

CHAPTER X.

Fresh Mahratta Invasion of Mysore.

The termination of hostilities with the English gave some respite to Haidar to levy contributions from a number of palegars and dependent chiefs. The secret treaty between Nizam Ali and Haidar before their joint invasion of the territories belonging to the English provided for the transfer to Mysore of Kadapa, Kurnool and other places between the Thungabhadra and the northern limits of Mysore as its dependencies. Haidar, accordingly, now marched with an army to the north-east and levied contributions from the Nawabs of Kadapa and Kurnool and the palegar of Gadwal. When marching in the vicinity of Gutti, he received visits from Morari Rao with considerable exchanges of courtsey and costly presents. At Bellary which was a dependency of Adwani, the jahagir of Basalat Jung, Haidar was obliged to be content with a mere promise of contribution, as on account of pressure of time and of political exigencies he could not afford to take the place by means of military operations. It was the common talk at the time that the widow of the palegar of Bellary who had taken the place of her deceased husband in the management of the paliam and who was a proud and fearless woman had when summoned by Haidar to tender submission instead of doing so sent Arishina and Kunkuma (turmeric and crimson powder which form the daily ornamentation of Hindu ladies) to show what little regard she had for Haidar's summons. Haidar next levied contributions from various other palegars on the line of his march and proceeded towards Savanoor. But finding that Madhava Rao's army largely outnumbered his own troops and considering it also risky as his former experience had shown to give battle in that open country to the Mahratta army led by Madhava Rao who possessed high military talents, he returned to Seringapatam in January 1770.

We have seen that on former occasions also there were Mahratta invasions of Mysore and the plea generally assigned for these incursions was that as the Mahrattas had succeeded to the sovereignty of Bijapur which had a claim over Mysore they became

the natural successors to this claim, besides being entitled to the chouth or a fourth share of the revenue which marked the assertion of their own sovereignty. Before returning to his capital, Haidar arranged to leave his son Tippu and his brother-in-law Mir Ali Raza in the woods of Bednore to harass the rear of Madhava Rao's army. He also adopted his former plan of destroying the country on the line of march of the Mahrattas towards Seringapatam. He further applied to the English to proceed to his assistance for repelling the Mahratta army according to the terms of the treaty concluded with them in the previous year.

None of the impediments created by Haidar prevented Madhava Rao from entering the Mysore territories and maintaining his onward march. It looked also as if Madhava Rao on this occasion had determined to annex the whole of the Mysore country to his dominions. Haidar found himself opposed single-handed—for the appeal to the English for succour had proved fruitless—to a person like Madhava Rao of distinguished military abilities and whose resources as compared with those of himself were almost inexhaustible. In these circumstances Haidar thought it prudent to come to terms with the Mahrattas and accordingly deputed Appaji Rao and Reza Ali Khan, son of Chanda Sahib, to the Mahratta court for entering into negotiations for peace. Madhava Rao demanded a crore of rupees on the ground that Haidar had levied on his pategars a large sum of money and owed on his own account tribute for two years at twelve lakhs of rupees a year for the dominions possessed by Haidar above and below the Ghauts. Besides, there was a reserve demand of chouth and also a number of other unsatisfied claims. On behalf of Haidar, it was explained that only very recently he had paid large sums of money to the Mahrattas and that his means were inadequate to meet such prohibitive demands. Madhava Rao would allow no diminution and the negotiations accordingly failed. Appaji Rao returned to Seringapatam, but Reza Ali Khan remained in the Mahratta camp under the pretext of renewing the conferences, but in reality, to quit for ever the service of Haidar as he had been disappointed in his ambition to gain possession of the Nawabship of the Carnatic with the help of Haidar.

Madhava Rao thereupon proceeded to occupy all the posts in the taluks of Kadur, Banavar, Hassan and Belur. Then proceeding eastward, he took possession without much resistance of Nandi-doorg, Doddaballapur, Chikballapur, Kolar and Mulbagal. When he arrived at Nijgal in the Nelamangala taluk, Madhava Rao was held up by the prowess of Sirdar Khan who had been deputed from Bangalore with a body of troops to defend the place. At the outset, all the efforts on the part of the Mahrattas to seize the fort by assault failed and Narayana Rao, Madhava Rao's brother, was himself wounded in one of the encounters. The Peshwa enraged at such failure was preparing to put himself at the head of a fresh assaulting party, when Madakere Naik, the palegar of Chitaldrug interposed and offered to take the post of danger. This chivalrous offer was accepted and the place was captured with such gallantry that it evoked the admiration of the whole army. In retaliation of an order which had been recently issued by Haidar to cut off the noses and ears of some of the Mahratta plunderers who were taken prisoners, Madhava Rao now ordered the same treatment to be accorded to the garrison of Nijgal. This order was accordingly carried out and when it came to the turn of Sirdar Khan, he boldly stepped forward to the presence of Madhava Rao and when the latter asked him whether it was not just that he should also be mutilated and disgraced, Sirdar Khan answered with an undaunted aspect: "The mutilation will be mine, the disgrace yours." Madhava Rao thereupon ordered his unconditional release. Shortly after, Madhava Rao was here taken ill and had to return to Poona, leaving the command in the hands of Triumbuck Rao or Triumbuck Mama as he was usually called. Narayana Rao also returned with his brother on account of the wounds he had received.

From Nijgal Triumbuck Rao proceeded to Gurumkonda which after a siege of two months surrendered to the Mahrattas. Its commander Syed Sahib, nephew of Mir Sahib was allowed to join Salabat Jung at Adwani chiefly through the intervention of Morari Rao who had effected a junction of his troops with the Peshwa's army, though but recently he and Haidar had met on terms of friendship. From Gurumkonda Triumbuck Rao returned to the west and was occupied for several months in possessing himself of

Tumkur, Devarayadoorg and various other places. Haidar's main army was at Seringapatam with a considerable number of troops at Bangalore also. From both these places detachments were sent to check the progress of the Mahrattas and to recapture the places taken by them. All attempts made by Haidar to take the enemy at a disadvantage during their march failed and at length the two armies came to closer vicinity near the hills of Melkote.

Here the Mahrattas kept up a continuous cannonade during the daytime and at night their rocket men penetrating in various directions through the woods near to the skirts of Haidar's army continued to keep the camp in perpetual agitation. For eight days this kind of harassment continued which was augmented also by the pressure of want of provisions and other requisites. On the 5th March 1771 Haidar commenced his march by the Chinkurli route towards Seringapatam, distant about 22 miles. The troops with the exception of the outposts and rear-guard moved silently off about 9 o'clock in the night, with Haidar himself at their head. Tippu was charged with the task of getting the baggage in motion and the rear-guard was directed to follow at midnight after beating the Noubat or the customary music at the usual hour as an indication to the enemy that the headquarters were still there. When however the head of the column of infantry had marched about four miles and were entering the open country, the commanding officer fancying that he saw the enemy in front fired some shots which gave intelligence of the withdrawl of the Mysore army and caused alarm to Haidar's men also of being overtaken by the Mahrattas in their retreat. At the same time, the baggages due to the embarassments caused in the woods on account of darkness had made no progress. The Mahratta horsemen quickly perceived the confusion prevailing in Haidar's army and overtook them at Chinkurli, eleven miles from Seringapatam. Here a fierce battle took place and Kirmani, though a professed admirer of Haidar, gives the following thrilling description of it :—

“The forces of the Mahrattas were in numbers like ants or flies and surrounding Haidar as he moved on made continual attacks on him. On their arrival near the hills of Chinkurli, it chanced

that a shot from one of the Mahratta guns fired at a considerable distance fell among a string of camels carrying rockets and threw them into disorder, and in the tumult and crowd of men, the rockets took fire and flying among the baggage and followers threw them into utter confusion. To increase their misfortune, a rocket which had taken fire fell on one of the boxes of ammunition and blew it up and in the black cloud of smoke which rose up to heaven, many of Haidar's brave soldiers were carried up to a great height and then cast down head foremost to the ground. Fate thus broke the bonds of discipline and order which held the army together. Mir Ali Raza Khan and Ali Zumuan Khan with many other chief officers were taken prisoners and most of the soldiers both horses and foot resigned their heads as a religious offering to the Mahrattas Thus the whole of the equipment of the army which had been collected with so much labour was now plundered or trampled beneath the hoofs of the Mahratta horses and the excellent store department and artillery, small and great, fell into the hands of the Mahrattas. The Nawab, however, mounted the hill of Chinkurli and standing on a rock viewed on all sides with furious anger the victorious career of the Mahrattas as they charged and pursued his troops. At that moment Ghazi Khan Bedi, a Pindari, presented himself and with the greatest difficulty forced him from the field and attended by only fourteen good horsemen escorted him to Puttan which was reached the next morning. Tippu assumed the disguise of a Fakir and reached Seringapatam the same night."

Haidar was delighted at the safe arrival of Tippu and with him entered the fort a little while after. The Mahrattas however wasted ten days in plundering and desolating the country around and gave time to Haidar for making preparations for resisting them. He accordingly put the defences of Seringapatam in proper order and with a lavish hand distributed presents to the men of his army. According to Kirmani's exaggerated language, Haidar threw open the door of his treasury of gold and jewels and to every horseman or foot soldier who had escaped from the disaster of Chinkurli he gave two handfuls of gold and to every man who returned with his horse and arms he gave, besides an honorary dress, a present of five

handfuls of gold. The result was that a large army was collected at Seringapatam and Triumbuck Rao when he arrived in its environs found himself unable to capture the fort.

The military operations that followed need not detain us long. Two or three incidents may however be given in Kirmani's words to furnish to our readers an insight into their nature. The first incident related to the capture of the Mahratta battery constructed near the Karighat hill from which the people in the fort suffered considerable damage. Muhammad Ali, one of the commanders, sought the permission of Haidar to attack this battery and Haidar though reluctant at first on account of the overwhelming numbers of the Mahratta army at last consented to the attack on the earnest solicitation of Muhammad Ali. This officer commencing his march at night crossed the Kaveri at a convenient ford and came up to the rear of the Mahratta battery passing by the village of Arkere. The Mahrattas in charge of the battery rested passive under the impression that it was a column of their own army sent to their relief. Muhammad Ali's men suddenly rushed on them and inflicted a severe disaster. "When the brave commandant found that the time was favourable and his good fortune aiding him and that by deceiving his enemies he would attain his heart's desire, he without any hesitation marched into the battery and instantly gave his orders to his men to attack and throwing their hand grenades on the heads of these worshippers of pride, they raised out of them the black smoke of destruction and with the merciless sword cut off the heads of soldiers, pioneers and men lying in the battery and trenches and laid them up in heaps. They then buried all the larger guns, but the light guns being more useful and available were sent off to the Presence The commandant having thus conquered his enemies before the rising of the sun, levelled the trenches and battery with the earth and setting fire to the materials returned to the Presence and was honoured by being addressed by the title of 'SON' by Haidar and moreover received the praise and applause of all ranks."

Another incident which took place at the junction of Lokapavani with the Kaveri at the foot of the Karighat hill may also be

related in the words of Haidar's biographer:—"On the day of the Hindu Eed, Triumbuck with his officers mounted their horses and came from the eastward of the hill called Karighat to bathe at the confluence of the two rivers which is called by the Hindus the Sangam and is near the Lal Bagh. Having received intelligence of this movement, the Nawab immediately sallied out of the fort with his troops and took his station near the Mana Mantap and placed his son Tippu with all the horse in ambush near Kirangoor which was on the other side of the Kaveri river. The brave commandant Muhammad Ali under Ghazi Khan and four thousand matchlock men, four hundred Pindaries and four guns for display and after the manner of Scouts or an advance guard were sent to the south of the hill above mentioned. When the cavalcade of the Mahratta chief arrived at the river, they dismounted and began to amuse themselves and swim about in the water, the horsemen of their guard following caracoling and curveting as they came along. The commandant, in the meanwhile, posted his guns and matchlock infantry in the dry bed of a channel and made a preconcerted sign to Ghazi Khan and that brave man no sooner saw it than with two or three hundred tried men galloped towards the rear-guard and by tricks and wiles and teaching the fools how to play the lion drew them gradually in front of the guns and musketry of the ambuscade; and having brought them there, his whole party suddenly facing about dispersed and every one retiring placed himself under cover of the concealed party. The commandant now suddenly charged them, and with the fire of guns and musketry broke their ranks and sent a great many of them to their eternal abodes. In this skirmish two or three chiefs of the Mahrattas were killed and the elephant which carried the flag and kettle drums was also killed. As soon as the body of the enemies' troops became disordered, Ghazi Khan and Haidar's son esteeming this a most favourable opportunity galloped their horses at once into the midst of the fugitives and as long as they had strength withdrew not their hands from spoil and slaughter The face of Triumbuck on his hearing this intelligence became yellow and in the greatest haste and trepidation, with his clothes wet and his lips dry, he returned and encamped near the Moti Talav"

Another extract from Kirmani may be given showing how convoys were at times attacked by detachments of Mysore troops and how the enemy was harassed:—"Tippu with five or six thousand regular and irregular foot attacked an escort of the Mahrattas coming from Poona consisting of eight thousand regular horse and ten thousand irregular infantry, conveying an immense supply of stores, provisions and treasure which was carried on 30 elephants, a hundred camels and fifty mules and accompanied also by merchants with gold and jewels of great value and a supply of ammunition. These men were encamped near Chennarayapatna perfectly at their ease not having the slightest intimation of a night attack. Tippu at once assailed them in suchwise that he did not allow one among them to escape in safety or fail to take every article of the least value belonging to the Mahrattas including their treasure and this done, he sent them off to the capital Puttan or rather to his illustrious father."

Such isolated successes on the part of the Mysore troops though they elicited admiration produced little impression on Triumbuck Rao and he with his superior numbers and immense resources continued to ravage and plunder the whole country from Periapatam in the west to Dindigul in the south. Haidar finding that he had not been able to expel the Mahrattas though fifteen months had elapsed from the date of the Chinkurli disaster, now thought it wise to open negotiations for peace and accordingly sent his trusted envoy to Triumbuck Mama's camp. About the same time, news arrived from Poona that Peshwa Madhava Rao was seriously ill and that trouble was brewing at the Poona court. Triumbuck Rao felt inclined to receive favourably Haidar's overtures for peace and after some parley, the terms were settled. Morari Rao also interposed his good offices on this occasion. A treaty of peace was signed on the 17th June 1772 which stipulated the payment of thirty lakhs of rupees as Durbar expenses or which meant no more than bribes or inducement money to the Mahratta officers. Haidar had also to leave in the possession of the Mahrattas Gurumkonda, Chennarayadoorg, Sira, Hoskote, Dodda-ballapur and Kolar.

Before we proceed to the next chapter, it may be stated that Nanjaraj Wodeyar who had succeeded Immadi Krishnaraj died in 1770 and his brother Bettada Chamaraj Wodeyar was placed on the throne.