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# EXPANSION AND CONSOLIDATION OF BRITISH RULE

The rule of East India Company in India became effective after the conquest of Bengal. The main interest of the company in India was territorial and commercial expansions.

## **The Carnatic Wars**

The Carnatic is a region in South India lying between the Eastern Ghats and the Coromandel Coast. This region constitutes the present-day Tamil Nadu, eastern Karnataka, north-eastern Kerala and southern Andhra Pradesh. The British had to fight three wars (1746- 1763) with the French to establish their supremacy, which in history are called the Carnatic wars.

### **First Carnatic War 1746-48**

- The Austrian War of Succession and Seven Years War fought in Europe had their repercussions in India. The Austrian ruler Charles VI died in 1740 and was succeeded by his daughter Maria Teresa. France did not support her succession and joined hands with German-speaking territories of Austria such as Bavaria, Saxony and Spain. Frederick II (known as Frederick the Great of Prussia) taking advantage of the emerging political situation invaded and annexed Silesia, an Austrian province, with the support of France.
- The wars fought between Britain and France in Europe also led to clashes between these two countries over their colonial possessions in North America and India. When the war broke out, the new Governor of Pondicherry, Dupleix appealed to Morse, the Governor of Madras, to remain neutral. But a British squadron under Commodore Barnett captured some of the French vessels with Indian goods and precipitated the situation.
- Dupleix, shocked by this incident, appealed to Anwar-ud-din, the Nawab of Carnatic, to help him to avoid war with the English. Calm prevailed for some time. Meanwhile Dupleix contacted La Bourdonnais, the French Governor of Isle of France, who appeared in the Indian waters with eight warships. Peyton, who led

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the English squadron with his four ships, intercepted the French squadron and in the battle on 6 July 1746 Peyton suffered reverses and retreated to Hooghly, Calcutta expecting some more ships from Britain.

### **Fall of Madras**

- The French squadron succeeded in capturing the undefended Madras on 15 September 1746. Governor Morse was asked to surrender but the Madras Governor turned to Anwar-ud-din for help. Dupleix was clever in convincing the Nawab that he was securing Madras from the British to be handed over to him.
- On 21 September 1746 the English were forced to part with Madras. But when the Nawab of Carnatic asked the French to hand over Madras to him as promised, the French dodged. Thereupon the Nawab sent a force of 10,000 men under the command of his son Mahfuz Khan.

### **The Battle of San Thome and Adyar**

Nawab's forces blockaded Fort St. George but the French forces pushed the Nawab's forces to San Thome. The French received reinforcement and Mahfuz Khan attempted to halt the progress of the French on the banks of river Adyar. The French forces were able to wade through the water and inflict a severe attack on the Nawab's forces resulting in heavy losses. Dupleix then set his eyes on Fort St. David at Cuddalore which was in British possession.

The English, with the help of the Nawab of Arcot, was trying to regain the places lost but Dupleix again played a diplomatic game by promising that he would hoist the flag of the Nawab in the Fort St. George for a week and after that he requested the Nawab to hand over the town to the French. The Nawab agreed to withdraw his proposed help to the British. Two attempts of the British under Rear Admiral Boscawen to take Pondicherry failed. By this time, in 1748, France and the English had signed the Treaty of Aix La Chapelle. Under this treaty the British and the French ceased their hostilities in India. It was agreed that the French would hand over Madras to the British in return for Louisburg in North America.

## ◆.....◆ **The Second Carnatic War: 1749-54**

- In Europe peace prevailed between the British and the French. But the two colonial powers could not live in peace in India. They played one native ruler against the other. Dupleix wanted to enhance the French influence by involving in the wars of succession in both Hyderabad and Arcot. Dupleix supported the claims of Muzaffar Jung, the grandson of Asaf Jah, who died in 1748 in Hyderabad, as the Nizam of Hyderabad.
- In the Carnatic, he supported the claim of Chanda Sahib. A triple alliance was formed amongst the French, Nizam and the Nawab of Carnatic. The English, after losing Madras, a precious possession, had only Fort St. David under their control.
- In order to reduce the influence of the French, the English supported the rival candidates Nasir Jung for the throne of Nizam of Hyderabad and that of Muhammad Ali after the death of Anwar-ud-din in the Battle of Ambur in 1749.
- The battle of Ambur was followed by the entry of victorious forces to Deccan. Nazir Jung was killed by the French Army and Muzaffar Jung was made the Nizam of Hyderabad in December 1750.
- Dupleix's dream of establishing a French empire appeared good for some time. Dupleix received huge money and territories both from the Nizam and the Nawab of Arcot. When Muzaffar Jung required French protection, Dupleix sent Bussy, the French general, with a large French force. Muzaffar Jung did not live long and the same people who killed Nasir Jung also killed him. Bussy promptly placed Salabat Jung, brother of Nazir Jung, on the throne.
- In order to reduce the influence of British and also with a view to capturing Mohammad Ali (who fled to Tiruchirappalli after Anwar-ud-din was killed) Chanda Sahib decided to take Tiruchirappalli, with the help of the French and the Nizam.

### **Clive in the Second Carnatic War**

- Dupleix was also determined to take over Tiruchirappalli with the help of Chanda Sahib. Chanda Sahib's troops were joined by 900 Frenchmen. Muhammad Ali had only 5000 soldiers and not more than 600 Englishmen to help him. Robert Clive's idea changed the course of history.

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- He suggested the idea of storming Arcot when the French and the Nawab were busy concentrating on Tiruchirappalli. Clive moved from Fort St. David on 26 August 1752 with only 200 English and 300 Indian soldiers. As expected the English received help from many rulers from small territories. The Raja of Mysore and the ruler of Thanjavur rallied to support Muhammad Ali. Chanda Sahib dispatched a force of 3000 under his son Raja Sahib to take Arcot. Clive seized Arcot on August 31<sup>st</sup> and then successfully withstood a 53-day siege by Chanda Sahib's son, Raja Sahib, who was helped by the French forces.
  - In the battle of Arni the English and the Maratha ruler Murari Rao faced an unequal number of French and the forces of Nawab of Arcot. In several battles that followed, including one at Kaveripakkam, Chanda Sahib was captured and executed. Muhammed Ali became the undisputed ruler of Carnatic.
  - In Europe Britain and France were not involved in any war and so neither of them approved the policy of their Companies fighting in India. The French government recalled Governor Dupleix. The Treaty of Pondicherry was signed in 1755 with the English; both countries agreed not to interfere in the quarrels of the Indian princes. The Treaty also defined their mutual territorial possessions in India, a situation that was maintained for nearly two centuries until Indian independence.

### **The Third Carnatic War: 1756-1763**

The third Carnatic War was an echo of the Seven Years War (1756-1763) which broke out in Europe in 1756. It was a global conflict and was fought between the two arch-rivals Britain and France. The war was fought in North America (resulting in the American War of Independence), and West Africa (which later became the French West Africa). In India it manifested itself in the Third Carnatic war. Before turning our attention to the Third Carnatic War, let us see what happened in Bengal in the meantime.

### **Battle of Plassey (1757)**

- The East India Company abused the trade permits (*dastaks*) granted by the Mughal Emperor by not paying taxes to the Nawab of Bengal, and by involving itself in internal trade.





- This apart, the Company had given asylum to the son of the Nawab Siraj ud-daula's hostile aunt. As the Company refused to oblige the Nawab, who demanded the return of his nephew, Fort St. William was captured and Europeans imprisoned.
- Responding to this situation, the Company at Fort St. George despatched a strong contingent under Robert Clive and Watson. The battle that ensued is called the Battle of Plassey.
- The battle of Plassey (1757) changed the position of the British from being a commercial power to that of a territorial power. It confirmed the privileges obtained by the Company and replaced Siraj-ud-daula with the betrayer Mir Jaffar.
- The Company's sovereignty over Calcutta was recognized and it was given sufficient land to maintain a military force. Mir Jaffar also agreed for a Company's resident in the court. Mir Jaffar was replaced by Mir Qasim and the latter tried to assert his independence, which was not to the liking of the Company officials.

### **Battle of Buxar (1764)**

- After fleeing from Bengal Mir Qasim aligned with the Mughal Emperor Shah Alam II and the Nawab of Oudh, Shuja-ud-daulah, who were equally aggrieved by the interference of the Company in their internal affairs. They declared war against the British. The battle was fought at Buxar (1764). By virtue of its superior armed the Company forces won the battle.
- The victory of the British led to the signing of the Treaty of Allahabad (1765) by Robert Clive with Shah Alam II. By this treaty the Company got the Diwani right to collect land revenue from the princely states of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. Besides, the Company obtained three districts, Burdwan, Chittagong and Midnapur, in Bengal and sovereignty over Calcutta. British virtually became the rulers of Bengal.

### **Outbreak of Third Carnatic War**

- With the outbreak of the Seven Years War, Clive captured Chandannagar, the French settlement in Bengal. With this the French influence ended in Bengal. But they retained their power in the south.
- The French government sent Count de Lally as the Supreme Commander of the French forces in India. As the British were active in Bengal, Lally promptly secured

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Fort St. David after a short siege. Lally's next move was Tanjore but the French were after money from the Raja which he could not give. Without a penny the siege of Tanjore was lifted because there was a threat of British attack on Pondicherry.

- Lally wanted Bussy to come from Hyderabad to help him to defend Pondicherry in the case of attack. Bussy left Hyderabad and joined Lally. In Deccan the political situation changed quickly and the French lost both Rajahmundry (1758) and Masulipatam (1759). Salabat Jung, the Nizam of Hyderabad, without fighting a battle signed an agreement with the British. The Nizam transferred Masulipatam and Northern Circars from the French to the English. The combined forces of Bussy and Lally captured Kanchipuram and proceeded to take Madras. As the British were busy in Bengal, Madras had only about 800 Englishmen and 2500 Indian soldiers. The Siege of Madras began on 12 December 1758. The French could not progress till February 1759, but both sides suffered casualties. The French, however, could not continue with the siege as supplies were dwindling. Meanwhile General Pocock brought a fleet to the relief of Madras. Lally was forced to lift the siege and fall back on Kanchipuram.

### **The Battle of Wandiwash and the Fall of Pondicherry**

- Lally retired to Pondicherry leaving a French contingent in Arcot. The British moved towards Wandiwash but suddenly fell upon Kanchipuram and captured it. A fresh detachment of British forces arrived under the command of Sir Eyre Coote. The last ditch battle was fought between Eyre Coote and Lally at Wandawashi (Wandiwash) in January 1760. Bussy was defeated and taken prisoner. Lally retreated to Pondicherry but it was not besieged immediately.
- Meanwhile the British captured Senji and proceeded to Pondicherry and laid siege to it. Lally had reorganized the defences and put up a heroic resistance to the British. The siege of Pondicherry continued for several months and finally on 4<sup>th</sup> February 1761 Pondicherry fell.
- In the same year the British took control of Mahe, another French possession in the west coast. All French possessions were now lost. Finally, the hostilities came to an end with the signing of the Treaty of Paris (1763) at the end of the Seven Years War. Pondicherry and Chandannagar were restored to the French.





- The French had to henceforth be content with Pondicherry, Karaikal and Yanaon (Yanam) (all in Union Territory of Puducherry), Mahe (Kannur district in Kerala), and Chandannagar (Chandannagar in Bengal).
- The English emerged as the undisputed colonial power in India, changing from a trading company into that of a territorial power.

## **Effects of British Rule**

### **Introduction**

- The general breakdown of the central authority, in the wake of Mughal's fall, resulted in a English trading company taking over India. Initially, the English East India Company's focus was not on administration. Its aim was ensuring smooth trade. However, after the terrible Bengal famine of 1770, they began to exercise power with some responsibility. Not with standing their exploitative economic policy, their professed objective was the safety of the people they governed and administration of justice.
- The justification for their expansionist policy was the extermination of tyranny of the local rulers and the harassment by robbers and marauders in the country. Railways and telegraph, introduced for easier communication, also served the purpose of curbing resistance and the control of the local population. However, their agrarian and commercial policies had a ruinous impact on the economy. India's wealth was drained in several forms. By the 1830's there was large scale emigration of ruined peasants and weavers to plantations in the British Empire countries.

### **Establishment of British Raj**

- Buxar was the real foundation battle for British dominion in India. Not only the Nawab of Bengal and Oudh, but the Mughal emperor Shah Alam II and his prime minister were also opposed to the British.
- As a result of the Battle of Buxar, the Company ceased to be a company of merchants and became a formidable political force. Under the pretext of corruption in Bengal administration.
- Clive was appointed Governor of Fort William. Clive did not like his predecessor Vansittart's decision restoring Oudh to Shah Alam. So he called for fresh

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negotiation with Shuja-ud-daula. As a result of this, two treaties of Allahabad were signed.

- The emperor granted the Diwani (revenue administration) of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa to the Company. The emperor Shah Alam II was to get the districts of Allahabad and Kora, besides an annual allowance of 26 lakhs of rupees from the revenues of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa.
- The province of Oudh was restored to Shuja-ud-daula on the payment of war indemnity. The treaties held the Nawab of Bengal responsible for the governance of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa.
- Before the emperor granted the Diwani to Clive, the Nawab of Bengal, successor of Mir Jafar, had practically transferred the Nizamat (civil administration) to the Company. So the Company had to function as Diwan and the Nizam. The Diwan's duty included the collection of revenue and the control of civil justice. The Nizam's function was to exercise military power and to dispense criminal justice. Thus the Company acquired the real power, while the responsibility of administration was with the Nawab. This arrangement is called Dual System or Double government or Dyarchy.
- But soon the dual system began to break down. Governance without responsibility led to the outbreak of a terrible famine in 1770. Nearly one third of Bengal's population perished.
- The miseries of the province were intensified by the Company servants who had monopolized the sale of rice and realized huge profits. Finally, the Company realized its responsibility and passed the Regulating Act of 1773. Warren Hastings was appointed the Governor General of Bengal.

### **Tenures:**

#### **Permanent Settlement and Ryotwari Settlement**

- The Regulating Act of 1773 imposed on the court of Directors the legal obligation of informing all revenue transactions of the Company servants to the British Treasury. The Governor and Council consisting of the Commander-in-Chief and two counsellors sat as a Board of Revenue which discussed revenue matters. The Pitt India Act of 1784 separated the civil and military establishments in India.
- Governor-General Cornwallis, himself a big landlord, wanted to create landlords after the British model in India. Cornwallis came to a settlement with the revenue

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farmers. This resulted in the creation of a new type of middlemen, called zamindars, reducing the cultivators to the position of mere tenants.

- This settlement that Cornwallis made with the zamindars of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa in 1793, in pursuance of the instruction from the Directors, is called the Permanent Settlement.
- 'Settlement' refers to the assessment and fixing of the quantum of land revenue to be paid by each zamindar to the government. For Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, this was fixed permanently.
- Thus the zamindars who were originally tax collectors acquired hereditary rights over the land assigned by the government. The zamindars pocketed whatever they collected over and above the settlement.
- The first quarter of the nineteenth century was a formative period in the land revenue history of the Madras Province. First after a great deal of deliberations Permanent Settlement was adopted.
- The districts of Chengalpattu, Salem and Dindigul were divided into a number of *mittahs* and sold to the highest bidders. Most of the purchasers, after fleecing the peasants, failed in the course of a year or two. The experiment was therefore abandoned. Then the Board of Revenue tried a system of village leases.
- Under the Village Lease system the assessment of each village was to be fixed for a period of three years based on the actual collections over a series of past years. In districts where *mirasi* rights existed, the *mirasdar* was made responsible for the rent collections. In districts where the *mirasi* rights did not exist, an arrangement was made with the village headman.
- This system failed due to various reasons such as bad monsoons, low price of grains and the short period of lease. When crops failed entire villages defaulted and fled without paying the revenue. The government had to seek the help of the district collectors to bring back the peasants to the village.
- By 1814 the Court of Directors had decided to introduce the ryotwari system. This was a system formulated by Governor Thomas Munro. Under this system the ryot, an Anglicization by the British in India of the Arabic word *rayah*, meaning a peasant or cultivator, was the proprietor and tax payer of the land. The government dealt with him directly without the intervention of any middlemen. The peasant

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was entitled to possession of land so long as he paid the land revenue. Apart from eviction, default could result in attachment of livestock, household property and personal belongings.

- The government assessed the revenue of each cultivated field. The revenue assessment was reviewed once in thirty years, taking into account the changes in grain prices, marketing opportunities, irrigation facilities and the like.
- The ryotwari system introduced the concept of private property in land. The individual holders were registered and issued *pattas*. They were permitted to sell, lease, and mortgage or transfer the right over land.

### **Subsidiary Alliance and Doctrine of Lapse:**

- Governor General Wellesley (1798-1805) pursued a forward policy to establish British supremacy in India. His annexation of territories was not a result of victory in war. It was by assumption of the entire administration of an Indian State, with its rulers retaining his title and receiving a fixed allowance.
- Before Wellesley, the company concluded alliances with Indian princes. The Nizam and the Nawab of Oudh received subsidies for the maintenance of British contingents. Such forces were generally stationed outside the State concerned. Payment was made in cash.
- Difficulties arose when the payments were not promptly paid. Wellesley broadened the scope of this arrangement by his Subsidiary Alliance System, bringing under it Hyderabad, Mysore, Lucknow, the Maratha Peshwa, the Bhonsle (Kolhapur) and Sindhia (Gwalior).

The provisions of the Subsidiary Treaty are:

- An Indian ruler entering into Subsidiary Alliance with the British had to dissolve his own armed forces and accept British forces and a British Resident in his territory.
- He had to pay for the British army's maintenance. If he failed, a portion of his territory would be taken away and ceded to the British.
- The protected prince was to sever all connections with European powers other than the British, especially the French.

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- No European should be employed without the permission of the British.
  - No negotiation with any Indian power should be held without the Company's permission and
  - No other Indian power to interfere in its internal affairs.

Thus the states brought under the system became dependent on the Company in political and military matters, sacrificing their own sovereignty and status. The Subsidiary System increased the military resources and efficiency of the Company government.

The immediate result of this system was the discharge of thousands of professional soldiers by the political powers. The disbanded soldiers indulged in freebooting activities. Pindaris (marauders) began to swell on account of the Subsidiary System.

In view of the guaranteed support to the Princes by the Company, the protective States mal-administered and paved the way for the annexation.

### **Doctrine of Lapse**

- Traditionally Hindu custom allowed the adoption of a son in the absence of male heirs. The adopted son had the right to inherit property. In this context the question raised was whether such an adopted prince holding the state subordinate to the Paramount Power (England) could succeed without the consent of the latter. Before Dalhousie's arrival, the custom was to obtain the sanction of the Company government before or after adoption.
- Governor General Dalhousie held that the paramount power could legally refuse to sanction adoption in the case of rulers of States dependent on it. This meant that dependent States could be regarded as lapsed to the paramount power, by its refusal to sanction the succession of adopted sons.
- By applying this policy known as Doctrine of Lapse, the first state to fall was Satara. Shahji of Satara died (1848) and the son he adopted on the eve of his death was not recognized by Dalhousie.
- Gangadhar Rao, Raja of Jhansi died in November 1853 and Dalhousie annexed that state immediately. (His widow, Rani Lakshmi Bai, played a prominent role in the



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Great Rebellion of 1857.) Raghuji Bhonsle III died in 1853 without a child. Nagpur was immediately annexed.

- In 1851, the last Peshwa died. He had been a pensioner of the Company for thirty-three years, but Dalhousie refused to continue paying the pension to his son, the Nana Sahib. The Doctrine of Lapse, thus, served as an instrument for the pursuit of its annexation policy. When the Crown took over India in 1858 Doctrine of Lapse was withdrawn.

### **Native States and British Paramountcy**

- In the aftermath of the Battle of Plassey (Palashi) (1757), when the Company embarked on its career of expansion, it established the system of dual government. Under this system, everything was sought to be done by the Company's servants in the name of some powerless and dependent prince.
- In theory the Company was only the diwan (the collector of revenue), but in practice it exercised full authority. This authority was asserted by the refusal to continue the payment of annual tribute to the Mughal emperor Shah Alam promised by Clive.
- Cornwallis even stopped affirming obedience in letters to the emperor. Wellesley carried matters further with his objective of establishing British predominance through his Subsidiary Alliance System. Wellesley made subsidiary alliances with the three of the major States of India: Hyderabad, Poona and Mysore.
- Hastings (Moir) who became Governor General in 1813 ordered the removal of the phrase denoting the imperial supremacy from his seal. He refused to meet Emperor Akbar II, unless he waived all authority over the Company's possessions. But Hastings laid down a policy that the Company was in no way responsible for the administration of the Indian States. Thus, under the Subsidiary System, each Prince was secure on his throne, notwithstanding the discontent of his people or by his jealous neighbours.
- In regions such as Kathiawar and Central India, divided among a great number of petty chiefs, the Company's close supervision became indispensable for prompt action. The Company army helped the Indian rulers under the Subsidiary system to quell any rebellion or disturbance within the State. In Hyderabad, the authority of



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the Nizam did not prevail in certain areas, as the Arab troops lived without any control.

- The assistance of British troops helped reduce the Arabs to obedience. In Mysore state the financial management of the raja provoked a rebellion in 1830 and the treaty of Wellesley only provided authority for the Company to interfere.
- William Bentinck, as Governor General, relieved the raja of all his powers and appointed Mark Cubbon to administer Mysore. In Gwalior, during a minority, the parties at the durbar quarrelled bitterly among themselves. The army of the State passed out of control. Ellenborough moved with a strong army, but the State army resisted. At the battle of Maharajpur, the State army was defeated and new terms of conditions including the limitation of the military forces maintained by it were imposed in 1843.
- Dalhousie's new method of annexing territories, Doctrine of Lapse, as we have seen, increased the territories under British domain. Every accession of territory also increased the influence of the Company over the governments of the Indian princes.

## Questions

1. Write a note on the Third Carnatic War (1756-63).
2. Describe the Permanent Settlement and Ryotwari Settlement
3. Discuss about the Subsidiary Alliance and Doctrine and Lapse.