

SECTION 2

Foreign Policy of Warren Hastings

Warren Hastings had to face so many internal difficulties but his external difficulties were also not less embarrassing. The administration of Bengal was completely paralysed. The treasury of the Company was totally exhausted, there was a hostile Council to oppose him in every sphere but over and above he had to face many powerful and hostile powers. The *Marathas* had greatly regained their power since their defeat in the Third Battle of Panipat. The Mughal Emperor, Shah Alam had also left the English and went to the Maratha side. *Haider Ali* was also planning a revenge on the English because they had failed to help him according to their promise when the Marathas attacked him in 1771 A.D. The Nawab of *Hyderabad* was also hostile to the English. Moreover, no help could be received from home because England was at that time engaged in a life and death struggle against her *American Colonies*. Thus the Company's condition was a critical one. In such a state of affairs all that was achieved by Clive would have been undone, had there been no wise man like Warren Hastings on the helm of affairs. But for Warren Hastings the whole structure would have collapsed and brought about the ruin of the Company's dominion. Warren Hastings with great ability and courage faced the hostile powers and thus saved the British dominion at a critical time.

1. The Rohilla War, 1774 A.D.—This war was fought by the British and the Nawab of Oudh with the Rohillas.

(1) *Causes*. The Rohillas were Afghan people who inhabited the fertile territory lying to the north of Oudh, known after their name as Rohilkhand. The Marathas frequently attacked their territory and consequently their leader Hafiz Rahmat Khan concluded a treaty with the Nawab of Oudh in 1772 A.D.

over the island of Salisette and Bassein to the English in return for their help to get the Peshwaship.

(2) *Events.* Soon after this treaty the English forces under Keating proceeded towards Poona and defeated the Marathas at Arras and occupied the island of Salisette. But as the treaty of Surat was concluded without the knowledge of the Governor-General so he along with his Council disapproved of this treaty and concluded another treaty with the Marathas, known as the *Treaty of Purandhar (1776)*. According to this new treaty the English promised not to help Raghoba if the island of Salisette was allowed to remain with them. The Directors of the Company, however, upheld the Treaty of Surat so the Bengal Government had to support Raghoba and the war had to be continued.

The Marathas mustered a strong army and gave a crushing defeat to the English near *Wargaon* and forced them to sign a humiliating treaty. The English agreed to surrender Raghoba and restored all the territories which they acquired since 1773. Such a humiliating treaty was too much for Warren Hastings and so he refused to accept it. He sent two armies from Bengal, one under General Goddard towards Poona and the other under Major Popham towards Gwalior against Mahadaji Scindhia. Goddard captured Ahmedabad (1780), overran Gujarat and won over the Gaekwar of Baroda to his side. In the meantime the crafty Nana Farnavis formed a confederacy with the Nizam and Haider Ali and when Goddard marched towards Poona they gave him a crushing defeat and forced him to retreat. But his disaster was somewhat counter balanced by Captain Popham who captured Gwalior and harassed Scindhia so much that he agreed to bring about a treaty between the English and the Peshwa. As a result of his efforts the Treaty of Salbai was signed between the English and Peshwa in 1782 and thus ended the First Maratha War.

(3) *Results and Importance.* According to the terms of the Treaty of Salbai (i) Madhav Rao II was recognized as the Sixth Peshwa of the Marathas. (ii) The English gave up the cause of Raghoba but not before they got 12 lakhs of rupees as expenses which they incurred on account of Raghoba. (iii) Raghoba was to receive a pension of Rs. 3 lakhs a year for his maintenance. (iv) The English were to retain the island of Salisette but return all other territories. The country west of Yamuna was also restored to Scindhia.

This treaty was a great success for Warren Hastings because he was able to save the prestige of the British in India when it was really at stake. Moreover, this treaty secured peace with the Marathas for the next twenty years and made all the chances of a confederacy among the Marathas, the Nizam and Haider Ali quite remote. Because of the Maratha's neutrality the English were able to break the power of Haider Ali and that of the Nizam. Thus this treaty is an "important land-mark in the history of India." (Dr. V. A. Smith)

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