

UNIT 74 – UPSC - War of Deccan

India's History : Medieval India : War of the Deccan; Death of Nasir Jang - 1750

Dupleix and French Policy



Two principal factories on the east coast of India were the British station at Fort St. George, now Madras, and the French station at Pondicherry, eighty miles farther south. The first man who seems to have entertained definite notions about building up a European sovereignty upon the ruins of the Mogul Empire was Dupleix, the French Governor at Pondicherry. His long residence in the East had given him knowledge of Indian affairs that few Europeans possessed. His restless, capacious, and inventive mind had formed this scheme at a time when the oldest servants of the English Company were busied only about invoices and bills of lading. Nor had he only proposed for himself the end. He had also a just and distinct view of the means by which it was to be attained.

He clearly saw that the greatest force which the princes of India could bring into the field would be no match for the small body of men trained in the discipline and guided by the tactics of the West. He saw, also, that the natives of India might, under European commanders, be formed into armies such as Saxe or Frederick would be proud to command. He was perfectly aware that the most easy and convenient way in which a European adventurer could exercise sovereignty in India was to govern the motions, and speak through the mouth, of some glittering puppet dignified by the title of Nabob or Nizam. The arts, both of war and policy, which the English employed a

few years later with such signal success, were first understood and practiced by this ingenious and aspiring Frenchman.

In 1748 the Nizam of the Deccan died. Two claimants for the throne appeared in the persons of Nazir Jung, son of the old Nizam, and Mirzapha Jung, a grandson. About the same time an adventurer, Chunda Sahib, set up a claim for the throne of the Carnatic against Anaverdy Khan, the reigning prince. Here was the opportunity for Dupleix to carry his long-cherished plans into execution. He espoused the cause of Chunda Sahib in the Carnatic, and sent four hundred French soldiers to his assistance. A battle was fought and Anaverdy Khan was killed. His son Mohammed Ali fled with a scanty remnant of his army to Trichinopoly, and nearly all the Carnatic submitted to the conqueror.

Next Dupleix lent his French soldiers to Mirzapha Jung, who in a short time became master of the Deccan. The new sovereigns showered wealth and favors upon the successful Frenchman. He was declared governor of a territory in India as large as all France, with a population of 50,000,000 people. He was placed in command of the largest military force of the country. He was presented with a million dollars in money and many valuable jewels. Neither the Nizam nor the Nabob concluded any affairs of moment without his advice and consent. He was, in fact, invested with sovereign powers, and French influence in Southern India was paramount and seemingly firmly established.

The triumph of the French arms carried consternation to the British factory at St. George. Unless the victorious career of Dupleix could be stayed, not only would British influence be destroyed, but also the very existence of their trading posts would soon be at an end. At this time the government of St. George was feeble. The military officers in command were without experience. Everything betokened speedy and irretrievable ruin. In this emergency the valor and genius of an obscure English youth suddenly turned the tide of fortune.

