

CHAPTER LVI.

Krishnaraja Wodeyar III—1811—1831.

Abuse of the Sharat System—Visit of Sir Thomas Munro, Governor of Madras.

The Sharat system as described in the previous chapter did not fulfil all the expectations formed of it by either introducing stability into the annual revenue or by helping towards its increase. The uncertainty of the seasons continued even after the drought of 1816-17 and culminated in a famine of some intensity in the year 1823-24. Besides this uncertainty of the seasons, there began to prevail for the first time in the country after the return of the Mysore troops from Hindusthan the epidemic now known as cholera which caused great havoc among the population of the country, greatly to the prejudice also of all agricultural operations. The Sharat system, however, in the early years proved itself advantageous to the Government in controlling the fluctuations of revenue. But later, heavy arrears began to accumulate and the system virtually transformed itself into an auction of land revenue to the highest bidder for one or two years at a time. This system also enabled the Moosahibs or advisers of the Maharaja to introduce their own relatives and friends into the service of Government more largely. In August 1822 Cole wrote to the Madras Government that the influence of Motikhane Narasinga Rao under the Sharat system had become immense and that his wealth had enabled him to buy off all complaints both against him as well as the amildars who were his proteges. He had seven brothers in service and he himself was in secret charge of ten taluks. Veene Venkatasubbiah's relations became amildars of seven taluks in the Nagar Division. Survotham Rao who was Foudjar of Nagar from 1816-26 employed many of his own relations in the Government service of that division during the long period of more than ten years he held office as Foudjar.

An amildar, especially a Sharat amildar, when he proceeded to his taluk narrowly examined the accounts of the past years and included in his account all sums which he ascertained to have been

fraudulently obtained by his predecessors. In cases where his predecessor had been guilty of large malpractices, the Sharat amildar was considerably benefited by the amount of recoveries being carried to his own credit. But where such sources failed, the new amildar was forced to have recourse to fresh arbitrary assessments, to over-rating of the actual produce from the lands and to raising the selling price of the Government share of the grain and forcing the patels and merchants to accept the land and grain at his own valuation or estimate. The consequence was that not only were the ryots reduced in circumstances but the revenue became embarrassed by large balances remaining uncollected and many of the patels and merchants were also ruined. Though the Sharat amildars were required to give a bond not to harass the ryots, yet after they took charge of their taluks they conveniently forgot their obligations and freely resorted to various devices to collect extra revenue.

On a Sharat amildar assuming charge of his taluk he generally distributed among the different villages the increased amount he had undertaken to pay. One or more villages were rented to contractors who in their turn often sublet them to the patels or others. The Moochalike or agreement given by the contractor included Suvarnadayam or cash collections such as rent on the Kandayam lands and taxes on houses as also the value of Batayi or shares of grain, but Bajebab or miscellaneous revenue was not included in them. The Shekdar furnished to the Amildar from time to time a memorandum showing the individuals from whom rents had been collected and those from whom they were still due. If at the end of the year there was any balance, the patel was held responsible for the collection.

Ordinarily the amildars collected the revenue by detaining or putting an embargo on crops and in cases where there was no crop the defaulter was put under arrest as was common in those days. Sometimes heavy stones were placed on the heads of the defaulters and they were forced to stand in the sun with these weights and it was also not unusual to inflict corporal punishments with a cane or a whip. The properties of defaulters were also sold and where still

a balance was left, it was remitted only after some years. Where the defaulters were present, their wives and children were not interfered with. But if they had concealed themselves, payment was demanded from their family and the members were kept in confinement for four days and if it was found that they were without any means, they were then set free.

Cole almost from the beginning of the Maharaja's direct rule addressed to the Madras Government alarming reports regarding the financial condition of the country. But when explanations were offered by the Maharaja's Government, the Madras Government in May 1815 expressed complete satisfaction. The Resident, however, depending on private information continued to repeat his accusations and in October 1822 in a private letter to the Governor of Madras he informed him that the public servants and troops were in arrears and in the preceding month there was even trouble about the payment of the instalment of the subsidy. Again in July and August 1825 Cole in his letters to the Madras Government urged that the right of interference in the management of the Raja's affairs might be exercised as the only means of correcting the abuses which he supposed to exist.

Sir Thomas Munro who was Governor of Madras at this time deemed it advisable to personally verify the accusations contained in the letters of Cole and he accordingly reached Mysore on the 16th September 1825. The two succeeding days were occupied in visits of ceremony. On the 19th a business interview took place between the Governor and the Maharaja at which Cole also was present. As Sir Thomas Munro himself expressed, the business with the Raja was to draw His Highness' attention seriously to the terms of the treaty and to point out to him in a friendly but firm way the consequences which would certainly result from a failure in their observance. An examination of the finances the instability of which had so much alarmed the Resident revealed that the annual revenue till then from the beginning of the Raja's assumption of power was on an average 26 lakhs of canteroi pagodas and the expenditure about 27 lakhs. During this period the Mysore Government had also incurred extra military charges due to their

co-operation with the British Government according to the terms of the Subsidiary Treaty and had passed through periods of severe depression. It did not therefore appear strange to Munro that under the circumstances the surplus left by Purnaiya of a little over 7 lakhs of canteroi pagodas was exhausted. It was found at the same interview that with a few improvements an ~~annual~~ revenue of 29 lakhs of pagodas could be raised and the disbursements as revised could be reduced to a little over 24 lakhs of pagodas, leaving a surplus of about 5 lakhs which was regarded as not extravagant.

Sir Thomas Munro now suspected that the difference of $3\frac{1}{2}$ lakhs of pagodas per annum between the receipts and the expenditure in Purnaiya's time was not sufficient to account for the huge sum of 70 lakhs of pagodas or 2 crores and 10 lakhs of rupees believed to have accumulated in the treasury when Purnaiya resigned his office. In a memorandum prepared after an examination of the accounts by the arbitrators at the time the Raja assumed power in 1810 and signed by Cole himself, it was clearly entered that the total amount due from Purnaiya from the year Sidharti 1799 to the year Promoduta 1810 was 14,15,729 canteroi pagodas of which 6,31,979 canteroi pagodas were remitted by His Highness in favour of Purnaiya and that the latter had paid in cash 7,83,749 canteroi pagodas. To a pertinent question put by Sir Thomas Munro whether the sum of 70 lakhs of canteroi pagodas was separate from this account, Cole could only answer that he had seen this amount mentioned in a paper in the hand-writing of Anantaramappa, one of the sons of Purnaiya. Sir Thomas Munro showed no further keenness to assure himself of the real existence of this large amount and he left the matter there.

It may here be noted, though it is somewhat of a digression, that Sir Thomas Munro had in June 1799 expressed his opposition to Mornington's proposal to re-create the State of Mysore and to place on it the descendant of the old Hindu royal family. Sir Thomas was in favour of equal division of the Mysore territories between the British and the Nizam but he had been overruled at the time. "I doubt much," he had said, "if we should, after all,

gain greater political advantages by establishing a Raja than would result from a fair division of the country with the Nizam. By a division the share that falls to us would come immediately under our own management. We should ascertain its resources, we should know what we had to trust to and we should be able to call them forth whenever any emergency required it..... By establishing a Raja and keeping Seringapatam in our own hands and a strong detachment in Mysore subsidised by him, we apparently get rid of some present expenses. But by leaving the administration to him we remain in ignorance of the state of this country and at some future period when it might be necessary to move our troops in this quarter to meet an enemy, we might find it impracticable from his not being able to furnish the requisite supplies. It is true that we should in some measure have the remedy in our own hands by our always being able to resume the country. But why embarrass ourselves with a complicated scheme of government that may eventually force us to take such a step."

Sir Thomas Munro, however, with that large-heartedness which was characteristic of him and for which his name is even now remembered by the people of Southern India, nobly discarded the opportunity of undoing Mornington's settlement of 1799 and impressed with perfect candour and impartiality of judgment upon the Raja that the treaty imposed certain duties on both the Governments—on the British, to maintain the treaty unimpaired, to defend Mysore and to assist the Raja with advice when it appeared to be necessary either for promoting the welfare of his country or for protecting the people from oppression ; on the Raja, to improve his country, to pay his subsidy regularly, and to keep his troops and other establishments efficient by not suffering them to fall into arrears of pay. Munro also impressed that it was the desire of the British Government to avoid interference as much as possible in the internal affairs of Mysore. If however the revenue declined, if the disbursements exceeded the receipts, if the troops from not being paid were discontented, there was danger to the treaty because His Highness in such circumstances would not be able to fulfil his obligations and the Company's Government must for their own security give effect to the fourth article of the treaty. Munro

also pointed out that the best way for His Highness to prevent such an occurrence was to cause annual statements of receipts and expenditure to be furnished regularly to the Madras Government through the Resident. The Maharaja accepted the observations of Sir Thomas Munro as tending to the convenience of both the Governments. Munro also found that no accounts had been called for by the Madras Government after the Maharaja came to power and that the British Resident had sought information regarding the state of the country through various channels which had frequently excited unnecessary suspicion.

In the end, beyond addressing a letter to the Maharaja on the lines mentioned, no material action was deemed necessary by the Madras Government. As long Sir Thomas Munro continued in office, the Raja was able to introduce various improvements and matters progressed smoothly. Munro died of cholera at Gutti in 1827 and Cole between whom and the Maharaja there was much personal friendship had left for England shortly after Munro's visit to Mysore and had finally retired.