



THE BRITISH SEIGE OF VIJAYANAGAR: A STRATEGIC MANEUVER

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ABSTRACT

Vijayanagaram was an important territory ruled by the local zamindars under the over lordship of Nizam of Hyderabad by 18th century. These zamindars paid annual rents to the Nizams and administered the region independently. Seatharamaraju was a prominent power among the native rulers who posed a severe threat to the British in the collection of rent and the tranquility of the territory. He was under the presumption that the British would permit him to collect the rents at Chicacole and Rajahmundry Circars after getting the sanad from the Nawab. After suppressing minor local zamindars, the British concentrated their attention upon the major local power Rajah Seatharamaraju of Vijayanagaram, who posed a severe threat to them in Rajahmundry and Chicacole Circars. The British were stubborn in their stand, surrounded his territory and ordered the Rajah to vacate from Rajahmundry before 10th May 1765. Realising his awkward position, the Rajah entered into an agreement with the British on 15th May 1765. The British captain took possession of the Rajahmundry Circar. The powerful zamindars as Seatharamaraju and his brother Vijayaramaraju were reduced to the extent of surrendering their possessions to the British.

INTRODUCTION

Vijayanagaram was an important territory ruled by the local zamindars under the over lordship of Nizam of Hyderabad by 18th century. These zamindars paid annual rents to the

Nizams and administered the region independently. They were very powerful during the first half of the eighteenth century. During the Anglo-French rivalry its zamindar by name

Vijayaramaraju played a vital role. Though Vijayaramaraju was an ally of the British the French tried their best to woo the Rajah to their side viewing his potentiality. However, after Anandharaju, Seatharamaraju, his nephew succeeded him as the zamindar of Vijayanagaram. His assumption to power, made the political situation of coastal Andhra to a high watermark and quite often ravaged the territories of Nizam and questioned the domination of the English. Seatharamaraju, had commanded a control over the local zamindars of Orgole, Pithapuram, Chicacole etc. Taking advantage of the weakness of the Nizam, he declared his territory independently and refused to pay annual rents to the Nizam. The British rivalry with the Nizam made his job easier and he even went to the extent of collecting rents from the neighbouring areas of the Nizam. The local zamindars frightened him only and not the Nizam. This ultimately paved the way for the rivalry between Seatharamaraju, zamindar of Vijayanagaram and the British.

RIVALRY BETWEEN BRITISH AND SEATHARAMARAJU

Seatharamaraju was a prominent power among the native

rulers who posed a severe threat to the British in the collection of rent and the tranquility of the territory. He was under the presumption that the British would permit him to collect the rents at Chicacole and Rajahmundry Circars after getting the sanad from the Nawab. When the British objected his claim in the Circars, he became suspicious that they wanted to acquire the whole Circars from the Nawab, and feared that he would lose his legal claim to the Circar Districts and would not even become a tenant over it. Hence, the disgusted Rajah collected a huge force under his captaincy and began the depredation of the Circar Districts on 8 January 1765. He had collected large booty and did not spare the inhabitants of the territory. Fearing his attack on their factories the British stopped their action for a short while against the Rajah.

SUPPRESSION OF LOCAL ZAMINDARS

After, this arrangement, the British had reached an agreement with the Nawab, to assist them, whenever they were in need of any military assistance. With this agreement the British collected a huge army by themselves and the Nawab and marched against the local zamindars.

All the local zamindars of Rajahmundry, Mughlatore, Trepethy, Calesty etc. returned the arrears to the English.

ATTENTION TOWARDS MAJOR ZAMINDARS

After suppressing minor local zamindars, the British concentrated their attention upon the major local power Rajah Seatharamaraju of Vijayanagaram, who posed a severe threat to them in Rajahmundry and Chicacole Circars. Besides the dues of more than forty lakhs of rupees to the Nawab he had collected large number of forces from Chicacole and Rajahmundry and resorted to plunderings on the Circars. He intensified his illegitimate activities more vigorous when he heard the march of the British against him. Apart from these, he had attacked the zamindar of Peddapuram, a close ally of the British on 18th April 1765 and hurt his feelings. Following the resistance given by the Rajah, a number of other zamindars at Murtazanagar and Rajahmundry refused to pay rents to the British. In view of the Pre judicial activities of the Rajah, the combined forces of the British and the Nawab marched against him on 25th April 1765. The British forces under captain Madge consisted

of soldiers of two companies, artillery with 500 garrisons, field pieces and large stores. For the British, reinforcements came from Vizakhapatnam too to assist them. At last the joined forces entered Rajahmundry on 5th May 1765 and on seeing the British forces the Rajah became perplexed. However, the British were stubborn in their stand, surrounded his territory and ordered the Rajah to vacate from Rajahmundry before 10th May 1765. Realising his awkward position, the Rajah entered into an agreement with the British on 15th May 1765.

IMPORTANT DECISIONS

According to this understanding the important decisions taken were:

1. The Rajah promised for the payment of dues every month and remain obedient to the British;
2. Regarding the arrears he promised to pay them in instalments;
3. He accepted the British proposal of delivering the fort of Rajahmundry and retiring his army to the distance of ten coarses out of it, where he was allowed a small piece of land;

4. He promised them that he would not molest their men on their return march to their respective places;
5. Instead of Chicacole, he was allowed to retain a small zamindary in Rajahmundry and for the arrangement, he accepted an amount of 1,50,000 rupees.

The British threatened the Nawab that the moment he violated the consensus they would not permit him even to stay at Rajahmundry. Further, in the event of attacking the British allied, they would retaliate against Rajah's forces with full vigour. The Rajah, anticipating dire consequences from the British, instantly agreed to the consensus proposed and quit Rajahmundry. Following this, the British captain took possession of the Rajahmundry Circar. By these arrangements, the powerful zamindars as Seatharamaraju and his brother Vijayaramaraju were reduced to the extent of surrendering their possessions to the British.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, until 18th century Vijayanagaram was ruled by the local zamindars under the lordship of Nizam of Hyderabad. Seatharamaraju, the Zamindar of Vijayanagaram had

intensified his illegitimate activities to get the dominant position among the Zamindars as well as to question the domination of the English. But the British made allied with Nawab and marched against Seatharamaraju which made Seatharamaraju's position deteriorated and made him to surrender his possessions to the British. That was why the British seige to Vijayanagar.

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