



## Chapter 5

### ● Two Decades after Purnaiah

Dewan Purnaiah gave Mysore State not only a sound administrative machinery but also a proud identity while securing its boundaries. He hauled it from total chaos, rebellion and unrest to place it within an efficient framework of able administration and political order within a decade. His political acumen earned him the respect and admiration of the British, while his strong personality and able leadership skills earned him loyal subordinates.

However, Purnaiah's efficiency did not go down well with the teenaged king Krishnaraja Wodeyar III who saw the Dewan as an impediment to his own freedom as king. The king's impressions were fuelled by people around him at the palace who disliked the Dewan's uncompromising manner of running the kingdom – he was a hard task master and a disciplinarian who regulated the expenditure in the palace with an iron hand. Wodeyar soon became convinced that he could run the state machinery without the old Dewan and considered removing him from his regency and dewanship.

Within a year of Purnaiah's death (in 1812), confusion took reign over the kingdom and the king had neither the sound advice of Purnaiah nor the guidance of his grandmother Queen Mother Rani Lakshmi Ammanni, who had passed away earlier in February 1810, to help him.

Resident Arthur Cole, on his part, initially supported the king in his inclination to rule without the Dewan, but was soon forced to detract following the unfavourable developments: "Krishna Raja Wodeyar, then about sixteen years of age commenced his rule under the most favourable auspices, with a treasury well filled and good wishes of the whole country. Flatterers and parasites, however soon gained too ready an ear, and in 1814 the Resident was compelled to report that the Raja has dissipated on all worthless persons

the treasure accumulated by Purnaiah, while the pay of the troops was for several months in arrears.” While the king was intelligent, he lacked Purnaiah’s administrative capability.<sup>1</sup>

However, Cole’s complaint was not taken seriously by the Company. The Mysore army had successfully participated in the Company’s campaigns against the Marathas, and further, in view of the famines in 1816-17 and 1823-24 in the State, the Company was sympathetic to the Maharaja.

Hayavadana Rao gives a list of Dewans appointed during the time:

- |                             |                        |
|-----------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Bargir Bakshi Balaji Rao | April 1811 to Jan.1812 |
| 2. Savar Bakshi Rama Rao    | Feb.1812 to Oct.1817   |
| 3. Babu Rao                 | Nov.1817 to April 1818 |
| 4. Siddraja Urs             | May 1818 to Feb.1820   |
| 5. Babu Rao                 | March 1820 to Aug.1821 |
| 6. Lingaraj Urs             | Nov. 1821 to Nov.1822  |
| 7. Babu Rao                 | Dec.1822 to Nov.1825   |
| 8. Venkata Urs              | May 1827 to Oct. 1831. |

“Not much is known about these Dewans,” says Hayavadana Rao.<sup>2</sup>

Bakshi Rama Rao was the brother of Bishtopanth Badami who had played a prominent role in the Maratha wars as part of the Mysore contingent. Rama Rao was the Faujdar of the Nagar Division in 1799. In 1809, he had played an important role in suppressing the mutiny of the European officers at Srirangapatna by checking their march from Chitradurga to Srirangapatna. Later he distinguished himself in the British army in its fight against Holkar in 1818. Thus, Resident Cole recommended his case for Dewanship.

The British Government made use of the Mysore army in its campaigns such as the one against Pindari Amir Khan in 1812-17, the final operation against the Pindaris and even in the Kittur action in Belgaum District in 1824. Sir John Malcolm paid a rich tribute to the Maharaja’s army and his administration. The Mysore Horses had served in the campaigns in Malwa and Rajputana as stated above, with much zeal, fidelity and gallantry. After participating in many heroic campaigns against the Marathas, the Mysore Horses returned to Mysore in March 1820. Bakshi Rama



*John Malcolm*

Rao and his nephew Bhima Rao who commanded the Mysore Cavalry in these British campaigns were honoured by the king in 1818.

“As the expenditure went up to Rs. 90 lakhs, some years proved deficit years. Moreover, owing to low prices, the grain collected as the Government

1. Rice, p.424.

2.C.H., p.2851.

share fetched very low prices”, says Hayavadana Rao. Following Purnaiah’s example, large sums of money was spent on public works, he points out. Between 1811-12 and 1830-31 money spent was on an average of 42,514 *Kanthirayi Pagodas* per year.<sup>3</sup> But things do not appear to be as simple as presented by Hayavadana Rao.

### Corrupt Officers

Rama Rao had been the Faujdar of Nagar since 1799 and held that post till 1805. During his tenure, he filled his Faujdari by appointing his relations, mainly from the family of Bhima Rao of Annigeri and Krishna Rao of Hanagal. After 1805, a close relation of Rama Rao, Sarvothama Rao was appointed the Faujdar of Nagar for the next 20 years barring some years in between. Sarvothama Rao had many marital relations within Rama Rao’s family. The prevalence of such unchecked nepotism in the administrative cadre resulted in one corrupt official protecting another.



Veena Venkatasubbiah

Another prominent officer was Babu Rao, a Sheristedar in the Dewan’s office. After Babu Rao became the Dewan in 1817, Rama Rao and Veena Venkatasubbiah became Moosahibs of the Maharaja. While a Moosahib was a non-statutory post, they were unofficially advisors to the Maharaja. However, Babu Rao did not stop at the Dewan’s post. Having made his way into the good books of Resident Cole, he went on to hold various posts under him, and finally in 1832, he was appointed as Dewan in the Commissioner’s office when the post of Dewan itself was abolished.

Moosahib Venkatasubbiah has been described as an evil genius by historians. Seven Amildars in the Nagar Division were his relations. All these Amildars in Nagar were corrupt, but whenever there was any complaint against any one of them, they were transferred to another subdivision in the same Faujdari by Krishna Rao Hanagal or Sarvothama Rao as per Venkatasubbiah’s directive. Chowdiah was the Residency Sheristedar and a close friend of Moosahib Venkatasubbiah. The whole circle was corrupt.

“Chowdiah and Veene Venkatasubbiah were in league and often did not scruple, it is said, fabricated communication between the Maharaja and the Resident to serve their own ends,” says Shama Rao.<sup>4</sup> There were instances when they would prevent important communication from reaching the Maharaja or the Resident.

The developments leading to such wretched situations fueled by a vicious and corrupt administration and the king’s inexperience were later described by the eye witness accounts of Col Welsh who had met the prince in 1811 and had formed a good opinion about him. He wrote in 1830 that “on acquiring

3. Ibid, p.2867.

4. Shama Rao, p.405.

the entire management he threw himself into the most improper hands and disregarded the advice of his real friends to such a degree that some of the most important stations were filled by low and insignificant wretches, that the whole country groaned under oppression... He has miserably failed, and those who frequent that once regulated country bear nothing but complaints against the sovereign in every village.” Quoted by Rice, this clearly illustrates how the king’s effort to free himself from the hold of Purnaiah landed him in a vicious whirlpool.

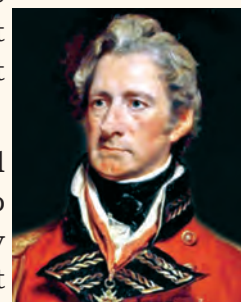
The king’s incapacity and ignorance leading to misrule caused widespread unrest called the Nagar Uprising and the Revolt of the Tarikere Palegar which can be briefly surveyed.

“In the meanwhile, several corrupt men continued to occupy important positions, including Motikhane Nagaraja Rao who was appointed as Palace Bakshi and Anoo Rama Rao who became a Moosahib (confidential advisor of the Maharaja), both appointed at the instance of Veena Venkatasubbiah, says M Shama Rao. Venkata Raje Urs, the last Dewan, was an incompetent man and he made himself a tool of Venkatasubbiah,” Shama Rao adds.<sup>5</sup> The last named was supported by Casamajor, the new Resident who replaced Cole in 1827.

“His Highness’ well-known generosity and his interest in temples and other religious institutions appear to have created misunderstandings in certain quarters,” says C Hayavadana Rao. <sup>6</sup> This was recorded in a minute by Sir Thomas Munro, the Governor of Madras, in 1825 based on a report by Cole. The Governor personally visited Mysore on 16 September 1825.

K.N.V. Shastry summarises the situation better: “The vast treasure that dubious policy of Purnaiah had wrung from the people was speedily squandered, and not on the country whose resources had been exhausted to supply it, but on foul creature of whom such a prince soon gathers round him, on foreign users and dealers in shawl and jewels who flocked to Mysore as an assured prey. In the meanwhile, the government had become venal and corrupt. No efficient control was exercised over district officers; the highest offices were upto sale; valuable lands were alienated to propitiate brahmins; new taxes and monopolies were invented to be bestowed like pensions on pimps and parasites; the people were vexed by the swarm of petty rulers and monopolists, could obtain no redress, and nothing that left fit to be administration of justice.” <sup>7</sup> Shastry’s account presents a harsher and factual picture of the situation.

When Governor Munro sought reports on financial transaction of the State by the king during his visit to Mysore, he was told that the same had not been furnished by Purnaiah. The reports were to help the Company know about



*Sir Thomas Munro*

5. Ibid, pp.404-405.

6. C.H., Op.cit.p.2867.

7. Shastry, K.N.V., *Administration of Mysore under Sir Mark Cubbon*, 1932, p.17-18, (Henceforth KNVS).

the true state of affairs, and to see that expenditure did not exceed receipts. In view of the situation at hand, he advised the king that a treasure of 10 or 12 lakhs *Kanthirayi Pagodas* were to be accumulated. While Munro did not take the over-expenditure or the religious matters too seriously, he advised the Raja to curb such expenditure. The Governor also managed to restore the relationship between Cole and the prince to cordial terms.

### Raja Unmoved

All remonstrance failed to check the Raja's downward course, Rice points out. High Offices of the State were sold to the highest bidders. The people were oppressed by the system of *sharti*, a contract designed by the Amildar to realise certain amount of revenue for the Government, but which was misused by the Amildar to collect more than what was due. "The consequence was the ryot became impoverished, the revenues more embarrassed and the Amildars themselves suffered frequent losses," says Rice.<sup>8</sup> The Sharti Amildar and the Sharti collector turned more and more oppressive while the ryots groaned under the burden.

Meanwhile, the court of justice was without any power to pass sentences against criminals and it was the Raja who alone held the power to take any action. However, his irregular attendance to work caused the jails to remain overcrowded for years with prisoners who "if guilty at all they were guilty of petty offences." When there were riots, these prisoners escaped to join the riots.

When Munro died in 1827, the new Resident Casamajor endeavoured to arrest the Raja's downfall. Unfortunately, the Raja did not take Casamajor into confidence nor did he have any senior advisor to guide him. "His Highness seemed destined to place his trust always in unworthy advisors," says Rice.<sup>9</sup>

The troubled times were marked by revenue deficits. The people of Nagar area failed to pay their dues with regularity. Thus, the outstanding balance from the region stood at Rs. 13 lakhs and in 1828, a large remission was granted to the tune of Rs. 7.5 lakhs by the Faujdar. The Raja replaced the Faujdar with Vira Raja Urs, a royal relation. Acting upon fears of his corrupt practices being exposed, Rama Rao, the former Faujdar, joined the leaders of a violent uprising that had been sparked off in the area by one 'Nagar Khavind' Sadara Malla, a aspirant to the Nagar throne. The uprising got a helping hand from the officials in Nagar area who were either Rama Rao's relations or his henchmen and who protected Rao and his fellow rebels.

In August 1830, the Nagar Khavind attacked Anantpur in Shimoga area but was repulsed. In December, he gathered a large number of peasants near Honnali. He was joined by the Palegar of Tarikere. At news of these developments, the king went to Channarayapatna on 13<sup>th</sup> December 1830 and

8. Rice, p.425.

9. Ibid, p.426.

succeeded in suppressing the uprising there. Some of the leaders were hanged and in January, the king camped at Hebbur.

### **Revolt Spreads**

Meanwhile, the uprising continued to spread across the State with trouble breaking out in places like Chennagiri, Holalkere, Chitterahalli, Krishnarajakatte, Arakalgud, Chikkanaikanahalli, Hagalavadi, Honnavalli, Budihal etc. Thousands of peasants armed with muskets, spikes, swords etc and beating drums and blowing trumpets, spread the unrest all over.

When the Maharaja sought the help of the Subsidiary Force to quell the rebellion, Casamaijor turned him down. It was only later through Harihar that the British regiment came to the king's rescue. Rochfort, the Resident's escort, took command of the Mysore troops and captured Kamandurga on 3<sup>rd</sup> March. Next, he marched to Shimoga and then took over Honnali, the rebels' stronghold, on March 12<sup>th</sup>. After capturing Honnali, the Mysore force led by Rochfort proceeded to the western parts of Nagar, namely Shikaripur and Udugani.

In this manner, the uprising was swiftly quelled despite stiff opposition from the insurgents, and on 26<sup>th</sup> March, Nagar was occupied by the troops. At the end of the turmoil, 20 government officials had been killed upon the orders of the Nagar Palegars.

Resident Casamaijor also took part in the campaign to contain the rebellion. However, his advice to take stringent action against the rebels went unheeded by the Maharaja. In January 1831, Casamaijor reported to the Madras government that the Maharaja was always averse to spilling the blood of his subjects.

Meanwhile, the unrest took hold of Canara where the rebels had secured support. There was obstruction to trade at Bangalore. Lushington, Governor of Madras, was compelled to visit Mysore on 1<sup>st</sup> May 1831. After discussions with the Maharaja, it was agreed more Subsidiary Force was to be used and the Resident and Maharaja was asked to proceed to Nagar which they reached on June 12<sup>th</sup>. This was a major breakthrough. On 10<sup>th</sup> May, Casamaijor secured the authority to issue cowls from the Maharaja and he arrived at Holehonnur on 19<sup>th</sup> May.

Lakkavadi had been the headquarters of Tarikere Rangappa Naik. When the Mysore troops reached the place, Rangappa Naik escaped to Mandagadde after a severe fight. Pursued by Major Clemons, Rangappa was forced to flee from Mandagadde as well. The troops stayed in the area to talk to the local people and win their confidence, while soldiers were sent to Nagar, Chandragutty Shikaripur, Tarikere and Wastare. By June, Anantpur, Gauja and other centres were brought under control. Clemons spoke to the rioters and guaranteed the cowls of the peasants. Meanwhile, Rangappa Naik's son,

Hanumappa Naik and his men surrounded the Chikamagalur fort. Capt. Cameron and his troops swiftly reached the place and forced the insurgents to flee to Wastare. On their part, the Resident and the Dewan addressed large number of peasants to hear their grievances, including misuse of *Bitty* (free labour) by officials for their personal gains and other forms of oppression, and promised their redressal.

Nonetheless, the Patels and others petty officers were still in league with the insurgents and the conciliatory attitude adopted by the government did not bear fruit. There was fresh trouble in June. Though the Maharaja and Casamajor returned to Mysore in July, they were unsure of peace being restored. The Nagar rebels had fled to the Nizam's territory and Mysore commander Annappa went in pursuit of him. The recalcitrant elements already in the Nizam's territory supported the Nagar rebels and together they marched into Dharwad District and reached Savanur. However were captured by Annappa at Savanur, while the rebels managed to flee, when Annappa received the news that the Mysore administration had been assumed by the Company.

### State Administration Taken Over

“The State of Mysore had been for some time attracting the notice of the Government of India, and it was considered that the insurrection was of so serious a character as to call for special enquiry”.<sup>10</sup> The report of the enquiry showed that “the misgovernment of the Raja had produced grave and widely spread discontent, that revenue were rapidly failing and maladministration was rampant in all departments of the Government.”

Governor General Lord William Bentinck, quoting the Article 4 and 5 of Subsidiary Treaty, addressed a letter to the Maharaja highlighting his mismanagement, tyranny and oppression and the need for British takeover of the administration. “It has seemed to me that in order to do this effectively, it will be necessary to transfer the entire administration of the country into the hands of British officers; and I have accordingly determined to nominate two commissioners for the purpose who will immediately proceed to Mysore.”

Bentinck requested the Maharaja to issue the necessary orders and proclamation to officers and authorities in Mysore for giving effect of the transfer of the territory and investing the British Commissioners with full authority in all departments, within 10 days from the date of receipt of the letter. A sum of one lakh Star *Pagodas* per annum was allotted to the king for his personal expenses.

The order was received by the Maharaja on 19<sup>th</sup> October 1831, at the time of the Dasara festival, and he peacefully surrendered his authority. The chaos and turmoil that followed Purnaiah's exit stands as a true testimony to his able administration of the State till then.

10. Ibid, p.428.

Of the British Commissioners, the Senior Commissioner was to be appointed by the Supreme Government and the Junior Commissioner by the Madras Government. The Senior Commissioner had the casting vote and was entrusted with the power to override the decision of the Junior Commissioner. They both were to be aided by the Dewan in financial matters. However both posts were abolished in 1834. The Commissioners were under the Government of Madras till June 1832 when they were made immediate subordinates to the Supreme Government. "It was soon found that a Board of two Commissioners viz., Junior and Senior, who naturally constantly differed in opinion, was an agency ill-adapted for the organization for the proper system of government," says Rice.<sup>11</sup>

Accordingly, Col. Morrison was appointed as Commissioner in April 1834 and following his transfer, he was succeeded by Col. Mark Cubbon as Commissioner of Mysore State in June 1834. Cubbon was the nephew of former Resident and historian Wilks.

Rice presents the list of Commissioners who administered Mysore upto Cubbon: 1) Col. Briggs from 4<sup>th</sup> October 1831 as Senior Commissioner; 2) C.M. Lushington from 4<sup>th</sup> October 1831 as Junior Commissioner; 3) C.D. Drury from 18<sup>th</sup> February 1832 as Junior Commissioner; 4) Col. J.M. Morrison as Senior Commissioner from 6<sup>th</sup> February 1833; 5) Col. Mark Cubbon as Junior Commissioner from 17 Feb 1834. Cubbon however took charge only in June 1834<sup>12</sup>, and 6) Bowring in 1862. Col. J.S. Fraser was appointed Resident of Mysore in June 1834 and Commissioner of Kodagu. Maj. R.D. Stokes succeeded him in 1836, and the post of the Resident was eventually abolished in 1843.

The instruction of the Governor General to the Madras Government was "the agency under the Commissioner should be exclusively native, indeed native institutions should carefully be maintained."

### **Briggs as Commissioner**

Upon taking charge, Col. Briggs seriously endeavoured to suppress the insurrection still continuing albeit on a small scale. A proclamation in February 1832 warned rebels against further depredations and asked them return to peaceful condition. The Tarikere Palegar sent a letter of submission which was accepted by the Governor. Later, Briggs granted a pension to Sarjappa Nayaka of the Tarikere Palegar family. He, however revolted again to join the Kodagu Raja and was killed in 1834.

Lord William Bentinck appointed a Committee to look into the details of the insurrection. The Committee comprising four European officers, namely Major General Thomas Hawker, W Morrison, J.M. Macleod and Lt. Col. Mark Cubbon, submitted its report on 12 December 1833.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, p.429.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.



In its report, the Committee pointed out that the disturbances appeared mostly in those areas where there were separate rulers or Palegars who had been in power since a long time even before the expansionist policies of Tipu and Hyder. Such regions (like Keladi or Tarikere to quote some examples) had not been subject to Mysore and were uncomfortable in accepting the Mysore Raja as their ruler.

Secondly, it observed that the collection of revenue had fallen in arrears due to fall in the price of farm products. This had been the case in Canara as well, causing the unrest to spike there. Further, withdrawal of the British troops from various centres was found to have made the subjects there fearless of the State since they regarded the British army with awe.

A rumour that Purnaiah had handed over more than two crores of rupees to the Maharaja when he retired was also found to be untrue – the amount handed over had been just Rs. 26 lakhs. This rumour had led the Company to misunderstand that the Raja was squandering huge wealth.

The Committee also felt that the unrest and disturbances could have been easily suppressed before the Keladi rebels and Tarikere Palegar had joined in. (In fact, the Maharaja's request to utilise the Subsidiary Force in the early stages of the uprising had been rejected by Resident Casamaijor. It was only later that the Subsidiary Forces were engaged.) The Committee wrote at length on the *sharti* system and its evil repercussions.

It further attributed the disturbances to the discontent prevailing among peasants not due to the avarice of the Raja, but possibly due to the lack of a machinery to hear people's grievances where the Residents failed to hear them as a policy of non-interference. According to some witnesses, though Resident Cole had lent his ear to such complaints, his successor Casamaijor did not. On this policy of non-interference laid down by the Company, the Committee felt, "Whatever the reasons of the policy there might be for adopting it, to have been anything but calculated to promote the policy of the British name." This observation later propelled Commissioner Gordon to advise Dewan Rangacharlu to set up some kind of a representative institution to hear public grievances following the Rendition (1881).

Lord William Bentinck adopted a sympathetic view towards the Raja. In 1834, he nursed "doubts as to the legality and justice of depriving His Highness of the administration of the county." Bentinck suggested to the Court of Directors that a portion of the State comprising Manjarabad, Mysore and Ashtagrama divisions be restored to the Maharaja and the rest of the territory taken over by the Company, as a guarantee for the fulfilment of military obligations resting on the king as per the Subsidiary Treaty of 1799. Bentinck was of the view that the king should have been warned by the Company early on over the developments leading to the uprising. In response, the Court of Directors, in September 1835, wrote to Lord Auckland, the then Governor General, that



## Jewels of Administration

the Subsidiary Treaty did not permit the division of Mysore. “This decision of the Court of Directors although cruel to the Krishnaraja Wodeyar at the time, now be regarded as a blessing in disguise in as much as it prevented the fragmentation of the state and helped preserve its integrity,” writes Shama Rao.<sup>13</sup>

Nonetheless, the fact that there had been mis-government in Mysore during the Maharaja’s rule which bred high-handed and corrupt officials and rampant nepotism cannot be lightly brushed aside. “Authority was most difficult to maintain in the eighteenth century when anarchy reigned supreme in the whole of South India,” says K.N.V. Shastry.<sup>14</sup> A decade of able rule by Dewan Purnaiah which marked the delightful transition of Mysore State from the eighteenth into the nineteenth century was unable to withstand the opportunism and corruption that followed, leading to a complete breakdown in administrative order. K.N.V. Shastry has also pointed out that the Patels usurped many powers and duties which were not theirs and asserted themselves at the earliest opportunity in the absence of Purnaiah’s iron grip over the State machinery.



*Kaveri Sangama, Near Srirangapatna*



13 Shama Rao, p.458.

14 Shastry, Op.Cit, p.2.