

CHAPTER XII.

Raghunatha Rao's commission to Haidar Ali to take possession of the country between the Thungabhadra and the Krishna—Annexation of Chitaldrug and Kadapa—Marriage connections with the family of the Nawab of Savanoor.

It will be noted that reference has been made in the previous chapter to a treaty concluded by Raghunatha Rao with the Government of Bombay, which however was not subsequently upheld by the Supreme Government at Calcutta under the powers vested in them by the Regulating Act of 1773. In the meanwhile, Raghunatha Rao addressed a letter to Haidar through his agent Baji Rao Burwa communicating the nature of the alliance he had formed with the Bombay Government and expressing his confident expectation of recovering his rightful possession of the musnud of Poona and proposing to Haidar that he should take possession of the whole of the Mahratta territory up to the right bank of the Krishna and be ready from that advanced position to assist him in the execution of his designs with military as well as pecuniary aid. This proposal was quite in consonance with Haidar's wishes and he accordingly remitted sixteen lakhs of rupees to Raghunatha Rao and collected an army at Gutti including contingents from his tributary pategars. With this army he marched towards Savanoor. Though the Pathan Nawab of that place Abdul Hakim Khan proposed a compromise by the offer of three lakhs of pagodas, Haidar would not consent to the proposal and the Mysore army occupied more than half the territories of the Nawab. By this time the monsoon burst in great violence and caused much damage to the horses and cattle of the Mysore army. Haidar had therefore to stop the campaign temporarily and leaving a select corps at Bankapur, he made his way to Seringapatam which he reached in August 1776 and here he stayed for sometime taking measures in the shape of levying contributions and free gifts of money from men known to be wealthy and from his dependent pategars and in other ways replenishing his coffers.

The ministers at Poona having become aware of the alliance formed between Raghunatha Rao and Haidar and of the latter's military operations in the Savanoor country formed a confederacy with Nizam Ali to invade the territories of Mysore. An advance army under Haripanth and three other Sirdars were sent with the object of driving back Haidar's army and repossessing all the places in the Savanoor country which had fallen into the hands of Haidar. Haidar whose main army was assembled at Gutti sent a force which he considered sufficient under Muhammad Ali, one of his able commanders to oppose the advancing army of the Mahrattas. An action was fought at a distance of about ten miles north of Savanoor, where Muhammad Ali by a pretended flight inveigled the Mahrattas into a rash pursuit which brought them under the fire of the Mysore guns and caused great confusion in their ranks. Muhammad Ali then making a determined charge with his cavalry utterly routed them capturing two of their leaders and inflicting great slaughter in general. The pursuit of the retreating Mahratta army was continued for nine miles from the field of battle and three thousand horses were secured for the service of the Mysore State. By this time Parasuram Bhow, the Mahratta general who had the command of the main Mahratta army reached Meraj and on hearing of the defeat of the advance army thought it prudent not to march further and accordingly retired behind the Krishna, reporting to his masters at Poona that strong reinforcements were necessary before they could attack Haidar's army. Similarly the army of Nizam Ali which was under the command of Ibrahim Khan becoming aware of the Mahratta defeat was ordered to fall back behind the Thungabhadra and to re-cross the Krishna. Shortly after these events, the periodical floods in the rivers which occur during the south-west monsoon converted the rivers into barriers and Haidar was for the present relieved from the dangers of this confederacy.

Haidar utilised this respite in punishing Madakere Naik, the palegar of Chitaldrug who had failed to join his standard in his operations against the Mahrattas and against whom Haidar had also nursed a feeling of revenge on account of the part he played when Peshwa Madhava Rao besieged and captured Nijgul. For

three months the siege of Chitaldrug proceeded and the palegar then offered to Haidar a handsome ransom with a promise to join his standard when next summoned to do so. Haidar was for the time being content to accept these terms as he had once more to face the Mahratta army.

The Mahratta horse was commanded by Haripanth and consisted of 60000 horse with an adequate number of infantry and artillery. Haidar advanced to meet this army at a place called Raravi where it had encamped after crossing the Thungabhadra. Manaji who was associated with Haripanth had been secretly bribed by Haidar to desert the latter and join the Mysore army. When however the two opposing armies were ready for action, Haidar finding some indecision on the part of Manaji directed demonstrations to be made in the shape of pretended communications, with the result that an impression was produced on Haripanth's mind that there was some treachery. Manaji was accordingly attacked by Haripanth himself and driven off the field and the latter then re-crossed the Thungabhadra with his army. Haidar followed up the pursuit and seized large parts of the territory between the Thungabhadra and the Krishna reducing the strongholds of Kopal and Gajendraghar with minor posts and capturing Dharwar and finally forcing Haripanth to cross the Krishna in 1778.

During these operations Ibrahim Khan remained inactive pretending to assure himself that the Mahrattas were really in earnest to attack Haidar's army, while in reality Haidar's gold had corrupted him. The rapidity of Haidar's conquest of the territories between the Thungabhadra and the Krishna was also facilitated by the fact that the same were held by Mahratta Chiefs known as Deshayes corresponding to the pategars of Southern India who readily consented to pay to Haidar their accustomed Peshkush with a further sum as free gift.

The Nawab of Kadapa and the palegar of Chitaldrug having failed to respond to Haidar's call to go to his aid in his later operations against the Mahrattas, he now determined to punish

them for their disobedience. Early in 1779 he despatched Mir Sahib towards Kadapa with a detachment and he himself marched to Chitaldrug to lay siege to it a second time, as the palegar would not consent to a proposal made by Haidar that he should surrender the fort and accept service under him with a jahagir yielding Rs. 50,000 annually. Kirmani's account of the final capture of the place may be quoted here as it affords interesting side-lights on the temper of the combatants and the manner of warfare of the time.—

“Every day the infidels armed to the teeth came out of the fort and gallantly assailed the bravest and the noblest of the Ghazis or the Mussalman soldiers: On the side of the Nawab, the noble and distinguished Khans and Foujdars with their brave companies came forward and ranged themselves in front and in line with the ranks of the infidels and daily with arrows and swords sent great numbers of them to hell. Agreeably to the orders of the Nawab all the pioneers of the victorious army with hatches and axes were meanwhile employed in cutting down the woods or jungle on the same hills near the fort which in the face of the enemy they surrounded with a strong stockade. They also raised batteries under the slope of the hill which lies to the eastward of the fort and mounted guns on them and from thence continually battered the walls to breach them. But although in a few days the walls were levelled with the ground and the towers and the gates were dismantled and afforded no shelter, still the besieged every night formed a new wall of earth in their places to cover themselves and sallied out of the fort and raised the confusion of the Day of Judgment among the guards and sentinels at the batteries and taking the heads of the slain and tying them to a string, they hung them round their necks like red roses and thus returned and received rewards from their chiefs for the deeds they had done.

“The Nawab now began to revolve in his great mind that the siege had continued to a considerable length of time, but that with all the exertions of his brave army the insolent palegar had not yet been reduced. He therefore by presenting Muhammad Ali land in gift and jahagir soothed and conciliated him and sent for him to the Presence..... After his interview, Muhammad Ali arrived among his own soldiers and selling the gorget, pearls and dresses of

honour presented to him by Haidar, he purchased from the proceeds articles for a feast and having caused a most delicious dinner to be cooked, divided it among the religious mendicants or Fakirs and his own men, and the same night accompanied by the Harpanhalli and the Rayadoorg foot soldiers, he like an angry lion assaulted and took a battery which might be called the nose of the fort and upon which indeed the whole strength of the fort depended, and with four risalas of regular and two thousand irregular infantry and six guns he fixed his station there. The chief of the fort at the head of two or three thousand infidels now attempted the recovery of this strong position and exerted himself strenuously to effect its recapture; but still every time they attacked it, the welcome intelligence 'God will aid thee and give thee a great victory' sounded in the ears of the Mussalman troops. As the soldiers of the enemy now grew weak everyday, they were not able to contend with the brave Moslems; and fear seizing on them, they no longer dared to step beyond the walls of the fort. When however the garrison was reduced to extremities, troops of them of all tribes fearing the loss of their property and honour crept out of the fort under pretence of fetching wood and water and joined the Nawab's army and only five or six thousand men of the Bedar tribe had the courage to exert themselves in defending the fort.

"The Nawab however seeing that the chief of the infidels was a very brave man and the keepers of the walls were also stout of heart was convinced that the fort would not immediately surrender and by obstinately persevering he would only be gratuitously sacrificing the lives of his brave men arranged an ambuscade consisting of five thousand foot, two thousand regular foot and a thousand horse. These troops under cover of the surrounding hills waited for an opportunity to take the fort and make the palegar a prisoner.

"The Nawab himself pitched his tents at some distance from that place. His plan was that if the palegar left the fort and presumed to follow him, he might attack him on all sides at once and destroy him. If, on the contrary, the palegar did not follow him, it was his purpose to give to his (Nawab's) tributary or dependent palegars the charge of the government of all the towns

and villages depending on the Doorg that they with a view to their own advantage might use every art to seize and make him prisoner.

“ On the day the Nawab marched, he set fire to the materials of the batteries and trenches which were of wood and had been collected at great expense. As soon as the besieged became acquainted with this movement, the whole of them with the greatest impudence manned the battlements and towers of the fort, beat their drums and began yelling and howling like a pack of hounds..... After a little fighting, the bonds which united the garrison of the fort were broken asunder and like falling leaves in autumn, they were dispersed and scattered on all sides, while the besiegers now fearlessly mounting the hills beat their drums in token of victory and watered the swords and spears of their resentment in the blood of the infidels and beat the black dust of existence out of the bodies of the unfortunate garrison.

“ When the chief heard the drums within the fort and saw the heads of his men rolling about on the plain of revenge like the balls of boys at play, he understood well that fortune was now bidding him farewell and that the genius of wealth and prosperity was about to depart from him. He did indeed leave his house armed and ready for fight but when he saw that most of his brave companions were either killed or wounded and that the few men round him were without arms, rubbing their hands and shedding tears, the feet of his firmness failed him and he stood like a picture painted on a wall, till the brave commandant with other officers came upon him and seized and made him prisoner and brought him to the Presence. Committing him with his women and children to the care of his confidential servants, the Nawab sent him and them to Puttan.”

The fall of Chitaldrug took place in March 1779. Haidar now appointed a Nair who had been converted to Mahomedanism when quite a boy and who had been named Sheik Ayaz as Civil and Military Governor of the conquered territories. Sheik Ayaz having forgotten all early ties of kinship was exclusively devoted to the cause of Haidar. He however on being informed of his appointment pleaded that he could neither read nor write and that he could

not do justice to the responsibility which he was required to shoulder. On hearing these words Haidar is reported to have advised Sheik Ayaz that he himself was not literate but that yet he was able to manage a kingdom with a kordah or lash. Sheik Ayaz was instructed to do the same, placing reliance on his good understanding and to leave pen and ink to the scribblers, as Haidar contemptuously called the clerks and accountants whom he employed. Haidar also ordered the inhabitants of Chitaldrug and of the surrounding country about twenty thousand to be collected and sent to Seringapatam and from among these a certain number were converted to the Mahomedan faith and formed into a battallion corresponding to the Turkish Janissaries.

Turning now to Kadapa to which place Haidar's brother-in-law Mir Ali Raza had been deputed, Haidar now relieved of his other occupations proceeded to the aid of his brother-in-law. The army of Abdul Hakim Khan was completely routed and all the Pathans were taken prisoners. Haidar allowed all these except eighty who could not furnish any security to enlist in his own army. An attempt on the part of Haidar's men to disarm these eighty men was resented by them and in the hope of finding sureties for them, they were all placed at night in a tent which was opposite to Haidar's own. At midnight according to a preconcerted plan these Pathans slew some of their guards and began to rush into Haidar's tent. Haidar was fortunately awake at this time and grasping the situation at once, left his bed after making up the semblance of a man lying on his bed with a pillow covered with a blanket and cutting a hole in one of the tent-walls escaped unhurt. Immediately an alarm was raised and the assailants were seized. The next day the hands and feet of some of these were cut off, while others were tied with chains to the feet of elephants and were dragged on the road till they were horribly mutilated and found relief in death.

Abdul Hakim Khan who had taken refuge in the fort of Sidhout to north-east of Kadapa on hearing of the fall of his capital and of the fate that had overtaken the remnant of his Pathan soldiers became alarmed and advised the inhabitants to leave the place at night and take shelter in the hills at some distance.

Haidar shortly after returned to Seringapatam and bringing to his mind the advantages that would accrue to him by contracting marriage alliances with the family of the Nawab of Savanoor sent proposals, according to which Haidar's daughter was to be married to the eldest son of the Savanoor Nawab and the latter's daughter to Kareem Sahib, brother of Tippu. These proposals were accepted by the Savanoor Nawab and the marriages were subsequently celebrated at Seringapatam with much pomp and rejoicing.

Haidar's Kuzzaks or predatory horsemen having obtained news of this intended departure of the inhabitants pounced upon their unfortunate victims in the dark at some distance from the town as they were in motion, and seizing all the valuable articles in their possession, violated several of the women and put a large number of the men to death. The unfortunate Kadapa Nawab had now no remedy left except to seek Haidar's pardon and to surrender to him. Accordingly he sent two envoys who did all they could to save their master from the fury of Haidar's anger. Haidar on hearing the ambassadors and observing their meek deportment consented to extend his friendship to the Nawab on condition that he should send two flags with two companies of matchlock men merely for honour and to remain in the fort for two hours. The envoys communicated this wish of Haidar's to their master and obtained his consent for the entry of the Mysore troops. Haidar however without causing suspicion despatched four thousand infantry with two ensigns under a commanding officer with secret orders to him. This officer on reaching the fort left half his men at the gate and ramparts adjoining and proceeded with the remaining men to the hall of audience where the Nawab was seated. He there made him a prisoner, put him into a planquin and sent him with his personal and other servants to Haidar's presence. Haidar thereupon unceremoniously sent him with all the members of his family to Seringapatam and conferred the Government of the country on Mir Ali Raza as a military dependency of Mysore. This event took place in May 1779. Haidar also took to his harem the Nawab's sister who was reputed to be of ravishing beauty by the *nika* ceremony, as otherwise she threatened to commit suicide.