in the place of Jackson, who was eventually dismissed from service.
- However, Kattabomman remained irreconciled. At this time Marudu Pandiyan of Sivaganga along with Gopala Nayak of Dindigul and Yadul Nayak of Anamalai, was engaged in organising a Confederacy against the British.
- In view of the identity of interests Kattabomman and Marudu Pandiyan came closer. Kattabomman also established contact with the Sivagiri palayakkarar. While Panchalamkurichi was situated in an open plain and appeared vulnerable, the strategic location of the fort of Sivagiri at the foot of the Western Ghats and the formidable barriers around it rendered it eminently suited both for offensive and defensive operations.
- Thus in a bold attempt to strengthen his position an armed column consisting of the followers of Veera Pandiyan, the son of the Palayakkarar of Sivagiri and other allied chiefs, led by Dalawai Kumaraswami Nayak, moved towards the west. As the Palayakkarar of Sivagiri was a tributary to the Company, the Madras Governor's Council considered this as a challenge to its own authority and ordered the march of the army.
- In May 1799 Lord Wellesley issued orders for the advance of forces from Trichirapalli, Thanjavur and Madurai to Tirunelveli. The Travancore troops joined the British. Major Bannerman, armed with extensive powers, effectively

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commanded the expedition. On 1 June 1799 Kattabomman, attended by 500 men, proceeded to Sivaganga. At Palayanur Kattabomman held deliberations with Marudu. Subsequently, joined by 500 armed men of Sivaganga, Kattabomman returned to Panjalamkurichi.

- The Palayakkarars of Nagalapuram, Mannarkottai, Powalli, Kolarpatti and Chennulgudi had already formed themselves into a combination due to the efforts of Marudu brothers. They asserted their rights to collect taxes from certain villages in the Company's territory. Kattabomman proceeded to join this league to take up its leadership by virtue of the influence that he wielded and the resources he possessed.
- Determined to strengthen this league, he persuaded the chieftains of Satur, Yezhayirampennai, Kadalgudi and Kulathoor to join it. On 1 September 1799 Major Bannerman served an ultimatum directing Kattabomman to see him at Palayamkottai. As Kattabomman dodged Bannerman decided on military action. The Company army reached Panchalamkurichi on 5 September.
- Kattabomman's fort, 500 feet long and 300 feet broad, was constructed entirely of mud. The Company forces cut off the communications of the fort. Kattabomman's forces fought gallantly and successive attacks were repulsed. Colonel Welsh recorded in his memoirs the gallantry of Kattabomman's soldiers.
- The English ordered for the arrival of more troops. On 16 September reinforcements arrived from Palayamkottai. As the broken walls appeared vulnerable, the garrison evacuated and reached Kadalgudi. In a clash at Kalarpatti, Kattabomman's minister Sivasubramonia Pillai was taken prisoner.
- The British forces followed up their victory with the reduction of Nagalapuram and other strongholds of the defiant chiefs to submission. On the appearance of the army the western Palayakkarars too surrendered. Vijaya Ragunatha Tondaiman, Raja of Pudukottai, captured Kattabomman from the jungles of Kalapore and handed him over to the enemy.
- Upon the fall of the Palayakkarar into the hands of the enemy, his followers fled to Sivaganga and from there to the hills of Dindigul for taking service with Marudu Pandiyan and Gopala Nayak.

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- Bannerman brought the prisoners to an assembly of the Palayakkarars and after a mockery of trial sentenced them to death. On 16 October Veera Pandiya Kattabomman was tried before an assembly of Palayakkarars at Kayatar. Unmindful of impending death Kattabomman admitted all the charges levelled against him.
 - He declared that he did send his armed men against Sivagiri and that he did fight the British troops in the battle at Panchalamkurichi. On 17 October Kattabomman was hanged to death at a conspicuous spot near the old fort of Kayatar. Kattabomman's heroic exploits were the subject of many folk ballads which kept his memory alive among the people.

Marudu Brothers and the South Indian Rebellion of 1801

- By the treaty of 1772 the Arcot Nawab had authorized the Company to collect the Stalam Kaval and Desakaval. This affected the Kaval chiefs in both the Palayakkarar and non-palaykkarar territories. The aggrieved kavalkarars and their chiefs had joined the palayakkarars in their fight against the Nawab and the Company.
- In Sivagangai, Vella Marudu and Chinna Marudu, who had taken over the administration from Periya Udaya Thevar, who died in battle against the Nawab's forces, expelled the forces of the Nawab and proclaimed Vellachi, daughter of Periya Udaya Tevar and Velu Nachiyar, as the queen of Sivagangai.
- The Marudus assumed the charge of the ministers. The temple of Kalayarkoil in the heart of the then Sivagangai forest became the rallying point of the rebels. When Umathurai reached Kamudhi after the execution of his brother Veera Pandiya Kattabomman, Chinna Marudu took him to Siruvayal, his capital.
- Now, Nawab Mohammad Ali released Muthuramalinga Thevar from jail and enthroned him as the Setupati of Ramanathapuram. But the rebels proclaimed Muthu Karuppa Thevar as their ruler. They occupied the southern and northern regions of the kingdom. The soldiers made their entry into Madurai too.
- In July Umathurai led his followers to Palayanad in Madurai and captured it. In 1801 both the Sivagangai and Ramanathapuram forces joined together under the command of Shevatha Thambi, the son of Chinna Marudu, and marched along the coast towards Thanjavur.

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- Thereupon the distressed peasants in Thanjavur also joined the force of Shevatha Thambi. Captain William Blackburne, the resident of Thanjavur collected a force and defeated Shevatha Thambi near Mangudi. Serfoji, the raja of Thanjavur stood firmly by the British. Yet the fighters could elude the pursuit of the British troops by rapid movements, while laying the entire region waste.

South Indian Rebellion 1801

- The victory over Tipu and Kattabomman had released British forces from several fronts to target the fighting forces in Ramanathapuram and Sivagangai. Thondaiman of Pudukottai had already joined the side of the Company. The Company had also succeeded in winning the support of the descendent of the former ruler of Sivagangai named Padmattur Woya Thevar.
- Woya Thevar was recognised by the Company as the legitimate ruler of Sivagangai. This divisive strategy split the royalist group, eventually demoralizing the fighting forces against the British. In May 1801 a strong detachment under the command of P.A. Agnew commenced its operations.
- Marching through Manamadurai and Partibanur the Company forces occupied the rebel strongholds of Paramakudi. In the clashes that followed both sides suffered heavy losses. But the fighters' stubborn resistance and the Marudu brothers' heroic battles made the task of the British formidable.
- In the end the superior military strength and the able commanders of the British army won the day. Following Umathurai's arrest Marudu brothers were captured from the Singampunary hills, and Shevathiah from Batlagundu and Doraiswamy, the son of Vellai Marudu from a village near Madurai.
- Chinna Marudu and his brother Vellai Marudu were executed at the fort of Tiruppatthur on 24 October 1801. Umathurai and Shevathiah, with several of their followers, were taken to Panchalamkurichi and beheaded on 16 November 1801. Seventy three rebels were banished to Penang in Malaya in April 1802.

Theeran Chinnamalai

- The Kongu country comprising Salem, Coimbatore, Karur and Dindigul formed part of the Nayak kingdom of Madurai but had been annexed by the Wodayars of

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Mysore. After the fall of the Wodayars, these territories together with Mysore were controlled by the Mysore Sultans.

- As a result of the Third and Fourth Mysore wars the entire Kongu region passed into the hands of the English. Theeran Chinnamalai was a palayakkarar of Kongu country who fought the British East India Company. He was trained by the French and Tipu. In his bid to launch an attack on the Company's fort in Coimbatore (1800), Chinnamalai tried taking the help of the Marudu brothers from Sivagangai.
- He also forged alliances with Gopal Nayak of Virupatchi; Appachi Gounder of Paramathi Velur; Joni Jon Kahan of Attur Salem; Kumara Vellai of Perundurai and Varanavasi of Erode in fighting the Company.
- Chinnamalai's plans did not succeed as the Company stopped the reinforcements from the Marudu brothers. Also, Chinnamalai changed his plan and attacked the fort a day earlier. This led to the Company army executing 49 people. However, Chinnamalai escaped. Between 1800 and July 31, 1805 when he was hanged, Chinnamalai continued to fight against the Company.
- Three of his battles are important: the 1801 battle on Cauvery banks, the 1802 battle in Odanilai and the 1804 battle in Arachalur. The last and the final one was in 1805. During the final battle, Chinnamalai was betrayed by his cook Chinnamalai and was hanged in Sivagiri fort.

Vellore Revolt (1806)

- Vellore Revolt 1806 was the culmination of the attempts of the descendents of the dethroned kings and chieftains in south India to throw off the yoke of the British rule. After the suppression of revolt of Marudu brothers, they made Vellore the centre of their activity.
- The organizers of an Anti-British Confederacy continued their secret moves, as a result of which no fewer than 3,000 loyalists of Mysore sultans had settled either in the town of Vellore or in its vicinity.
- The garrison of Vellore itself consisted of many aggrieved persons, who had been reduced to dire straits as a sequel to loss of positions or whose properties had been confiscated or whose relatives were slain by the English.

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- Thus the Vellore Fort became the meeting ground of the rebel forces of south India. The sepoys and the migrants to Vellore held frequent deliberations, attended by the representatives of the sons of Tipu.

Immediate Cause

- In the meantime, the English enforced certain innovations in the administration of the sepoy establishments. They prohibited all markings on the forehead which were intended to denote caste and religious, and directed the sepoys to cut their moustaches to a set pattern.
- Added to these, Adjutant General Agnew designed and introduced under his direct supervision a new model turban for the sepoys. The most obnoxious innovation in the new turban, from the Indian point of view, was the leather cockade.
- The cockade was made of animal skin. Pig skin was anathema to Muslims, while upper caste Hindus shunned anything to do with the cow's hide. To make matters worse the front part of the uniform had been converted into a cross.
- The order regarding whiskers, caste marks and earrings, which infringed the religious customs of both Hindu and Muslim soldiers, was justified on the grounds that, although they had not been prohibited previously by any formal order, it had never been the practice in any well regulated corps for the men to appear with them on parade.
- The first incident occurred in May 1806. The men in the 2nd battalion of the 4th regiment at Vellore refused to wear the new turban. When the matter was reported to the Governor by Col. Fancourt, commandant of the garrison, he ordered a band of the 19th Dragoons (Cavalry) to escort the rebels, against whom charges had been framed, to the Presidency for a trial.
- The 2nd battalion of the 4th regiment was replaced by the 2nd battalion of the 23rd regiment of Wallajahbad. The Court Martial tried 21 privates (a soldier of lower military rank)– 10 Muslims and 11 Hindus–, for defiance. In pursuance of the Court Martial order two soldiers (a Muslim and a Hindu) were sentenced to receive 900 lashes each and to be discharged from service.

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- Despite signals of protest the Government decided to go ahead with the change, dismissing the grievance of Indian soldiers. Governor William Bentinck also believed that the 'disinclination to wear the turban was becoming more feeble.'
 - Though it was initially claimed that the officers on duty observed nothing unusual during the night of July 9, it was later known that the English officer on duty did not go on his rounds and asked one of the Indian officers to do the duty and Jameder Sheik Kasim, later one of the principal accused, had done it.
 - The leaders of the regiment who were scheduled to have a field day on the morning of 10 July, used it as a pretext to sleep in the Fort on the night of 9 July. The Muslim native adjutant contrived to post as many of his followers as possible as guards within the Fort.
 - Jamal-ud-din, one of the twelve princes of Tipu family, who was suspected to have played a key role in the revolt, kept telling them in secret parleys that the prince only required them to keep the fort for eight days before which time ten thousand would arrive to their support.
 - He disclosed to them that letters had been written to dispossessed palayakkarars seeking their assistance. He also informed that there were several officers in the service of Purniah (Tipu's erstwhile minister) who were formerly in the Sultan's service and would undoubtedly join the standard.

Outbreak of Revolt:

- At 2:00 a.m. on 10 July, the sentry at the main guard informed Corporal Piercy saying that a shot or two had been fired somewhere near the English barracks. Before Piercy could respond, the sepoys made a near simultaneous attack on the British guards, the British barracks and the officers' quarters in the Fort.
- In the European quarters the shutters were kept open, as they were the only means of ventilation from the summer heat. The rebels could easily fire the gun 'through the barred windows on the Europeans, lying unprotected in their beds.' Fire was set to the European quarters.
- Detachments were posted to watch the dwellings of the European officers, ready to shoot anyone who came out. A part of the 1st regiment took possession of the magazines (place where gun powder and ball cartridges stored).

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- A select band of 1st Regiment was making their rounds to massacre the European officers in their quarters. Thirteen officers were killed, in addition to several European conductors of ordnance.
 - In the barracks, 82 privates died, and 91 were wounded. Major Armstrong of the 16th native infantry was passing outside the Fort when he heard the firing. He advanced to the glacis and asked what the firing meant.
 - He was answered by a volley from the ramparts, killing him instantly. Major Coates, an officer of the English regiment who was on duty outside the Fort, on hearing of the revolt tried to enter the Fort.
 - As he was unable to make it, he sent off an officer, Captain Stevenson of 23rd, to Arcot with a letter addressed to Colonel Gillespie, who commanded the cavalry cantonment there. The letter reached Arcot, some 25 km away, at 6 a.m. Colonel Gillespie set out immediately, taking with him a squadron of the 19th dragoons under Captain Young, supported by a strong troop of the 7th cavalry under Lieutenant Woodhouse.
 - He instructed Colonel Kennedy to follow him with the rest of the cavalry, leaving a detachment to protect the cantonment and to keep up the communication. When Colonel Gillespie arrived at the Vellore Fort at 9 a.m., he thought it prudent to await the arrival of the guns, since there was continuous firing.
 - Soon the cavalry under Kennedy came from Arcot. It was about 10 o'clock. The gate was blown open with the galloper guns of the 19th dragoons under the direction of Lieutenant Blakiston. The troops entered the place, headed by a squadron of the cavalry under Captain Skelton. The Gillespie's men were met by a severe crossfire.
 - In the ensuing battle, Colonel Gillespie himself suffered bruises. The sepoy retreated. Hundreds escaped over the walls of the Fort, or threw down their arms and pleaded for mercy. Then the cavalry regiment assembled on the parade ground and resolved to pursue the fleeing soldiers, who were exiting towards the narrow passage of escape afforded by the sally port.
 - A troop of dragoons and some native horsemen were sent round to intercept the fleeing soldiers. All the buildings in the Fort were searched, and mutineers found

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in them pitilessly slaughtered. Gillespie's men wanted to enter the building and take revenge on the princes, the instigators of the plot; but Lt. Colonel Marriott resisted the attempt of the dragoons to kill Tipu's sons.

- Colonel Gillespie is said to have brought the Fort under the possession of the English in about 15 minutes. Col. Harcourt (Commanding Officer at Wallajahbad) was appointed to the temporary command of Vellore on July 11. Harcourt assumed command of the garrison on 13 July, 1806 and clamped martial law. It was believed that the prompt and decisive action of Gillespie put an end to 'the dangerous confederacy, and had the fort remained in the possession of the insurgents but a few days, they were certain of being joined by fifty thousand men from Mysore.'
- But the obnoxious regulations to which the soldiers objected were withdrawn. The Mysore princes were ordered to be sent to Calcutta, as according the Commission of Inquiry, their complicity could not be established. They were removed from Vellore, on 20 August 1806. The higher tribunals of the Home Government held the chief authorities of Madras, namely the Governor, the Commander-in-Chief, and the Deputy Adjutant General, responsible for the bungling and ordered their recall.
- Vellore had its echoes in Hyderabad, Wallajahbad, Bangalore, Nandydurg, Palayamkottai, Bellary and Sankaridurg. Vellore Revolt had all the forebodings of Great Rebellion of 1857, if the word cartridge is substituted by cockade and Bahadur Shah and Nana Sahib could be read for Mysore Princes.

Peasant and Tribal Revolts:

- In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries the land tenures and revenue settlements of the Company's government had fundamentally disrupted the Indian rural society and affected the peasantry in an unprecedented manner.
- In the early days of revenue farming system, the peasantry was oppressed by the revenue contractors and company officials who imposed high revenue demands and collected them forcibly.
- Initially the peasants sent a petition to the Company's government asking for redress. But when their appeal for justice went unheeded, they organized

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themselves and resorted to direct action. They attacked the local *cutchery* (revenue collector's office), looted grain stores and refused to pay revenue.

- A peasant movement of the 1840s and 1850s was the Malabar rebellion in present day Kerala. The Mappillas were the descendants of Arab traders who had settled in this region and had married the Malabar women. Gradually the Mappillais became dependent on agriculture and turned into a community of cultivating tenants, landless labourers, petty traders and fishermen.
- When the British took over Malabar in 1792, they sought to revamp the land relations by creating individual ownership in land. The traditional system provided for an equal sharing of the net produce of the land by the *janmi* (holder of *janmam* tenure), the *kanamdar* (holder of *kanam* tenure), and the cultivator.
- The British system upset this arrangement by recognising the janmi as absolute owners of land, with right to evict tenants, which did not exist earlier. Apart from that, over-assessment, a huge burden of illegal cesses and a pro-landlord attitude of the judiciary and the police led the peasants to live in conditions of extreme poverty.
- A series of incidents therefore occurred in Malabar throughout the nineteenth century. Three serious incidents occurred in Manjeri in August 1849, in Kulathur in August 1851 – both in south Malabar – and in Mattannur in the north in January 1852. British armed forces were deployed to suppress the revolt.
- The repressive measures restored peace for about twenty years, but then the Mappillas rose again in 1870 and the events followed a similar course.
- Some of the rebellions in pre-1857 India were of the tribals whose autonomy and control over local resources were threatened by the establishment of British rule and the advent of its non-tribal agents.
- The tribal people, spread over a large part of India, rose up in hundreds of insurrections during the 19th century. These uprisings were marked by immense courage on their part and brutal suppression on the part of the rulers.

The Kol Uprising (1831-32)

- Kols as tribals inhabited in Chotanagpur and Singbhum region of Bihar and Orissa. The immediate cause of their uprising was the action of the Raja of Chotanagpur in leasing several villages to the nontribals. The Kols of Sonapur

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and Tamar took the initiative in organizing a revolt against the *thikadars* (tax collectors).

- The forms of rebellion consisted of attacks on the properties of the outsiders, but not their lives. Plunder and arson, were the chief modes of peasant protest. Sonepur pargana of Chotanagpur was raided, plundered and burnt down by a body of seven hundred insurgents on 20 December 1831.
- By 26 January 1832 the Kols had taken complete possession of the whole of Chotanagpur. The revolt against the British had ended up in a war against the Company government.
- Buddha Bhagat, the leader of Kol insurrection was killed in a pitched battle. A sum of one thousand rupees was distributed among officers and soldiers as their reward for delivering Bhagat's severed head to the authorities. Bhindrai Manki who inspired the revolt surrendered on 19 March 1832 and with his surrender the revolt of Kols came to a tragic end.

Santhal Hool (rebellion), 1855-56

- **Santhal**, also called **Manji**, lived scattered in various forest regions of Bengal, Bihar, and Orissa. Driven from their homeland, they cleared the area around the Rajmahal Hills and called it Damin-i-koh (land of Santhals). They were gradually driven to a desperate situation as tribal lands were leased out to non-Santhal zamindars and moneylenders.
- To this was added the oppression of the local police and the European officials engaged in railroad construction. This penetration of dikus (outsiders) completely destroyed their familiar world, and forced them into action to take possession of their lost territory.
- In July 1855, when their ultimatum to the zamindars and the government went unheeded, several thousand Santhals, armed with bows and arrows, started an open insurrection "against the unholy trinity of their oppressors-the zamindars, the Mahajan's and the government."
- At the battle of Maheshpur, many of the Manjis were dressed in red clothes. Later this garment became an assertion of authority. In the first week of the rising a party of ten men attacked and burnt down the village of Monkaparrah.

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- The rebels included a number of women. Initially their leader was Sido. After his arrest the revolt was led by Kanoo. At the later stage of the revolt, the peasants also joined. Several thousand peasants raided on Charles Maseyk's indigo factory and pillaged.
 - This invited brutal counter-insurgency measures; the army was mobilized and Santhal villages were burnt one after another with vengeance. According to one calculation, out of thirty to fifty thousand rebels, fifteen to twenty thousand were killed before the insurrection was finally suppressed.

Munda Rebellion

- The rebellion (ulgulan) of the Munda tribesmen led by Birsa Munda, occurred during 1899-1900. Mundas were a prominent tribe in the Bihar region. During the British rule their system of common land holdings was destroyed.
- *Jagirdars, thikadars* (revenue farmers) and moneylenders grabbed the land owned by them. Birsa, born in a poor share-cropper household in 1874, declared himself a divine messenger to drive away the British and establish Munda rule in the region.
- Under his influence the Mundas strongly opposed non-tribals occupying tribal lands. He urged the Munda cultivators not to pay rent to the zamindars. Birsa Munda led a revolt in the Chotta Nagpur region.
- The indiscriminate slaughter of Munda women at Sail Rakab did not deter the followers of Birsa. The British authorities issued a warrant for Mirsa's arrest and put up a reward for his capture. Birsa became a martyr in Ranchi jail (9 June 1900). His name continues to inspire the tribals of the region.

Questions:

1. Write a note on Veera Pandiya Kattabomman.
2. Write on the causes and outbreak of Vellore Revolt.
3. Explain in detail about the Santhal Rebellion.