CHAPTER-V

MILITARY CAMPAIGN IN TANJORE AND RAMNAD

The end of the Khan Sahib witnessed the growth of the power of the Nawab who was backed by the British. The Nawab wanted to assert his direct rule over the entire Arcot Subha. Tanjore King meanwhile sent an expedition to the Ramnad in an attempt to extend its borders southwards. But the Nawab using this opportunity won the British favour and invaded Tanjore. Subsequently he sent an army against the Ramnad Ruler, who was left weakened by his war with Tanjore and suppressed them. Subsequently, the Nawabs invaded Tanjore a second time and annexed it too.

Nawab claimed superiority over Tuljaji, the Ruler of Tanjore. At the same time Tuljaji wanted to assert his independence. Mohammad Ali cherished an ambition to annex Tanjore, a fertile territory. In September 1769 the Nawab appealed to the British for assistance to compel the King to pay twenty five lakhs of rupees as compensation for not supporting him and the British in the First Mysore War. He charged that the King assisted Khan Sahib in the latters rebellion. He urged the British that unless the King was

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forced to pay the amount, he would not be able to repay the debts to the British.\(^2\)

He sought British support for an expedition. The King resisted the demands of the Nawab. In addition, the Treaty of 1762 drew a line between the Nawab's ambition and the King's rights. Thus the claims made by the Nawab violated the Treaty of 1762. However the Madras Council permitted the Nawab to make the demand on Tanjore, not violating the terms of the Treaty.\(^3\)

In the meanwhile, King Tuljaji renewed his conflict with the Maravas for taking possession of Hanumantgudy.\(^4\) This disputed territory originally belonging to the Marawars, but changed hands several times. Tuljaji referred the issue to the Madras Council. The British replied that Tuljaji was at liberty to clear the disputed territory.\(^5\) The relation of Tanjore with Pudukkottai and Sivagangai too became strained for the Kallars of Pudukkottai made incursions into Tanjore. King Udaya


\(^{4}\) Mohammed Ali, 8 March 1771, letter to Madras Council, M. C. C., Vol. 19, 1771, pp. 82-86.

Tevar of Sivagangai captured a few elephants belonging to Tuljaji.\textsuperscript{6} Hence Tuljaji wanted to enthrone his candidate Mappila Tevar, a rival to Setupati Mutturamalinga, at Ramnad and to establish his sway over there and Pudukkottai.\textsuperscript{7}

In February 1771 Tuljaji,\textsuperscript{8} marched against Ramnad. However, the Madras Council did not favour Tuljaji's venture. Josias Du Pre (1770-1773), the Governor of Fort St. George, did not like the activity of Tuljaji. Ramnad, on the other hand, enlisted the support of the King of Sivagangai by ceding Tirupattur and won the service of a body of the Nawab's troops by granting it the Fort of Pallikonda.\textsuperscript{9} The Setupati sought the help of the Nawab and acknowledged his overlordship. Mohammed Ali agreed to help\textsuperscript{10} but did nothing.

The forces of Tanjore advanced and launched a surprise attack over Ramnad on February 3, 1771. After a clash, the troops of Ramnad withdrew to Armogam.\textsuperscript{11}


\textsuperscript{7} Mohammed Ibrar Khan, 17 March 1771, letter to Madras Council, M.C.C., Vol. 19, 1771, p. 118.


\textsuperscript{10} Dalawai of Ramnad, 10 February 1771, letter to Nawab, M.C.C., Vol. 19, 1771,pp. 35-39.

King overruled him. The invaders, swept off the posts of Sundarapandiyapuram, Waroor, Mangalgudi, Kannangudi, Kadavalandam ani Hanumantgudi, and infested Armogam, the key to Ramnad. Armogam fell on the February 19, 1771. The next day the forces threatened the Fort of Ramnad.

Thereupon, Tuljaji suggested terms for a settlement. He asked the Queen to pay a visit to him with her son Setupati for requesting his pardon for offering resistance and to surrender half of her treasures together with two heavy guns and two large elephants. The Queen gave her consent for most of the terms but she clearly refused to pay a visit to the King of Tanjore. Hence Tuljaji stopped the negotiation.

As a sequence, hostilities were renewed. The troops of Tanjore took positions on the eastern and northern sides of the Fort of Ramnad. The forces of Ramnad broke the Big Tank of Ramnad and flooded the camp of the enemy. The Negotiations were renewed. On the March 9 1771, a settlement was reached. The Queen ceded most of the occupied territories. The remnant Ramnad comprised

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15. Advice papers from Tanjore, 4 and 6 March 1771, M.C.C., Vol. 19, 1771,pp. 89-93.
only the southern districts. Then the forces of Tanjore marched against Sivagangai. The invaders advanced on Nilakkottai. On March 17, 1771 Tuljaji dictated the King Udaya Tevar to cede a part of his territory. At this juncture, there was the possibility of the Nawab's expedition to Tanjore Kingdom.

**Nawab's Expedition to Tanjore**

Mohammed Ali considered Tuljaji's expedition was an act against his interest. He claimed that Tanjore, Ramnad, Sivagangai and Pudukkottai were all his dependent States. Hence he sought the military aid of the British to punish Tuljaji. Both the Nawab and the Tanjore King claimed the Marava States as their dependent. Hence Josias Du Pre appointed a commission. In its report dated on April 3, 1771 the commission observed that neither the Marava States nor Pudukkottai State paid any regular tribute to any power at any time. It concluded that the Marava States as well as Pudukkottai maintained their independence. The Madras Government refused to support the cause of the Nawab on the ground that the Treaty of 1762 made no provision for the defence of the Marava States. It

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further warned the Nawab that as Tuljaji was related to the Marathas, a conflict with Tanjore would lead a war with the Marathas.\(^{20}\)

Through legal means, Mohammed Ali attempted to draw the British support against the Kingdom of Tanjore. The Nawab, presented his arguments sincerely to the taste of the Madras Government. In return for assistance to conquer the state he offered to pay the military expenses of the British and to make a present of ten lakhs of \textit{star pagodas}\(^{21}\) to the British. The pressure of the Nawab made the British to change its stand. Governor Du Pre remarked that though he would not make a claim or a condition to any present, if the Nawab would offer it out of his good will, he would willingly receive it and advise the Court of Directors thereof.\(^{22}\)

In the beginning the British vacillated to invade the Kingdom of Tanjore on behalf of the Nawab. In September 1771 the combined forces of the Nawab and the British assembled at Tiruchirappalli for the invasion of Tanjore. Colonel Joseph Smith commanded the expedition while the Nawab's son Umdut ul Umara exercised civil control. On September 21, 1771, the forces occupied Vellum. On September 25, 1771, Colonel Smith commenced regular siege of the Kingdom.


The troops of the King assembled in great number and attacked the British troops, but failed in their attempt to cut off the communications of the invading army with Tiruchirappalli. By October 16, 1771, the besiegers silenced the guns on the ramparts and on October 18, 1771, they made a practicable breach on the east wall. On the night of October 25, 1771, they made an attack, but found it strongly defended. Subsequently a negotiation began leading to the termination of hostilities on October 27, 1771.\textsuperscript{23}

Settlements were effected. Tuljaji agreed to pay war indemnity. He restored the places taken from the Marava States. The King ceded the places of Tervanooor and Arni to the Nawab. He consented to render military service to the Nawab at his own expense whenever required. The Nawab on his part permitted the King to retain possession of Kovilody and Elangad and agreed to restore the possession of Vellum to Tanjore. The King also assigned the place of Mayuram and part of the place of Kumbakonam as war indemnity. The King also promised to pay the annual tribute to the Nawab without deceit\textsuperscript{24} or delay. Thereafter on the advice of the Nawab his son Umdut ul Umara, forced the helpless King to return not only

\textsuperscript{23} Rajayyan, K., \textit{History of Madurai, op.cit.}, p.256
Vellum, but also Kovilody and Elangad to the Nawab. 25 Mohammed Ali permitted the British to garrison Vellum with its own troops. 26

Annexation of Ramnad and Sivaganga

After effecting a settlement with Tanjore, Mohammed Ali turned his attention to the Marava States. He represented to the Madras Council that the Marava States occupied Circar villages, harboured the most notorious robbers in their woods and that they permitted the Dutch to establish factories in their territory without his consent. He complained that the ruling Setupati Muthuramalinga Tevar ascended the throne without his approval. 27 The Madras Government listened to the Nawab and decided to support an expedition. It viewed the Marava Rulers as dangerous offenders and they should be suppressed. 28

In January 1772 the Nawab's forces marched on Sivagangai. They occupied Tondi, a sea port. The Marava troops led by Samialinga Pillai sought to expel the invaders, but were driven back. However, the Nawab suspended the


operations because of a threatened Maratha invasion of the Carnatic. In May 1772 the campaign being resumed, the combined forces of the Nawab and the British led by Joseph Smith marched on Ramnad. The fort, equipped with a heavy cannon and fifty light guns and surrounded by open space, had forty-four bastions and a ditch on May 28, 1772 the army appeared before the fort before the Queen knew that there was a complaint against her. Another army led by Abraham Bonjour advanced from Madurai to the eastern borders of Sivagangai and captured Tiruppuvanam, thereby preventing the troops of Sivagangai from marching to the aid of the Setupati. Thus the British military operations were successfully effected in the Marava State.29

Umdut-ul-Umara opened negotiations with the Queen Regent for stressing the surrender of Ramnad. When the Queen Regent refused, on June 1, 1772, the British General Smith ordered a general siege and the next day, made a breach on the walls. At 5 p. m. on June 2, 1772, a corps of grenadiers led by Major John Braithwaite carried the fort by assault. A large number of Marava soldiers died while fighting and others fled away.30 The invaders plundered the flourishing town and imprisoned the royal family including the Queen-Regent, her son the twelve-year old Setupati and her two young daughters.31 Thus under the able

31 Josias Du Pre and Council, 20 June 1772, letter to Court of Directors, M. D., to England, Vols. 7-9, 1772, pp. 80-83.
military operation of British General Smith, Ramand, the Marava State was annexed.

Thereafter, Joseph Smith from the east and Bonjour from the west threatened Sivagangai in June 1772. Udaya Tevar, the Ruler of Sivagangai was prepared to face the invaders. He filled up the roads with large trees, dug trenches and erected posts in the woods of Kalayarkoil. Umdut-ul-Umara directed the King to pay one lakh of rupees\textsuperscript{32}, but the latter evaded, abandoned his capital town of Sivagangai and established himself at Kalayarkoil.

On June 21, 1772, the combined forces of Smith and Bonjour occupied the town of Sivagangai. The next day, the forces marched to Kalayarkoil, and captured the posts of Keeranoor and Sholaveram. Now Tandavaraya Pillai, the Minister of Sivagangai sought for negotiation with Umdut-ul-Umara. Knowing it, Smith halted his advancement. Unknowing it, Bonjour, continued his operations. On June 25, 1772, the King with many of his followers fell dead in the battle. But his widow and daughter fled to Viripakshi in Dindugul, where they were joined by their two able servants Vella Marudu, the dog keeper of the late King, and Chinna Marudu, the betel bearer. The invading forces plundered the town and collected jewels worth 50,000 pagodas.\textsuperscript{33} Thus the Nawab won easy victory over

\textsuperscript{32} Josias Du Pre in Council, 26 June 1772, M. C., Vol. 42, 1772, p. 534.

the both Marava States with the military expeditions of both Joseph Smith and Bonjour.

Conquest of Tanjore

In 1773 the ambitious Nawab decided to annex Tanjore. He viewed that Tuljaji violated the terms of the settlement of 1771 by refusing aid for the conquest of the Marava States and assisted the Setupati and King Udaya Tevar. Mohammed Ali further, warned the Madras Government that unless he suppressed the Tanjore Raj, the Marathas and the French would convert it into a sphere of their influence and endanger the Nawab and the British interests in the Carnatic. In return for military assistance of the British, the Nawab assured to present of ten lakhs of star pagodas and in addition, promised to support three battalions of the British troops at his own expense. 34

Alexander Wynch, the Governor (1773-1775), and the successor of Du Pre in the Madras Government agreed to support of the Nawab’s cause over Tanjore. Regarding the present, Wynch remarked; "whatever your Highness shall please out of your good will and friendship to offer me as a present to the Company, I shall most willingly receive and advise them thereof". 35

Subsequently, the forces of the Nawab and the British led by Joseph Smith invaded the Tanjore Kingdom in August 1773. They captured the posts of Tourgudi and Singarapettai. On August 21, 1772, they took their position before the capital. An advance-column commanded by Major Robert Fletcher surprised a detachment of the prince inflicting a loss of 1,000 men killed and wounded. On August 27, 1772, Smith set fire to the town. The siege continued for three weeks and on September 16, 1772, the breach made on the wall appeared practicable. At 12 in the noon, the forces took their position ready for assault. The sun being very hot, the King's army consisting of 20,000 men retired to their quarters for meals, anticipating the attack only in the evening. Utilizing the favourable situation, Smith made surprise attack and brought the fort under his control without loss. Tuljaji and his ministers were taken prisoners. In consequence, the Nawab rewarded the British by presenting ten lakhs of star pagodas and entertaining three battalions of its troops at his expense.  

Then the Nawab’s interest turned towards Nagore, a commercial centre which the King mortgaged to the Dutch. He again sought the help of the British. Considering the Nawab’s ambition, Wynch, the Governor of Madras, directed Smith to help the Nawab’s forces. On October 21, 1772, the forces marched towards Nagore. The Dutch withdrew to Nagapatnam. They brought the fort under

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the Nawab’s control. Finally the Dutch shifted their principal commercial centre from Nagapatnam to Colombo.

Thus the Nawab brought the native states one after another under his authority. He brought the native rulers to be dependable upon him. When Tuljaji began the scheme of conquest, Mohammed Ali accused the Tanjore King of attacking the dependent states of the Carnatic and invaded his state. The Nawab, then, conquered the Marava States on the ground that the latter did not render service for the invasion of Tanjore. Ultimately he annexed Tanjore too, holding the King guilty of not furnishing aid for the annexation of the Marava States. Except the Pudukkottai State, the Nawab brought the other native states of the Carnatic Region under his sway.

British versus the Nawab

The triumph of Nawab Mohammed Ali led him to assert his complete independence and sovereignty. He appointed his second son Amir-ul-Umara, as the deputy at Tiruchirappalli. He reorganized the administration of Tanjore and appointed Dubbeer, an able minister of Tuljaji, and brought able servants from


Arcot to carry out reforms. The new administration indeed carried out beneficial reforms.

However, the benefits conferred upon the native states were perhaps more than negated by equally radical but adverse measures. The Nawab's servants, in the exuberance of victory, considered the revenues of the native states not to be improved, but extorted. The Marava territories too experienced the weight of maladministration. The Nawab renamed Ramnad as Alinagar, and Sivagangai as Hussain Nagar, dropping out of use the popular names. Ever since the annexation, the Marava territories experienced nothing but exaction. Naturally this oppressive policy kindled disturbances in the land.

However, the Nawab made an earnest endeavour to establish order in Madurai. Seeking no military aid from the British, he went to war with the Poligars in 1775 and won partial success. He drove off Kattabomman to Sivagangai and occupied his Pollam of Panjalamkurichi. Yet soon after the withdrawal of his forces, the Poligar returned to his Pollam. Next, he attempted the reduction of Ramagiri and Sivagiri to submission, but failed. However, his

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41 Rajayyan, K., History of Madurai, op.cit., pp.266-267.
42 Tinnevelly Letter Book for 1782, No.5.
forces defeated the Poligar of Sattur and annexed his territory. These ventures marked a departure from the Nawab’s traditional dependence upon the British for the suppression of the vassal chiefs. In addition Mohammed Ali made attempts to reduce the British to a state of dependence upon him. The Nawab aspired to secure the governorship of Bengal for his eldest son Umdut-ul-Ulama. He even cited his equality of status with the King of England, as recognised by the Treaty of Paris, for alarming the British.

The enforcement of the Nawab's sovereignty was marked by instances of inevitable conflict with British. In 1772 the Madras Government realized the design of the Nawab and decided not to give military aid to suppress the Poligars. The Nawab, on his part. refused to admit the British forces into the Fort of Tanjore on a pretext that the Hindus were afraid of the Europeans killing their cows. Mohammed Ali bitterly opposed the British intervention and declared that he was the absolute lord of the Tamil Country. Therefore a direct confrontation of the Nawab with the British was inevitable.

The acquisition of Marava States and Tanjore marked as much the triumph of Mohammad Ali's intrigues as it was an error of judgment by the Madras Government. On the other hand, succumbed to the tactics of the Nawab, captivated by the offer of concessions, the Madras Government fell into the hands of the tactful Mohammed Ali. However, the military superiority still enjoyed by the British goaded them to attain the road towards ascendancy.