

CHAPTER III.

ORIGIN AND FOUNDATION OF THE WODEYAR DYNASTY.

Early references to "Mysore"—Traditional accounts of origin :

In nineteenth century manuscripts—In eighteenth century manuscripts and inscriptions—In seventeenth century literary works and inscriptions— Examination of the different accounts—Probable date of the founding of the Dynasty c. 1399-1420.

DURING the greater part of the period we have thus far sketched in general, very little is known from authentic sources about the place called

Early references to "Mysore."

*Mysore*¹ and the ruling family there.

Among the earliest available documents, a lithic record,² dated in 1128 (ś. 1050), belonging to the reign of the Hoysala Vishṇuvardhana (1111-1141), refers incidentally to the Mahābalāchala hill (the present Chāmuṇḍi Hills, near Mysore), situated in Maisu-nāḍu. The next one,³ dated in 1175 (ś. 1097), belonging to the reign of Vīra-Ballāḷa II (1173-1220), refers to a Hoysala-gauḍa of Mysore. Coming to later times, another lithic record,⁴ dated in 1494 (ś. 1416), claims our attention. It registers a grant of the village of Bommanahalli—assigned to God Triyambaka—to provide for the feeding of the great Haradanahalli Wodeyars. The grant was made by Parvataiya, a son of Mallikārjuna of Vijayanagar (1446-1487). The record incidentally

1. For the derivation of "Mysore," vide Appendix I—(2).

2. *E. C.*, III (1) My. 16, ll. 9-10: *Maisu-nāḍu svasti Śrī-Mārbalāḍu tīrthakke*.

3. *Ibid.*, My. 8, l. 10: *Mayisūra Hoysala-gauḍa*.

4. *Ibid.*, IV (2) Gu. 2, ll. 28-29: *Mahisūra-dēvara nidāna*. *Nidāna* here is a colloquial for *nīdhāna*, treasure. Rice renders the passage as "treasury of the lord of Mysore," taking *dēvara* apparently to mean the ruler of the place. But, according to the context, *dēvara* would suggest a local god.

refers to the setting up of a stone charter both at Triyambakapura and at the treasury of the God of Mysore. The God of Mysore referred to here, was probably God Sōmēśvara, now situated in the Mysore fort, which claims⁵ to have been set up in the time of the Chōlas.

These records, however, do not help us much regarding the early history of the place and its rulers, beyond indicating that in the twelfth century Mysore formed part of, or was situated in, *Maisa-nāḍu* (the buffalo country) and was known as *Mayisūr* (lit. buffalo town), and that towards the close of the fifteenth it was known by the still earlier form *Mahisūr*,⁶ the place itself being directly under the control of the Vijayanagar governor at Terakaṇāmbi (*Triyambakapura*).

The founding of the Ruling House of Mysore has to be dated in 1399, according to tradition preserved in the *Annals of the Mysore Royal Family*⁷ (1864-1865). Yadu-Rāya and Krishṇa, two brothers, princes of the lunar race and of Yādava descent, of Ātrēyasa-gōtra and Āśvalāyana-sūtra, having left the region of Dvāraka, proceeded, it is said, by way of the Vindhya to Vijayanagar. From there they went to Mēlkōṭe (Yadugiri), where they paid their obeisance to their family god Nārāyaṇa. Crossing the Cauvery, they next paid a visit to the Goddess Chāmuṇḍēśvarī of the Mahābalāchala hill and were taking rest in the temple of Kōḍi-Bhairava situated near the tank behind the temple of Triṇēśvara in Mysore. About this time, however, the chief of that place, Chāmarāja, had died, leaving behind him the dowager queen (Dēvājammaṇṇi) and a daughter (also named Dēvājammaṇṇi). Māra Nāyaka, the general of the late chief, had usurped all power and was causing much distress to the queen. The two princes, informed

5. *Mys. Nag. Pūr.*, p. 26; *vide* also Ch. IV.

6. See also Appendix I—(2), for details.

7. I. 4-12.

of this state of affairs, entered the town of Mysore, assisted by a loyal Jangama preceptor (Woḍeyar). Despatching Māra Nāyaka's men who obstructed them at the gate, they took up their abode in the palace. Later Yadu-Rāya slew Māra Nāyaka in a mortal combat. The queen, in deep gratitude, bestowed her daughter on Yadu-Rāya. Yadu eventually succeeded to the principality of Mysore and became the progenitor of the *Mysore Royal Family*, the title *Woḍeyar* being subsequently affixed to the name of each ruler, in recognition, it is said, of the valuable assistance rendered by the Jangama preceptor to Yadu-Rāya during his chivalrous exploit.

Jaina tradition, as narrated in the *Rājāvalī-Kathā* (1838) of Dēvachandra,⁸ is as follows: There was a twelve-year famine in Vijayanagar between 1414-1426 (ś. 1336-1348). Thereupon, runs the account, the Arasus and Setṭis of the place went over to the Karnāṭak and other parts of the Empire. Among them three Arasus, of Yādava descent, established themselves in Nuggēhalli. The youngest of them by name Vijaya-Rāja, however, settled in Kumbāra-Koppal (*Kumbhakāra-Koppal*, lit. Potters' settlement), near Mysore (*Mahisūr*), devoting himself to agricultural pursuits. He married a maiden of the potter community in the locality and leased out for himself five villages near by. After some time Vijaya-Rāja died, leaving behind him his wife and a daughter. The Toreyas, taking advantage of the situation, were forcing Vijaya-Rāja's widow to marry away her daughter against her wishes. At this juncture, two of the descendants of Vishṇuvarhdana of the Yadu dynasty, namely, Dēva-Rāja and Śānta-Rāja, then going about the country in search of a kingdom for themselves, happened to pass thither and were halting for the while on the tank bund at Mysore. Having ascertained the state of affairs in the locality, they entered Mysore and became masters

8. XII. 446-449; also X. 285-288, etc.

of the situation by despatching the ring-leaders of the trouble and forcing others to take to their heels. Dēva-Rāja and Śānta-Rāja became the lords of Mysore. Dēva-Rāja acquired some villages and made two Jain Brāhmanas (Śāntaiya and Padmaṇṇaiya) of Maleyūr, his chief officers. In due course Śānta-Rāja, owing to differences with his elder brother, settled himself in Kārugaḥalli and became master of some adjoining villages. Later Dēva-Rāja was slain by one Māra Nāyaka, a powerful member of the Toreya community, who usurped all power in Mysore. Māra Nāyaka was, however, eventually put to death by Rāja Woḍeyar, a posthumous son of Dēva-Rāja, the main line of rulers in Mysore being restored with the help of his Jain adherents.

The *Mysūru-Rājara-Charitre* (c. 1800) of Venkaṭaramaṇaiya,⁹ has it that from the closing years of the incarnation of Lord Kṛishṇa the kings of the Yādava dynasty had been settled in Mysore (*Mahishapura*) favoured by the Goddess Chāmūṇḍēśvarī of the Mahā-balāchala hill, that among them one by name Yadu paid a visit to Mēlkōṭe (*Nārāyaṇagiri*) and worshipped God Tirunārāyaṇa there, and that his descendants continued to rule from Mysore.

The *Mysūru-Dhoregaḷa-Vamsāvali*¹⁰ (c. 1800) merely refers to the kings of Yādava descent who were settled and were ruling in Mysore.

A manuscript entitled *Mysūru-Nagarada-Pūrvōttara*¹¹ (c. 1734-1740), relied upon by Wilks,¹² contains the following account: From Dvāraka two brothers by name Vijaya-Rāja Woḍeyar and Kṛishṇa-Rāja Woḍeyar, it is said, proceeded to Vijayanagar and were staying with the king (*Rāya*) there. The latter proposed to give them a territory (*sīme*) to administer. The brothers accepted the offer, expressing their desire to choose one in the south

9. P. 15.

10. ff. 2.

11. Pp. 24-26.

12. I. 38-40.

Having obtained the king's permission, they went about the Seringapatam country and devoted themselves to the service of the Goddess Chāmuṇḍēśvarī to the south of the Cauvery. They proceeded as far as the fort named Haḍadaṇa in the vicinity of the Chāmuṇḍi Hills. About this time the chief of Haḍadaṇa, one Śānta Woḍeyar, having for some reason or other renounced the world, had left the place (*vairāgya hutṭi . . . horaṭu hōdaru*), leaving behind him a daughter, who was being looked after by a certain Woḍeyar. The Toreya chief of Kārugahaḷli, profiting by the absence of the ruler in Haḍadaṇa, became puffed up with pride and arrogance and plotted to marry the chief's daughter himself. The two brothers, who were stationed near the tank of Haḍadaṇa, came to know of all this and were also told that preparations were afoot for the coming marriage. Vijaya and Krishṇa offered their willing help in the cause of the distressed maiden and, accompanied by the Woḍeyar, proceeded to the fort where temporary structures had been erected for the marriage. They quietly won over the local militia (*haḷēpaika* men and the *rāṇuves*), led the leading members of the Kārugahaḷli party one by one to the marriage pavilion and made short work of all the mischief-mongers. Vijaya then married the princess; Haḍadaṇa, and subsequently Mysore (*Mahisūr*)—then a sort of irregular fort (*hūḍēvu*)—came into his possession.

A still earlier manuscript entitled *Mysūru-Dhoregaḷa-Pūrvābhyaḍaya-Vivara* (c. 1710-1714), is silent regarding the origin and founding of the dynasty.

Inscriptions¹³ of the eighteenth century, ranging from 1716 to 1761, record that certain princes of the race of Yadu, having left the region of Dvāraka (or Dvārāvātipura), proceeded to the Karnāṭaka country, either led by fancy (*ichchayā*) or to visit their family god Nārāyaṇa (*īkshītum Ramā-ramaṇam*), and being attracted by the

13. *Vide* references cited in f.n. 1 to Table II.

beauty and fruitfulness of the land, took up their abode in the city of Mysore (*Mahisūr*), from where they ruled.

The available literary works and inscriptions of the seventeenth century,¹⁴ unanimously echo the same tradition, the earliest among the former being the *Kanṭhīravanarasarāja-Vijayam* (1648) and among the latter, the *Hālagere copper-plate grant* (1663).

In seventeenth century literary works and inscriptions.

Tirumalārya, however, in his *Chikkadēvarāya-Vamsāvali* (c. 1678-1680), elaborates thus¹⁵: In the lunar race Yadu sprang up. Among his descendants, Bala and Krishṇa, with a view to worship their family god, proceeded to Yadugiri (Mēlkōṭe). There they worshipped God Nārāyaṇa, presented him with the sacred jewelled crown (*Vāira-muḍi*) and returned to Dvāraka, leaving one of their descendants for the protection of the place (Mēlkōṭe) and carrying on the services to the god. The latter resided at Yadugiri for some time, but later, under the advice of the Śrī-Vaishṇavas, went over to Mysore, from where he began to govern. In the *Yādavagiri-Māhātmya* (of Timma-Kavi)¹⁶ also, among others, we have a similar account.

Only one record of the seventeenth century, namely, the *Gajjiganahalli copper-plate grant*, dated in 1639,¹⁷ however, echoes the following tradition, in a direct and more significant manner: "The glorious kings of the banks of the Gōdāvarī, formerly sent forth with honour by the rulers (before the Vijayanagar king, Venkaṭa II), again obtained the Karnāṭa portion of the earth, to protect it; sprung from the *Ātrēya-anvaya*, of the

14. *Vide* f.n. 1 to Tables II and III.

15. Pp. 11-12.

16. I, 70-77.

17. *E.C.*, III (1) Nj. 198, ll. 29-33:

Pūrvam Gōdāvarītīra bhūpālā bhūri tējasah |
Ētat pūrvaṭ maṇḍalēndraih sādaram prēritah punah |
Pātum Karnāṭa bhūbhāgam prāptāh prathīta tējasah |
Ātrēyanvaya sambhūtā Āśvalāyana-sūtrīnah |
Rg-Vēdinō mahābhāgā Mahishāpūr-nivāsīnah ||

Āśvalāyana-sūtra, followers of the *R̥g-Vēda*, dwelling in Mahishāpura.”

It will be seen from the above gleanings from the available sources that the tradition relating to the Yādava descent of the present Ruling House of Mysore has had a continuous course of development during the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. An examination of the nineteenth century tradition preserved in the *Annals*, in the light of the earlier sources of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, would show that it has been based, in the main, upon the latter. The traditional date 1399, assigned in the *Annals* to the founding of the dynasty, remains, however, uncorroborated, there being, so far, hardly any reference to the Ruling House in Mysore, in the inscriptional and other records prior to c. 1550. The Jaina tradition in the *Rājāvalī-Kathā*, while it confirms the Yādava descent of the Ruling House, differs totally from other accounts in regard to the details about the founding of the dynasty. The sequence of events narrated appears also to be loose and vague. The twelve-years' famine referred to, stands uncorroborated, while the names¹⁸ of the progenitors of the dynasty form a distinct departure from the position taken in other sources. In the absence of confirmatory evidence, the Jaina tradition would only seem to indicate a later attempt to connect the Ruling House of Mysore with the Hoysaḷas and trace the Jaina connection with it from the time of its foundation—a position perhaps best borne out by a further examination of the *Rājāvalī-Kathā* itself.¹⁹ The information contained in the *Mysūru-Rājara-*

18. *Vide* Table VIII, compared with Nos. V and IX.

19. See, for instance, XII. 450-475, where Dēvachandra, while closely following the text of Tīrumalārya's *Chikkadēvarāya-Vamsāvalī*, freely makes his own interpolations. One of these (*Rājāvalī-Kathā*, 454-455), in keeping with Dēvachandra's earlier position (XII. 446-449 and X. 285-288, etc.), clearly connects the progenitors of the Mysore Ruling House with a collateral branch of the Hoysaḷas.

Charitre, is clearly an improvement on the earlier tradition. The tradition referred to in the *Mysūru-Dhoregaḷa-Vamśāvali*, is in keeping with the one preserved in the literary and epigraphical records of the seventeenth century, while the *Mysūru-Dhoregaḷa-Pūrvābhyudaya-Vivara* only attempts to fix the succession, etc., of some of the early kings of the dynasty, on a chronological basis.

There seems, however, to be an air of reality in the account narrated in the *Mysūru-Nagarada-Pūrvōttara*, though it lacks chronological data and fuller genealogical details. The archaic nature of its language—which seems to correspond to the type of colloquial Kannaḍa prose prevailing in the earlier part of the sixteenth century—would appear to reflect the genuine historical tradition handed down from time immemorial. The place *Haḍadana* referred to in the manuscript as the fort at which the two princes Vijaya and Krishṇa are said to have arrived in the course of their sojourn, is to be seen even to-day as a village south of the Chāmuṇḍi Hills, Mysore, though in a corrupt form as *Haḍadana* or *Haḍajana*,²⁰ in the Kaḍakoḷa hōbḷi of the Mysore taluk. Wilks, while first using this source, spelt *Haḍadana* as *Hadana*,²¹ which has been identified by later scholars with the distant place *Hadināru*²² or *Adināru*²³ in the Nanjangūḍ taluk. The information recorded in this manuscript, is also, in general outline, in keeping with the trend of Śrī-Vaiṣṇava tradition echoed in the earlier sources of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, particularly in respect of the extraneous origin of the dynasty.

The tradition preserved in the seventeenth century sources (inscriptions and literary works), is of a general

20. *Vide* Mysore Government *List of Villages*, 83. The identification of *Haḍadana* with *Haḍajana* was first made in the *Annals* (II. 87), on the authority of a copy of the *Mys. Nag. Pūr.*, in the possession of Mr. Muddarāja Urs, noticed in f.n. 11 to Ch. I.

21. I. 39.

22. By Rice in *Mys. Gaz.*, I. 361.

23. By R. Narasimhachar in *M.A.R.*, 1918, para 38.

character, there being in them very little data which would enable us to determine the exact chronological limits within which the founding of the dynasty in Mysore can be fixed. There is also a tendency in these sources, as in the case of the works of Tirumalārya and Timma-Kavi among others, to elaborate and improve upon the Vaishṇava tradition relating to the origin of the dynasty.

The *Gajjiganahalli copper-plate grant* (1639), is, however, of some interest. The statements in it that “the glorious kings of the banks of the Gōdāvārī, formerly sent forth with honour by the rulers (before Venkaṭa II), again obtained the Karnāṭa portion of the earth, to protect it” and that they dwelt in Mysore, are significant. The record belongs to the reign of Kaṅṭhīrava-Narasarāja Wodeyar I of Mysore (1638-1659), who acknowledges the suzerainty of Venkaṭa II of Vijayanagar. If we are to identify “the glorious kings of the banks of the Gōdāvārī” with a branch of the line of Yadu princes—from the circumstance that the Yādavas of Dēvagiri formerly ruled in that region (c. 1200-1312)—than this record should be taken to suggest that they (*i.e.*, the line of Yadu princes) having been for long out of power, obtained the permission of the Vijayanagar rulers—predecessors of Venkaṭa II—to proceed to the south and establish their sway in Mysore. Hence the expression “again obtained the Karnāṭa portion of the earth, to protect it” (*punaḥ pātum Karnāṭa bhūbhāgam prāptāḥ*). Thus this record would, in the main, corroborate the tradition contained in the *Mysūru-Nagarada-Pūrvōttara*, noticed above.

Pushing our inquiries further backwards, we have already seen that the earliest available reference to Mysore in the fifteenth century, is in a record dated in 1494. It contains no reference to the ruler of the time in Mysore, nor, as indicated, is there any decisive evidence to fix the date of the founding of the

Probable date of
the founding of the
Dynasty : c. 1399-
1420.

Ruling Dynasty. The earliest ruler of the dynasty who can, however, be fairly well located, is Hiriya-Bettada-Chāmarāja Wodeyar III (1513-1553), who is found invariably referred to, in the seventeenth century inscriptions and literary works,²⁴ as one of the immediate descendants in the line of Yadu princes in Mysore. Apart from differences in point of detail, the manuscripts are agreed that Vijaya or Yadu-Rāya was the founder of the dynasty. If, in the light of the seventeenth century records, we are to allow a period of about one hundred to one hundred and fifteen years for the ancestors²⁵ of Hiriya-Bettada-Chāmarāja Wodeyar III, the founding of the dynasty itself will have to be fixed not later than c. 1420 and not earlier than c. 1399. The circumstance that there is no reference to the early members of the House, in the records up to about 1550, is, perhaps, due to their having been purely local rulers within the jurisdiction of the Terakaṇāmbi or the Seringapatam province of the Vijayanagar Empire. The dynasty, it would seem, emerged from small beginnings into an important local power about the early years of the sixteenth century. This position would find some support from the traditional history of the contemporary dynasty of Kaḷale, the founding of which is dated in 1500, in a family manuscript entitled *Kaḷale-Arasugaḷa-Vamśāvali* (c. 1830). From this work we find²⁶ that matrimonial relations between the Kaḷale and Mysore families began only subsequent to 1500, during the reign of Hiriya-Bettada-Chāmarāja Wodeyar III of Mysore, who is referred to in the manuscript as *Vijaya-Chāmarasa Wodeyar of Mysūru-Nagara*, *Vijaya* probably indicating that he was named after Vijaya, the progenitor of the Mysore Ruling House according to the *Mysūru-Nagarada-Pūrvōttara*. At the same time it is to be noted that the

24. *Vide* Tables II and III and references cited in f.n. 1 thereto.

25. *Vide* Tables IV-IX.

26. ff. 2-3; see also Ch. X and Table XIII.

tradition relating to the origin of the dynasty, noticeable in the records of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, is conspicuous by its absence in the extant records of the rulers of the sixteenth century. In particular, one lithic record,²⁷ dated in 1598 (ś. 1520), refers only to the *Ātrēyasagōtra*, *Āśvalāyana-sūtra* and *Ṛk-śākhā* of the Mysore Royal House.

It would thus appear from an examination of all the available sources that the founding of the Mysore Ruling House—of Yādava descent, *Ātrēyasa-gōtra*, *Āśvalāyana-sūtra* and *Ṛk-śākhā*—took place towards the close of the fourteenth century or the earlier part of the fifteenth (c. 1399-1420), more probably under the circumstances narrated in the *Mysūru-Nagarada-Pūrvōttara* and in keeping with the main trend of tradition preserved in the *Annals*.²⁸ The development of tradition relating to the Yādava origin of the dynasty, by about 1639 and more markedly throughout the rest of the seventeenth century, seems to have kept pace with the parallel rise of the dynasty from small beginnings to a prominent position commanding a powerful kingdom, and the gradual growth of Śrī-Vaishṇavism in the country.

27. *E.C., Mys. Dist. Suppl. Vol.*, Sr. 198 (*M.A.R.*, 1911-1912, p. 52).

28. Cf. S. K. Aiyangar, *Ancient India*, pp. 275-276.



Yadu-Rāya (Vijaya), 1399-1423.