



Chapter 22

● Arcot Ramaswamy Mudaliar

A great personality came to undertake a small job. Sir Arcot Ramaswamy Mudaliar was appointed to the Dewanship of Mysore in place of N. Madhav Rao. Though he had previously held very important positions in Madras, his work in Mysore is very difficult to appreciate. Unlike other Dewans who had worked earlier in Mysore, he did not know Mysore State very well. But being an experienced bureaucrat and politician, he could have advised the Maharaja who was far younger than himself to agree to grant responsible government a few weeks earlier than he did. He could have avoided the tumultuous turmoil of the 'Mysore Chalo' Satyagraha, which among other things cost more than 20 lives, of the Maharaja's subjects. Perhaps it was the Justice Party outlook of the anti Congress stand and extreme imperial loyalty that made him accept the job and take a stubborn stand against popular agitation in Mysore.

No doubt, Mudaliar is clearly one of the jewels among the administrators, but sadly, in Mysore the jewel did not just shed its lustre, but earned ignominy and demands to 'boycot' him. Even after the formation of the responsible Government, he continued as the Dewan for several months, a phenomenon beyond explanation.

The twin brothers, Ramaswamy and Lakmanaswamy born on 14th October 1887, rose to be great public figures holding important positions under British Rule, even in free India. Ramaswamy Mudaliar was honoured with Padma Vibhushan in 1970.

Ramaswamy had his school education in Kurnool and graduated from Madras Christian College. After getting a law degree from the Government Law College, Madras, Mudaliar practised law in Madras. He entered politics, became the Mayor of Madras, Member of Madras Legislative Assembly and a

member of the Central Legislative Assembly. In all these positions, he stood out as a scholar and an intellectual. He had also attended the Round Table Conference in London representing India. He worked as the member of the Viceroy's Council, the Imperial War Cabinet and the Pacific War Committee. He worked as India's representative in U.N.O. in 1945. Mudaliar was Dewan of Mysore between 1946 and 1949.

He joined as Dewan in July 1946. During the first two years, he did not function as a full-fledged Dewan, and had to spend most of his energies in dealing with the 'Mysore Chalo Movement' during September-October in 1947. In 1947 October, when K.C. Reddy became Prime Minister, all important decisions were taken by the Cabinet and his role as an administrator was only marginal, though he presided over the Cabinet meetings as well as the Legislative bodies.

Two important projects were given impetus by Mudaliar, though they were already in the pipeline in the days of Dewan Madhav Rao, but had to be held in abeyance due to paucity of funds during the Second World War. The Jog Power Scheme, planned by Sir Mirza and kept in abeyance by Sir Madhav Rao was pursued with vigour after the end of the Second World War. In February 1949, the first generating unit of 12,000 K.Ws. was commissioned as a part of the Jog Power Scheme with a total capacity of 48,000 K.Ws. By that time, the work connected with the construction of a dam across the river Sharavati at Hirebhasakar village located upstream of Jog Falls, capable of storing 708 million m. Cmt. of water, and the connected power house were completed and power began to flow from the station. The dam submerged 4,800 acres of land in Sagar and Hosnagar taluks. Later, the Linganamakki dam was taken up by subsequent governments, and is still a major power project in the State.¹

The other programme started in the days of Mudaliar was the Bhadra Irrigation Project which was started in 1947 and completed in 1972. A masonry dam of about 440 meters long was built with the intention of impounding 1,785 m.cmt of water at Lakkavalli in Tarikere taluk in order to generate power.²

'Mysore Chalo'

The Dewan in the meanwhile tried to organise a loyalist elite group as opposed to the Congress. As the Maharaja acceded the Mysore State to Indian union, 'the transition from authoritarian to responsible rule became easy'. But there was no talk of establishing a responsible government, though Congress had a majority in the Assembly. The Dewan constituted a consultative committee to consider ways and means of running the government and asked the Congress to nominate



1. Karnataka Gazetteer, Shimoga Dist, p.175.

2. Ibid.



four representatives, but the offer was rejected. Bhashyam announced that starting of a Satyagraha was the only honourable course for the Congress to achieve a responsible government. The Working Committee decided to launch the non-violent Palace Satyagraha which would continue till the goal was reached. This was on 21st August 1947.

Whether the Maharaja himself was responsible for the Palace Satyagraha, popularly known as '*Mysore Chalo*' movement which took place in Mysore State and lasted for more than six weeks in September-October 1947 or the Dewan, is not known for certain. The Dewan and Maharaja's Private Secretary Sir T Thumboo Chetty were the main advisors to the Maharaja.

Lack of foresight of both the advisors in not advising Maharaja on the right course of action caused heavy bloodshed, unnecessary lawlessness and turmoil. Only the Hyderabad Nizam excelled the Mysore Maharaja in this perversion. While the Nizam had hot-headed Razakars surrounding him, the Mysore Maharaja had a few sycophants around him. Despite signing the Instrument of Accession to join the Indian Union on August 9, the Maharaja did not think of establishing the responsible government and instead preferred to run the administration with the Dewan and the Council. "If the ruler could not come to the people, then the people would go to the ruler, to the very gates of the palace," was the stand of the Congress. K.C.Reddy, former Mysore Congress President had written to the Dewan on the 7th August: "Under the circumstances it has to be assumed that our talks are at end. Please let me know that the responsibility for the same is yours." ³

At a mammoth public meeting attended by over one lakh people on 1 September at Bangalore, the Congress headed by K.C.Reddy (who was called 'Dictator') gave a call to the people to start the Palace Satyagraha. He urged them to start on

4th September and reach Mysore on 14th September by foot from all places. It was decided to go by foot so that the message could reach people on all routes. '*Mysore Chalo*' was the slogan, an inspiring echo of Subhash Chandra Bose's '*Delhi Chalo*'. "The agitation far exceeded the Quit India Movement in scale and intensity because it drew upon idealists whose main preoccupation with national level events and upon men whose interest lay in more tangible rewards within the political system of Mysore" says James Manor.⁴

The government strategy was to prevent the Satyagrahis from reaching Mysore by stopping them on the way, rounding them up and transporting them to distant jungles inside the state. Many Satyagrahis stated that their whole group was detained till it was dark, and at midnight, they were put in a bus and taken to distant places passing through forests. They were made to alight one by one, being dropped alone at a point far apart from the other, in order that they did not reassemble. Since they were aware that this tactic was also used in 1942-43, the Satyagrahis took a candle or a small torch light or a

3. Hettne, p.205.

4. Manor, James, p.156.

match box and came back on the road they had been taken, reassembled, and reached a nearby town before dawn. With the help of the local community and sympathetic townsmen who fed them, they started on their march to Mysore again. Several thousands were treated by the Government this way and they could not stop the waves of Satyagrahis on the one hand and could not feed them in jails, due to scarcity of foodgrains.

Public meetings, processions and surrounding the Tahsildar's offices and hoisting the national flag on the *cutchery* buildings were other forms of agitation. Groups on march to Mysore broke pitchers tied to toddy trees and burnt toddy shops on their way. Volunteers came from Bombay and Madras provinces to participate in the Satyagraha.

Colleges, schools and bazaars were closed. Firing was resorted to control the mob and deaths occurred in Tumkur (1), Hosadurga (6), Shidlagatta (2), Tirthahalli (2), Madhugiri (2), Bangalore Seppings Road (6), Mysore (1) (where Ramaswamy, a school boy was killed, after whom Ramaswamy circle is named in the city).⁵ There was a strike by railway employees in Mysore, sabotage in the Railways, severing connection between Mysore and Hassan. On September 19, a large batch of police constables went on strike in Bangalore and they 'marched from station to station asking comrades to do likewise'.⁶

The Dewan had to step down and ordered all political leaders to be released on Gandhi Jayanti Day (October 2nd) and started capitulations on October 8th. On October 11th, he authorised the Assembly members to form a cabinet in which six were to be Congressmen along with three others. He also gave the new government the power to form a new constitution. The Maharaja consented to it on October 12th. "He gave away the prerogative of the princely house of Mysore."

As per the agreement, a coalition government with six Congressmen, one Muslim League member and two others were included and the Cabinet was formed where the Dewan would continue. A new Cabinet was sworn in on 27th October. However, continuation of the Dewan was not appreciated by the people. He had been greeted by the slogan 'Arcot-Boycott' during the agitation by thousands. But for the time being, Congress accepted it, and a new Cabinet with K.C.Reddy as the Chief Minister was sworn in.⁷ The Dewan continued as a 'fifth wheel' even after the new Cabinet was sworn in, until he was pressurised to quit in May 1949.

"The 'Mysore Chalo' agitation was largely the work of people who were a part of or those very near the urban centres of the state. The movement gained support from the wide range of urban groups, including a significant number of labour and upper middle class and professional people who had remained aloof. But



K.Changanarayana Reddy

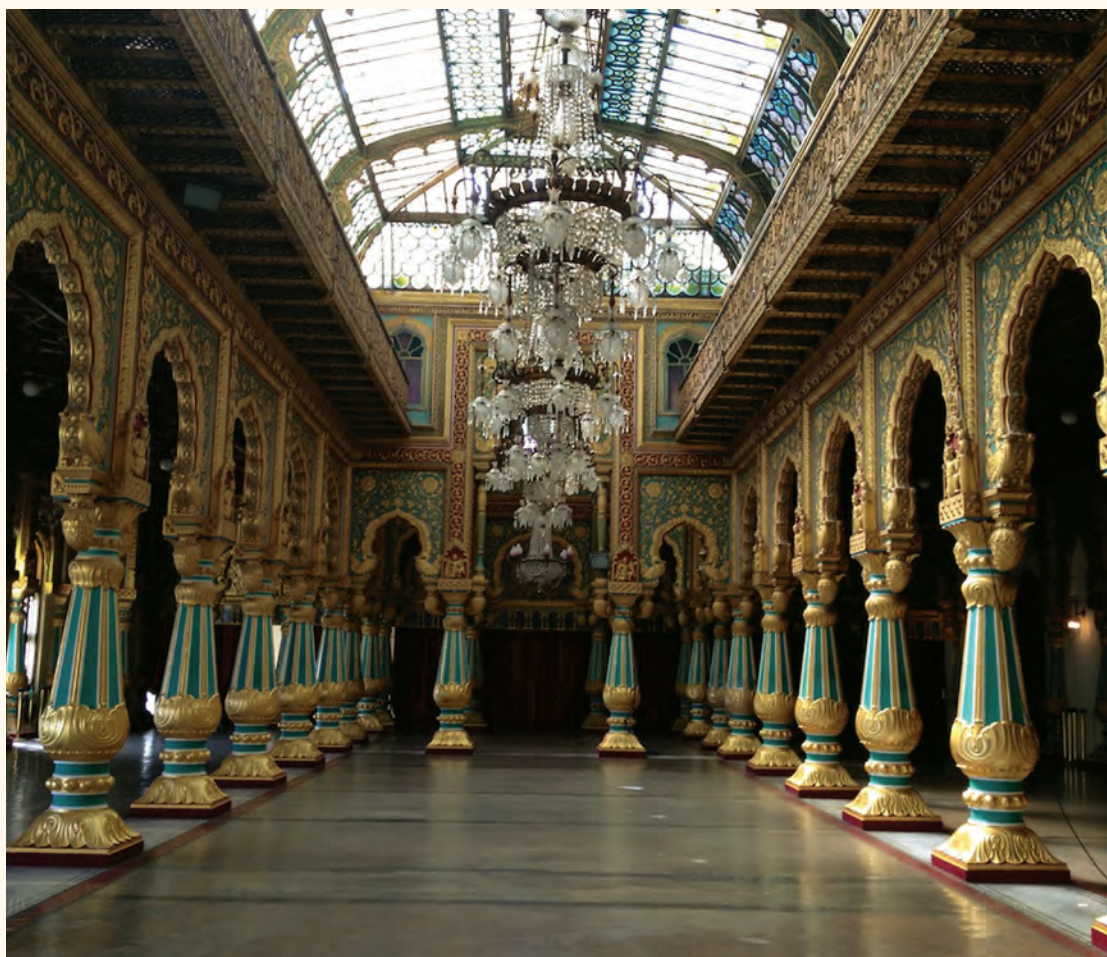
5. Karnataka Gazetteer, I p.118.

6. Manor, Op.cit.p.158.

7. Karnataka Gazetteer, I.p.369.

it did not penetrate far beyond the borders of cities and towns,” say James Manor.⁸ “No agitation in Mysore even succeeded in evoking extensive response among ryots,” he continued. But James Manor was not right in making the statement that the movement did not enjoy support of rural folk and ryots. Interviews of freedom fighters (*Swatantrya Sangaramada Smritigalu*, in Three Volumes. Edited by Suryanath U. Kamath) indicate that during their march to Mysore through villages away from the main roads to avoid arrest, they had the privilege of being welcomed and fed by villagers in the interiors. There are also accounts of hundreds of rural ryots joining the movement in 1939, 1942-43 and 1947.

Subsequently, a Constituent Assembly for Mysore was elected in February 1948 and Congress won 67 out of 76 seats with overwhelming majority. A new Cabinet was sworn in dropping Non Congress Ministers. As the constitution was being discussed with Talakere Subramanya presiding over the proceedings as Speaker, a message came from the Government of India that a Constitution for the whole of India was taking shape, and there was no need to have a separate Constitution for Mysore.



Dewan-i-Kas, Mysore Palace

8. Manor, Op.cit p.160.