

CHAPTER LX.

Krishnaraja Wodeyar III—1811—1831.

Insurrection in Nagar.

We may now turn our attention once more to Nagar. By the time Hanagal Krishna Rao reached Shimoga to take the place of Veeraraj Urs, large bodies of patels and ryots had proceeded to Rani Bannur in the Dharwar district and taken up their residence there. Anche Ramaiya who had been sent by Veeraraj Urs to conciliate them returned with a number of them and halted at Doddakallu in the Honnali taluk near Nyamti. In the meantime, according to the directions of Foujdar Krishna Rao, the Killedar of Honnali had stopped a number of the discontented ryots who were proceeding to the Dharwar district and these also joined the party at Doddakallu.

Krishna Rao now arrived at Holehonnur from Shimoga on his way to Honnali and on this news reaching Doddakallu a body of the malcontents about 2000 in number marched to Holehonnur with the object of preventing him from proceeding further. The Foujdar's attempts at conciliation proved of no avail and the insurgents insisted that all communications should be made through the main body at Doddakallu. They explained that they had arrived there with the object of obtaining the surrender of the amildar of Chennagiri who, they said, had harassed them considerably and who was then in the fort of Holehonnur. The Foujdar now moved out of the fort with a body of troops and an attack was made on the insurgents, with the result that 300 of them were wounded, the rest fleeing to Doddakallu. Krishna Rao next proceeded to Nyamti from Holehonnur with Regimentdar Srinivasa Rao and the body of troops under his command. The Tarikere palegar at this time was observed passing over the bund of a neighbouring tank seated on a white horse with an umbrella held over him. The Foujdar ordered his arrest. But Ranga Rao the amildar of Honnali who was secretly in league with the insurgents procrastinated and allowed time to the palegar to join the crowd collected at Doddakallu.

At this time news reached the Foudjar that the ryots of Oodagani had laid violent hands on the amildar and plundered the public treasury and thereupon Krishna Rao immediately started to proceed to that place with a regiment of cavalry. On his way while halting at Honnali, information reached him that the ryots had collected near a hill at some distance and that they intended to slay him. Regimentdar Srinivasa Rao was sent to the place with a small body of cavalry who attacked them and returned with about 40 prisoners. On being questioned as to their conduct, these prisoners explained that they had joined the cootum or rising considering it a caste matter, as they had been threatened with horns, bones and margosa leaves being placed at their doors. The Foudjar as a punishment ordered one of the ryots to be hanged and after a slight mutilation of the others, all were released. The Foudjar then moved towards Kumsi which had fallen into the hands of the Tarikere palegar. On news of the punishments inflicted reaching Doddakallu, all the persons assembled there moved off to Rani Bannur where the Nagar Pretender had taken up his residence.

In the meanwhile, information having reached His Highness while at Chennarayapatna of the rapid spread of the rebellion in Kumsi, Anantapur and other parts, Annappa who was an officer of great courage and ability was deputed from Chennarayapatna to quell the disturbances. This officer left Chennarayapatna with two risalas of cavalry but had to wait at Kadur for some days till two battalions of infantry with which he wished to be reinforced joined him with a gun. From Kadur Annappa marched to Tarikere and on the way there were a number of skirmishes between his troops and the Tarikere palegar's men. On reaching Tarikere, Annappa received intimation from Krishna Rao to join him and he accordingly did so at Haranhalli. From there proceeding to Kumsi having obtained possession of it, Annappa took Anantapur also having expelled the palegar's garrisons from both these places. At this time Krishna Rao was recalled to Mysore and Annappa was directed to perform the duties of the Foudjar also.

Venkataraj Urs who, as we have seen, separated himself from the Raja at Hebbur to proceed to the Nagar Division arrived at Tarikere and after some days possessed himself of a fortified hill known as Kaldoorg, which together with a similar hill known as Kamandoorg, had fallen into the hands of the palegar. While at Kaldoorg, Venkataraj Urs finding that he required more reinforcements to capture the fort of Kamandoorg sent a requisition to Annappa at Anantapur for a battalion of infantry with some guns. Annappa's expostulation that compliance with the requisition would weaken his position proved of no avail. In the meanwhile, it had become clear to Casamaijor that the employment of the subsidiary troops was a necessity as had been pointed out previously by the Maharaja. Indeed, while at Madras in the early part of January 1831 Casamaijor had explained to the Governor that as there was simultaneous disturbance in the British district of Canara, the occasion had almost arisen for using the subsidiary force to suppress the rebellion. But the Governor had overruled him. Casamaijor now became fully alive to the seriousness of the situation in the Nagar country and deputed with the Raja's concurrence Captain Rochfort the officer commanding the Residency escort to Tarikere to help the Dewan in his operations against Kamandoorg. Casamaijor also at this time became aware that an invitation had been sent by the two pategars to Soonda and Company's territories adjoining the Nagar Division for the enlistment of more bodies of armed men and that the proclamations of the pategars inciting the inhabitants of Nagar to rebellion under hopes of obtaining free grants of lands on reduced assessments had also not been without effect. In these circumstances, Lt.-Col. Wolfe commanding the 24th regiment at Harihar was now desired to move upon Kamandoorg, so that a decided demonstration might be made that the Company would support the legitimate authority of the Mysore ruler.

Rochfort reached Kaldoorg on the 26th February 1831 and the same evening the Mysore troops moved off and reached Kamandoorg on the 28th. The palegar not having surrendered the fort though formally called on to do so, an attack was made and the fort fell into the hands of the Mysore troops led by Rochfort on the

3rd March. The palegar Rangappa Naik escaped, but 50 of his followers were killed while throwing themselves to the ground from the ramparts of the fort. On the advice of the Resident the palegar was not pursued and Venkataraj Urs and Rochfort with some of the Mysore troops now proceeded to Shimoga in consequence of information having been received of the intentions of the insurgents to take possession of that place.

While at Shimoga, Venkataraj Urs and Rochfort received orders from Mysore directing them to proceed to Honnali. After Hanagal Krishna Rao's recall, Manappa the Nagar palegar's agent arrived at Honnali with a body of men numbering about 1200 from the Ceded Districts and took possession of the place with the connivance of Ranga Rao. Hence had arisen the necessity of sending fresh troops to Honnali for its recapture. On reaching Honnali Rochfort found that the palegar's men after taking possession of the town had quarrelled about the booty and separated themselves into two parties, one party occupying the fort and the other the temple of Halladamma situated at a short distance. A strong force of the Silledar horse under Regimentadar Chander Rao Ranore was picketed round the fort to prevent those in the fort from escaping, while Rochfort proceeded to the Halladamma temple. This officer rode with 200 Silledar horse, formed them into a line and waved a white handkerchief to show that he was prepared to consider any proposals of surrender. The men in the temple however were under a strong impression that the Company's Government would not help the Maharaja and regarding Rochfort as only a fair-coloured Indian in the uniform of a British military officer began to fire at him. The temple was thereupon attacked by Rochfort and was wrested from the rebels on the 12th March 1831 with 40 killed and 100 wounded on their side, the total number of the wounded and the killed on the side of Mysore being 40. About 200 rebels were taken prisoners including the wounded. At Honnali notwithstanding all the precautions taken by Chander Rao to prevent the men in the fort from escaping, large bodies of them through the machinations of Ranga Rao who though superseded by an other amildar had still remained in the fort jumped into

the river Thungabhadra and escaped, Ranga Rao himself following these men under the pretence of compulsion from them.

Now turning to Anantapur. Venkataraj Urs having withdrawn a number of men for service in Tarikere, the palegar's men were quick enough to perceive the weakness of Annappa confined as he was to the limits of the fort and began to harass him on all sides. There were daily engagements from the 11th January to the 20th February 1831 with losses on both sides. The supplies of the Mysore troops in the fort began to fail as the rebels had blocked up all the roads. Tappals were obstructed and supplies of grain and money were cut off. Being thus reduced to great straits, Annappa addressed the troops saying,—‘Rather than perish by starvation or by falling into the hands of rebels, let us fight and die like soldiers.’ The troops left the fort on the 21st February 1831 and had a running fight till they reached Shikarpur. The palegar had collected in the vicinity of Shikarpur between 4000 and 5000 horsemen from the Dharwar country supplied with guns and ammunition. An action was fought by the Mysore troops with a body of these men with some success. But the Mysore troops had to remain the whole night fasting having had no supplies of articles of food. From here Annappa went to Masoor in the Company's territories where he halted for a few days for replenishing his supplies and then proceeded with his troops to Harihar from where he sent a detailed report of all the events that had taken place to the Huzur office at Mysore. On the 4th March 1831 a reply was received commending him and his troops for their conduct and directing them to proceed to Honnali, where they arrived shortly after the temple of Halladamma had been captured by Rochfort.

On arrival at Honnali, Annappa was placed at the head of the Mysore troops and Venkataraj Urs left for Shimoga with a detachment. Before Venkataraj Urs left for Shimoga, Annappa is stated to have received directions from him to execute such of those as had taken up arms against the Government and to set at liberty the ryots and merchants who had received severe wounds. On the 15th March Annappa released 100 wounded prisoners and detained the remaining 99 for execution. On the 16th, 51 of them were

executed around the temple and the remaining were hanged the next day on the road from Honnali to Shikarpur. The callousness with which these executions were carried out may be understood when it is stated that on the first day when one of the officers who was passing by at the time wishing to witness how the prisoners were hanged and how they died, though the gruesome work had closed for the day, two more men were immediately brought out and hanged in his presence and the sole ground assigned in justification of these horrid acts was that none of those executed were inhabitants of the Mysore State, all of them belonging to the Company's territories. For convenience it may here be mentioned that later when official reports of these executions reached the Maharaja at Mysore, His Highness was horrified at what had taken place and at once sent orders to all the officers concerned not to inflict in future capital punishment without his express sanction.

After the events at Honnali, Lt. Rochfort with the Mysore force proceeded to the western parts of Nagar, namely, Shikarpur, Odagani and other places meeting with considerable opposition from the insurgents on the way and having to dislodge them from several of the stockades which had been formed and were defended with much obstinacy. Rochfort and Annappa found on reaching the vicinity of Nagar that the place was in the hands of the insurgents. Little resistance however was offered by them and the place was taken possession on the morning of the 26th March by the Mysore troops, having been evacuated by the insurgents the preceding night. Here it was found that under the direction of the palegar of Nagar 22 persons had been put to death, most of them Government officials, after a preliminary repast of rice, milk and sugar which was regarded as an essential ceremony before an execution took place. Some of those executed were found hanging on the trees and others were found lying across the roadside with their throats cut. The next place occupied was Fatehpur and when Anantapur was reached, it was found to be in the possession of the 24th Company's regiment under the command of Col. Wolfe.

This regiment, as we have seen, had been sent from Harihar by the Company's military authorities on the requisition of the

British Resident. It left Harihar on the 28th February. But by the time it reached Shimoga, Kamandoorg had fallen into the hands of the Mysore troops and it was then ordered to proceed to assist Lt. Rochfort and accordingly it was found at Anantapur which had been vacated by Annappa on account of pressure from the palegar's men. Next Sagar and Chandragutty which had been occupied by the rebels were taken from them by the Mysore troops, the latter on the 6th April 1831. From Chandragutty the Mysore troops were despatched in various directions in small detachments for the purpose of surprising parties of insurgents assembled in the vicinity. Lt. Rochfort also detached various bodies of troops to garrison a number of places in order to give confidence to such of the ryots as were well affected towards the Government and to induce them to return to their homes and cultivation. Rochfort then proceeded to Shimoga where he found the Company's 15th native regiment under the command of Colonel Evans. Rochfort later bore ample testimony to the good behaviour of the Mysore troops on all occasions and said that he was especially impressed with the gallantry and decision of Annappa, Syed Salar who was an Infantry Commander and Regimentdar Kadapa Srinivasa Rao. The only instance of hesitation on the part of the Mysore troops was when they were required to escalate the fortified temple at Honnali and this hesitation was, according to Rochfort, caused by want of food and by fatigue, the troops having had no regular meal for 24 hours and not from any want of courage. Their obedience to him, he also said, was perfect.

Colonel Evans had arrived at Shimoga from Bangalore with his regiment in accordance with a requisition from the Resident who had now become further alive to the inadequate number of the Mysore troops to overcome the rebels widely scattered as they were and largely recruited from time to time from the adjacent territories belonging to the Company. The Resident had also become convinced that the greatest embarrassment had arisen from the weakness and supineness of the Dewan and his inattention to the orders received from the Huzur. The Maharaja as desired by the Resident replaced Venkataraj Urs by Balaji Rao, an officer of cavalry and a man of energy.