

CHAPTER LXXXV.

Krishnaraja Wodeyar III—1831—1868.

Death of Krishnaraja Wodeyar III—Chamaraja Wodeyar proclaimed successor—Personal characteristics of Krishnaraja Wodeyar.

Krishnaraja Wodeyar whose health had been failing for some time was found towards the end of February 1868 to be in a somewhat precarious condition. He had an obstinate hiccup at intervals and realising that he was dying gave directions as to what he wished to be done regarding some of his property and relatives. However, the strong constitution that he had inherited enabled him to rally for some time to such an extent that the daily offering of sacred rice which was being sent to him from the famous temple of Siva at Nanjangud 15 miles from Mysore was discontinued. On the 23rd March however His Highness had a relapse accompanied by extreme prostration and his advanced age caused considerable apprehension. On the morning of the 27th the Maharaja's condition became alarming. His Highness gradually sank and expired at about 11 o'clock at night.

Bakshi Narasappa at once went to Major Elliot the officer in-charge of the Palace duties and intimated to him the sad event. As the night was a dark one and any measures taken then to safeguard the property in the Palace would have caused apprehensions among the people as well as among the inmates of the Palace, all measures were postponed till daylight the next day. In the meanwhile, an express message was despatched to French Rocks for the services of a regiment of Native infantry which arrived at Mysore a little before daybreak. Major Renton who was in charge of the Maharaja's troops and was also Town Magistrate of Mysore was entrusted with the duty of occupying the fort. This duty as well as the posting of sentries at the entrances to the Palace having been satisfactorily accomplished, Major Elliot went round the several rooms in the Palace where the jewels and clothes had been kept and put the Residency seal on the padlocks and doors. Two almirahs of public records were also sealed. As it was not possible

to immediately examine all the property, the officials in charge were warned to give lists of property in their charge in the course of the day as far as possible. Narasappa was directed temporarily to take the control of affairs and to continue the daily routine and customary observance of interior management as existed in the Maharaja's time. In the meanwhile, a telegram having arrived from Bowring who was at the time at Bangalore, Major Elliot conveyed through Bhagavat Subba Rao, one of the Palace officials, to the Ranees and to the dependents assurances on behalf of the Commissioner of the protection of the British Government.

The funeral procession the next day was attended by Sowars, Barr, State elephants and horses and the body of His Highness was carried in a palanquin to the burning place below the bund of the Doddakere tank. Crowds of people from the town and neighbourhood thronged both sides of the route and gave utterance to loud lamentations as the body passed them. Major Elliot and other European officers met the body at the gate of the cremation ground and saw it pass on attended by all the relatives and dependents of the Maharaja. The adopted son was not brought out as he was too young and as it was feared that the noise and excitement would frighten him the ceremony of lighting the funeral pyre was therefore performed by a substitute. The grief of the Ranees and women in the Palace previous to the removal of the body was most pathetic and there was a general wailing on the part of all people numbering about 4000 living within the precincts of the fort. A large quantity of sandalwood and of camphor were used for the cremation of the body and money doles were distributed to the poor and the destitute who had gathered at the place of cremation.

On receiving telegraphic news from Mysore of the death and cremation of the Maharaja, all the troops at Bangalore mustering 2000 were assembled on the parade ground on the evening of the same day. On every side of the parade ground large concourses of people gathered on hearing the sad news. There were also present a large number of officials and so were almost all the leading people. Bowring then appeared on the ground, read out the proclamation of the Government of India preceded by one from

himself. The Commissioner began by saying that he felt assured that all classes, official and non-official, would participate with him the deep regret with which he had received the sad news of the demise of His Highness Maharaja Krishnaraja Wodeyar whose friendly allegiance during a long course of years had been recognised by Her Majesty's Government and whose princely generosity and kindly qualities in private life had won for him the grateful esteem of all those who had the good fortune to enjoy his acquaintance. In accordance with the orders received from the Viceroy and Governor-General of India, continued Bowring, the government of the territories of Mysore would be carried on in the name of His Highness Chamarajendra Wodeyar Bahadur to whom would be rendered all the honours and respect paid to the late Maharaja. The administration of the Province would be conducted by the British Government on the same principles and under the same regulations as previously existed. All persons who by reason of consanguinity or service were dependent on the late Maharaja would receive full consideration, concluded Bowring, according to their several positions and could rest assured of the protection of the Mysore Government.

The Proclamation by the Government of India was next read which was in these terms :—“His Excellency the Right Honourable the Viceroy and the Governor-General in Council announces to the Chiefs and people of Mysore the death of His Highness the Maharaja Krishnaraja Wodeyar Bahadur, Knight Grand Commander of the Most Exalted Order of the Star of India. This event is regarded with sorrow by the Government of India with which the late Maharaja had preserved relations of friendship for more than half a century. His Highness Chamarajendra Wodeyar Bahadur at present a minor, the adopted son of the late Maharaja, is acknowledged by the Government of India as his successor and as Maharaja of the Mysore territories. During the minority of His Highness the said territories will be administered in His Highness' name by the British Government and will be governed on the same principles and under the same regulations as heretofore. When His Highness shall attain to the period of majority, that is the age of 18 years, and if His Highness

shall then be found qualified for the discharge of the duties of his exalted position, the government of the country will be entrusted to him subject to such conditions as may be determined at that time." Copies of the two Proclamations were sent by express post to each district with directions to the Deputy Superintendents to distribute them in Kanada at once to all the taluks, so that the people of the Province might be speedily informed of the intentions of Her Majesty's Government.

On the 30th March Major Elliot read the Government of India Proclamation at Mysore in the Palace Square. The regiment of sepoys which had arrived from French Rocks was present on the occasion and the square was also full of the inhabitants of the place. The Proclamation gave great satisfaction to the assembled people and after the presentation of arms and the firing of a royal salute there was a great clapping of hands and demonstration of joy.

On the 30th March the Government of India also published a notification for the information of the people of India in general and it ran as below:—"His Excellency the Right Honourable the Viceroy and Governor-General of India in Council announces with sorrow the death on the 27th of March of His Highness Krishnaraja Wodeyar Bahadur, G.C.S.I., Maharaja of Mysore, a Prince who from his earliest years had lived in friendship and concord with the British Government in India. In accordance with the sanction of Her Majesty's Government, His Highness Chamarajendra Wodeyar Bahadur the adopted son of the late Maharaja has been recognised and proclaimed as Maharaja of Mysore. The Maharaja being now a minor, the Government and administration of the territories of Mysore will during His Highness' minority be conducted under the direction of the Commissioner in the same manner as heretofore and all matters relating to the Maharaja's household and to the due protection in comfort and dignity of the family will be regulated by the same authority. The conditions under which the Government of Mysore will be entrusted to the Maharaja will remain for consideration at the time when His Highness shall arrive at the proper age."

On the 4th April following, Bowring had an interview with the two Maharanis at Mysore and communicated the Viceroy's condolences for the death of the old Maharaja as well as good wishes for the welfare of the young Prince. The young Prince was also present with his mother and maternal uncle Chennappaji Urs. The ladies expressed their gratification at the Viceroy's sympathy and desired the Commissioner in reply to say that they placed themselves under the protection of the British Government. They then requested him to take the young Maharaja in his arms, which he accordingly did. Bowring found the boy handsome and intelligent. The expression of the Prince's face was refined and pleasing.

Krishnaraja Wodeyar was 74 years old at the time of his death. He was somewhat short of stature but had a pleasant and dignified countenance. His complexion was fair and his dress was ordinarily in excellent taste. On public occasions he used to wear round his neck a triple necklace of pearls and girt round his waist was also a sword with a medallion of the Queen of England upon the belt. He was of a kindly and generous nature and possessed many amiable qualities. He was well-up in the administrative details of his State and possessed a rare memory. He never gave up lightly any object on which his heart had been set and there was in him an extraordinary amount of persistence and tenacity in pushing forward his views. Krishnaraja Wodeyar was described by those who knew him well as a prince of more than average acuteness of intellect, active for his years and capable of taking a shrewd and lively share in a discussion on public affairs, master of three languages spoken in his dominions Kanada, Marathi and Hindustani, sufficiently acquainted with English to appreciate and control a correspondence and to understand a good deal of conversation, though unable or unwilling to take part in it.

His Highness held two durbars annually, one on the occasion of his birthday and the other during the Dasara festival. On both these occasions besides the Indian guests, a large number of European guests were invited including the Resident. On the occasion of the Resident's visit to the Palace when these durbars were held,

he was escorted by a large body of the Mysore Horse accompanied by His Highness' body-guard. Their gaudy uniforms together with the green apparel of the running spear-men, the gaily caparisoned elephants and the tumultuous assemblage of retainers and sight-seers made, it is stated, a pleasing as well as a distracting spectacle. On entering the fort a salute was fired from the ramparts and when the narrow streets were traversed and the cortege defiled into the large square before the Palace, the household troops were drawn up on either side. Then commenced the din of musical instruments, the band playing 'God save the Queen', the elephants trumpeting and the mob shouting the Maharaja's praises, while the troops presented arms and amidst all this characteristic pomp and noise the Resident alighted and was received at the foot of the staircase by the Maharaja's nearest relations and courtiers. From the time when the administration was taken out of his hands Krishnaraja Wodeyar ceased to sit in open durbar and a curtain was drawn in front of him.

In private, the Maharaja divested himself of all state and was accustomed to sit up to a late hour at night listening to the gossip of the town, hearing tales and poetry, and sometimes discussing politics or religious themes. He was fond of pungent dishes. In his younger years he amused himself with fondling pigeons and with keeping a small menagerie.

During the course of the interviews, if not of a private character, the court retainers remained in the room calling out from time to time 'Adab Se'; (with respect), 'Tafavat Se'; (from a distance). When the audience was concluded, the Maharaja placed round the necks of his visitors garlands of sweet-smelling white flowers, while to each were distributed a few drops of attar of roses and a sprinkling of rose-water from elegantly-chased golden vessels, pansupari and a few cloves or cardamoms being placed in the hands of each person as a sign that the interview was over. During this ceremony the retainers shouted 'Mahaswami Parai.'

On the occasion of visitors seeking an audience of the Maharaja they were received in an inner apartment of the Palace known as Amba Vilas, which at the time was not very remarkable

except for a superabundance of highly-coloured paintings among which were likenesses of most of the Maharaja's European friends during his long life. The Maharaja was refined in demeanour and his conversation was generally seasoned by shrewd and sarcastic remarks and he was fond of jokes. He generally addressed English officials in Hindustani.

On the occasion of his birthday he used to invite all his European acquaintance to the races and the attendant ceremonies in the Palace, where he regaled his visitors with a dinner in English fashion and amused them with fireworks and circus performances.

Krishnaraja Wodeyar was a great patron of learning and his charities were innumerable and princely. The Maharaja, besides the knowledge he possessed of the four languages already mentioned, was also acquainted with Persian and Sanskrit. He had a well-stocked library and scholars learned in various branches received liberal encouragement at his hands. For providing instruction in English His Highness established in 1840 an English school in the Mysore City known as the Raja's High School in which he took considerable personal interest, often presiding over the annual distribution of prizes to the pupils. In 1866 a new building was completed for this school and the opening ceremony took place on the 30th of July 1866 at 4 p.m. His Highness drove in state from the Palace with Major Elliot and was received at the entrance to the new building by Bowring. There were gathered in the hall a large number of European and Indian gentlemen together with some ladies. Bowring at the desire of the Maharaja distributed the prizes of that year to the pupils and after a few encouraging words to the latter commended the generosity of His Highness in providing a new building and the keen interest His Highness evinced in education. The Maharaja then presented a pair of costly shawls to James Dunning the headmaster of the school and desired that equal attention should be paid to Kanada and Urdu languages.

The Maharaja's charities and gifts extended to all parts of the State and even to outside places. He established a hospital at

Mysore where European medicines were dispensed free of cost to the sick. In 1828 under his orders was constructed the big Gopuram or tower for the temple on the Chamundi Hill which is visible from Mysore. In subsequent years similar towers were constructed for the temples of Nanjundeswara at Nanjangud and of Lakshmiramanaswami at Mysore. In 1819 he presented a crown of great value set in gold with precious stones known as Vairmudi to the deity at Melkote. Gifts of rows of houses at Mysore in the names of his mother and his queens known as Kempa Nanjamba, Deviramba and other agrahars were made to Brahmins. Parakala, Sringeri, Uttaradi, Jain and Veerasiva religious institutions received rich benefactions from His Highness. He arranged for the celebration of festivals at Siva and Vishnu temples at Madura, Srirangam, Sri Sailam and Tirupati. At Tirupati he restored the two silver umbrellas presented by Raja Wodeyar and provided for the feeding of pilgrims frequenting the place. While on a visit to Subrahmanya and Udipi in 1820, His Highness presented costly gifts to the temples in both the places and also provided for the celebration of certain annual festivals.

The most notable feature of Krishnaraja Wodeyar's character was his unalloyed loyalty to the British Crown whether in sunshine or in storm. In all his letters before attaching his signature, he invariably used the words "with my unaltered and unalterable but grateful attachment to the British Government." Rama Varma, the enlightened Maharaja of Travancore at the time, on hearing of Krishnaraja Wodeyar's death observed that he was quite a historical character and that a future Sir Walter Scott might find in his life materials for a most interesting romance. The great Persian poet Saadi has observed that when a person is ushered into this world he comes weeping, while those around him exhibit joy and that it should be the aim of one's life to leave this world with joy, leaving others to weep. It is no exaggeration to say of Krishnaraja Wodeyar that his life was so regulated as to afford a typical instance of this observation of Saadi. His birth in 1794 gave joy to his family then under clouds of obscurity and misfortune. In 1868 when he died, the whole of the Mysore world mourned for him

and this mourning extended even beyond. In His Highness' time there was a Kanada saying which meant 'King Krishnaraja, the illuminating light of all households'; 'Krishnaraja Bhupa, Maneyella Deepa' and this popular Kanada saying is even now not forgotten.