



Chapter 15

● **V.P. Madhav Rao**

A long and illustrious tenure in Mysore service earned Vishwanath Pathankar Madhav Rao the coveted post of the Dewan of Mysore in 1906, following the retirement of P.N. Krishnamurthy from the Dewanship. At the time of his appointment, he had been working as the Dewan in Thiruvananthapuram (Travancore) State.

V.P. Madhav Rao was born in Tanjore on 10 February 1850. His family of Marathi Brahmin origin, had settled in Tanjore during the Maratha regime of the successors of Ekoji, Shivaji's brother. His father was in the Madras Judicial Service. Madhav Rao did his education in Kumbhakonam from the old Provincial High School, where Porter, one of the European teachers, guided and encouraged him. Porter later came to Mysore as a tutor to the young prince Chamarajendra Wodeyar.

After securing his B.A., degree in 1869, Madhav Rao began his career as a freelance journalist in Kumbhakonam. As a journalist, he was once prosecuted and fined for his scathing criticism of the local Municipality. Soon after, he left Kumbhakonam and came to Bangalore. Perhaps on the recommendation of his old teacher, Porter, he joined the London Mission High School in Bangalore as a teacher.

A tall and handsome man, Madhav Rao also had a fine personality and was a fine orator in English. "Madhav Rao had three qualifications which are essential for any State administration according to me and they are (1) Attractive personality, (2) Expertise in achieving tasks and (3) Enthusiasm for new ventures," says D.V.Gundappa.¹

¹ Gundappa, D.V., *Mysurina Divanarugalu*, p.78 (D.V.G.)

As Deputy Commissioner

In 1878, Madhav Rao was taken in by Porter as one of his assistants at the palace and that is when he met Rangacharlu and Sheshadri Iyer. During the Rendition in 1881, Porter became the Ruler's Private Secretary and Madhav Rao was appointed in Mysore Civil Service in the Revenue Department. From there, he rose to the position of a Deputy Commissioner and worked in Shimoga District for seven years.

"In Shimoga, Mr. Madhav Rao proved himself to be an executive officer of the best type. His accessibility to men of all grades, his readiness to hear and redress grievances, the interest he took in welfare of agriculture, population and the many works undertaken by him for improving sanitation of towns and villages, in providing drinking water, in opening out roads and planting avenues and restoring irrigation tanks, and generally looking after the interest of people won for him their love and respects."² K Subba Rao says that as the Deputy Commissioner in Shimoga, Madhav Rao had "high reputation and perhaps learned much that was unknown to him."³ He received much praise for his work in the District from the British Resident, Sir Oliver St. John who also congratulated the Maharaja on having an officer like Madhav Rao. "Madhav Rao never knew laziness, never lacked enthusiasm. He engaged himself in conversation with somebody. Kept himself busy in some activity and attracted the attention of all," says D.V.Gundappa.⁴

Inspector General of Police

Madhav Rao's next posting was that of Inspector General of Police (IGP) in Mysore State in 1892, which also made him the first Indian to hold the post. As IGP, Madhav Rao made many improvements in the police force, improving its tone; he also founded the Bangalore Police School. When the Plague was anticipated, Madhav Rao's efficiency as a police officer saw him being entrusted with the additional charge of the anti-Plague operations in 1898 and he was appointed the Plague Commissioner by Resident Donald Robinson. His work bore true testimony to his qualities as a capable organiser and an able administrator. He was conferred the title 'CIE' and honoured with the 'Kaiser-e-Hind' gold medal by the British Government.⁵

"Madhav Rao has left permanent memorials of his administrative genius in reorganisation of the Mysore Police Forces which stood at the highest point of efficiency in the regime of Inspector General of Police," says K Subba Rao who was an official in the Secretariat.⁶

"The originality of Madhav Rao's mind may be guessed by the fact that in the very commencement of anti-Plague campaign, he realised that to combat the disease, the most effective measure was to induce the people to abandon

² *Hindustan Review*, July 1906.

³ Subba Rao, K., *Revived Memories*, p.407.

⁴ D.V.G. p.78.

⁵ *Hindustan Review*

⁶ *Revived Memories*, p.402.

old localities and build new house on sanitary principles on fresh soil in open country. While not neglecting the usual remedies of disinfections and inoculation then in vogue, he directed his energies from the outset in devising a scheme for buildings in large new extensions, in the Bangalore on sanitary principles.”⁷

Madhav Rao was rendered full support by Dewan Sheshadri Iyer to create large extensions which were even bigger than the original city. (This has been already discussed in the section on Sheshadri Iyer). Dr. Martin, who was deputed by the Supreme Government to investigate the questions connected with the Plague, observed that the encouragement towards the building of houses along sanitary principles, as adopted in Mysore, had proven to be the most efficacious measure in preventing the Plague and minimising its ravages.⁸

In 1898, Madhav Rao became a member of the Council of Regency and he was appointed the Revenue Commissioner in 1902, when Krishnaraja Wodeyar assumed power. However, he encountered serious differences with Dewan Krishnamurthy with whom he clashed over various policy matters. Krishnamurthy was the leader of the ‘Mysorean Party’, while Madhav Rao represented the ‘Madras Party’. In fact, his case for Dewanship had been recommended by Sheshadri Iyer.

Dewan at Thiruvananthapuram

In 1904, Madhav Rao was appointed Dewan of Travancore (Thiruvananthapuram) State. He served in this post for two years and he was hailed for his work by all leading newspapers, including *The Hindu* and the *Times of India*.

During his short tenure, Madhav Rao re-organised the Settlement Department and initiated the revision in a way that it would be completed in four years. Daily audit of accounts was also initiated. He also started Srimoolam Assembly (Representative Assembly) in 1904. Acharya Shankara’s birthplace, Kaladi was improved by clearing the place, raising a temple, while a Sanskrit college was also founded there.

A new department called Excise Department was organised for the systematic collection of *Abkari* and levies on salt, tobacco, customs, etc. and as a result, the income from these sources comprised almost half the State’s revenue. Much importance was given to education and grants for the Department substantially increased. Backward classes were provided with free education and scholarships.⁹

He also checked the extravagance in temples. At the time, non-Hindus and lower classes used to be heavily fined if they entered the temple periphery, for ‘polluting’ it. Madhav Rao banned the practice as illegal and the fine which was

⁷ *Hindustan Review*

⁸ *Ibid*

⁹ *Ibid*

imposed to meet the 'purificatory ceremony' on such occasions from the so-called offender was also stopped and the cost of these purificatory ceremonies minimised.

The partial payment of revenue in kind (food grains) was in practice at that time. It was a big source of harassment for the farmers, more so because the price at which the grains were collected was more than half-a-century old and 500 percent below the current price. Madhav Rao stopped this practice and substituted it by full cash payment. This was 'hailed by the ryots as an immense relief.'¹⁰

"In Travancore, Madhav Rao left many landmarks which will forever keep his memory green as in the case of his cherished namesake and predecessor Raja Sir T Madhav Rao, who was in many respects the maker of Modern Travancore," says Subba Rao.¹¹

Dewan of Mysore

In 1906, Madhav Rao assumed the Dewanship of Mysore on the retirement of P.N. Krishnamurthy. However, during Krishnamurthy's Dewanship, the powers of the Dewan and the Council had been diminished considerably and there was no vigour or grit in the administration. "A small but notable change was introduced into the constitution of the Executive Council. The modified rules invested the Councillors with certain measures of administrative responsibility, the lack of which had been felt to be the chief reason why the new Consultative Council of 1902 failed to fulfil the objects with which it was constituted," reports Hayavadana Rao.¹² Under the Revised Rules, the Members of the Council, though not possessing any executive power as such, were empowered, in their respective departments, to pass final orders in the name of the Government instead of merely recording, on all ordinary matters which were not of sufficient importance to the Dewan or to the Council.

In fact, the efforts of the Resident and Viceroy Curzon to strengthen the powers of the Maharaja against the Dewan and the Council had brought about many changes which diluted the powers of the Dewan and the Council to an extent. The Maharaja's office was regulated by his European Private Secretary. Once, the Maharaja even complained that he had received 800 files on a single day! Under such circumstances, the administration was bound to slacken, more so due to a Dewan like P.N. Krishnamurthy who was not very active.

Madhav Rao's tenure marked significant modifications and changes in the administration from the very beginning itself. An important change effected in 1906, the same year that he took office as Dewan of Mysore was enhancing the powers and status of the Revenue Commissioner. Larger powers were delegated to the Revenue Commissioner by amending the Land Revenue Code. The Revenue Commissioner was made the chief controlling authority on Revenue

¹⁰ *Ibid*

¹¹ *Revived Memories*, p.403.

¹² *Mysore Gazetteer*, p.3020.

subjects. "His position was rendered analogous to that of Commissioner in Bombay. His decision on appeal in matters falling under Revenue Code were rendered final, except where a question of law or usage having the force of law was involved, in which case an appeal to the Government was allowed," says Hayavadana Rao.¹³

Another major change was the Examiner of Accounts office (post) being merged with that of the Comptroller and the Comptroller being made the *ex-officio* Finance Secretary of the Government. "This has resulted in greater attention being paid to Codal Rules and closer scrutiny being exercised over the expenditure of public funds. This has tended to greater independence of audit in connection with the working of the largest departments of Government." ¹⁴ Madhav Rao also constituted the Department of Public Health.

"Madhav Rao took a somewhat pessimistic view of the finances of the state... Madhav Rao justified his stand by stating that in seven years from 1898 to 99 to 1904-05, the liabilities of the state have considerably increased under Savings Bank deposits and Insurance Fund, while simultaneously the cash invested in resources had considerably decreased from Rs. 140 lakhs in the beginning to Rs. 43.5 lakhs in 1905-06," points out Shama Rao.¹⁵

Reserve Funds

Madhav Rao took certain remedial measures with regards to reserve funds. Earlier, from 1899, Savings Bank deposits were being paid in Government treasuries up to a maximum limit of Rs. 5000 on each account. This limitation on the deposits was withdrawn. As a result, deposits which stood at Rs. 38 lakhs in June 1899 rose to Rs. 95 lakhs by the close of 1905. A revised limit was imposed in August 1906, fixing the maximum deposit to Rs. 2000 a year at two percent interest, instead of the earlier 3.8 percent. The total balance in the credit of any individual depositor was not to exceed Rs. 5000 at any given time. Thus, an impressive Rs. 48 lakhs were added to the State Reserve.

In addition, a Famine Reserve of Rs. Two lakhs a year was created from 1906-07 onwards to meet future famine possibilities. Shama Rao observes that "Madhav Rao justified the creation of this Reserve, somewhat dubiously however, by stating that in a year of famine, while expenditure would be necessary on relief measures, the revenue resources of the Government would be crippled and in the absence of special provision for meeting the situation, the government would be forced to contract loans and starve the administrative departments."¹⁶

In 1906, construction of light railway from Bangalore to Chikkaballapura was assigned to an indigenous company, BCL Railway. This was the first co-operative effort on a large scale. As an incentive, a four percent on the interest of the investment was assured. It was completed in 1909. A new contract for

¹³*Ibid*, 3021.

¹⁴ *Ibid*

¹⁵ *Modern Mysore*, II p.224

¹⁶ *Ibid*



running the Mysore State railway lines coming into effect from 1 July 1908 was signed with the Southern Maratha Railway Company by the Secretary of State for India on behalf of the Mysore Government, in London. As per the new contract, the Railway Company was to receive a remuneration of one-twentieth of the net earnings of all lines as against one-fourth of the net earnings from Mysore-Harihar line; but it was to receive nothing for the branch lines.

The competitive examination for the Mysore Civil Service was also revised. New rules were issued for selection of eligible candidates for the appointment of *Amildars* and clear rules were also issued for the appointment of judicial probationers. Rules were further framed (revised) regulating appointment and promotion of ministerial officer in the Revenue Department. Redefined rules for recruiting suitable staff for the Revenue Executive Service were issued. Finally, proper rules for the recruitment of village accountants (*Shanbhogs*) were also framed.

To improve administrative efficiency, Retrenchment was introduced in different departments, a move which was also aimed at reducing expenditure. A committee consisting of two members of the Council was appointed to examine proposed Retrenchment cases. Certain *Amildars* were divested with magisterial functions and their powers were transferred to *Munsiffs* who were invested with powers of Magistrates of second class.¹⁷

The Department of Public Health was created in 1906-07. Special Health Officers were appointed for cities like Bangalore, Mysore and KGF. In a bid to popularise Ayurveda and Unani, qualified professors were engaged to impart instruction in these systems and a scheme was drawn for the purpose.

Legislative Council

An important measure undertaken during the period was creation of the Legislative Council under Regulation 1 of 1907 passed in March 1907. The creation of the new body had been a long-standing demand of the European coffee planter members of the Assembly. This was specially created to help enactment of law and legislation which till then could be undertaken only by the Dewan's Council and then approved by the Maharaja. Moreover, all existing laws that were in force at the time of the Rendition could be changed only after the consent of the Supreme Government which took a long time. One example of such undue delay is the fact that the Local Boards Regulation, passed in 1883, could secure the approval of the Supreme Government only in 1902, after a long period of hibernation, Shama Rao points out.¹⁸

Further, since the Dewan's Council was small with limited scope and time for discussing any important legislation, passing it without knowledgeable members in greater numbers was not advisable. Every Bill had to be discussed from various perspectives and their possible impact. The Legislative Council was to have the Dewan as its President and two Council members were to be

¹⁷ *Mysore Gazetteer*, p.3022.

¹⁸ *Vide Modern Mysore*, II, p.214.



the Vice Presidents. Additional members, not less than 10 and not exceeding 15, to the Dewan's Council were to constitute the Legislative Council. Of the member strength, less than two-fifth was to be non-officials. Of the non-official members, the Representative Assembly was to depute two to the Council.

Then, in 1908, the Mysore Newspaper Regulation was passed and made into a law. Under the Regulation, every printer, publisher and editor of a newspaper were required to secure the permission of the Government before starting the same and this permission could also be withdrawn at any time. Certain penalties were to be imposed in case of any paper being published without the required permission. Expectedly, the Regulation faced stiff opposition from the newspapers and others. "Advocate D Venkatramayya, M Venkatakrishnaiah, Balakrishna Rao of Shimoga, Shankaranarayana Rao etc. were among those who severely opposed the Regulation in the Assembly and the Dewan must have been very angry with them," says D.V.Gundappa.¹⁹

In Defence of the Newspaper Regulation

The Dewan spoke in the Assembly in support of the Act thus: "As regards the Newspaper Regulation, there is nothing to be alarmed about. It is not contended that the legislation gives more powers to the Government than were already inherent in the Maharaja. But objection has been taken by critics to the power to refuse permission and withdraw it when once granted being reserved to the executive Government. This objection, however, assumes that the Government of His Highness the Maharaja will exercise power arbitrarily on the least provocation and that press will be exposed to the petty tyranny of officials dressed in brief authority. I have already assured the public that the Government would always be glad to have their criticism with much freedom as the critics like, provided the criticism stopped short of disseminating absolute falsehood and deliberate perversion of facts likely to be prejudicial to the interest of the State. The Government of His Highness has never shrunk from giving publicity to their acts and the opening of Press Room and the public discussion of question in this very Assembly than which there is not a body in the whole of India better representing the people of a state will convince you that such is their attitude."

The Dewan also stated that "some well-informed people have fears that refusal or withdrawal of permission could be done at the whims and caprices of an officer. But such instances will be treated as scheduled cases under rules of business, considered by the Council and referred to the Maharaja."

But more than the discussion and comments in the Assembly, the reaction towards the Act can be witnessed later. Hayavadana Rao says that "the Act gave legislative form to the inherent powers of the Maharaja to regulate criticism in the interest of the Council and referred to the Maharaja to regulate criticism in the interest of the State or in the cause of public morality."

¹⁹ D.V.Gundappa, *Op.cit.* p.80

Other Developments

In the field of education, student fees in elementary schools in all villages were abolished from 1907. The fees at lower secondary schools and Anglo-Vernacular schools too were abolished for elementary classes. Fees in all Government schools were completely abolished. Moral and religious education was introduced in Government schools. The salaries of village school teachers were increased. The number of recipients of scholarship to the Depressed Class students was also increased. Suitable text books were selected and prescribed after discussions at a departmental conference. A grant of Rs. Five lakhs for the construction of the Indian Institute of Science was released in 1907-08, and an annual grant of Rs. Five lakhs for maintenance was assured to the Institute from 1908. Artist K Venkatappa who was a student of the Industrial School of Mysore and was receiving a scholarship of Rs. 20 per month was awarded a monthly scholarship of Rs. 30 to attend the Calcutta



Artist K Venkatappa

School of Arts. An officer, Ranga Rao was deputed to the London School of Economics for a special study of co-operative institutions wherein he was permitted to visit European countries to know the functioning of the co-operative societies there. Two students were deputed to Oxford and five others to Dehradun to make special study of forestry.

The period also marked important milestones in public works. The work of the Third Installation of Cauvery Power Works was completed in 1908 and Bangalore Cantonment began receiving electricity from 1st January 1908. Similarly, Mysore City was also electrified on 26th September 1908. The Marikanive Project initiated by Dewan Sheshadri Iyer in Chitradurga District was completed in 1907.

A Veterinary Department was started. An inspector of cattle diseases was appointed to inspect cattle in areas which reported prevalence of such diseases and prescribe suitable treatment. He was also required to promote cattle health by giving suitable advices and educating and guiding the rural folk and the veterinarians about necessary precautions. In 1908, a veterinary hospital was opened in Bangalore, and later, at Mysore, Chikamagalur, Kolar and Hassan. To inoculate the cattle against diseases, serum was secured from the Indian Government's Bacteriologist at Mukteasar Laboratory, Punjab.

One of the important steps initiated by Dewan Madhav Rao to help the Malnad betelnut (*supari*) growers was the abolition of *halat*. Earlier, a share of the produce from betel nut gardens was paid together with revenue to the Government as duty. This was called *halat*. There had been demand for its abolition since 1891 from the *supari* industry which regarded the practice as decadent. The recommendations of an officer on deputation had granted some relief to the growers by way of a cut in the rate of assessment on the gardens. In 1905, the matter was placed before the Maharaja by Dewan Krishnamurthy



Vani Vilasa Sagara (Mari Kanive) Dam - Hiriur Taluk, Chitradurga Dist

in support of abolition of the *halat*. After the Maharaja's consent, *halat* was finally abolished in 1907. Another development was in the grant of land for raising a *supari* garden. Earlier, the minimum limit for the same was 15 acres. The Dewan brought it down to five acres to encourage creation and extension of more gardens.

Tank Panchayats

The creation of Tank *Panchayats* was a notable decision of the Government in 1908. The rules issued in 1873 by the Commissioner and in 1887 by Sheshadri Iyer had not produced any satisfactory result. In 1903, a committee was appointed to investigate the causes of the failure. According to the report, the failure was attributed not to the insufficiency of rules framed, but to the lack of co-operation among the ryots. Secondly, it found that there was no incentive for the ryots to take personal interest in the matter. "The present Bill, in addition to educating the ryots to co-operate with one another, aimed also at creating in them an interest in proper maintenance of their tanks. This it was intended to be done by creation of a *Panchayat*, thereby allowing certain measures of self-Government to the ryots in respect of the tanks," says Shama Rao.²⁰

The *Panchayat* so created was to have members elected by the ryots themselves and they were to be created in the villages only if two-third of the village wanted them. The *Panchayat* was vested with the enforcement of the Tank Maintenance Rules (till then, this power lay with the *Patel* or the *Shekdar* or the Revenue Inspector).

As per the Act, the ryot was to perform his part of the duty by rendering labour or the payment to be made in lieu of it, while the *Panchayat* was to

²⁰ *Modern Mysore.*, p.231

ensure the completion of the work or collect the due from the defaulting ryot. The *Panchayat* was empowered to grant tank beds for temporary cultivation of fast yielding crops and to regulate the ryots' sowing operations when they wanted to use the tank water so that they did not come in conflict with each other while doing. All decisions had to be taken by two-third majority among the *Panchayat* members. The irrigation cess and money levied from defaulting members were put at the disposal of the *Panchayat* which was to create a Tank Fund from the same and control its usage. As an extra incentive, the sales proceeds of fishing rights and grazing rights in the tank and other proceeds were to be credited to the Tank Fund. Several other miscellaneous levies were also to be transferred to the Fund. The stone and masonry work to be undertaken for maintenance of the tank was to be entrusted to the *Panchayat* and the cost paid by the Government. The Bill was passed and finally came into force in 1911.

The creation of the Tank *Panchayat* also marked an effort to revive the ancient system of Village *Panchayats*, which would be guided by the success of the initiative. Shama Rao points out that the Royal Commission of Decentralisation in India, having known of the passage of the Bill in Mysore Legislative Council, observed optimistically that if any village ran this proposal successfully, it would suggest gradual establishment of a Village *Panchayat* in that village by conferring upon the body certain limited powers. However, the prevalence of homogeneity, natural intelligence and freedom from internal feud in the village was a pre-condition. The Dewan and his colleagues had put in lot of thought to make this experiment a success while drafting the Bill. The peculiar atmosphere in the social setup in the Malnad area purports that Madhav Rao's long and seasoned experience in Shimoga district as Deputy Commissioner may have perhaps planted the many ideas in him. The Bill became a law and came into force only after the Dewan's retirement from his office.

"Not with standing all the efforts made to establish village autonomy in the management of the tank, it may be stated the scheme has been attended with somewhat indifferent success till now," say Shama Rao in 1930.²¹ It can be likened to the idealistic concepts of Economic Conference which was evidenced a decade later.

The Chikkaballapur rail line perhaps marks the most significant development during Madhav Rao's Dewanship, because the Legislative Council was already being thought of, while the Tank *Panchayats*, though ambitious and visionary, could not work.

Social Attitudes

In 1874, the Government had issued an order in view of the Backward Classes Movement which



Chikkaballapur Railway Station

²¹ *Ibid.*, p.212.



required for at least eight of every 10 recruits in the police department to be non-Brahmins. However, the 1874 order was not followed strictly till Dewan Madhav Rao reviewed it.²²

The practice of performing *tafe* (dance) in the temple at Nandi had been stopped in 1892 and at Nanjangud Srikantheshwara temple in 1899, as already seen. This was during the days of the Dewanship of Sheshadri Iyer. The Maharaja was a puritan and he was opposed to the performance of such 'cheap' dances in the temples. In fact, he did not attend any marriage where *tafe* was organised. (It was customary in those days to have *tafe* performances at marriage pandals). A Government Order proposed during the tenure of Madhav Rao and issued in April 1909 (after his retirement) barred *devadasis* from any service in the *Muzrai* temples in the state. However, it allowed them to keep the *inams* (gifts/earnings) held by them from their service.²³ This ban order of 1909 and the Maharaja's attitude ensured public performances of such programmes to effectively stop.

Dewan Madhav Rao was a Vedantist Sanatana Hindu and a great devotee of Shankaracharya. His work at Kaladi has already been observed. A devotee of Sringeri Shankara Matha, he helped the Matha to open a branch at Bangalore in 1906 by granting a site at the present area. He was also deeply devoted to Shivabhinava Nrisimha Bharathi Swamy. The article on Madhav Rao in *The Hindustan Review* (July 1906 by A 'Mysorean') calls him 'liberal' in social matters. Madhav Rao is said to be a firm supporter of the Indian Social Reform propaganda started by K Natarajan at Madras. He increased the number of scholarships to the backward class pupils in the state. He helped the Vokkaligara Sangha (1906) and granted them a site in Bangalore, and K H Ramaiah, one of its founders, was also very close to the Dewan, says D.V.Gundappa.²⁴

When the Murugha Rajendra Swamy of Chitradurga visited Bangalore, the Dewan played a prominent role in honouring him. The Swamiji camped at the Thotadappa Chatra for several weeks and the Dewan visited him regularly. Also, when noted scholar R Narasimhachar delivered a series of lectures on the Veerashaiva saints at that time, the Dewan attended some of them. "Undoubtedly, he was an admirer of scholars," and enjoyed their company says D.V.Gundappa.²⁵

"Even regarding Muslims, Madhav Rao had great regard. He was toiling for Hindu-Muslim unity. The huge public buildings raised during his time have 'Saracenic' (meaning Arab and Turkish) decorative designs is the view of some people. I do not know whether it is true or not. But that he had friendship with people of other religions is certain," says D.V.Gundappa.²⁶ Madhav Rao also helped the founding of the Central Mohammedan Association at Bangalore.

²² *Karnataka Gazetteer*, II, p.787.

²³ *Ibid*, p.964.

²⁴ D.V.G., p.287.

²⁵ *Ibid*, p.286.

²⁶ *Ibid*, p.287-88

Newspaper Regulation

Things heated up for Dewan Madhav Rao in 1908 after the passage of the Mysore Newspaper Regulation. Those were the days of the nation-wide Swadeshi Movement following the Division of Bengal (1905). Though a princely State, Mysore could not distance itself from the current developments. Newspapers like *The Hindu* and *New India* from Madras were writing prolifically about the Swadeshi Movement and even the local newspapers carried ample writings and comments in favour of the Movement.

In 1907, Resident Stuart Fraser had written to the Dewan that “time has come for Darbar to realise the responsibility they owe to the British Government and their own subject for controlling the native Press, unparalleled probably for license in any other Native State in India.” Such comments and warnings forced the Dewan to pass the 1908 Regulation.

Many nationalist newspapers, including D.V.Gundappa’s *Bharati*, a daily (which had been just started), stopped publication in protest. The *Mysore Herald*, *Vrittanta Chintamani*, *Mysore Standard* and *Nadegannadi* were also among them. D.V.Gundappa arranged for the publication of a booklet, *Press Gag in Mysore*, from Madras. Its author is mentioned as one Tirumalachari. This created commotion all over. Mysore’s cherished reputation as a ‘Model State’ suffered. Newspapers outside the State too joined in to paint Madhav Rao as the ‘villain’ and enemy of the press and the person responsible for the ‘obnoxious’ Regulation. The fact that an erring editor was threatened to be banished from the State boundaries did not help matters at hand.

“What is this power intoxicated Dewan? He is not a politician, not an economist, not a statistician, not a man of letters, not a philosopher, not a scientist. Of course, he cannot lay claim to any high order of statesmanship. Where is glory?” the booklet questioned. It further continued: “In the play of circumstances anybody may acquire a place, and amass mint of money. But to get a place in memory of men one should possess rarer qualities”.²⁷

On 20th August 1908, *Vrittanta Chintamani*, edited by M Venkatakrishnaiah, announced its intention to discontinue the paper, boldly stating, “When one newspaper editor is deported, another will be ready to take his place.”

R Ramakrishnan, in his article ‘The Fourth Estate in Princely Autocracy’, writes thus: “Such comments developed out of contemporary notions of the immense power wielded by the Dewans of Princely States. While admitting that as a fact, it needs to be observed that the Maharaja, his Dewan and the First Member of the Executive Council had differing views regarding the necessity of the curb on the public press. While the Dewan thought the object of the Press Law was to inform mischievous journalist of penalties of irresponsible writing. Krishnaraja Wodeyar IV was granting permission to intending editors and publishers of newspapers rather selectively and thus restricting the growth of the press. T.Ananda Rao, the First Member of Council, went on to say

²⁷ *Press Gag in Mysore*, p.37.

that the publishing of newspaper was no 'birth right of a Mysore Citizen,'²⁸ based on *Compilation of Papers Relating to Mysore Newspaper Regulation in Karnataka State Archives*. In fact the Viceroy had seen the draft of the bill and expressed his appreciation by writing the "Durbar has reached a wise and patriotic decision."²⁹

There was another incident which also caused a blot on Mysore's clean slate as a 'Model State'. Janopakari Doddanna Shetty (the title '*Janopakari*' was conferred by the Maharaja), a rich philanthropic citizen of Bangalore, shared some difference of opinion with Dewan Madhav Rao regarding the construction of a building near the Bangalore City Market (where a College functions and a free hostel and charities were run). Doddanna Shetty had raised a hall there, but he had met with official objection owing to an issue over construction of its compound. It cannot be ascertained whether the objection was legitimate or done at the behest of the Dewan. However, there was public outcry against the Dewan over the matter and Doddanna Shetty went to court. His advocate was D Venkataramanayya, a member of the Representative Assembly and a staunch critic of the Dewan. Nonetheless, the compound wall at the particular site was eventually demolished perhaps by the Dewan's henchmen.

D Venkataramanayya was a popular figure and had strongly opposed the Newspaper Regulation in the Assembly. When the Representative Assembly had to nominate two members to the Legislative Council, they nominated D Venkataramanayya and M Venkatakrishnaiah, the editor of *Vrittanta Chintamani*. The two were also supporters of 'Mysore Party', arch rival of Madhav Rao's 'Madras Party'. When the Dewan vetoed the nomination of these two members and asked for re-nomination, there ensued public commotion. The move was severely criticised by the press.

On 14th October 1909, *The Indian Patriot* wrote, under the heading 'The Mysore Sensation': "The veto proved unmistakably the Government has no confidence in candidates who enjoy the largest measure of public confidence and the elective system is out of place under an absolute autocratic Government. In fact Venkataramanayya had secured 167 votes and Venkatakrishnaiah 109 votes in the Representative Assembly. We thought that Mr. Madhav Rao had committed that greatest blunder when he enacted the Press Regulation; but a worst blunder still remained and he has committed it in a fatal spirit of obstinacy."³⁰ *The Hindu*, on 15th October 1909, wrote: "The veto exercised by the Government of Mysore, is an act of bare-faced despotism."³¹ "The three years of his Dewanship at Mysore was full of excitement. The Press Regulation, the Mining Regulation, and vetoing the election of Mr. M Venkatakrishnayya, and D Venkataramanayya evoked considerable hostile criticism," says Subba Rao.³²

28 *QJMS*, Vol.74, p.365. Based on *The Compilation of Papers Relating to Mysore Newspaper Regulation in Karnataka State Archives*.

29 *Ibid.*, p.364

30 Halappa, G.S., *History of Freedom Movement in Karnataka*, II p.745.

31 *Ibid*

32 Subba Rao, K., *Revived Memories*, p.410.

The Maharaja, on his part, was deeply upset over the news of demolition of the compound wall of Doddanna Shetty's building. He even made a secret visit to personally see the demolished wall at the site. Doddanna Shetty was also a very popular public figure, helper of the poor and a gentleman known for his charitable disposition and the event caused a huge outcry among the public. Many wrote protest letters to the Maharaja. In addition, the rejection of the selection of the two members to the Council, known for their gentlemanly qualities and long record of public service, added to the public resentment.

These three developments, namely the Mysore Newspaper Regulation, demolition of Doddanna Shetty's compound wall in Bangalore and the rejection of the selected members to the Legislative Council, marked a series of dark clouds which shadowed the Dewan's earlier achievements. It was a dark end to his earlier achievements. When the Dewan turned 60, "the Maharaja offered him *tambula*," (or, bade him goodbye) says D.V.Gundappa.³³ Madhav Rao retired from post of Dewan of Mysore on 13th March 1909.

Madhav Rao was an able administrator responsible for many permanent developmental changes in Mysore administration, a good orator and an active organiser. However, despite his fine personality and a cheerful disposition, Madhav Rao did have an ego which harmed him more than he would have anticipated and earned him some enemies.

Even in an autocracy, people can devise their own methods to protest and rebel, something which is indicated by the responses of some of the newspapers at the time. The newspapers in Mysore had always been protesting against unfair Government policies. "Native States do not afford even those facilities for popular representation which exist in British territories. Of the several states, only three, Mysore, Travancore and Pudukottai, have Representative Assemblies. But even here, the assemblies can merely acquaint the Government about the grievances of the people. They are seldom consulted on any legislative measures in contemplation," wrote *Nadegannadi* on 29th June 1906.³⁴

Commenting on the anticipated press regulation, the daily *Bharati* wrote on 7th August 1906: "The new Press Law practically binds the press owners hand and foot and gags their mouths. Such a drastic measure is altogether unwarranted by the political situation in the state... A thief, a robber, and even a murderer can be declared guilty after a fair trial in a court of Law. But the editor of a newspaper who fights for the ruler, the country and the people can be summarily deported from his country without trial."³⁵ "Everyone was till now under the impression the administration in Mysore was conducted well under the regime of V.P.Madhav Rao as Dewan. The press law recently passed by the Government has not only changed the public impression about it, but has also served to create feeling of disgust in the public mind," wrote *Kesari*, Madras on 12th August 1908, adding, "there is no such law even in British India."³⁶

³³ D.V.G., *Op.cit.* pp:80-81; for details see pp:78-79.

³⁴ Halappa, *Op.cit.* p.741.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*, pp:741-42.



Dewan of Baroda

Later, Madhav Rao worked in Baroda (Vadodara) State as Dewan from 1914 to 1916. The British wanted Prince Gaekwad of Baroda to be 'tamed' by Madhav Rao and subsequently, appointed him there. Gaekwad was known for his independent spirit and dashing progressive ideas.

In Baroda, the Dewan fixed the land revenue by settling it for 60 years, going against the wishes of Gaekwad and Members of the State Executive Council. His social, economic and educational reforms added to the prestige of the prince. Sanskrit teaching to the Depressed Classes and also to the higher classes (*Pandits*) with adoption of modern academic methods was initiated. Encouragement was extended to education of women in conservative Gujarat where the *purdah* still prevailed. He also initiated and led the propaganda against child marriage. Elementary education was made free. Libraries were opened. Technical education was introduced. Co-operative movement was given a fillip. Those were the days of the First World War and the financial situation was critical.³⁷ Madhav Rao also persuaded the Paramount Government to lift the ban on use of local cotton in Gujarat textile mills by negotiating with the Viceroy Lord Hardinge II.

Madhav Rao further convinced the British that Prince Gaekwad's loyalty to the Paramount power was unquestionable. When he retired in 1916, Madhav Rao had left an indelible mark on Baroda during his Dewanship.³⁸

Madhav Rao was a good speaker with liberal ideas. He became President of the Madras Provincial Conference and presided over its session in Tanjavur in 1912 and 1913. He became very close to Annie Besant and Madan Mohan Malaviya. He presided over the Hindu Mahasaba Conference held at Lucknow in 1916 and also presided over the All-India Industrial Conference at Kolkata in 1917. The Karnataka State Political Conference which strongly demanded unification of Karnataka, held at Dharwad in 1920, was also presided over by him. He further presided over the public meeting addressed by Mahatma Gandhi at Bangalore in 1934.

Madhav Rao passed away on 1st December 1934. A suburb in Bangalore is named 'Madhavanagar' after him.

³⁷ *Hindustan Review*

³⁸ *Ibid.*



Jewels of Administration

Mysore Palace Under Construction Before 1912

