

# Arcot Captured by Robert Clive -[August 31, 1751]

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## What happened?

On 31 August 1751, the English East India Company's forces led by Robert Clive captured Arcot, the capital of the Nawab of Carnatic (Arcot), Chanda Sahib. This event changed the landscape of British and French colonialism in the subcontinent. This siege was part of the Second Carnatic War. This is an important part of modern Indian history.

## Siege of Arcot

- After the death of the Nawab of Carnatic, Anwaruddin Khan in 1749, Chanda Sahib had become the Nawab of Carnatic with the support of the French. The English had supported another claimant to the post of the Nawab of Carnatic, Muhammad Ali (son of Anwaruddin Khan).
- Trichinopoly or Trichy was in the hands of the French and Chanda Sahib, but the Fort of Trichinopoly was held by Muhammad Ali. Chanda Sahib wanted to eliminate Muhammad Ali and consolidate his position as the Carnatic's Nawab. So, he led a force to besiege the Fort of Trichinopoly.
- Even though the British supported Muhammad Ali, their response was weak and the British authorities were bracing themselves to give up Trichy to the French.
- Robert Clive, however, had a different plan which he proposed to the Madras Governor, Thomas Saunders.
- Clive masterminded a plan to attack Arcot, the capital of Chanda Sahib. This was a divisionary tactic to force Chanda Sahib to lift the siege at Trichy.
- Thus, 200 British soldiers along with 300 sepoys and 8 European officers (four of whom were civilians employed with the Company specifically called for this expedition), marched towards Arcot on 26<sup>th</sup> August.
- Within five days, they were 10 miles short of Arcot. Despite information that the fort at Arcot housed 1000 Indian soldiers, Clive advanced towards it.

- The Indian troops then fled the fort thinking that the arriving forces were larger and so, Clive's men were able to occupy the fort taking the weapons abandoned by the Indians.
- As expected, Chanda Sahib's troops advanced towards Arcot with 4000 Indian and 100 French soldiers (supplied by Dupleix) to take back Arcot. This force also had elephants.
- In spite of being outnumbered, Robert Clive decided not to accept surrender and continued to attack the army of Chanda Sahib. Clive also knew of the Maratha forces that were on their way to help the British.
- Chanda Sahib's troops (which were being led by his son Raju Sahib) were not able to breach the fort's defences led by Clive and they retreated on November 14, 1751.
- After this siege, where a numerically inferior force defeated a much larger force, the British forces were seen with awe and they gradually dominated the French colonial power which was confined to much smaller areas within India.
- Mark Bence-Jones, in his biography of Clive wrote, "*It may have been luck, it may have been bungling on the part of the enemy, but it created the legend of English courage and invincibility which was to carry English arms in India from one success to another.*"