The Carnatic Wars

Though the British and the French came to India for trading proposes, they were ultimately drawn into the politics of India.

- Both had visions for establishing political power over the region.
- The Anglo-French rivalry in India reflected the traditional rivalry of England and France throughout their histories.
- Specifically, in India, the rivalry, in the form of three Carnatic wars decided once for all the English and not French were the more suitable ones to establish their rule all over India.

First Carnatic War (1740-48)

Background:

- Carnatic was the name given by the Europeans to the Coromandel coast and its hinterland.
- The First Carnatic War was an extension of the Anglo-French War in Europe which was caused by the **Austrian War of Succession.**
- The First Carnatic War is remembered for the **Battle of St. Thome (in Madras)** fought between the French forces and the forces of **Anwar-ud-din,** the **Nawab of Carnatic,** to whom the English appealed for help.

The War of Austrian Succession

- Between 1740 and 1748, most of Europe's great powers were involved in a conflict caused by the question of Maria Theresa's succession to the Austrian Habsburg crown.
    - The war involved all of Europe, with France, Prussia, Spain, Bavaria and Saxony arrayed against Austria and Britain.
    - The first two series of wars, **the First Silesian War (1740–42) and the Second Silesian War (1744–45)** were centered around Austria and Prussia.
    - The third war was centred on the continued conflict between **France and Britain** over colonial possessions in India and North America.
        - During the war, British troops proved their worth as soldiers.
- The war was concluded with the Peace treaty of **Aix-la-Chapelle,** signed in October 1748.
    - Under this treaty, France agreed to leave the Austrian Netherlands and give back Madras to Britain in return for Louisbourg.
    - Maria Theresa was also confirmed as Austrian ruler.

The Cause of the War:

- Although France, conscious of its relatively weaker position in India, did not favour an extension of hostilities to India, the English navy under **Commodore Curtis Bennett** seized some French ships to provoke France.
    - The French Governor General, the **Marquis Joseph-François Dupleix,** appealed for protection from Anwar-ud-Din, the Nawab of Carnatic and he in turn warned the British that his province was neutral territory and that no attack on French possessions would be tolerated.
- France retaliated by seizing Madras in 1746 with the help of the fleet from Mauritius, the Isle of France, under **Admiral La Bourdonnais,** the French governor of Mauritius.
    - The capture of Madras triggered a bitter argument between Dupleix and La Bourdonnais.
        - Dupleix wanted to hand the town over to the Nawab, as compensation for breaking the Nawab's decree of neutrality, while La Bourdonnais wanted to ransom the town back to the British.
    - This dispute dragged on into October, and eventually Anwar-ud-Din decided to intervene. He sent an army of 10,000 men under the command of his son Mahfuzz Khan to besiege the French in Madras.

Result:

- A small French army under Captain Paradise defeated the strong Indian army under Mahfuz Khan at St.Thome on the banks of the River Adyar.

- The First Carnatic War ended in 1748 when the **Treaty of Aix-La Chapelle** was signed bringing the Austrian War of Succession to a conclusion.
    - Under the terms of this treaty, Madras was handed back to the English, and the French, in turn, got their territories in North America.

Significance:

- **War was an eye-opener for the Europeans in India:** it revealed that even a small disciplined army could easily defeat a much larger Indian army.
- Further, this war adequately brought out the importance of naval force in the Anglo-French conflict in the Deccan.

Second Carnatic War (1749-54)

Background:

- The background for the Second Carnatic War was provided by the **Anglo-French rivalry** in India.
- Even after the end of the First Carnatic War, the peace in India was short lived.
    - In 1748 **Nizam-ul-Mulk,** the Mughal governor of the Deccan and semi-independent Nawab of Hyderabad died.
    - The succession to his position was contested, and the British and French were soon dragged into the fighting between the candidates.
        - Dupleix, the French governor who had successfully led the French forces in the First Carnatic War, sought to increase his power and French political influence in southern India by interfering in local dynastic disputes to defeat the English.
- The resulting Second Carnatic War lasted from 1749 until 1754, and saw the British strengthen their position in southern India.

The Cause of the War:

- The opportunity was provided by the death of **Nizam-ul-Mulk,** the founder of the independent kingdom of **Hyderabad, in 1748,** and the release of **Chanda Sahib,** the son-in-law of **Dost Ali,** the Nawab of Carnatic, by the Marathas in the same year.
- **In Hyderabad,** the accession of Nasir Jang, the son of the Nizam, to the throne of Hyderabad was opposed by Muzaffar Jang, the grandson of the Nawab, who laid claim to the throne saying that the Mughal Emperor had appointed him as the governor of Hyderabad.
- **Further south** there were two candidates for the **Nawabship of the Carnatic,** a subsidiary post officially dependent on the Nizam.

- **Anwar-ud-Din** had only been appointed Nawab of the Carnatic in **1743,** after Nizam-ul-Mulk had been forced to intervene to restore order in the province.
    - Anwar-ud-Din was one of the Nizam's officers.
    - Appointment of Anwar-ud-Din was resented by Chanda Sahib
    - Chanda Sahib was the son-in-law of a previous Nawab of the Carnatic, Dost Ali (1732-39).
        - He had been an effective ally to the French, before in 1741 being besieged in Trichinopoly by the Marathas.
- The French supported the claims of Muzaffar Jang and Chanda Sahib in the Deccan and Carnatic, respectively, while the English sided with Nasir Jang and Anwar-ud-din.

Course of the War:

- The combined armies of Muzaffar Jang, Chanda Sahib and the French defeated and killed Anwar- ud-din at the **Battle of Ambur** (near Vellore) in **1749.**
    - The Nawab was killed early in the war and left behind his son **Mohammed Ali** to claim the Nawabship.
- Muzaffar Jang was installed as the Nizam of Hyderabad and the subahdar of Deccan, and Dupleix was appointed governor of all the Mughal territories to the south of the River Krishna.
    - Territories near Pondicherry and also some areas on the Orissa Coast (including Masulipatnam) were ceded to the French.
    - However, Muzaffar Jung was killed a couple of months later and the French installed Muzaffar's uncle Salabat Jung as the new Nizam.
- Having failed to provide effective assistance to Muhammad Ali at Trichinopoly, **Robert Clive** of the English company (first British administrator of the Bengal Presidency), put forward the proposal for a diversionary attack on the Governor Saunders of Madras.
    - He suggested a sudden raid on **Arcot** (the capital of the Carnatic) to divert the pressure from Trichinopoly in which the British won.
    - After several battles fought, Chanda Sahib was executed by Muhammad Ali who was later installed as the Nawab of Carnatic.

Result:

- The French authorities, annoyed at the heavy financial losses that Dupleix's policy involved, decided to recall him in 1754.
- **Charles Robert Godeheu** succeeded Dupleix as the French Governor-General in India.

- Godeheu adopted a **policy of negotiations** with the English and signed the **Treaty of Pondicherry** with them under which the English and the French agreed not to interfere in the quarrels of native princes.

    Also, each party was left in possession of the territories actually occupied by them at the time of the treaty.

Implications:

- It became evident that the countenance of Indian authority was no longer necessary for European success; rather Indian authority itself was becoming dependent on European support.
- **Muhammad Ali** in the Carnatic and **Salabat Jang** in Hyderabad became clients rather than patrons.

Third Carnatic War or the Battle of Wandiwash (1758-63)

Background:

In Europe, when Austria wanted to recover Silesia in 1756, the **Seven Years War (1756-63)** started.

    Britain and France were once again on opposite sides.

Course of War in India:

- In 1758, the French army under French General, **Count Thomas Arthur de Lally** captured the English forts of St. David and Vizianagaram in 1758.
- Now, the English became offensive and inflicted heavy losses on the French fleet under **Admiral D'Ache** at Masulipatnam.

Battle of Wandiwash:

- The decisive battle of the Third Carnatic War was won by the English on January 22, 1760
- at Wandiwash (or Vandavasi) in Tamil Nadu.

    General Eyre Coote of the English totally routed the French army under **Count de Lally** and took Marquis de Bussy as prisoner.

- Pondicherry was gallantly defended by Lally for eight months before he surrendered on January 16, 1761.

    With the loss of Pondicherry, Gingee and Mahe, the French power in India was reduced to its lowest.

- Lally, after being taken as prisoner of war at London, returned to France where he was imprisoned and executed in 1766.

Result and Significance:

- The Third Carnatic War proved decisive.
- The third war ended with the **Treaty of Peace of Paris (1763)** under which Pondicherry and Chandannagar were returned to France but they could only have trading activities in them.
    - Although the treaty restored to the French their factories in India, the French political influence disappeared after the war.
- Thereafter, the French, like their Portuguese and Dutch counterparts in India, confined themselves to their small enclaves and to commerce.
- The English became the **supreme European power** in the Indian subcontinent.

Conclusion

- The victory at Wandiwash left the English East India Company with no European rival in India. Thus they were ready to take over the rule of the entire Country.
- Significantly, in the **Battle of Wandiwash,** natives served in both the armies as sepoys.
- It makes one think that irrespective of which side won, there was an inevitability about the fall of India to European invaders.

Causes for the English Success and the French Failure

- **Lesser Governmental Control Over British:** The English company was a private enterprise.
    - This created a sense of enthusiasm and self-confidence among the people.
        - With less governmental control over it, this company could take instant decisions when needed without waiting for the approval of the government.
    - The French company, on the other hand, was a State concern.
        - It was controlled and regulated by the French government and was hemmed in by government policies and delays in decision-making.
- **Superior British Navy and Bigger Cities Under Control:** The English navy was superior to the French navy; it helped to cut off the vital sea link between the French possessions in India and France.
    - The English held three important places, namely, Calcutta, Bombay and Madras whereas the French had only Pondicherry.
- **British were Strong with Funds:** The French subordinated their commercial interest to territorial ambition, which made the French company short of funds.
    - In spite of their imperialistic motives, the British never neglected their commercial interests.
        - The British always had the funds and the consequent sound financial condition to help them significantly in the wars against their rivals.

- **Superior British Commanders:** A major factor in the success of the English in India was the superiority of the commanders in the British camp.
    In comparison to the long list of leaders on the English side - Sir Eyre Coote, Major Stringer Lawrence, Robert Clive and many others, there was only Dupleix on the French side.