

CHAPTER XI.

Coorg conquered—Malabar re-annexed—Taluks pledged to the Mahrattas wrested—Agreement with Raghunatha Rao of Poona—Bellary and Gutti conquered—Death of Bettada Chamaraj Wodeyar and adoption of his successor.

After Triumbuck Rao's departure, Haidar's first thought was to replenish his treasury by levying monetary contributions from all who according to his secret information were regarded as wealthy men. This augmentation of his resources enabled him to reorganise his army on a better and larger scale and to await the turn of political events with greater assurance and hope. Such an opportunity presented itself when he heard that Narayana Rao who had succeeded Madhava Rao as Peshwa in November 1772 after the latter's death had been murdered by his uncle Raghunatha Rao or Raghoba in August 1773, himself succeeding as Peshwa. The Poona ministers headed by Nana Fadnavis were however opposed to the claim of Raghunatha Rao and supported that of the posthumous son of the murdered Peshwa Narayana Rao. Haidar with the keen foresight with which he was blest took advantage of the dissension at the Poona Court and at once deputed his son Tippu to take possession of all the places which had been pledged to the Mahrattas and himself proceeded with an army for the conquest of Coorg and Malabar.

Haidar first turned his attention towards Coorg. Ever since the conquest of Bednore in 1763 Coorg had been regarded by Haidar as a dependency of that State but the manly Coorgs had resisted his attempts to bring them under his subjection. In the year 1770 a dispute arose as to the succession to the chiefship between two rival claimants and Lingaraj, uncle of one of them, had sometime before solicited the help of Haidar. Haidar however on account of his preoccupations had not felt himself free to comply with the request made. He now took advantage of the respite he had obtained to proceed with an army towards Coorg and Devaiah who held the country against the claimant befriended by Haidar fled and Haidar took possession of the country with great

ease, as the Coorgs though a brave race were small in number and could offer no strong resistance to the outnumbering Mysore army. Haidar's real object in this expedition was to possess himself of the Coorg country which intervened between the Mysore territory and Malabar, access to which was long and tedious from other parts of Mysore. After obtaining possession of Coorg, Haidar deputed his brother-in-law Mir Ali Raza and Berki Srinivasa Rao to Malabar which was soon wrested from the Nair chiefs to whom, as we have seen, it had been given back some years before when Haidar's fortune had somewhat declined. In this connection, it may also be mentioned that the palegar of Ballum or Manjarabad as it was subsequently called through whose country a portion of the Mysore army had to pass on their way to Coorg was forced to surrender to Haidar. Haidar however gave him back his country and allowed him to continue in possession of it.

Haidar now retraced his steps from Coorg to Seringapatam to give support to Tippu who had been deputed to take possession of the places pledged to the Mahrattas in accordance with the treaty concluded with Triumbuck Rao. Before however Haidar reached Seringapatam, news reached him that Tippu had accomplished the task allotted to him and that there was no need for Haidar to go to his son's aid. Thus in one short campaign from September 1773 to February 1774 not only every place in the possession of the Mahrattas was won back but Coorg also came under his sway with Malabar which he had wisely abandoned during the pressure of difficulties in his war with the English.

Raghunatha Rao who had made himself Peshwa after the death of his nephew Narayana Rao resenting the conduct of Haidar in forcibly taking possession of the places pledged to the Mahrattas marched with a large army to the south to punish him. Haidar wishing to avoid any conflict with Raghunatha Rao whose good offices at Poona had been helpful to him after his conquest of Bednore in 1763 now deputed the ever-ready Appaji Rao to conciliate Raghunatha Rao who had by this time reached Kalyan-doorg at some distance from Molakalmuru. Appaji Rao was fortunate in reaching Raghunatha Rao's camp on the very day that

news had arrived from Poona that the ministers there had formed a confederacy against Raghunatha Rao on behalf of the posthumous son of Narayana Rao whose claim to succeed his father could not be disputed. Appaji Rao taking advantage of the difficult position in which Raghunath Rao was placed explained to him with his accustomed skill the benefits of a mutual alliance between himself and his master and won him over to enter into a treaty with Haidar. According to this treaty, Haidar acknowledged Raghunatha Rao as the exclusive head of the Mahratta State in consideration of a reduced tribute of six lakhs of rupees and also agreed to act in support of Raghunatha Rao's claim whenever his aid was requisitioned. Raghunath Rao's affairs however at Poona became so desperate that he was forced to flee from that place and take refuge first at Cambay and then at Surat and here on March 1775 he concluded a treaty with the English Government of Bombay for providing him with aid to recover his authority on terms of reciprocal advantage.

About this time an insurrection broke out in Coorg which was suppressed with great cruelty by hanging every man above the rank of an ordinary soldier who was suspected of being concerned in the insurrection. Haidar also ordered for the purpose of overaweing the inhabitants the construction of a series of block-houses connected with one another and with the nearest posts in Mysore. These arrangements being completed about the beginning of the year 1775, Haidar returned to Seringapatam to give a short repose to his troops. In November following, Haidar received a request from the palegar of Bellary to go to his succour against Basalat Jung whose suzerainty he had discarded and who had sent an army under a French officer M. Lally for the palegar's subjugation. Haidar as naturally to be expected readily accepted the request on account of the insult he had received from the former palegar's widow and reached Bellary within five days from his leaving Seringapatam. While the troops of Basalat Jung still supposed Haidar to be at Seringapatam, Haidar surprised them by an attack on their rear, in which Bhoja Raj the commander of Basalat Jung was killed and M. Lally the head of the French corps which operated with Bhoja Raj was forced to flee with precipitation,

Haidar next turned his guns against the fort of Bellary and demanded the unconditional surrender of the palegar. On the eighth day from the day of Haidar leaving Seringapatam, Bellary was in his hands. Basalat Jung now afraid of his jahagir being plundered was glad to compromise with Haidar by offering to him a lakh of pagodas.

From Bellary Haidar marched towards Gutti, the stronghold of Morari Rao and sent a message in advance that he had come as a guest to Morari Rao's country and that he needed a lakh of rupees. Morari Rao who understood the meaning of this message returned a reply stating that he was also a Senapathi or Commander of troops levying contributions from others and that he never paid anything himself. The result was that Haidar approached Gutti and laid a regular siege. After five weeks, the lower fort and the town of Gutti were taken by assault and an immense booty consisting of two thousand horses, a considerable number of elephants, a vast amount of private property and a very respectable equipment of guns and military stores fell into the hands of Haidar. The siege of the upper fort continued for two months longer and the letters which Morari Rao wrote to the Poona ministers explaining his desperate position and appealing for immediate help never reached their destination having all been intercepted by the cordon of Haidar's predatory horse. At the same time the reservoirs on the hill were drying up and the water-supply was day by day growing scanty for the large number of persons and animals assembled on the hill.

In these circumstances Morari Rao was compelled to sue for peace and the terms were soon arranged, namely, the payment of twelve lakhs of rupees, eight in cash or valuables and a hostage in security for the payment of the remainder. The cash amounted to one lakh and the balance was sent in the shape of jewels and plate estimated at seven lakhs of rupees by the hands of the hostage Pali Khan, son of Yoonas Khan who was Morari Rao's commander-in-chief and who had been killed at Hoskote some years previously. Haidar, according to Wilks, received his hostage with much courtesy and invited him to dinner and the young man

considering the hostilities to be at an end was induced by the gracious manners of Haidar to be unreserved in his communications. The conversation was purposely turned to the events of the siege and Haidar took the opportunity of paying some appropriate compliments to the experience of Morari Rao and to the conduct of his troops, not omitting to refer to the exemplary gallantry of the young man himself. Ticked by the compliment, Pali Khan was so imprudent as to observe that there was no want of troops or provisions and nothing short of being reduced to three days supply of water would have induced Morari Rao to propose peace. Haidar heard all this with his accustomed command of countenance and after dinner referred the young man to the proper department for the delivery of his charge.

The description of the valuables had been vaguely given during the negotiations and it was understood that if on a fair valuation the amount should fall short of seven lakhs, Haidar would still receive the same and accept the hostage for the remainder. The period of inspection was however designedly prolonged, the appraisers on Haidar's side having been secretly instructed what part they were to play. When the appraisers accompanying the hostage returned and reported that the total including cash amounted only to five lakhs, Haidar affected the greatest disappointment and anger and proceeded to accuse Morari Rao of trifling with him and of deceiving him. He then ordered the hostage immediately to return with his paltry five lakhs and to announce to Morari Rao that the negotiations were at an end.

Haidar now increased the rigour of the siege and prevented water even of the smallest quantity being taken by individual members of the besieged people from parts of the hill below the ramparts. This rigour continued for two days and on the third day Morari Rao could no longer restrain his men from exclaiming from the parapet to the besiegers that they were dying of thirst and wished to capitulate. Haidar insisted on Morari Rao and his followers surrendering to him without arms and the latter had no alternative but to submit. On the approach of Morari Rao, Haidar ordered a separate tent for his accommodation and placing him in it

sent a garrison of his own men to the top of the hill. All the women of Morari Rao's household were then required to withdraw into the zenana apartments with only such furniture or utensils, their wearing apparel or clothes in use, and such jewels and gold and silver ornaments as were of small value. But the pearls and jewels of great price, jewelled ornaments and other articles of value, with all arms and stores of war, Haidar appropriated to himself. Morari Rao was next sent with all his family first to Seringapatam and subsequently from there to Kabballoor where he shortly after died and Gutti passed into the possession of Haidar in April 1776.

Before concluding this chapter, it may be mentioned that Bettada Chamaraj Wodeyar died in 1775 without progeny and Haidar adopted a novel method of finding a successor for him. He ordered the assembling in the hall of audience at Seringapatam of a large number of young boys of the Arasu community eligible for adoption. In the hall were placed fruits, sweetmeats, flowers, playthings of various descriptions, arms, books, male and female ornaments, bags of money and varied objects of puerile or manly pursuits. Each boy was then asked to help himself to any object he pleased and in the scramble that ensued one of the boys three years old took up a dagger and a mirror, and Haidar thereupon commending the boy declared that he was fit to be the Raja and accordingly he was adopted by Lakshmi Ammanni the widow of Immadi or Chikka Krishnaraja Wodeyar. This boy was the son of Devaraj Urs of Arikutara subsequently named Chamarajnagar and was installed on the throne under the same name as that of his predecessor. He was the father of Mummadi Krishnaraja Wodeyar whom Lord Mornington placed on the old Hindu throne after the fall of Tippu in 1799.