

UPSC Civil Services Examination

UPSC Notes [GS-I]

Topic: Popular Uprisings by Deposed Chieftains and Landlords [NCERT Notes]

The British establishment of political and economic dominance over many parts of India after the Battle of Plassey, 1757 disrupted the political, social and economic order of the country. This led to the divesting of many landlords and chieftains of their power, properties and estates. Naturally, many of them revolted against the British. Two rebellions by the deposed landlords and chieftains were led by Veerapandi Kottabomman and Velu Thambi Dalawa.

Polygar Rebellions (1799 – 1805)

- Polygars (Palaiyakkarars) were feudal lords who were appointed as military chiefs and administrative governors from the time of the Vijayanagara Empire in parts of Southern India. (They were given the charge of a Palayam or a group of villages).
- It was the Polygars who collected taxes from the cultivators.
- But the East India Company came into conflict with the Polygars over the question of who should collect taxes, and sought to control the Polygars.
- The first rebellion, also called the First Polygar War broke out in September 1799 in Tirunelveli district in modern Tamil Nadu.
- The Polygars were led by Kattabomma Nayak (also called Veerapandi Kattabomman) who was in charge of Panchalankurichi Palayam.
- He had defied the British for 7 years refusing to accept their suzerainty and pay revenue to them.
- In the battles with the British troops, Kattabomman initially escaped but was subsequently caught and publicly hanged as a warning to other Polygars.
- The Second Polygar War (1800 – 01) is also called the South Indian Rebellion due to its scale and reach.
- This South Indian Confederacy consisted of Marudu Pandian of Sivaganga, Dheeran Chinnamalai of Kongu Nadu, Gopala Nayak of Dindigul, Krishnappa Nayak and Dhoondaji of Mysore and Pazhassi Raja Kerala Varma of Malabar.
- It took the British more than a year to suppress this rebellion.
- After this, the Carnatic Treaty of 1801 was signed which gave the British direct control over Tamil Nadu. With this, the authority of the Polygars also ended.

Revolt of Velu Thambi Dalawa (1805 – 09)

- Velu Thambi was the Diwan (Prime Minister) of the Kingdom of Travancore.
- He rose in revolt against the British when they tried to oust him from the post of Diwan. He was also against the heavy financial burden imposed on the kingdom by the Subsidiary Alliance Treaty.
- Velu Thampi was able to garner good support from the people of the land against the British.
- He took his own life in order to avoid capture by the British in 1809.

