

MAKING HISTORY

Karnataka's People and their Past

SAKI



Volume II

Colonial Shock, Armed Struggle

(1800-1857)



1. Raji in the rain at the Nagar fort

This book

is dedicated to the fond memory of

Comrade HR Rajeshwari

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Volume II

**Colonial Shock, Armed Struggle
(1800-1857)**

SAKI

Vimukthi Prakashana
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This book outlines the development of Karnataka history from the time of British conquest of Karnataka in 1799 till the War of Independence in 1857.

On what basis did the British partition Karnataka? What was the content of the Subsidiary Treaties the British signed with different kings? How did the British consolidate their rule without upsetting the social order of feudalism? Why did the local landlords support British rule? Did the British check or did they contribute to caste oppression? What was the nature of the new state the British established? What was the impact of British colonialism on the broad masses? What was the political response of the masses of Karnataka to British domination? How and why did the people conduct armed struggle to fight the British? What was the political thrust of the peasant insurgencies that shook Karnataka during this period? Did Karnataka really show up prospects for a bourgeois democratic revolution?

Basing on a wide range of primary and secondary sources this book makes an analytical narrative of all these and many more questions. Contrary to biased history writing, it makes a comprehensive and objective presentation of the people's history of Karnataka, adopting the methodology of Historical Materialism.

This book is a sequel to the first volume, which traced Karnataka history from the first signs of human habitation till the time of British conquest.

The third volume is to explore into the impact of British colonialism on Karnataka from 1858 to 1947.

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PREFACE

In the Preface to *Volume I of Making History*, it was said that this book had more than just one author.

As *Volume II* prepares for print I am compelled to tell about one such author who remained anonymous.

Such a revelation should have been a matter of joy. But the circumstances brim with emotions of an opposite kind.

Raji, as she was known to those who were close to her, was killed by police on 20 March 2001 in the forest of Kothapalli in Vishakapatnam district of Andhra Pradesh. She was captured that afternoon by a 20 member detachment of the Special Task Force, tortured for more than four hours and finally shot from the back of her head.

There were two children who saw all of this from behind a bush. They were dumbfounded by the barbarity. They could not eat for the next three days. But when they finally spoke, they said one thing of her. It was remarkable. She had stood her ground. As she was mauled, this soft-spoken woman in her forties was outrageously defiant. She hailed the revolution from her dying lips.

Raji had passed her test as a revolutionary in flying red. She defied her assassins to live beyond them.

The volumes of *Making History* are indebted to this coffee complexioned and short statured, yet, abundantly tall and graceful heroine of the oppressed.

Raji has her modest place in the writing as well as in the making of history.

She was the first to lend her patient ear to the pages of the first and second volumes. As the parts were written out, she would hear them read. It did not matter to her if it was late on a wintry night. Or, if it was in the epicentre of a sultry summer's afternoon. She would have her senses glued. Then she would make her observations. Raise questions or pose her points. That way she left her imprint on these pages. Noiselessly and unadvertised.

The production of *Volume I* owes a lot to her. Ugh! Drab office work. That is how many would dismiss it. But she was perennially enthusiastic. She set the pages on the computer. She doctored the viral infections and tailored the illustrations to precision. As the book rolled out of the press and the jacket neatly tucked in its glistening sleeves, Raji had graduated as a DTP beautician.

Volume II had caught her imagination. The armed struggles waged by the people of Karnataka in the early decades of the nineteenth century were a point she would often have me ponder about. We could not resist the contagion. We decided to relive these precious moments from our popular past. We caught the bus to Nagar. There we saw what was left of the famous fortress that served as a flash point for the historic Nagar peasant insurgency. A few months later we squeezed some time for Nandagad. We spoke to the people about Sangolli Rayanna. As we talked with the toilers, they gave us accounts, pointed about his escapades, guided us around and treated us to food in their huts.

Raji spotted the smouldering fire that burnt in their hearts.

I asked her if Rayanna kindled something deep inside them. She blew away decades of ash with her warm breath. Then, pointing to the red glow of the embers, she said that new generations of those very same masses were stirring to re-enact them across the forests and plains of Nandagad and Nagar.

As I shook hands with her in January 2001, it was the last I saw of her. She was in olive green. Her rucksack was firmly strapped onto her back. In it she had empty tapes, empty notebooks and unexposed film. She carried no firearm. She was a non-combatant. Comrade Rajeshwari held out her clenched fist in farewell.

There are two facts about the past and future of Indian history which the Kannada and Telugu nations share among them. To unravel best the prospect of the bourgeois democratic revolution, one has to venture into Karnataka's past. In the period of Haidar and Tipu and in their Kingdom of Mysore, the Indian high road to the old democratic revolution had been laid. One could already catch a glimpse of the maturation of conditions, of an imminent storm against the system of feudalism. Later in Nagar and around Nandagad the masses stormed those very gates of heaven. They illustrated through popular war against feudalism and colonialism that they desired democracy and liberation. These were simmering embers that Raji had deftly picked up and placed in the first and second volumes of *Making History*.

But she aimed for more. She desired to relive the past only so as to enact the future. She desired that it was not enough just to see the prospect of the bourgeois democratic revolution. Her intellect was not insipid. She wanted to see and share the living popular experience of the proletarian democratic revolution.

If Karnataka's past demonstrated the possibility of the old democratic revolution, the people's war raging in Andhra Pradesh brilliantly lit up the prospect of the new democratic revolution.

Raji had seen the past. She wanted to see the future. She chose to visit the villages of Andhra Pradesh where new democratic people's power was being forged. She wanted to study it, record it and broadcast its prowess among the masses of Karnataka.

She interviewed scores of people. She recorded revolutionary songs. She made copious notes of what she had read and heard. She took photographs of the oppressed adivasis and of their hope, the young guerrilla fighters in green.

On March 20, she sat beneath a tree. She was pouring over her diaries. Shots rang out. She hid in the thicket. But they got their filthy hands on her. Then it was short work. Bullets burnt through her brains. Blood was on her cheek. It oozed from her mouth. She could not rise to protect her notebooks. Raji rested on the forest floor like a carefree child. Her curls were disheveled. They would remain unkempt forever.

Today she is in deep sleep.

Volume II of Making History is dedicated to her. But as this volume is read, the sleeping Rajeshwari will awaken her readers. In her we catch a glimpse of the glorious past. But not just that. She comprehensively epitomizes the future too. As the revolution rages across our land, the fascist rulers and their state will discover more and more that the memories of the dead are

not as easily erased from the hearts and minds of the living. That is what history—the history of class struggle, is also about.

Raji learned this lesson well. She reminds us of it always, only because she generously gave away the one most precious thing she had when it was asked of her—her pulsating life—for the cause of the oppressed.

Saki

1 November 2002

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¹ Saki

² mapsofindia.com

³ Shyam Bhat

⁴ ibid

⁵ ibid

⁶ tipusultan.org

⁷ based on ibid

⁸ ibid

⁹ mysoreonline.com

¹⁰ HS Gopal Rao

¹¹ William Dent and his Brother, John and an Indian Landlord, Anand Narain, (circa 1790), by Arthur William Devis

- ¹² karmic.in
¹³ Saki
¹⁴ tipusultan.org
¹⁵ ibid
¹⁶ Shyam Bhat
¹⁷ Saki
¹⁸ Saki
¹⁹ ibid
²⁰ A contemporary painting at the shrine by the graveside of Sangolli Rayanna in Nandagad
²¹ Based on Appendix II
²² Saki
²³ ibid
²⁴ ibid
²⁵ ibid
²⁶ ibid
²⁷ Based on Appendix III
²⁸ ibid
²⁹ ibid
³⁰ ibid
³¹ Shyam Bhat
³² ibid
³³ ibid
³⁴ Ministry of Environment and Forests, Government of India, Forest Survey 1999
³⁵ Saki

INTRODUCTION

Unlike its predecessor, *Volume II of Making History* tells of a brief period from our past. It talks of little more than the first five decades of colonial conquest of Karnataka which shocked the social formation into submission.

But it also pulverized historiography into dishing out stereotypical myths. It lit a halo around the Rajas of Mysore who ascended the throne by dint of British conquest. “Benign”, “enlightened”, “liberal”, “patriotic”, “philanthropic”... The hyperbole is unending. But Part I of this volume will reveal from the very correspondence and statements of the Mysore royal family and from an evaluation of the struggles of the time that they were no more than puffed up puppets of the Raj. They were anything except what these epithets sought to present them as. Amusing but true, they called themselves slavishly as the “*sons of the Company*”. History has its way of taking ironic jibes.

The alliance between colonialism and feudalism as manifested in the Subsidiary Treaty between the Raja of Mysore and the British was reflective of a wider and universal alliance between the class of big landlords and British colonialism. The British, as this *Volume* will reveal, were meticulous in forging such an alliance. This was no accident. Rather, it was

purposeful. The moribund landlord class was sought by conscious historical intent. This result of British conquest is not adequately appreciated by historiography. The age-old system of feudalism held together by the integument of caste has survived and has proved its resilience even in the face of the “modernising” impact of colonialism. The simple fact about the longevity of this decrepit system is that the very moderniser chose its perpetuation. It is a case of suspended historic animation. The British consolidated the hold of the upper caste landlord class over the oppressed masses of our land. In enshackling India, the British relied on the feudal ruling classes of the existing social system. The colonial sabre rested secure in the moth eaten feudal scabbard.

In this sense the first half of the nineteenth century was indeed a dark period in the history of Karnataka. But in the midst of this pervasive darkness, as Part II will describe, there was the regular flash of gunpowder which illumined the sky. The fire that issued from the matchlocks of the masses scorched the feudal-colonial alliance.

Volume I described beyond doubt the brilliant summing up by Karl Marx and Frederick Engels in the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* that the “...history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles”. *Volume II* illustrates that the high point of this class struggle invariably assumed the form of creative violence. Gandhian ideology has an overbearing influence on history writing. But there are quite a few scholars who would have little to do with it. Yet there has been the general tendency of historians to underwrite or even maintain petrifying silence about the role of violence in the historic process, particularly when the period of history inches closer and closer to the very social precipice where we stand today.

Dr Abimael Guzman refined the Clausewitzian principle when he said: “*First comes the military deed and later political change. This shows once again that war is the continuation of politics by other means.*”

Were the four anti-colonial wars waged by the armies of Haidar Ali and Tipu Sultan not such “*military deeds*”? And can anybody deny the fact that it was due to Tipu’s defeat in 1799 that Karnataka’s political character was transformed and it became a colony of the British? The British colonization of our land was achieved by an epoch of predatory wars of conquest. It was with violence that the British conquered and subsequently ruled over us.

Shocked and mowed by the colonial experience, a section of the feudal lords and the broad masses made attempts to recover the lost frontier. Starting from the very moment that the British had defeated Tipu Sultan, there was a string of armed uprisings against the British. The popular armed insurgencies of Nagar, of Sangolli Rayanna and of Kalyanaswamy are important illustrations of the fact that the masses opted for the “*military deed*” in order to invoke the political change for independence and democracy. For a century, starting from the 1760s right up to the armed rebellion of the Bedas of Halagalli in Bijapur in 1858, Karnataka was one vast battlefield. It was repeatedly and incessantly engaged in war. The British and their puppets decimated a fair percentage of our populace. The number of those who died fighting the British

during that century ran into a few lakhs. The anti-colonial sacrifice of the masses during this time has remained unprecedented to date.

The ruling classes have not remained absolutely inert to these upheavals. Under popular duress, they have been selective and partial in their glorification. They have one-sidedly glorified the struggles of Kittur's Rani Chennamma. Chennamma belonged to the ruling classes. Her husband was an upper caste feudatory of the British who assisted the colonialists in the overthrow of the Marathas. Yet the Rani chose to part ways, like a few others of her time, and she waged an inspiring battle against the invaders. Chennamma deserves praise.

But it had to be even.

In Kittur, remnants of the palace vandalised by the British gentlemen is preserved. The fortress has attended lawns. There is a museum with accounts of events of the time. But search the pictures and the paintings on the wall, and you will be struck down by the class logic. There is not a single scribble from the pen and not a single stroke from a painters' brush to tell us about Sangolli Rayanna. Was it not this *shetsunnadi* of hers who continued the war against the British after Chennamma's had folded up? He had surely not betrayed the Rani of Kittur as his corpse dangled from the hangman's noose in Nandagad. British capitalism killed Rayanna. The collaborating casteist feudal-comprador entourage buried him.

But Rayanna lives among the people.

To get a glimpse of this hero of the masses one has to walk out of the fortress of Kittur. Out in the fields among the peasantry and the herdsman he comes alive as a legend. There are a host of folk songs which tell of him. They celebrate his martyrdom by flocking each year in thousands to the giant banyan at Nandagad.

The ruling classes have extolled the typically feudal form of positional war that Rani Chennamma led. They have tried to ignore the fact that Sangolli Rayanna conducted an altogether different kind of war. He demonstrated that without arms the masses could procure arms, that without an army the masses could build an army and that without having the training in war the masses could creatively deploy guerrilla warfare against a powerful and centralized enemy.

The Nagar peasant insurrection that followed immediately after his death illustrated this truth on a grand social scale before the entire Kannada nation.

But over and above all, as the masses hurl themselves in the class struggle for political change in the coming days, the real meaning of Rayanna will be realized. The military deed will also plunge into the heart of historiography. History will have to concede to the claim of those who have, after all, made it.

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PART I

COLONIAL SHOCK (1800-1857)

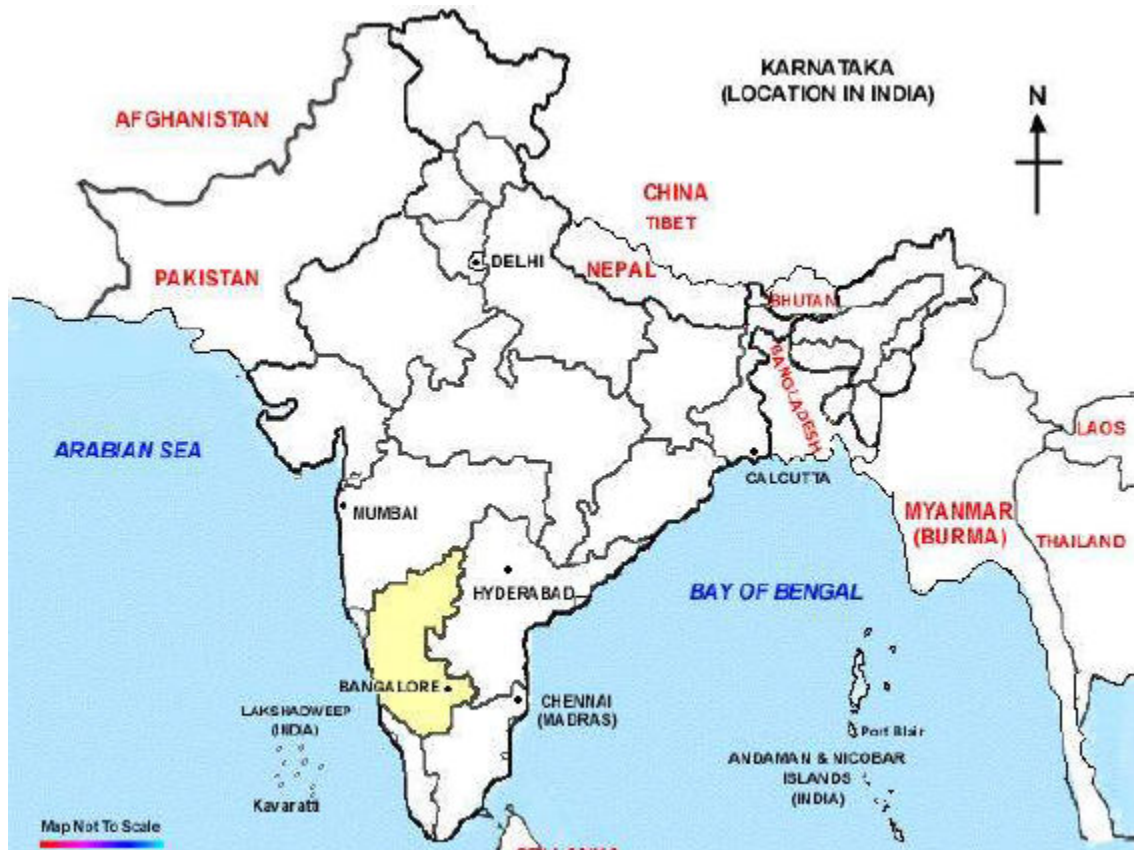
Chapter I

WODEYARS: FIRST AND FOREMOST OF KARNATAKA'S PUPPETS

1. MAKING OF A PUPPET

The enthronement of the Wodeyar dynasty on Tipu Sultan's defeat in 1799, after the eclipse for several decades, was a result of factors which were carefully weighed by British colonialism, and the outcome of certain changes introduced in colonial policy following the experiences of a century's rule over India. While we shall look into the arguments that cleared the way for the Wodeyar's ascent as enunciated by Wellesley, the Governor General, at a later point; we shall now consider the surrender of Lakshmi Ammani the dowager Queen to the British and how her embrace of the feet of colonialism was not an insignificant factor in choosing the Wodeyars as the reigning puppets of Mysore.

Lakshmi Ammani was the widow of Krishna Raja Wodeyar II who died in 1766. Her two sons Nanjaraja and Chamaraja who were confined to their royal house by Haidar Ali, died after a few years, leading to the adoption of her grandson, Krishna Raja Wodeyar III. He was born in 1792.



2. Map of Karnataka in India

In early 1770 itself, she had, through her emissaries contacted Pigot, the Governor of Madras, and expressed her loyalty to the British in the event of Haidar Ali's overthrow. In May 1782 she addressed a letter to Macartney, the Governor of Madras, offering *“to pay one crore or ten millions of Arcot Rupees for the expense of the camp, and grant to the Company a Jaghir to the amount of fifteen lacks of rupees per annum and thirty six lacks more annually for the payment of the Company's troops to defend the Kingdom”*, if her family was restored.¹

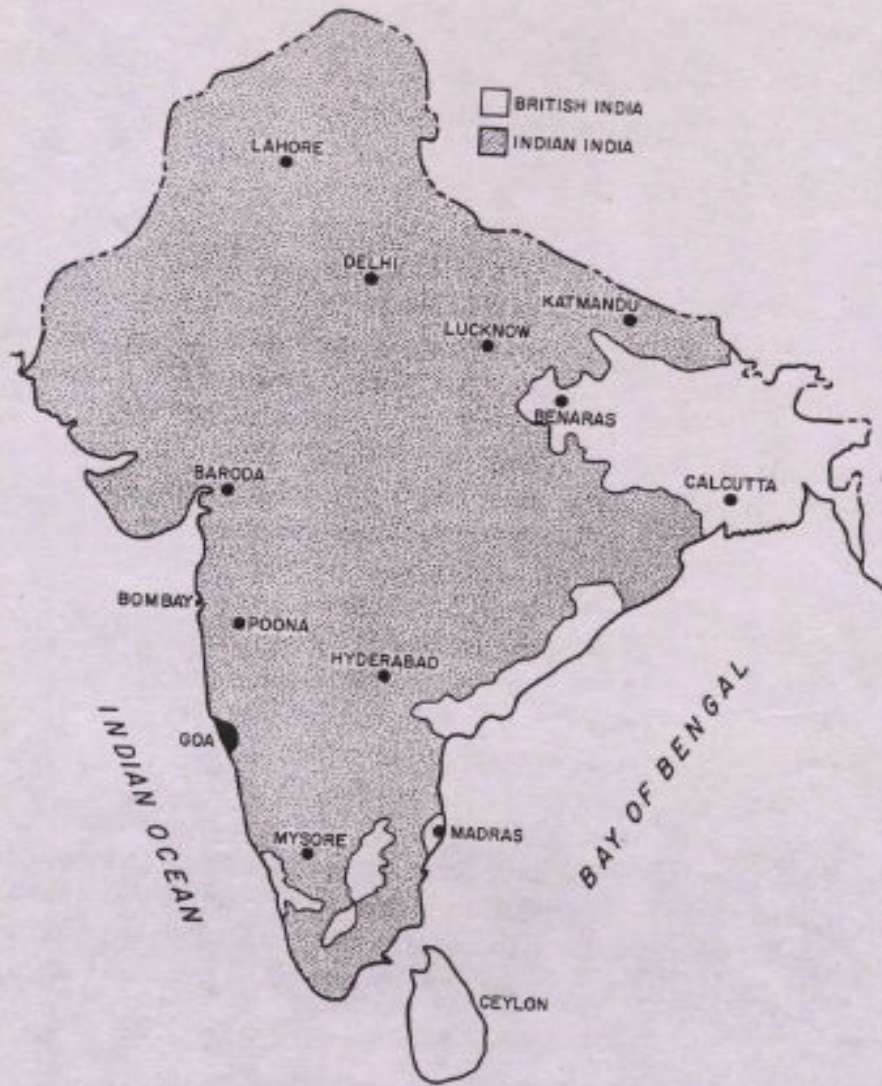
After *“a voluminous correspondence a secret treaty”* was signed in 1782 between the Rani and the British through their mutual representatives called 'The Rana Treaty for the Restoration of the Hindoo Dynasty of Mysoor'.² While the British agreed to restore the Wodeyars subsequent to the defeat of Haidar Ali; they placed a price for every step in this process, ingrained by culture typical of British avarice. The successive articles laid a claim for three lakh Kanteraya Pagodas (KPs) on their taking of Coimbatore, one lakh KPs on ascending the Balaghat, one lakh KPs on the taking of Mysore and another 5 lakhs on the fall of Srirangapatna.³ Thus she assured the British a total of 10 lakh KPs.

With the outbreak of the Third Anti-Colonial War in 1791, the Rani grew excited at the prospect of the colonization of Mysore. She hiked the booty for the British in proportion to her excitement. In great anticipation she wrote: *“If however, it should happen by God’s grace that we should be alive and the English conquer Tipu and restore to us our Kingdom, we shall pay the expenses of the English army to the extent of one crore of Pagodas”*.⁴

In 1798, in a letter to the Madras Governor, this handmaiden of colonialism wrote: *“...we learn that you have been sent to this land especially to restore to us our Kingdom. Besides, we have also heard of your great nobility of character and purity of heart, and placing implicit faith in you we seek your protection and aid: And hence with your usual goodness, considering the claims of justice and with an eye to God and everlasting fame, you should root out the enemy and restore to us our Kingdom, according to the conditions of our last treaty with you. We shall pay you a crore of star-pagodas for the expense of the war.”*⁵

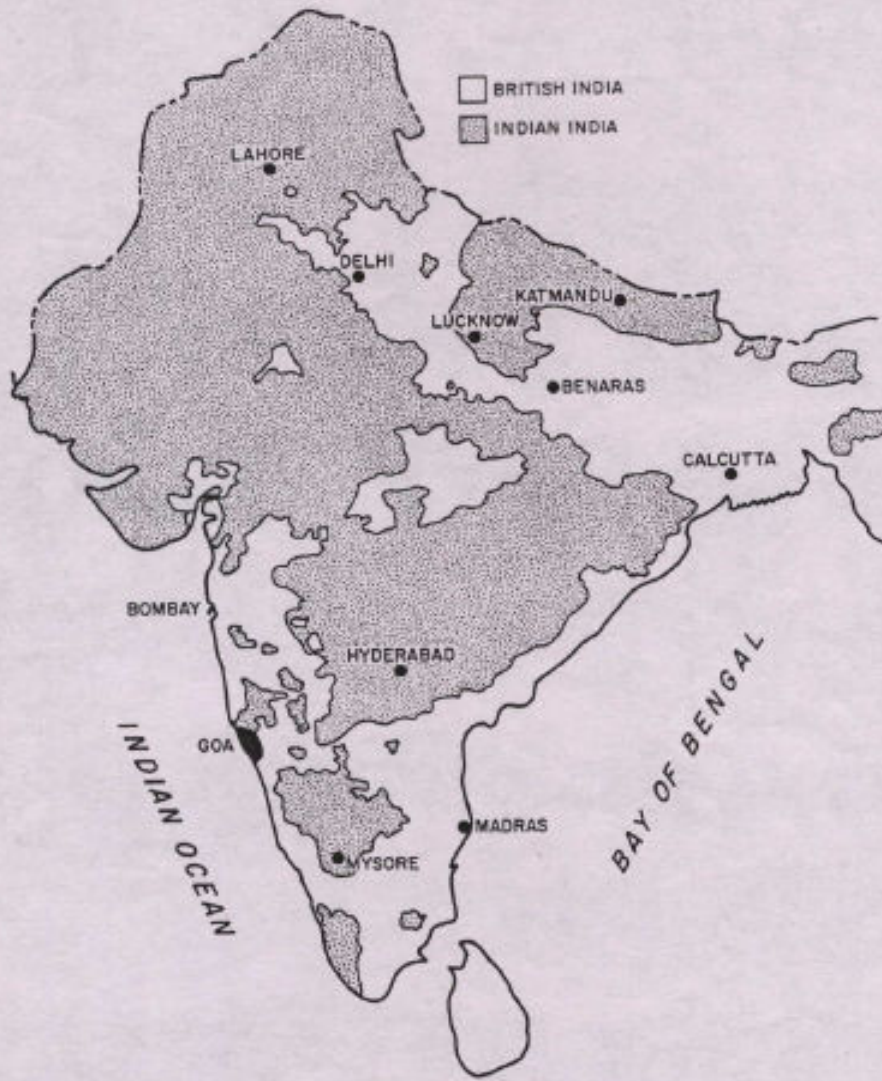
Her god-fearing perception that the British marauders were messiahs in our country to fulfill a divine inspiration was again repeated in February 1799. In her letter, this time to the chief deity, the Governor General, she concluded with the following obeisance: *“We have recently heard that the Almighty conferred on you high distinctions and sent you to this country, doubtless, to relieve us of our miseries. We have also heard that you are generous, good intentioned and pious. We therefore seek your protection.”*⁶

It did not take much time thereafter for the Governor General’s condescension. The needs of Empire answered the prayers of the scraping puppet Queen, and Krishnaraja Wodeyar II was strung on stage. After nearly a century of conquests and direct colonial administration, the British decided to alter their form of rule and preferred, since the conquest of Oudh, the rule of puppet kings. George Forrest tells us: *“...it was the daring genius of Hastings which first conceived the policy of reducing Native princes to the position of subordinates without independent rights. He was the first to introduce in his dealings with Oudh, the Subsidiary System”*.ⁱ



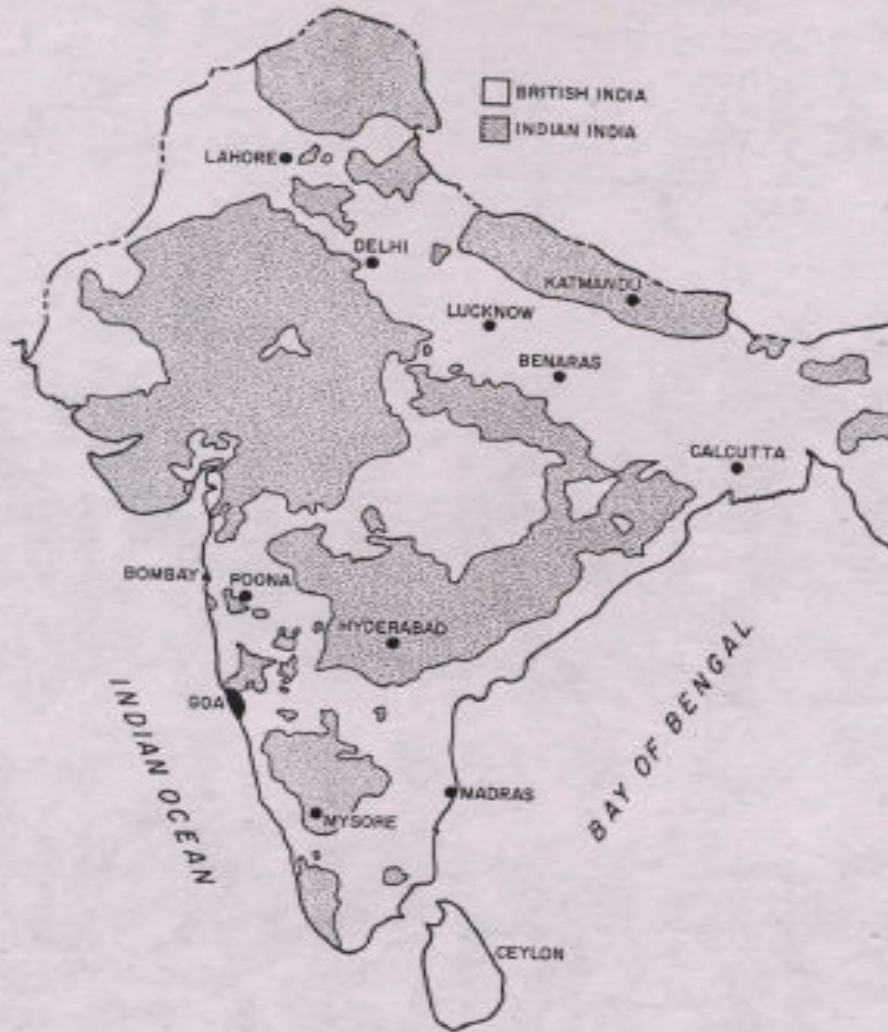
Map 1: India in 1797

3. Map of India in 1797



Map 2: India in 1840

4. Map of India in 1840



Map 3: India in 1857

5. Map of India in 1857

Such puppets proved vastly advantageous to the British. There were several factors leading to this change from direct rule to indirect means.

On the face of it lay the most important fact. It fed the masses, still caught up in feudal mores, the sentiment and thus an illusion that they were ruled by their own king and not an outsider—so distinct and conspicuous by colour, language and culture.

Thus the tyrant was hidden from full public view. It was a feudal fig leaf covering the nakedness of British civilization. Further, at times of mass impatience and seething popular anger, the British could intervene as though on behalf of the people. In the view of the masses they became benevolent overlords and well-meaning final arbiters. This element draped a mask of restraint in their pillage. The political advantage of having a puppet, realized on a wholesome scale in the course of the nineteenth century, undercut the growth of an anticolonial consciousness.

The defeat of Tipu, marked the transition to the ultimate and comprehensive territorial conquest of India. And just as we witnessed in the case of Lakshmi Ammani, the petty kings and chieftains strewn all over Karnataka were possessed with a universal attitude of voluntary surrender and vassalage to the British.

A century earlier, it would not have been possible to anticipate such widespread slavishness to the British since the colonialist had yet to establish himself and exhibit his prowess. This change ushered in by the turn of the eighteenth century ensured the loyalty of the puppet princes. Without such crass loyalty this form of indirect colonial rule would not have risked experimentation. It is important to note that ultimately, when British rule was consolidated across the length and breadth of India, about two-thirds of the country came under princely rule and only one-third fell under the Presidencies.

Another factor compelling indirect rule was the numerical inadequacy which direct rule envisaged. As conquests in India and worldwide increased, the British were left with a gnawing shortage of personnel to manage the striding mammoth. However, while the potential enormity of their possessions restrained the Portuguese from venturing out for extensive territorial conquest; the British sought to overcome this contradiction between the desire and the capacity to pillage by relying on the political rule of puppets, without whose intervening supplication, the empire would not have endured.

And, last of all was the fact that the rise of industrial capital in England since the close of the eighteenth century had broadened the base of colonialism since it daily spawned a collaborating comprador merchant, which had already begun to cement the weak foundations of the feudal puppet kings by linking them more and more with the mode and manner of colonial capital.

In a letter to Henry Dundas of the Board of Directors of the East India Company in London written on 7 June 1799, Wellesley, the Governor General, was involuntarily reflecting on all these factors. He was meticulously weighing his options on the demarcation of the conquered territories of Karnataka and the form of political rule that had to be instituted. But the king maker did not take the trouble of mentioning about the Rana Treaty. That was not more than a scrap of paper. The British had by then signed and discarded scores of such treaties. Wellesley knew better than to be bound by them. He wrote: *“For the information of your Honourable Court, I have annexed to this dispatch a comparative statement of several plans for the partition of Tipu Sultan’s dominions, drawn up under my instructions with a view to the relative interests and power of the Nizam, the Mahrattas and the Company; to the nature of produce and geographical boundaries of the country and to the position and strength of several fortresses and passes; an attentive investigation of every comparative view of the important question terminated in my decision that the establishment of a central and separate Government in Mysore, under the protection of the Company, and the admission of the Mahrattas to a certain participation in the division of the conquered territory, were the expedients best calculated to reconcile the interests of all parties, to secure to the Company, a less invidious, and more efficient share of revenue, resource, commercial advantage, and military strength, than could be obtained under any other distribution of territory of power, and to afford the most favourable prospect of general and permanent tranquility in India.”*⁸

Coming from a country encircled by water and administering on behalf of a company which achieved a monopoly in sea-borne trade and possessing a predatory seafaring army, Wellesley was accustomed to think as he did. Without batting an eyelid, he loped the seaboard of the former Mysore Kingdom and thrust it into the pockets of the Directors in London. Of the 568 princely states that were allowed a lease by the British in India, only a miniscule number had access to the sea. And they could gain access only because their kingdoms, like that of Travancore, resided most entirely by the sea. The Mysore Kingdom of the Wodeyars was locked by land and it lost the springboard to the Arabian Sea.

Wellesley then went on to present his arguments for the choice of the Wodeyar as the most suitable puppet. *“The necessity now occurred of determining in what hands the new Government of Mysore should be placed and although no positive right or title to the throne existed in any party, it seemed expedient, that my choice should be made between the pretensions of the family of Tippu Sultan and those of the ancient house of the Rajahs of Mysore.*

The claims...on both sides rendered the decision a painful and ungracious task...

Since the peace of Seringapatam, and more especially since the year 1796 the destruction of the British power in India has formed the favourite and unremitting object of Tippu’s hopes and exertions... He prosecuted his unalterable purpose with all the zeal and ardour of passionate resentment and vindictive hate, as well as with steadiness of a deliberate maxim of

state...the records of Seringapatam furnish abundant evidence that his antipathy to the English was the ruling passion of his heart, the mainspring of his policy, the fixed and fundamental principles of his councils and government.

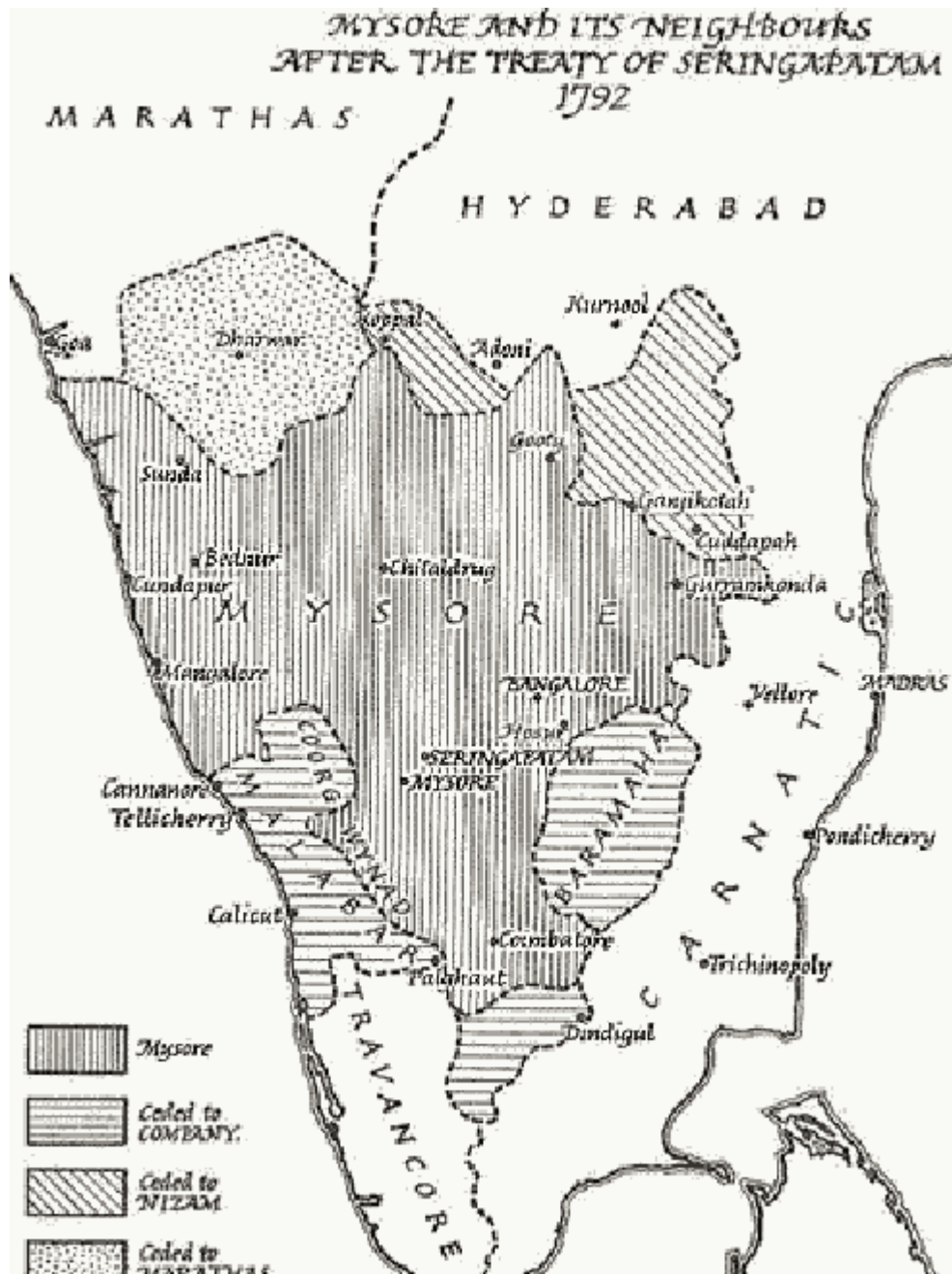
The heir of Tippu Sultan must have been educated in the same principles, and encouraged to indulge in the same prejudices and passions, and instructed to form the same views of the interests and honour of the throne of Mysore. These sentiments would necessarily acquire additional force in his mind from the issue of the late war. Our unexampled success had subverted the foundations of his father's empire...placed on the throne by our favour, and limited by our control, he would have felt himself degraded to a state of humiliation and weakness so abject as no prince of spirit would brook... In opposition to the reduction of his territory and resources, he would have less to lose and more to regain in any struggle for the recovery of his father's empire; nor does it seem unreasonable to suppose that the heir of Hyder Ali and Tippu Sultan, animated by the implacable spirit and bold example of his parents, and accustomed to the commanding prospect of independent sovereignty, and to the splendour of military glory, might deliberately hazard the remnant of his hereditary possessions in pursuit of so proud an object, as the recovery of that vast and powerful empire...

If, therefore, a prince of his race had been placed on the throne of Mysore, the foundations of the new settlement would have been laid in the very principles of its own dissolution...

The hostile power of Mysore would have been weakened but not destroyed...

[On the other hand] Between the British Government and this [Wodeyar] family, an intercourse of friendship and kindness had subsisted in the most desperate crisis of their adverse fortune. They had formed no connection with your enemies. Their elevation would be the spontaneous act of your generosity, and from your support alone could they ever hope to be maintained upon the throne...

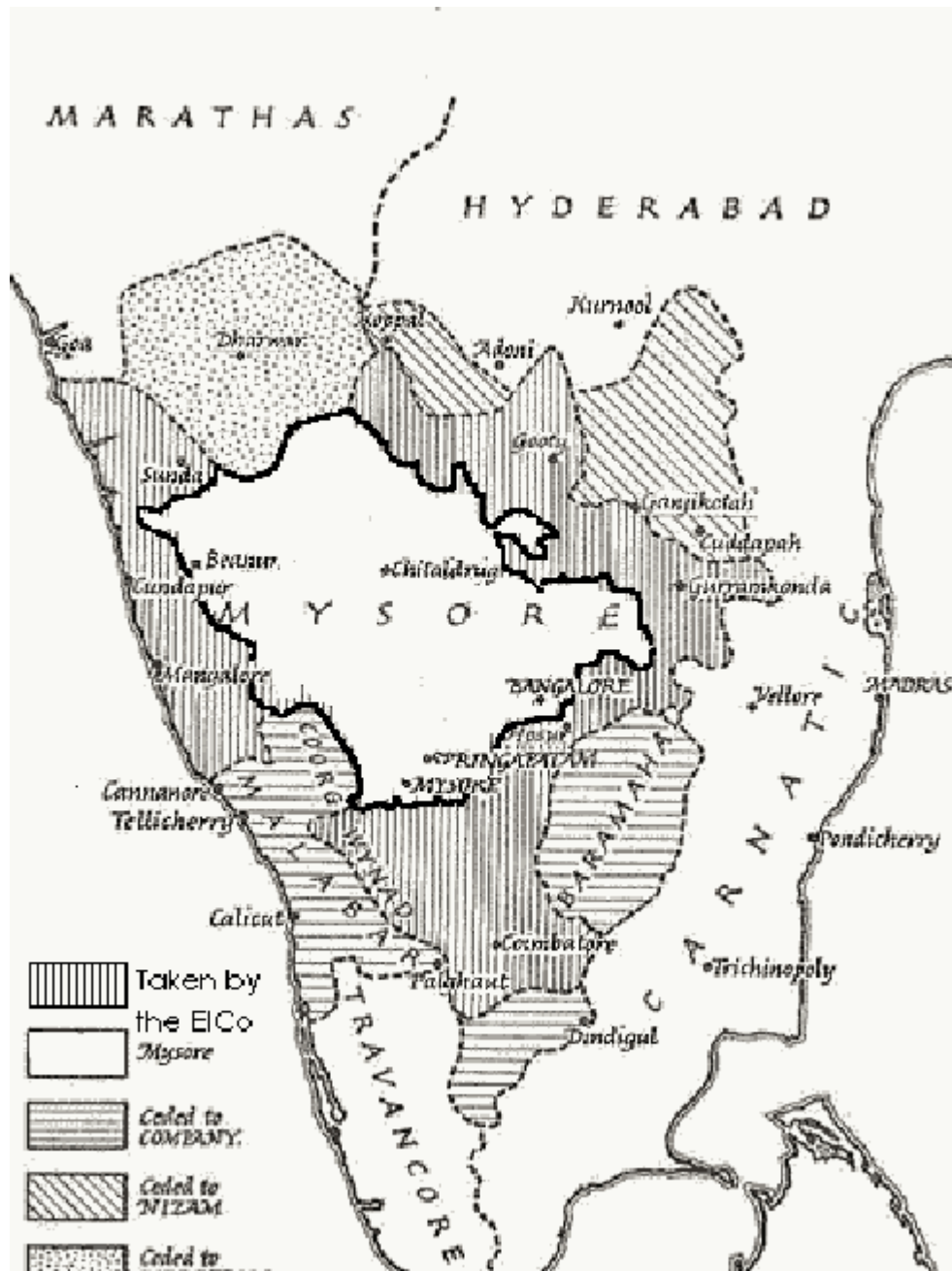
The effect of such an arrangement of the affairs of Mysore would not be limited to the mere destruction of the hostile power which menaced our safety. In the place of that power, could be substituted one, whose interests and resources might be absolutely identified with our own, and the Kingdom of Mysore, so long the source of calamity and alarm to the Carnatic, might become a new barrier for our defence, and might supply fresh means of wealth and strength to the Company, their subjects and allies...



6. Map of Tipu Sultan's Mysore Kingdom after the Third Anticolonial War of 1792



7. Map of Tipu Sultan's Mysore Kingdom before the Third Anticolonial War of 1792



8. Map of the Mysore Kingdom gifted to the Wodeyars of Mysore in 1800



9. Map of the Mysore state as it was handed down to the Wodeyars by the British in 1800

These considerations induced me to adopt the resolution of preferring the descendants of the Rajah's of Mysore to the heir of Tippoo Sultan.”⁹

Wellesley could not have made a better choice. As we shall see by and by, the Wodeyars proved themselves not just as the first and foremost of British puppets in Karnataka but also the most loyal of their ilk; standing by their masters even in the face of the most adverse of circumstances.



10. Map of fragmented Karnataka in 1858

It is indeed a strange irony of Karnataka history that the same seat of power should bear, in a matter of days, two different men—Tipu Sultan and KR Wodeyar III—whose mutual dispositions could only be described as diametrically opposed; an opposition which did not yield to the other even a hair's width, making them absolute historic opposites. One was a tiger that

shook with patriotic anger and roared and challenged the colonial order. The other was a meek mouse that quivered and squeaked, clinging to the coat-tails of the colonialist.

2. TREATY OF SUBJUGATION

Signed about two months after the fall of Mysore, between the British and the regent King KR Wodeyar III, the Subsidiary Treaty consisting of 16 articles (see Appendix I for the entire text), sealed the independent existence of Karnataka and chained it to colonialism. The Subsidiary Treaty was in essence a treaty of submission and subservience. As the name itself suggests, Mysore was, on its signing, to sacrifice its free existence and become only a subsidiary, a backyard state to the centre of colonialism that was Britain.

Let us take a look at what the Subsidiary Treaty contained.

As per Article 2, Mysore lost the right to maintain an army of its own and the British took it upon them to maintain “*a Military Force for the defence and security of His Highness’s Dominions*”. Thus in one stroke the independent existence of Mysore as a State was emasculated and it became powerless against British colonialism. British military presence over Mysore was secured by establishing a cantonment at Bangalore, which remained outside the Mysore government’s territorial jurisdiction and came under direct British administration. Nevertheless, Mysore was allowed to maintain a nominal force subject to British supervision, to attend to internal policing duties and provide ready assistance to the British during external exigencies.

Lushington, the Governor of Madras observed in his President’s Minute: “*In 1807 it was determined by the Governor General Sir George Barlow...for the fixed maintenance of a body of 4000 irregular horses to be kept up by the Rajah in war and peace to be wholly paid by him, but to be subject to the muster and inspection of the Company’s officers and to be at their disposal...*”¹⁰

The same article also ensured the financial bondage of Mysore. Accordingly, starting from the very next month itself, Mysore had to cough up, in twelve monthly installments, a tribute of 24.5 lakh rupees annually. In 1896 this was increased to 35 lakh rupees and again reduced to the former amount in 1928. While we shall find the opportunity of discussing the impact of this heavy drain on the economy of the Kingdom in the final pages of Chapter III, for the time being, let us not forget, this tribute was so heavy that it remained the single biggest expenditure of the Kingdom for more than a hundred years that followed, the overall revenue collection in 1809-10 being just Rs 28,24,646.¹¹

The next Article sealed Mysore as a territorial and financial springboard for furthering British conquest. It was relegated into a territorial, military and financial buffer against any possible capture of British ruled territory. It stated that the Wodeyar had to “*contribute towards*

the discharge of the increased expense incurred by the augmentation of the military force and the unavoidable charges of war... ”

Article 4 sought direct intervention by the British colonialists in the passing of regulations and ordinances for the collection of revenues and any other financial matter concerning the internal administration of the state. This capped Mysore's freedom in financial matters.

Article 5 ensured the British a part or the complete direct territorial possession of Mysore at times of a financial or political crisis. Thus the sovereignty of the state was sealed for posterity. The same article also ensured an annual payment of 3 lakh rupees to the King, apart from a granting of 20% of the net revenue (which was later reduced to 5%) as the puppet's purse. Since all the expenditures of the royal house were officially borne by the public account, this was an amount which remained the privileged pocket money of the King. Similarly, the Dewan was granted, apart from his regular salary, 1% of the net revenue of the Kingdom. Thus the exalted King and his Prime Minister became shameless commission agents of colonialism, gorging on money milked from the masses of Mysore.

Article 13 of the Treaty called for the establishment of “commercial intercourse between their respective dominions” thus converting the State into a market for British capital.

The Subsidiary Treaty also imposed a ‘Resident’ who was an agent of the British government and remained the hidden hand of colonialism, never coming under public view but religiously scrutinizing and supervising, instructing and intervening in every matter, including the personal affairs of the King whose “advise” the Raja was on all occasions compelled to accept and implement with a smile. As Article 14 stated, the Maharaja had to promise “*to pay at all times the utmost attention to such advice as the Company's Government shall occasionally judge it necessary to offer to him, with a view to the economy of his finances, the administration of justice, the extension of commerce, the encouragement of trade, agriculture and industry, or any other objects...*”

Writing about the Subsidiary Treaty, Wellesley said: “*In forming this engagement it was my determination to establish the most unqualified community of interests between the Government of Mysoor and the Company, and to render the Rajah's northern frontier in effect a powerful link in our fence.*”

With this view I have engaged to undertake the protection of his country in consideration of an annual subsidy of seven lakhs of Star Pagodas; but recalling the inconveniences and embarrassments which have arisen to all parties concerned, under the double governments and conflicting authorities unfortunately established in Oude, the Carnatic and Tanjore, I resolved to reserve to the Company the most extensive and indisputable powers of interposition in the internal affairs of Mysore, as an unlimited right of assuming the direct management of the

country, and of requiring extraordinary aid beyond the amount of the fixed subsidy, either in time of war or apprehension of hostility.

*Under this arrangement I trust that I shall be enabled to command the whole resources of the Rajah's territory... It appeared to me a more candid and liberal as well as more wise policy to apprize the Rajah distinctly at the moment of his accession, of the exact nature of his dependence on the Company, than to leave any matter for future doubt or discussion.”*¹²

This then was the chief content of the Subsidiary Treaty, the other articles being select improvements over these basic conditions, ultimately leaving scarce room for the worm wearing the crown to even wriggle. Never in the history of Karnataka had a king or overlord exposed his fiefdom to such regulation and pillage. Yet these puppets of Mysore proved themselves at the job, swallowing insult and yearning for injury. About their sycophancy to the British we shall see later; however, it would do to feel astonished for the present that these effete kings, drawn as they were from a putrefying feudal base, were not even remotely provoked into an accidental ventilation of feudal pride.

Not satisfied with the despicable conditions in the Subsidiary Treaty, the British turned the screws tighter in 1807 by getting the Raja to sign, what was called, the Supplementary Treaty.¹³

The Subsidiary Treaty was the chief instrument for the colonial subjugation of Karnataka. Apart from the Mysore Wodeyars whose territory encompassed 10 districts, the British had entered into similar subsidiary alliances with several other kings, palegaras and princelings.

In October 1798, the British signed a Subsidiary Treaty with the Nizam of Hyderabad, which provided among others, for the maintenance of British troops and an annual tribute of 14 lakh rupees.¹⁴ In fact as the Governor General himself stated in his letter to the Board of Directors, the Treaty signed with the Mysore Wodeyars was only a slightly modified version of the essential one that the Nizam had signed.¹⁵ Thus the three districts of Bidar, Raichur and Gulbarga also came under the sway of indirect colonial rule.

The Kittur Desai, whose territory included parts of the districts of Belgaum, Dharwad and Uttara Kannada was also a signatory to the Subsidiary Treaty. While he paid the Peshwas 70,000 rupees as tribute in 1792, he agreed to pay Rs 1,70,000 to the British in 1818 out of a total revenue collection of Rs 4 lakhs.¹⁶

The various palegaras and deshghathis who queued up to submit to the British for retention of their petty principalities turned cartwheels before the foreign ruler and signed similar treaties, thereby making the Subsidiary Treaty the chief instrument for the absolute enslavement of the Kannada nation.

3. SYCOPHANT ‘SONS OF THE COMPANY’

The loyalty, which the Wodeyar family extended to the British, became a well embedded and permanent feature of their dynastic life. Just days after the signing of the Subsidiary Treaty, in a letter of gratitude to the Governor General, Lakshmi Ammani and Devajammani, her mother-in-law, wrote: *“Your having conferred on our child the Government of Mysore, Nagar and Chitaldrug with their dependencies and appointed Purnaiya to be Dewan has afforded us the greatest happiness. Forty years have elapsed since our Government ceased. Now you have favoured our boy with the Government of this country and nominated Purnaiya to be his Dewan. We shall, while the sun and the moon may continue, commit no offence to your Government. We shall at all times consider ourselves as under your protection and orders. Your having established us forever be fresh in the memory of our posterity from one generation to another. Our offspring can never forget an attachment to your Government on whose support we shall depend.”*¹⁷

In a letter to Lushington, the Governor at Madras, the Raja wrote in January 1831, amidst a growing all-sided crisis which was to envelope Mysore and Karnataka with guerrilla war: *“I have lately by your kind determination and through the instrumentality of the Resident, received an honour of the highest kind in the transference to me of Seringapatam the place of my birth and origin. May God extend and perpetuate your auspicious shadow over the heads of your attached adherents through this grace and mercy. According to your direction all the affairs of Seringapatam continue to be conducted in the accustomed manner. I who have been raised up by you and taken under the protection of your generous government, will look to your kindness for the like accomplishment of all my wishes, whether present or future of all your favours the greatest is the appointment of the present Resident, who is adorned with excellent and amiable qualities, to the station which he fills at this Court, so that he might constantly give the benefit of his well directed exertions and his judicious care to the business of this Government, and in all circumstances might bestow, as he does, his best attention on the management of my affairs and the promotion of my prosperity, to a degree which cannot be now described by pen or tongue. Such being the case how should it be in my power to return adequate thanks for your kindness?*

*What more shall I say”*¹⁸

Nothing more, for heaven’s sake! Very little remained to be said.

Shortly afterwards, in the same year, the British took over the direct administration of the Mysore Kingdom due to the convergence of an economic and political crisis. On hearing of the British Government’s decision, the Raja was crestfallen, and put out a feeble whimper of supplication. Casamajor, the Resident, in a letter to Fort St George, wrote of the Raja’s response: *“...yesterday evening I had a further interview with His Highness...who I found surrounded by his family in a state of great mental dejection and he earnestly solicited my aid to*

*mediate... His most urgent entreaty is that his character [as King] may be preserved from the disgrace that will be attached to the entire assumption of his territory... His abject intention is to solicit such nominal change of this His Lordship's [Governor General's] present decision as will admit..." His plea was for a "bit" of territory—of Mysore Astagram—so that he may still be "Rajah".*¹⁹

Wellesley must have turned in his grave, tickling his old bones and rattling into laughter. The "Rajah" had been granted a full loaf while he was worthy, in his own estimate, of only some crumbs.

Three weeks later, in a letter to William Bentick, the Governor General, the puppet king who signed the Subsidiary Treaty as a toddler, but was now a full man, 38 years of age, wrote: *"I look upon conformity to your sacred instructions as the means of ascending to the heights of bliss; because I owe my life to that great Government which has taken me under its patronage and protection..."*

At last when the star of his [Haidar Ali's] power began to sink in conflict with the sun of the victorious armies of the English Government the morning of prosperity again dawned upon my house from the horizon of the kindness of that Government..."

It was in this state of things that, out of their own lordly magnanimity they were pleased to bestow life and power upon this destitute family who except by their prayers, for the success of that Government [British] had not rendered any service nor borne any part in the war... They rule over the conquered country which by conquest appertained to that illustrious Government... They exalted me who of myness was nothing to the honour of being numbered among the sons of the Company... They seated me on the musnud of this State. With paternal kindness they conferred this high dignity on me while I was yet a child. These accumulated favours constitute a deed of generosity such as the eye of revolving heaven has rarely beheld during the lapse of ages and the ear of time has rarely heard from the volumes of the histories of famous sultans and powerful sovereigns... By the acquisition of such name and connection, and by the fame of such honours, my station was raised to the very highest pitch of dignity..."

I reckon myself as one of the adopted sons of the Company's Government though among the least of them..."

In adducing...instances of my faithful service, I am only actuated by the desire to shew proof of those strong ties of fidelity and attachment by which I am bound to that mighty Government and by the hope of experiencing continual kindness now and in future from its great men, not like other princes, by the ambition of increasing my territory and wealth, of attaining more towns and villages.

*...there is not wanting an appearance of ill success and of decline upon my part, seeing how prosperous and honourable my condition was in the period of my childhood and incapacity for business, and how much there is in it to be ashamed of now in the maturity of my years and understanding. From this cause my soul is overcome with grief that to me annihilation were preferable to existence. The gracious look of mighty lords, who are a manifestation of divine mercy and power, has, however, much virtue that if they cast a glance of mercy on a man in a state of destitution his want will undoubtedly become abundance, and his defects be changed into merits. It is therefore possible that by the chemical power of one kind look from your lordship the copper of my existence, imperfect as I am, may be converted into pure gold.”*²⁰

Having allowed this to ooze out from his pen, this middleman of British colonialism ultimately made his point. He said, explaining in fair humour about the “honour” and “dignity” that still remained in him: *“In this condition my most earnest request and first wish is what I shall now state...the plan which has now been established for the Government of this Raja is without mention of my name or dignity. Hence there appears to be a loss of honour and dignity; and the loss of honour and dignity is more dreadful to me than the loss of existence. Therefore I entreat and solicit from your Lordship, the continuance of my name and the preservation of my dignity... As the talook of Mysore with the town is the scene of the transaction of most of my business it would be difficult to carry on affairs prosperously without my having possession of that talook...”*²¹

Bentick’s reply to the genuflection of the Wodeyar was typically perfunctory. His slavish whimpers were dismissed and the Kingdom kept from this prodigy till 1881, which was long after his death. Despite this loss of “dignity and honour”, KR Wodeyar III lived a full life of absolute loyalty to the British cause. Without the subtlest remonstrance, the mellow old crony breathed his last on his sedan bed.

Shama Rao tells us: *“In March 1846 on receiving intimation from the Governor General of the victory on the banks of the Sutlej over the Sikh forces in the month of January previous, the Maharaja sent his warmest congratulations on that important event and in commemoration of it a royal salute was fired from the ramparts of the fort at Mysore. Similar salutes were fired on news reaching of further successes of the British army. On intimation from Lord Dalhousie of his assumption of the government of India, the Maharaja, in April 1848, while sending his congratulations to him, reiterated that he would always make it his duty as he had done during the past 49 years to maintain inviolate the esteem and friendship of the British government to which he was bound by many personal obligations.”*²²

The incorrigible puppet furthered his submissive dialogue with the British. In February 1854, he sent an invitation to Dalhousie, the Governor General, to attend his sixtieth birthday celebrations: *“As I flatter myself that your Lordship takes an interest in my welfare, I take the liberty of informing your lordship that I am now about to celebrate the attainment of my sixtieth*

*year by the performance of certain ceremonies as prescribed in our sastras and with all the solemnity befitting such an occasion. I would not intrude on your Lordship's time and attention were it not for the circumstance that amongst us this is considered a most remarkable period and rendered still more remarkable by the fact that out of twenty of my immediate predecessors none have ever attained to this age. Next to a gracious providence who has been pleased to hitherto preserve and sustain me, I attribute my good fortune in this respect to the favour and protection of my benefactors, the British Government, whom I consider in the light of my parents....”*²³

Of his dogged sincerity and sustained sycophancy which grew with his age, Shama Rao's following appreciation is testimony: *“On learning from a letter addressed to him by Dalhousie of the success gained by the British army at Sebastapol against the Russians, the Maharaja, while conveying his congratulations in February 1856, stated also that in promulgating the glorious tidings contained in His Lordship's Khareetha (letter), he had ordered in accordance with the usual customs observed in India on such occasions, the distribution of sugar in the streets of his capital as well as the firing of a royal salute.*

Canning arrived in Calcutta on 29 February 1856 and assumed the office of the Governor General. On this event being intimated to the Maharaja in a khareetha, the Maharaja, while acknowledging it trusted that his arrival would be the precursor of greater happiness and prosperity to the states and people of India in general. On Lord Canning intimating to the Maharaja of the conclusion of peace with Russia, His Highness replied that he had on receipt of the khareetha ordered the firing of a royal salute and added: ‘It has given me great pleasure to learn from your Lordship's khareetha that the armies of Her Majesty have been victorious in all their engagements with the Russians in the Crimea, thereby sustaining the fame and high character they have always borne for bravery, courage and patient endurance of hardships and trials such as they encountered in the late war and also the good that would result from peace being concluded in Europe. In congratulating your Lordship and the British Government on the restoration of peace in England, it is my earnest prayer that it may always continue inviolate, that Her Majesty may live long and reign prosperously, that her subjects may enjoy every happiness and that commerce and trade may increase and extend to all parts of the world’.”²⁴

Thus the guns of the “*adopted sons of the Company*” fired not to ward off the colonialist but to celebrate his diabolic victories. This must not be misconstrued as an affable peace-loving disposition. On the contrary, the puppet was no nincompoop. He was the native knight who bore the British coat of arms. He subjugated mass rebellions and his guns made Mysore “the jewel” of British India; the loveliest pearl in the Queen's Indian necklace.

The sword that Krishna Raja Wodeyar always carried was indicative of this. It “*was a sword with the medallion of the Queen of England upon the hilt*”.²⁵

4. FLUNKEY OF COLONIALISM

The puppets in power did all that was possible to serve the British militarily in their design of expansion. In 1803, Purnaiah who was Dewan, on orders from Fort St George, enlisted 2,245 silledar horse and 4,026 infantrymen to serve as cannon fodder for the British. 60,000 bullock loads of grain and another 60,000 sheep “were furnished with a facility unknown before.” Shama Rao adds, “Purnaiya also continued to forward supplies to the army in the field under British commanders as fast as the Brinjaries [Lambanies] were ready to take them away, besides sending quantities into Canara to enable the collectors there to export larger quantities for supply to other British contingents. The Dewan also took particular care to ensure regular payment of all salaries and allowances due to the Mysore troops serving in the field with the consequence that their services were at all times available with alacrity”.²⁶

Again, Shama Rao informs us that “It was found that the total cost to the Mysore government in connection with the Mahratta campaign including the amount of presents, rewards and reimbursements to the troops, gratuities and allowances on their return as well as the amount required for pay till the extra troops entertained were discharged, amounted very nearly to 4,10,000 Star Pagodas [Rs 12,30,000] in 1804.”²⁷

Purnaiah stayed on and administered till 1807, on behalf of KR Wodeyar III. The King turned 14 that year, and as the Raja assumed charge of the administration, Purnaiah was judiciously felicitated with property and praise by the British. In doing so, the British always took note, as the Governor General in the following manner did, of his exceptional assistance to British conquest. On Purnaiah’s retirement, Wellesley wrote: “The merits and services of the Dewan have been particularly conspicuous in the promptitude and wisdom manifested by him in the application of the resources of Mysore to the exigencies of the public service during the late war with the confederated Mahratta chieftains, and I deem it to be an act of justice to acknowledge that the expectations which I formed in selecting Purnaiya for the important office of minister of Mysore have been greatly exceeded by the benefits which have resulted from his excellent administration.”²⁸

In 1810, 1,500 Mysore horsemen were dispatched to fight in Nagpur and Malwa. In 1817, 1,000 horsemen of Mysore partook in a campaign in the Nizam’s territories. In the conquest of Maratha dominions in 1817-1818, hundreds of soldiers and cavalrymen from Mysore were put to use, right till the time of the flight of Peshwa, Baji Rao.²⁹

Thus it was that with flunkeys like KR Wodeyar III, who provided the British masters with men, material and money that Karnataka was conquered and India subjugated. The ‘white man’s burden’ had in fact fought the white man’s war. Thomas Munro spelt out the importance of this achievement for global domination by colonialism: “We are trying a new experiment never yet tried in the world: maintaining a foreign dominion by means of a native army...”³⁰

Karl Marx made the same point in his own characteristic way: *“India is held in English thralldom by an Indian army maintained at the cost of India.”*³¹

Icy melancholy is the residue when history slaps such treachery on one’s face.

Most historians writing on Karnataka support the struggle of Rani Chennamma against the British. They respond to social struggle and dishonour the staid vulture-like “objectivity” of the historian. That is a good stand. It reflects the anticolonial national aspiration in historiography. But at the same time most of them also support the puppet Wodeyars of Mysore. This is a self-contradiction. It is also more. It is no less than opportunism causing agonizing convulsions for historiography. What would they have to say; accosted by the fact that KR Wodeyar III promptly dispatched 2 guns, 700 infantry and 2,000 cavalry to Kittur to make short work of Chennamma’s uprising of 1824? Did the Raja’s guns not pound the Rani’s fortress? Did the Raja’s horsemen not behead the Rani’s footmen? And, did the Raja’s rifles not pump lead into the flesh of the Rani’s soldiers? What else was he but a devoted regal mercenary of the Raj?

5. STOOGES OF THE BRITISH

1857, as we know, was the First War of Indian Independence; which by the heroic armed action of soldiers, artisans and peasants in concert with a few princes and princesses seriously threatened British rule in India. Even after the struggle was suppressed in the urban areas and as it overflowed to the villages of North India, many feudal lords, Desais and Deshmukhs of Karnataka made bold to fight the British and permanently claim fiefdoms, which for centuries were theirs. The Raja of Mysore, KR Wodeyar III who was chucked out from what nominal power was given to him, in 1831, was left without his Kingdom and no day went without his rehearsal or the execution of plans in his dark inner chambers with his Brahmana advisers to plead with the British and seek back his token reinstatement. While 1857 provided an occasion for several of the servile lords of Karnataka who had signed the Subsidiary Treaty to reclaim by force what they believed was theirs, the puppet at Mysore remained a loyal stooge, careful to muffle his murmur behind his profuse whiskers so that it was not to be confused as a conspiratorial whisper. On the contrary, the Mysore Raja was among the most vociferous of India’s princes in mobilising opinion on behalf of the British, a cheer leader dashing off letters to the other rajas, urging them to back the colonialists to the hilt and funding, with troops and money, the continuity of the Raj in its hour of crisis.

Shama Rao writes: *“In 1857 the Government of India directed that a body of 200 Silledars should at once proceed to Hindusthan. This order was subsequently countermanded but a similar number were employed in the districts to the northward of Mysore as far as Shorepur [Surpur] and took part in the minor affairs which arose during 1857-58 in that part of India”.*³²

Thus, the bodies of about 500 people who died in uprisings at Surpur and those led by other chieftains in Karnataka also had the distinction of carrying bullets that were fired by puppet KR Wodeyar's men.

*“On receiving intimation from the Governor General of the fall of Delhi [from rebel hands who had held it till then] during the period of the Indian Mutiny, the Maharaja in his letter dated 9 December 1857 sent his congratulations on the event. ‘It gave me no small amount of grief’, he added ‘to have heard for some time past the treacherous deeds committed by the rebels and Bengal mutineers, and though for a time dark clouds appeared to have gathered in the horizon of that part of India, yet it was my firm conviction that the bright sun of the British would soon disperse it and its powerful arm subdue the mutineers who are still in a state of rebellion against the Government. I rejoice to learn that my expectations have been fully realised by the gratifying intelligence conveyed in your lordship’s khareetha from which I was also glad to learn that several Native States have continued firm and faithful to the British Government in these troublous times and have rendered every assistance that lay in their power. As on previous occasions when any success was achieved by the British arms a royal salute was fired and sugar was distributed in the streets of Mysore’.”*³³

Again, in a private letter written in February 1858 to General JS Fraser who was Resident at the Court of Mysore more than 20 years earlier, the royal minion thus expressed his sentiments: *“It is gratifying to observe that the great rebellion in this country alluded to in your letter is now assuming a more settled aspect. The dark clouds that had gathered round the North Western Provinces are gradually dispersing and the seditious movers in this rebellion are being apprehended in every village and town and dealt with retributively. My own country, I am happy to say, has continued free from contamination and I am quite certain that this happy circumstance is owing to the wise and judicious measures adopted by Sir Mark Cubbon. I will not at present dwell at length on the harrowing scenes of cruelty and blood which this rebellion has caused nor on the sacrifice of many of England’s best and bravest officers in suppressing it but I shall merely state that as my welfare and happiness are bound up in the success and power of the British Government so has it been my regard to support that Government as my best friend and benefactor”*.³⁴

How did the British respond to these manifest signs of diehard loyalty by the puppet who rejoiced at the death of the gallant men and women who gave their lives in fighting the invader?

Cubbon wrote to the Government of India in June 1860 that: *“His Highness...displayed the most steadfast loyalty throughout the crisis, discountemancing everything in the shape of disaffection and taking every opportunity to proclaim his perfect confidence in the stability of English rule.... In fact there was nothing in the power of the Maharaja which he did not do to manifest his fidelity to the British Government and to discourage the unfriendly”*.³⁵

Canning, who was then the Viceroy, had this to say to the puppet on receiving Cubbon's letter: *"I have lately received from the Commissioner of Mysore a dispatch in which the assistance received by that officer from Your Highness in preserving peace and encouraging tranquility in the districts under his charge during the recent troubles in India is prominently brought to notice. I was well aware that from the very beginnings of those troubles the fidelity and attachment to the British Government which have long marked Your Highness' acts had been conspicuous upon every opportunity. Your Highness' wise confidence in the power of England and your open manifestation of it, the consideration and kindness which you showed to British subjects, and the ready and useful assistance which you rendered to the Queen's troops have been mentioned by the Commissioner in terms of the highest praise"*.³⁶

Thus KR Wodeyar who did his best to retain the British loot of India, killing fellow Kannadigas and his own countrymen, rejoiced at the bloody suppression of the patriotic struggle of 1857 by distributing sweets in the streets of Mysore. But one cannot be wholly unkind to him. The man had his emotions too. And like any other human being, he expressed his sorrow and shed tears. But his melancholy was always reserved for British officers and men who died in the rapacious conquest of India to feed colonial greed. Beyond doubt, he was among the worst that Karnataka had seen, a puppet to his marrow, and incorrigible in his sycophancy down to the root of his last tapering whisker.

And, what a frightening contrast to the brave Tipu Sultan—unflinching patriot till he breathed his last!

Perhaps, an irony of history is that the real gems of our past can be measured only when they tip the scales in which on one side diehard scabs are also placed.

Chapter II

FEUDAL BASE OF COLONIAL RULE

This section attempts to probe into an important part of history which has been neglected by blunderous oversight. The onset of British rule established a firm relationship of alliance between colonialism and feudalism. This relationship between foreign capitalism on the one hand and feudalism on the other, a relationship between two distinct and historically contradictory modes of production has endured and shaped the manner and pace of the social

development of Karnataka and India to this day. As we have seen in *Volume I of Making History*, Karnataka's past was characterized, as was India's, by a material pressure caused by the dialectic of economic changes and their interconnected political upheavals which tended, with the force of the masses, to tear up a social order cloistered by feudalism. Colonial conquest, however, altered the pace and became the principal influence in reshuffling the ensemble of relationships. It struck a chord with dying feudalism and subverted its overthrow by implanting a capitalism which befriended and allied with it. In this part, therefore, we shall look into questions concerning this unholy marriage between feudalism and colonialism, the terms of their fraternal relationship, the mutual impact of the one on the other, their combined impact on the structure of the state, the conversion of these historic opposites into intimate bedfellows, and the outcome of this bonding in generating and sustaining compradorism, as the authentic representative of colonialism in a colony.

1. MARRIAGE OF COLONIALISM AND FEUDALISM

We have already seen how the British signed Subsidiary Treaties with the Desais of Dharwad, Belgaum and Bijapur districts; the Wodeyars of Mysore and the Nizam of Hyderabad. All of them were either representatives of feudal principalities or kings drawn from and signifying a feudal base. These feudal representatives were cultivated over a long period before they ultimately signed up and submitted, in exchange for privileges from the British. The palegara warlords ousted from Mysore by Haidar and Tipu and who had made good their escape, took refuge under the British. They stretched out their arms to embrace colonialism, which was the last force capable of keeping them alive as a class. In turn, these feudal warlords were of great importance and politically expedient as props for the British. Thus on the one hand while this decadent social class was being swept out of existence by the onward march of history, British colonialism sheltered, pampered and ensured its longevity; thus resuscitating a class on its deathbed. However, while colonialism was keen on ensuring the life of the decadent palegaras and deshghathis, it took care to see that the process of subinfeudation was not initiated once again.

In describing the textile town of Vallur near Bangalore, Francis Buchanan tells us: *“The town consists of a castle, of a fort city, and a pette or suburb. The castle is occupied by a Rajput and 15 of his family. The ancestors of this man were formerly Jagirdhars of the place, and of villages in the neighbourhood, to the annual value of 11,000 Pagodas [Rs 33,000]. They were expelled by Hyder; but during the war carried on by Lord Cornwallis, they were again put in possession of their territory by Colonel Read. After the peace they were a second time expelled by Tippoo... The present Mysore Government [British by proxy, it must always be remembered] has granted the heir of the family an annual pension of 400 Pagodas [Rs 1,200] and allows him to live in the castle.”*³⁷

Buchanan's narrative provides many such accounts of palegaras of Mysore, who, suffocated by campaigns of elimination by Haidar and Tipu, gasped for breath in a see-saw battle with death, till British victory settled them peaceably, cushioning their disturbed generation with fat perks and a part of their former feudal privileges.

Kirmani tells us: "*Colonel Read, the Darogah of the Intelligence Department, who was appointed to the command of Amboor Gurh, with great address, and by the liberal distribution of money, sweet words and kind actions, brought over to his side the whole of the Poligars of the Balaghaut, who from the oppression and cruelty of the late Nawab, and the tyrannical character of the Sultan, had abandoned their own country, and had sought refuge in the towns of the Karnatic Payanghaut; such as the Poligar of Gungoondi Pala, the sons of Byreh Kor, the Poligar of Chuk Balapoor; Pud Nair, the Poligar of Vinkut Giri Kote, who was residing at Charkul; Shunk Rayel, or Rawul, the chief of Punganoor, and besides these, the Poligars of Khut Koomnir, Mudunpalli, Anikul, Oonkus Giri, Cheel Naik, etc, all being dispossessed of their lands, received written assurances of protection, and were dispatched to their own districts on condition they should collect and forward supplies of forage and provisions to the English army; and they also received authority to retake or recover (by any means) their own districts and talookas...*"³⁸

Macartney, the Governor of Madras, in a letter that he wrote in 1782 stated: "*as to the public advances that might be expected from the assistance of the Palegars...[words indecipherable] all encouragement were given to them...it consists in the Company's government stepping forward and protecting them in their just rights and privileges....*"³⁹

The letter then goes on to list the Sanads delivered by him and Charles Smith in July 1782 to 13 palegaras.

In another letter that he wrote in November 1782, Macartney said: "*...many polygars and chiefs...much exasperated against Hyder to some of whom were granted the Company's Cowle last year, were able and willing to make, if not a considerable attack on his territories, yet to create most formidable disturbances in them...*"⁴⁰

Thus the front that fought Haidar and Tipu was a front composed of colonialism and feudal dregs.

JC Dua provides details about the palegara families to whom the British awarded privileges in Bellary district.⁴¹ Pensions provided to the palegaras in the first years of the nineteenth century were so enduring that in 1969, a good two decades after 'independence', a visit to the Thashildar's office yielded information that some of the descendants of these palegaras continued to receive pensions from the government.⁴²

Buchanan tells us: *“All the Ploygars have been restored to their estates and put on a footing very similar to that of the Zamindars of Bengal. They pay a fixed rent, or tribute, for their lordships; but have no jurisdiction over the inhabitants, for whose protection an officer (Sheristadar), appointed and paid by the government, resides at each lordship. The establishment of officers of revenue and police are paid by the polygars, whose profits may now be about a fourth of the revenue; but as the country recovers, these will greatly increase.”*⁴³

Thus, with regard to Old Mysore there were two forms by which colonialism integrated with feudalism. On the one hand in the heart of Mysore territory, where the scourge of palegaras was eliminated, the few survivals were pensioned off and made Patels of their former villages. On the other hand, in the territory bordering Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh where the palegaras were relatively stronger, the campaign against them by Tipu Sultan being of a relatively late origin, they emerged as zamindars who not only paid, but also collected taxes from the peasantry.

The Malnad and Karavali were, as we have seen in *Volume I of Making History* areas of big landlordism. In the Karavali, the big landlords or original proprietors or wargadars had been killed, imprisoned or driven out by Haidar Ali and Tipu Sultan, *“its local tax collectors having been replaced by military appointees of Haidar and Tipu Sultan”*; but their tenants, the mulgenidaras, were themselves hardly cultivators.⁴⁴ They were landlords who sublet lands to tenants which now passed into their hands in the absence of their masters. The mulgenidaras also possessed bonded labourers.

Munro who made the settlement of the Karavali immediately after its falling to British hands in 1800-1802, tells us as to how he completed his task: *“After dividing the country into great estates, each of these estates ought to be made over to the potail or principal proprietor of the small estates of which they are respectively composed, in perpetuity. As he has no property in any of the lands composing the great estates, except those which were before his own, he can only be constituted a kind of lord of the manor; but as he must be responsible for all failures, he ought to be allowed the following advantages in order to enable him to perform his engagement:—1st, he ought to have an allowance of 2 ½ per cent on the jama to be included in the reduction which I have already proposed, leaving the remaining per cent, to go as an abatement to the mass of inferior proprietors and farmers. 2nd, he ought to be vested with proprietary of all waste lands to which they are the owners, on condition of his paying the Bidnore assessment the second year after they are brought into cultivation. 3rd, all inferior castes which, on failure of heirs, have heretofore been accustomed to revert to the Sircar, must now revert to him, and become in every respect, as much his respective property as his own original estates.*

*...the regulation I have recommended will apply to every part of Canara and to the greater parts of Ankola, Sunda and Biligi...”*⁴⁵



11. British colonialists with Indian landlord and bondsmen in attendance

The entire effort by the British was to prop up and secure the local rule of a class of big landlords—landlords who had only a few decades ago been vanquished by the rule of Haidar Ali and Tipu Sultan.

In a letter written during the course of the land settlements Munro made at Mudabidri in October 1800, he specified: “*All my settlements were made with landlords [the wargadaras] or, in cases where there was no landlord, with the immediate occupant [mulgenidara] ...*”⁴⁶

Shyam Bhat citing Kurup, sums up the essence of Munro’s settlement: “*KKN Kurup, after studying the land ownership and agrarian system in the Kasargod (old Bekal) Taluk during the period in question says: ‘Though scholars like RC Dutt had analysed Munro’s ryotwari system as a settlement with the ryot or cultivating peasant in his capacity as proprietor, in practice the ideal ryot of Munro was nothing but a land monopolist or zamindar who possessed thousands of acres of land and remained an absentee landlord.*”

This is an apt description of Munro's interpretation of a 'ryot' in South Kanara too.

*In the case of the ryotwari system introduced by Thomas Munro in Kanara, 'the assessment was made on those who held a proprietary right or Mulwarge title over the land irrespective of whether or not they took to actual cultivation'."*⁴⁷

Burton Stein's information tells us that colonialism not only befriended the landlords pure and simple, but also Brahmanical landed property of the temples. It was indeed an historic marriage between colonialism and feudalism blessed by Brahmanical mantras and ceremony. He writes: *"These reports of 1800 (of Munro) won immediate approval from his superiors on the Board of Revenue and from Lord Clive the governor of Madras. The latter approvingly noted how Munro's description of Kanara showed the effect of the suspicious Mysorean rule in corrupting the 'wise liberal institutions of the ancient Hindoo Government' especially of 'the proprietary rights in the lands of Canara'. Accordingly Clive argued that the MBOR [Madras Board of Revenue] follow Munro's recommendations. He did expect puzzlement over one part of Munro's policies in Kanara. This pertained to imams, or revenue-free land, there. Why, the Governor asked, when Tippoo had resumed imams and when the Company having succeeded to rights actually exercised by Tippoo Sultan, were inam rights granted again by Munro? Why especially, when the value of the imams resumed by Tippoo and regranted by Munro reduced the revenue to the Company by more than all the rapacious exactions imposed by Hyder Ali and Tippoo and even earlier regimes?"*

*There is no record that these queries about imams in Kanara were answered, any more than similar queries from the Court of Directors were when Munro served in the ceded districts. With respect to Kanara, though in 1804,—as usual long after the event—the Court of Directors joined in the general approbation of Munro's Kanara reports..."*⁴⁸

Although Munro had not forwarded any specific explanation on the question of regranted inams to temples and basadis, he had clearly referred to it in general historic terms during the period of his administration. We shall in a later section look into what this was and the wisdom the Court of Directors and their crafty officials later saw in it so as to procure "approbation" and elicit applause.

Suryanath Kamath reveals how a new layer of landlords from among the Chitrapur Brahmins emerged at this time: *"During British rule in Kanara district (from 1799) the people of this Chitrapur community came to be appointed as Shanbhags in most of the villages in South and North Canara and thus, the Chitrapur Saraswats have almost as many surnames as the villages in these two districts."*⁴⁹

Let us now proceed to view the unity that colonialism forged with feudalism in the Bombay-Karnataka region comprising Belgaum, Bijapur and Dharwad districts.

These three districts, constituting the dominions of the Peshwa, was an area characterized by the existence of Desais and Deshmukhs, the feudal intermediaries and tax-collectors of the Marathas. The entire feudal structure was intact despite peasant anger against this class, of which we have seen in the last chapter of *Volume I of Making History*.⁴⁹ Thomas Munro led British forces in the southern flank while taking this region. He had earlier served as Collector of Bellary and then of Uttara and Dakshina Kannada districts. He was therefore personally in charge of the process of conducting the marriage between the two social systems in extensive parts of Karnataka, and in effecting Karnataka's transition into a colony. Munro was therefore, in a certain sense, the predatory midwife who played a direct role in effecting a change of historic dimension to Karnataka's future. Hence we increasingly learn of the workings of the colonial mind as we read his letters, reports and long winded minutes.

In 1826, Munro explained the origins of the feudal intermediaries of the region. *"Most of the jagirdars are strangers from the Konkan and countries beyond the Krishna... The Patwardans, who are by far the most considerable of the jagirdars, are I believe, strangers to Dharwar, and were scarcely heard of until the time of Parsaram Rao's father, or rather Parsaram Rao himself..."*

*These observations are made, in order to show that Dharwar is not a Mahratta province, held by these jagirdars as hereditary chiefs, but a Canarese province, in which they are strangers, and in which their still having jagirs is owing to the accidental interference of the British government... We know from experience that a Mahratta chief of much higher rank and antiquity than any of them, the jagirdar of Sundur in Ballari a member of the Gorpari (a Mahratta family) lives contentedly in his jagir between Harapanahalle and Ballari, and is well pleased at his separation from Poona."*⁵⁰

Another letter to Elphinstone that Munro wrote in 1818 ran thus: *"The earliest way of subduing these prejudices of being accustomed to follow, respect and serve the Peshwas and of rendering them useful feudatories would be for the Company to take upon itself the office of the Peshwa... [This] would, I believe reconcile the Jageerdars to the change of masters and induce them to employ their troops willingly at the call of the British government."*⁵¹

While these constituted the approach in forming a military alliance, stemming from this martial association were the political and economic policies of making a settlement with these jagirdars.

To quote Burton Stein: *"To Elphinstone once again on Aug 28, 1818, Munro was reassuring about the political situation in the Dharwar-Belgaum area. It was stable and would remain so if the promises he had made to all of the major jagirdars (except Gokhale, whose lands were seized) and to many of the minor chiefs were kept, and if no startling changes were*

introduced... All such magnates should have their cavalry forces reduced to a quarter of the contingents they had previously. This would limit their military capabilities...

He had left the political foundation of the Dharwad-Belgaum tract pretty much as he found it, Munro said, and recommended to Elphinstone that nothing should be done to weaken the 'gentry' formation there, a recommendation with which Elphinstone had much sympathy...

District and village headmen, as well as accountants, held 'considerable inams! These should be left undisturbed' as it establishes a respectable class of landholders and gradations of society and fortifies the authority of district and village officers upon whom the British must depend... He was in effect recommending that the settlement of inam lands in the southern, former Maratha, districts be left intact, as they had been left by him in the Ceded districts.

Minting, trade cesses, and other prerogatives of jagirdars that inhibited trade should be abolished, but compensations should be paid 'for the sacrifices of these rights'."⁵²

It is evident that Elphinstone who was finally in charge of making the revenue settlement, took the advice of Munro seriously. He even went a step ahead and excelled his guide.

George Forrest writes: "*Elphinstone had a regard for hereditary rights; and not only were jaghirs given back to their owners, but all other rent-free lands—all established pensions, charitable and religious assignments and endowments were restored. 'The preservation of religious establishments', he wrote, 'is always necessary in a conquered country; but more particularly so in one where the Brahmins have so long possessed the temporal power'. [The Peshwas were Brahmanas]—The Peshwa's charities and other religious expenses amounted to nearly Rs 15,00,000 besides those of the wealthy persons in employment under his Government. It would be absurd to imitate this prodigality, but many expenses of this nature are rendered necessary...*"⁵³ So much for those who would say that it was British rule that broke Brahmana domination. In fact the converse was true. In Karnataka, Brahmana domination had already begun to crack by the onward march of history and it was colonialism that rescued it from decline and propped it up with vengeance.

Forrest adds: "*He [Elphinstone] preserved the influence of the village officers...in the important matter of the administration of justice Mr Elphinstone restrained from any hasty introduction of English machinery or agency... He proposed that the Patel or head of the village in the country districts, and the head of trades in the towns should have power to summon a Panchayet*"⁵⁴

Let us see the result of these policies. Forrest quotes the following statement of J Macleod of 1819 on the value of various tax-free lands that the feudal lords enjoyed:⁵⁵

Table 1: Tax Free Lands in Bombay Karnatak

Tax-Free Lands	Karnatik (Rupees)	Patwardhan Jaghirs	Kittur Taluk
Inams	2,43,522	50,070	8,060
Devrithans	26,779	12,374	5,595
Survisthans	--	--	--
Warshasans	28,400	13,269	2,224
Dewisthans and Warshasans (together)	15,474	--	--
Nemnuks	1,46,412	--	--
Dharmadars	23,513	35,111	--
Rozimadars	3,364	--	--
Pirs	80,543	--	--
Miscellaneous allowances (Ketta)	27,112	28,160	--
Khairats	1,866	--	102
Balpururishi	398	--	--
Bakshish	--	--	--
Dehuji	--	--	--
Mezuani	--	--	--
Gardens	--	--	--
Exemption (Maf)	--	--	--
Lands and buildings to Jamindars, Bhis, etc	1,66,929	8,879	--
Lands and buildings to additional (doubtful)	--	--	--
Shet Sannadi	--	--	--
Total	7,64,317	1,52,785	16,001

This amount was quite phenomenal indeed and speaks of the confidence that feudalism enjoyed with the British. The biggest concessions were in the form of inams and on lands and buildings of the zamindars. Together the tax relief offered to them added up to Rs 4,10,451 or close to 54% of all the tax free lands during the time. In addition to this, are the lands offered to the religious institutions such as temples. The religious and landed magnates—more often than not, the two combined into one—had a field day.

Krishna Rao and Halappa provide us with a table, of the inams that elapsed due to their confiscation by the British on account of a rebellion by the owners in 1857. The brief table only reveals the extent of inam grants to the overwhelming majority of those who were in the good books of the colonialists.⁵⁶

Table 2: A Select Sample of Inams Granted to Landlords of Bombay Karnatak

SINo	Name of Inamdar	Name of Village/s	Total of land and cash emoluments enjoyed by the Inamdars which now lapsed to Government
1.	Sreenivas Venkatadri, Desai of Dumbal	1. Sortoor 2. Kudadee 3. Dumbal 4. Thoopudkoorhuttee 5. Kotoomuchgee 6. Shiddapur 7. Beyinhal 8. Kutunkul 9. Krishnapur 10. Yerdoneee 11. Punnapoor	8,057-6-0
2.	Bheema Row Rungo, Nadagowda of Mundargee	12 villages	2,581-8-0
3.	Kenchangowda Sirnadagowda of Gowankop	32 villages	3,204-6-7
4.	Bhaskar Rao Babasaheb, late chief of Nargoond	11 villages	1,297-11-0

The foundations of feudalism were so strongly entrenched by colonialism that as Fukazawa says, “13% in Dharwar were Inam villages” alone.⁵⁷ From Eric Stokes we learn that the Brahmana Patwardhans who fanned out with the expansion of Peshwaite rule were granted principalities by the British. In Belgaum district alone, Chinchani, Nippani, Miraj, Tasgaon and Kagwad were among the few that were gifted to those former hangers-on of the Pune confederacy.

Virupaksha Badigera’s study of the Sirasangi Deshgathi in Belgaum district tells us of the proliferation of the feudal princelings in this part of Karnataka. He writes that, as late as in 1922 in Belgaum district alone there were 122 deshgathi families on inam.⁵⁸

In the Hyderabad-Karnataka region, the undisturbed state was most elegantly protected. The inamdars and jagirdars who controlled the entire territory were the tax-farmers of the Nizam

and with the Nizam's disgraceful submission to the British, the entire apparatus of the feudal system was, with possessive fragility, wedded to colonialism.

In Kodagu the British allied themselves with the former dominant Kodava feudal families such as Apparandra, Cheppudira and Biddandra. It also forged alliances with some new families such as Bittiandra, Madandra, Kolowandra, Kuttetira and Manabanda.⁵⁹ These families later held "*hundreds of acres of coffee estates and wet lands and wielded considerable influence in public life*".⁶⁰

There is a widespread notion in modern Indian historiography, prevalent among the liberal and even a good deal of revisionist inspired writing, that British colonialism led to the break up of feudalism in India—in the sense that it opened the course of unbridled capitalist growth. We have taken pains to meticulously quote from the horse's mouth itself, only so that no iota of doubt may remain in our minds of this gross misconception of the colonial period of our history. The British approached the landlord class with tenderness and handled them with kid's gloves. They saw to it that the feudal lords were stabilized. Subsequently, it was on the basis of such a stable and consolidated foundation that they cruised ahead with their task of colonial plunder; without which, it hardly needs mention, their pillage would not have endured.

Feudalism was the social basis for colonial domination. Colonialism allied itself with the ruling classes of the previous social structure and sought to perpetuate these precapitalist forms of exploitation and oppression. And Karnataka was no exception to this historic generalization.⁶¹

2. SOCIAL PILLARS OF THE RAJ

The British bourgeoisie led the peasantry against feudalism to complete the bourgeois democratic revolution and usher in capitalism in Britain in the seventeenth century. But as we see, in Karnataka and India, the very same British capital made an about turn, befriended and provided succour to the decadent feudal system and its putrid landlord class. This was a watershed in the history of the development of capitalism in our country and the distinguishing feature of foreign capital as it operated in our land. The social canvas was rendered complex. This also became a point of departure for genuine Marxist-Leninist-Maoist and flawed revisionist analysis. Let us turn to the progenitors of this phenomenon to learn the whys of it before returning to our debate with revisionist historiography.

Of the two instructions that the Governor General gave to the Madras Government on the take-over of Mysore, one was that "*the existing native institutions should be carefully maintained*" and not subverted.⁶² The Governor General's instructions did not carry an explanation, perhaps because it was already foregone knowledge, at least with colony builders like Munro.

In a memorandum of 1812-13, Munro said: "*The Potails and Curnums [Shanbhogas] of every village, as political instruments holding together the internal frame, are of the highest use*

to the Government".⁶³ This was a succinct, yet highly valid observation. It brought out the essence of the motivation behind British colonial pampering of the decadent feudal class.

Now let us look at Munro's arguments in greater detail. Though meandering, they clearly speak of the reasons for the preservation of the zamindars and the system of feudal land ownership. *"In the infancy of our power, when the great zemindars could afford a formidable resistance, the division of their domains might have been desirable; but in the present state of our power it ought rather to be our object to maintain them as entire as possible. If the whole of the zemindars were swept away...we should have nothing of native rank left in the country. All rank and power would be vested in a few Europeans. Such a state of things could not be but dangerous to the stability of our Government; because the natives could not fail to make the comparison between the high situation of their foreign rulers and their own abject condition; and in the event of any discontent arising, it would be more likely to spread and become general when they were reduced to one level, and consequently more liable to be actuated by feeling. They have no common sympathy with us, and but little attachment to our Government, with the exception of a portion of those who depend upon it for their maintenance; and nothing can tend more effectually to shake what they have, than to behold the destruction of every ancient family and its domains passing into the hands of a set of low retainers of the courts and other dependants of Europeans.*

Our power is now too great to have anything to apprehend from our zemindars. They know that they cannot oppose it, they also know that it is not our wish to turn it against them, in order to deprive them of any right which they now enjoy; and that they are as secure in the possession of their zemindaries with a small as with a large armed force. They will all by degrees gather confidence from this safety, abandon their military habits, and attend to the improvements of their possessions; and they will, for their own sakes, be more disposed than any other class of our subjects to support our Government in all times of disturbance. This change will be later among some of the remote hill chiefs, but it will ultimately take place among them all. It will be accelerated by the growing extension of our influence...but by nothing so much as by our own moderation...

Not only zemindaries, but the official lands of the village servants have been divided and parceled out among different claimants and, unless measures are adopted to stop this evil, every landowner will in time be reduced to the state of a common cultivator. With this fall of all the upper classes the character of the people sinks; they become less attached to our Government, they lose the principal instruments by which we can act upon and improve them, and the task of conducting the internal Government becomes everyday more difficult. I am therefore of the opinion that we ought by every expedient in our power to maintain the ancient zemindaries; and official landed estates unbroken. This will keep up a class of native nobility and gentry, and preserve those gradations in society through which alone it can be improved in its condition.

It is not intended to extend the proposed entail to any class of landholders whose lands have not been usually held according to that rule, or to strangers who might already have got possession by purchase, of portions of ancient zemindaries.

*The H'nble Court of Directors have already prohibited the sale of ancient zemindaries for arrears of revenue.”*⁶⁴

In protecting ‘ancient’ feudal property and the ‘zemindar class’ which possessed it, Munro was only counting upon the support of the upper rungs and the submission of the vast lower order to the regal sceptre of the Raj.

We have seen how Munro approached the economic base of feudalism. Now let us see how he saw its specific superstructure in relation to the needs of Empire.

As Governor of the Madras Presidency, he set the direction to be pursued to the new recruits of the British Civil Service who served in India and were enthusiastic in changing some of the feudal mores they encountered in India which were, starting from reasons of simple cultural abhorrence, antithetical to them.

*“Our institutions have, not resting on the same foundation as those of a free country, cannot be made to act in the same way. We cannot make the inanimate corpse perform the functions of a living body; we must, therefore, in making regulations here, think only of their probable effect in this country, not of what such regulations have or might have in England...”*⁶⁵

Explaining the importance of feudal consciousness for the stability of colonial rule Munro wrote in December 1801, on receiving letter upon letter from other British officials about his exposed nature and probability of succumbing to attack by the people: *“...there is not a single man along with me, nor had I one last year, when I met all the Gurramcondah poligars in congress, attended by their followers. I had deprived them of their cowle; and they knew that I meant to reduce them to the level of Potails, yet they never showed me the smallest disrespect. The natives of India, not disrespecting poligars, have in general, a good deal of reverence to public authority.”*⁶⁶

Munro drew the distinction between bourgeois democratic England and semifeudal India. He wanted feudalism to continue. He made no bones about it. He wanted all the inherent divisions—class, caste, gender, or what else have you—to continue. Taking landed property as the key link, he worked towards the preservation of feudalism. But this preservation, he wanted to achieve, under the new conditions of colonialism. He wanted feudalism to be preserved in a way that it served colonialism. He wanted to see feudalism offer India on a platter for the plunder of the British bourgeoisie. In other words, he sought its perpetuation under certain modified conditions. He obviously sought the instatement of semifeudalism.

On the one hand, while the colonialists prevented the break-up of big landed property, thereby preserving the economic essence of feudalism; they on the other hand stopped short of introducing social and cultural reforms of mores for which they might have had personal distaste such as untouchability, superstition, illiteracy, child marriage, widow persecution, Basavi cult and other such repugnant manifestations. Rather, they demonstrated their overt and covert support for these reactionary and decadent superstructural practices so as not to upset the applecart of colonial rule. As British rule matured in years, they learned to pass laws against some of these social evils as a result of popular struggles. But they did not strain their muscle to implement them. One may call this the British rope trick. But it was far more deceptive than what the Indian fakirs and dombars displayed. It was a trick played on the masses—upon which the Indian rulers continue to improvise to this day. It was a political trick which has effectively swept the constitutional reformists and the liberals off their feet, roping in their private praise and public support for the Raj.

Thus, starting from political expediency, they arrived at the base of the feudal system, and taking up the gauntlet on behalf of it against the Indian masses, they ultimately settled with preserving the superstructure too.

The existence of feudalism, above all had the political advantage of tying down the peasant masses and weighing down a conquered nation. The feudal economy, with its relations of direct appropriation, immobility and physical bondage tied the peasant to the master and both of them to the land; permitting the colonialist to construct his schemes and freely manoeuvre in implementing them. The abolition of feudalism by the division of great landed property would have introduced capitalism, in turn awakening the peasantry to its political rights. The case of Japan bore out this fact. Colonial intervention and exploitation of the Japanese market was short-lived on account of the awakened peasantry which had already united with the urban poor in concerted actions against feudalism even as the western colonialists set foot on Japan and made pacts with the tottering feudal lords and their Shogun. The general struggle against feudalism queered its pitch and with awakened patriotism resolutely attacked and drove away colonialism which sought to perpetuate the feudal order in a bid to lay its claim on the Japanese nation.⁶⁷

Mashood Danmole in his book *The Heritage of Imperialism* analyses the bridge between colonialism and feudalism in terms of the dovetailing of the superstructures of two contradistinct social systems. “*With India...disapproval of social resistance is rooted in the Hindu’s religio-cultural system. The restriction of the freedom of one caste by another, or the exploitation of a lower caste by another caste is permissive because the imputed superiority of the higher caste is confirmed and sanctified by the Hindu religion. Colonialism therefore merely introduces a hierarchy of social relationships to which its mentality is accustomed, and for which there is already in existence a compatible social structure among the subject population.*”⁶⁸

Danmole's analysis which penetrates the purpose behind Elphinstone's grants to temples and Munro's warmth for the mathas, goes on to say: "*The oppressive forces of colonialism are insulated behind the mystical curtain of the traditional lord and his establishment.*"⁶⁹

He concludes by saying: "...*though traditional ideologies may have been conceived to guarantee the continuance of the community's social values and thereby regulate the social equilibrium process, their anthropomorphic nature, with their class bias (sometimes obscure) is nevertheless bound to constitute an oppressive force. It is the same as the withdrawal of a right of query. It is the perpetuation of a state of ignorance. Traditional ideologies were therefore to be subsumed to the oppressive character of foreign ideologies as their natural co-extension, for the effective operation of the imperialist ideologies, traditional ideologies therefore constitute a permissive framework.*"⁷⁰

Thus it was the result of the compulsion of tying down the masses of Karnataka and India, in particular the peasantry, that the British united with and spruced up the declining feudal order. Colonialism, with all its economic and military might constituted the force, supporting, animating, fostering and perpetuating semifeudalism.

Dr Jekyll in England, in India a Mr Hyde. Bourgeois colonial greed and hypocrisy greased this self-contradictory divide.

A. Microcosm of the Thallur Deshgathi

Thallur is a village in Saundathi taluk of Belgaum district. It housed a dynasty of Lingayat desais whose fiefdom extended to 30 villages before the time of the British. Relying on Ashok Shettar's research into the Thallur deshgathi, we shall present a microcosmic glimpse of the semifeudal colony that Karnataka was.⁷¹

After British take over, only the village of Thallur continued as the Desais's inam. But from the remaining 30 villages one-fourth of the total revenue was allocated as the Thallur Desai's share. The inamthi of Thallur alone is said to have possessed a total of 10,600 acres. Of this, 6,000 acres were forest and 4,000 acres were cultivated. The government was paid an annual tax of Rs 2,200. Of this, the British government returned Rs 192 as "*compensation*". In the Thallur village, the Gowda was the representative of the government. He combined revenue and police functions. He remitted the annual tax of the Thallur Desai to the treasury.

Formerly all the revenues payable to the Desai from his fiefdom were collected in kind. But once after the English administration was established, cash revenues became the norm.

It was a precondition that the people of the village were subservient to the Desai. This was because the peasantry in and around Thallur was dependent on the Desai in many ways. Their cattle had to graze in the Desai's forest. People fetched fuel and wood from this jungle. They

took water from here. They would have put these privileges at stake if they dared to raise their voice against the Desai. After allocating by an auction, the plots of his land to the peasants for cultivation once every five years, these tenants were obliged to perform *bitti* (corvee) for the Desai. If they did not perform *bitti*, then such peasants had to pay 20 rupees during the annual appropriation of the harvest.

The courtyard of Thallur was built by the *bitti* labour of the peasantry. They fetched logs for it from as far as the forests of Uttara Kannada district.

There were eight Holeya families in Thallur. The people of the village had to pay them for the service they rendered to the *deshgathi*.

Ashok Shettar also provides good insight into certain religious ritual which emerged from the authority exercised by the *Deshgathi* dynasty.

From families like the Thallur Desais', compradors would emerge. That would become evident by the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries. That we shall discuss in *Volume III of Making History*.

For now, the view from Thallur gives a glimpse of how colonialism perpetuated semifeudalism—in the base and in the superstructure.

3. SOCIAL PREMISES FOR THE BIRTH OF A COMPRADOR CLASS

The unity of colonialism with feudalism was the premise for the pillage of Karnataka. Without the role of another very important class, colonialism could not have achieved its political or economic objective in the long run. This was none other than the comprador layer of the social formation. While feudalism and colonialism appeared to coexist and move in tandem, it was however the comprador class that emerged as its true representative, being a new product created by colonial intervention. With the "*settling*" of the *palegaras*, *desais*, *jagirdars* and *deshmukhs*; the next important function of colonialism in completing the process of its consolidation, was its yearning for and subsequently the creation of the compradors. It may be said that while landlords were its allies, the compradors were the agents of colonial capital.

It took more than a century of British colonial domination of Karnataka before the comprador bureaucrat bourgeoisie could be born. At this point of history, we can clearly observe the social premises being laid out for its emergence. The comprador merchant class and comprador officials were springboards for launching of the comprador bureaucrat bourgeoisie a century later. Let us now see in this section how the comprador merchants and comprador officials were spawned in the early decades of colonial rule over Karnataka. The emergence of a comprador merchant bourgeoisie along Karnataka's coast as a result of Portuguese colonialism is

a question, which we have already looked into in *Volume I*.⁷² Here let us consider about the emergence of the comprador class in the rest of the State.

Feudalism, the most significant ally of colonialism was also at the same time the principal social base for begetting the comprador class. Suniti Kumar Ghosh who has made an admirable study of India's comprador bourgeoisie, recounts several times, about its unmistakable feudal moorings, in his book *The Indian Big Bourgeoisie*. The feudal litter, which the British had gathered together, produced Karnataka's comprador class. On being pensioned off or 'settled' these feudal forces or their progeny who had directly received sannads from the British branched off either into the bureaucracy or into colonial trade, often the first form of 'trade' being money-lending. This differentiation in the community of landlords, achieved over several years of British administration and trade, produced the first set of comprador merchants and bureaucrats. To this source of the emerging compradors the puppet kings must be included. From being a feudal puppet, the Wodeyar dynasty, with the subsequent growth of British capital, transformed gradually into a puppet with comprador-feudal traits.

Another case in point was the "contented" Ghorpades of Sandur. Former vassals of the Marathas, the Ghorpades shifted loyalties. Backing Munro, they turned their guns against their former mentors, the Peshwas and won for themselves the fiefdom of Sandur in Bellary district. In the early decades of the nineteenth century, they emerged as leading merchants and highly placed bureaucrats. The satin chairs on which they reclined balanced on three legs—one feudal, one mercantile and one bureaucratic.

Mashood Danmole rightly says: "...it has become sufficiently clear that traditional rulers, or their descendants, or those who think like them, have largely constituted the bosom from which have been nourished most of the comprador bourgeoisie sandwiched between the local community and the foreign owners of capital. This new class of local bourgeoisie represent, no more and no less, the native hand maidens of imperialist manouvres." ⁷³

Feudalism therefore remained the pervasive source for the emergence of compradors. The feudal geyser often spouted the comprador bureaucrats as well as the comprador merchants. Let us consider the origins of the comprador merchants first. This class emerged in several ways.

Firstly, we have the pattern which Mao Tsetung described in his *Analysis of the Classes in China*, wherein compradors were thrown up by originally operating as officials in the trading outposts of the colonial companies.⁷⁴ While Karnataka's ports were not the entrepots for British trade; Calcutta, Bombay, Madras and Surat playing this role, such origins of compradorism may be found in these cities. Yet the coffee trade of Karnataka is one example of how direct forms of compradorism also obtained in Karnataka, although on a diminished scale.⁷⁵

Malathi K Moorthy confirms this phenomenon by writing: "...there was little direct trade contact between South Kanara and foreign countries".⁷⁶ British reports of the time say that "No

*foreign vessels ever came to the ports of this district.”*⁷⁷ Malathi then goes on to add: *“Almost all the business of the European merchants within the region was conducted through their agents or middlemen, with the help of sub-agents.”*⁷⁸

In 1818, the trade with Bombay alone exceeded 40% of the total Kanara trade.⁷⁹ All the ports on the Karnataka seaboard were transit points between their hinterlands and Bombay.

Since the British did not trade directly with the Kannada, Tulu and Kodava heartlands, the comprador merchants emerged in Karnataka as agents, in turn, of the compradors of Bombay and Madras. Hence one notices that there generally, though not always, was a retarded and delayed growth of the big comprador merchants in areas that were conquered during the course of the nineteenth century. The nineteenth century fetched the British far more territory than the eighteenth. But this only meant that the compradors that had already nestled in the colonial network of trade at Bombay, Madras, Calcutta and Surat by the end of the nineteenth century, stood at an enormous advantage with every inch of increase in British conquest. The fact that the merchants of Karnataka who served the British did not do so as their direct compradors, does not undo their comprador character or their crucial economic and political role as compradors in the service of colonialism. Being agents of the agents, they were an insipid archetype—a bit short, though stocky, and dealing in Rupees; when compared to their overfed and towering elder cousins transacting the Pound and Sterling at Bombay.

Although the objective tendency of the economy which the British introduced tended to eliminate a large section of former local merchants and transform a lean layer into its compradors; we are not able to identify, due to a paucity of source material, as to who among the locals constituted this crème.

While all this was about the premise for the emergence of the comprador merchant from Karnataka, there was meanwhile another development underway. Some of the direct compradors migrated from British territory to Karnataka. This part of Karnataka’s history was symbolized through a token act of great political value. VI Pavlov thus wrote of this: *“Jagat Seths remained bankers of the Company up to 1782. They were replaced by the Marwari banking lending house of Gopal Das who was a member of a big firm of Marwari bankers from the Agarwalla community. He and his brother moved to Calcutta in the 1770s and there acquired a great fortune. His son Bhavanidas, was the supplier of the British army that invaded Mysore in 1799. How great the services are which Bhavanidas rendered to the invaders is evident from the fact that he received the sword of Tippoo Sultan after Seringapatam was taken by the British.”*⁸⁰

It is an irony of history that the sword which was wielded against colonialism and became symbolic of everything that was opposed to the British came to be gifted to a Marwadi comprador. It was a gift which only foreboded the gifting of the Karnataka market itself to these enemies of Karnataka and of vesting these minions of British colonial loot with the task of

protecting and serving the cause and interests of the Empire in Karnataka. In *Volume I of Making History* we have already seen the spread of the comprador tentacles to the Bijapur region by the Banias.⁸¹

However, one of the earliest references to these compradors of colonialism who came from western and north-western India to the Mysore heartland was to be met with in Ananda Ranga Pillai's dairies. AR Pillai was a comprador of French colonialism and one of the chief ones at that, who had a major role in the French trade. AR Pillai, born in 1709, emigrated from Madras to Pondicherry in 1716 "*at the suggestion of his brother-in-law Naniya Pillai then courtier, or chief native agent at that place for the French.*"⁸²

He established several trading posts in Tamil Nadu and carried out a "*brisk business in the exchange of European goods for the merchandise of the country.*"⁸³

However, what is important is that "*the Wodeyars who came after Chikkadevaraja gave an opportunity for the spread of the French compradors like Ananda Ranga Pillai's activities, who operated in Bangalore, not with the aid of Kannadiga merchants but by relying on the Marwadis and Gujaratis, who, it is clear, were the principal and foremost economic mediators of colonialism in inland Karnataka. One of the entries in Ananda Ranga Pillai's dairies gives a dress of honour to Sambu Das, a merchant who traded with him, which was meant for Lal Das 'the Gujerati of Seringapatam in Mysore'.*"⁸⁴

With the overthrow of Mysore's anticolonial government, colonial penetration of the new market was mediated by the southward march of such established comprador families of western India. This phenomenon was so rapid that Buchanan, who visited Mangalore barely months after it fell to the English already observed the visible change. He wrote: "*The principal merchants in Hyder's time were Moplays [Mapillas] and Kankanies [Gowda Saraswath Brahmins]; a few came from Guzzerat since the Company has acquired the government of the country, many men of substance have come from Surat, Cutch, Bombay and other places to the north. These men are chiefly of the Vaisya caste, but a good many Parsis are among them...the vessels employed in trade chiefly belong to other ports.*"⁸⁵

RD Choksey confirms this when he says: "*The Marwaris have settled in large numbers since the British conquest. They came mostly from Bombay and unlike the banias, settled in the remotest villages where they gradually ousted the local money lenders.*"⁸⁶

Suniti Ghosh explains this phenomenon thus: "*In the conditions that prevailed both in overseas and in domestic trade the decline of the Indian merchants who did not serve as brokers or agents of foreign merchants and the rise of the comprador merchant bourgeoisie became inevitable.*"⁸⁷

The intervention of the colonial state in protecting and promoting the compradors from Madras as against the local merchants of Bangalore in the Bangalore Cantonment which came under direct British rule, is attested to by Narendar Pani et al. They write: *“The overall British control of the Civil and Military Station was further strengthened by ensuring that most of the occupants were of non-Mysore origin. In order to make their control effective, within territory not completely controlled by the British, it is perhaps necessary to ensure that, the Cantonment remained ‘an isolated piece of British territory’ segregated from the rest of Mysore, in particular from the Pettah in Bangalore. To this end the commanding officer of the station was even instructed to ‘extend the private buildings as little as possible towards the pettah of Bangalore’. This violation would of course, have meant very little if it was purely geographical. The British therefore also saw to it that the economic relations between the Cantonment and City were limited. The traders, who, in the same period, were being protected within the Pettah, were judiciously kept out of gaining ascendancy in the Station. Indeed traders from the pettah were not allowed to set up shops in the Cantonment but could sell their ware in wholesale only to the merchants of the General or Regimental Bazaars within the station.”*⁸⁸

On the role of the colonial state in ruining the monopoly enjoyed by the Kannadiga traders who had not developed comprador tendencies, particularly in the business of arecanut and tobacco, and in turn aiding their compradors is unmistakably evident.

The same authors tell us: *“The merchants had further reason to be dissatisfied as Cubbon [the Commissioner of Mysore State after the British assumed direct administration] placed a limit beyond which individual merchants were not allowed to grow. Thus the traditional monopolies of tobacco and betel-nut held by a section of wealthy merchants were broken. The breaking of the tobacco monopoly in Bangalore and its environs was accomplished by first securing the abolition decree, and then introducing superior quality foreign tobacco which was sold at lower rates in the open market and the introduction of a Sayer duty at the rate of 3 ½ rupees per maund from 7th July 1839 on all tobacco sold within the Bangalore town and its environs.”*⁸⁹

Thus the independent Kannadiga trader was routed. We have seen in *Volume I*, about the case of the Banajiga, a merchant community which fell from grace.⁹⁰ In *Volume III* we shall study the implications of these developments on the Kannada national question. For the present it will do to quote Suniti Ghosh who explains a similar phenomenon, albeit in a different locale: *“The first few years of colonial rule saw the gradual liquidation of old big Indian traders and bankers in most of Eastern India, which first came under the rule of the British, and the rise of others who served as **banians** and brokers of the latter. Indian merchants who traded independently were ousted not only from foreign trade but from internal trade.”*⁹¹

The other form of compradorism was to be found in the bureaucracy. The initial periods of colonialism saw an attempt on the part of colonialism to forge a bureaucracy, which was

comprador in character. Without the creation of this stratum, they always considered their rule unsafe.

After the East India Company removed the Raja of a fig leaf and took over the direct administration in 1831: “*The instructions of the Governor General to the Madras Government on the first assumption of the province had been to the effect that ‘the agency under the Commissioners should be exclusively native’...*”⁹²

This standpoint of the British was a result of the sustained campaign which Munro had undertaken, with far-reaching insight on the role of the comprador bureaucracy in sustaining the colonial edifice, often construed by apologists of colonialism as “*Munro’s liberalism*”.⁹³

Munro in his *Minute on the Promotion of Natives*, said in 1827: “*The employment of Natives in high offices will be as much for our own advantage as for theirs...*”⁹⁴

In 1822, in a letter to Elphinstone, Munro, wrote: “*I have given the Board of Revenue a complete native catchery...it opens a field to able and aspiring Natives, and prepares the way for giving them some share in the Government half a century, or a whole century hence.*”⁹⁵

In the territory of Karnataka which colonialism was sort of late in taking, the relatively developed comprador bureaucrats of the Presidencies of Madras and Bombay had moved in. Thus the bureaucracy, the upper rungs of which were manned by several representatives from these British enclaves remained a small but important forte for supplying Karnataka with comprador bureaucrats.

The revenue administration (which combined magisterial and police functions) and the army were the two shoulders of the state, which groomed the comprador bureaucrats in these early decades of colonialism in Karnataka. Both these instruments had a raw carnivorous appetite. The Karnataka component of the revenue administration, whether found at the bottom or at the top, invariably had personnel who were wealthy landlords also at the same time. The revenue apparatus was dominated by the Brahmanas. They presented themselves in several colours of dots and stripes. But the ones with the solitary black vertical cornered up to 30% of the posts under the Mysore government when the *sharat* system of revenue extraction was in swing. H Stokes who assumed the Nagar foudari after the uprising broke out, recommended the introduction of Lingayats into the bureaucracy.⁹⁶ Some contemporary authors, vexed by the sight of the clogged sewers in the bureaucracy, see anti-Brahmin British fairplay in this. But the virtuous British found it convenient, by this, to wheel and deal. The lower echelons had a greater component of Lingayats and Vokkaligas. The higher layers, just as Brahma had ordained, remained the Brahmana abode.

In the initial decades of colonialism, to which this *Volume* is dedicated, it would have been almost unimaginable to expect a separation of the bureaucrat from the landlord. The

bureaucrats who fattened on graft were also at the very same time flourishing owners of vast landed property. Hence it would not be wrong to characterize them with an hyphenation as feudal-comprador bureaucrats.

On the making of the Mysore bureaucracy, Shama Rao says, *“On the establishment of the new Government under Krishnaraja Wodeyar III a few of the Palegars retired to other parts of the country preferring chances of future commotion. A small number who were of a refractory character were imprisoned, while the greater portion of them who were willing to accept reconciliation were granted suitable State pensions or were appointed to civil offices or military commands... Purnaiya took particular care at all times to respect their feelings by treating them with kindness and courtesy.”*⁹⁷

Again on the composition and the feudal roots of the comprador bureaucracy we learn from Shyam Bhat that: *“The introduction of the British revenue administration for its functioning, necessitated an indigenous personnel which was well informed about the local peculiarities. The Company authorities found such men in Brahmin, Saraswat Brahmin and Bhand communities, who possessed a set of qualifications which filled the deficiencies and met the structural requirements of this early period of British agrarian management.”*⁹⁸

Further informing us about the emergence of the bureaucrats in the Karavali districts, Suryanath Kamath says about the Chitrapur Brahmins that: *“Due to certain peculiar historical and social reasons, this group of people took to English education earlier than all other communities in Canara and came to dominate in the civil service under the British in these two Canara districts.”*^{98A}

Then there is also the example of Bheema Rao of Mundargi in the Bombay Karnataka region. His grandfather was the Chief Adviser at the court of the Dambal Desai and his father, a judge under the Peshwa.⁹⁹ In other words, Bheema Rao had privileged antecedents associating him with the aristocracy. He enjoyed the inam of 12 villages conferred by the British. But Bheema Rao, like his predecessors was not just a landlord pure and simple. He served the British as a bureaucrat. He was appointed as Thasildar of Harapnahalli and later, Bellary. There were many like Bheema Rao. But unlike him, very few would break with the British. That however, is besides the point we are now making and Part II of this *Volume* will tell more of it.

The second source for the emergence of comprador bureaucrats was the army. The British Indian army adopted a policy of not taking recruits from the former army of Tipu Sultan, preferring to pension off commanders and sweep overboard the entire soldiery.¹⁰⁰ Despite this it could have left about half a lakh men with the Mysore Raja, the Kodagu Raja and the various other former palegaras and deshghathis. The upper crust of these armies developed as compradors. Some of the higher military functionaries drawn from places like Kodagu directly into the British Indian army were also groomed in this direction. However, the Brahmana

composition in this arm was relatively less, though not insignificant. The Ursus, Kodavas and Lingayats wore with awe the medals and multicoloured ribbons pinned on their uniforms by the British.

One must be cautious against looking for an unilinear process in the emergence of the comprador. The process at work in early colonial Karnataka tells us that it often described a trajectory of zigzags; of fits and starts. A comprador bureaucrat would often relapse into a semifeudal lord, as was the case with Purnaiah. Or, a merchant would traverse the agrarian road and settle down along the way as a landlord, as was wont with the Gowda Saraswats who pursued usury with the peasantry of Tulunadu.¹⁰¹

Feudalism provided the comprador merchant and the comprador bureaucrat. Together, the compradors became an instrument for British economic and political mediation in Karnataka and India. It was the comprador that knit together their requirements. They mediated the vital bond between colonialism and feudalism.

The following description of the Gowda Saraswat Brahmins by Suryanath Kamath who in turn cites Sturrock, describes the fusion between the semifeudal landlords, money-lender-businessmen and bureaucrats: *“A great bulk of the Konkanis are shop-keepers and are to be found in almost every bazaar throughout the district... They were wealthy landowners in the district... Some occupy very high positions in government service...”*^{101A}

The cultural make-up of the comprador class, drawn as it was from a feudal-reactionary background, was anti-people and decadent. It upheld all its rotten manifestations and moribund ideology and combined it with daily oblations for the white god.

The comprador bourgeoisie had a vital economic role to perform. In the initial stages of colonial take over, the economic role of the comprador bureaucracy was basically confined to connecting the colonialist with the feudal tax-farmer as a siphon mechanism. With the advance of British industrial capital in India the role of the comprador merchants became all the more prominent. Comprador merchants became an important link in the economic pillage of Karnataka, carrying British manufactures to the remotest parts and taking back raw materials and agricultural produce to feed the appetite of the colonial monster.

The political role, however, was significant, both in terms of the immediate stability of the colonial enterprise and its long-term endurance; for which precise reason, traitors like Purnaiah were heaped with praise and presents by the British. On the political importance of the comprador bureaucracy, Munro wrote: *“We might endeavour to secure ourselves by augmenting our European establishment. This might at a great additional expense, avert the evil for a time, but no increase of Europeans could long protract the existence of our dominion. In such a contest we are not to expect any aid from the people: the native army would be joined by all that numerous and active class of men formerly belonging to the revenue and police departments,*

*who are now unemployed, and by many now in office, who look for higher stations; and by means of these men they would easily render themselves master of the open country and of its revenue: the great mass of the people would remain quiet. The merchants and shopkeepers, from having facilities given to trade, which they never before experienced might wish us success, but they would do no more. The heads of villages, who have at their disposal the most war-like part of the inhabitants, would be more likely to join their countrymen than to support our cause. They have, it is true, when under their native rulers, often shown a strong desire to be transferred to our dominion; but this feeling arose from temporary causes—the immediate pressure of a weak and rapacious Government, and the hope of bettering themselves by a change. But they have now tried our Government and found, that though they are protected in their persons and their property, they have lost many of the emoluments which they derived from a lax revenue system under their native chiefs, and have also lost much of their former authority and consideration among the inhabitants, by the establishment of our judicial courts and European magistrates and collectors. The hopes of recovering their former rank and influence would therefore render a great part of them well disposed to favour any plan of our overthrow. We delude ourselves if we believe that gratitude for the protection they have received, or attachment to our mild Government would induce any considerable body of people to side with us in a struggle with the native army.”*¹⁰²

This was an anticipation by Munro of 1857 although with an underestimation of the role of the masses. He therefore visualized the comprador bureaucracy as the mainstay for the unbroken rule of the Raj. And this was what he wrote: *“In this point [taxation], at least, we ought to be guided by the example of those governments and employ intelligent and experienced natives, at the head of the revenue to assist the revenue board. If in other departments we give experienced natives to assist the European officers, shall we not give them in this, whose duties are the most difficult and most important? We cannot exclude them from it without injury to ourselves as well as to them; we cannot conduct the department efficiently without them. But even if we could, policy requires that we should let them have a share in the business of taxing their own country. It attaches them to our Government, it raises them in their own estimation, and it encourages them by the prospect of attaining a situation of so much distinction, to qualify themselves for it by a zealous performance of their duty. Although we can never leave entirely to the natives the power of taxing the country, we ought to entrust them with as much of it as possible under our superintendence.”*¹⁰³

LB Bowring, one of the Commissioners who administered Mysore after KR Wodeyar III was given marching orders in 1831, echoed these ideas of Munro. He wrote: *“It will be remembered that under present circumstances we are administering the Government of Mysore in trust and on behalf of the Maharaja, so that considerations both of justice and of good policy demand that, while the guiding power is retained in the hands of the European officers, a fair admixture of native officials should be appointed to posts of trust and importance. I feel sure*

that the measure will give great satisfaction, strengthen our influence and reconcile native officials who have not unnaturally, possibly looked to the Rajah for preferment.” ¹⁰⁴

While this was the British perception on the cultivation of Indians so that they could share the viewpoint and the station of the colonialist, Munro considered this not as an end in itself but rather as a means to serve the ultimate end of sustaining British colonialism even in the absence of British colonialists in the country, that is, under conditions of indirect rule. Although such conditions had not yet dawned, a study of popular aspiration led him to that inevitable and objective conclusion. Yet, as a true colonialist, and among the most die-hard of the lot—he visualized the role of the compradors in ensuring a continued share in the pillage for a colonial master who resided overseas.

He wrote: *“We should look upon India not as a temporary possession, but as one which is to be maintained permanently, until the natives shall in some future age have abandoned most of their superstitions and prejudices and become sufficiently enlightened to form a regular government for themselves and to conduct and preserve it, whenever such time shall arrive it will probably be best for both countries that the British control over India should be gradually withdrawn.”* ¹⁰⁵

This was the yearning of British imperialism for the comprador. The feudal lord was uncouth for the civilization of capital and could not fulfill this task. Let us, in *Volume III of Making History* see how this vision of transferring power to the compradors was gradually fulfilled so that the ducts exploiting the colony would remain intact even after the British had withdrawn.

4. OPPRESSIVE TRINITY, REACTIONARY STATE

Victory for colonialism, altered in its wake, the ruling alliance. Before British rule, the feudal and merchant classes shared state power in the Mysore Kingdom, and in other parts of Karnataka it was the feudal class which claimed a monopoly on it. British presence altered this. While it retained the feudal classes, it absorbed one section of the merchants and routed the rest. All over Karnataka, it was replaced by the colonial-comprador-feudal alliance that constituted the ruling fraternity.

In the Mysore Kingdom of the late eighteenth century, the landlord class, although constituting the twosome with the merchant, had already conceded leadership for the alliance to the latter.

In the new set up, following colonial conquest, the leadership for this alliance was provided by the colonialist; the feudal lords and compradors enjoying a supplementary and restricted status in the ruling trinity.

A qualitative change in content and composition of the state had been effected between the two epochs.

The significance of the leading element in the alliance was that it constituted not only the principal force in welding together a common front but that it always influenced and reshaped even the other members of the alliance to its requirements—political and economic—which in this case was nothing but the requirement of colonial capital. As we have already seen, the various feudal lords were drawn into the alliance only after they consented to submit themselves to a processing by British industrial capital. This obligation led to a modification of feudalism. The landlords were compelled to give up their military establishment, they merged their manner of justice with the colonial hierarchy of courts, surrendered several feudal privileges they formerly enjoyed and so on. This select alteration of feudalism continued right down history, opening itself even more to this process under conditions of semicolonialism and the growing monopoly and concentration of international capital in the twentieth century; which we shall find the opportunity of describing in *Volume III of Making History*. For instance, the procreation of comprador capitalists from the feudal base was the result of such social intercourse, which in other words only meant that a section of feudal lords had shed their former class position to assume a new status and enter into altogether new relations of production. However, it must not be forgotten that while modifying feudalism, colonialism never went to the point of undermining it.

Colonialism transformed the structure of the state in India. For the first time in Indian history a unified and centralized state was created for the entire country, by selectively assimilating and reorganizing the feudal state, the structure of which had originally been fragmentary or disjointed. This state was ushered in as a result of the dissolution of the feudal armies, which were organized on a decentralized basis. Some presume this weakened feudalism. But the fact is that this imbued feudalism with new strength. While on the face of it, the liquidation of the former feudal armies amounted to an apparent weakening of feudalism, in reality the converse was true. The feudal armies were dissolved only to be amalgamated and restructured on a new, powerful and centralised basis. British colonialism, which drew the landlord into a reactionary class alliance, took upon itself the task of protecting feudalism with the aid of the new centralized state that it had now created. Colonialism spoke on behalf of the landlords and compradors. This was the great historic blow that colonialism dealt to the masses of India. From now on, even an isolated struggle against a petty landlord in the remotest corner of the country would find an instantaneous reactionary intervention by the centralized Indian state. The landlord class, which was dying, had been reinvigorated and given a new lease of life. The might of colonial capital and the vast resources of the reactionary Indian state could be summoned to defend feudalism and suppress an awakening peasantry. Every commonplace landlord, unworthy of a pie-dog's snarl, rose to stand by the feet of the towering Queen. This historic change in the nature of the state had grave implications on the gathering antifeudal tide of the Indian masses.

It would no longer be possible to expect a regional phenomenon like that which Chikkadevaraja Wodeyar had initiated in the late seventeenth century, since in terms of internal cohesion, all the landlords of India had become one.¹⁰⁶ This also meant that the development of individual nationalities and their liberation could not any more be achieved in isolation. The fate of the nationalities was invariably tied with the achievement of their mutual solidarity and concert just as was the case with the dispersed peasantry of India. Thus the abolition of feudalism would, in essence, require as a precondition, an emphatic and consolidated effort at coordination, at a time when the outbreak of antifeudal peasant insurrections were still at their infancy. Historically speaking, an all-India consciousness, worked upon and premeditated, had to guide the peasantry.

The second fallout of the new structure of state was, the intertwining of the historic antifeudal mission with that of the anticolonial. There could not be the one without the other; the defeat of one could not be ensured without the rout of the other. Whether by conscious intent or by spontaneous action, this feature became the engraved essence of the historic search of the masses of Karnataka and India in their rich experience of liberation. This was no dualism but a dual task against a united enemy with an allied mission.

Chapter III

IMPACT OF COLONIALISM ON THE LIFE OF THE MASSES

In the previous chapter we have studied about the impact of British colonialism on the ruling classes of Karnataka. Now let us see its impact on the masses, the various sectors of social life and as to how the colonial dose, in the first few decades of its administration, rendered progress into regress, and all the salient tendencies of pre-colonial advance topsy turvy.

1. DISSOLUTION OF THE ARMY

The very first, and at the same time, most glaring impact of colonial ascension was the rapidity with which armies—more of that of Mysore than of the feudal lords’—were dismantled. The sense of urgency in undertaking its dissolution was prompted by the four decade long anticolonial spearhead that it was. The Mysore army was the central institution to deliver blows on the British, and thus contained all potential, due to its internal cohesion and well regulated

hierarchy in the course of its anticolonial existence, to become the ready rallying point, not withstanding the fall of Tipu. The break up of the army was therefore the primary task, which the British addressed on learning of the death of the Sultan.

Tipu Sultan's regular forces had about 1.4 lakh men.¹⁰⁷ This was liquidated and the Raja was left with a measly force of 12,000 men. The kandachara militia had 1,80,000 men in Tipu's period.¹⁰⁸ This was similarly dissolved. But owing to the fear that "*they could become instruments of commotion*" the puppet government retained 20,000 in the first year of its rule.¹⁰⁹

Lt Col Close who was allotted charge for this dismantling and later assumed the Resident's office in the protected and unexposed chambers of the Wodeyar's palace, in a letter written to one of the Commissioners, explained how it was achieved with an air of exultation and a liberal peppering of rabid colonial pride: "*That Tippu loaded the departments of his Government with dronish Mussalmans cannot be denied, but the characteristic of his domination was to reserve all power to himself and allow no hereditary claims or fixed offices... Individuals holding the principal offices of the state doubtless exercised authority and from such cause possessed some influence, but of these how many remain? Burhanuddin was killed at Seringapatam. The Benki Nawab fell at Siddeswar, and Syed Sahib, Mir Sadak and Syed Gaffar at the storming of Seringapatam. Purnaiya is forthcoming and rests upon our will. Kamruddin rests upon our generosity and is perfectly at our devotion.*"¹¹⁰

Kamruddin was gifted jagirs in Gurramkonda: One from the Company and the other from the Nizam. Marx records that "*the chief commander of the Mysore army*" was paid Pounds 2,000 for his unconditional surrender. It is not clear if he is talking of Mir Sadak who was annihilated for his betrayal. Kamruddin would not have fetched such a heavy price.¹¹¹

It was such a situation that Close further remarked: "*Where then is the Mahomedan influences to embarrass us or to give a turn to our politics? Tippu's infantry are discharged, his Silledar horse are dissolved, his Killedars pay us obeisance, his Asophs if so disposed have not the means to resist us, the stable horse remain and look to our pleasure for subsistence and at best they are but so many loose individuals connected by no head and kept apart by separate interests. They are ours for actual service at a nod.*"¹¹²

Narasimha Murthy, one of Purnaiah's prodigies writes that the commission to "*settle*" Mysore's dominions, of which Barry Close was a member, met in Srirangapatna on 8 June 1799. While Kamruddin made a satisfied retreat after what he received, other chief officers were retired on their old pay and an adequate provision was made for the families of those officers who lost their lives, in a bid to pre-empt any disgruntled outburst. Tipu's civilian officers were granted pensions and the Frenchmen were taken prisoners of war.¹¹³

In her monograph, Meera Sebastian tells us how remnants of the army were further scrubbed off, and by 1831 it remained no more than an inconsequential relic of the past.¹¹⁴

While the military elite was purchased, the rank and file and the militia were simply pushed off the precipice. The army against colonialism became overnight an army of the unemployed, its resources ruined and moorings sloughed.

The first blow of British rule sought the Muslim of Mysore. In one momentary colonial flourish a chivalrous ruling community which had sacrificed thousands of its sons as it gave battle to the foreign invader and had begun to rally the best elements from the oppressed castes was dashed on the ramparts of the Raj. The Muslim community encountered sudden death. European conquest, by liquidating the army, had in one stroke reversed the fortunes of the rising Muslims of Mysore who had constituted its principal contingent and which served as their principal source of employment. The defeat of Mysore also spelt the historic fall of the Muslims, from the dizziness of which they continue to reel even today. The shock waves generated a ferment which initiated its own endeavours at redemption, of which we shall see in Part II of this *Volume*. The Muslim was all but outcaste and thrown among the dregs of society. The colonial catharsis of 1799 has left its effect even after two centuries, the Muslims served with the melancholic monopoly of a distinct part of the economy—the sordid recycling of waste.

Buchanan was already a witness to this fall and historic fix. He writes, though with a tinge of condescending scorn, which nevertheless is revealing, about Husseinpur and Mulluru of Hunsur taluk: *“The Mussulmans who were in Tipoo’s service are daily coming to this part of the country. Those who have any means carry on a small trade in grain; those who are poor hire themselves to the farmers, either as servants or day labourers. Being unacquainted with agriculture, they are only hired when others cannot be procured. Their wages are, of course, low, and their monthly allowance is 30 seers of grain (worth three Fanams) and one Fanam in cash... They however prefer this to enlisting in the service of the Company along with the infidels who killed the royal martyr.”*¹¹⁵

Again, in Bangalore, Buchanan observed similar distress among the Muslims, seeking a niche in the urban economy and falling back on petty trade, which, with its downward progression, quickly landed them among others, as merchants of waste.

2. PARALYSIS OF AGRICULTURE

The agriculture sector went through several critical contortions on account of the new ruling alliance in power. The combined effect was to precipitate a devastating crisis, which destabilized the peasantry.

A. Taxing Land in Place of Yield

One of the early manifestations of the Raj was a change in the mode of the agrarian tax. All ‘settlements’ conducted by the new bureaucracy with the peasantry were motivated by the pursuit of changing the mode of assessment.

Shama Rao tells us that in the new mode “*dry lands all over the State paid a fixed money rent amounting to about one third of the value of the crop....*”¹¹⁶

Parasitic single-mindedness of the British led to the emergence of an altogether new tenure called the *kayamgutta* which fixed the rent that had to be paid without room for variation.¹¹⁷

The new assessment was not as before. Formerly the seed that was sown was taken to draw up revenue estimates. Yet the final revenue amount after harvest was based on the volume of yield. This process of agrarian taxation characteristic of not just Karnataka in particular but pre-colonial India in general, experienced a variation from region to region on the percentages that were imposed. The general percentage in pre-British Karnataka was one-sixth for the government, two-sixths to three-sixths for the various feudal interests and the remaining was left with the cultivating peasant.

The new mode however relegated yield to the background, as it was in the rapacious search of a growing annual income from agriculture.

While the earlier form was indeed vexatious and plundersome, it still provided the peasantry with token respite during the bad years. The new method, however, by fixing the tax on acreage instead of yield, also at the same time hiked the percentage due to the Sircar. Thus in years of crop loss or failure the peasant was hard pressed to pay up his dues and awaited the condescending waiver of a part of the imposition or tasted the rapacious brutality of the strong arm of the colonial state.

B. Ryotwari: Nothing Benign

A little confusion and a lot of mistaken views abound regarding the ryotwari revenue collection system introduced by the British. Starting from certain personal points of detail about its authorship to its propensity at being a herbivorous “*even handed*” “*liberal*” institution which “*recognized the rights*” of the peasant, unlike the carnivorous zamindari system of revenue collection, have been put forward. But, of all historians from Karnataka, KN Venkatasubba Sastri’s fidelity and apologia remains unmatched. His books are early and fine examples of stalking historiographical terrain with comprador perceptions of British rule over our land.

The ryotwari system of revenue had its origins under Colonel Read in 1792 who was the first British Collector of Baramahal district. Incidentally, Baramahal of Tamil country had only then been acquired by the British from Tipu Sultan after their victory in Mysore’s Third Anticolonial War. Munro served under Read and it matters little to us if it was Munro who first whispered about it in Read’s ears, or, if it was Read who munched at Munro’s ear lobes first. The point to be underscored is that this was the first of British conquests from the former Kingdom of Mysore and at the outset it proved itself incapable of sustaining the zamindari

system of revenue collection. The reason was clear. The former zamindars had already been eliminated in Mysore. And on their elimination, tax collection was undertaken by the Mysore revenue administration and not by pategara tax farmers. Hence a kind of ryotwari system—of the government directly collecting revenues from the peasantry in association with the Patels and Shanbhogas at the level of the village—was in vogue. In fact the British did try to mechanically implement the zamindari system in Coimbatore district. But it was immediately resisted, as the District Gazetteer says, by the village level landlords and peasantry, since it meant a forsaking of their juridical rights over land. What Thomas Munro capably did was to continue with this former system of revenue collection, but by adding new features, which gave it that impeccably avaricious British stamp. For example, we just saw in the previous section, that the nature of agrarian taxation had been changed from yield to land. Under ryotwari there was all the characteristic British arbitrariness associated with fixing the land tax.

It would be a misnomer, as Kurup and Shyam Bhat have said, that ryotwari meant that the government made a deal only with the peasant that tilled the land. Far from it, the ryotwari system made the “*settlement*” with whoever owned the land. And, in the early nineteenth century land was principally owned by the landlords with only a small portion coming under direct peasant control. In his study on agrarian relations in Tulunadu, Chandrashekhara B Damle says of the time that: “...by formalising the existing tenures the status of the pattadar or landlord was reinforced while in case of tenants nothing was settled.”^{119A} Hence there was nothing “*liberal*” or “*judicious*” or “*statesman-like*” in the ryotwari settlement. It befriended the existing landlords just as much as the zamindari system did, or the mahalwari and mirasdari systems did in the rest of India. The high level of taxation soon pushed the peasants into arrears and land gradually fell into the hands of usurers. In other words, the ryotwari system, as it came to be implemented in the Bombay and Madras Presidencies and in the Mysore Kingdom, became an instrument for the perpetuation of semifeudalism.

R Richards, another of those Madras based English Channel sharks who fell out with Thomas Munro, provides some useful insights into the workings of the ryotwari system. He writes, at times unbelievable for a Britisher—only showing the intensity of the jostling that went on within Fort St George—that the ryotwari system was “*always directed with the one object of exacting from the country the largest amount of revenue it could afford to pay... that the collections, under this system of rack rent, were realized, from year to year, with increasing difficulty, and that there were no means of arresting the progress of decay.*”¹¹⁸

One cannot be blind to the fact that the obtruding ryotwari also rolled out the red carpet for the sickening *sharat*.

The ryotwari system was the method through which feudalism was befriended. Not only were former landlords rallied but a whole generation of new moneylender-landlords rose from its greedy flanks.

Siddalinga Swamy explains of the burdens upon the peasantry due to the advance payment of money to the government before the grain was harvested. The peasants took the aid of sowcars and in a short time they owed large sums to these usurers. The peasants are reported to have “*flocked to the Huzoor*” to complain of this. But the irony is that in 1826, the Ji Huzoor who was perched on the Mysore throne himself owed up to 4 lakh KPs to these usurers! ¹¹⁹

Malathi K Moorthy talks of a development from the coast which was not very dissimilar. Basing on Stoke’s reports of 1800 she writes, referring in particular to the Gowda Saraswaths: “*The people who had entered the district as traders found it profitable and respectable to invest in land. They found that the possession of land would allow them to enjoy a certain proportion of the net produce after the payment of the fixed assessment and hence the possession of the land became one of their dearest objects. Even the public servants competed in the race for the acquisition of the land. In this process the simple and ignorant farmers were outrun, and the greater part of the land passed from the purely agricultural to the commercial and other classes.*” ¹²⁰

Ryotwari was vexatious. There was nothing benign about it. Similarly, there was nothing noble about Thomas Munro. He was the British peninsular czar who warred with the ryots of an enslaved India.

C. Partial Feudal Relapse

We have by now seen how colonialism fraternized with feudalism. The result of this was to consolidate and strengthen this reactionary force which was on the threshold of its demise. But that apart, the first half century of colonial-feudal alliance also set into motion a regressive historical movement. There was a marked tendency towards not just the reinvigoration of existing feudalism but also the rebuilding of feudalism. This revival was a knee-jerk reaction to colonialism by Karnataka’s social formation. This historic retracing emerged out of two factors. The first was the result of conscious intent and the second was the outcome of the objective results of the supplanting of a lecherous colonial system in our land. In the first case, puppet feudalism took advantage of colonialism’s reliance on it. As a consequence, this regressive movement traversed the first three decades after conquest. The second was the result of the uprooting of pre-colonial institutions by British parasitism and the generation of an unprecedented mass of unemployed. Their only source of existence was to undertake backward emigration to the villages and partake in agriculture, the overall objective result of which was the strengthening of feudalism in the economy. This motion spilled over even into the second half of the eighteenth century. Thus the colonial-feudal bonding not only obstructed the onward march of society, it also at the same time contributed to a temporary, backward and regressive trajectory.

For the first seven years after conquest the British purchased the service of Purnaiah, a Brahmana by caste and former minister in Tipu's court, on account of his detailed knowledge of the social system and particularly the revenue administration of Mysore. Purnaiah's, therefore, has been a classic case of running with the hare and hunting with the hound. It is also popular belief that Purnaiah had no small a role in encouraging the British when they stormed Srirangapatna. For his treacherous role Purnaiah was rewarded handsomely. His annual pay was fixed at 18,000 rupees and he was buttressed with one percent of the net revenue proceeds of the Kingdom which amounted to an annual average of Rs 62,000.¹²¹

Three years before his retirement in 1807 and before the total assumption of the Kingdom by Krishnaraja Wodeyar III, who was till then a minor, saw the showering of praise by the British not only for managing the affairs of the Kingdom in a manner befitting their interests but also due to his uncanny zeal in sucking off huge amounts from the people as their principal comprador-feudal revenue farmer in Mysore. While Purnaiah's wish that the office of the Dewan be made hereditary, was politely refused, this unpatronising negation was well compensated for by asking him to choose from any taluk in the Kingdom for bestowal as jagir to him and his successors.¹²² On his choice of Yelandur, Narasimha Murthy one of its benefactors lower down the Purnaiah lineage, writes: *"The taluk of Yelandur selected by Purnaiah for his Jagir is a small but rich tract, one of the most fertile and densely populated in Mysore... The hills have a large forest area abounding in teak, sandal, hone and other valuable trees, which are a source of wealth to the Jagir. The taluk has a large area of compact level ground traversed by the river Suvarnavati, a perennial river which is the sole source of irrigation. The fertility of the soil is conducive to the formation of gardens which yields betel-leaf, areca and coconut. Mulberry is extensively grown and silk is produced in large quantities."*¹²³ The annual revenue yield of the taluk was Rs 30,000. But the rich forest wealth as a source of plunder could well have surpassed the total remaining revenue income for its jagirdars.¹²⁴

Thus ran the Sanad issued by John Malcolm, the Resident, in December 1807 on behalf of the Raja: *"...with a view to the completion and fulfillment of these desires, it became necessary for us to appoint a Minister with plenary powers, to whose integrity and ability the administration of the State might be confided in the same way as we had ourselves in our August person attended to the affairs of the State. Since the uprightness, rectitude and honesty of the Noble Purniah had been observed, and his ability and sagacity proved and tested, therefore the office of the Minister, which is at all times a trusted and honourable post (and the distinction and honour of which was at this particular time redoubled...) was conferred on and conferred to the Nobleman aforesaid; and his uprightness and integrity and sincerity and fidelity in the performance of the duties of the office conferred upon him and his loyalty to the Government of the English Company were so conspicuous as to afford clear proof of (the validity) the reasons above stated (for his appointment).*

And since it is the intention of our Illustrious Mind that the remembrance of our worthy services and befitting actions performed by the Nobleman should not be totally erased and obliterated from the pages of the Record of Time, and more over that the children of this Nobleman shall while contemplating the result of his diligent services, dwell in comfortable and easy circumstances exalted and distinguished for ever and ever; therefore with the advice and the approval of the Government of the Honourable English Company, we have conferred the taluk of Yelandur on the aforesaid Nobleman as an hereditary Freehold (Inam) as long as the course of the Sun and Moon, which are the illumination of the world (shall continue)...

*The Jagir of Yelandur was given by the Raja of Mysore to Purniah, Dewan, at the recommendation of the English Government, and in record of the entire acquiescence and approbation of that State of the reward which has been granted for the faithful and great services of Purniah, I have (as British Resident of the Court of Mysore) affixed my name and seal to this deed.”*¹²⁵

At the time of his retirement, Purnaiah owed KPs 14,15,729 (1 KP = 2.86 rupees) to the state. When he was asked to settle his dues, he paid KPs 6,69,750 in cash and returned jewelry worth KPs 1,14,000 KPs that was stolen from the public treasury by his relatives. However, he refused to pay the remaining KPs 6,31,978 KPs.¹²⁶ In other words, Purnaiah had embezzled so much that he could cough up—in one go—nearly as much money as the Mysore Kingdom paid as its annual tribute to the rapacious British!

The following breakdown of his expenditures, due to the government, establishes how the Brahmanas were pampered from the spoils that Purnaiah had pillaged.¹²⁷

Table 3: Purnaiah’s Pillage of the Public Fund

Unauthorised charities to Brahmin	3,89,600 KPs
Cost of house built for Purnaiah and his family	78,398 KPs
His household expenses during 1799-1811	1,09,676 KPs
Pay of family servants	54,304 KPs
Total	6,31,978 KPs

It would be of interest to note that Purnaiah’s crumbling mansion at Yelandur has kept yielding hidden pots of gold at regular intervals, one as recently as in the 1980s.

So much for the “*uprightness*” of this “*exalted*” and “*distinguished nobleman*”

In a letter written more than a month before the sanad was issued, Malcolm had in a letter to the British Government in Madras, said: “*Though the amount of the reward is perhaps considerable considering the extraordinary claims of Purniah, it is not large and it appears to*

*me to be fully sufficient. It will support his family as long as the Mysore Government shall exist, on a footing with its first officers and the grounds on which it is granted will confer an honourable respectability upon its possessors till the most distant period.”*¹²⁸

In a bid to prevent the reversion of any further such grants, the Governor General was quick to issue the following policy orientation: *“We deem it highly advisable on this occasion to fix the principle on which any further grants of a similar nature should be made. If the Mysore Government were quite at liberty on this point, a weak, bigoted, designing Prince or minister might assign grants to an extent which might seriously affect the stability of that State to perform its engagement to the British Government, while on the other hand it would seem foreign to a wise and liberal policy to deprive it altogether of the exercise of a power so essential to a Government as that of efficiently rewarding great and distinguished services. In our judgment the best rule that could be prescribed would be that a certain value should be made from the territories of Mysore either for life of an individual or as a hereditary tenure without the acquiescence of the Company’s Government.”*¹²⁹

Malcolm, in his letter to Madras, which we have cited from, on his part, explained his understanding of the question thus: *“This Jagir cannot be drawn into precedent as it would not appear possible that any person in the service of this State can ever have an opportunity of establishing a claim to a reward in any degree similar to that to which Purniah is entitled.”*¹³⁰

Hence it was clear that the British wanted to make this the first and last instance, as it was not keen on witnessing the slide-back of the Kingdom into the premodern feudal era, which flourished before the seventeenth century. But Krishnaraja was enthused by this grant in a manner characteristic of the emperors of yore and looked forward to repeating it. Issuing such grants befitted the mark of a Raja. This phenomenon however was not jus a post-1810 feature, but in fact had its beginning in 1799 itself.

Shama Rao tells us that one of the foremost measures of Purnaiah which had *“a conciliating effect on the minds of the people in general”* was *“to restore all the old inam lands and cash allowances to temples, mutts and dargas and the other places of religious worship or institutions of charity which had been appropriated in the later days of Tipu.”*¹³¹ He further says *“There arose in all parts of the country pategars and pseudo-pategars who laid claim to almost every part of the State. Even patels and police officers and ryots who could pay bribes by various devices procured entries of lands in the village accounts though not belonging to them...”*¹³²

On Purnaiah’s measure of *“conciliating”* the landlords and the Vaidika Brahmanas in particular, Wilks writes: *“Tipu Sultan in 1778...resumed these [following] lands and directed the amount to be added to the Jummabundy...it was among the Dewan’s first acts to restore these allowances...”*¹³³

This included village temples, land allotted to astrologers, to mathas and their gurus, land allotted to landlords for tank construction, gardens to jagirdars and gardens for the use of the Raja. The total came to a reversion valued at Rs 2,68,467. ¹³⁴

Lewis Rice provides us interesting information based on a periodisation of the issue of imams and quit rent or jodi to the various inamdars. ¹³⁵

Table 4: Issue of Inams and Jodi in the Mysore Kingdom from 1800-1831

Period of Inams	Whole Villages		Minor Inams	
	Valuation	Jodi or Light Assessment Rs	Valuation	Jodi or Light Assessment Rs
The termination of Purniya's administration in 1810	2,86,038	1,32,150	4,99,528	1,48,134
Granted during the Maharaja's administration 1811-1831	3,19,169	62,435	35,025	--
Granted by the Chief Commissioner of Mysore	--	--	18,500	8,000
Sthal or unauthorized Inams	--	--	63,616	17,946
Total Rs	6,05,205	1,94,585	6,16,669	1,74,080

From Rice's table it is evident that of a total grant of imams valued at Rs 15,90,539; the first decade showed the most intense reversion to feudalism, which continued with a lesser degree of intensity till 1831 under the puppet, after which it petered out. By 1831 there was a clear move on part of the British government, and as we have seen, it was reflected in the correspondence between the Resident and the Governor, of the need to prevent Krishnaraja "from making extensive sunnads of land" ¹³⁶

Venkatasubba Sastri who typically epitomizes the thinking of the comprador bourgeoisie which wore the mask of nationalism provides more insight into the nature and impact of these inam grants. He says: *“The imams lay for most part in the fertile villages of the Kaveri and the Hemavati and in the garden lands of Bangalore. As no register had been kept of them, much more land had been occupied as Inam than had been granted. The practical supremacy of the fujdars and the amildars within their districts had contributed to a still further extension of the number of imams, depriving the State of a larger revenue than what appeared at first sight.*

*Agriculture suffered under these anarchical conditions. The cultivator was thereby free to raise the best crop and enjoy the reward of his sacrifices. But in fact this crop was all but the property of himself. Besides the Government demand, the money lender who had helped him to pay off the assessment of the past year and to buy seed and cattle took possession of much of the crop, and then renewed his advance on a fresh bond.”*¹³⁷

Shyam Bhat in his study of Tuluva economy came to the following similar conclusion about developments in the 1830s. He writes: *“The revenue policies of the Government created a class of new landlords who replaced the old feudal chiefs. They also created a group of merchant money-lenders and collaborators in its set up”*¹³⁸ who, it is said, began to exercise their ownership of peasant lands in due course.

Writing about coastal trade, Malathi K Moorthy concluded: *“The region’s economic history also reveals that the claims of prosperity ushered in by the British regime were rather dubious, at least in the first two or three decades of the nineteenth century.”*¹³⁹

Neil Charlesworth in his book *Peasants and Imperial Rule*, explains of an identical process of alienation of government revenues due to feudal reversion in the Bombay Karnataka region. He writes: *“There can be no doubt that touring the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries there was a massive extent of alienated land and revenue throughout the Bombay Presidency. Besides the whole villages and groups of villages held within jagirs and inams, a significant proportion of the land of the typical village was alienated. An official estimate in 1850 placed total alienations in Bombay at about a third of the Presidency’s gross revenue involving lands assessable at over Rs 82 lakhs. Certainly we can safely guess that in mid-century the government’s revenue writ did not run in between 20% and 30% of the Presidency’s cultivated land. Of the major regions, the highest proportion was probably in Gujarat, but the Deccan and Southern Mahratha country also boasted substantial alienations. Sykes discovered in 1828 that in the four districts of Poona, Ahmednagar, Khandesh and Dharwar, nearly a fifth of the towns and villages were completely alienated and in addition, almost ‘every village has rent-free lands held by the Patel, Kulkarni and Mahars’.*¹⁴⁰ *Within the region, alienations grew thicker the further one traveled from Poona. In the South, in Dharwar and Belgaum districts Maratha military chiefs and their descendants held sprawling estates, comprising large groups of villages, in jagir or surinjam. Here even in the Government villages inamdars controlled*

*much of the land; in 1848 there were an estimated 60,000 'minor alienations' even [if] these [are] Khalsat [full revenue paying] villages not averaging one half of potential revenue proceeds. Badami taluk in Belgaum is a fairly typical case study within the South. Here Wingate found in 1852, 76 completely alienated villages and 151 where government possessed rights. In the latter, 42% of the arable land was inam or subject merely to a quit rent."*¹⁴¹

Charlesworth then adds: *"Although many alienations stemmed originally from government grant, the authorities clearly possessed substantial interest in limiting them..."*¹⁴²

From all the above information, it is clear that the first few decades of colonial rule not just strengthened but also created innumerable new points for the emergence of the feudal sore across the length and breadth of Karnataka. The substantiation we have forwarded above to elucidate this point refers to the phenomenon of the state providing grants of land and villages to the assortment of feudal interests—religious, landed, princely and military. Information regarding the more covert phenomenon of backward migration and the falling back on agriculture which by all means implied a voluminous body of population ranging from anywhere above 3 lakhs or about 12% of the Mysore population alone, prevents us from going into the details of this rather pathetic and exasperating process. However, from Buchanan's mention of it, which we have already cited, it is evident that this push backwards was a result of the break up of trade and industry, in addition to the demobilization of the army. While the rise of capitalism is marked by the differentiation of handicrafts from agriculture, expressed in the rapid growth of towns and cities; the phenomenon during the entire first half of the eighteenth century is characterized by precisely a reverse process—of the reunification of handicrafts with agriculture and the depopulation of the urban centers and emigration to villages. This historic reverse would only have led to the general collapse of the rate of labour due to its glut and placed labour at the mercy of the landlord class. Buchanan tells us already of how landlords utilized this to their advantage by sharply depressing wages. DK Choksey writing of the decline in the Bombay Karnataka region as a result of the competition with British goods, which ruined the artisans said that they *"were soon to leave the looms for the plough, and, like the soldier, burden the land. The land was to supply the raw material for the textile giants of Manchester; the millions of India were to be bound to the soil to cultivate for the greed of their new masters that wealth which was to make England the richest country in the world and the Indian rayat so poverty stricken as to make it difficult to find a parallel in the world."*¹⁴³

VI Pavlov in *Historical Premises for India's Transition to Capitalism* called it the process of *"progressive deindustrialization"*. He has said: *"The drift of labour power in Maharashtra from the handicrafts to agriculture was also admitted by the British administrators. One of them wrote in 1830 that many artisans in search of the means of subsistence were forced to turn to agriculture, although the burden on the land was, in his opinion already too great."*¹⁴⁴

There can be no doubt that this backward movement must have compelled the emigrants to enter into a variety of forms of bondage. This must have been a phenomenal and devastating systemic volteface striking at the bosom of the Dalit bonded labourers who were just about then overcoming centuries of enshacklement. Thus this was a cold reactionary wave of feudalisation which swept through Karnataka—more in the province of Old Mysore which had known a greater degree of commodity production—with landlord competing with landlord to ‘cash’ in on the swarms of adrift and immiserised men, women and children washed upon feudal shores by a cruel Atlantic tide.

D. Ruin of Tanks, Caving-in of Canals

We have seen how important a role the system of tank and river irrigation played in the advancement of agriculture, on the process of commercialization and the dependence of towns and cities on it in the late eighteenth century in *Volume I of Making History*. But colonialism, keen on pillage and not regeneration, soon destabilized and ruined the entire system, causing a drastic shortfall in the total irrigated area.

Schwartz, the clergyman wrote of the contrast between Haidar’s Mysore and British ruled Madras: “*After each rain, the magistrates [Amildars] of the place must send people to replace any earth that may have been washed away. Hyder’s economical rule is to repair all damages without losing an instant whereby all is kept in good condition and with little expense while the Europeans in the Carnatic leave everything to go to ruins.*”¹⁴⁵

Further, Shama Rao informs us that after a study of irrigation in Old Mysore, Wilks came to the conclusion that the extent of irrigation in 1804 was far lesser than what it was in 1789.¹⁴⁶

On the one hand while the total area under irrigation fell drastically within five years of colonial rule, showing how the puppets in power regarded the issue; on the other hand, except for an attempt to dig a canal from Sagarkatte to Mysore to supply drinking water to the palace and its hangers-on, (which reportedly failed), they undertook no serious effort at creating new irrigation potential.

The neglect was explicit and absolute. The following figures reveal the apathy and the pathetic ruination of a truly ingenious system of irrigation which had been gradually developing from the eleventh-twelfth centuries onward. Wilks’ *Report on the Interior Administration* provides us with the following data:¹⁴⁷

Table 5: Amount Spent on the Management and Repair of Tanks (in Rupees)

Year	Amount
1800	3,98,754
1801	4,62,975

1802	2,90,520
1803	2,24,468
1804	1,96,800

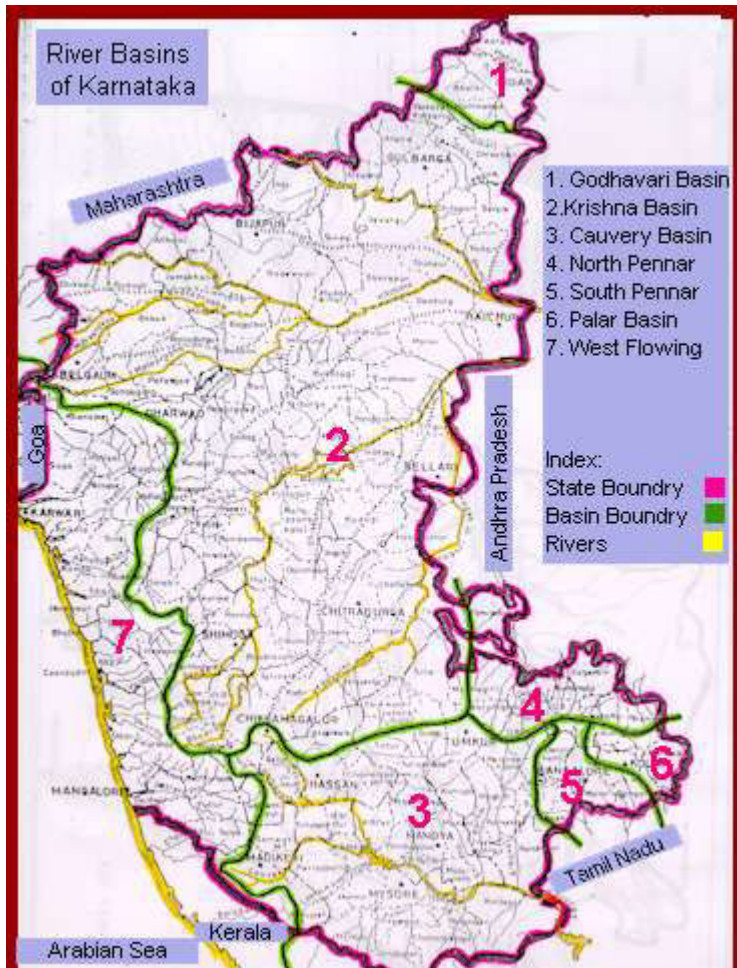
He then offers us the following excuse by which the colonialist seeks to brush off, for all posterity, the responsibility of the puppet government in providing for its upkeep. *“The unequal face of the country in Mysoor causes a large portion of earth to accompany the water which fills the reservoirs, and the deposition of this earth renders the clearing of these reservoirs a more frequent and laborious operation than in flat countries.*

*Occasional accidents enhance this expense: in the present year [1804] the uncommon quantity of rain which fell in the early part of October, burst the banks of near 400 reservoirs, the repair of which will require a sum of not less than 1 lakh pagodas [3 lakh rupees] over and above the ordinary expenditure.”*¹⁴⁸

In fact it was this very “unequal face” of Mysore country, its undulating landscape, which made the construction of tanks a possibility in the first place.

MH Gopal further updates Wilks’ figures and tells us that by 1829, the amount spent in this regard ebbed to Rs 1,28,115.¹⁴⁹ Despite all these self-evident facts, Siddalinga Swamy says: *“Funds were made available by the Dewan for construction and repair of tanks, water courses, roads, bridges and other works which contributed to the improvement and development of agriculture.”*¹⁵⁰ Such biased writing can only serve the purpose of refurbishing the tainted face of British colonialism and its local reactionaries.

Far away, in London, Karl Marx saw the woeful phenomenon and responded with the following observation in his article *The British Rule in India*—which he wrote in 1853—about the ruination of what he calls the “third department of Asian Governments” which was that of “public works”. *“Climate and territorial conditions, especially the vast tracts of deserts, extending from the Sahara, through Arabia, Persia, India and Tartary, to the most elevated Asiatic highlands constituted artificial irrigation by canals and water-works the basis of Oriental agriculture. As in Egypt and India, inundations were used for fertilizing the soil in Mesopotamia, Persia, etc; advantage is taken of a high level for feeding irrigative canals. This artificial fertilization of the soil dependent on a Central Government, and immediately decaying with the neglect of irrigation and drainage, explains the otherwise strange fact that we now find whole territories barren and desert that were once brilliantly cultivated, as Palmyra, Petra, the ruins of Yemen, and large provinces of Egypt, Persia and Hindostan; it also explains how a single war of devastation has been able to depopulate a country for centuries and to strip it of all its civilization.*



12. Map of river basins of Karnataka

*Now the British in East India...have neglected entirely that of public works. Hence the deterioration of an agriculture which is not capable of being conducted on the British principle of *laissez-faire* and *laissez-aller*....”*¹⁵¹

E. Takavi Ceases

With the general augmentation of usury, Takavi fell to disuse. Shyam Bhat tells us, how, after 1810, there is no mention made of Takavi loans in government records in Tuluva country.¹⁵²

However, the practice lingered on in Old Mysore for some more years, only to fold up as the oppressed peasants' wishful dream whenever accosted by the ravenous moneylender.

Table 6: Takavi Loans to Ryots ¹⁵³

Year	Advances(Rupees)	Recoveries(Rupees)
1836-37	46,500	30,000
1839-40	76,000	1,16,000
1844-45	58,500	59,500
1849-50	37,000	35,000
1854-55	29,600	25,700
1859-60	3,500	8,000
1860-61	4,250	4,000

From the above table it is clear that while the total amount of money loaned to the peasantry from 1836-37 to 1860-61 was Rs 8,76,100, the total recoveries during the same period was Rs 9,49,250. Thus the colonial government of the Commissioners sucked out from the peasants more than what they had ploughed in and became as parasitic as any usurious moneylender. The implication of this collapse of the Takavi system only reflected the decline of the instruments of production in the countryside.

F. Havoc Visits Commercial Agriculture

The feudalisation of agriculture, and the ruin of irrigation apart; the general collapse of urban production and the rural migration of urban people shattered commercial agriculture. In all the important areas, whether it be cotton, paddy, sugarcane, oil seeds or areca the devastation caused by all these factors was very deep and made its sustenance impossible. This transition of cropping pattern from commercial crops to cereals recreated the dreary hand-to-mouth, inward-looking, cloistered feudal village.

Due to these factors, in a few years after British conquest and the acquisition of the throne by a reactionary puppet, agriculture was deeply paralysed.

Sumit Guha in his *The Agrarian Economy of the Bombay Deccan, 1818-1941*, explains the stagnation in agriculture in the Bombay Karnataka region. He says that the data “testifies to the general stagnation of agriculture, especially prior to 1840. The figures were taken from various settlement reports and cover most tracts of the Deccan. The fertile and secure talukas of Dharwad show no better record than the famine prone talukas of Sholapur.... This was not due to any shortage of cultivable land. The settlement reports all describe extensive stretches of cultivable land as lying waste”.¹⁵⁵

3. DISLOCATION OF INDUSTRY

Free trade between India and England always left the balance of trade in India's favour. European industrial goods had few takers in India. PJ Thomas says that in the mid-seventeenth century: *"With a view to preserving the treasure of the country and encouraging industry at home, it was provided that the Company should export English commodities to the East. Accordingly varying quantities of woollen cloth, iron, lead, quicksilver, cutlery and swordblades were sent to the Indian factories. There was, however, very little effective demand for these goods in India. The Company's iron and tin were too costly for the Indian consumer, and the other goods were wanted only in very small quantities. The Company was particularly interested in opening a market in India for English woollens, but its efforts were attended with little success. The great majority of people in India wore only cotton clothing. They might want a blanket or two, but equally suitable and cheaper goods were made in India.*

*Repeated orders were sent by the Company's directors to India urging the need for increased sale of woollens, and the factors in their turn worked hard to push on the business. But all these efforts were of little avail".*¹⁵⁶

In his Minute *On Opening the Trade with India to the outposts of Great Britain* in February 1818, Thomas Munro was only still echoing what PJ Thomas had explained of a situation almost two centuries before. He noted: *"No nation will take from another what it can furnish cheaper and better itself. In India, almost every article which the inhabitants require is made cheaper and better than in Europe. Among these are all cotton and silk manufactures, leather, paper domestic utensils of brass and iron, and implements of agriculture. Their coarse woollens, though bad, will always keep their ground, from their superior cheapness: their finer camblets are warmer and more lasting than ours....*

Their simple mode of living, dictated by caste and climate renders all our furniture and ornaments for the decoration of the house and the table utterly unserviceable to the Hindus....

*If we reason from the past to the future, we can have no well founded expectation of any considerable extension of our exports. If it were as early as some suppose, to introduce the case of foreign articles, it would have been done long ago".*¹⁵⁷

The above two quotations make it extremely clear that the development of the machine leading to mass production, thereby reducing unit cost of production was in the beginning of the nineteenth century disproportionately priced when compared to the putting-out or manufactory of Karnataka. Further, transshipment costs hiked the costs of machine made goods from England. It would need many more years before prices could equalise and thus make 'free' competition possible for the British capitalist.

Yet we learn from figures provided by Marx that: *“From 1818 to 1836 the export of twist from Great Britain to India rose in the proportion of 1 to 5,200. In 1824 the export of British muslins to India hardly amounted to 1,000,000 yards, while in 1837 it surpassed 64,000,000 yards. But at the same time the population of Dacca decreased from 1,50,000 inhabitants to 20,000.”*¹⁵⁸

How then is one to explain this achievement?

In the answer to this question one discovers at the same time the quintessence of colonialism and the part played by India in the legend of British industrial success.

It is obvious, as we shall see shortly, that the source of this splendid achievement lay not in the just pursuit of *laissez-faire* but was rather the outcome of, on the one hand, the extensive use of force and violence in the task of colonization and then the most brazen use of the colonial state to pass horrendous restrictions which broke open the handlooms and ripped apart the manufactories. Thus the victory of British industry lay not in its capitalist character alone—mass production being the overwhelming economic precondition; but also the employment of political means such as the unrestrained worship of violence to subjugate our nations and the application of unbridled terror and tariffs to suffocate our industry. The victory of British manufacture was therefore achieved only by the destruction of Karnataka’s and India’s industry. It was only after the piling up of a vast rubbish heap of our instruments of industrial production and the blazing of this funeral pyre of historic progress that British exports found their much needed foothold in Karnataka. It was only at a later stage in history that the cause had exchanged its place for the effect, bringing about the all-round destruction of artisan production. As Marx said *“It was the British intruder who broke up the Indian handloom and destroyed the spinning-wheel. England began with driving the Indian cottons from the European market; it then introduced twist into Hindostan and in the end inundated the very mother country of cotton with cottons”*.¹⁵⁹

We have already seen how the colonial state blocked out the entry of Bangalore’s traditional merchants to the Cantonment. This only meant that the manufactures of one part of Bangalore city could not find a market in another part, becoming thereby an impenetrable arena of British industry.

Pani, Anand and Vyasulu tell us that while a new market was forcibly opened for British industry, how, at the same time, it meant its forfeiture for our artisans. *“The factories that were established by Tipu Sultan in Musquat, Ormy, etc, were closed in 1801, and the Mysoreans repatriated to their respective towns. This resulted in a cancellation of the export market for silk cloth, sandalwood, etc. much of which was Bangalore’s contribution. The resulting slump in the market catering to the elite consumers of cloth had in turn repercussions on the producers catering to that market. And the producers functioning within the first system of textile*

*production in Bangalore were worst hit. It becomes increasingly clear that the British were not willing to replace these lucrative markets”.*¹⁶⁰

The liquidation of the army and the depopulation of Srirangapatna, both major markets for the flourishing textile industry of Bangalore struck like a thunderbolt. Perhaps, nowhere was the economic impact of the fall of the patriotic government of Tipu Sultan so vehemently and instantaneously felt as in the sphere of textiles, the lifeblood of Karnataka’s growing industry.

Merely a few months after the fall of Tipu, Buchanan describes the suddenness and degree of impact. About Sarjapura, one of Bangalore’s emerging satellite textile towns, he says: *“The cloths were formerly made of a very fine quality but at present the only demand is for coarse goods”.*¹⁶¹ Then, about Bangalore he says: *“The weavers of Bangalore seem to be a very ingenious class of men, and, with encouragement, to be capable of making very rich, fine elegant cloths of any kind that may be in demand but have been chiefly accustomed to work goods for the use of the court at Seringapatam, they must now labour under great disadvantages; for it never can be expected, that the court of Mysore should equal that of Seringapatam nor will the English officers ever demand the native goods as the Mussulman Sirdars did. The manufactures of this place can never therefore be expected to equal what they were in Hyder’s reign, unless some foreign market can be found for the goods”.*¹⁶²

Then, like the demon recommending to the devil to escort the innocent to hell for justice, Buchanan goes on: *“Purnea, very desirous of the reestablishment of this city, has forwarded by me the musters of cotton and silk cloth that accompany this account, with a request that they may be presented in his name to the Marquis Wellesley: and I beg leave to recommend, that the attention of the board of trade may be directed to them, with a view of forming some commercial arrangements that may assist in restoring a country which has suffered so much.”*¹⁶³

Pani et al say: *“... the resultant glut in the textile market, that the merchants were less willing to shoulder the risk of commissioning goods, except on very secure investments. This restraint on the part of merchant capital affected the affluent textile producing goods...there arose an increasing reliance on the money lenders”.*¹⁶⁴

The same authors elaborate on the process of further decline: *“The British policy of opening up the economy helped trade...remain[ed] under direct British patronage. Merchant capital could not grow beyond certain limits. And even this limited merchant capital could not be diverted into production since the local textile industry was no longer a viable proposition. Bangalore’s textile production which had already been hit...by earlier British policies was disabled further. Bangalore’s silk had not only been hit...but was now pushed into a further crisis by the importation of foreign silk, ‘Nool Rashom’, which was more popular due to its cheapness and brilliance. A further blow that fell on the already ailing silk industry was that import duty on foreign silk entering into Mysore was not changed, but any silk produce being*

exported to England was charged duty according to Colonial Tariff. Even when the sayer duty on silk was later discontinued, the silk industry could not recover.

*The local cotton industry too was hit by the policy of abolishing sayer on imported European cotton thread entering the Bangalore Division and by the introduction of Bourbon cotton which was comparatively new to the weavers who only rarely adopted this new technique".*¹⁶⁵

The result of this devastation was reflected in the census of looms taken in 1849-50 in Bangalore which counted the existence of only 2,921 looms for the whole city, several of which were only partly used; showing a decline by nearly half since 1800.¹⁶⁶

Thurston captured the pathos which pervaded the textile industry, although of a slightly later period, when he narrated the apparent mirth of the Devangas of Bellary: *"Those whom I studied in Bellary district...laughingly said that they are professional weavers, yet they find it cheapest to wear cloths of European manufacture".*¹⁶⁷

VI Pavlov, describing the situation in the southern part of Bombay Presidency says: *"The general economic decline was compounded by the fact that Maharashtra had been ruined by long wars. The existing system of socio-economic relations proved to be undermined by the abolition of the Mahratha state system and the introduction of a new land tax settlement by the British. Urban handicrafts engaged in catering for the court and the army were deprived of their customers while the strengthening of market relations with the villages was hampered by competition from imported British goods, which were exempted from import duties and began their penetration of the country's markets. The manufacture of coarse cloths was better preserved in the villages, where the weavers used British yarn....*

The artisans who continued in the occupation of their ancestors were doomed to semi-starvation. British administrators estimated that in the early 1830s a weaver's family had to spend 84 rupees a year only on cereals, usually the cheapest sort of millet, while having an annual income of 108 rupees.

Considering that human beings must have a number of other foodstuffs, clothing, fuel, utensils, etc, one can easily imagine the plight of the artisans. One should also bear in mind that this was the very early period of foreign rule, and that the condition of the artisans subsequently even became worse. Thus a British official who surveyed weaving in Belgaum district in 1849 admitted that weavers' incomes had been reduced to one third as compared to their incomes 20 years earlier. (Indeed in 1849 weavers in Belgaum district earned only 2 annas a day or about 36 rupees a year...)

The condition of Bhagalpore shows the destructive effect of the conquest for the economy...

Bhagalcot...according to T. Marshall, owed its prosperity in part to the court of the native rulers and the general condition of the people, who were better off and thus created a demand for handicrafts articles. Among the items formerly sold in the bazaar are costly cloths, of which 50,000 rupees worth were sold only on the occasion of one religious festival. People of high rank stopped all purchases, says Marshall, approximately by 1822; even those who could still afford expensive items, made do with cheap ones, because there was no occasion or incentive for persons deprived of their rank and position to dress up. A still greater number of people were altogether deprived of all means of sustenance. British taxes dealt another blow to Bhagalcot's handicrafts and trade. Under the Indian rulers, 18 manufacturing houses paid 400 rupees in tax, the biggest of them paying 88 rupees. Under the British the taxes on these establishments came, respectively to 1,900 and 3,000 rupees. As a result, trade and handicrafts in the town declined".

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We have seen how the sugar industry was an up and coming sector capable of manifesting an advanced form of production organisation for the time. British legislation crushed the sugar industry like cane. Shama Rao says: *"In 1843...to the great detriment of the revenues of Mysore the prohibition of Acts XV of 1839 and XI of 1842 of the importation of foreign sugars into the Madras territories was enforced against Mysore on the ground that it was foreign territory, it was in fact ruled that no sugar which was the growth of Mysore could be admitted into the adjacent district of Canara even for local consumption".*¹⁶⁹ This measure was imposed in order to ensure a market for British owned production of sugar in these territories.

Similarly we find the tobacco trade going up in smoke *"In like manner, on the same ground, the importation of tobacco from Mysore into Malabar was prohibited altogether and coffee was subjected to a high defferential duty and this notwithstanding the fact that Mysore admitted all British produce free and levied on the produce of the Company's districts no higher duty than upon its own".*¹⁷⁰

Well that was about the economic quintessence of colonialism and the political purpose behind placing a puppet like KR Wodeyar on the throne of Mysore.

Further, KNV Shastri tells us that in 1805 the Raja abolished all duties on salt so as to facilitate the import of British salt into Mysore, which was to set in motion the ruination of the several thousand inland salt pans of the Mysore Kingdom. This, he says, was in contrast to Tipu's policy which *"forbade the import of sea salt into Mysore with the object of encouraging home production".*¹⁷¹

The plight of the iron and steel industry would have been no different from that of textiles. Benjamin Heyne already reported of the silent forges of Malavalli. Iron being a produce which was purchased in large quantities by the former patriotic Mysore government and being one of the major causes for its growth surely must have been confounded.

Thus in all the leading sectors, textiles, oil, iron, sugar and wool the crises was writ large and the devastation was as severe as it was complete.

4. DESTRUCTION OF THE HOME MARKET: GRIEF OF AN AWAKENING KANNADA NATION

Just as significant the emergence of a home market was for Karnataka, both, in terms of the fight against feudalism and in terms of the rise of the Kannada nation and its realisation of a nation state; the smashing of the home market had an equally significant impact in pre-empting the realisation of these two tendencies of early capitalism.¹⁷² The destruction of the home market was one of the aims of British conquest of Karnataka, without which the expansion of the colonial market across Karnataka's frontiers could not have been achieved.

The home market of Karnataka was squeezed out of existence by first targeting its political spearhead which was, as we have seen in *Volume I of Making History*, the rule of Haidar and Tipu. The political fragmentation of Karnataka was a major non-economic disincentive for the progress of the home market, with commodity circulation having to fight through a series of intermittent levies and tolls before reaching the consumer; ultimately loosing in the price war and vanquished by British goods.

The obvious economic targets of British colonialism were the national merchants, the rising class of owners of capitalist manufacture and the multitude of commodity producing artisans. The eclipse of the first two of these classes was as sudden as the collapse of the political order which sustained them. The Banajiga Shettis vanished into ignominy within years of British conquest and all traces of capitalist cooperation and manufacture disappeared from the economy capable of making even meticulous historians such as Irfan Habib doubt their past. VI Pavlov correctly summed up this eclipse. He said: "*If one takes into account the ruin or decline of industries with workshops based on a detailed division of labour.... one will realise that there is no ground for any notions of some kind of petty capitalist or manufactory sector existing in India in that period*".¹⁷³

Thus the advanced forms of production organisation which served as indicators of the coming transition to capitalism were snuffed out. With this, not only were the political forces which centralised and united the home market overthrown, but so also were the social classes which constituted the firm economic basis for such unification. With the destruction of these classes, the economic objective of British colonialism was by and large won. With the overthrow of the powerful merchant class and the subsequent destruction of capitalist manufacture which was passing into their hands, the economy was left without that vital class which wove the home market together. The offensive which was later launched against the artisans was no more a challenge but rather a widespread rearguard mopping-up operation so as to clear up the rubble of a paralysed Karnataka home market making way for the entry of British capitalist ware. Martin Carnoy explains what happened in the following way: "*This is the basic*

*imperialist relationship that developed. From an exporting country India became an importing one; from a budding manufacturing potential she retreated into a pure agricultural nation, cities depopulated peasants falling back on small plots with low productivity barely above starvation. The surplus from all this was utilised to build “liberal” Britain. By 1850 the Indian market took up one-fourth of Britain’s entire foreign cotton trade: the cotton industry employed one-eighth of England’s population and contributed one-twelfth of the national revenue”.*¹⁷⁴

The immediate consequence of the elimination of the national merchant and the rising capitalist of manufacture was the snapping of the link which drew together Karnataka’s regionally differentiated market on the basis of a division of labour in agriculture and industry into an integral whole. The north was cut off from the south and the west from the east. The severely fractured home market only echoed the political fragmentation of Karnataka. The vital links between the twistors of cotton and its weavers; between the pressers of oil and the dyers; and between the shepherds and blanket makers were irreconcilably snapped. The territorial division of labour, and with it, the growing specialisation of production was disrupted; making what was once the source of economic advancement the bane of all the commodity producers. The web of commodity production soon became a fatal net from the entanglement of which the peasant and artisan producers tried their best to extricate themselves and, having done so, settled down in villages resigned to feudal autarchic production.

Another major distortion caused by colonial intervention on the home market was the break-up of the agriculture-industry-agriculture continuum. It was this organic continuity which caused the development in one sphere to spill into the other. This tendency in agriculture also led to a gradual dialectic of awakening the peasantry and contributed to the rise of the Kannada nation. By attacking trade and manufacture, colonialism broke up this relationship between agriculture and industry. On the one hand, it pushed both the interdependent parts: agriculture and industry into a spasmodic and staggering crisis. On the other hand, and only because of such a break-up, could colonialism supplant Karnataka’s market with its trade and seek the subservience of our agriculture to the interests of its manufacture.

Yet another impact on the home market was the decay of urban centres. The impact was so lethal that it would need another century at least before the process of urbanisation seemed to reappear in Karnataka. But this time under conditions of imperialist oppression and distorted capitalist development. While we do not have figures to describe the process of urban collapse, there need be little doubt that the urban centres were quickly liquidated.

Buchanan’s account of Srirangapatna, made just a few months after the fall of Tipu Sultan, makes it no more than a motley place with a population less than 30,000 from a former population of 1.5 lakhs. Srirangapatna, being the political and administrative centre, suffered not only on this count, but also because of the dissolution of the army which was the principal population it housed. Further, all references to the rising urban mart of Shehar Ganjam are lost

to us in the literature that followed just years after conquest. In 1852, the total population of Srirangapatna had reduced to a mere 12,744.¹⁷⁵

Describing Macaulay's visit to Srirangapatna in 1834, Shama Rao writes: "*Here [at Srirangapatna] he was met by an officer of the Residency who had been deputed to show him all that was to be seen. He found the town depopulated, but the fortress remained entire. On entering the town he found everything silent and desolate. The palace of Tippu had fallen into utter ruin. The courts were found completely overrun with weeds and flowers...*"¹⁷⁶

The *Gazetteer of South India*, published in 1855, speaks of the total ruination of Nagar. It says that it was "*Once a large populous town situated in the Western Ghats of Mysore...it was a place of great strength and very populous, as its ruins indicate... It is now a mere village*".¹⁷⁷

The picture was indeed soul stirring and pathetic.

Figures about Bangalore during this period often tend to be misleading. While the 1849-50 census conducted in 1849-50 describes the reduction of the city at least by a half, the presentation of statistics related to Bangalore which combines the population of the British garrison with that of the former pete often props up its urban appearance and misrepresents its decay.

The only place which grew in population during this period was Mysore. As the seat of the puppet king and his cronies, Mysore grew like a festering sore.

5. CULTURE: ASCENDING DECADENCE

Following colonial conquest and the restoration of feudal rule, the cultural superstructure was consciously altered to suit the requirements of the new ruling trinity. Discussing the question of ideology, Mashood Danmole draws attention to the conscious class intent which motivates it. He says: "*Ideology is such a composite and intimate part of the lifestyle of most communities that it is seldom recognised as an institution in itself, and one having a deliberate objective*".¹⁷⁸ It is important to note that the first attempt at restructuring culture, following colonial conquest was to reintroduce and strengthen all those decadent feudal values and ideological institutions which were being replaced by the advance of Karnataka's society. Just as there was a feudal relapse in the economy so also in politics and culture, the rule of decadent feudalism was reconsolidated. Thus it was by propping up feudal culture that colonialism sought to enslave the masses and bring Karnataka under the domination of colonial capital. It was only several decades later that colonialism took upon itself the task of spreading *its* culture among the masses.

A. Cultural Traits of the Puppet

The court in Mysore was an important bastion of reactionary culture. Not having to bother about the administration of his Kingdom since the Resident and the Dewan took care of that, and least perturbed by external conquest since he was in the safe hands of British “*adoption*”, KR Wodeyar was no more than cultivated as a cultural symbol. And, true to such colonial expectation, it was his participation in and encouragement for all kinds of decadent cultural mores that tended to fascinate him and engaged the best part of his time. Further, it also became his biggest and perhaps sole expenditure; the burden of which he transferred on state revenues and his largesse contributed in no small measure in creating the economic crisis which shook Karnataka in 1831. Asked to explain his extravagance, which had all but consumed the revenue surplus of two crore rupees, the puppet King wrote to William Bentick in 1831 substantiating his indulgence and revealing the decadent priorities that had kept him busy since the time he clambered up the throne. He wrote: “*In consequence of my early period of life the preparation of those things required for the splendour of the state which are indispensable to the princes of these countries had not yet become necessary and from its being accordingly deffered the above mentioned money [of two crore rupees] was accumulated. Afterwards when under the shadow of your favour I attained the age of manhood, those things became necessary and occassion also arose for other expenses...*”

Briefly, they were construction of palace, cutcherries, repairs to temples and pagodas [mathas], charity for public benefit, nuptial ceremonies of sons and daughters, marrying the children of friends and relatives, supporting relations and allotting them allowances”.¹⁷⁹

The Srivaishnava Brahmins always enjoyed a cosy relationship with the Mysore Wodeyars. During Tipu Sultan’s time there were attempts by the Sri Vaishnavite advisers to incite a rebellion which was promptly crushed. Soon after that, the 25th Jeer of the Srivaishnavite Parakala Matham, Ramanuja, left his peetha at Srirangapatna and settled down at Tirupathi, which was under the British. The website on Ramanuja states: “*At the insistence of the Maharani of Mysore and several well-wishers, HH left for Tirupati for preserving the divine heritage of the Matham*”.^{179A} The flight of Ramanuja coincided with the flight of the dowager queen Lakshmi Ammani herself, who was given refuge in Tiruchi by the British. On the fall of Tipu Sultan, the rani requested Ramanuja to return to Srirangapatna. The jeer condescended and he went on to oblige the rani by conducting the *pattabhishekam* of KR Wodeyar III. Later among the many gifts that were showered by the Wodeyar family upon the Parkala Matha was, the “*beautiful temple for Sri Sveta-Varaaha Swamy and presented to HH for the activities of the Matham*.”^{179B}

Lakshminarasimhaiya and similar such Brahmana cronies of the Mysore court who made the best of the puppet’s patronage have this to say in a book about the Wodeyar: “*It is in the tradition of Sessa’s family [Kashi Sessa Shastri, a Brahmana hanger-on of the palace] that the*

Maharaja himself selected the bridegrooms and brides on the basis of horoscopes, fixed the date and time of every marriage, attended each at the auspicious moment, gave dakshinas and presents to the Brahmans from his own purse and hands, presented the new-weds with attractive gifts, etc. But above all, the Maharaja ordered, as a standing rule, that on the last day of marriage the young couples in Sessa's family be seated on a howda in public procession with Palace honours, which rule continued till his death..."¹⁸⁰

The same authors tell us how he patronised Sanskrit which was buried for good during the reign of Haidar and Tipu and revelled in classical dance and music. KR Wodeyar also made it a point to advertise with fanfare his pilgrimages which took him to all the renowned Brahmanical abodes across the country and presented him as a humble and pious King doing the bidding of god. Various charitable purposes consumed more than 4 lakh rupees annually.¹⁸¹ The Raja frittered away most of the money which he exacted from the toiling masses of Mysore in crass feudal waste and epitomised through this culture, the rot that had set in as a result of British rule. He appeared benevolent and imposing as he perched on a Himalayan rubbish heap of decadence.

B. Religious Revival

As we have already seen earlier in this *Volume*, one of the immediate tasks which the puppet government of Mysore resorted to on being installed by British colonialism was to not only reinstate all former inams and charities that were denied to the mathas and Brahmanas by Tipu but also issued new grants to these institutions of reaction. This phenomenon was not an exception to Mysore, owing as some would say, to the installation of a Brahamana Dewan, but was rather the general policy which British colonialism adopted in the sub-continent. Writing to Elphinstone in 1818 during his campaign for Northern Karnataka, Thomas Munro spelt out what ought to be British policy towards feudal cultural institutions: "*All charities and religious expenses, whatever their amount may be, ought, I think, to be continued to the present; considerable portions of them are probably consecrated by time and could not be touched without a violation of private rights and of religious prejudices; a large portion of them too, will, no doubt, be found to have arisen from unauthorised grants and other frauds...*"

We should, I think, let everything connected with the religious establishments, charities, Jageerdars, Desmooks, and other public servants, remain as at present..."¹⁸²

Buchanan's investigation is replete with instances where the mathas of both the Brahmanas and Lingayats were restored by Purnaiah. The Hujiny Swamy, whose predecessors were the Lingayat gurus of the Ikkeri palegaras, is a case in point.¹⁸³ Similarly fresh concessions were granted to the Jangamas of Jamgallu in Kolar.¹⁸⁴ It was during the reign of Purnaiah that the Srivaishnava Brahmanas of Kumarapura were granted 22,300 acres of prime forest as Sarvamanya in the BR Hills, thereby encroaching on the life of Soliga adivasis.¹⁸⁵ Similarly, the Sringeri Matha with nearly 150 villages was regularised as a jagir. Thus the parasites of the mathas prevailed over the peasantry.

In the four-decade long battle which Mysore waged against the British conquerors, it would be certain that the Vaidika Brahmanas and the mathadipathis whose privileges were shorn by Tipu must have taken, like the palegaras, a stand which befriended and encouraged the colonial invaders. Ramakrishna and Gayathri tell us of the assistance which the Heggade dharmadhikaris of Dharmasthala gave to the British in the seizure of the fortress of Ujjre from Tipu Sultan.¹⁸⁶ Thus the Hindu feudal clergy not only blessed the conquest of Karnataka by the British, but also supplied men and materials for the effort and became an important part of the reactionary alliance led by colonialism even before Mysore was completely overrun by the foreign invaders.

Siddalinga Swamy tells us that in the Nagar Foujdari alone there were 120 agraharas of the Brahmanas.¹⁸⁷

Sebastian Joseph's monograph *State and the Ritual in the Nineteenth Century Mysore* concludes by saying: "*The colonial state, both direct and indirect, colluded with the ritual realm in its attempt to keep the society backward, ignorant and superstitious*".¹⁸⁸ Providing details of the process, Sebastian says: "*While Purnaiah assumed charge as Regent under the British, he made large scale commutations of land for money payment. He further restored many of the **Devasthanam** endowments and **Bhattamanya** or Agrahara lands. A few years of Purnaiah's rule witnessed a miraculous spurt in the number of temples, **Chattrams**, **Musafir Khanas** and other institutions.*

*The following statement shows the number of religious institutions that existed in 1801 and 1804 respectively:*¹⁸⁸

Table 7: Number of Religious Institutions in 1801 and 1804 in the Mysore Kingdom

	Number in 1801	Number in 1804
1. MusafirKhanas	8	173
2. Mantaps	19	5,549
3. Chattrams	45	4,479
4. Temples	1065	26,947
5. Temples of which supported by the government	--	14,218
6. By private contributions	--	12,729
7. Jangam Matts	72	1,402
8. Jain Pagodas	4	153
9. Tekkias or resting places of Muhamadan Fakirs	237	319
10. Masjids		
13	517	

Further, M.H.Gopal provides us with data which describes the unhindered patronage of the feudal clergy.¹⁸⁹

Table 8: Expenditures of the Mysore Kingdom towards Charitable Institutions

	Expenditure		
	Charitable Institutions.	Religious Institutions.	Total
	KP	KP	KP
1799-1800	--	37,192	37,192
1800-1801	--	50,443	50,443
1810-1811	18,825	65,487	84,314

Charitable endowments which stood at 18,825 KP in 1810-1811 increased to 3,11,414 KP or Rs 9,34,242 by 1829-30.¹⁹⁰ Thus the single biggest expenditure of the semifeudal and colonial puppet regime was towards religion. In fact the expenditure which KR Wodeyar incurred towards charities alone in 1829-30, which was only a part of the entire expenditure towards religion, was more than one-third of what the state coughed up as tribute to the British. The advent of colonialism was thus a divine blessing to these religious reactionaries. They soaked themselves in state patronage, and churned out an ideology which had not been as pervasive and powerful for more than a century.

This spasm of religious revival had an important role to play in the social life of the period. It buttressed the shock of colonial conquest. It served as a dramatic antidote to the equally dramatic effects of colonial rule and feudal relapse. But for the fatalism of the karma siddhantha which was doled out by the religious institutions with lavish munificence, it is doubtful if colonialism could have kept Karnataka, as easily as it did for itself.

Those rabid Hindu communalists who accuse Tipu Sultan of being a Muslim bigot maintain a conspiratorial silence about the religious revivalist indulgence of the Wodeyar. They are pen pushers of reaction who do not have the gumption to hold their phony tirade against Tipu in check.

C. Caste Oppression Intensifies

The reclaiming of inams by the mathas from tenants who were Shudras by and large, and the migration of soldiers and artisans to villages inaugurated a resurgent phase of caste oppression. Caste was an institution which the feudal ruling classes wielded to extract maximum possible surplus from labour.

The puppet administration took special pains to see that all the former progressive anti-caste currents in the social, cultural and religious spheres were summarily put down.

Thurston narrates the myths at Melkote which led to the granting of special rights to Holeyas by the Srivaishnavite Brahmanas, by dint of the former's struggle, which included the right to temple entry and won them the appellation of *Tirukulam* or "sacred caste" by Ramanujacharya. He also says, that the practice underwent a drastic reversal on the installation of puppet rule over Mysore. *"In 1799, however, when the Dewan Purnaiya visited the holy place the right of the outcastes to enter the temple was stopped at the dhvajasthambam, the consecrated monolithic column, from which point alone can they now obtain a view of the God"*.

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Sebastian Joseph tells us of another similar instance that involved Purnaiah. Its significance lies in the fact that it reversed, through statute, a historical process which formed the best part of the antifeudal cultural essence of the Bhakti tradition of Karnataka. *"In the circular issued by Diwan Purnaiah in 1807-08 he strongly reprimands the Devangas for violating their respective caste rules and emulating the Brahmanical practices. It was reported to Purnaiah that a self proclaimed Guru of the Devangas attempted to introduce sacred thread for the Devangas and to provide religious instruction to them. Purnaiah writes: 'One unknown sudra, claiming to be the so-called guru of the Devangas has been creating unwanted troubles by insisting that the Devangas should wear sacred thread and receive religious training. Where is the sacred thread for the sudras? What do they mean by religious teaching? This is not the work that sudras can do. He should be punished. Those Devangas are supposed to be the disciples of Sringeri Mutt. Therefore, the people from the Mutt should warn the Devangas against such acts and take the necessary steps. If the newly arrived sudra is still adamant to create the troubles, then he should be sent out of the country'. Thus it is clear that the views of the Sringeri Mutt on the fundamental question of caste and varna were fully accepted as a part of the state policy under the regime of Diwan Purnaiah. Any attempt from within the backward castes to rise above the ritual and social ladder was considered to be a threat to the existing social order inviting the instant intervention of the state in support of the forces of status quo"*.¹⁹²

The Devangas, as we know from *Volume I*, were a major caste to challenge Brahmana supremacy. But for their active role, the Bhakti movement and the urban resistance to Brahmanical imposition would not have been possible. Thus it is clear that Purnaiah was targeting a vital caste, a caste; which often functioned as the fulcrum in heaving off the burden of the caste system, so that all forms of Shudra assertion could in turn be contained.

Another dimension of caste oppression and Brahmanical consolidation was to be seen in the altered composition of the bureaucracy.

In 1800 itself Buchanan was compelled to observe that after the fall of Tipu, the Brahmanas were *"in the almost exclusive possession of public offices"*.¹⁹³

The purge and reconstitution of the bureaucracy was universal and Muslim and Shudra elements were as good as driven out of what became the bureaucratic preserve of the Brahmanas. The following two quotations from Shama Rao may indicate how quickly Brahmana monopoly over the administration was achieved, making this caste, for more than a century to come, the exclusive fertile ground for the procreation of the comprador bureaucracy of Karnataka. Shama Rao tells us of Rama Rao the third of Mysore's Dewans:

*“Rama Rao originally came from the place called Badami in the Mahratta country and was accompanied by two of his relations Bhima Rao of Annigere and Krishna Rao of Hangal. He was appointed Faujdar of Nagar in 1799 by Purnaiya and held that office until 1805. By his influence the public situations next in importance to his own in the Foujdari; became mostly filled with his relations and the members of the Annigere and the Hangal families, and a powerful party entirely in his interest was thus formed in this part of the State which maintained itself in strength till the commencement of the insurrection in 1830. Rama Rao's successors in the office of Faujdar from 1805 to 1825 with only an interruption of a few months were persons nearly allied to him by blood or marriage, namely, Survotham Rao twice Foujdar whose son was married to Rama Rao's niece, Pompiah, Rama Rao's nephew, Balakrishna Rao his grand nephew and Krishna Rao another nephew”.*¹⁹⁴

The monopoly of certain Brahmana families over the bureaucracy was so strong that the case of Motikhane Narasinga Rao illustrates it: *“He had seven brothers in service and he himself was in secret charge of 10 taluks. Veene Venkatasubbaiah's relations became Amildars of 7 taluks in the Nagar division. Survotham Rao who was Faujdar of Nagar from 1816-26 employed many of his own relations in government service of that division during the long period of more than 10 years he held office as Foujdar”.*¹⁹⁵

It is therefore no exaggeration to view the rule of KR Wodeyar III as the hegemony of Brahmana power over the masses of Karnataka. Contrary to perceptions that have come up in the Non-Brahmin and Dalit movements, British colonialism did not upset Brahmana power either in Karnataka or in the rest of the country. In fact, as the case of Mysore very clearly illustrates, the contrary was true. Colonialism always stood by the Brahmana reactionaries. And not just that, the British were instrumental in reinstating Brahmana power which was visibly in decline during the reign of Haidar Ali, and even more so, under Tipu Sultan.

In *Volume I of Making History* we have seen how the Right and Left Hand caste fraternities emerged, and how, their onward development led to the undermining of the caste institution.¹⁹⁶ It is significant to observe that after the rendering of Karnataka into a colony, the institution was all but subverted; its members succumbing not only to colonial oppression but also to caste oppression of the Brahmanas. The destruction of the home market and the targetting of the local merchant castes which bled the Right Hand guild on the one hand, and the attack on the artisan castes and the rising Panchacharis of the Left Hand, on the other, destroyed the material basis for

economic advancement and thus silenced their voice of social assertion. Thus the literature of the pre-colonial period which was replete with the phenomenon of the Left and Right hand fraternities suddenly ceases to record any aspect of the phenomenon after British onset. However, Vijaya Ramaswamy illustrates how, in the case of the Black Town that had emerged to satisfy British mercantile needs around Fort St George, “*competition from British textiles threatened their very existence. They [the Chettis who belonged to the Right Hand fraternity] lined up with the weavers [who belonged to the Left Hand group]*” to resist the colonialist.¹⁹⁷

Yet, their inability to successfully resist British penetration soon altered the premise of their historical conflict and as Vijaya Ramaswamy narrates: “*In the seventeenth century the lines of the weavers...evolved around the European factories and Black Towns.*¹⁹⁸ *The squabbles of the left hand and right hand castes invariably involved the crucial question of who was to secure the Company’s contract for cloth. The weavers gradually began losing their bargaining power and independence as they worked on a system of advances provided by the Company’s merchant middlemen...*”¹⁹⁹

Thus, in the case of Tamil Nadu, it was colonialism operating through comprador middlemen that led to the collapse of the Left Hand and Right Hand caste fraternities.

When compared to Tamil Nadu, the subversion of these guilds in Karnataka was less gradual. In the century since the emergence of the Black Towns around Fort St George, British colonialism had risen as the unchallenged power over the globe. It fattened from plunder, becoming aggressive and impatient with the years. During the period of mercantilism, British colonial policy depended on the finished ware the colonies produced. The Right Hand-Left Hand phenomenon in fact had emerged out of the production and trade in artisanal goods. But the growth of the industrial bourgeoisie in Britain implied changed circumstances and dictated that it sought raw materials from and markets for its manufactured goods in the colonies instead of the finished products of India. Contrasting the two periods of mercantile and industrial capital, Marx said: “*Till 1813 India had been chiefly an exporting country, while it now became an importing one.*”²⁰⁰

As a result of a combination of all these factors, the material life upon which the Right Hand and Left Hand castes had relied, was subverted. The centuries old Right and Left Hand social phenomenon which had left behind ample historic record, died with little time to put out its anguish and elicit an audience to listen to its pathetic moans.

Elaborating on the Left Hand and Right Hand phenomenon nearly eight decades after British conquest of Mysore, Lewis Rice recorded that “*the opposition between the two divisions is still kept up, but apparently not with the same bitterness as in former times*”.²⁰¹ Thus the institution lingered beyond its purpose and that too among the outcaste Holeyas and Madigas, for whom the appellation was a token of status and little else. Yet, for the upper castes this came

handy to maintain them at loggerheads. A cultural relic had been retained to keep the Dalits in a sustained state of rivalry.

D. Tonic for Social Travails

While caste and religion were composite parts of a feudal-colonial ideology to keep the masses on the leash, the reactionary state broke the former ban that existed on liquor during the rule of Haidar and Tipu, and permitted its wholesale production and consumption no sooner than it came to power. While this measure served as a source of income not only to the state but was also good business for the toddy contractors, these alone were not cause enough for lifting the ban. More important was to spawn a culture, which could generate a hallucination and put the indignant masses breaking free from the harness of religious benediction and caste subordination into stupor. Toddy soothed the nerves of the simmering masses and preserved the rule of the feudal lords and that of the British Empire. Thus, although the Brahmanas and Lingayats were teetotalers, the new state which increasingly came under their sway saw the lifting of the ban so that their class rule could thrive.

The result of this cultural drag was that in Bangalore city alone “*gross revenue from toddy and spirituous liquor had risen from 487 Canteraya Pagodas in 1799-1800 to 808 Canteraya Pagodas in 1800-1801.*”²⁰²

Figures presented by Wilks of the Mysore administration during the first four years of colonial rule shows us that while the total revenue from toddy and spirituous liquors was 28,845 KPs in 1799-1800; it shot up to 44,290 KPs in less than 3 yrs, making it, after tobacco, the item which netted the maximum percentage increase in receipts for the state.²⁰³

E. Patriarchal Persecution

Tipu’s *Regulations* had banned prostitution, concubinage and the sale of women. He is also reported to have taken serious offence to the practice of offering human sacrifice to the Chamundi temple which claimed the lives of virgins.²⁰⁴

However, with the onset of colonialism and its puppet in power these abhorrent practices were recommenced, making it a period of the most brazen persecution of women. On the collusion of the puppet state in the flagrant oppression of women, Sebastian Joseph tells us: “*The position of women has been one of the most discussed, yet, the least advanced themes of historical research in Karnataka. Every scholar who dealt with the issue even indirectly, tried to project a glorified image of the women of pre-modern Karnataka. Scholar after scholar, tried to continue the same argument in the most stereotyped manner, often giving room to a critical reader to suspect that there has been something fundamentally wrong with their thought process itself. Very often the position of women in the society is measured by pointing out a few isolated*

cases of queens or dancers. But one should remember that one Akkadevi or Lakshmidēvi cannot be cited as examples to suggest a dominant social trend or to substantiate a historical fact.

When we examine the documents pertaining to the position of women in the Sringeri Dharmasamsthana, we get a rude shock. The Kaditas of Sringeri Mutt speak of the existence of orphan women, poor and helpless women, 'fallen' and destitute women. Notwithstanding the fact that it was an anachronism to have a considerable percentage of women of the above categories within the Dharmasamsthana, where the spiritual needs of the subjects were instantly taken care of, one is still intrigued to know that the Mutt had the right to take over them and sell them like any other commodity. It has been found in the Kaditas that the women of the above categories used to either present themselves before the Chavady (the village court) or were brought before the village courts by others. They were taken care of by the Matha.

The normal practice was to employ such women in the Matha to do menial service. Sometimes these women used to be sold out to some persons who also probably employed them to work in their gardens. In the year 1818, we have a documentary evidence to show that one Venkatachala Sastri, Parpatyagara of the Sringeri Mutt, openly sold a widow of Manju, for 3 varahas to a person named Ahobala Somayaji.

Krishnaraja Wodeyar, the Raja of Mysore became a party to the procurement and sale of women in the year 1826-27. The Raja issued a royal order to all the Amils and Killedars asking them to hand over to the Matha all fallen women of the families of the disciples! As a concession, the Matha was willing to issue receipts to those Amils and Killedars who handed over 'fallen women' to them. Well, the records do not specify the process of identifying the 'fallen' women. It was claimed that the Matha was interested in reclaiming and reforming these women! However, one doubt remains in the minds of the faithless. Why should only the women be treated as fallen? How about the fallen men? Should they not also have been reformed by the Matha? Could they also have been sold to the merchants at fixed rates in the name of reclaiming and reforming them?

Under the British Commissioners, in 1834, Timmappa Raja, the Foujdar of Nagar issued an order to the Amils and Killedars under his control to keep a watch on the 'fallen women'. However, here, the documents give surprisingly interesting allusion to the crimes that made a woman labeled as fallen. Many a time it was not the loss of chastity or the immoral practices that transformed a woman ultimately into a saleable commodity in the divine hands of the Matha. On the other hand, if a Killedar or an Amildar satisfied himself that a woman had violated or disregarded her respective caste rules, then she could be taken forcibly to the Mutt for the reforming procedure, which included her initial employment for 'menial' works with the Mutt and her eventual sale to the wealthy 'reformists' like Ahobala Somayaji. All these were done in accordance with the orders passed by Commissioner Briggs in 1834.

The only condition that the British authorities stipulated was that a prior permission should be taken by the Mutt as well as by the government officials before they sold or purchased a woman.

It has been found in some records that the Sringeri Mutt was not the only mutt interested in the acquisition of fallen women for reforming purpose. Women belonging to Panchagrama, who lost their caste, used to be forcibly taken away by people belonging to another Mutt. And hence, Sringeri Mutt had to make forcible claims on these women, before the Amils and other authorities. Thus within the Dharmasamsthana, innocent girls who were the victims of man-made rules of caste, could be converted into saleable commodities. They could be procured by the Mutt as an inalienable right. And others could buy and sell them as pack animals.

In his report on the Nagar division of Mysore H Stokes writes:

'The practice of selling widows convicted of a breach of chastity has been abolished by Government, but is still some times being enforced by the mutts. The woman is occasionally redeemed by her relations, on payment of the usual price that is from 3 to 12 pagodas. Women eating the sacrificial rice (Beli Anna) at certain Pagodas lose caste and become forfeited to the Pagoda. They must then either reside and perform menial offices in it, or if they subsist elsewhere must pay to it a small sum annually. They generally became prostitutes'."²⁰⁵

Female slavery was rife during KR Wodeyar's rule, and it was not a phenomenon confined to the mathas alone. Rice narrates to us about the preponderance of this awful culture.

"The condition and treatment of females was most deplorable during all former administrations, especially under Hindu rulers; and if to live in constant dread of degradation, and exposure to the greatest indignities, at the accusation of the meanest and most disputable informers, be considered a state of slavery—actual sale in the market, which frequently followed, was but the climax of a long course of previous suffering and servitude. It will hardly be credited that in the large towns there were regular farmers of an item of Government revenue, called Samayachar, part of the profits of which arose either from the sale of females accused of incontinency, or fines imposed on them for the same reason. Thus the government was placed in the position of deriving direct support from the crimes of its subjects, or what is still worse, of sharing with common informers the fruits of the nefarious extortion.

The rules of this system varied according to the caste of the accused. Among Brahmanas and Komtis, females were not sold but expelled from their caste, and branded on the arm as prostitutes; they then paid to the Ijardar an annual sum as long as they lived, and when they died, all their property became his: Females of other Hindu castes were sold without any compunction by the ijardar, unless some ijardar stepped forward to satisfy his demand. The wives and families of thieves were also commonly taken up and imprisoned with their husbands, notwithstanding that there was no pretence for including them in the charge. These sales were

*not, as might be supposed, conducted by stealth, nor confined to places remote from general observation; for in the large town of Bangalore itself, under the very eyes of the European inhabitants, a large building was appropriated to the accommodation and sale of these unfortunate women...”*²⁰⁶

Shama Rao tells us of instances of Sati in Mandya district during the rule of KR Wodeyar III, about which this King hardly thought fit even to react. Further Rice says: *“A peculiar custom prevalent among one branch of Morasu Vokkaligas by which the women suffer amputation of the ring and little fingers of the right hand. Every woman of the sect previous to piercing the ears of her eldest daughter, preparatory to her being betrothed in marriage, must necessarily undergo this mutilation, which is performed by the blacksmith of the village for a regulated fee for a surgical process sufficiently rude. The finger to be amputated is placed on a block, the blacksmith places a chisel over the articulation of the joint and chops it off at a single blow. If the girl to be betrothed is motherless, and the boy have not before been subjected to this operation, it is incumbent on her to perform the sacrifice”.*²⁰⁷ Instead of opposing these practices, the state either maintained collaborative silence or offered its open support, thus making life unbearable for women.

Patriarchy took many ugly forms under feudalism. Though feudal patriarchy operated with all force during the rule of Haidar Ali and Tipu Sultan, one already notices, attempts at putting to rest a few of its inhuman manifestations. Sacrifice of virgins was banned, prostitution was proscribed and bare breasted women of the Wynad and Malabar were asked to cover themselves. But colonial domination reversed these trends and provided for the unbridled sexual oppression of women by Brahmana religious institutions and reactionary feudal interests. Hence it would not be wrong to say that one of the impacts of colonial conquest over Karnataka was the increase in patriarchal oppression of women.

6. SOCIAL BREAKDOWN AND CRISIS OF SEMIFEUDAL-COLONIAL RULE

The new alliance that ruled over Karnataka quickly impoverished the people and devastated the land. Within a brief period of its rule it found itself perched over a badly mangled social order and was trying to save its skin from a deep and pervasive crisis, the likes of which Karnataka had not frequently seen in its centuries long history. As the people of Karnataka braced up to enter the fourth decade of colonial enslavement, their trauma broke loose and assumed a defiant political dimension driving the enemy from pillar to post and making the first half of the decade of the 1830s Karnataka's glorious 1857.

As we have already seen, the crisis of feudal-colonial rule became evident just days after conquest, with the dissolution of the Mysore army. Then in fits and starts the social formation began to react to colonial pillage and within a decade the gashes ran precariously deep. By the

1820s the crisis assumed pervasive proportions and began to snowball into a political conflagration, with brilliant sparks being regularly discharged during the entire 1820s, pinpointing to the general flare-up that was to sally forth by the turn of the decade.

While the crisis that colonialism introduced to Karnataka in the early nineteenth century continues to swamp us to this very day, this first crisis that plagued the State, was, despite its overbearing similarities, quite distinct from all future crises that imperialism was to precipitate. The specific feature was that this crisis stemmed from the fact that it was created by the opening of a long innings by colonialism in Karnataka at a time when industrial capital was yet to get the better of merchant capital in the conquering nation, Britain. This brought to focus the question of forms of pillage and thus the specific causes of crisis, the two altering with subsequent changes taking place in the development of capital or, in other words, with changes in the mode of social existence of the exploiters.

One devastating and highly parasitic form of colonial plunder which bogged Karnataka in thralldom was the perfection of the system of revenue farming which remained the principal mode of colonial aggrandisement during the first several decades after conquest.

A. Revenue Farming and its Oppressive *Sharat*

Apart from spices from the coast and the Malnad and cotton from the northern districts, the British took very little from agriculture during the first five decades of its rule over the State. Yet within years of its suzerainty it routed agriculture not only in these tracts but across every inch of our land. The sweep of the colonial sceptre over agriculture, causing its widespread and inescapable ruin, was achieved by its lecherous apparatus of revenue administration which literally drained away the energies of the peasantry. Surplus was so ungraciously sucked out that agriculture was left with little to reinvest. Surplus agriculture was reduced to subsistence agriculture and from there it fell to utter ruin. The first bitter encounter with colonialism for the peasant masses was on account of Britain's parasitic revenue farming. And, the drain was so gratifying for the Company that what it procured in the form of land tax far surpassed all other sources of revenue and remained, for the introductory decades, the principal source of British wealth from the colony. Let us then look at the proportions of this brigandage, its ramifying forms and the cruelty that accompanied this sombre exaction in order to realise its role in fomenting the first pervasive crisis of feudal-colonial rule.

As we have already noted, one of the first conditions that the British exerted on the kings and pategaras who surrendered to it by signing the Subsidiary Treaty was the annual contribution, *in monthly installments*, of a tribute to the crown. In areas that came under its direct rule, it extracted this amount through its own revenue collection machinery by setting targets for its bureaucrats. Sebastian Joseph tells us of how heavy this levy was for Karnataka. "*A tribute of 24.5 lakh rupees was imposed on Mysore under Article ii of the Subsidiary Treaty of 1799...*"

At a later stage in 1881 this was increased by 10 1/2 lakh rupees and the enhanced payment of 35 lakhs was made regularly for a period of 32 years from 1896 to 1928. Although in 1928 it was again reduced to 24.5 lakhs as fixed in the Treaty, the absolute practice continued for more than 136 years... Mysore's tribute formed almost 50% of the total contributions of all the 198 tribute paying states to the imperial exchequer". ²⁰⁸ Mysore indeed was the goose laying the golden eggs.

The enormity of the tribute can be better appreciated when we turn to the revenue collections of the Kingdom. In 1809-10 the net revenue receipts were Rs 28,24,646, peaking at Rs 37,18,633 in 1811-12 and gradually falling to Rs 28,64,950 in 1825-26.²⁰⁹

Thus the net revenue was sometimes even less than what was expended as tribute to the British and what accrued in the form of commission in the hands of the puppet King and his Dewan.

However, in 1831-32, revenue collections rose to Rs 43,97,035 and nearly doubling, at Rs 80,08,339 for 1848-49. The net revenue collection till the turn of the third decade need not in any way be misconstrued as the result of a light assessment. There is enough evidence to point to the contrary. Wilks, who was one of those that never hesitated to make the best use of his three volumes on Mysore history to pour invective on Tipu's 'vexatious' revenue policy, himself commits figures that attest to British pillage in his *Report*.

In 1792, during the rule of Tipu Sultan, the districts of what were later to belong to Princely Mysore paid a gross revenue of 14,12,553 KPs. In 1802-03 this was almost doubled to 25,41,571 KPs.²¹⁰ And that too at a time when the economy was ruined and production had fallen drastically.

The peasantry was so minced up that by the time Purnaiah quit British service in 1811 the state's treasuries had accumulated a surplus of more than two crore rupees! Lewis Rice says of this: "*Purnaiya's system of government was no doubt absolute; and, as a financier, the accumulation of surplus revenue presented itself to him, as a prime end to be attained. It may be questioned, therefore, whether he did not to some extent enrich the treasury at the expense of the State, by narrowing the resources of the people; for by 1811 he had amassed in the public coffers upwards of two crores of rupees*". ²¹¹

MH Gopal states: "*Purnaiya's administration had been subjected to one grave criticism. As early as 1815 the Maharaja wrote: 'The late Divan, Purniya, whose talents lay only in the collection of revenues, directed his attention to the accumulation of money merely for the purpose of displaying his industry and zeal in this branch of the administration and in the course of 12 years he created a separate fund. But he was inattentive to the interests of the people and the inhabitants of the provinces were consequently reduced to great straits and difficulties'. This criticism was echoed by the committee which in 1832-33 enquired into the Mysore insurrection.*

'But notwithstanding this public tranquility and financial prosperity; runs the report of the committee, 'it does not appear that the wealth of the country has increased under Purnaiya. One witness (to the committee) whose testimony is of much weight, states that the circumstance of the ryots greatly deteriorated during this period. To quote his own strong words, 'the great body of the ryots were in easy circumstances in the beginning of it and half of them were reduced to poverty at its close'."²¹²

The very first indications of the fleecing was visible during Buchanan's sojourn who observed a marked change in the peasantry's perception of the puppet government only months after its installation, indicative of future consequences as the new ruling trinity entrenched itself. He recorded the opinion of the peasants of Bethamangala in Kolar and said "*The people here...complain that the Amildars of the Mysore government take more money from them, than they did in the reign of Tippoo...*"²¹³

While KR Wodeyar on the one hand and the British administration on the other were only trying to make Purnaiah, who was by then dead and gone, the villain of the piece, their silence and in fact British encouragement, often bordering on admiration for Purnaiah's maverick genius at extraction cannot hide their complicity.

Revenue farming originally concentrated on the peasantry. But in due course it spread its scope to other sections of the population too. The items on which people were taxed were of so mundane a nature that British rule outdid Chikkadevaraja Wodeyar's revenue perfidy of the late seventeenth century. According to Rice "*No less than 769 petty items of taxation*" were imposed during the first three decades. "*Among these were such whimsical taxes on marriage, on incontinency, on a child being born, on its being given a name and on its head being shaved. In one village the inhabitants had to pay a tax because their ancestors had failed to find the stray horse of a palegar and anyone passing a particular spot in Nagar without keeping his hands close to his side had to pay a tax. All these taxes were formally entered in the Government records as part of the resources of the state*".²¹⁴

While we have seen how one-sixth of the produce of the peasantry passed hands as the levy of the state during the period of Haidar and Tipu, MH Gopal estimates that in the period of puppet rule "*two-fifths of the gross produce formed the share of the state*".²¹⁵

Lushington, the Governor of Madras, in a minute of his, observed about Mysore that: "*The countries forming the separate government have yielded upon an average of 29 years double the sum in net collections at which they were valued in the Partition Treaty*".²¹⁶ If the total tax revenue for the Mysore government stood at Rs 42 lakhs in 1791 during the reign of Tipu Sultan; it more than doubled in 1809 to Rs 93 lakhs and in 1831, owing to the insurrection and the collapse of the government machinery in the Nagar Foujdari, it came down to 76 lakhs.²¹⁷

RD Choksey says that *“besides other cesses, especially in Southern Kanara, the government took 30 to 50 per cent of the gross produce”*.²¹⁸

Writing on the impact of colonialism on the Tulu area during this early phase of its rule, Shyam Bhat gives us a detailed picture. He says: *“A study of land revenue administration reveals that generally the government share was much higher than normal as recognized by the administrators themselves. Irfan Habib’s observation that maximisation of land revenue was one of the driving forces of the British Raj is amply demonstrated in South Kanara”*.²¹⁹

Then, giving us a rundown of revenue farming in the Karavali during the period, he goes on: *“The increase in the land revenue was more due to the enhancement of the share of the state than due to the increased cultivation of waste lands and the general prosperity of the region.*

If a particular ryot failed to pay the arrears for four or five years his property was auctioned by the government to realise the amount due from him. However, if the amount of arrears was negligible, the officials used to write off such dues. There was one important defect in this system of granting remissions to the ryots. As remissions were not generally allowed to the tenants it added to the receipts of the landlord. The government gave remissions to the landlords though they used to lease out lands for actual cultivation to their under tenants. So it brought no benefit to the actual farming cultivator unless he happened to unite in his own person the character of landlord also, and therefore was of no immediate use or advantage to the interests of agriculture...

The year 1809-10 was undoubtedly one of diminished crops and low price throughout the province of Kanara. It was such a depressed economic situation which made the ryots of South Kanara demand remissions in the revenue payable to the State. Their no tax campaign was a spontaneous expression of their sufferings, and dissatisfaction with the revenue policies and administration of Company Government. The result was a considerable fall in the collection of land revenue and other revenues collected by the state during these years... Records show that between 1820 and 1825 there was a gradual but definite increase in the collection of land revenue, but thereafter it went on falling upto 1830-31 when the land revenue collection touched its lowest point”.²²⁰

Then, quoting Harris, the District Collector, Shyam Bhat writes: *“It is now the third year of low price of its staples, and in this last of the three, that price had sunk extremely below the former rates as to have thrown many of the farmers into a state of ruin irretrievable; whilst in many more also amongst those above that class even their kists have not been sent in without a considerable sacrifice of lands or in mortgages’. In some instances lands put up for sale had not reached a price of half their moderate valuation or at a depreciation of 70%. Harris was of the opinion that the deplorable condition of the ryots of the district was not solely caused by*

overassessment. To him it was also due to the stagnation of trade in general, and to the role of the moneylenders in the society.

But the problems of overassessment and the absence of liberal remissions during such periods of economic crisis added to the already existing burden of the peasants. Poverty of the ryots forced them to approach the moneylenders. In order to meet the government demand, the ryots mortgaged their lands to the moneylenders. In South Kanara were two kinds of mortgages; land and its produce were separately mortgaged. If land was mortgaged it was known as bogiadhi or living mortgage and if produce was mortgaged it was called torradhoo or toradoovoo or dead mortgage.

The rate of interest for the loans offered by the moneylenders varied from 6% to 12% per annum depending upon the amount of the loan; the smaller the amount the interest was high, and the higher the amount the interest was low. In most cases the ryots failed to pay back the loans and ultimately they sold their lands to the moneylenders, in a pattern all too familiar in rural India. Another feature that developed during the 1820s was that of revenue arrears and the public auctioning of extracts by the government to realise such revenue dues...

Under these conditions of neglected amelioration the ryots found themselves caught in the sinister Shylockian web, and by late 1820s, the transfer of property by ancient Moolgars to the grabbing hands of the merchant moneylenders became a familiar occurrence both in the district and the province of Kanara...

On 1 February, 1831, Dickinson the Collector of Kanara, wrote to the Board. 'It is a truth with which my duty compels me to make the Government fully acquainted that the assessment of this District is in consequence of the market which for the last three or four years has existed, so very high that it is impossible the ryots should continue to pay it. The utmost distress prevails among them and I cannot hesitate to say that it is absolutely necessary a considerable amount of revenue should be permanently relinquished in order to save them from utter ruin... It is more painful to me to witness the present poverty and distress of the people which in some parts of Canara exist to an extent of which Gentlemen knowing only the ryots of the eastern coast can form no conception...'

After the Koot rebellion was quelled the Board followed the dual policy of granting annual remissions to the hard hit ryots, and or confiscating the property of such ryots who fell in arrears to the government for a long time of four to five years. This change in policy is clear from the administrative records of the 1830s which frequently allude to the sequestration of property. Public auctioning was usually resorted to by the government and in most cases the proprietorship passed into the hands of a moneyed class like a merchant-moneylender. Such forced transfer of property was particularly striking in the more impoverished taluks like Buntwal, Bekal and Mangalore...

The nexus between the Government officials and moneylenders is clear from the report of AF Huddleston the Sub-collector of Kanara who on 29 July 1826 reported to the Board:

'In Barkur taluk the system of forestalling has for some years been most complete. The agents of the coast merchants, furnished with a supply of cash, accompany the Shambogue, when he goes to collect the last kists. These parties fully understand each other and while the one sets forth to the distressed ryots the disagreeable consequence of non-payment the other shows how these may be avoided by the loan which he is ready to offer on the security of next year's crop. To make everything sure, the merchant becomes responsible for the payment of Jumabundy of the next year, and thus he obtains undisputed possession of the produce. When once fairly in the grasp of the money-lender the ryot finds it impossible to free himself—his difficulties increase, and in the end the merchant takes possession of the estate and makes him a tenant at will'."²²¹

Benjamin Heyne's *Report Relative to the Mysore Survey* written as early as in 1802 had a foreboding of feudal usury running amok. He wrote: "*The greatest bane however and ruin to cultivation on the Coast is the Mustacabole, or the advance of money to the Circar before the grain is in the ground and again at stated periods before it is cut. As no Zemindar, Renter or Cultivator have money to advance, they are obliged to have recourse to the Soukars or Money Lenders who on a man's known honesty, advance money at the very moderate rent of 2% per month and a present of 5% on the advance. For the second and third kist (as the crops are then well advanced) a present is not required, but when the fourth is to be paid the crops are to be mortgaged. Most lenders insist upon immediate sale and become themselves the purchasers—at the Bazar place which in common is 5% or 10% lower at that season than at any other*".²²²

Thus while colonial revenue farming enriched the Company on the one hand it tended to encourage the appropriation of peasant lands by rapacious moneylenders who quickly began to emerge as the landlords of Karavali, a new feudal section born out of colonial pillage. This money lending section whom Bhat and Huddleston refer to were none other than the 'merchants of the coast'—the comprador Gowda Saraswat Brahmanas that we have already referred to. From comprador merchants in the port towns initially, then as moneylenders who moved eastward into the villages, the Gowda Saraswats acquired landed property and transformed into the new layer of feudal overlords, bringing under their exploitative control a wide cross section of the people of Karavali. Thus, having commenced their eastward movement, some also journeyed up the Ghats and began to forage in the lush Malnad.

Elaborating on the colonial-comprador-feudal nexus, Shyam Bhat says: "*The origin of these moneylenders and their development as a distinct and influential group in society took place due to the peculiar colonial situation...*

The new landlords, moneylenders and administrative officials (who hailed from Brahmana, Sarswat and Bunt families) who had close link with the British bureaucracy, saw to it

that the British revenue and judicial administration favoured them in every possible way. The truncated political order which resulted from the pacification (1799-1800) provided wide scope for the landed Brahmins, Bants and merchants to establish themselves as a complex layer of adept and influential manipulators between the Company and the peasantry. In 1826 AF Huddleston, the Sub Collector of Kanara, reported about such fraudulent contrivances of the magne Shanbogues in South Kanara who exploited the ignorance of the peasants by substituting sale deeds for mortgage lands, obtained their signatures and cheated them. More disastrous than the manipulation made by these native revenue officials in the revenue accounts, was the unholy alliance between these officials and the local merchant-moneylenders...some of the men belonging to the merchant class were in the administration, and in all probability, they played the dual role of government officials and local moneylenders. It should be borne in mind that these merchant-money lenders were not necessarily revenue officials. Some of them like the Konkans of Buntwal were the flourishing merchants of the region". ²²³

Summing up the situation in Tulunadu, Shyam Bhat concluded that it was “*the clear interest of the colonial masters in fleecing the natives to the point of breakdown*”.²²⁴

The situation in Bellary which came under the direct rule of the Madras Presidency, like Dakshina Kannada, was in no way dissimilar. In his minute on the State of the Southern Ceded Districts in 1824, Munro, as the Governor of the Presidency, drew the contrast for a district, the revenue settlement of which he had himself undertaken as a lower official in the colonial hierarchy more than two decades before. “*In the Collectorate of Ballari...the condition of the people, instead of improving during the long period of peace, has considerably declined within the last 20 years. This is to be ascribed to several cause... [one] was the two leases of 3 and 10 years, which requiring the same amount to be paid in all years, did not make sufficient allowance for the inequality of the seasons, and whenever they were unfavourable, broke down many of the ryots...*” ²²⁵

In the very next month, alarmed by the deteriorating situation in Bellary, he observed in yet another minute entitled *On the Depressed Condition in the Bellari District* that: “*Among the poor ryots, from whom 1/5th of the land revenue was raised very few paid their full rent—most of them obtained a remission from 10% to 50 or 60%; but in so numerous a body, after every indulgence, many could not raise subsistence for themselves, far less pay rent. Many failed every year, and much land was in consequence thrown up... The proportion of poor ryots has certainly increased during the leases, and must have occasioned a greater abandonment and transfer of land than before*”. ²²⁶

Northern Karnataka which came under the colonial government of Bombay experienced an identical phenomenon. We have already seen that the Kittur Desais had agreed to shell out Rs 1,75,000 as annual tribute to the British in 1818. However, seen in the light of the fact that this was a doubling over what the satrap paid to the Peshwas and that the overall annual revenue of

Kittur was about Rs 3,50,000, it is clear that British claims from their puppets in Karnataka was always half the gross revenue; never anything less.²²⁷

Writing about the British Revenue administration of the time in Bombay Karnataka, Fukazawa says: “...in their first assessments of 1818 the British tended to adopt the highest rates of revenue fixed in the later Maratha period as their standard rate of assessment. Peasants had to mortgage their whole crop to the moneylender. There were frequent crop failures and when harvests were good, prices fell further. There was widespread official agreement that the Deccan suffered from some 20 years of over assessment, and people were impoverished, villages dilapidated and land went out of cultivation. Remissions of revenue had to be granted but one could not be sure that these concessions actually reached the peasants. This was the picture even in Dharwar whose suitability for cotton made the extension of cultivation particularly desirable. Peasants who would take up deserted lands were charged reduced rates of revenue for a period of years, but the land revenue was even lower in the neighbouring princely states. So the new measures did not greatly increase cultivation. Till the middle of the nineteenth century up to a third of the Government land in Dharwar remained waste, despite a fairly rapid increase in population”.²²⁸

Further, Dharma Kumar tells us of the abject state of the peasantry of the region: “The incidence of land revenue varied enormously from district to district, and indeed from village to village, since the revenue administration was still illorganised and often arbitrary. Besides the land revenue and the amount officially set aside for community purposes and village officials, there were the unrecorded deprecations of revenue officials. The cultivator was thus often left with pitifully little; the Board of Revenue itself admitted in 1818 that the cultivator often got only a fifth of the crop or less”.²²⁹

Writing on the same question and of the same region, Neil Charlesworth says: “A leading feature of the two or three decades that followed the overthrow of the Poona Peshwa in 1818 was widespread agricultural depression...

In the Bombay Presidency, though, these economic difficulties were undoubtedly exacerbated by the effects of the land revenue system, particularly the Pringle settlements of the late 1820s and 1830s. Pringle unrealistically attempted to base revenue charges on estimates of gross returns from cultivation. In addition, these and other early settlements erred in assuming that the formal demands of the later Peshwas and their revenue farmers, in fact hoped for objectives in most areas, represented reliable indicators for British revenue charges. The result was, often, intense and long-lasting over assessment. Bankapur taluk in Dharwar district in the south, for example, had, one official commented in 1846, ‘been suffering from over-assessment during the whole course of our administration’. Depression and over-assessment in turn inhibited cultivation. As we have noted, land in the Deccan seemed abundant relative to population levels, but now new large amounts of cultivable land lay waste because of low

demand and the revenue cost of bringing them under the plough. Cultivation in Bankapur, a potentially prosperous cotton growing tract, was in 1846 more limited than at any former period of our rule, instead of exhibiting the increase that might naturally have been looked for from 30 years of peace and security'. At the same time, early British revenue demands were often inequitable as well as harsh. In Bankapur one piece of garden land was rated at Rs.40 per acre and as a result, 'the holder is well-nigh ruined, but elsewhere in the taluk large landowners paid next to nothing, having clearly bribed classifying officers. Repeated examples in the diaries for the late 1830s of one leading settlement officer, Wingate, suggest that Bunkapur's experience was not untypical.

*These features may have had important social consequences. Over-assessment could have weakened or destroyed established landholding groups at the same time as ready availability of land for cultivation, with much potentially cultivable land waste, permitted the entry of new men. Alternatively and more subtly, many landowners may in fact, like the Bunkapur tax evaders, have turned the situation to their own advantage..."*²³⁰

However, the best admission of rack-rent by the state came from none other than Thackray, the Collector of the Southern Maratha region. He said with apparent frankness: *"A collector whose zeal is his chief recommendation makes a high settlement, and his Aumils, following his example, blindly and rigidly exact payment of the full amount. A bad season causes much distress; but the Aumil, fearful of the Collector's displeasure, and doubtful of the proper objects of remission squeezes all he can collect from the Ryots before he thinks of representing this poverty. The strength of our government enables him to enforce his demand..."*²³¹

Yet, unlike the repeated personalisation that Charlesworth resorts to, thereby lending a human face to colonial plunder, it was not merely a question that was resolved between the Amildar and the Collector. Rather, it was a question of predatory colonialism which allowed and encouraged these two agents of theirs to wreak havoc among the peasantry, unhindered.

Of all the methods, however, the most pernicious, which surpassed the grant of zamindaries in the task of revenue farming was the annual auction of taluks to Amildars by the puppet government of Mysore which came to be called the *sharat* system. The *sharat*, which was a lousy sore on the body politic, the eye of the colonial storm, was what gave the ultimate push to Karnataka tipping it into the morass of an irretrievable crisis.

The *sharat* system was introduced just about the time of Purnaiah's exit in 1811. Rice tells us: *"All remonstrances failed to check the Raja's downward course. High offices of State were sold to the highest bidder while the people were oppressed by the system of sharti, which had its origin under Purniya's regency. Sharti was a contract made by the Amildar that he would realise for the government a certain amount of revenue; that if his collections should fall short of that amount he would make good the deficiency, and that if they exceeded it the surplus should*

be paid to the government. The amount which the Amildar thus engaged to realise was generally an increase on what had been obtained the year preceding. In the Muchalika or agreement, the Amildar usually bound himself not to oppress the ryots, nor impose any new taxes, or compel the ryots to purchase the government share of garden but this provision was merely formal; for any violation of the contractors in any of these points when represented to the government was taken no notice of. The consequence was that the ryots became impoverished...the distress arising from this state of things...fell heavily upon the ryots, who groaned upon the oppression of every tyrannical Sharti Foujdar and Amildar.” ²³²

In a letter which he wrote to the Chief Secretary, Casamaijor explained another pernicious feature of the sharat system. *“A practice has also prevailed hitherto of taking security by the Sircar for the due performance of cultivation in case of the death or emigration of the ryots and the deficiency of revenue was either levied upon these ryots who voluntarily became securities for others or upon the village itself...”* ²³³

Explaining how the sharat system worked and of its ultimate consequences, MH Gopal wrote: *“In the Nagar Division the cultivator did not pay the revenue directly to the State. In some taluks (such as Shimoga, Tarikere, Holi Honnur, Ajjampura, Honnali, Chandgere, Shikaripur, Basawapatna, Kumsi, Lukkavali, Muntagatti and Anawatti) the rent was paid through the Patels of the villages who adjusted their accounts with the Amildars, in others (such as Nagar, Anantapur, Kavlidurg, Koppa, Sagara, Chandragutti and Soraba) the rent was paid through a class of people called guttagedars. In other parts of the country the practice of paying through the patels as well as of direct dealing between the ryot and the Amildar prevailed. The latter after arbitrarily fixing the assessment of a village according to his own idea of its ability to pay, compelled the patel or the contractor to collect the amount. In his turn the patel or contractor shifted the burden onto the ryots. Sometimes the patel and the amildar conspired together to squeeze the ryot. Where there was direct contact with the ryot, an arbitrary assessment was fixed directly on the holdings. Further, in waram lands while dividing the crops between the state and the cultivator, an unduly large share of grain appears to have been taken for the State. The amildars also forced the ryots to buy the government share of the grain at prices above the market rates. These grains, of course, did not go into the public treasury but into the amildar’s pocket.*

...if the cultivator did not pay, perhaps on account of his inability, his goods and cattle were seized and sold, and his wife and children confined. The result was that the ryot was ruined and cultivation decreased”. ²³⁴

The sharat system could emerge and prevail only because of certain specific historic conditions. The chief factor was colonialism. It was unbridled British colonial greed that constituted the source of the malignancy. The Raj installed a Raja who was nothing but a decrepit feudal commission agent elevated to the throne. The Raja had a commission agent in

the Dewan. And the Dewan had commission agents in the Foujdars. They in turn had the Amildars as their agents. And ultimately the Patel and Shanbhoga were the feudal agents who milked the artisans and peasants dry. The sharat system was a creation of the British. From bottom to top, this elaborate mechanism came alive on just one incentive: More the revenues, more the income. The East India Company ran the Mysore Kingdom like a brokerage firm. Marx said, ironically, that when the Raja was pensioned off in 1830 “*when half the raj was in a state of insurrection*”, with an “*annuity of Pounds 40,000 and one-fifth of the revenues of the country; the increase of the revenues had made this later ‘bit’ exceedingly valuable.*” Then he said in parenthesis: “*Thus in their pensioning off...the English burdened the poor Hindus in favour of the dispossessed princes and princelings.*”²³⁵

By 1830 the peasants of Nagar owed revenue dues worth 13 lakh rupees to the government.²³⁶ The peasants of Nagar sent a petition to the Resident the same year describing their plight: “*When Tipu Sultan was sovereign of the country, they all lived in peace and prosperity. But the oppressions and cruelties unceasingly practiced by the officers of the Raja’s Government were such that they had become unable to endure them any longer. The exactions of the officers had been so excessive as to have obliged them in many cases to sell their children.*”²³⁷

Estimates of the period tell us that the Maratha Brahmanas, traditionally outsiders to Mysore territory, cornered almost 30% of the Brahmana dominated bureaucracy, and the families that we have mentioned in an earlier section of this chapter entitled ‘Caste Oppression Intensifies’, were all kinsmen of this sect. The annual auctioning of the taluks in the court of the Wodeyars was one important factor leading to monopolisation by Smartha Brahmanas. Sebastian Joseph tells us in his monograph *A Service Elite Against the Peasants* that: “*The system of renting the taluks to the highest bidder, irrespective of the effect on the people was mainly responsible for the financial confusion during the succeeding years [after Purniah’s departure]. It was not only the Amildary that was sold. All the public offices of the government from that of the Foujdar which brought the price of Rs 10,000 to that of Shekdar at Rs 100 were sold.*

The repetition of these sales and the frequent removal of these officers which became the fertile resource of wealth of the courtiers induced others to withhold payment for a lengthened period so that these donors now instead of being paid at once were discharged by instalments and were eventually rented at a fixed sum annually made payable to the patrons of each.

*Thus every new recruit to the service was suffered to hold his office till someone else made a more lucrative offer and the previous renter was expelled on the plea of complaints against his administration, of which it was not difficult to produce many whenever it suited the convenience of the court to bring them forward”.*²³⁸

Thus there was tremendous traffic in the purchase and sale, not only of taluks but also government posts. Mysore had been auctioned out by British colonialism.

Casamajor, the Resident at Mysore then, who was the local representative of colonialism and presided over the large-scale embezzlement, often made representations to the King about instances of corruption among his revenue officers. These complaints were, naturally, bought off; and it was only after the imposition of direct British rule in 1831 that the Resident, in order to put up a guiltless front, revealed his effort at checking the literal sale of government. Yet by his own account, Casamajor had brought innumerable instances of embezzlement of taxes by Amildars and Foudjars who were the Raja's favourites "to his notice for action". He then goes on to forward a list of his honesty for the years 1828, 1829 and 1830.²³⁹

Sebastian writes: "*This dependence on the service elite [the lecherous bureaucrats] made the Maharaja a party to the corrupt methods followed by them. At one stage, the British Resident even alleged that the Maharaja himself participated in the corruption and that he told the appointed offices that they were at liberty to reimburse themselves. There was even a practice of tampering with the accounts of the taluqs by the Amildars who thus made a profit out of the loss sustained by the State. In the warrum taluks where the crops were divided between the state and the cultivators the Amildars speculated extensively in the midst of fluctuations, by disposing off government share of grain. Lt Col Briggs, Senior Commissioner, stated in 1832. '...All my enquiries lead me to believe that very few of the persons who have held the office of the district Amildars within late years and who have been removed every 8 or 10 months as the case might be, are not only notoriously corrupt but that at the moment they are indebted to the government for money realised but not brought to account and that most of those now in office are in the same predicament'.*"²⁴⁰

Writing of the towering, and at the same time highly arbitrary stature of the Amildar, Sebastian says: "*He exercised authority both in villages as well as towns...an Amil was both an executive head as well as the highest judicial authority at the local level. It was through him that the peasant made his encounter with the State power. The Amil was a further link with the local level and the seat of state power. Naturally when the Amildary degenerated and transformed itself into a repressive machinery, it had a direct and immediate effect on the peasantry. While the Amildar with his almost licentious power could exact even arbitrarily to realise the annually stipulated amount from his taluk, in accordance with the spirit of the sharat system, the peasant had no redressal against exploitation and injustice because the Amildar himself was the judicial authority to hear the complaints against himself.*

This powerful class of service elite was not only known for its flagrant frauds and embezzlements but also for criminally colluding with the bandits to plunder the peasants. Maj Gen Hawkes Morison, Macleod and Mark Cubbon who made an enquiry into the Nagar insurrection of 1830-32 state that 'Sarvottam Rao and Kishen Rao, Foudjars of Nagar, had

*confidentially employed 'Goonda', a robber leader, for the purpose of plunder. The thieves themselves who were later caught had stated during interrogation that they had plundered 73 houses, since the arrival of Sarvottam Rao, Fouzdar, and that they went to such houses as they received directions from the Fouzdar to go and they 'delivered the whole property to him'. Strangely, it is these men, the worst exploiters of the peasants, who incited the peasants initially to revolt in order to achieve their own ulterior ends".*²⁴¹

The crisis had grown so deep and the bureaucrat-feudal interests so steadfastly entrenched, that among the ruling classes themselves peaceful methods of chicanery yielded to violent methods of upmanship.

B. Torture for Tax Extraction

In order to collect the abusive taxes, it became a regular and legitimate means for the revenue officials from the Fouzdar right down till the Patel and Shanbhoga to apply torture on the masses.

Under the ryotwari system peasants were directly exposed to the civil bureaucrats. Quite often the Sheristedar with his troops would be physically present to supervise its application by the Patel and Shanbhoga who were landlords as well as tax farmers at the village level. Under the sharat system, the application of torture gained universality. Tales of torture would become as much a natural and annual part as the yearly turn of seasons.

Writing in 1832 about the features of the ryotwari system, R Richards said: "*Every subordinate officer employed in the collection of land revenue to be a police officer, vested with the power to fine, confine, put in stocks, and flog, any inhabitant within his range on any charge, without oath of the accuser, or sworn recorded evidence in the case*" Richards then went on to add, for the disbelievers, that this was "*not an exaggerated*" picture.²⁴²

By the time the first decade of British rule had run its course and as the *sharti* became the mode of revenue collection, the first mass reactions of the peasantry to torture was seen. Thomas Munro and the rest of his tribe—white or brown—have taken much trouble to tell how the Mysore peasantry, particularly in the bad years, fled the villages *en masse* at the time of the annual revenue harvests. And how it befell upon the Collectors to accomplish the loathsome task of catching hold of these runaways and exchanging them so that they could be entrusted to the loving care of their former owners once again.²⁴³

But whom and what were these wretched souls running away from? To ensure the arrears, the sharat system innovated next. It asked the "*well off peasants*"—the rich peasants—to stand as guarantors for particular tenants and poor-middle peasants.

But when this too failed to yield revenues, the feudal bureaucrats began to torture and resume the land of even this class. The representations to the government in the final years of the 1820s amply indicate this sordid fact.

Immediately after the 1857 uprising, the British government constituted a Torture Commission to investigate the “*belief in the general existence of torture for revenue purposes*”.

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The Torture Commission, in a manner typical of British hypocrisy accepted that “*torture in one shape or other is practiced by the lower subordinates in every British province.*”²⁴⁵

However, reacting to these lines, Marx exposed that the civilized gentleman was in fact a naked predator, by stating: “*The universal existence of torture as a financial institution of British India is thus officially admitted.*”²⁴⁶

The court historians—Shama Rao and Hayawadana Rao—and the British Enquiry Commission, which investigated the Nagar uprising, attempted to similarly drape the Raja in the silks of Mysore. But KR Wodeyar III who presided as the principal Mysore broker of this “*financial institution*” only stood out, stark and naked, as the fairy tale ‘prince without clothes’.

A whole gamut of ingenuine methods of torture was practiced. Placing huge stones on the back and making the victim stand in the sun—this was quite popular and spread across the Madras presidency too. The umpteen folk songs of the Kittur area mention how Rayanna’s parents were tortured thus. Asking one defaulter to lift the other up by the ears, plain and simple whipping, kneeling on scorching sand and to the delight of the patriarch torturers, even dangling weights on women’s breasts. However, these were a few of the milder forms. The more serious, perhaps when the particular persons also tended to display audacity, were outright punitive. They included the application of burning torches to the face, the chopping of ear lobes, nose and breasts.

No surprise therefore that the revenue farmers: the Patel and Shanbhoga from the village upwards, their puppet King and his courtroom of cronies, and the colonial overlord who kept the reactionary apparatus in harness became the hated enemies of the people. The oppressed of Karnataka were surely seeking to give back this treatment to their perpetrators. They wanted blood and lunged for vengeance to redeem their debts.

It can therefore be understood why the insurgent Nagar peasantry, after their congress at Hosanthe declared that “*all the peasants would have to unite against torture*”.²⁴⁷ And, as the peasantry grew more rebellious, in their rallies it became common for them to ask for a particular Amildar or Sheristedar to be handed over to them. The crowd had turned into a mob. The Englishman’s language is full of such sensitivities. Yes, they wanted to use their bare hands to lynch and tear these hateful men to death.

C. Ripping the Means of Production Apart

The first half of the nineteenth century was characterised, as we have seen, by the large scale destruction of the means of production. Entire irrigation systems, new instruments for processing agricultural produce, modern machinery used by the state in its military production and mints, hundreds of looms, scores of bellows and forges, innumerable furnaces and moulds, umpteen oil presses all accumulated by the labours of the masses for centuries were simply ripped apart by the colonial cyclone. These means of production, which were the wealth of the Kannada nationality, were destroyed. The fields, workshops and marts of the peasantry, artisans, emerging capitalists and traders were rummaged through and ransacked. The peasantry further forsaked its land to the usurers who rode on the tide to become their new masters. The period was universally characterised by a steep decline in productivity. These years marked an interval in Karnataka's march towards commodity production. This widespread destruction of social wealth was a major factor in the accentuation of the crisis that colonialism inaugurated. Karl Marx could grasp the extent and the implications of this exhaustive destructiveness. He wrote, as he witnessed the wanton violence unfolding before his eyes: *“England has broken down the entire framework of Indian society, without any symptoms of reconstitution yet appearing. This loss of his old world with no gain for a new one, imparts a particular kind of melancholy to the present misery of Hindostan, ruled by Britain, from all its ancient traditions, and from the whole of its past history...”*

*There cannot, however, remain any doubt but that the misery inflicted by the British on Hindostan is of an essentially different and infinitely more intensive kind than all Hindostan had to suffer before”.*²⁴⁸

One major impact of this destructiveness was the drop in the price of goods that it created, affecting all classes of producers very seriously and becoming a big damper to what struggle for commodity production remained. Shama Rao explains one fact of this crisis on the price front. He writes: *“Certain economic factors also began to operate in full force at this time to cause embarrassment. In the days of Haidar and Tipu large armies had been maintained with considerable bodies of camp followers for whose sustenance there used to be constant demand for very large quantities of grain and other articles and whatever unsettlement of peace there was in the country, there were no complaints of lack of employment nor was there much diminution in the expenditure of money which went to benefit all classes. Even during the days of Purnaiya there was a large British army maintained in small bodies in various parts of the State, together with considerable numbers of Mysore troops similarly distributed, and cultivators of land, manufacturers, artisans, traders and other classes found ready markets for their articles. By about 1810 however, the number of places in which British garrisons were stationed underwent a marked diminution and the number of British troops also was greatly reduced. As a result there was a decline in the demand for produce and in the expenditure of money. Simultaneously with this diminished demand for articles there was an extension of cultivation*

which brought into the market more grain than could be absorbed resulting in a fall in prices. The fall of prices was also understood to have to some extent been accelerated by the necessity of having to pay the monthly installment of the annual subsidy in specie...

*Throughout, their [the British Residents'] one great anxiety was to watch that the Mysore government was in a position capable of paying at regular intervals the Company's subsidy under the terms of the treaty. Of the heads of revenue, Sayer, Excise and Bajebab or miscellaneous revenue were equally affected by the diminution of trade, and recourse was necessarily had to the only source left namely, land... ”*²⁴⁹

Thus Shama Rao attributes the sharat system to have emerged out of these fiscal compulsions that came about due to the collapse in prices.

The widespread damage caused to the means of production and the accompanying fall in prices had nearly routed the producing classes. Indebtedness, which had also been a phenomenon of pre-colonial society, assumed demonic proportions in the new context of impoverishment and alienation of the instruments of production, and only redoubled the crisis of pauperisation. Vast masses of urban and rural people were for the first time brought under the sway of usury and the Marwadis, Sindhis and Banias who flocked to the bazars of Karnataka had a ball. As Amina Ghosh says, in *“the new climate...imposed by the British, usury had a phenomenal growth”*.²⁵⁰

The aggressive nature of this parasitic capital was encouraged by Mark Cubbon after he assumed charge as the Commissioner of Mysore by extending to this predatory social layer the direct backing of the state. Pani et.al. describe the process that Cubbon had introduced and his repressive measures which sided with these dreaded Shylocks.

“...indebtedness and the method of dealing with it underwent a sea change...

The government's new law stated: ‘The Peshkar shall on application write in a book the name of the person applying to him for the recovery of debt the name of the debtor and the amount of debt, the time and cause of it being incurred and thereupon fix a day for hearing. Hearing was scheduled at 8 days from the date of complaint and after the decision, stay of execution would be for 35 days’. The concept of jailing debtors who could not repay debts even on promise, was introduced for the first time, and as a further step, ‘if the debtor fails to pay any of the installments, his property shall then on application of the creditor be seized and sold on execution of the court’. As is to be expected there was much opposition to this... But despite protests the concept of jailing for indebtedness was introduced by the British into the system”.²⁵¹

Thus emerged Karnataka's system of justice and law. The legal superstructure set up in the wake of a deep crisis, amidst protest and against the interests of the impoverished and indebted masses, was an institution that colonialism established to prop up its blood-sucking collaborators.

With the legal edifice came the gaol. The black-robed dispenser of justice was, for the masses, also always their jailer.

D. Parasitic Expenditures, Financial Mess

Another important factor causing the crisis was the pointless nature of state expenditures. During the entire first half of the nineteenth century, nearly one-half of the Mysore government's revenues went towards the payment of tribute to the British Raj. And, what they took from Mysore was never ploughed back. Thus half of the receipts remained precluded. A commission of 5% to the King and 1% to the Dewan on the total receipts took away a few lakh rupees each year from the public sphere. Of the 40 odd per cent that remained, a good part was burnt up by KR Wodeyar in his regal indulgence, of which we have already seen in the preceding pages. In a letter to Richard Clive, the Acting Secretary at Fort St George, Casamajor, the Resident of Mysore wrote in 1831 of the Raja's pointless extravaganza. He accused him of making a lot of debt apart from utilising state funds and spending it in purchasing "*useless and expensive property from the Soucars which he had again squandered away on Brahmin ceremonies...the Rajah relapsing into his former habits of heedless extravaganza*".²⁵²

Again, days later, declaring the Company's direct rule over the Mysore Kingdom, Lushington, the Governor of Madras, admonished the puppet in a letter addressed to him: "*The sources of your Highness' difficulties are a lavish expenditure of the treasures which you possess and a neglect to supply their exhaustive by employing proper officers to watch over the welfare of your country...*

...In the adjustment of your Highness' debts to sowcars, I learn with regret that your revenues have been in many instances diverted from their proper objects, the payment of your troops and Hoozoor establishments, to your personal expenses, that when your ready-money funds have been insufficient for this purpose you have either substituted donations in lands granted to Sowcars some particular privileges of collection and that you have alienated a large portion of your revenues, by extensive grants of Enams, in many cases, to persons utterly undeserving of your bounty...

Your highness's extensive grants of Enam lands are another cause of your financial distress, the more alarming because they form a drain upon your resources which is annually increasing. In the Dewan Purneah's time the Enamtee amounted to 1,84,766, 3.14 3/4 Centeroy Pagodas. In 1828 it was 3,53,165, there being an increase of 1,68,998, 3.9 since the time of Purneah. But between 1828 and 1830 a further increase took place, making together the immense sum of 4,34,346, 5.4 Canteroy Pagodas, withdrawn from the resources of the State.

It is my painful duty to inform your Highness that an alienation of your revenues by grants of land, in a measure so disproportionate to your means, is totally irreconcilable with

*the mutual engagements existing between your Highness' and the Company's Governments and I recommend your Highness...to refrain from making such grants in future... ”*²⁵³

And then, in a last whiff of paternal advise, Lushington lashed out at the errant adopted son: “...it is absolutely necessary that you constantly devote a daily portion of your time to the duties of your high station, and then your finances will soon be restored to a proper state...”²⁵⁴

Meera tells us that one major area of expenditure for the Mysore Kingdom was in the maintenance of the colonial master's army. In 1830 alone, the slender force stationed in Mysore needed Rs 1,50,156, whereby the “ruler was burdened with heavy pecuniary obligations which left the country under developed”.²⁵⁵

All along the thirty-year period the British sucked out precious resources, amounting to tens of lakhs of rupees for their wars of pan-Indian conquest. Meera Sebastian says: “The continuous wars waged by Wellesley in which princely Mysore was dragged resulted in a heavy drain on the state exchequer. So even during the Dewanship of Purnaiah despite his shrewd ways of striking economy, expenditure of maintaining the troops amounted to Rs 20.7 lakhs by 1809-10. This leaves little room for doubt that during Maharajah's direct rule there was constant arrears in the pay given to the troops because of this costly maintenance. The case of the Kandachar peons alone during 1824-25 was Rs 7,03,181. It was due to these constant wars that expenditure for Sowar Kacheri and Barghir was Rs 10.5 lakhs in 1824-25”.²⁵⁶

The Raja also displayed his magnanimity on British merchants and officials that visited Mysore. The British Commissioners estimated in the 1830s that up to 20 lakh rupees left Mysore each year for Britain just in the form of such gifts the stooge doled out.²⁵⁷

Thus the principal expenditures of the time were the tribute to the Raj, commission to the puppet and his Dewan, the whimsical feudal expenses the Raja incurred which included patronage to British merchants, officials, mathas and temples and payments finally, for the British mercenary effort to further enshackle India. These four heads so totally consumed the coffers that they were always in want of more at the end of the financial year. As a result, in 1822, the monthly installments of tribute were disturbed and on several occasions, soldiers in the pay of the Mysore King were in arrears, deepening the crisis and causing it to drift even into the ranks of the uniformed.

A look at the nature of state expenses can ultimately be shocking revelation. The abominable puppet government of semifederal and colonial mould displayed gross neglect towards social expenditures. Whatever paltry sums were spent in this direction were of a token nature and issued out of the compelling weight of tradition established under the patriotic reign of Haidar Ali and Tipu Sultan. As a result of the huge investments the government of Haidar and Tipu had made in building up resources and creating social wealth something had to be kept going. Just like in the feudal state's of yore; colonialism allowed the relapse, of a slide back to

the medieval ages. The parasitism of the British puppet was as crass as it was absolute and complete.

E. Famine, Cholera and Plague: Curse of the White God

A gross and sustained misconception has been that famines are a 'natural' phenomenon. Yet historical memory predates the oldest famine to the period after British colonisation of India. Most of the land surface of Karnataka at the time of its subjugation by colonialism was covered by forest. Even the arid and semi-arid regions coming under the rain shadow area had a high degree of tree cover as is evident from the reports of Buchanan. This made the flow of streams perennial. As a consequence, the water table must have been quite high and the network of irrigation tanks which held back the run-off rain water caused its subterranean percolation so that ground water was readily replenished and soil retained a high level of moisture, as is indicated by the super harvests and the extent of wet crops that were grown even in rain-shadow regions. The Karavali, Malnad and semi-Malnad were water surplus regions; the Karavali producing three wet crops in a year and the region receiving the second highest average annual rainfall for the subcontinent. Thus Karnataka experienced years of 'less' and 'more' rainfall but not famine. There were drought years but not periods of famine. Even these droughts often tended to be locality specific and not widespread, making room for the movement of grain from the surplus areas and at all costs avoiding the misery of starvation deaths and pestilence on account of it and famine.

Munro who came to Karnataka while it was at its agricultural best, oversaw the violent take-over of the state and presided over its pillage; had significant observations to make about the question. He revealed from his writings that famine was not a result of natural or climatic factors, rather; that it was man made. It was, as we can read from what he says, the result of intervention in the social system; and, the only social force which so devastatingly intervened during the period was colonialism.

In 1805 he wrote on *The course to be Taken by Government in Dealing with the Scarcity of Grain*: "However unfavourable the season may have been in the Carnatic, the produce will probably be found to be very equal to its consumption; a total failure of the crops is unknown, except in single villages or very small districts. In the very worst years when the crops are everywhere poor, and in particular villages totally destroyed, the produce is always equal to 8 or 9 months consumption, and the deficiency is made up by the grain of former years remaining on hand, and by importation from the neighbouring provinces where the season may have been more favourable. The seed time in India continues so long—it is so easy when one kind of grain fails, to plough up the land and substitute a second; the produce is in general, so abundant and there is usually so much grain laid up in plentiful years by the farmers and merchants that it may be safely observed that no famine is ever produced in this country by the operation of seasons alone. The scarcity which arises from the seasons is converted into famine in the territories of

the native powers by war, by the rapacity of government in anticipating the revenue by absurd though well meant, regulations for keeping down the price and supplying the great towns, and above all by the endless exactions and robberies by petty zamindars”. ²⁵⁸

All these crimes that Munro stated as factors which could transform a scarcity into a famine were particularly perpetrated by the advent of British colonialism and famines emerged as a gift to the world of the uncivilised.

Bellary and other Ceded districts were struck by a famine in 1804, to which we have seen Munro’s reaction. However the scourge was kept at an arm’s distance from the territories of the Mysore Kingdom proper due to the fact that colonialism had not had enough time yet to destroy its irrigation network and subvert its trade in grain. Thus Shama Rao, the court historian of the Wodeyars recounts with glee: *“On the occasion of a famine in 1804...the inhabitants of these affected parts emigrated in great numbers to Mysore and the abundance of grain was at that time so great that these immigrants were furnished not only with the food but also large quantities of grain were exported to the affected British districts. Lord William Bentick who was Governor of Madras at the time expressed in a letter to Purniya on the 4th July 1804 that while lamenting the fatal effects which had been experienced in other parts of India from a deficiency of grain, it was a source of gratification to him to observe that the State of Mysore had been preserved from that calamity and that it continued to enjoy the blessings of abundance, thereby, being able to administer to the wants of the neighbouring people and to afford shelter to the inhabitants suffering under the affliction of famine”.* ²⁵⁹

The grain surplus was of course shortlived. Like the fable of the goose which laid golden eggs, colonialism ravaged Mysore making short work of its agriculture. And, by Shama Rao’s own admission, the drought of 1816-17 which visited Mysore culminated in a famine in 1823-24.²⁶⁰ Famines occurred again in 1831 and 1833.²⁶¹

However, this time there was no region in India which could come to the aid of the Kingdom since Tipu’s Mysore was perhaps the last rice bowl, the agriculture of the Deccan having already been raped and thoroughly wrecked. However, famine visited Mysore, as it always did, never alone; but with its hand-maiden of death in arms—pestilence. Shama Rao says: *“Besides this uncertainty of the seasons, there began to prevail for the first time in the country...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”.* ²⁶²

Shama Rao’s observation that the epidemic “is now known as cholera” needs closer attention. The name was obviously of a recent origin. But was that not solely because the reality signified by the name was also of recent origin?

However, Karl Marx’s *Notes* makes the matter explicit. He writes that in August 1817 “the first outbreak of cholera with terrible vehemence in India” had occurred. That “at first it

appeared in Zillah Jessore, near Calcutta, advanced across Asia to the European continent, which it decimated, from there on to England, and thence to America". So cholera from India was bequeathed upon the commonwealth and had even gone to London to visit the Queen. Marx then talks of the November 1817 attack of cholera on Hastings' army and says that as it passed through Bundelkhand, *"for weeks the track was strewn with dead and dying."* ²⁶³ As the British army stalked the subcontinent in pursuit of fresh conquests, its own trail of dead caused the dispersion of this dreadful pestilence across the face of the land.

It is no wonder that an epidemic such as plague has no Kannada equivalent; and, more interesting is the fact that *Plague-amma*, Kannadised as *Pillekamma*, is a mother goddess whose malevolence is appeased by offering sacrifices so that she may end her rout. British rule not only added new words to the Kannada lexicon, it also introduced new and fearsome gods and goddesses to an already overcrowded Hindu pantheon.

The emergence of famines, of cholera and plague were sure indications of the crisis to which colonialism had pushed the masses. It was the cumulative effect of the loot of the feudal lords, the rapacious moneylenders and the plunder of the white colonisers. This effect which was a reflection of the depth of the crises of the social formation in turn figured out to be the cause for the further exacerbation of all the contradictions in society, bringing out the enemy's glaring inhumanity since all these rogues dug their talons deep into the flesh of the masses of Karnataka to make the best of a famine. Effect became veritable cause and triggered another chain of crises which drowned the people in misery and despair.

F. Press-Ganging and Plunder

One other factor furthering the crisis and inviting the abhorrence of the masses towards British rule was their method of taking whatever they wanted from them. They not only physically plundered them of their precious little resources but at the same time also took whatever labour they wanted by press-ganging.

Wellesley wrote shortly after the fall of Mysore: *"Many complaints have been made by Purnaiya that the people of the country are pressed by the officers of the army to act as coolies, they are driven by the sepoy and afterwards dismissed unpaid"*. ²⁶⁴

A few years later Munro wrote *"...it is a common practice, not only among camp followers, but also with all bullock-men...bringing stores on account of the Company, to take straw forcibly from the inhabitants, either for nothing or at a rate much below its value..."* ²⁶⁵

Again, he wrote that the *"persons and property of the inhabitants"* were forcibly seized particularly by the colonial troops when marching. *"This evil has been long complained of and has gone on increasing with our power... A great road which is in most countries an advantage to the villages near which it passes, is in this country the reverse. Such villages generally lose*

*some of their inhabitants, who remove from the dread of being pressed themselves, or having their labourers pressed as coolies, and instances sometimes occur in which the whole ryots of the village quit it from this cause and choose a new site for their habitations at a great distance from the road”.*²⁶⁶

These policies were in striking contrast to the norms that Tipu and Haidar had set. Despite the fact that these two kings fought battles for most part of their reign, there were hardly any instances when they turned oppressive on the people to meet their military requirements.

If men and forage were so easy to come by, would the white man’s rapacious army then have spared the women?

A keen observer who closely followed the events in India wrote in 1858: *“The fact is, there is no army in Europe or America with so much brutality as the British. Plundering, violence, massacre—things that everywhere else are strictly and completely banished—are a time-honoured privilege, a vested right of the British soldier.”*²⁶⁷

G. The Crisis Assumes Political Form

The crisis which had become all-pervasive by the time the second decade of the nineteenth century ran its length, quickly assumed a political form.

The people, and the peasantry in particular, took to armed insurrection against these hated enemies and inaugurated, with the onset of the third decade, a full blown guerilla war, so extensive in character and so persistent in its defiance of colonialism and its feudal props, that it easily became the biggest rebellion of the time in India, and perhaps, ever since the British had set foot on Indian soil. It was called the Nagar Insurrection, also because its centre was located in the Nagar Revenue Division which housed Shimoga and Chickmagalur’s Malnad.

The outbreak of widespread mass armed resistance brought about a serious crisis within the ruling classes and compelled colonialism to take a sterner view of its alliance with the puppet King and his coterie of revenue farmers. The Company terminated in 1831, only weeks after the masses rose up in resistance, the cosmetic rule of the Raja, and assumed through its Commissioners housed in Bangalore, all power to rule over the Kingdom. In doing so it created an impression that it was a benefactor of the masses and had adequately punished the puppet for his misrule. Wellesley’s arrangements of 1799 were being put to practice and to the litmus test by colonialism. One of the themes that worked behind this ‘change of governments’ was well expressed by Munro for what it really was: *“We have had instances of corruption among Europeans, notwithstanding their liberal allowances... If we are to have corruption it is better that it should be among ourselves [ie, kept secret] because the natives will throw the blame of the evil upon their countrymen: they will still retain their high opinion of our superior integrity, and our character which is one of the strongest supports of our power, will be maintained”.*²⁶⁸

Another article of the Subsidiary Treaty was being implemented. But in doing so, the Subsidiary Treaty which was an agreement between the central British government and the various princely states kept alive this essential relationship. It endured for more than 150 years and was expressed in the context of an 'independent' India in the relationship between the centre and the states. The Governors of modern India's states were only reenacting the role of the former British Residents and the central government of the big comprador bureaucratic bourgeoisie has stepped into the shoes of the British Government of India. The Subsidiary Treaty finds continued existence through the instrument of the Constitution of India and is not an entirely forgotten parchment. It lives and it lashes out at India's nationalities, drawing up the essential framework of relations between the centre and the states. But more of this in *Volume III of Making History*.

The enemy which contributed to the crisis over these years, reaped the most from Mysore's loss of independence, dictated every move through the Resident—who was the central player in the courtroom. Now the Resident ventured to mask British plunder, pointing at the puppet while hiding the strings which ran from his blood soaked crafty fingers. Yet the white officers who led the counter-insurgency campaign, torturing and killing the peasant masses in hundreds, betrayed this ill kept secret, revealed the true character of the state and the ghoulish face of colonial rule.

Notes on Part I

¹ Rao, Hayavadana I, p

² *ibid*, Pp 1181-7

³ *ibid*, Pp 614-5

1 KP = 3 Rupees

⁴ *ibid*, P 936

⁵ *ibid*, P 937

⁶ *ibid*, p 271

⁷ Forrest, George W, *Selections*, p 2

⁸ Montgomery Martin, *Despatches, II*, p 75

⁹ *ibid*, Pp 78-82

¹⁰ Copies of Correspondence Relating to the State of the Mysore Government, 1831, Pp 15-16

¹¹ *ibid*, p 37

¹² *ibid*, Pp 13-15

¹³ Siddalinga Swamy, p 1

¹⁴ Fernandes, Praxy, p 174

¹⁵ The Earl of Mornington to the Commissioners for the Affairs of Mysore, p 43

¹⁶ Wodeyar, Sadashiva, p 9 and p 23, and, CV Mathada in Suryanath Kamath, *Sangolli*, p 75

¹⁷ Rao, Shama, 267

- ¹⁸ Copies of Secret Correspondence Relating to the State of the Mysore Government 1831, Letter from Raja of Mysore to Governor, fort St George, 5 Jan, 1831, Pp 144-5
- ¹⁹ *ibid*, To Henry Chamier, From Casamajor, 11 Oct 1831, Pp 675-6
- ²⁰ *ibid*, Letter to William Bentick, From His Highness, 5 Nov 1831, Pp 717-745
- ²¹ *ibid*, Pp 745-7)
- ²² Rao, Shama, p 541
- ²³ *ibid*, Pp 541-2
- ²⁴ *ibid*, p 542
- ²⁵ *ibid*, p 605
- ²⁶ *ibid* 354-5
- ²⁷ *ibid*, p 357
- ²⁸ *ibid*, p 358
- ²⁹ *ibid* Pp 390-1
- ³⁰ Gleig, GR, *II*, p 35
- ³¹ Marx, Karl, *The Future Results of the British Rule in India*, in Marx, Karl and Engels, Frederick, *The First*, p 30
- ³² Rao, Shama, p 509
- ³³ *ibid*, Pp 542-4
- ³⁴ *ibid*, p 543
- ³⁵ *ibid*, Pp 544-5
- ³⁶ *ibid*, p 545
- ³⁸ Rao, Hayavadana, Pp 887-8
- ³⁹ *Copies of Correspondence Relating to the State of the Mysore Government, 1831, Volume II*, From Macartney, Secret Department, To Fort St George, 1782, 26 August, p1
- ⁴⁰ *ibid*, To, Capt Edmonds, Commanding at Ongole, From Lord Macartney, Fort St George, 19 November 1782, p 572
- ⁴¹ Dua, JC, Pp 188-9
- ⁴² *ibid*, p 160
- ⁴³ Buchanan, Francis, *II*, p 504
- ⁴⁴ Stein, Burton, P 65.
- ⁴⁵ Gleig, GR, *I*, Pp357-8
- ⁴⁶ *ibid*, p 282
- ⁴⁷ Bhat, N Shyam, *A Study*, p 153.
- ⁴⁸ Stein, Burton, *op cited*, Pp 67-8
- ⁴⁹ Saki, *I*, Pp568-70
- ⁴⁹ Suryanath Kamath, *The Origin*, p 19
- ⁵⁰ Stein, Burton, *op cited*, p 233
- ⁵¹ *ibid*, p 234
- ⁵² *ibid*, p 242-3

- ⁵³ George Forrest, p 59.
- ⁵⁴ *ibid*, p 61
- ⁵⁵ *ibid*, p 407
- ⁵⁶ Rao, Krishna MV and Halappa GS, *I*, Pp 452-455
- ⁵⁷ Fukazawa, H, *Western India*, in Dharma Kumar ed, *II*, p 181.
- ⁵⁸ Badigera, Virupaksha, *Sirasangi Deshgathi* in Seegihalli, Balanna ed, *Belagavi* p 25
- ⁵⁹ Vijaya, TP, *Jamma*, p 103
- ⁶⁰ *ibid*. However, we are not informed of the relationship that British colonialism established with the landlords of the Non-Kodava dominating castes of Kodagu.
- ⁶¹ Tse-tung, Mao, *The Chinese Revolution and the Chinese Communist Party*, Pp 20-21
- ⁶² Rice, Lewis, *Mysore*, I, p 303
- ⁶³ Gleig, GR, II, p 264
- ⁶⁴ Arbuthnot, Alexander J, *I*, Pp 118-9
- ⁶⁵ Gleig, GR, III, p 379
- ⁶⁶ *ibid*, I, p 327
- ⁶⁷ Manfred, AZ, *A Short History of the World, Volume I*, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1974, Pp 465-470
- ⁶⁸ Danmole, Mashood P, p 3 reverse
- ⁶⁹ *ibid*, (p 4, reverse)
- ⁷⁰ *ibid*, (Pp 2, reverse 3)
- ⁷¹ Shettar, Ashok, *Thallur Deshgathi*, in Seegihalli, Balanna ed, *Belagavi*, Pp 41-58
- ⁷² Saki, I, Pp 339-358
- ⁷³ Danmole, Mashood P, (p 5)
- ⁷⁴ Mao Tse-tung, *Analysis of the Classes in Chinese Society, Selected Works, I*, Foreign Language Press, Peking, Pp13-14
- ⁷⁵ *Copies of Correspondence Relating to the State of the Mysore Government, Volume II, 1831*, From Parry Dare and Co, Coffee Contractor, Madras 15 November 1831, To The Chief Secretary, Fort St George, Pp 109-112
- ⁷⁶ Malathi K Moorthy, p 121
- ⁷⁷ *ibid*
- ⁷⁸ *ibid*, p 103
- ⁷⁹ *ibid*, p 129
- ⁸⁰ Pavlov, VI p 239
- ⁸¹ Saki, *I*, p 447
- ⁸² Price, J Iredrick and Rangachari K ed, *I*, p vii
- ⁸³ *ibid*, p vii
- ⁸⁴ *ibid*, p 266
- ⁸⁵ Buchanan, Francis, *II*, p 243
- ⁸⁶ Choksey, RD, *Economic*, p 82
- ⁸⁷ Ghosh, Suniti Kumar, *The Indian*, p 43

- ⁸⁸ Narendar Pani et al, p 15
- ⁸⁹ *ibid*, p 20
- ⁹⁰ Saki, *I*, Pp460-463
- ⁹¹ Ghosh, Suniti Kumar, *op cit*, p 126
- ⁹² Rice, Lewis, *op cit*, p 303
- ⁹³ Sastri, KN Venkatasubba, *The Administration*
- ⁹⁴ GR Gleig, *II*, Pp 423-424
- ⁹⁵ *ibid*, *III*, p 413
- ⁹⁶ Siddalinga Swamy, p 52
- ⁹⁷ Shama Rao, p 349
- ⁹⁸ N Shyam Bhat, *A Study*, p 348
- ^{98A} Suryanath Kamath, *The Origin*, p 20
- ⁹⁹ MV Krishna Rao and GS Halappa, *I*, P 269
- ¹⁰⁰ Details of this process can be had in the next and last chapters
- ¹⁰¹ Malathi K Moorthy, Pp101-2
- ^{101A} Suryanath Kamath, *The Origin*, p 20
- ¹⁰² GR Gleig, *II*, Pp33-34
- ¹⁰³ *ibid*, *III*, Pp363-364
- ¹⁰⁴ cited in Siddalinga Swamy, p 56
- ¹⁰⁵ *ibid*, *II*, Pp 29-30
- ¹⁰⁶ Saki, *I*, Pp 361-364
- ¹⁰⁷ *ibid*, p 381
- ¹⁰⁸ *ibid*, p 386
- ¹⁰⁹ Siddalinga Swamy, p 33
- ^{119A} Chandrashekhara B Damle
- ¹¹⁰ Hayavadana Rao, p 1085
- ¹¹¹ Karl Marx, *Notes*, p 104
- ¹¹² Shama Rao Pp 256-7
- ¹¹³ NK Narasimha Murthy, p 81
- ¹¹⁴ Meera Sebastian
- ¹¹⁵ Francis Buchanan, *I*, p 355
- ¹¹⁶ Shama Rao, p 337
- ¹¹⁷ Siddalinga Swamy, p 19
- ¹¹⁸ R Richards, p 505
- ¹¹⁹ Siddalinga Swamy, p 52
- ^{119A} Chandrashekhara B Damle, p
- ¹²⁰ Malathi K Moorthy, Pp 101-2

- ¹²¹ Shama Rao, p 378
- ¹²² *ibid*, p 378
- ¹²³ NK Narasimha Murthy, Pp 131-132
- ¹²⁴ S Saketh Rajan, *Commercialisation*
- ¹²⁵ NK Narasimha Murthy, Pp132-134
- ¹²⁶ Siddalinga Swamy, p 40
- ¹²⁷ *ibid*, p 43
- ¹²⁸ NK Narasimha Murthy, P 135
- ¹²⁹ Shama Rao, p 379
- ¹³⁰ NK Narasimha Murthy, p 134
- ¹³¹ Shama Rao, p 344
- ¹³² *ibid*, p 343
- ¹³³ Major M Wilks, *Report*, p 63
- ¹³⁴ *ibid*, Pp 63-64
- ¹³⁵ Lewis Rice, p 596
- ¹³⁶ *Copies of Secret Corresoncence Relating to the State of the Mysore Government, 1831*, From Casamajor, 8 Jan 1831, To Richard Clive, Acting Secretary, Fort St George, p 28
- ¹³⁷ KN Venkatasubba Sastri, *The Administration*, Pp 28-29
- ¹³⁸ N Shyam Bhat, *A Study*, p 323
- ¹³⁹ Malathi K Moorthy, p 352
- ¹⁴⁰ Mahars are Dalits in Maharashtra. Mahars wer given rent-free lands for the military service they offered. However, these were small holdings which gave the Mahars who enjoyed them a poor, or at best, middle peasant status. Hence they must not be equated with the Patels and Kulkarnis who came from the oppressing upper castes and obtained rent free lands
- ¹⁴¹ Neil Charlseworth, Pp 27-28
- ¹⁴² *ibid*
- ¹⁴³ VI Pavlov, p 3
- ¹⁴⁴ VI Pavlov, Pp 3-4
- ¹⁴⁵ Hayavadana Rao, Pp 498-9
- ¹⁴⁶ Shama Rao, p 371
- ¹⁴⁷ Major M Wilks, *Report*, p 44
- ¹⁴⁸ *ibid*,p 45
- ¹⁴⁹ MH Gopsl, *The Finances*, p 185
- ¹⁵⁰ Siddalinga Swamy, p 37
- ¹⁵¹ Karl Marx, *Pre Capitalist*, Pp 71-2
- ¹⁵² N Shyam Bhat, *A Study*, p 331
- ¹⁵³ KN Venkatasubba Sastri, *The Administration*, p 198
- ¹⁵⁵ *ibid*
- ¹⁵⁶ PJ homas, p 9

- ¹⁵⁷ Alexander J Arbuthnot, *II*, Pp 236-237
- ¹⁵⁸ Karl Marx, *Precapitalist*, p 73
- ¹⁵⁹ *ibid*
- ¹⁶⁰ Narendar Pani et al, p 15
- ¹⁶¹ Francis Buchanan, *I*, p 189
- ¹⁶² *ibid*, p 154
- ¹⁶³ *ibid*, Pp 154-155
- ¹⁶⁴ Narendar Pani et al, p 15
- ¹⁶⁵ *ibid*, p 21
- ¹⁶⁶ *ibid*
- ¹⁶⁷ Edgar Thurston, *II*, p 155
- ¹⁶⁸ VI Pavlov, Pp 2-6
- ¹⁶⁹ 133 Shama Rao, p558
- ¹⁷⁰ Shama, p558
- ¹⁷¹ KNVS, *Cash*, p 1
- ¹⁷² Saki, *I*, Pp 540-546
- ¹⁷³ VI Pavlov, p6
- ¹⁷⁴ Martin Carnoy, p1
- ¹⁷⁵ Lewis Rice, *I*, p 356
- ¹⁷⁶ Shama Rao, p 479
- ¹⁷⁷ *A Gazetteer of Southern India*, p 568
- ¹⁷⁸ Danmole, p6
- ¹⁷⁹ *Copies of Secret Correspondence, 1831*, Letter to William Bentick, From His Highness, 5 Nov 1831, Pp 724-725
- ^{179A} Sri Ramanuja Brahmatantra Swatantra Parakala Maha Desikam
- ^{179A} *ibid*
- ¹⁸⁰ KS Sastri, p 31
- ¹⁸¹ Shama, p 408
- ¹⁸² GR Gleig, *III*, Pp 239-40
- ¹⁸³ Francis Buchanan, *II*, p 385
- ¹⁸⁴ *ibid*, p 473
- ¹⁸⁵ Saketh Rajan,
- ¹⁸⁶ G Ramakrishna et al, *An Encyclopaedia*, Pp 113-114
- ¹⁸⁷ Siddalinga Swamy, p 51
- ¹⁸⁸ Sebastian Joseph, *State*, Pp86-7
- ¹⁸⁸ *ibid*, Pp 81-2
- ¹⁸⁹ MH Gopal, *The Finances*, p 27
- ¹⁹⁰ *ibid*, p 185

- ¹⁹¹ Edgar Thurston, *II*, p 330
- ¹⁹² Sebastian Joseph, *State*, Pp 85-6
- ¹⁹³ Francis Buchanan, *I*, p 32
- ¹⁹⁴ Shama Rao Pp.401-2
- ¹⁹⁵ *ibid*, P.410
- ¹⁹⁶ Saki, *I*, Pp528-539
- ¹⁹⁷ Vijaya Ramaswamy, *Textiles*, p 85
- ¹⁹⁸ Black Towns were the slums and townships that developed around Fort St George, where the Tamil masses resided
- ¹⁹⁹ *ibid*, p 170
- ²⁰⁰ Karl Marx, *The East India Company—Its History and Results*, in *Marx and Engels, The First*, p
- ²⁰¹ Lewis Rice, *Mysore*, 319
- ²⁰² Francis Buchanan, *I*, p 12
- ²⁰³ Major Wilks, *Report*, Pp 65-96
- ²⁰⁴ Nikhiles Guha, p
- ²⁰⁵ Sebastian Joseph, *State*, Pp 81-86
- ²⁰⁶ Lewis Rice, *Mysore*, Pp 530-531
- ²⁰⁷ Shama Rao, p 338
- ²⁰⁸ Sebastian Joseph, *Mysore's*, p 154
- ²⁰⁹ *Copies of Correspondence*, Lushington, President's Minute, 27 Sep 1831, p 37
- ²¹⁰ Major Wilks, *Report*, Pp 97-104
- ²¹¹ Lewis Rice, *Mysore*, p 298
- ²¹² MH Gopal, *The Finances*, Pp 56-57
- ²¹³ Francis Buchanan, *I*, p 23
- ²¹⁴ Lewis Rice, *Mysore*, p 304
- ²¹⁵ MH Gopal, *The Finances*, p 8
- ²¹⁶ *Copies of Correspondence, Volume II*, Lushington, President's Minute, 27 Sep 1831, p 23
- ²¹⁷ Siddalinga Swamy, p 115
- ²¹⁸ RD Choksey, *Economic*, p 66
- ²¹⁹ N Shyam Bhat, *A Study*, p 154
- ²²⁰ *ibid*, Pp 168-181
- ²²¹ *ibid*, 204-205
- ²²² Benjamin Heyne, *Report*, Pp 93-94
- ²²³ N Shyam Bhat, *A Study*, Pp349-351
- ²²⁴ *ibid*, p 389
- ²²⁵ Alexander J Arbuthnot, *I*, p 244
- ²²⁶ *ibid*, p 222
- ²²⁷ Sadashiva Wodeyar, P. 13

²²⁸ H Fukazawa, Agrarian, in Dharma Kumar ed, *II*, Pp 183-184

²²⁹ Dharma Kumar, *Changes in Government Policy and Agrarian Structure—1792-1855*, in *ibid*, p 219

²³⁰ Neil Charlseworth, *Peasants*, Pp 17-19

²³¹ Sumit Guha, *Society*, p 393

²³² Lewis Rice, Mysore, Pp298-299

Foujdar: He had jurisdiction over a foujdari. There were three foujdaries in the Mysore Kingdom. Amildar: Had jurisdiction over a taluk

Sirastedar: Had jurisdiction over a hobli

²³³ *Nagar Peasant War: Fort St George Correspondence*, From Casamajor, Mysore 6/7/1831, To Chief Secretary, Fort St George, p 466

²³⁴ MH Gopal, *Tipu*, Pp 179-180

²³⁵ Karl Marx, *Notes*, p 128

²³⁶ Siddalinga Swamy, p 45

²³⁷ *ibid*, p 49

²³⁸ Sebastian P Joseph, *State*, p 7

²³⁹ *Copies, I*, From Casamajor, 8 Jan 1831, To Richard Clive, Acting Secretary, Fort St George, p 31

²⁴⁰ Sebastian P Joseph, *State*, p.6

²⁴¹ *ibid*, Pp 8-9

²⁴² R Richards, *Character and Condition of the Native Inhabitants, Volume I*, 1832, Omsons Publications, New Delhi, 1988, p 601

²⁴³ *ibid*, p 600

²⁴⁴ Karl Marx, *Investigation of Tortures in India*, p 67, and p 205

²⁴⁵ *ibid*, P 69

²⁴⁶ *ibid*

²⁴⁷ BS Ramabhatta, p 21

²⁴⁸ Karl Marx, *Pre-capitalist*, Pp,71-70

²⁴⁹ Shama Rao, p,408-9

²⁵⁰ Anima Ghosh, cited in Suniti Kumar Ghosh, *India*, p 3

²⁵¹ Francis Buchanan, I, Pp 19-20

²⁵² *Copies, I*, From Casamajor, 8 Jan 1831, To Richard Clive, Acting Secretary, Fort St George, p 20

²⁵³ *ibid*, From SR Lushington, 15 Feb 1831, To The Rajah of Mysore, Pp 146-152

²⁵⁴ *ibid*, p 158

²⁵⁵ Meera Sebastian, p.42

²⁵⁶ *ibid*, p 44

²⁵⁷ Siddalinga Swamy, p 39

²⁵⁸ Alexander J Arbuthnot, *II*, p 218

²⁵⁹ Shama Rao, Pp. 371-2

²⁶⁰ *ibid*, Pp.410

²⁶¹ Siddalinga Swamy, p 108

²⁶² Shama Rao, pg.410

²⁶³ Karl Marx, *Notes*, p 123

²⁶⁴ Shama Rao, Pg.362

²⁶⁵ Alexander J Arbuthnot, *II*, p 206

²⁶⁶ *ibid*, Pp 205-206

²⁶⁷ Frederick Engels, *Details of the Attack on Lucknow*, in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The First*, p 136

²⁶⁸ KN Venkatasubba Sastri, *The Munro*, p xxix

PART II

GLORIOUS ARMED STRUGGLE AGAINST COLONIALISM (1800-1857)

The severity of British colonial rule prompted a resistance of matching intensity from the side of the people. It was only by taking every necessary repressive measure to contain this constant challenge and open defiance to its authority that the Raj could survive with its loot. Try as much as it wanted, the people of Karnataka did not give British colonialism a chance to pillage at its convenience and in peace.

We have already seen the valiant anti-colonial struggle that Haidar and Tipu put up against the foreigners even as they tried to set foot on our land. Apart from these 40 years of anticolonial Mysore rule, right until 1857, armed struggles continued to break out recurrently against the enemies, giving Karnataka a rich history of nearly a century of incessant armed resistance to European conquerors. Starting their struggle in 1799 just a few days after the government of Tipu was destroyed, insurrections continued till 1857 and culminated as part of the all-India torrent to dislodge the aggressors. Our brief record demonstrates the outbreak of armed struggles in 1799-1802 when there were several, in 1806, 1810-11, 1819, 1820, two in 1824, 1829-30, 1830, 1837, 1840, 1841, 1849, 1852 and a few in 1857-58. The struggles, as we can see, were quite evenly spread out and in the space of every few years there was a serious conflagration.

These struggles were essentially of three types: The first was by former members of Tipu's army. They appealed to the rising patriotic sentiments which prevailed among the soldiers and invariably rallied them in large numbers. Soldiers were the principal fighting force in this type of struggle. This type of armed resistance was not only the first to break out but also the first

to yield itself, not surviving beyond a few years of the first decade of foreign rule over Mysore. However, there was a faint echo of this in August 1857 on a new basis when troops in the Belgaum garrison of the British Indian army planned a rebellion. The plan fell through and its leaders were hanged.^{1A}

The second type was that led by the feudal lords. These former palegaras were successful in mobilising their armed retainers who had served them and constituted the soldiers of the feudal army.

The third form, the slowest to assume shape and yet the most persevering was that type, the struggles of which were led by members of peasant stock and whose fighting force was composed basically of the oppressed peasantry.

Some historians, Shyam Bhat for instance, consider the struggles led by feudal lords as not belonging to the anticolonial genre since they were led by former palegaras whose sole aim was to recover their lost feudal privileges and nothing more. He therefore seeks to classify these outbreaks as being reactionary in nature; and tends to be dismissive of them.

Marx and Engels were the first to characterise the uprising of 1857 as “*India’s war of independence*”. They hailed it in no uncertain terms. Did these founders of Marxism not know that 1857 was led by feudal chieftains, kings and queens who were fighting for their own principalities and fiefdoms? Ultimately, the movement launched Bahadur Shah Zaffar, the last and weakest—a caricature of the Moghuls, on the throne.

The founders of Marxism were looking not merely at the class in the lead, or merely the consciousness that was impelling them into the blitz. They were also fathoming the scope of the struggle. As true historical materialists, they gauged the real and objective ‘effects’ of these struggles.

The cardinal question that must be answered lies in deciding what constitutes ‘progress’ and what defines ‘reaction’ at a particular historical juncture.

The success of these struggles—even if it were a Chennamma in the head or any other oppressive downright feudal palegara—the logical conclusion of such struggles, would have been nothing short of the ousting of British colonialism from our land.

With this signal victory over the foreign enemy, even if we were to be ruled by a feudal system, it would have allowed for the nourishment of an impending bourgeois democratic revolution.

And, is not bourgeois democracy progressive, is not patriotic feudal rule progressive when compared to colonial-feudal domination? It will do good if these historians leafed through the pages of Japanese history and grasped the significance of the restoration of the Meiji dynasty

to power in 1868; and how it objectively served the protection of the Japanese home market and allowed for the gradual development of native capitalism. The masses of India's nationalities could have more easily destroyed a feudal system which existed without the backing of colonialism, than take on decadent feudalism which had been invigorated in its hour of death with the might of British arms. Colonialism was the principal enemy and every blow delivered at it, from whichever quarter, objectively, contributed to its further weakening.

As long as these struggles were objectively arrayed against the main enemy of the people of Karnataka and India—British colonialism—they tended to have a progressive character, in pushing society forward. Even the victory of a movement led by feudal lords over colonialism would have been pregnant with revolutionary potential since it would then have permitted the growth of native capitalism capable of eventually overthrowing feudal society and liberating the peasantry from its yoke. Thus, unless one grasps the essential change in the *quality*, of state power, and the *qualitative* change that British conquest had brought to the ruling alliance, it would only lead us up a blind alley.

It might appear overtly Marxist to draw out the class roots of such anticolonial leadership and negate on this sole basis the progressive prospect such struggles delineated. But this is exactly what differentiates Marxism from revisionism. Revisionist historiography can be mechanical and superficial. Its ultimate essence is that it tends to legitimize colonial domination. Marxist historiography takes the class characteristics into consideration, places it in the historical context and considers the dialectical processes at work.

It is only when we keep this in mind, grasp the objective direction of history and the nature of the ruling classes at each historic turning point that we can, although apparently self-contradictorily, say, with convincing certainty, that the palegaras who fought for the restoration of their fiefdoms with British support against Tipu were trying to pull history backwards; while at the very same time, palegaras who took up arms against British colonialism, albeit, for the repossession of their petty fiefdoms, were pushing history forward.

Chapter IV

ARMY SALLIES ON

The Mysore army, as we have seen in *Volume I of Making History*,¹ had a long tradition of anticolonial warfare. This had generated, considerable anticolonial consciousness among the soldiers. The best indication of these anticolonial sentiments was reflected in the days following the storming of Srirangapatna. Even as the city fell, traitors like Mir Sadak were punished. Later, except for a few officers such as Kamruddin the entire army, although having accepted defeat, refused to cooperate with the British. All attempts to win over soldiers into the colonial army was boycotted by them. Buchanan tells us how the mass of soldiers refused all such attempts by the British even at the cost of remaining unemployed and having to forcibly emigrate as coolies to villages. They scoffed at the enemy which had slain their Sultan. The army, a good part of which was composed of Muslim soldiers, was prepared to make a great sacrifice and undoubtedly remained a brilliant example and the earliest expression of patriotism after Tipu's fall. This display of loyalty was not a sudden phenomenon. It was part of the tradition of the Mysore army all along its four decades-old reformed existence, surprising the British with the absence of desertions, even at the most trying of moments in battle. The killing of Tipu only added to the indignation of the soldiers. This deep-seated anger at colonial conquest was the principal motivation in the effective and extensive mobilisation of the soldiery in the armed struggle that ensued against the British. Even men such as Dhondia Waugh who was a former horseman of the Mysore army, but later imprisoned for his ambitions by Tipu, was active in resistance. The army was the chief instrument of the centralised state that Haidar and Tipu had built. It generated in its members a consciousness vastly different from that of the feudal palegaras' forces. The Mysore army, on being a modern and centralised apparatus, always performed with a great degree of coordination of its different departments. This effort at coordination filtered down to its members and in the struggles in which former soldiers fought and led, one notices that there was the attempt to unite their efforts with other fighting feudal forces. It was always the fact that former soldiers—whether in the case of Dhondia or in the case of Subba Rao and Thimma Nayak in Dakshina Kannada—easily emerged as focal points for coordination with palegaras. The mode of life and warfare of the palegaras, on the other hand, always tended to be closed-door and narrow.

1. DHONDIA WAUGH'S INSURGENT ARMY (1799-1800)

Dhondia belonged to Chennagiri in Shimoga. He proved to be a capable military hand serving the Patwardhans, the Kolhapur Raja and the Lakshmeshwar Desai in Dharwad.² Haidar came in touch with him during one of his campaigns in northern Karnataka and in 1780 Dhondia was recruited into the Mysore army as a horseman, also at the same time converting to Islam. In

1792, during the Third Anticolonial War, he deserted and tried to establish himself independently at Dharwad. In 1794 however, Tipu won him back and promoted him in the army. But in a short time his ambitions to have a kingdom of his own, landed him in prison where he was kept on a stipend. On the fall of Srirangapatna, Dhondia was set free along with the other prisoners. Freed at the age of 60, Dhondia quit Srirangapatna and began to build up an army and a political confederation of all those palegaras who sought to overthrow the British.

K Rajayyam's *South Indian Rebellion* and his *Rise and fall of the Palegars of Tamil Nadu* sketch the confederation which included palegaras from Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka and Maharashtra. Dhondia played an important part by linking these regions into one. However, the vastness of territory on the one hand, and the weakness of all the forces that constituted the federation and their obvious class limitations on the other, made this an ineffective alliance, which failed to act in concert and strike in unison.

On leaving Srirangapatna, Dhondia went to Aigur in Hassan's Malnad, conferred with palegaras there and later went northwards to Maratha territory. Rajayyam says; *"From there he opened a correspondence with the sardars, formerly in the service of Tipu and gathered a body of armed men and 5,000 horse from the remnant of the army of Mysore... Almost all the Muslims of Mysore associated themselves with the rebels. Dhondoji Waug occupied Shimoga and proclaimed himself 'king of the two worlds.'*

*After establishing his headquarters at Shimoga, Dhondaji Waug engineered designs for the overthrow of British power in Mysore. He committed depredations in the northwest, captured war equipment from the British store and created his own artillery corps. This was followed by the occupation of Nagar and Bednore from the Company. A body of rebels moved to the East and occupied Gooty in the Nizam's territory. He formulated plans to kidnap Colonel Wellesley, Commander of British forces in Mysore...and to murder Purnea who had abandoned the cause of the fallen Sultan..."*³

Thus, starting his military offensives in June 1799 itself, only two months after Mysore's fall, Dhondia took possession of extensive territory which included most of Shimoga, Chitradurga, Dharwad and Bellary districts by the time the year had run out. In June 1800, Dhondia's forces killed the Maratha commander Dhondoji Pant Gokhale who had 10,000 cavalymen, 5,000 footmen and 8 guns.⁴ He also began to gather the support of the princes of Ramdurg, Sholapur, Kholapur, Anegundi and Gwalior.⁵

Thus, while he started off with a slender force of 200 cavalymen,⁶ in a short time Dhondia amassed a cavalry force of about 5,000 men and an army whose strength stood at 70,000 to 80,000 men at its peak.⁷

The source of this phenomenal growth and instant recruitment was due to widespread rallying by soldiers of the Mysore army under Dhondia's banner. The vanquished soldiers of

Srirangapatna retained their firearms and cavalrymen their horses. They migrated in large batches and all those forts that hadn't yet fallen to the British opened their gates and welcomed Dhondia's forces, thereby joining his standard.

While Srirangapatna fell in May 1799, it did indicate a seminal victory for the British but not the end of the war with the Mysore army. Srirangapatna and Bangalore, the principal centres, and the region falling to the south of Karnataka were taken by the British, yet the outflanking central and northern parts remained in the possession of Dhondia and the allied Maratha army. The British dispatched their forces in June 1799 itself to pursue and capture Dhondia so as to bring the other parts of Mysore under their complete control.

In order to achieve this task they dispatched no less a person than Colonel Wellesley and the serious situation of unconsolidated British rule led Munro to write in a letter to Wellesley that "*Dhondia would undoubtedly have become an independent and powerful prince and the founder of a new dynasty of cruel and treacherous sultans.*"⁸ ("*cruel*" towards the British and "*treacherous*" in frustrating their conquests is something that our readers will have by now got accustomed to, on reading such statements by the colonialists about us).

The British campaign to isolate and suppress the main contingent of Dhondia's forces led them to commence their operations against him in June 1799. However, it took them several battles and slightly more than a year before they could defeat his troops and eliminate him on the banks of the Krishna in Raichur.

The British campaign was, to use Munro's sweet words, both 'cruel' and 'treacherous'. On taking Chitradurga on 14 July 1799 the forces under Darliple encountered a party of Dhondia's army who, according to Shama Rao, "*were immediately attacked, defeated and dispersed... Of the 40 prisoners taken 39 were hanged and one man was released after he had witnessed the execution of his comrades to create fear in the country by relating the terrible fate that had overtaken some of Dhondoji's men*".⁹

Despite undertaking a bloody campaign which engaged the British forces for a whole year and the capture of several fortresses under Dhondia's control such as Honnali, Shikaripura and Chennagiri, they still found it difficult to eliminate him. As Shama Rao rightly paraphrased British military correspondence on the operation, Dhondia moved "*from place to place eluding the pursuit of his enemies and avoiding a pitched battle.*"¹⁰

Thus, although Dhondia took territory and garrisoned his forces in the forts, he never gave battle against the superior British forces from within the ramparts. He avoided entering into decisive battles and planned his retreat after a skirmish. Thus, while it appeared that Dhondia was 'fleeing' from battle in the face of colonialist attacks, the contrary was always true since Dhondia was continuously conserving his forces and drawing more and more recruits to his side, growing from a small force of 200 cavalrymen to a powerful army of nearly 80,000 soldiers of

whom 5,000 were cavalry. Dhondia was obviously adopting the tactics of mobile warfare, using an extensive terrain that stretched across a few thousand square kilometres of woods, valley and plains; preferring field operations to that of cloistered fortress warfare. Strengthened, as he was, by a powerful cavalry, the British always found it difficult to pursue him or achieve his encirclement.

However Dhondia's strength itself became the cause for his defeat. As long as his forces were small they kept a tidy pace and quickly shifted from one location to another making hot pursuit by the British forces an impossibility; thereby providing for the best application of mobile warfare of a guerrilla type. As Dhondia continued to grow in strength he gathered all these forces into one single fighting contingent. Cavalrymen were combined with footmen and they together with the establishment. The bazaar and other paraphernalia for the mobile army was modeled on the Maratha armies. Dhondia now kicked up a lot of dust as he moved and his force appeared like a small city when it camped. These great numbers rolled into one single military formation severely affected his mobility. This made him unfit for mobile war of a guerilla type and pushed him more towards the mode of positional war. However, this last form, Dhondia was incapable of implementing, since he did not have consolidated territory nor did he have adequate logistic means to counter a superior enemy. As Dhondia's forces grew in strength, he got increasingly bogged, making his identification and pursuit an easy task. Thus, after sustained harassment by Wellesley's forces, Dhondia was pushed to the banks of the Krishna and up against a swift river flowing to its brim. He was encircled and mowed down by a superior force; caught, as the saying goes, between the devil and the deep sea. On 10 September 1800, Dhondia died giving battle against the British.

Frederick Engels wrote of conditions not entirely dissimilar when he said, after the loss of Delhi by the insurgent sepoy and their dispersal to the countryside: "*So long as the rebellious sepoy kept together in large masses, so long as it was a question of sieges and pitched battles on a great scale, the vast superiority of the English troops for such operations gave them every advantage.*" ¹¹

2. THE VELLORE INSURRECTION (1806)

We shall discuss in the next section which deals with the armed resistance led by feudal lords about the struggle of 1800-1801, under the leadership of Subba Rao and Mahatab Khan, both formerly in the Mysore army, who fought the British in Dakshina Kannada in alliance with former palegaras.

Karl Marx's dispatches to the *New York Daily Tribune* on the Indian revolt of 1857 makes penetrating analysis of some of the key questions which help us understand the Vellore insurrection better. He wrote that India was a country where 200,000,000 people were ruled by an army of 200,000 men. And in this, the British numbered just 40,000. ¹²

There was however a difference in the composition of the Bengal army on the one hand and the Madras and Bombay armies on the other.

Of the 80,000 men in the Bengal army, 30,000 were British, 28,000 were Rajputs, 23,000 Brahmanas, 13,000 Muslims and only about 5,000 of the “*inferior castes*”.¹³

However, Marx writes that “*the bulk of the Bombay and Madras armies is composed of low caste men*”.¹⁴ Further, the European component in the Madras army was far less than in the Bengal army.

Tipu’s sons were housed in the Vellore jail in Tamil Nadu, by the British. The Madras army stationed there was made up basically of the oppressed castes. Hence objectively it did not have to take much time or planning to eliminate the few European officers and soldiers among them.



14. Fatah Haidar, Tipu Sultan’s eldest son



15. Mohiuddin, Tipu Sultan's fourth son

Marx rightly evaluated the situation when he said: *“On first view, it is evident that the allegiance of the Indian people rests on the fidelity of the native army, in creating which the British rule simultaneously organized the first general centre of resistance which the Indian people were ever possessed of.”*¹⁵

The oppressive conditions of the Indian soldiers in the British army were often a cause for the outbreak of resentment among the soldiers and for punitive court martials. The 1857 War of Independence was prompted by sepoys in the British army bringing out their great revolutionary potential in the anticolonial struggle. Tipu's sons, led by Fatah Haidar channelised the indignation of the Vellore sepoys, whose leadership they readily accepted, which led to an insurrection enjoying the support of the urban masses.

Based on the report of the enquiry committee which later investigated into the mutiny, Chopra, Ravichandran and Subramanian write: *“Scope of Indian sepoys for promotion was limited; they could not rise above the rank of Subadar. Even for petty faults Indian officers were very often demoted and degraded. Their remuneration was also meagre; the ordinary **Sipahis** under the Nizam and Mahratta chiefs were, they alleged, better paid than the Subadars and*

*Jamadars under the Company. However, their discontent came to the surface only when the Company tried to introduce a new head-dress for the sepoy in infantry and artillery”.*¹⁶

Thus just like the fat of beef and pork which became an issue to ignite anger in the 1857 mutiny, here a similar nominal matter such as head gear became the rallying issue. Internalising the tone and tenor of the British enquiry committee these very same Indian authors write: *“In order to make the sepoy appear smart, a new form of turban resembling an European hat was introduced and ear-rings and caste-marks on the forehead were prohibited... But the sepoy refused to accept the new turban and openly stood against the order even though they were threatened with imprisonment. Consequently some were arrested. On 7th May 1806 when the sepoy were asked to put on the new turban during their morning parade, they disobeyed the command by putting handkerchiefs on their bare heads and abusively calling the English officers ‘dogs’...*

Not long after this incident at Vellore there started at Wallajabad in North Arcot a similar agitation among the sepoy stationed there. In this case the initiative came from the public; they taunted those sepoy who wore the European fashioned ‘topis’. Consequently the sepoy threw them away and ridiculed those who continued to wear them.

*This opportunity was fully exploited by the sons of Tipu Sultan who were living at Vellore in captivity... They tried to attribute a political objective to the revolt...and made clandestine contacts with the sepoy and channelled the latter’s discontent against the English to violent resistance with the definite object of their expulsion from South India... The sepoy were told that Moinuddin, the fourth son of Tippu would lead the rebellion with support and reinforcement from different parts of South India. It was decided secretly that they should launch their rebellion with violence and 10 July 1806 was fixed for its formal beginning. By night the sepoy plunged into action; they killed the English sentinels in the main gateway and took possession of the magazine. This was followed by a wanton massacre of the European troops and officers though women and children were spared... There was a scramble for booty and treasure. The unprotected possessions of the English were plundered and there was confusion everywhere”.*¹⁷

In all, 14 British officers and soldiers were killed and 76 were wounded. The “massacre” was well directed and controlled. It was the first time in British Indian history that its sepoy had rebelled and killed their own European officers. The people of Vellore extended their whole-hearted support for the mutiny and rendered all kinds of assistance to the soldiers. Even as plans were drawn up to spread the mutiny to other garrisons, the British encircled Vellore and after a bitter battle, retook the fort. After slaughtering scores outside the fort they dragged out 800 bodies from inside, thus putting down a rebellion which sought to return the Mysore Sultans to power by driving out the foreigners. The irony is that the enquiry committee could however not discover a “wanton massacre” on this count. Marx says that while Colonel Gillespie with his dragon regiment killed many, while occupying Vellore, Governor General

Minto, gave the mutineers “*genteel*” treatment. Like a perfect gentleman, he must have sent many more to the gallows.¹⁸

However, the British massacre has not been treated with mere silence. There have been diehard colonialist versions justifying the manslaughter by the British. Here is one of them describing Gillespie’s deeds: “*The 19th and Madras Cavalry then charged and slaughtered any sepoy who stood in their way. The massacre of the helpless European sick so aroused the British that no mercy was shown; about 100 sepoys who had sought refuge in the palace were dragged out, placed against a wall and blasted with canister shot until all were dead. John Blakiston, the engineer who had blown in the gates, recalled that although such punishment was revolting to all civilised beliefs, ‘this appalling sight I could look upon, I may almost say, with composure. It was an act of summary justice, and in every respect a most proper one.’ Such was the nature of combat in India where the ‘civilised’ conventions of European warfare did not apply.*”¹⁹

Soon after its defeat, the British dispatched Tipu’s sons to Calcutta, the seat of British power in India, since their proximity to Mysore would have, in their opinion, recurrently contaminated the masses with inspiration against colonialism.

The seriousness of the Vellore uprising and its implications for the future of British rule was narrated in a confidential letter that William Bentick, the Governor of Madras, wrote to Thomas Munro in Aug 1806: “*We have every reason to believe, indeed undoubtedly to know, that the emissaries and adherents of the sons of Tipu Sultan have been most active below the Ghauts, and it is said that the same intrigues have been carried on above the Ghauts. Great reliance is said to have been placed upon the Gurrumcondah poligars, by the princes. I recommend you to use the utmost vigilance and precaution; and you are hereby authorised, upon any symptom or appearance of insurrection, to take such measures, as you may deem necessary. Let me advise you not to place too much dependence on any of the native troops. It is impossible at this moment to say how far both native infantry and cavalry may stand by us in case of need. It has been ingeniously worked up into a question of religion. The minds of the soldiery have been inflamed to the highest state of discontent and disaffection and upon this feeling has been built the reestablishment of the Mussalman government, under one of the sons Tippu Sultan: It is hardly credible that such progress could have been made in so short a time, and without the knowledge of any of us. But, believe me, the conspiracy has extended beyond all belief, and has reached the most remote parts of our Army; and the intrigue has appeared to have been everywhere most successfully carried on. The capture of Vellore, and other decided measures in contemplation, accompanied by extreme vigilance on all parts will, I trust, still prevent a great explosion*”.²⁰

Not only was Bentick expecting other such mutinies, but, from the deep unease expressed in the letter coupled with total skepticism about the loyalty of the Indian soldiers in the British army, it appears that he might have also been thinking of the physical safety of British officers

like Thomas Munro, for instance, who was then Lt. Colonel, and were completely exposed and reliant on Indian sepoy for even their smallest of personal needs.

It was as a result of ruminating more deeply on the causes of the Vellore mutiny and after a more particular study of the British Army in India that Thomas Munro, writing in 1822, about the question of granting freedom to British newspapers in Madras, strongly rejected the proposal, since it had all the potential of igniting an explosive situation in India which could have sent the British packing, in which the army, he anticipated, would have had a principal role to play. In more ways than one Vellore was a miniscule 1857 and Munro, that shrewd rascal among the colonial lot, grasped it for what it really was. KNV Shastri and other British bred 'native' historians chose to call Munro a "liberal". This was only 'native' whitewashing of the black deeds of the demonic Raj. Munro's following statement, in which he spoke of the impact of the British press is a sharp and unsettling slap on the face of such historians. He chose to forego one of the political gifts of the bourgeois democratic revolution of England in order to perpetuate the white man's civilization over the coloured continent. Thomas Munro was unabashedly what he was: an elegantly cultivated diehard colonialist. He wrote: *"The high opinion entertained of us by the natives and the deference and respect for authority, which have hitherto prevailed among ourselves, have been the main cause of our success in this country; but when these principles shall be shaken or swept away by a free press, encouraged by our juries to become a licentious one, the change will soon reach and pervade the whole native army. The native troops are the only body of natives who are always mixed with Europeans, and they will therefore be the first to learn the doctrines circulated among them by the newspapers; for as these doctrines will become the frequent subjects of discussion among the European officers, it will not be long before they are known to the native officers and troops. Those men will probably not trouble themselves much about destruction, regarding the rights of the people, and form of Government, but they will learn from what they hear to consider what immediately concerns themselves, and for which they require but little prompting. They will learn how to compare their own low allowances and humble rank, with those of their European officers,—to examine the ground on which the wide difference rests—to estimate their own strength and resources, and to believe it is their duty to shake off a foreign yoke, and to secure for themselves the honours and emoluments which their country yields. If the press be free, they must immediately harm all this and much more. Their assemblage in garrisons and cantonments will render it easy for them to consult together regarding their places; they will have no great difficulty in finding leaders qualified to direct them; their patience, their habits of discipline and their experience in war, will hold out the fairest prospect of success; they will be stimulated by the love of power and independence, and by ambition and avarice, to carry their designs into execution. The attempt, no doubt, would be dangerous; but when the contest was for so rich a state, they would not be deterred by the danger. They might fail in their first attempts, but even their failure would not, as under a national Government, confirm our power, but shake it to its very foundation. The military insubordination which is occasioned by some partial or temporary cause, may be removed, but*

that which arises from a change in character of the troops, urging them to a systematic opposition, cannot be subdued, we should never again recover our present ascendancy; all confidence in them would be destroyed; they would persevere in their designs until they were finally successful; and after a sanguinary civil war, or rather passing through a series of insurrections and massacres, we should be compelled to abandon the country". ²¹

This was a sure anticipation of 1857, for which Vellore of 1806 was only the beginning. Mao said “*All imperialists are paper tigers*”. And, the best confirmation of this was when an accredited colonialist like Thomas Munro himself admitted that a “war” or a “series of insurrections” targeting colonialism would make it impossible for the British to rule over India leading to the ultimate flight of the foreigner from this land.

Chapter V

ARMED STRUGGLES LED BY FEUDAL LORDS

Feudal lords lost their former privileges under British rule. Some families were almost at the point of emasculation owing to British policy of inheritance. It was to regain their lost status that they resolved to overthrow the British, leading to armed flare-ups which have decorated the entire period right until 1857. Let us have a look at each of these struggles after which we may sum up the experience of their sacrifice in the wars that Karnataka waged against British colonialism.

1. SOLDIER-PALEGARA ALLIANCE IN TULUNADU (1799-1802)

Burton Stein tells us: “*There were ample grounds for Munro’s concern about resistance to Company rule over Kanara in 1800. The coastal tract was in a high state of political chaos when he began his work there. A number of armed local chieftains had re-entrenched themselves in territories from which they had been driven by Hyder Ali and Tippu Sultan partly with the aid of firearms obtained from the Company...*

But above all it was the martial character of the dominant landholding population of Kanara, those private proprietors of small estates, about whom he talked—that had to be appeased, in part by a low level of revenue demand... most of these small estate holders of Kanara were Bunts (Bant’s) a caste of warriors indistinguishable from the Nayars of Malabar, except in language”. ²²

The former Rajas of Vittla, Ravivarma Narasimha Domba Heggade, and those of Nileshwar and Kumbla were all Bunts. All their lands had been annexed by Haidar and Tipu and several leading members of these families had been eliminated. However, their scions escaped to British protected territory of the Raja of Tiruvanandapuram and allying with the British, they launched repeated attacks on the Mysore army. However, after British conquest, these Rajas who had already forfeited their position as petty chieftains were not given back their former fiefdoms although they were settled with handsome pensions and compensated with all their remaining ancestral property.

On 15 December 1799, Domba Heggade of Vittla who was housed in Tellicherry ignored British summons to give up the arms that were entrusted to him by them. With a party of 150 armed followers, he took over the management of the district and collected revenue, thus openly defying the British.²³

Thimma Nayak who was an officer of the Mysore army at Bekal in today's Kasargod, at the same time mobilised 200 of his soldiers and led them with Domba Heggade to form a junction with Subba Rao. The last had by then descended the Ghats to reach Puttur with a small force of Mysore soldiers. He was a former Sheristedar in Coimbatore under the Mysore government and was quite well experienced in warfare, having served in Tipu's army for several years. Subba Rao, on his part, had teamed up with Mahatab Khan who hailed from Kodagu and served as an officer of the treasury first under Haidar Ali and then under Tipu, in Srirangapatana, choosing subsequently to convert to Islam. Mahatab Khan was employed as an impostor, pretending to be Fatah Haidar, Tipu's eldest son, in order to easily arouse the soldiers against the British. Thus Domba Heggade, Thimma Nayak, Subba Rao and Mahatab Khan formed an alliance in Puttur and decided to fight under the leadership of Subba Rao, who was best versed in warfare, against the British.

They went on to seize Jamalabad and from there undertook several expeditions to mobilise funds by confiscations. *"On 7 May 1800, Subba Rao, with the assistance of Vittal Hegde attacked the temple of Uppinangadi in which the Thasildar of Kadaba was holding his office. The Thasildar escaped by crossing the river in the dark and several patels who were there at that time also got away. Subba Rao then marched on Buntwal, a commercial centre in South Kanara, which he plundered and afterwards took up his quarters at Puttur and began to collect the revenue".*²⁴

Thus the southern region of Dakshina Kannada towards the Ghats came under the control of the rebels, and the fort of Jamalabad which Munro described as *"one of the strongest hill forts of India"* was with them.²⁵

Yet Munro stated with confidence, before commencing the campaign to annihilate the rebels that: *"I have no doubt of my peons being able with 50 sepoyes to quell this desperate*

*rebellion, as it is called. The enemy have no real strength, because no part of the country is for them".*²⁶

In the end of April 1800 the British effort to suppress the rebellion was undertaken by launching an attack on Jamalabad. However, the British attackers had to fall back suffering serious losses inflicted by Thimma Nayak who held the fort. Then they used other means to achieve their goal.

Shyam Bhat writes: *"Anxious to seize Thimma Naik, the British employed Raman Nair, an influential chieftain of Bekal. In October Raman Nair proposed an hunting excursion to which Thimma Naik gave his consent. In the course of their hunt, Thimma Naik was seized at Bekal, who was promptly executed and his party dispersed".*²⁷ Raman Nair is supposed to have personally handed over Thimma Nayak's head to the British. *"In return for his service Raman Nair received a reward of Rs. 590 and a public approbation from the British. The British stormed the fort and regained possession of Jamalabad".*²⁸

Thus with the most protected centre, Jamalabad, and one of the leaders, Thimma Nayak, eliminated, the British undertook to run down the rebel forces, targeting Subba Rao next. However, this effort appeared more formidable than Munro's initial expectations drew him to brag about.

*"By this time Munro had raised a body of 200 armed men and placed them under the orders of Kumara Heggade of Dharmasthala, one of the Patels of Buntwal, who had rendered good service in the operations against Jamalabad. Kumara Heggade marched against Subba Rao and defeated him on 11-5-1800. But he was shot through his arm, which prevented him from dispersing the insurgents. But on the 16th the English succeeded in defeating Subba Rao and took possession of Puttur and Buntwal. On 15th July Subba Rao was put to death. Fateh Hyder was also surprised and routed..."*²⁹

Next, a force of about 1,000 men was sent to Vittala and on 18 July Domba Hegde and the whole of his family were captured. Writing to Close, the Resident at Mysore, Munro explained the decision to eliminate Domba Hegde: *"We may now by making an example of him and his associates secure Canara from internal disturbances in the future...it is the mistaken notion of observing on this coast toward every petty chief of a district all the ceremony and attention that is due to a sovereign which keeps alive dead and dangerous pretensions which it ought rather to be our aim to extenuish".*³⁰

A court-martial promptly tried the rebels and sentenced them to death. Vittal Hegde, his two nephews, brother-in-law, a Shanbhoga and Jamadar were hanged to death on Idgah Hill, a conspicuous point for the entire neighbourhood of Mangalore, on 25 August 1800.³¹

2. AIGUR (1799-1800)

The first place that Dhondia reached after fleeing Srirangapatna was to the territory of Aigur where the palegara Venkatadri Nayak was preparing for a struggle with the British.

Falling in Sakleshpur taluk of Hassan, Aigur's palegaras were feudatories to the Ikkeri Nayakas. Having learnt costly lessons from attempting to suppress the Kodavas, Tipu befriended the Aigur palegara Krishnappa Nayak, despite his support for the British, and allowed him to retain his fiefdom on the condition that he paid an annual tribute to Srirangapatna. Then he built the Manjarabad fort in the Ballum area falling on the Bangalore-Mangalore road, thereby achieving undisturbed commerce with the coast.

Venkatadri Nayak, Krishnappa's son, was the palegara of Aigur when Mysore fell and knowing that his fiefdom was to be confiscated by the British, he prepared for the rebellion. He fortified himself at Arakere which was surrounded by thick forest and the attempts by the British army to seize this bastion proved futile in 1800. However, Shama Rao tells us: *"After the death of Dhondoji Wagh in September 1800, the pursuit of the Aigur palegara was continued vigourously by both the Mysore and British troops under Colonel Arthur Wellesley, so much so that many of his relatives and principal people fell into the hands of the pursuing army, while Venkatadri Naik himself with a few followers was forced to take refuge in the jungles. To pursue in these jungles was considered profitless and accordingly small bodies of the Mysore troops were dispersed in these jungles as well as in the villages bordering on them, where it was likely that provisions were procured. On the 19th February 1802 the palegar sent some of his men to obtain supplies from a village which had been occupied by some of the Mysore horsemen. Receiving intelligence of the palegar's whereabouts, these horsemen went to the spot and captured him and his men. On the 10th he was executed with six of his men, some of whom had violated the terms of the pardon granted by Purnaiah by helping the palegar with provisions. At the same time it was found that every village in the country was strongly fortified and accordingly steps were taken to destroy such fortifications, besides, Purnaiah detained 300 families as hostages consisting of those who had been principally concerned in the rebellion and suffered none to depart till they had delivered up all their arms and paid all arrears of revenue. The amildars were also particularly instructed not to allow trees and hedges once destroyed to grow again and once more furnish strength to the villages".*³²



17. Map showing anti-British struggles led by palemgaras

Thus it is evident that although the main centres were taken by the end of 1800 itself it costed the puppet another year and two months before Venkatadri himself was captured and executed. Obviously Venkatadri had gone into hiding utilising the advantageous terrain which the Malnad offered.

3. KOPPAL (1819)

Krishna Rao and Halappa in their *History of Freedom Movement in Karnataka, Volume I*, tell us: “In the territorial arrangements made after the war with Tippoo [of 1792], the territories of Koppal (in the district of Raichur), were assigned to the Nizam of Hyderabad. Unable, perhaps, any longer to tolerate the irksome suzerainty of the Nizam who was safe under

*the protective cover of the Subsidiary Alliance, one of the zamindars, Veerappa rose in insurrection in 1819 and seized the forts of Koppal and Bahadur Banda”.*³³

No sooner than this was done the British army was despatched which quickly put down the uprising and redelivered the forts to the control of the Nizam.

4. BIDAR (1820)

Under the leadership of Shivalingappa, Tirumal Rao and Meghasham, all Deshmukhs under the Nizam, “*widespread insurrections*” took place in Udgir, Bidar.³⁴ However, it appears that despite the fact that these three Deshmukhs coordinated their uprising, their struggle survived for a brief period before it was put down by the colonialists.

5. SINDGI (1824)

SB Chaudari writes of another flare up led by feudal lords in Sindgi, Bijapur. “*In 1824, a Brahman named Diwakar Dikshit, supported by Raoji Rastia and Balappa Takalki, gathered a band of followers and plundered Sindgi about 40 miles east of Bijapur. He established a government of his own by setting up a thana and making arrangements for the collection of revenue. He sustained himself in power by plundering other villages. On receiving the intelligence of this situation, a small detachment was sent against the rebel from Dharwar...Sindgi was taken and Diwakar and his followers were captured and severely punished.*”³⁵

6. KITTUR (1824)

Chennamma’s struggle to retain Kittur as a puppet state of British colonialism led, just as in the case of the various feudal lords, to an armed clash with the British.

As we have already seen in the final chapter of *Volume I of Making History*, the Kittur Desai, Mallasarja’s son Shivalinga Rudra Sarja deserted the Peshwas for the British in 1818. He joined hands with the British in the conquest of Maratha territory.³⁶ On account of this service, the British extended to him the opportunity to retain his fiefdom which had a total of 350 villages under it, making it the biggest principality in Karnataka after Mysore. In fact Mallasarja had been defeated, captured and imprisoned by Tipu Sultan in 1785. His principality had been liquidated. For the Kittur deshgathi, history had turned one full circle. But in 1787, when the Maratha confederacy defeated Tipu Sultan, Mallasarja was restored. The clock had been turned back by the victors and Mallasarja was granted 11 of his former villages as his fiefdom.³⁷ In 1800, when Dhondia Waugh swept across the northern face of Karnataka, the Kittur Desai furnished the British, who were in hot pursuit of Dhondia, with 100 cavalymen and 100 foot soldiers. They also furnished the walled garrison of Sangolli at the service of the colonialists.³⁸ As Munro had revealed, the British had already cultivated the Desais for at least two decades.

British munificence ultimately landed Shivalinga Rudra Sarja on their side and on his part he gained 350 villages for himself, becoming an important prop on the southern exterior of the Peshwaite kingdom.

Shivalinga Rudra signed the Subsidiary Treaty and became a British vassal. He died on 11 September 1824 without a male heir and thus his kingdom lapsed into the hands of the British. However, when British officials tried to acquire control of the principality and leave to the family of the Desais a bounty of personal wealth, ample private property and pensions; Chennamma, Mallasarja's young widow, pleaded against it and wanted the British to accept the adoption of a heir and allow the continuation of the fiefdom. Thus Chennamma's struggle against colonialism was for allowing Kittur to continue to be a loyal vassal of the British. Its denial led to an armed resolution of the conflict and made it one of Karnataka's better known anticolonial struggles.

Suryanath Kamath's views are typically interesting. He is sore with the British for their ingratitude. He writes: "*In fact the Kittur principality provided the British with ample assistance in their fight against Dhondia Waugh in 1801 and later in 1818 in their war against the Peshwas. Yet the British did not demonstrate gratitude for this.*"³⁹ Such historiography can be dangerously evasive since it is disinclined to see Kittur's repeated role in aiding the British conquest of India as an act of feudal betrayal. Instead it is cut up with the British for not showering continued support on their loyal vassals. This view has a percentage of patriotism all right. But it is skin deep. It can only be as patriotic as the collaborating feudal class can ever get.

However, it is important to see how even such a reactionary feudal class to which the Kittur Desai belonged, tended to echo, under certain historic circumstances, strong anti-British sentiments and serve the crystallization of the anticolonial consciousness of the masses. The following speech by Chennamma addressed to members of her court on 18 October 1824 questioning Thackeray and, the British government's steps to acquire the treasury and take control of the fort, exhibits how even representatives of this decaying class could arouse anticolonial consciousness although fighting only for their own feudal privileges under British suzerainty.

"Kittur is ours, we are masters of our own territory. The Britishers say that the adoption is not valid because we did not take their permission. Where is it stipulated that we should take their permission for taking a son in adoption? The political agent Mr Thackeray, in his insolence of power, has said that we have lied regarding the adoption. He is prepared to believe the words of a mere servant of the Company like Dr. Bell, but is not prepared to believe us. These Britishers have come to our land on the pretext of carrying on trade and now seeing that we are quarrelling amongst ourselves, they want to grab our land and rule over us. They want us to pay them huge sums of nazrana. They might have vanquished other rulers in this part of

*the country by their cunning and wicked manouvres. If the Peshwas have done some wrong to us, let us not forget that they are our own kith and kin. Some day they may realise their follies and join hands with us to drive away these foreigners from our sacred land. Are these Britishers our kith and kin? Do they belong to our country? Thackeray and his sycophants are labouring under a great illusion that they can vanquish Kittur, a small state, in no time. They are certainly mistaken. They do not know that the people of Kittur love freedom more than life. This sacred land of Kittur has been sanctified by the blood of thousands of martyrs who have fought for independence and held its banner of freedom flying high all these years. We are no doubt a small state. Our army compared to the British may be small in number. But they are not mercenaries. Patriotism and the love of this sacred soil and love of freedom, flow in their veins. Each one of us is equal to ten of their soldiers. We will tell Mr Thackeray and Mr Chaplin that we will not submit to them whatever be the consequences. Kittur will fight to the last man on its soil. They would die rather than be slaves of the British.”*⁴⁰

The struggle per se involved two episodes. The first took place on 23 October 1824 which resulted in victory for Kittur and the second starting on 29 November, concluded on 5th December 1824 which resulted in defeat.

The Kittur garrison possessed 7,000 soldiers, 2,000 horses, 1,000 camels, 50 elephants, two 24 Pound brass guns and 14 other high calibre guns. Apart from this there were about 6,000 shetsanadies or armed retainers who were kept on a special land tenure. They were bound by the tenurial arrangement to serve the Desai when summoned, remaining as peasants at other times.⁴¹

Thackeray who had come to Kittur with a force of about 250 men in order to assume charge found that the fort was not complying to his directives, and further more, the gates were drawn against him on the second day. Thus he threatened to blow up the gates and take control by force. He backed his threats by positioning his guns at the unbudging gate.

Chennamma had by then decided to protect the fort. She ordered her forces to issue out of the gates and cut up the British threat. Wearing battle dress and observing the cavalry charge from the ramparts, she took Thackeray by surprise. The colonialists did not expect such a mark of defiance at that juncture, and in their thoroughly exposed state, their paltry force was routed. 80 British soldiers, a few officers and Thackaray were killed. Another 40 were taken prisoner.

Sadashiva Wodeyar tells us of how this victory was perceived. *“That night there was great jubilation in Kittur. There were celebrations of victory in the palace, the fort and the town.*

*The ramparts of the fort were illuminated and the sound of bugles announcing the great victory rent the air, resounded in the ramparts of the fort and echoed across the green hills and valleys surrounding Kittur.”*⁴² Sadashiva shared the perception of the Kittur court when he

added. *“The gallant soldiers of Kittur had won a great victory in their fight against the mighty British, and had completely vanquished them.”*⁴³

While the death of British soldiers aroused panic among the lower echelons of the bureaucracy, Elphinstone, the Governor of Bombay, did not fear the incident in itself as much as its potential to spread. He wholly backed Thackeray’s actions but only felt that it was foolhardy on his part not to have achieved his goal with a stronger force.⁴⁴

In the month that elapsed before the second episode, Chennamma progressed by anticipating two contradictory possibilities, and the British colonialists on their part progressed with singular intent.

While appealing for British condescension and recognition of the adopted son as heir to Kittur, there was also desperate preparation for war. The shetsanadies were sent for and about 5,000 of them assembled in due course and she looked for support from other former Peshwaite vassals, who, just like her deceased husband, now served the British. By the end of November the Kittur fort contained around 12,000 fighting men. Meanwhile Chennamma sought to appease the colonialists by releasing the British hostages she had taken. But as it gradually dawned upon her that the British were looking for battle, she lost hope in them and put up a fight.

At this crucial moment, Chennamma could have surrendered. She could have bowed to the British and lowered the drawbridge for them. Yet she chose to fight. And that was what made a world of a difference. She hemmed in her troops and lost the battle all right. But she went down in history as a courageous woman, a Rani who challenged colonialism. She struck a contrast to British puppets such as the Wodeyars.

The British on their part used the month after the first episode to undertake an extensive mobilisation of their forces so as not to repeat the mistake that Thackeray had made. Nearly 25,000 British troops encircled Kittur for which the Mysore puppet, KR Wodeyar III, sent 2 guns, 700 infantry and 2,000 cavalry as his treacherous contribution for the colonial carnage that followed.⁴⁵

The outer posts fell under British fire. The entire Kittur army retreated to the fort, after the pounding of which, large numbers were massacred on 5 December. The town was looted, the palace razed to the ground, and its wooden columns auctioned by the colonialists. Kittur saw a repeat of the orgy that had taken place a quarter century ago at Srirangapatna; just as in so many other places in India. It was not for nothing that Karl Marx, while writing about the British in India, said: *“The profound hypocrisy and inherent barbarism of bourgeois civilization lies unveiled before our eyes, turning from its home, where it assumes respectable forms, to the colonies, where it goes naked.”*⁴⁶

Chennamma unceremoniously signed the accession of Kittur to the British and she was imprisoned at Bailhongal where she died forlorn and at a young age in 1829.

But that was not the last that was heard of Kittur. In 1830 there was Sangolli Rayanna's guerrilla war. In 1833 Shankaranna led a rebellion. Narappa Ganapathy, Sheik Suleiman, Nagappa Beda, Navay Shetty and Rudrappa Kotagi attempted to gain Portuguese support for their revolt.⁴⁷

7. BELAGUTI (1835)

Belagutti was granted as an inam village to Venkatappa Nayak in 1804 by KR Wodeyar III. In addition, for Venkatappa's son Thimma Nayak's daily requirements of milk and butter, the King also made an annual grant of 221 Varahas. But this was discontinued by the British later. In 1830, Thimmappa Nayak wrote of his poverty and asked for the reinstatement of his former jagir. But the British did not respond. In 1830, Budi Basappa, the leader of the Nagar uprising visited Belagutti and assured Thimmappa that he would regrant the jagir on his victory. Thimmappa Nayak extended his support for the Nagar uprising.⁴⁸

In May 1835, two years after the Nagar insurrection was quelled, the British turned their attention on an insurgent Belagutti. "*Thimappa Naik and Mariappa Naik installed the son of the former, named Digambarappa as paleger of Balagutti in the present Honnali taluk...*"⁴⁹ But this minor uprising was easily put down by the British army stationed in Mysore.

8. BADAMI (1840)

Krishna Rao and Halappa give us the following account culled from British records. "*Nimbaji or Narsappa, a Brahmi...had an interview with the Chatrapati at Nimb, when the latter was being taken to Kasi. He toured the districts of Ahmednagar, Poona, Nasik and Raichoor, and contacted at Shorapore, an Arab Jamadar Salim Bin Asood alias Koheran. With the help of Koheran and of another Arab, Talib Bin Ali, he collected more than a thousand men for his army at Deodurg (Raichur) and from there marched towards Badami fort which had remained neglected by the British. The insurgents killed the guards and captured the fort. Narsingrao hoisted the flag of the Satara Raja and started ruling the fort as a sub-division. But the Company's troops from Karwar and Belgaum were sent immediately to Badami and the fort was taken back by the British. Narasingrao captured with his Arab friends and troopers, was taken to Belgaum and sentenced to death. But due to his blindness, the sentence was later changed to life transportation. It appears that Narsingrao was confined in the Ahmedabad jail where he died in 1862.*"⁵⁰

9. NIPPANI (1841)

Stokes in his *Historical Account of Belgaum*, tells us of another uprising under feudal leadership in Nippani in 1841. Raghunatha Rao, with the aid of 300 Arabs who were in the service of the Desai took “possession of the fort, and set the authorities at defiance. The aid of the military had to be called in before the fort submitted. It was attacked on the 20th Feb 1841, and surrendered on the following day. The ring leaders were punished...”⁵¹

10. CHITRADURGA (1849)

Shama Rao says “In 1849 a member of the family of the Palegar of Chitaldrug attempted to raise a rebellion. But the rising was easily suppressed as no interest was evinced in the family by the people in general.”⁵²

11. BIDAR (1852)

Krishna Rao and Halappa write: “Trouble broke out in the Bidar district again in 1852, when one Lingappa rose in rebellion. A number of places had been captured by the insurgents in the district. The contingent troops marched against the insurgents and were in action against them from the 19th of March to the 24th of March 1852. The rebellion was put down and the forts of Swergaum, Dowbe, Kookulgung, Boorke, Julecte, Daplea and Huludsirana were captured and destroyed”.⁵³

These were then some of the struggles that broke out under feudal leadership before the 1857 uprising. 1857 had its echo in Karnataka too. We shall not go into the details of each struggle since all of them were led by feudal lords or princes and met the same certain end which their predecessors had.

David Arnold in his book *Police Power and Colonial Rule* tells us that the situation in Bellary had become quite critical by the 1850s. He writes: “...while the state could scrupulously refrain from regulating the movement and pricing of grain, it was committed to intervene to save the traders from popular anger and demands. In September 1855 cavalry detachments patrolled Bellary district to discourage looting and the government warned that ‘all persons guilty of outrages on the property of grain dealers will be severely dealt with’.”⁵⁴

Thus Bellary had reached a point where the people, hard pressed by 65 years of colonial plunder, were prepared to riot and rummage for grain.

However, the feudal lords who coordinated with the leaders of the 1857 War of Independence, hardly reflected on any of these problems of the people and confined their entire effort in waging fort-warfare against colonialism in order to retain their petty fiefdoms which were on the verge of relapsing into British hands.

The main leaders were Bhima Rao of Mundargi and Bhaskar Rao or Baba Saheb of Nargund—both of Dharwad; and the Beda king Venkatappa Nayak of Surpur from Gulbarga. With them they had the Deshmukh of Jambgi in Hippargi taluk, Bijapur, Kenchanna Gowda Desai of Hammigi, Sortur Desai, Dumbal Desai, the Raja of Toranagal and Kenchanagowda of Koppal. They had coordinated their activities with Nana Saheb. However, their plans to undertake a simultaneous struggle failed, and face to face with the enemy, they battled the British. But they were defeated in quick succession.

There is a pattern to the geographic dispersal of the struggles waged by the feudal lords. They are concentrated in the Bombay Presidency and the Hyderabad Nizam's dominions. This once again confirms the point we made in *Volume I* about the elimination of the palegara stratum of the feudal class by Chikkadevaraja Wodeyar in the late seventeenth century and by Haidar Ali and Tipu Sultan in the final decades of the eighteenth century. Struggles by the feudal lords were very few in the core area of the Mysore Kingdom of the late eighteenth century, simply because the palegaras had already been eliminated as a class in this region.

There were few important factors which impelled these former palegaras into a clash with the British. On the one hand, there was the general historic fact, as we have seen in Chapter II, of the British alliance with feudalism. But within this generality, on the other hand, there was an exceptional trend which showed up intermittently during the first six decades of British rule over Karnataka. A section of feudal lords resorted to a life-and-death struggle with the British. How does one answer this? And, should this dispute the fact that the British had forged a firm alliance with the feudal cr me?

It must not be forgotten that all feudal lords that fought the British, had, in the initial days, signed agreements with the British. However, they realized little, at that point of time, that the British were going to be very unlike former feudal kings of India. The British, in the course of the alliance made with the feudal crust, also initiated a process of remoulding them. With this, the deshgathis and palegaras lost a fair part of their armies as much as they forfeited some of their privileges and at times, exalted titles and status. Those that signed subsidiary treaties were subject to the irritant of regular inspection and direction by the British administration. And finally, those without a male heir had to forego dynastic continuity and forsake their principalities altogether. While most lords agreed to this remoulding, there were a few who could not come to terms with this altered mode of existence.

There was another factor too which operated simultaneously. The alliance with the British, as we have already seen in Part I, implied a heavy financial price. Former palegaras had to pay unprecedented and high annual tributes. Hence they imposed new and vexatious modes of taxation. The peasantry, artisans and small merchants were squeezed with each passing year. There was also the growing pauperization of the masses as a result of the import of British manufacture. The condition of the masses deteriorated and at a time of famine, the yoke became

simply unbearable. The people were restive. The feudal lords knew this. And a few among them, who could not accommodate to the remoulding, tried to channelise this crisis against the British.

With the loss of privilege and as overlords of a mass that was seething with anger, some of them chose war. They emerged as exceptions to the general alliance between colonialism and feudalism. They peppered Karnataka's past with exceptionally brave deeds.

All these struggles led by the palegara class displayed a common pattern. They were far removed from one another, they were spread out by time and had little mutual coordination. The inability to achieve coordination with other struggles was a result of the class nature of the leadership. It operated within the parameters of its world. And its world was its cluster of villages or at best, its fiefdom. The feudal class leadership also imposed a self-inhibiting pattern of struggle. All these struggles were a replication, some like Kittur, on a larger scale, with the same old class imprint, and failed to demonstrate any progression. What more could one have expected from a class which was exhausted and quitting the historic scene when suddenly confronted by colonialism? As a class it latched on to the colonial straw, and those desperate members who still sought their former privileges fought a battle, which, despite the inherent historic advance, ended in quick defeat. These struggles draw a striking contrast with those which the peasantry led. They speak volumes on the relationship between class leadership and the generation of an anticolonial consciousness.

What then were the characteristics of these struggles led by a feudal leadership? They had three distinct features. Firstly, they failed to mobilise the peasant masses; secondly they were shortlived; and thirdly, they fought a feudal form of fort-based warfare against an enemy which had stormed the manors of the lords and the fortresses of the dukes and barons way back during the English bourgeois revolution starting from the 1640s.

The anger of the masses was not adequately channelised into war by the feudal leadership. Beyond rallying the shetsanadies to the precincts of their fortresses, the role of the soldiers was not unleashed. The practical backing of the masses was not obtained. Hence the masses remained, despite their anger for the British, neutral and passive. This was the principal cause for defeat. At other times, the feudal class which had since time immemorial been the oppressors of the peasant masses failed to arouse much sympathy. The peasant masses viewed their wars with suspicion. In fact, the wars which the palegara class had formerly waged were a burden on the artisans and peasantry. Hence the peasant masses were not in a volatile mood ready to jump at the first opportunity to fight the colonialists under their leadership. This isolation of the feudal class, which is but 'natural', owing to its exploitative origins, largely restricted the scope of these armed struggles, making them at best, brilliant acts of isolated chivalry.

The second feature was their infantile mortality. These struggles suffered defeat no sooner than they were born and failed to persist. Some lasted for just a few days; the others, at most, a few months. Even this relative longevity was not on account of their tenacity and ability to battle the enemy for long but because the enemy was engaged otherwise and needed time to muster the requisite forces. Most of these struggles which succeeded when the enemy was either not present or was weakly represented, floundered in the face of colonialism's first concerted attack. This failure on their part to sustain themselves against the onslaught of the enemy was another major factor which prevented them from achieving any noticeable degree of mass support. The reasons for this debility on part of these insurrections were, on the one hand, a result of the first characteristic, ie, their inability to garner popular support and on the other—which incidentally leads us also to the third characteristic: the form of warfare its proponents waged.

Starting from the time of Chikkadevaraja Wodeyar, the gradual irrelevance of the feudal form of warfare made it a defunct mode of military means. Haidar made significant changes to this and innovated with new forms of warfare which Tipu later theorised, ushering in a modern era of military science with the rise of the modern state. The modern all-India state which colonialism had created had already accumulated the experience of suppressing the feudal mode of warfare in the rising capitalist class's fight against feudalism in Britain and their military ravages against recalcitrant feudal lords in India. These 'hill chiefs' became sitting ducks to the anti-palegara wave undertaken by Haidar and Tipu. The palegaras ensconced themselves in their fortresses making their encirclement easy and thus committed their harakiri on a social scale. Being the class that it was, it could hardly draw lessons from history. In resisting the British, and proclaiming its independence, it resorted to the same old suicidal mode of warfare. In the case of Chennamma, the summoning of her shetsanadies on an extensive scale to the fort, only led to the entombment of her massive fighting force. This in turn restricted their freedom to act or manouvre. The mode of fort warfare could yield to nothing but instant death. It was a suicidal form of warfare emerging from a class which was all but spent and a dying historic force. Thus the jubilation that rent the Kittur fortress on its first victory was only a decadent illusion, a bubble that was to effortlessly burst. The feudal class, by concentrating all its forces including the peasant armed retainers within the precincts of the fort, was, leave alone the task of arousing the peasantry, only drawing itself further away from even an accidental possibility of mobilising them. Thus, often, even before the peasantry could find an opportune opening to intervene with its own antifeudal anticolonial aspirations, the struggle was lost and the cumulative anticolonial fighting consciousness that the sacrifice ought to have generated was unfortunately wasted. Frederick Engels had rightly said: "*Nothing is more dependent on economic preconditions than precisely the army and navy. Their armaments, composition, organization, tactics and strategy depend above all on the stage reached at the time in production and communications.*"⁵⁵

Thus for reasons which stemmed from the class nature of the leadership, the armed struggles against colonialism led by the feudal class, though progressive in an objective historic sense, ended in quick defeat.

Chapter VI

PEASANTRY WIELDS THE GUN

The third type of armed resistance was that in which the peasantry took the initiative. This was the most glorious aspect of the liberation struggle of Karnataka during the first half of the nineteenth century. The peasant masses of Karnataka illumined the path of anticolonial struggle. They threw up their heroes. Sangolli Rayanna was the foremost among them. Their struggle attacked both colonialism and its feudal props and charted the course of guerrilla warfare based on the peasantry as a way out for liberation. Let us study three important struggles of this type occurring as a continuous movement, in succession, within a short span of eight years between 1829 and 1837—Sangolli Rayanna’s guerrilla war, the Nagar armed rebellion and the armed struggle led by Kalyanaswamy—and seek lessons from this rich experience of the peasant masses of Karnataka. After all, is it not with blood and tears; the sacrifice of what is most precious—life—that history enriches posterity?

1. SANGOLLI RAYANNA’S GUERRILLA WAR (1829-30)

Rayanna belonged to Sangolli village in the Kittur *samsthana*. He was a shetsanadie or armed retainer of the Kittur Desai, holding a few acres of land on military tenure. This middle peasant of the backward Dhangar or Kuruba caste was also, on account of this, the watchman of the village. At 29, Rayanna had responded to the call of Chennamma and was one among the 5,000 armed retainers to flock to Kittur and partake in the struggle against British colonialism. Rayanna was arrested after the Kittur uprising was quelled and released with a warning on grounds of a general clemency granted to most prisoners in 1826. He was witness to the imprisonment of Chennamma whom he had occasion to meet after her confinement in Bailhongal, posing as a peasant relative of hers, and drew inspiration from her longing for the repossession of Kittur.

On his return to Sangolli, his anger against the feudal-colonial masters only multiplied. After Kittur came under the direct administration of Bombay, Company sharks undertook a land revenue settlement of the territories. We have already seen earlier in this volume as to how colonialism connived with local feudal forces while making the tenurial assessments and thus increased the feudal stranglehold on the peasant masses throughout Karnataka. Encouraged by the local Kulkarni, half of Sangolli Rayanna’s lands were confiscated and on the remaining half, a heavy rent was imposed.⁵⁶ Similar must have been the fate of another armed retainer, Muntguttee of Sangolli. Then, as Rayanna himself recounted, “*exasperated by a quarrel which he had with the Kulakarni of his village*”, he not only lost his land but also lost all opportunity of living unharmed in the village and along with Muntguttee left the village altogether.⁵⁷

Thus, while Rayanna fought with the articulate political demand of restoring the Kittur principality to the adopted son of Chennamma, which remained the influence of feudalism on his consciousness; he was by doing so only in fact at the same time expressing an unarticulated antifeudal and anticolonial aspiration, attacking the cruel rack-rent of revenue farmers, and centered on the question of land for the pauperised and burdened peasantry. To see the overt and miss the covert, as historians writing of the period have generally succumbed to; is to miss out the masses while seeing only the escapades of feudal kings and queens in our past; is to miss out the cause—the class cause—motivating the broad masses to act and make history. Being a retainer, that is, both peasant and soldier at the same time, Rayanna who always bore the weapon in the service of the feudal class, this time armed with a powerful antifeudal and anticolonial consciousness, wielded the matchlock with a new purpose, a purpose which served the masses of the peasantry too. It was this purpose and determination which made up the essentials of his ideology that helped Rayanna strike a chord among the marginalised, and, although only for a brief period of four months, yet he created an awakening and rallied the people such as the ranis and rajas never ever did.

There are two striking features about Rayanna and the struggle he led which bring forth, from a different angle, the popular antifeudal content.

Rayanna had a sense of popular justice. He had deep regard for the ordinary masses and he held them in high esteem. He was aware of his role as leader in checking and punishing the outrages conducted by his commanders and fighters against the people.

For instance, when Rayanna learned from an aged man that children and cattle were charred to death in a raid on Hadalagi conducted by Bapu Bhandari, he compensated the old man with money.⁵⁸

Similarly, when Rayanna came to know from an aged Brahmana woman that Bapu Bhandari had tied up and wanted to kill her husband, he immediately sent instructions to stop it. But by then it was too late. Later, Bapu Bhandari was punished and he died from a blow by one of Rayanna's men.⁵⁹

From Rayanna's statement, it is evident that he maintained a clean record of the money that was confiscated or collected. It is important to underscore in this context that he used money to buy food for his fighters. Neither did he pillage nor pilfer.

The other striking feature of Rayanna's struggle is that it had a broad caste composition. Of the list of 12 of his compatriots who were arrested by the British, five were Bedas, two were Lingayats, there was one Panchamasali, one Muslim, one Maratha, one Narvekar and one Jain.⁶⁰ Rayanna himself, as we have said, was a Kuruba. We also learn from the folk songs that Bovis were there among his men and that the Siddis, brought to Goa from Mozambique by the

Portuguese as slaves, and who inhabited the western fringes of Kittur, were his body guards. In fact Gajaveera, a Siddi, committed suicide after hearing of Rayanna's death.⁶¹

This broad composition, none of whom were landlords, is an objective reflection of the antifeudal basis and scope of the struggle.

It did not express itself merely as a passive 'nonfeudal' objective factor. Rayanna called for an end to seclusion among his men and introduced a life of inter-dining. He gave nonfeudal material an antifeudal twist.

These possibilities and features would not have blossomed if the movement had been under feudal hegemony.

Thus, having overcome these limitations of the feudal class, which always distanced itself from the peasant masses; under Rayanna, the basis for a peasant guerrilla war was laid. Let us now see how it was achieved.

A. From Small to Big

When Rayanna launched his first action, the burning of the Government office in Bidi, he had about 100 men with him and it was 5 January 1830. And, by the time he was captured on 8 April 1830, he had 1,000 fighters with him.⁶²

This was reflected in a letter written by Nisbet the Collector of Dharwad: "*The number of insurgents is without doubt rapidly increasing and there is reason to apprehend that if not immediately checked they may be joined by many others...*"⁶³

B. Rallying the Masses in Armed Actions

From Rayanna's staid 'confession' made at the Amildar's Court before his sentence was passed, we get a picture of how he mobilised the masses in these armed actions: "*People to the number of 1000 collected from the Malnad country. Having taken them with us we plundered and burnt Khanapur and returned to Shumshergurh. On that day about 3000 persons collected. We took them with us to Itgi and levied Rs 5000 from the Ryots [ie, landlords]*".⁶⁴

Thus the people were mobilised in armed actions that Rayanna led. Of the innumerable such actions that the guerrillas initiated, most were attacks on government property, burning of the new land records and the extraction of returns from notorious landlords and bureaucrats who had pillaged the people consequent to the onset of British rule. The fact that people participated in large numbers in these actions goes to demonstrate not just that guerrillas were addressing the burning issues of the masses, but also that in doing so, they mobilised the peasantry in such large numbers that no sooner that an action had been conducted and the guerrillas planned to leave the spot, they had already spontaneously recruited fighters for their cause. The raid on Sampgaon is

a case in point.⁶⁵ This pattern in their armed actions thus explains the rapid growth of Rayanna's force.

Popular support for Rayanna's armed uprising was also expressed in the noncooperation of the people and particularly the other shetsanadies who refused to share intelligence about Rayanna's movements with the government. When government forces were on his pursuit after the raid on Sampgaon, Nisbet, the Collector wrote: "*The Amildar and others repeat that the peons of some of the villages in that part of the country did not afford any assistance against the insurgents. They appear to act in concert with them, furnishing them with information and offering no resistance to their attacks....*"⁶⁶

Nisbet went on to observe that "*the whole of Shetsanadis throughout the Province*" were being engaged in the insurrection.⁶⁷

On 14 January, Nisbet wrote attesting the popular support for the struggle: "*People who actually saw the rebels on the road, would not tell us. The marauders are here, and there, for every where—we cannot as yet discover, who furnishes them with intelligence of our movements.*"⁶⁸

C. Putting Terrain to Good Use

The Kittur principality which encompassed parts of Belgaum, Dharwad, and Uttara Kannada districts was covered on its western part by the Malnad forest tract. The other directions were occupied by open country. Even as Chennamma's struggle broke out, the British were worried by its possible fall-out in Kittur's Malnad. However, the feudal perception of the Rani and her ministers prevented such utilisation of terrain. Yet the repeated anxiety which the British expressed in this regard came true in 1829-30. Elphinstone's very first minute on the outbreak of the Kittur insurrection reads: "*...Kittur is in the midst of the land of the jagirdars, not far from Kolhapur or from Waree, and close to the tract of wood and mountain which stretches between our territory and that of the Portuguese. It is therefore a situation where a jungle war could be long maintained and where it would be likely to spread unless soon got under*".⁶⁹

Sangolli Rayanna put the Malnad to use as a rear. He treated it as a point to reorganise his forces, rest and launch renewed attacks. The Malnad therefore served as a cover for retreat after attack; it served as a virtual fortress of the guerrillas to recoup and launch attacks on the enemy in the plains.

Krishna Rao and Hallappa inform us of how this was effectively done: "*The Amildars of Sampgaon, of Belgaum and Bidi under the guidance of the Dharwar Collector were pursuing Rayanna, who successfully evaded them. Rayanna and his followers spent their days in the hills... Krishna Rao the Amildar of Sampgaon exerted himself to the best of his capacity to capture Rayanna and was disappointed several times. As the regular troops were not well suited*

*for pursuing the Kittur warriors through the thickly wooded hilly country, the English officers and their supporters found it extremely difficult to overcome the Kittur hero”.*⁷⁰

In Rayanna’s ‘confession’ we observe how he utilised the terrain even in open country to his advantage. Interspersed as it was, with hills, Rayanna often used them as a retreat and a brief rendezvous from where, after drawing up final plans, a raid would be launched.

Further, good knowledge of the terrain always proved a great advantage in the face of enemy pursuit. We are told: *“Having burnt Khanapur, the Kittur patriots spread in many directions and continued their attacks... Rayanna came to Nandgad. The Commander of the Doab Field Force was requested by Nisbet to strengthen the detachment which had been sent to Nandgad to pursue Rayanna... The number of Rayanna’s men was now more than 500, and was daily increasing. Because of their local knowledge they had an advantage over the Government troops. Rayanna evaded the troops at Nandgad and turned eastward...”*⁷¹

D. Utilising the Cover of Darkness

Rayanna and his guerilla fighters had to always be mobile. They had to move away after launching raids on select targets, sometimes with the people and if it was an attack on the enemy’s forces, then without the people; so as to keep the enemy always off their back. In this they put darkness to good use leaving the pursuing enemy behind them by marching at night.

They also used the night to regroup and launch attacks by daybreak, taking the enemy unawares, as in the case of the Bidi attack which was conducted at 5-00 in the morning.⁷²

Again they also conducted ambushes at dusk so that darkness could be effectively utilised to cover their retreat. In a report to Col. Macleod made at 10-00 pm, Major Pickering whose force was ambushed, wrote: *“I was this evening attacked by a large body of rebels...they came on at sunset but for sometime after the night had set in remained firing at a distance and we were driven back by detached parties”.*⁷³

The insurgents experienced losses on two important occasions. The first was on 21 January at Goudalli when they raided camping enemy forces. It was afternoon. The battle dragged on for 45 minutes. And the guerrillas pulled off leaving 8 dead when they learned of the presence of more enemy forces.

Rayanna mentioned of the desertion of some forces following this. However, it did not take much time for him to recuperate. The 8 February encounter just outside Kittur also took place in broad daylight. Rayanna was not present in this fight, though most of his forces were.⁷⁴ In fact the enemy, superior in training, weapons and battle-field mobility caught the rebels in a pincer, leaving 78 dead, 36 injured and taking 85 captive. There were no deaths on the side of the government. It is not clear how long this encounter lasted. But the rebels *“surprised”* the

enemy by making their appearance in the outskirts of the chief city of the former kingdom, Kittur, at daytime.

Under similar circumstances, Rayanna had avoided an attack on Kittur in January, though he passed close to the town.

In his statement Rayanna also said that some leaders wanted to make a raid on Belgaum. *“But I discouraged it because it was not possible.”*⁷⁵

He obviously had an uncanny grasp of the principles of guerrilla warfare better than some of his lieutenants.

The setback at Kittur was made good in a short time and the guerrillas continued their struggle without repeating the mistake of attempting large towns and that too in broad daylight.

E. Small Sized Formation

In the initial stages when Rayanna’s forces were still small, he organised all of them into one single detachment. But by mid-January itself, we have reports that his force swelled to cross 500 men. In his later operations, he did not commit the mistake which Dhondia Waugh had done. He often split up his force, so that it generally did not cross a company size of 100 fighters and they operated simultaneously. For instance we are told: *“Rayanna and his followers spent their days in the hills and at night divided into organised parties in order to attack the Government forces”*.⁷⁶

Stokes confirms this when he says of Rayanna’s forces: *“The rest retired to Suttagatti, where they divided into two large bands, one of which returned with Rayappa to Kittur hill by Sangoli while the other looted and burned Marikatti”*.⁷⁷ Stokes says that in another instance: *“They spent the day in Balagunda and Handi Badaganath hills, and at night they divided into parties to loot”*.⁷⁸

Srinivasa Havanur has rightly observed that *“it was not his policy to build a big army and fight”*.⁷⁹

Sangolli Rayanna’s guerrilla army which operated on these principles, targeted the people’s enemies, starting from village usurers and landlords (who were also forced to pay for the cost of their war), to bureaucrats of the administration and the colonial army. The British were surely perplexed and knew very little of how to handle the situation. Stokes tells us: *“It was hoped at first that the rising might be put down without military force, but when Kittur shetsanadies refused to serve, and the disturbance continued increasing, it became necessary to obtain the services of strong detachments. These regular troops, however, as might be expected, were not found well suited for pursuing bands of robbers through close and difficult country”*.⁸⁰

Krishna Rao and Halappa have placed before us British correspondence which exclaims in panic at Rayanna's mode of war. The enemy was left with little peace and had to be on its toes to anticipate an attack at any moment and from any direction.

Realising their difficulty to quell the war by purely military means, they chose other methods: Infiltration appeared to be a sound option for defeating the peasant war.

British colonialism took the help of landlords and comprador bureaucrats, their reliable allies, in this task. Amildar Krishna Rao was their con man. The Khudnapur Patel, Lingana Gowda, sent emissaries to the rebels suggesting to join them with 300 men. Rayanna consented and for a fortnight after mid-March, Lingana Gowda partook in all the operations of the guerrilla force. Stokes narrates the rest: *"Then one day, when Rayappa had laid aside his arms and was bathing, Lakkappa, a Sanadi of Neginhal rushed suddenly on him and clasped him round the body, whilst another secured his weapons. The rest overwhelmed him, bound him hand and foot on a stretcher, and carried him in triumph to Dharwar"*.⁸¹ More than 400 guerrillas gave themselves up after Rayanna was captured.⁸²

Krishna Rao was given a hefty cash award. The landlords who had betrayed the peasant uprising were also rewarded by the British. They were given Rs 300 each and granted entire villages as inams. Lingana Gowda got Kaloli near Kittur and Yenkan Gauda got Dhori in Dharwad.⁸³

Rayanna and his comrades who hailed from Kuruba, Beda, Jain, Lingayat, Siddi, Muslim, Pancham Sali and other diverse castes, got death.

But in 1837-1838, there was a minor rebellion in Kittur. It was the fifth and the last of the tremors that shook Kittur. The revolt was put down. But the rebels saw to it that the treacherous Patel of Khudnapur, Lingana Gowda, was killed.⁸⁴ Karnataka history once again demonstrated how the masses have a way with destiny, how they go about with patience and hatred in settling scores with their enemies even in the face of defeat.



24. Banyan at the grave of Sangolli Rayanna bearing ritual flags and festoons

Sangolli Rayanna ‘confessed’ that he was not guilty and in his statement he left behind for the people of Karnataka, a detailed assertion of his actions. Stokes records that Rayanna was to be hanged at Nandagad, “*the scene of his chief robbery*” and, “*as he passed along the road to the gallows, he pointed out a spot for his burial, stating that a great tree would spring from his remains... and a magnificent banyan is now shown close to the road near Nandgad, as the one which grew from his grave*”.⁸⁵ Rayanna’s last wish was that of a modest peasant.

But it was also that of a thoroughgoing anti-colonialist. Just before he was hanged Rayanna said: “*My last wish is to be born again in this country to fight against the British and drive them away from the sacred soil.*”⁸⁶ Sangolli Rayanna became a martyr for the people’s cause. He became their hero. Scores of songs have been composed about him by folk singers and he became a symbol of their class aspirations and desires. Just as the humble seed buried at Nandagad began to sprout, the Nagar guerrilla war had broken out. Even before it put out its first

props, his sacrifice and the path he had charted was broadcast from the northern most tip of Karnataka's Malnad down the length of its 700 kilometre long course and the adjacent sprawling plains awakening the peasant masses from slumber as never before.

2. THE NAGAR PEASANT INSURRECTION (1830-33)

A. A Widespread Uprising

A widespread peasant insurrection broke out in several parts of Karnataka during 1830-33. It was popularly known as the Nagar peasant rebellion since it was most intense in the Nagar Foudari which included the districts of Shimoga and Chikmagalur. However, armed struggle had spread out at the same time to other districts as well. They were Uttara Kannada, Chitradurga, Tumkur, Hassan, Mysore, Mandya and Bangalore. There were mass struggles which hadn't yet assumed a violent form in Dakshina Kannada and Bellary districts. Raichur and Dharwad districts extended their support to the struggle in various ways. While the northern parts of Dharwad had had their uprising under Sangolli Rayanna, the southern parts were engaged on this occasion in extending support. Thus the Nagar peasant insurrection remained perhaps the most widespread antifeudal and anticolonial struggle not only in Karnataka but also in India during the initial decades of conquest by British colonialism of our land.

B. Role of Landlords in Causing the Outbreak

The independent assertion of peasants against colonialism came after it was initiated by a section of the feudal lords themselves. We have seen how Chennamma's struggle and the feudal class demand that she raised served also as the apparent demand for the participation of the peasant masses. But the peasantry, in doing so, placed their own independent antifeudal and anticolonial class demands which ultimately remained the underlying crux in releasing and sustaining their initiative, creativity and valour.

In the case of Sangolli Rayanna's struggle the peasantry's class perspective was couched in a feudal political idiom. The masses demanded restoration of the Kittur state. Similarly in the case of the Nagar uprising, the peasantry located its antifeudal anticolonial aspirations within a political framework. They recognized Budibasappa Nayaka as the heir of the Ikkeri kings and sought the restoration of Ikkeri rule over Nagar.

However, in the case of the Nagar rebellion the first step was not taken by a section of landlords or pategaras who fell out with colonialism. That was to come a bit later. Rather, the first step was initiated by a section of the reactionary comprador-feudal bureaucrats. By the turn of the 1820's, in the context of the gathering of a pervasive crisis, the contesting ruling factions and caucuses locked horns in the royal court.

Explaining the contributory causes for the insurrection, Shama Rao says: *“Through Bhakshi Rama Rao’s influence both when he was Foujdar of Nagar as well as after he became attached to the court of Krishnaraja Wodeyar in various capacities all the important situations in the Foujdari had come to be occupied, as we have seen, by his relations belonging both to his own family as well as the Annigere and Hangal families and a family party was thus formed with powerful interests of their own and this party continued to maintain its position till the beginning of the insurrection in 1830. Many of the members of this party were, it was believed, given to commit embezzlement and frauds of various kinds and were also suspected of being in league with gangs of robbers who had sought assylum in jungles in that part of the country. In the village of Chetnahalli in the Honnali taluk some families of Thugs or Phasegars, as they were locally called, had settled for several years and about the year 1820 a great number more came from the Southern Mahratta country and also settled in the neighbourhood. Another still more numerous gang from North Arcot and the neighbourhood of Bangalore settled at Luckwalli situated at some distance from Tarikere. Among these people were found some of the most notorious robbers who were suspected of receiving encouragement from the members of the above powerful family. As an instance it may be stated that in January 1827 a rich merchant’s house in the town of Yedehalli (now called Narasimharajapur) was broken into, several persons were killed, and property was carried off to the amount of about three lakhs and a half of rupees and at the time the belief prevailed throughout the country that the gang of robbers employed on this occasion was directed by Aunnigere Venkata Rao, Amildar of Chennagiri, supported by his relative Hangal Krishna Rao, then Foujdar of Nagar. This belief among the people as well as the frequent gang robberies that occurred in various parts of the country accelerated the occurrence of the agrarian revolt on a wider scale than it could have been otherwise possible”.*⁸⁶

Earlier in this *Volume* we saw how Krishna Rao, the notorious Foujdar of Nagar, mobilised the people to revolt in order to oust Veera Raj Urs who was nominated in his place.

Thus the dog-fight within the comprador-feudal bureaucracy assumed openly violent forms. They began to increasingly rely on the peasant masses and drew them into its vortex. The so-called ‘thugs’ and ‘robbers’ that Shama Rao speaks could well have been people who had migrated out of impoverishment.

However, once Krishna Rao’s demand was fulfilled, Budi Basappa Nayak, one of those cultivated by the Amildars assumed leadership and channelised the struggle. Shama Rao says that Budi Basappa’s original name was Hygamalla, who *“was a cultivator by occupation and who calling himself Budi Basappa advanced a claim to the Gadi of Nagar as being the adopted son of the last Raja of Nagar. In reality, however, he was an imposter and was a native of the village of Chinikatte near Honnali where his mother and elder brother lived.*

*From his early boyhood Hygamalla had led a wandering life and had found agreeable comrades among the Thugs who lived in the neighbourhood of his native village”.*⁸⁷

MH Gopal adds: *“Before he was 20 years old, he had committed several robberies and spent two years in jail. He was afterwards taken into the service of an old jangam...who had been the spiritual guide of the last **Poligar** of Nagar and who had the **Poligar’s** seal rings. Sadara Malla [Hygamalla] or as he came to be called, Budi Basavappa got possession of these signets and secretly spread a story that he was a descendant of the Nagar **Poligars**. About 1812 [1821?] he had been imprisoned for a long time in Canara for robbery, and on his release, stating himself to be the son of Dodda Basavappa, the adopted son of the late **Rani** of Nagar, he secured a passport from the Canara jilla court as Budi Basavappa **Nagar Khavind** or lord of Nagar. In April 1830, on his marriage, he was recognised, probably deliberately, by the Amildar of Anwatti as the ‘Raja of Nagar’, a district which for some years had been distracted by robberies and dacoities. Sometime later he was formally installed by some of the Patels as the sovereign of Nagar. These proceedings seem to have had the support of some of the Government officials in the foudari who were the adherents of Rama Rao, the ex-Diwan and who were opposed to the Foudar Vira Raj Urs who had displaced Krishna Rao, Rama Rao’s nephew in that office.*

Meanwhile the attempt of Vira Raj to recover some of the balances remitted by Rama Rao in 1827, the unfavourable seasons in 1826-28, the general oppression and corruption prevalent in the Nagar foudari and the insecurity of life and property had created general alarm and discontent in Nagar. Taking advantage of this, Basavappa spread the news that he had assumed the sovereignty of the country and promised the ryots ‘full remission of all balances and a reduction of the government demand on their lands to only one rupee for each Pagoda they then paid, if they would espouse his cause’.

*He then began raising levies of armed men...”*⁸⁸

While Budi Basavappa’s writ prevailed in Nagar as a whole, in Chickmagalur it was the leadership of Rangappa Nayak, the palegara of Tarikere and that of his family who formerly served under the Ikkeri dynasty, that dominated.

Of this aspiring palegara, Shama Rao says:

*“The second person who gave support to the discontent of the ryots was Rangappa Naik, head of the Tarikere palegar’s family. It was usual at that time to require all the displaced palegars or their descendants to reside at the capital of the State. Accordingly, this Rangappa Naik lived at Mysore. Becoming aware of the discontent in the Nagar Division, he obtaining permission on the pretext of a marriage at Tarikere had left Mysore... On reaching Tarikere he falsely informed the people of the villages that the Maharaja of Mysore with the assent of the Company had given back his ancestral territory to him for the purpose of establishing order and tranquility and that if they assisted him in that task he would remit a part of the taxes...”*⁸⁹

Thus there was a noticeable change that took place. As long as the corrupt comprador-feudal bureaucrats led the revolt, it had no popular demands, and served the exclusive interest of one faction of the reactionaries against the other. However, with the restoration of Krishna Rao in power, there was a bend in events. New leaders emerged: Budi Basappa and Rangappa. Both were motivated by feudal class interests. Yet, this time they took up the issues of the peasant masses and articulated them in clear terms. They were compelled to speak of clear cut solutions to the people's problems. Thus the peasant masses rallied behind them and fought for their claims to power; since by this, and this alone, they felt their burdens could be alleviated.

C. The First Wave: Mass Awakening with *Koota* as the Basic Form

The struggle per se took place in three waves. The first was that of mass struggles; the second, of mass actions, and; the third, when armed struggle predominated.

The mass struggle started in early 1830 and assumed a host of forms. The most important of these, however, was the *koota* or simply 'gathering'. The mass awakening was ignited through their assembly into kootas which was a broad forum to organize the masses. While it appears that the *koota* emerged as a spontaneous form in the process of the Nagar rebellion, Shyam Bhat's exposition of it as it occurred in the Karavali makes it out to be a form of a general nature and antiquity in Karnataka. Thus while the struggles might have been spontaneous, the form was quite well developed. This only goes to show that the peasantry in its long history of class struggles and uprisings had also thrown up, as part of its antifeudal fighting history, forms of struggle which continued well into the new era and began to, at the same time, also question colonialism.

The word *koota* in Kannada more often than not connotes a negative sense like the word "gang" would, for instance, signify in English. This value loaded signification of the word sheds light on the fact that the *koota* ought to have been a form which the peasantry must have repeatedly resorted to, or else why would the feudal classes have nourished dislike for it and inverted its original positive sense? Furthermore, we learn from Suryanath Kamath that *koota yudhdha* was the Kannada term to describe guerrilla warfare.⁹⁰ And did not guerilla warfare develop in history as the warfare of a rebellious peasantry?

Let us look at the accumulation of peasant anger in the case of Karnataka's coastal districts first before coming to the Nagar uprising per se and see how the *koota* emerged as the principal form of struggle at this stage. Shyam Bhat tells us:

"The peasant uprisings of 1830-31 is also popular as the 'Koot rebellion'. In the context of South Kanara, koots refer to unions or assemblages of peasants expressing their grievances against and seeking redress from the Company Government. The vital factor involved in this peasant uprising was that of land revenue which was a matter of conflict between the peasants and the Company Government..."

The signs of the peasant unrest could be seen in the closing months of 1830, when the ryots gave general petitions complaining of their losses. But they developed and came to the fore in the beginning months of 1831. The ryots of Kasargod, Kumbbla, Mogral, Manjeshwar, Bungra-Manjeshwar and Talapady sent general arzees (petitions) and complaints of their losses to Dickinson the Collector of South Kanara...

In their petitions, the ryots not only complained about the harsh revenue assessment of November 1830, but they also demanded remission to them all at a uniform rate...

In the second stage, that is by the beginning of January 1831, the ryots started their Koots or assemblages. These Koots were assemblages or unions of leaders and active supporters of the peasant movement...

It was in Bekal (Kasargod) that the Koots started in the first week of January 1831 and within a few days it spread to the northern parts of Kanara...

*Barkur, Brahmavar, Buntwal, Madhur, Manjeshwar, Mulki, Kadri, Kumbbla, Malluly (Malali?), Wamanjoor, Mogral, Udyawar, Uppinangadi and Vittal were some of the important places where the ryots of the respective regions had assembled in Koots or assemblages. The Koots extended to North Kanara also. Manjunatha temple at Kadri was the centre of these peasant uprisings, where the Grand Koot [**Maha Koota**] was organised towards the end of January 1831. Ryots from other important centres of the district such as Kasargod and Buntwal came and met at Kadri. The Venkataramana temple at Basrur, the Mahamayi temple at Mangalore, the temple at Manjeshwar and another temple at Wamanjoor were some of the important centres of the Koot...*

In the South Kanara, the situation was quite different and Hindu religious leaders never had any link with the peasant uprisings. The comparison holds good only as far as the use of these religious institutions are concerned, i.e, as meeting centres of the ryots...

In order to organise these Koots the ryots maintained one Patel and two head ryots in each of the villages. There were separate Headmen for the maganes. When any aspect was discussed and plan or action was proposed in the Koots, these leaders disseminated them to the ryots in the villages. Further, each of the Koots had its own leaders and all of them met and discussed (at the Grand Koot in Kadri). The organisers of these Koots also made use of a 'Secret Council'. It comprised two or three Muktesars (head ryots) of each Magane. The object of this Council was to maintain the secrecy of the whole organisational affair of the Koots. However, the result of the deliberations of this Council was communicated to the various assemblies or Koots. Thus the Secret Council played the role of a linking and organising body in these peasant uprisings. It in fact acted as a think-tank of the rebellion. Further, anonymous pamphlets were made use of by the leaders to spread their ideas and programmes among the ryots. Such papers were circulated in the various Koots.

The participants in these Koots at times made bold to attack the Government servants. Before Dickinson left Kundapura for Mangalore at the end of January 1831 he received reports from the Tahsildar of Barkur that the ryots of that taluk had assembled in Koot and had assaulted some of the public servants. The report of the Tahsildar of Barkur says that a Magane Shanbogue, deputed to read a proclamation was severely assaulted. Again at Mulki the ryots roughed up an Ameen who had been sent to read them the proclamation issued by the Government. The ryots were thus determined to refuse the kists to the Government, until a fresh settlement was made, and their mood was so defiant that they unhesitatingly attacked those public servants whom they feared not long back. The growing sense of unity among themselves and faith in their organisational strength had emboldened them to take such postures of defiance. The peasant intransigence which surfaced in the month of November 1830 continued up to the end of March 1831. It was after Cameron's promise (March 1831) to the ryots that their petitions would be considered and remissions would be made after an examination of their losses to redress their hardships that they dispersed and stopped organising the Koots. Thus by April 1831 the rumblings of Koot rebellions died down".⁹¹

This was then what happened in Dakshina Kannada. From Shyam Bhat's explanation we find that the koota was not only a conscious form of organisation of the peasantry but that it also had a centralised structure of its own. In the Karavali tract, however, the koota form did not graduate into armed struggle due to the assurances which the British government gave its leaders, and having seen the already explosive situation, in Nagar, they didn't want to have a mess at all places at the same time. A letter of the Acting Chief Secretary to the Governor General written on 16 May 1831 warned: *"The northern districts are already in a flame, extending to the Company's districts of Kanara, Bilghee and Soonda...*

The extension of the rebellion to Kanara is not I think in consequence of that district having been in former times a part of the Raja of Bednoor, but because the people cannot any longer pay our high assessment, which it seems has been kept up though the prices of produce have fallen very much. We shall be obliged to grant remissions in that district and in those above the Ghats, but this will of course be done on the merits of the case itself, and if practicable in no way mixed up with the concern of Mysore, here the discontent is, it may be hoped, occasioned by causes altogether different. But the apparent connection of the rebellion with Kanara and the risk of its extension to Malabar are strong grounds for an early settlement in Kanara..."⁹²

In Bellary too the situation was volatile. However, we don't know for certain if the peasantry had resorted to the koota form or not. Yet, the anger is writ large. Munro, on his visit to the district in 1824 had this to say: *"The crowds of ryots who assembled every evening at my tent to complain of the waste [fallow land that was taxed], rather resembled a mob than an ordinary party of complainants".⁹³*

In the mass struggle that commenced in 1830 in the Mysore principality, it is not clear as to how exactly the koota was structured on an all-Mysore basis. Yet its basic organisational form is evident from the following letter of Casamajor, the Resident at Mysore, to the Chief Secretary in Fort William, Calcutta, on 5 January 1831: *“I regret to report that the disaffection among the inhabitants has been very general, the Head Potails of Talooks conjugated in bodies called ‘Cootum’ with two or three thousand ryots in each, the parties corresponded with each other and persecuted those who from better dispositions were unwilling to combine against the Circar officers”*.⁹⁴

From this it is clear that the koota had achieved centralisation upto the taluka level, coming to represent the thousands of peasant members in the village kootas.

Sebastian tells us: *“Chenagerry riots were the first to assemble in ‘cootum’ to resist the authority of the Government. This was followed soon by the peasants of Buswencottah, Shimoga, Holyhonnur, Ananthapur, Terrikerry and Anwutty in rapid succession... The ryots of the talooks of Chitradurga, Holalkera, Hosdoorg and Cayeconda raised a Cootum (Assembly) and insisted on the Amildar and Shiristedar for returning them their amounts which they had paid on account of taxes and bribes...*

In the meanwhile the ryots of Hassan taluk received [pamphlets?] asking them to join the Cootum and to refuse to pay the revenue...

By the end of 1830 the revolt assumed a new dimension. It was no more limited to Nagar and the surrounding areas. In a letter the Fouzdar of Bangalore dated 4 [Jan?] 1831 wrote that there was a huge crowd of 5,000 ryots at Devaruvasahally on their way to Tumkur...

On 16, December 1830 the Fouzdar of Bangalore in a letter to the Maharaja of Mysore states that the people in the district attached to the Bangalore Collectorate had arisen enmasse and were in a state of revolt”.⁹⁵

The election of an executive council, with Manappa in the lead in a massive rally held at Hosanthe village on 23 August 1830 indicates the degree of centralization that was achieved above the district level.

Thus the koota which survived from early 1830 till December 1830 aroused the peasantry on an extensive scale. In the koota one observes the workings of peasant democracy, quite in contrast to feudal norms which dominated the social system. Kootas had been mass assemblies of the peasantry conducted at each village in which the demands of peasant masses were clearly put forth. These demands were then centralised at the taluk level by representatives of the village kootas and they placed their demands before the Amildars. As the peasant masses moved to the taluk centres to forward their demands to the Amildars, the koota form of struggle underwent a transition, passing on to different types of mass action.

D. Class Demands of the Peasantry

Budi Basappa toured a fair part of the former Nagar dominions in 1830. He appointed Manappa as his representative. Manappa has also been addressed as Budi Basappa's "*commander-in-chief*".⁹⁶

On 23 August 1830, a rally was called for at Hosanthe village, near Anandapura in Shimoga district. Thousands of peasants participated in it. Ramabhata writes that hundreds of bullock carts filled the fields of Hosanthe. Peasants had come from Dharwad and Bellary districts too.

This massive demonstration passed a charter unanimously. It said:

- The peasant organization must be built everywhere.
- The struggle must be advanced till the demands were accomplished.
- Government officials must be prevented from entering villages.
- Revenue payment to the government must be stopped.
- The government must recognize that the "tiller is the owner" of land.
- Land must be returned to those tenants who had forfeited it.

A letter was drafted for the King and the thousands that had gathered, signed it. Also, separate letters were drafted for the Foujdars of the three divisions—Nagar, Chitradurga and Ashthagram.

The rally elected a 10 member executive council of peasant leaders to assist Manappa and to tour the other territories of the Kingdom. Horses were allocated for each of these leaders.

Soon afterwards, Manappa and five other elected leaders reached Mysore to meet the King. Their letter included the following demands:

- Cultivated lands should be handed back to the peasants.
- The system of tenancy should be stopped.
- Auctioned lands should be returned to their former owners.
- All loans and revenue arrears due to the government must be waived.
- Peasants must be given additional lands to cultivate, depending upon the size of their families.
- Lands lying fallow must be distributed to the peasants.

- Government must provide financial aid directly to the peasants.
- Government must forward takavi loans for the purchase of seed and cattle for the next five years.
- The sharat system of revenue collection must be immediately abolished.
- Revenue must not be collected for the next 10 years, till the peasants were able to recover from their dire conditions.
- The struggle would continue till the above demands were accomplished.⁹⁷

It was a package of democratic agrarian reform.

Naturally, the King expressed his inability to meet these demands.

On its circuitous way back, the delegation led by Manappa, met peasants in Mysore, Mandya, Tumkur, Hassan and Chikmagalur.

Budi Basappa Nayaka however promised to meet all these demands if he was installed in power. He had obviously won the support of the masses to his side.

The antifeudal reform was thus clearly manifested in the demands that were articulated. They reflected, overbearingly, the class aspirations of the peasantry.

The time had arrived in Karnataka's history when the feudal leadership had to openly acknowledge the class demands of the oppressed peasantry if the former had to come to power. The masses were indeed making history, and, more assertively, stridently and vociferously at that.

E. The Second Wave: Mass Actions Against the Parasitic Bureaucracy

The koota was quickly giving way to other forms of mass action. Even as the koota contagion continued to spread to the southern districts, in Shimoga, which was in the forefront of the struggle, there was a graduation to mass actions by August 1830. This phase of mass action, in which the peasantry participated in thousands in struggles against parasitic bureaucrats, continued till the end of 1830. Throngs of peasantry demonstrated against the Raja on his tour to the less affected districts which the Resident asked him to undertake in December-January 1830-31, as a measure to conciliate the angry masses. However, the Raja's trip which appeared more like an army of conquest, and behaved so, was fruitless. Rather, it intimidated the struggle to graduate to the higher form of armed struggle.

The forms of mass action were explained by Casamaijor in two letters that he dispatched to the Chief Secretary, Fort William. The letter of 6 December 1830 states: “...resistance to his [Raja’s] authority has been evinced by the ryots of some Talooks to the extent of refusing to pay their usual kists, and compelling the Amildar to restore money fraudulently obtained [by the Amildar] and by assembling in large bodies, but no act of violence has yet been committed of any importance.”⁹⁸

In August 1830, Manappa had already gathered a fighting force of 200 men and “gave encouragement to overt acts of disobedience on the part of the discontented ryots living in the surrounding taluks”.⁹⁹

Manappa’s call on 23 August 1830 from Anandapura changed the gears of the peasant struggle. His appeal was circulated in all the districts of the Bangalore and Chitradurga Foujdaris or in other words, across Princely Mysore. It stated: “You must positively come to us at the rate of one man per house... set out taking with you the Shanbagues, the Jamindars and the other inhabitants with due respect without leaving them behind. You must also bring Amildars, Killedars, Sheristadars with as much disrespect as respect is shown to the former class of people. These officials should be kept in custody and made to walk.”¹⁰⁰ Already one notices in Manappa’s call, that the feudal-bureaucratic reactionaries from the village level upwards were clearly targeted.

This call found immediate response. Shama Rao narrates: “The ryots of Chennagiri were the first to manifest disobedience... In the month of September 1830 on a demand being made in the village of Basavanahalli in the Chennagiri taluk for the annual land assessment, the ryots insolently enquired for whose benefit the assessments were to be paid, whether for the benefit of the Raja of Mysore or the Nagar Raja. The ryots shut the outer gate of the village against the Amildar who was thereupon compelled to break them open to effect an entry. A few of the ryots were then arrested, when a hostile mob assembled and the Amildar taking the prisoners with him escaped to Chennagiri and shut himself up at the fort. The mob then marched to Chennagiri and some among them scaling the fort walls by means of ladders set free their comrades who had been confined there. The Amildar however managed to send intelligence of what had taken place to the Foujdar at Shimoga and when a body of cavalry arrived from there, the mob dispersed...”

In the Chitaldrug Foujdari where Sheshagiri Rao brother of Mothikhane Narasinga Rao was Foujdar the ryots of Holalkere were the first to show signs of unrest, this taluk being adjacent to that of Chennagiri. Sheshagiri Rao with the intention of pacifying the ryots proceeded to a place called Chitterhalli where news reached him that some of the ryots of Chitaldrug taluk had assembled in the village Mavinhalli and were creating disturbances. The following day this body of ryots numbering between 600 and 700 proceeded to Chitterhalli and warned the bazaar people not to sell any provisions either to the Foujdar or to his party. Four

or five days after, several of the Holalkere ryots numbering more than 500 arrived at Chitterhalli, where they were welcomed by those of Chitaldrug. The Foujdar was forced to walk to a place called Guntanoor where also there was a large collection of ryots and here various other indignities were heaped upon him.

At Doddaballapur in the Bangalore Foujdari there were also some disturbances... The Amildar of the taluk one Venkata Krishniah had before he went to Doddaballapur been Amildar of Maddagiri and had left the place without making proper adjustments of the money he had collected from the people of that taluk. These people now came to Doddaballapur and raised a tumult there. Venkata Krishniah having heard that the mob was preparing to seize him, stealthily escaped to Bangalore.

At Krishnarajakatte and Arkalgud in the Mysore Foujdari...a large number of officials were subjected to various tortures such as holding lighted torches to their faces, twisting the fleshy part of their thighs with pincers, placing them together in a line with their arms pinioned, putting small stones in their ears and compressing them, seizing them by their ears and lifting them up...[All, methods which the Amildars had formerly tortured the people with].

On news of the rebellion in Nagar and Chitaldrug Foujdaris reaching the people of Budihal in the Bangalore Foujdari, they began to obstruct the passing by 'Irsal' or remittances of Government treasure to Mysore. The Foujdar Thimmapparaj Urs on being apprised of these obstructions proceeded to a place called Hulyar [Tumkur district] and summoned several of the ryots for a conference. None of them cared to respond to his call but they gathered to the number of six or seven thousand at some distance from his camp armed with sticks, slings, swords, spears and muskets... About ten of them proceeded to the place where the Foujdar was encamped and applied for an interview. But the Foujdar sent word to them to say that they should represent their grievances in writing. Dissatisfied with the Foujdar's conduct towards them they began to blow their horns, beat their drums and thereby to create a great uproar. A large crowd of people thereupon arrived and surrounded the Foujdar's tent. The Foujdar had only 8 sowars and 80 Kandachar peons with him. These sowars on seeing the crowd advancing drew their swords, whereupon the crowd stood still and sent a communication to the Foujdar that if 2 persons who had been kept in confinement for having incited the people of the villages to join the Cootum were released, they would disperse. The prisoners were then made over to their charge. The next day however, a fresh demand was made for the surrender of the Amildar and the Sheristadars who then voluntarily went over to the crowd to obviate excesses being committed and the town being plundered".¹⁰¹

Another letter of 5 January 1831 provided more details: "Instances of contumacy were daily increasing. The Raja's Tappal was stopped, his Neroops torn and destroyed. Amildars were generally placed in restraint. Their seals of office taken from them, beat and ill used the Sircar

treasuries seized by the Potails. Merchants and travellers arrested by the several gangs of insurgents and money forcibly levied from them...”¹⁰²

Such mass actions saturated the months from September to December. The peasantry used many struggle forms. While targeting corrupt bureaucrats, they did so by isolating their collaborators in the village.

BS Ramabhatta explains the methods that were used in villages to isolate the feudal and reactionary elements. The peasantry brought tantra and vamachara into the social struggle. They summoned the bad omens and cursed them like they cursed their foe. The evil spirits had obviously succeeded: On 21 December 1830, a proclamation was issued by the government “*directing all persons carrying bones and margosa leaves to be seized, tried and, if convicted, to be hanged.*”¹⁰³

The mass actions which were directed against the Amildars, corrupt bureaucrats and reactionaries in the villages succeeded. Amildars who feared the wrath of the masses either fled or surrendered to the groundswell. By the end of 1830, as the phase of mass action began to conclude, they often culminated in the seizure of the Amildars’ offices by the insurgent peasants and the collection of all revenue was annulled by this new authority in power. Anandpura, Kumsi, Nagar, Tarikere, Kamandurg, Sakharayapatna and other forts housing the reactionary bureaucracy had passed hands.

The Raja’s visit to some of the areas where the situation was not as yet very serious, in order to placate the peasantry, was futile. On the contrary, it inaugurated the first wave of state suppression.

(i) The Raja’s Tour of Terror

From 14 December 1830 till 10 January 1831 the enemy took up a campaign of instilling terror in the peasantry. This terror campaign was conducted as part of the Raja’s tour to some of the affected areas in the districts of Mysore, Hassan, Mandya and Tumkur.

The King was accompanied by 1,000 Sowars, 200 of the body-guard and three battalions of infantry. While its purpose was to placate the peasantry, it in fact was a display of the might of the state so that the peasantry would not dare to advance into rebellion.

At Chennarayapatna, Shama Rao, says: “*...a tom-tom was sent round to proclaim that 2 men were to be hanged at Chennarayapatna and 2 at Kickery [in today’s Mandya district] and these executions were accordingly carried out on the same day. It had been settled likewise that 2 persons had to be hanged at Hole-Narsipur. But one of them was reprieved at the instance of the Resident and the other was hanged. In all eight or nine persons were hanged at different places as a warning to the inhabitants against joining the cootum or seditious gathering.*”¹⁰⁴

Simultaneous to KR Wodeyar's tour of terror, in Nagar, Krishna Rao unleashed a similar campaign, of much greater intensity.

On his way to Honnali from Shimoga Krishna Rao came across a demonstration of 2,000 peasants who were proceeding to Chennagiri to obtain the surrender of its Amildar. The Foujdar called upon his troops to fire on the peasants, injuring 300 of them.¹⁰⁵

Again at Udgani, the Foujdar arrested 40 peasants hanging one to death and mutilating the others before releasing them.

Further, in early 1831, 24 ryots of Nagar, obviously rich peasants, sent a letter to the Governor General where they wrote of Krishna Rao's crimes against them.

"The humble petition of the poor kind ryots of the Talooks or Gaudies belonging to the Nuggur country which produces nine lakhs [of Pagaodas] dated 19 Jan Fasli 1840..."

While we were under the dominion of the family of Caladi Sivappa Naik, who governed this country for many years, and also in the days of Nawab Bahadur Tippoo, we were in a state of happiness. When the Company took possession of this country, instead of giving it up to the family of the Rajah of Nuggur who had formerly held dominion over it, joined it to the possessions of the Rajah of Mysore, and without making the least enquiry into the state of our country has appointed a Foujdar to govern us. This Foujdar, not understanding revenue affairs, has merely looked to supporting himself and has been in the habit of forcibly obeying us to sign an agreement for this Sircar revenue, and then collecting the money. If we delayed to pay for one or two days after the fixed time, he used to torture us to extort bribes, and besides this, he obliged us, who remained in our villages, to pay on account of wastelands, on account of poor individuals who owed balances, and on account of the ryots who had run away. Being dreadfully distressed from this tyranny of the Foujdar, we from the end of September to the end of December in this year addressed many petitions to the Rajah, praying that he should enquire into these matters, but he paid us no attention. Afterwards the Foujdar Criestna Roy having sent for some ryots to the village of Hole Honor, under the pretence of giving them satisfaction, having assured them that they might put confidence in him, took them into the fort, where he killed 500 of them outright, and wounded some others, whom he afterwards ordered to be tied in comlies with large stones attached to them and thrown alive into a deep pool. We seeing these horrors, fled into the woods and jungles. After this Somasacara Naik who belongs to the family of the Rajas of Keladi Naggur whose family governed this country, having heard this intelligence came to Naggur for the purpose of returning to his kingdom and having exhibited the orders which had been given him by the Company's government settled himself down. We joined, and lived under him. While such was the case Foujdar Cristna Roy and his son-in-law Sreenevasa Roy having assembled some cavalry and sepoy, came here, seized and hung the ryots, ravished the women and cut off their and their children's ears and noses, and plundered and burnt down

*all their houses. Having in this way ruined some Talooks, they arrived before a fort in the talook of Somashe, here the troops of our Rajah, opposed and fought them. The Foujdar Crishna Roy having collected some forces in Anantapur treacherously plundered and burnt down the ryots houses thence. We have no means of preserving our lives against this treachery—from the time that the Company gave over our country to the Rajah of Mysore, he has never made any enquiry into our circumstances, but acted as we have written above. The ryots who live in this country that produces 9 lakhs, have nothing but death before us, therefore we cannot in any way remain as subjects of the Rajah of Mysore. Your charitable government must take into consideration all that we have stated, and quickly give us relief and protection”.*¹⁰⁶

However, the peasantry did not then know that the terror instilled by the Raja or by Krishna Rao was a result of a policy decision which none other than British colonialism had itself taken.

The Acting Chief Secretary of the Governor General had stated in a letter on 16 May 1831: *“The northern districts are already in a flame, extending to the Company’s districts of Kanara, Bilghee and Soonda, and without the early adoption of the strongest measures, the evil may be expected to extend daily”.*¹⁰⁷

The Acting Chief Secretary was only confirming the decision of Casamaijor, the Resident at Mysore, who had already set the course of things in late December 1830 and early January 1831. Halfway during the Raja’s tour, Casamaijor sent out clear cut instructions to the puppet who implemented it in good faith: *“...it was the Resident’s opinion that without some drastic measures such as hanging, whipping, fining and confinement the insurrection might spread even to the Company’s territories and that it was therefore necessary to act decisively”.*

¹⁰⁸

In his letter to the Chief Secretary, Fort William, on 5 Jan 1831, Casamaijor stated: *“...it was felt that further temporising measures would be fatal to general tranquility”.*¹⁰⁹

Casamaijor, having unleashed a campaign of terror, was obviously preparing for war.

(ii) The Raj Starts a War

Casamaijor and colonialism were not satisfied with the Raja’s terror campaign alone. They sought to completely suppress the peasantry, destroy and retake the new power it had begun to exercise. Thus an undeclared war was commenced. A war which laid colonialism bare before the masses of Karnataka.

The blood-thirsty war was undertaken in three major campaigns. The first reactionary military campaign spread out from January 1831 to June 1831. The second campaign started in October 1831 and wound up before the onset of the monsoon in June 1832. The third

commenced in September 1832 and ended by mid 1833, soaking the Malnad in blood and the rivers which flowed eastward drained the undulating plains: red.

In the first campaign, apart from two regiments of the Mysore force led by Annappa and Lt Col Rochfort, a regiment of the Company's army stationed in Harihara led by Lt Col Wolfe was also summoned and deployed. In April, under Col Evans, another regiment was summoned from Bangalore. A total of nearly 4,000 troops were thus mobilised. The regiments at times operated independently and at times united, coming under the centralised command of the Resident who directed the war through a chain of couriers that were employed.

The first campaign led the colonial and puppet forces to Kamandurg, Tarikere, Honnali, Shikaripura, Masur, Harihara, Nagar, Fathepet, Anandapura, Sagar, Chandragutti, Mandgadde and other places.

The second campaign witnessed a mobilisation of 15,000 soldiers organised in five detachments, all under British command, with Annappa of the Mysore force kept as its commanding figure-head.

The third campaign, of which our information is scanty, undertook the final mopping up, passing death sentences to peasants on an extensive scale; bringing to an end a war which lasted three years and took the lives of several thousand men and women.

However, the war was not a one-sided affair. The peasantry started their resistance as soon as the first shots of the enemy were fired and lost no time in providing a glorious and fitting reply to the reactionaries. In doing so the armed struggle of the peasantry began to acquire concrete shape and the militant creativity of the masses led to the unfolding of a full blown guerrilla war.

F. The Third Wave: Peasant Guerrilla War

Let us look at some of the distinct features of the guerrilla war of the Nagar peasantry; its achievements and the predicament it created for the enemy which floundered under its blows. In the third phase of the Nagar uprising the armed struggle had clearly emerged as the principal form of popular struggle.

i) Changing Class Composition

At various stages in the struggle, there was a concordant change in the forms of struggle. At the same time, there was also a change in the role and class composition of the movement. It was this change which marked the transition of the struggle's phases and proved to be a decisive factor in determining the forms that were adapted. It is this factor therefore which needs to be first appreciated for any general analysis of the insurrection.

Shyam Bhat's analysis of the Karavali in what he called the 'koot rebellion' can be a good starting point for us. He writes: "*In its leadership, it was as extensive and widespread as its geographical extension. The leaders belonged to Brahmana and Bunt communities. Interestingly enough many important leaders were government officials for they were also land holders and had, for that reason, complaints against the government.*"

*The most important classes which supported and led the movement were those of the rich and middle class ryots or land holders. When the assessment was heavy and the economic conditions were unfavourable, they could not meet the government demands, and refused not only the payment of kists, but also openly attacked the policies of the government. The poorer ryots, who cultivated their lands by themselves could not bear the brunt of the heavy assessment and joined the peasant uprisings. This is clear from the records relating to the examination of the various participants by John Stokes, the then Commissioner of Kanara. As already stated the members of the secret council were the head ryots or Muktesars and were rich landholders".*¹¹⁰

In the first stage of the movement in which the koota form dominated, the class positions were not much different from what Shyam Bhat reported of Kanara. Except for the fact that the landlords of the Karavali were much bigger and the number of government officials that participated was perhaps greater, in other essentials there was an identity.

At Kikkeri, we are told that a delegation representing the hundreds of peasants who had gathered to present their protest to the king, included, "*one Kusappa who had formerly been a government official but had now placed himself as a leader of the insurgents and this individual was ordered to be detained in custody*".¹¹¹

Further, as we already saw in Casamaijor's letter of 5 January 1831 in which he describes the structure of the koota, he said "*The head Potails of talooks conjugated in bodies called 'cootum' with two or three thousand ryots in each*".¹¹²

Thus like in Dakshina Kannada's kootas, at the top was a section of landlords which led the koota. At the village, however, we might expect there to have been greater representation for the rich peasantry, drawn in all probability but not exclusively from the upper castes. The wide membership of the koota demonstrates its popular nature, and its spread among the poor peasantry, even tenants. Idigas, as we learn from Shama Rao, participated in them. At this stage of the movement, therefore, the rich peasants and landlords may be clearly said to have led the struggle, what with Rangappa Nayak and Budi Basappa representing these very classes—Basappa hailing from a rich peasant-small landlord background was not a former palegara like Rangappa. The koota also did emerge only as a result of the wide inter-regional links of this section of the leadership stretching to Bellary, Dharwad and even Raichur districts. One form of protest among the richer peasant sections was to emigrate to these districts and thus pressurise the Amildars to reduce their vexatiousness, for, without them, entire villages tended to be left

revenue dry. For the poorer peasants however, the alternative was to flee to the forests on sight of the revenue officials. This was evident in a letter of Cameron, the Kanara Commissioner to fort St George. *“As I have already informed government, a multitude of persons of all descriptions have been driven by want of food for themselves and forage for their cattle out of the Southern Maharatta country, to seek shelter in the jungles of Soopah and this taluk, [Sirsi]. The greater part of these people are poor destitute wretches, prepared for anything which promises them food”*.¹¹³

As the koota stage passed to that of mass actions, the masses had an active role to play and soon began to take the initiative. However, landlord leadership continued and contested with that of the peasantry's and it was not till the culmination of the first military campaign and the commencement of the second, that landlord leadership had almost universally changed hands.

Its political manifestation in the form of a dividing line however came a bit late with the conclusion of the second military campaign. The landlords had as good as compromised with the enemy, leaving the peasantry to sustain the war.

During the entire period of the war, Budi Basappa Nayak remained outside the area of struggle. By the end of 1830, Budi Basappa moved to Ranebennur in Dharwad district which was in the Bombay Presidency. Then, when the government began to hunt for him in Dharwad, he shifted further away from the Nagar area, to Raichur, which came under the Nizam's administration.¹¹⁴ It is said that Budi Basappa was seen in battle only once. Moreover, he is supposed to have quit half-way during that clash.¹¹⁵ He behaved like a typical monarch even before he could warm the throne. Meticulously careful about himself, he stepped only where the soil was firm. He chose not to announce his presence with gunpowder and he preferred not to have grime on his body, blood on his sword or possess a pair of battle-scarred arms.

The Chickmagalur-Shimoga area which came under the influence of the Tarikere palegara's family was the first of the landlord class to surrender. Briggs, who was the Senior Commissioner of Mysore (the puppet's government having been toppled in October 1831), on his arrival in Tarikere in May 1832, claimed that *“he received about 40 headmen of the villages all eager to save themselves from further sufferings and obtained a ready response from them to cooperate with him towards the establishment of peace”*.¹¹⁶

From there he proceeded to Shimoga where he obtained the surrender of almost all the palegaras of the Tarikere family. The following account by Shama Rao brings out all aspects of the compromise, the vainglory of feudalism, and, how colonialism always pampered it.

“While at Shimoga, Briggs received intelligence from one of the members of the palegar's family, Nanjappa Naik by name, that he had arrived within a few miles of Shimoga but that Annappa [commander of the Mysore force] had carried off his horse and he was ashamed to enter the town like a common man on foot. Immediately the Commissioner sent a horse to him

and on the palegar's arrival the next day presented the animal to him and also a Khillat in open assembly. Nanjappa Naik on meeting the Commissioner requested to know what terms would be offered and in reply he was informed that unless all the members of the family surrendered there could be no talk on the subject. With Nanjappa Naik came also two other members of the family Kengappa Naik and his son Hanumappa Naik. But Surjappa Naik another member of the family was still at large. Nanjappa Naik helped the Commissioner considerably in arresting gang robbers and putting down their outrages and also made a promise to bring in Surjappa Naik within a month.

On 11th July Surjappa Naik arrived at Shimoga with a large cortege wishing to make a display and the interview with the Commissioner was fixed for the next day. During the night however, Nanjappa Naik was attacked with cholera and suddenly died. The next day the Commissioner sent a sum of money to Surjappa Naik for distribution in charity. After the funeral ceremony was over, Surjappa Naik visited the Commissioner on the afternoon of the 19th July. He was received by Briggs with cold formality but with every demonstration of respect. After some negotiations it was agreed that he was to receive a state pension of 30 Pagodas per mensem and should return home, the past being forgotten on both sides. On the 25th July a memorandum of the terms was delivered in an open darbar before a very large assemblage of people of the country. Presents of cloth were also given to him and to the other members of the family and a handsome horse also was placed ready as a present for Surjappa Naik to convey him home when he took leave of the Commissioner. On the same day the followers of the palegar were called before the Commissioner and to each was given a sufficient sum of money to return home without any molestation. Some of the principal leaders also who were not in the public service when they joined the Palegars were enlisted in the Kandachar and they pledged themselves to become responsible for the conduct of those who had been allowed to return to their homes".¹¹⁷

On his return to Bangalore, obviously pleased with his achievement, this was how Briggs bragged about the situation: "*The Commission has received repeated communications from the Palegar of Terrykerry offering to come in if his life is spared...it appears the desperation arising out of ill-treatment and the execution of several of his clan and kindred by the late government as well as the sympathy for the suffering of his countrymen placed him at the head of a party in opposition to it. Rungappah Naik the chief of the family has paid the debt of nature, his eldest son Annappah was taken prisoner and hanged by the late Dewan and his retainers are now under the command of his nephew who is after all but one of his uncle's followers as a clansmen and sues for mercy from the British government".¹¹⁸*

These palegaras had been trying to court the British government for quite some time, that is, ever since the completion of the first military campaign.

The following letter by Nanjappa Naik to the British in March 1832, explains on the one hand his inability to continue with the war due to the sacrifice it demanded and on the other, his inability to exercise any control on the armed struggle which had begun to bypass him.

*“I am in good health and living in the fastness of the jungle. I am in expectation of receiving from you orders of the future expectation of my conduct. Notwithstanding that since your assumption of the management of the Mysore territory, being seen a period of 6 months, I have addressed 8 or 10 arzees to you containing a representation of my situation. Upto this time no communication has been made to me of the terms that will be granted to me. I therefore now write to you again. In the last 18 months we have been suffering increasing distress from the measures adopted by the Mysore authorities. In consequence of our remaining in the jungles, people of the country who are living in these villages, are making use of our name and committing depredations. In consequence of these disorderly persons thus making disturbances in my name, the Brahmins attribute all the blame to me. I have however in conformity with your orders done all in my power to prevent the commission of these excesses. But notwithstanding all my endeavours to this effect matters have not been settled in any quarter. I beg you will forward to me in writing. Up to this time we have suffered the loss of the whole of our forts, houses, property, lives and honour and our families have also been imprisoned. One or two of us only remain in the jungle. We have been in expectation of some determination being come to regarding us”.*¹¹⁹

Thus the landlords were getting isolated, flooded by the peasantry, and had already taken on a treacherous role of not just surrender but counter-insurgency and betrayal.

This change in the leadership of the movement from hands of the landlords to that of the peasantry was not a result of the inability to counter the enemy's war or the mere participation of the peasant masses alone. More important was the fact that the struggle, as it reached the new stage of guerrilla war, apart from attacking the colonial and puppet troops, also at the same time enriched the war by targeting all the feudal forces at the village level; the Patel and Shanbhoga in the main. Thus the struggle which began with an apparent anticolonial orientation by targeting bureaucrats initially, graduated and began to lash out at the feudal props of colonialism at the village level. This strident attack on feudalism was what dug at the roots of the pategaras. The movement they had initiated was inadvertently turning against them. Hence they went for a hasty compromise with the British colonialists, who were their benefactors and guardians after all.

ii) Feudalism Takes a Good Battering

There were two ways in which feudalism was targeted. One was more easily identifiable. It constituted the launching of attacks on the feudal classes. But the second was more subtle and

about which we do not have much evidence, though it showed up in a decisive way in one instance. Let us examine this latter point first.

Similar to the practice which Sangolli Rayanna introduced, we observe that during the peasant rally held at Hosanthe, all the peasants, irrespective of caste differences, had interdined.¹²⁰ When the broad masses came together, they did so with values and perceptions that were diametrically opposed to those imposed by feudalism. Such new traditions tended to cement the solidarity of the oppressed and lent vigour to an open and robust attack on the upper caste feudal crême.

As we have already seen in the initial chapters of this *Volume*, feudalism was the mediator for colonialism. Colonial plunder was always perceived by the peasant masses as the enhanced loot of the landlords since it was through them that colonialism exploited the peasantry. The junior most revenue farmers at the village invariably were the Patel and Shanbhoga.

On the formation of the koota and ensuing mass action which paralysed the administration, the first economic impact was that all revenue flows to the government ceased. The terror campaign which was unleashed attempted to cure this paralysis. War was immediately commenced and British colonialism simultaneously moved its troops and bureaucracy so that revenue estimates were made and agreements reached with the Shanbhogas and Patels in villages for the collection of the first installment of land revenue from the peasantry. Hence the determination of the peasant masses to dry up the flow of revenue to the state, was ruined on account of the agreement which the feudal interests had struck with colonialism. Thus while resisting the military campaign on the one hand with guerrilla war, the armed struggle at the same time also was realised by the attacks it made on the collaborating feudal interests of the village—the Patels and Shanbhogas in the main.

In a letter which Casamaijor wrote on 20 may 1831 from his tour to Nagar to re-establish revenue collections in villages, he pointed out: *“From communications I have had with the Head Potails and Gowdahs of the talooks of Terrikeray, Bankipoor and Hoolehonore I am sanguine that the general feeling of the inhabitants is most hostile to the insurgents...they express a strong wish to accept the terms of cowl offered them by the Mysore Sircar and agree to pay the balances by reasonable installments, but they dread the enmity of the insurgents on their coming to terms...”*¹²¹

Just as the first military campaign was coming to an end, the Secretary to the Governor General wrote: *“I believe the present state of irritation is kept up by the want of means on the part of the Mysore Government to afford sufficient protection to the well dispose... Most disgusting scenes of bloodshed [ie. attacks on landlords by the guerrilla war] and cruelty have been and I regret to add continue to be practiced by the insurgents upon the unoffending ryots who have paid kist and remain in their villages and unless they are defended by the military they*

have no other recourse for safety than to appear to unite themselves with the insurgents who are generally armed". ¹²²

BS Ramabhata provides certain instances from Chikmagalur and Wastare of the antifeudal orientation of the movement. He writes: *"The rebels brought out the grain from the houses of the rich and distributed them to the poor peasants. They harvested the crop from their fields and carried them to the houses of the tenants."* ¹²³ Thus it was quite evident that the feudal forces which collaborated with colonialism were being mauled and this decadent class was on the desperate look out for protection by the colonial state. There can be no doubt that this heat of anti- feudalism was kept up throughout the period the guerrilla war lasted, remaining the chief plank for its sustenance and the procurement of support from the peasantry.

Appendix III furnishes detailed evidence on the antifeudal orientation of the armed struggle. Briggs' statement filed to the Chief Secretary provides us with a table listing the place and nature of armed actions launched by the guerillas from 27 October 1831 till 8 January 1832—73 days in all. This table merely places essentials of the reports filed by Amildars and lower officials for this two-and-a-half month period after the Company took over the direct administration of Mysore. A note attached at the end of the statement by Briggs says: *"The nature of most of these attacks are not to be misunderstood, they are made principally out of revenge on the local magistrates [Patels and Shanbhogas] and on the inhabitants in order to deter them from the payment of the taxes till redress is obtained"*. ¹²⁴

However, it was not merely a question of flouting the decision of the peasantry. These die-hard 'magistrates' were the only ones to openly defy the peasant masses. And, 'naturally' so, since they were not only the biggest landholders of the village but also kept their safe distance from partaking in social labour. They were the cruel perpetrators at the local level of violence, punishment and torture on men, women and children of the oppressed peasantry.

The fact that 86 armed actions were reported in just 73 days by the guerrillas describes the intensity of the armed struggle. At least 70% of these attacks were directed against the Patels, Shanbhogas, other landlords and usurious merchants. Thus the armed struggle was intense not just by the frequency of its armed actions, averaging more than one a day; but also by the intensity with which it attacked feudalism, giving it a solid battering from top to bottom. These representatives of feudalism were either killed, their bodies mutilated and their property seized or destroyed.

iii) Torture and Retribution

A look at Appendix III and a study of British reports or any of the accounts written by later day historians will make it amply clear that the peasantry adopted "*extreme*" forms of violence. Ruling class and court historians will openly declare their abhorrence at the "*brutality*" displayed by the peasantry. A good number of progressive writers, while upholding the Nagar

struggle in general terms, will, succumbing to decades of Gandhianism, probably choose to draw a line of demarcation from the “*mindlessness*” of the peasantry. The more sensitive ones would perhaps opt to remain silent on the whole question. But all these interpretations, manifest or not, cannot provide an objective view of the peasant insurrections of the period. The nagging question would remain to be understood and answered: Why did the insurgents react the way they did?

In Part I of this *Volume*, we have already seen how the British applied torture and punishment as a regular means of revenue extraction from the peasantry. The British and their collaborating Rajas and Foujdars and Amildars and Shanbhogas did this when their power was safe and secure, at a pacific time and in cold blood. *“Is it surprising that the insurgent Hindus should be guilty, in the fury of revolt and conflict, of the crimes and cruelties alleged against them?”* ¹²⁵

The point of fact is that each of the types of “*abominabilities*” and “*excesses*” of the rebels in the course of the revolt can be traced to the general application of such precise methods by the reactionaries. Hence it was “*only a reflex, in a concentrated form of England’s own conduct in India.*” ¹²⁶

One day after the proclamation to hang peasants carrying bones and neem leaves was issued on 21 December 1830, the Foujdar of Bangalore received instructions “*to catch one or two protestors in each taluk and hang them. Many of the rebels were caught and hanged. Some of the rebels’ nose and ears were cut off resulting in several persons being badly disfigured.*” ¹²⁷

Evaluating the Indian revolt of 1857, Karl Marx addressed this question of violence by the insurgents. He made an important evaluation which should be kept in mind while we study the popular uprisings of the time: “*There is something in human history like retribution; and it is a rule of historical retribution that its instrument be forged not by the offended, but by the offender himself.*” ¹²⁸

iv) Nature of Combat

The military campaign started off in a lousy way for the enemy, with the Mysore force encircled, badly mauled, harassed and driven away in its very first offensive. A few hundred troops under the command of Annappa had taken Tarikere and were stationed there. The guerrilla forces encircled the fort and launched repeated attacks on it, killing several soldiers. “*The supplies of the Mysore troops in the fort began to fall as the rebels had blocked up all the roads. Tappals were obstructed and supplies of grain and money were cut off.*” ¹²⁹

The troops were forced out and as they exited from the fort to break the encirclement, they were badly attacked. The troops which left the fort on 21 February 1831 had a “*running fight*” till they reached Shikaripur.¹³⁰ Thus the fleeing army was pursued till Shikaripura. There again, a massive attack was launched on them and Annappa fled to Masur in the Company’s territory, his army starved of food for more than a day, battle scarred and demoralised. From there he proceeded to Harihara to gain some rest and lick his wounds. A few score troops were killed.

Later, making a junction at Honnali, Annappa’s forces and that led by Lt Col Rochfort fought a pitched battle to take that place, losing 40 soldiers in the bargain. Badly wounded and desperate, they detained 99 people in the town. On 16 March 1831 “*51 of them were executed around the temple and the remaining were hanged the next day on the road from Honnali to Shikaripura. 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...*”¹³¹

Thus British colonialism left a trail of dangling corpses. This blood-curdling sight became quite common. It was one of the forms of punishment meted out to the masses as the brutal war raged. It only stuffed more powder into the matchlocks of the insurgent masses.

Just as the *kadanga* was an innovation in the armed struggle of the Kodavas against Haidar Ali and Tipu Sultan, similarly the peasantry of Shimoga and Chickmagalur developed the form of stockade or picket warfare. Shama Rao tells us of their existence in villages around Shikaripura such as Udgani. The army found it painstaking to dislodge them from these stockades which were “*defended with much obstinacy*”.¹³²

The guerrillas also conducted successful ambushes such as those in Avinahalli, where they attacked and killed two Mysore soldiers in a ravine.¹³³

A report to Cameron sent on 23 January 1833 from Banavasi states of a successful raid by the guerrillas: “*...the Mysore force stationed at Jiddah in Anwutty taluk have fled. The Potal, merchants and ryots have also fled to Anwutty because of attack...*”¹³⁴

v) The Guerrilla Army

The guerrilla army had a two-tier structure. On the one hand were the regular troops which were quite mobile and which had a wide territory for recruitment. It was composed of fighters across the Nagar region and also had a good number of forces from Uttara Kannada, Bellary (from villages such as Battarahalli, for instance), Chitradurga and Dharwad.¹³⁵

BS Ramabhata tells us of the militia. He says: "... 'village squads' were formed for the protection of the villages".¹³⁶

There can be little doubt that the former kandachara militia which we have described in *Volume I of Making History* contributed the core of these "village squads".¹³⁷

The guerrilla army was given secret training in Brahmagiri, Ulavi, Chennagiri, Chandragutti, Sonale and Saswehalli. Weapons such as matchlocks, swords, spears, bows and arrows were prepared in the villages and supplied to the insurgent army. Contributions were raised from the rich for financing this activity.¹³⁸

We learn from various sources that the size of the guerrilla detachments ranged normally from 20 to 200. A glance at Appendix III will make this clear. The most frequent size ranged at around 40 partisans. One also observes that in those detachments led directly by palegaras or men owing direct loyalty to him and sponsored by their funds, firearms and often recruits from Dharwad, Raichur and Bellary; the size of the detachment was large. Some of Budi Basappa's detachments in Uttara Kannada are reported to have had 400 men. They constituted the regular forces.

However, the smaller detachments did not display any established palegara leadership and often reflected guerrilla formations of the peasantry. While more details on the structure and functioning of this guerrilla army are wanting, it is clear that the countryside was liberally peppered with innumerable such regular fighting formations. It is also most probable that their numbers tended to fluctuate and grew in spontaneous response to the vagaries of the war.

At any given moment, in the three years of the armed struggle, there must have been a guerrilla force of a few thousand fighters, if not exceeding, at least comparing quite favourably in number with the enemy's troop strength. We come across references which depict insurgents' strength at several thousand. On taking Tarikere, Lt Col Rochfort who led the offensive, claimed that despite his insufficient means there were 11,000 fighting men in the fort of which 750 bore matchlocks.¹³⁹

At Shikaripura, we are told that about 2,000 insurgents attacked the Mysore army.¹⁴⁰

Again, in sending instructions to Lt Col Evans, Casamaijor wrote on 29 May 1831; "*I have taken considerable pains to ascertain with accuracy the numerical strength of any armed body that could confederate or be concentrated in any one point of the talooks in which the Brigade are about to move and I feel that I can confidently state that your opponents can at no time exceed 2,000 armed men....*"¹⁴¹

In the attack on Honnali in 1831, leading to its capture, it is said that Manappa led a force of 1,200 fighters.¹⁴²

It is interesting and important to observe that the peasant armed detachments achieved absolute supremacy in their localised armed actions against feudalism. Of the 86 cases that Briggs reported over a two-and-a-half month period, there was not a single instance when guerrillas were apprehended. Thus the sweep and influence they exerted over the village demonstrates the support of the peasant masses for these actions on the one hand and the strength of the peasantry's political power which was achieved in the course of the Nagar insurrection on the other.

All these facts speak not only of the number of combatants but also takes us to the next question, their capacity to coordinate and centralise their operations. Cameron's letter of 22 January 1833 from Sirsi informs us of the plasticity in centralisation and decentralisation that was achieved. "*The Nuggar rajah is said to be in these jungles and to have small parties dispersed in various directions...*"¹⁴³

While evidence tells that there was a fair degree of centralisation wherein detachments of a taluk at least were gathered at one point, the mode of existence and functioning was normally in small units of around 40 members. These centralised operations were evidenced whenever attacks were to be launched on the enemy which had dug itself in the forts. Thus there was tremendous flexibility under a fair degree of centralisation which kept altering the size of the fighting formation, depending on the strength and position of the enemy, and the task on hand. However, since there was no formal military training, the fighting efficiency of the partisans, particularly when they combined, was much lower than that of the enemy army. The composition of these guerrilla units was quite diverse. They had, as we learn from Shama Rao, apart from Gowdas and Kurubas also Idigas, Bedas and Kormas. Thus the backward and oppressed castes also found good representation, establishing thereby the fighting unity of the oppressed people. We learn from Cameron's report that there were women fighters too in these detachments. He mentions about "*Anni of Audeegary in Soonda taluk*".¹⁴⁴

The guerrilla war resisted the British army, targeted the landlords, and eliminated hated bureaucrats. Apart from these targets, they leveled their guns to seize enemy treasury, ransacked their property in order to feed themselves and fund the war, and pillaged temples replete with wealth.

vi) Avoiding Decisive Battles

One major feature of the guerrilla war was to avoid decisive battles. Except a few instances where palegara leadership was deeply entrenched and the hangover of fort warfare was strong, the insurgents normally disengaged themselves from prolonged battle and beat a quick retreat at the prospect of being encircled. Reports from British officers conducting the war frequently spoke of the "*dispersal*" of insurgents rather than their death.

Major losses were incurred by guerrillas when they resorted to fort warfare, needless to say, under palegara leadership. Rangappa Nayak's tactics of fort warfare proved quite disastrous to the guerrillas.

Thus in battles waged to keep Tarikere, Kaldurga and Kamandurga, losses were very heavy. Lt Col Rochfort's letter to Casamajor of 4 March 1831 tells us of the damage that was inflicted upon the guerrillas in one such instance: "*Of the insurgents a great many have been killed by throwing themselves with their wives and children from rocks of the height of between 100 and 200 feet...endeavouring to avoid their pursuers*".¹⁴⁵ The palegara inspired form of keeping the fortified position at all costs was indeed suicidal.

This however does not mean to say that the guerrillas avoided taking forts and towns altogether. Rather, the converse was true. They took good advantage of the fact that the army was overstretched and fought a brilliant see-saw battle which profoundly demoralised the enemy. The case of Nagar is a good example and presents a striking contrast from the war which Rangappa Nayak fought.



Entrance of the Nagara fortress

The town of Nagar in today's Hosnagar taluk of Shimoga was seized by guerrillas in early 1831. Having taken the southern and eastern parts of the Nagar Foujdari the combined forces of Lt Col Rochfort and Annappa moved towards Nagar. *"Rochfort and Annappa found on reaching the vicinity of Nagar that the place was in the hands of the insurgents. Little resistance was*

however offered by them and the place was taken possession on the morning of 26 March by the Mysore troops, having been evacuated by the insurgents the preceding night".¹⁴⁶

Map of the first campaign led by Annappa, Lt Col Rochfort and Lt Col Wolfe





Ruins of the palace in Nagara

Thus it is clear that the guerrillas had an efficient communication system and they slipped out of the fort just hours before the British army moved in. However, before they left, “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”.¹⁴⁷

To borrow Marx’s evaluation of the Delhi fort after it had fallen to the hands of the insurgents in 1857; Nagar, it may be said, offered “*the image of a fortress, keeping open its lines of communication with the interior of its own country.*”¹⁴⁸

Having slipped into the forest they kept a watch on the fort. However, the colonial army was hard pressed and had to move towards the other towns and thus, leaving a slender force behind to keep the fort, they marched out. After the chief body of enemy troops had crossed several miles the guerrillas now encircled and relaunched an attack on the fort killing enemy troops and reclaiming their power on what had only days earlier been a consolidated position of their adversary.

We learn that Nagar crossed hands no less than six times. On every occasion that the fort was taken, the guerrillas utilised it to undertake propaganda among the urban population, win their support and recruit members from among them for the war and punish all those collaborators who catered to enemy troops.

Rochfort’s letters narrate this: “...but amongst the former [prisoners I regret to say no one of rank or consequence have been held] from the facilities of escape they had the jungles extending to the walls of the fort on nearly three sides.”¹⁴⁹

Casamajor’s following letter of 19 May 1831 about Chandragutti explains the dexterity and perfection of this form, making it an important ingredient of the guerrilla war: “On his [Rochfort’s] approach the insurgents fired from the thick jungles upon his advanced guard and retreated into the fort. But on his ultimate ascent to take the Droog by storm the garrison abandoned their works and escaped into the heavy jungles surrounding. The number of armed men estimated at Chandergooty was estimated at 300...”¹⁵⁰ What is significant here is that this retreat was so well achieved that “not a single loss to the insurgents” was reported.

Thus at the surface what seemed to the colonialists a “dispersal” or a “victory” was in fact a ‘retreat’ only to counter-encircle after the main body of the enemy army had departed, inflicting ‘defeat’ upon ‘defeat’ to the enemy. This retaking of forts was so rapidly achieved that barely hours after the victorious colonial-puppet armies left, news reached them that the fort they had just left behind was retaken and their slender force was captured by insurgents. For instance, Anandapur fell to the guerrillas during the first military campaign even before the contingent reached Sagar and Kamandurga was reclaimed in a short time after Lt Col Wolfe left for Shimoga. Thus without launching decisive battles in the face of a strong or well entrenched

enemy, they took to attack him when he was weak, thereby conserving their forces most effectively while punctuating their war with a rich mosaic of innumerable minor victories.

vii) Harassing the Enemy

The guerrilla war was enriched by its tactic of harassing the enemy while it marched. This not only inflicted minor losses upon the enemy; its more important effect was to delay the movement of the army, thereby upsetting its schedules, leaving the enemy without food, keeping a constant pressure in a battle of nerves; in short harassing it till exasperation. The stockades which were set up were put to good use in this task delaying the progress of the war for the enemy while contributing to the progress of the war waged by the guerrillas. The following instances demonstrate how the guerrillas moved when the enemy marched and how they developed a kind of relay war harassing the enemy till it reached a fort. They not only pursued the enemy as its own shadow: but operating from the forest, they were indeed a shadow army.

Even as hostilities commenced in early 1831, this tactic was put to effective use. We are told that during Annappa's march from Kadur to Tarikere, "*there were a number of skirmishes between his troops and the Tarikere pategars' men.*"¹⁵¹ When Annappa was encircled in Tarikere and was forced to flee from the fort, we have seen how he was pursued and the guerrillas kept stinging him like bees till he reached Shikaripura. The army was said to have had "*a running fight*" till it reached Shikaripura.¹⁵² Again, when the Rochfort-Annappa regiments moved to Nagar from Shikaripura they were given a good taste of the guerrilla war all along the march.¹⁵³

All British commanders' dispatches to Casamaijor from the field give us a vivid picture of the perfection of this form. We already know that Rochfort's troops were ambuscaded before he reached Avinahalli on his way to Nagar. He wrote: "*I left Avinahally on the morning of 23 [March 1831] and after driving the insurgents from the opposite bank of the Sherwutty encamped at a small village called Husselmacky where there was sufficient plain for the camp to pitch that night. From thence I determined to push on for Nagger about 20 miles, but in consequence of the insurgents having cut down a number of the largest trees laid them across the road which was thus rendered impracticable to even infantry and their having also placed at different distances parties of matchlock men whose fire was very galling, this march was rendered most arduous and trying to the troops and at every 300 or 400 yards it was necessary to detach parties right and left*".¹⁵⁴ Thus it took 3 full days to traverse those 20 miles and Nagar was reached only on the 25th.

Capt Clemons wrote from Gajnur on 23 May 1831 that he attempted to attack Mandgadde before which the "*insurgents made a get away*" to Lakvalli. So he made a detour in his march so as to pursue them to Lakvalli. "*I continued my route upon Luckwally, a fort in the possession of the insurgents containing 300 men. On my advance to it through the jungle, such obstructions as*

*trees felled across the road, stakes and ditches gave indication of the preparation made to resist the progress of troops in that direction”.*¹⁵⁵

Lt Col Evans wrote on 3 May 1831 from Anandapur: *“I reached the ground in front of Fuddy Petta at 1 pm on the 1st instant after two tedious marches through the jungle from Anantapore: all the road through which I found constantly obstructed by felled trees which it took much time to remove. My advance guard was fired on and the first man that advanced shot by the enemy. They had concealed themselves in the thick part of the jungle where any men could not penetrate and I was once or twice obliged to dislodge them by grape shot”.*¹⁵⁶

Even Casamaijor was not spared from this treatment on his participation in the war. Writing from Shimoga on 29 May 1831, he said: *“...there was an occasional or desultory firing upon [my] ...ecampment or line of march from the jungle”.*¹⁵⁷

The guerrillas also wore down the enemy by attacking his train of supplies, disrupting his links of communication and encouraging people to impose a boycott by denying the enemy army even the barest of civil resources, thereby disrupting their prosecution of the war.

Casamaijor wrote on 25 May 1831 that insurgents had been successful in making away with the baggage and ammunition of the Mysore army and despite his pursuit of the guerrillas with a force of 450 men from Oabraney to Lakvalli via Ajjampur they could not be reclaimed.¹⁵⁸

Again, Capt Hutchinson wrote from Kumsi on 21 May 1831 that a Brigade of Mysore troops with 100 bullocks for fetching grain was attacked three miles from Kumsi on the road to Anandapur by about 500 to 600 insurgents led by Manappa.¹⁵⁹

viii) Taking Advantage of Terrain and Rain

The Nagar division was covered by the lush Malnad and this was put to good use by the guerrillas. In fact the advantage they took of the thickly forested terrain was an important factor in sustaining the struggle. The terrain was so encouraging that even palegaras were beckoned to desert their forts for the sanctuary of the jungle.

One notices that throughout the length of the armed struggle, in every major form that the guerrilla war had developed, it was done so in keeping with and basing on the advantage that the forest offered. For instance, it provided shelter to the persecuted masses who were being punished by the tax farmers. The forest served as the place for quick retreat while slipping away from forts on sighting the enemy. Thus without the advantage of the forest, the movement could not have quickly retaken the forts or had the pervasive influence that it did have on the urban population. Again, the form of stockade warfare was an improvisation which put the forest to good use. These stockades were effective pin pricks to the marching enemy and the guerrillas had become used to quickly slip into the forest if they felt their position vulnerable. Further, the

harassment that was meted out to the marching foe and the disruption of their supplies and communications was as effective as it was only because of the fine use of the forested terrain. The guerrillas gave up the main roads to the enemy, of course dug up and strewn with enough obstacles, and took to the narrow jungle pathways to keep a constant fire on the enemy and to develop its own system of communication.

The forest remained a place into which the enemy hesitated to venture and thus provided the guerrillas free room to manoeuvre. It was also because of taking advantage of the forest that losses on the side of the guerrillas were low, keeping alive the optimism of these peasant fighters.

Furthermore, rain was a great advantage to the guerrilla war in more ways than one. The Malnad normally experiences 100 rainy days in a year, being most intense in July and August, while spreading out from June to October. Hence we note that the enemy had to cease its offensive war with the start of the rainy season providing a reprieve to the guerrillas, helping them reorganise and prepare themselves for the fresh offensive. Moreover, this interval greatly benefited the peasantry who would utilise the time to concentrate on their agricultural operations which sought their labour during this time, thereby providing the war with a regular and undisturbed supply of grain.

Lushington, the Governor of Madras, echoing Casamaijor, rather desultorily observed on 12 April 1831: *“With the commencement of the rainy season which is now rapidly appearing, the operations of regular troops will be highly destructive to them in that unhealthy country, and the knowledge of this will prompt the insurgents to a renewal of the measures by which the internal management of the country and the collection of the revenues have been so long disordered and interrupted...”*¹⁶⁰

ix) Mutiny by Enemy Troops and their Crossing Over

We have seen earlier in this *Volume* that a feature of the all-pervasive crisis that shook Karnataka by the 1830s was also reflected in the Mysore army. The puppet found it difficult to even pay the salaries of his paltry force, while on the other hand he was always keen on deploying it to serve the British in its wars to subjugate India. It was thus only a few years since the army had returned from Kittur, that it was dispatched to fight a war, a guerrilla war, for which it was not at all trained. The soldiers were not prepared to fight an enemy with which it enjoyed ties of blood and whose cause it sympathised with. Further, the battering the army received even as it commenced the reactionary war, causing it to lose many soldiers and compelling it to flee from Mysore territory was a tremendous damper. This only aroused the anger of the soldiers against their officers for marching them into the jaws of death. We also note that the army was overstretched and the paltry forces left behind to keep the forts that were taken from the guerrillas proved highly inadequate and led to a chain of defeats. All these

factors combined to cause not one but a series of mutinies and a spate of desertions which badly rattled the strength of the enemy's war, and what is more, the mutinying soldiers, like the sepoy of 1857, joined the anticolonial war injecting it with new vigour and strengthening the peasant's cause.

On 12 April 1831 itself, Lushington, the Governor of Madras had written to Bentick, the Governor General, that "*the troops and establishments [of Mysore] were ready to mutiny for want of subsistence...*"¹⁶¹

Casamaijor confirmed, just five days later, that the insurgency had been pepped up by "*some deserters of the local sibundee of His Highness the Rajah of Mysore...*"¹⁶²

However, as the war wore out the enemy's fighting morale, Casamaijor wrote with alarm on 20 May 1831, of a situation which had reached truly serious proportions, in his letter to Richard Clive: "*...at present I see the necessity of an immediate supply of funds to render the Mysore troops available for service and to prevent the evil results that would attend the manifestation of mutiny or discontent among the 5,000 military in His Highness the Raja's service who are all in arrears of pay in this quarter...*"¹⁶³

Casamaijor also informs us that the intense antifeudal thrust was on account of the crossing over of the troops that had mutinied.

Lt Col Rochfort in his report accuses the Mysore army of gross ineptitude. Lushington's letter from Yelval near Mysore on 21 April 1832, gives us an indication of how mutinies continued during the entire course of the war. "*...it is now my painful duty to inform you that intelligence has just reached me of a mutiny among the Mysore troops...in consequence of a proclamation issued to them by Mummah Meah the ex-Buckshee of Mysore*".¹⁶⁴

Among the first sections of the army to cross over to the side of the peasant war were the armed Kandachara peons. Their desertion was almost universal, hailing us they did from poor and middle peasant stock. These *kandachara* militiamen must have been a great asset for the armed struggle and a major component in it. They must not only have taken an active part but also led the several guerrilla detachments that had sprung up.

The British colonialists were unable to trust the Mysore infantry which was placed in small numbers in the forts after the main body departed from there since they not only deserted but also must have opened the gates to the insurgents and made common cause with them. Thus Casamaijor's letter of 29 May 1831 instructs Lt Col Evans to be more cautious with them and always station them in large numbers. He then draws up details on how the Mysore army must, if needed, be split up, under whose specific command this ought to be done, and the forts in which each of these five detachments were to be located.¹⁶⁵

While this could have contained the problem of desertions to a certain extent, it surely hampered the mobility of the troops and thus restricted the effective pursuit of the partisans. Hence, the British had to wage a war where they had to not only take care of the guerrillas, but of those very soldiers in their employ. It was surely messy business for the invaders.

x) Targetting Enemy Officers

Another measure which the guerrilla war adopted was to target enemy officers. Nadeem Khan, a sepoy of the Barr planned such an attack on Major James, a British officer, at the Benkipur (today's Bhadravati) garrison in March 1833. As James was retiring to his tent on the night of 25 March, Nadeem Khan attacked him with a sword striking him on his arm and his head, before which he was overpowered and later hanged.¹⁶⁶

In a letter that Cameron wrote, he states providing information from a spy who had met Narasinga Rao, (one of Budi Basappa's lieutenants who was in the forefront of the armed struggle in Uttara Kannada district) that he had forwarded a list of eight officers to be executed.¹⁶⁷

We also learn of an attempt made on the life of Cameron, the Collector of Kanara, while he was at Sirsi in February 1833. In a letter to the Chief Secretary, Cameron provides details of a plan to kick up a ruckus outside his office and kill him in the melee that would erupt. Led by Choorie Linga, a guerrilla leader, and with the support of the Muslims led by Sheik Mohammed, a pig was cut open and thrown before the masjid. The Muslims were thus mobilised and assembled in large numbers to complain to Cameron who they said, was responsible for it as he was a Christian. *"The riot consequent on the discovery of the pig's carcass had hardly commenced before a host of Hindoos, as I afterwards learned, joined the mob and were more outrageous than Musslmen. They were headed by a person named Chooria Linga, a well known character during the Nuggur disturbances..."*

*When the mob assembled in front of the Cutcherry, it was observed that great numbers of Mysooreans had joined the...that the rioters had received considerable accession of force and that they were now better armed. During the first day very few guns were seen. Whereas on the second when I went out in front of the cutchery to observe what was going on, I saw plainly that more than half the people assembled had guns".*¹⁶⁸

Cameron did not venture amidst the people, and stayed within the confines of his office. However, the plan was that Sheikh Mohammed and Choorie Linga were to conceal swords in their blankets and while Sheik Mohammed had to first draw his sword, Choorie was to follow and cut him up.¹⁶⁹

xi) Broad Support for the Armed Struggle

As the armed struggle raged on, it did so enjoying the support of the broad masses. Before the outbreak of the armed struggle we saw the mass mobilisation which electrified the people and aroused them for the rebellion. It was only because of this extensive support of the peasant masses and the people who dwelt in the towns that the guerrilla war could develop and make significant achievements.

The participation of the oppressed peasantry from such diverse castes as the Vokkaligas, Lingayats, Bedas, Kurubas, Idigas, Kormas, Dalits and Muslims, apart from a few Brahmanas too, speaks a lot about the broad basis that the armed struggle had found for itself and its popularity, which always as a result, replenished it with men and materials.

Cameron tells us that the armed struggle was joined “*by a host of the very dregs of society, Paraiyahs and people of all castes...*”¹⁷⁰

Again he explained the peoples’ total opposition to the government when in Sirsi; early one morning in February 1833. “*...The Naik Sheristedar desired the Potail of this town assemble the Pariahs and bring them up to my assistance but none could be found...not a single Pariah was in [his house]*”.¹⁷¹

Lt Col Evans, writing from Anandapur to Casamajor said about the wall of non-cooperation that he met with: “*No information whatever can be procured about Nuggur...This place is quite deserted and I think the whole country is hostile. It is therefore I think necessary to have a well supplied commissariat established to enable a corps to act. Rice was laid in for me here but not one bullock could be procured to carry it*”.¹⁷²

In striking contrast is the statement of Narasinga Rao, one of the leaders of the rebellion, as reported to Cameron by a spy. Narasinga Rao is stated to have said: “*What have I to apprehend...all the ryots are coming over to me in numbers every day and grain is brought to me in great abundance’, and so saying he showed me a large quantity of it*”.¹⁷³

Writing from Gajnur, Capt Clemons said: “*It appears to me that the peaceably disposed inhabitants at Luckwully...are under the entire control of the insurgents and every village within the belt of jungle where they have taken refuge is under their subjection and influence*”.¹⁷⁴

Lushington wrote on 12 April 1831: “*The flame of insurrection kindled in Nuggur has now reached the Company’s provinces of Canara, formerly a part of the Biddnoor Raj and although much blood has already been shed in Mysoor, I cannot flatter myself that the Raja’s authority has been sufficiently established by this sanguinary struggle for mastery between his irregular troops and the poligars and the inhabitants to prevent the recurrence...*”¹⁷⁵

Finally, the note attached to the statement that Briggs filed (See Appendix II) was quite explicit: “*The total inefficiency of the police and the ill success of the local troops can arise*

only from the want of information supplied by the people, who themselves are prevented from affording it either from fear or disaffection to the government". ¹⁷⁶

Yes, the popular masses were solidly behind the armed struggle, and as long as this was the situation, the colonialists could not hope of advancing in their war.

The form of armed struggle which the peasantry chose, the manner in which they daily developed on it and the outright support of the peasant masses for it, all at a time of acute crisis in the ruling system drove the British conquerors against a mighty wall. They made confused assessments, adopted self-contradicting tactics and tried out all the tricks of their trade. At each turn they failed miserably. The Malnad was a maze in which they had begun to lose their way. Let us see the circles in which they were moving.

xii) Challenge, Delusion and Crisis

Several permutations and combinations were worked out by Casamaijor to quell the insurgency. First he sent the army marching and took the principal towns and forts. But they fell back to the guerrillas as soon as the army departed. So he requisitioned for more troops, calling in the British army and constantly raised its strength to nearly 10,000, of which half were supplied by Mysore.

As the situation in the villages was out of control, he sent orders for the splitting up of the force into small parties. They were then asked to enter villages and conduct one or two executions so that fear could be instilled. However, this policy was never again pursued after having tried it out in Shikaripura since it exposed the army to attack and their numerical weakness caused by the splitting up made them susceptible to defeat. The following letter of Briggs of 14 January 1832 to Major Gen Hawker commanding the Mysore Division makes the point quite clear: *"Although I give the officer [Major James] every credit for zeal in detaching a havildar's guard for the protection of the village of Siller Coopa, there are strong objections to exposing such small bodies of British troops to attack and discomfiture. I beg you will have the goodness therefore to direct him to withdraw the guard, and care will be taken to provide protection for the village in some other way".* ¹⁷⁷

Thus the landlords remained thoroughly exposed, and try as the colonialists may, they could not instill the confidence they intended to, among this major constituent of their ruling alliance.

The territory was spread wide, their troop strength absolutely inadequate, the rebels well armed and terrain extremely unfavourable. The only solution that they repeatedly came up with was to strengthen their military presence. Yet their targets were always elusive and uncertain.

In other words, the British failed to grasp one fact. That they were up against a novel form of warfare which they found difficult to conceive. Mao Tsetung was to develop similar anticolonial Chinese experience in theory and practice, as Protracted Peoples' War led by the proletariat, in which peasant guerrilla war constituted an essential part. The Nagar armed struggle was a peasant guerrilla war of an antifeudal anticolonial type which had mobilised the masses before the proletariat could develop it as protracted people's war on scientific lines. Thus, although the concept was not formalised, yet the struggles of the peasant masses who resorted to guerrilla warfare remained a harsh fact: a war which the British could simply not perceive and a war which they could not contain.

Casamaijor said, after witnessing the war, which he thought would yield quick results: "*...the conduct of the Mysoor infantry [was] most apathetic and discreditable and from the nature of the country the cavalry has been useless*".¹⁷⁸

Capt Hutchinson chose to call it "*petty warfare*" since it was neither recognised nor taught in British military schools and British war manuals.¹⁷⁹

On 20 January 1832, Briggs wrote, of the hopelessness of the situation, adducing the Major General's expert opinion to bear out the fact: "*The Commission feels considerable difficulty in acting with regard to the western Poligars, particularly those of Nugger and Terrikerry. It has availed itself therefore of the local experience and professional knowledge of Maj Gen Hawker commanding the Division as to the nature of the obstacles to be encountered by troops in that part of Mysore and requested his opinion...he seemed to think that successful military operations could not be carried on therein without a great expenditure of money and of human life. Indeed the war waged against the same people in the Ballum tract by his Grace the present Duke of Wellington [Wellesley] affords a sample of the sacrifices that must be made to ensure success on such an occasion*".¹⁸⁰

Thus the fear of the spread of a war which they found difficult to comprehend or contain remained a challenge which was not easily overcome by the colonialists.

The Kanara Collector Cameron's fervent appeals from 1832 onwards for stationing the British army in Sirsi and Sunda of Uttara Kannada district is a case in point. Expecting an attack on Bilgi where the treasury was maintained, he wrote in January 1833, even after a contingent of British troops had reached Sirsi: "*The wild nature and scanty population of the taluk is well known to Government. Was a determined body of men once in possession of it, nothing but starvation could drive them out*".¹⁸¹

The exasperation and irritability the war had caused, which also owed much to the nature of the war, often led the British to consider "*dispersals*" or "*retreats*" as "*defeats*". Casamaijor was always under a delusion that the war was as good as won and he kept making these wishful statements to his peers assuring them of the establishment of peace and of the regular collection

of revenues save a few riff-raff that roved in the jungles. However, the same Casamaijor very soon contradicted his own statements and spoke of the need for greater force to put down the defiance of the peasantry.

As soon as the executions of 1830-31 were carried out and the Raja was on his way back after his bloody tour, Casamaijor wrote: *“The reports from the talooks to the Rajah have within the last week indicated that the spirit of insurrection has by these examples been broken and subdued and with the exception of some Talooks of Nuggur the Ryuts in Cootam have all returned to their homes and collections have again commenced”*.¹⁸²

In fact, this sojourn by the puppet only inaugurated the outbreak of the guerrilla war of the peasantry. And within days of making this statement, Casamaijor deployed 1,000 troops to those very areas which he said had been *“subdued”*.

Again, in April 1831 Casamaijor opined: *“I have satisfaction to state that the accounts His Highness the Rajah daily receives from the Dewan at Sheemogah continue to be favourable and that the tranquility of the Northern Talooks may be early anticipated. In the Talooks of Sheemogah, Hollay Honnoor, Terrykerray, Adjampoor, Honally, Oodgenney, Shekarpoor, Anavatty, Chengerry, Buswaputtan, Wusturah, Hurryhur, Chickmoogaloor, Eggaty and Cudoor in which insurrection did exist, the collections of the revenues are now in progress and in all the other talooks, from which the Poligar adherents have been expelled, the inhabitants have readily returned to their lands and voluntarily resumed their engagements with the Sircar...”*¹⁸³

Casamaijor was again far off the mark. In fact, that was the year when revenue collections almost ceased and the mass movement graduated into widespread armed struggle.

On another occasion, Casamaijor wrote that *“In 24 out of the 25 talukas of the foudaree of Naggur, the Amildars are again established with exception of the taluk of Luckwully... tranquility is restored...”*¹⁸⁴

After the conclusion of the first military campaign, Casamaijor wrote: *“The insurrection and discontent among the inhabitants has been now quelled and under active and vigilant administration will not be in danger of recurrences”*.¹⁸⁵

But events demonstrated the exact opposite of such an assurance.

These statements were not eyewash on part of the Resident to keep his peers happy. He believed every word of what he wrote. Shama Rao says: *“...the Resident and the Dewan interviewed a large number of ryots at Nagar and came to a settlement with them that the taxes should be collected only on cultivated land while remissions were to be allowed on all waste lands and ‘Bitty’ or unpaid work was not to be exacted by the officials for their private purposes. On the 30th May the Madras Government was informed by Casamaijor that the measures he had*

*adopted since his arrival at Shimoga for the restoration of tranquility promised the most favourable result and that the contingent of the subsidiary force would not be long required. On the 12th June the Resident believing that there would be no further use for any large number of the Company's troops kept only 300 sepoys under the command of Capt Clemons and sent the rest away to Bangalore and Harihar before the monsoon rains began".*¹⁸⁶

British colonialism was obviously steeped in a deep crisis. Casamaijor could have done better than eat his own words and saved himself and his superiors the delusory embroilment. He could have paid more attention to words which he himself had penned down, little knowing the profundity of what he had uttered on 6 December 1830, at a time when the armed struggle was yet to launch itself. He wrote to the Chief Secretary in Calcutta that "*...the spirit of insurrection is not so easily appeased as provoked*".¹⁸⁷

The cumulative effect of these bitter experiences for the British led it to react with dread, its officers beginning to detest the prospect of the commencement of a guerrilla war in 1857. As Engels wrote, they expected "*guerrilla warfare...will be far more harassing and destructive of life to the British than the present war with its battles and sieges.*"¹⁸⁸

G. The Armed Struggle Folds Up

How then did the British defeat the guerrilla war?

Just as in the case of their war with Sangolli Rayanna, they targeted the leadership. Resorting to infiltration, and laying bait for the leaders of the struggle with the help of feudal reactionaries, they captured and decimated them.

Rangappa Nayak died in mid 1831 itself and his family was restored without punishment. Manappa was killed in action near Anandapur in early 1831. Narasinga Rao, Choorie Linga and Sheik Mohammad were captured and killed in early 1833 by infiltration of government soldiers. Sheshagiri Rao was captured in Sagar with the help of a spy who was paid Rs 300 for the job. In April 1833, Kumara Nayak, another leader was captured in Hangal of Dharwad. Sarjappa Nayak was captured and later hung in 1834. Siddaramaiah, another of Budi Basappa's commanders was captured while he was entering the Nagar Division from Dharwad with recruits and replenishments. Most important, on 27 March 1833, Budi Basappa was captured with the aid of a "*Patel and another Jungum*" in Danaganahalli village of Sunda taluk in Uttara Kannada.¹⁸⁹ He was apprehended after monitoring his movements in neighbouring Dharwad and in Raichur for quite some months. Then, with the help of these landlords, he was captured.

The loss of Budi Basappa had salutary effect on the masses. He represented the political alternative for them and without him, their hopes of realizing a Nagar in which they would be free were frustrated.

The armed struggle had lost its political as well as a fair part of its military leadership by 1833.

The British simultaneously undertook a brutal campaign of executions in the important towns and villages leading to the death of thousands of peasants. It is said that on either sides of the road outside villages the British army had left behind rows of dangling corpses.

Then the government conceded to some of the demands put forward by the peasants such as the scrapping of the hated sharat system.

As a result of a combination of all these factors, the Nagar insurrection petered out before the monsoon broke out in 1833. And, the downpour must have washed away a great deal of blood from the forests and fields of the Malnad, if it hadn't by then already caked.

3. KALYANASWAMY'S ARMED UPRISING (1837)

Although the struggle led by Kalyanaswamy and Kedambadi Rama Gowda broke out in 1837, the events leading to it may be traced from 1834 itself, since the time when the British pensioned off Virarajendra from Kodagu and took up its administration directly.

A. Economic Causes

British zeal of revenue farming altered the mode of payment of land revenue from kind to cash in the Puttur-Sullia area of Dakshina Kannada which belonged to Kodagu from 1804 to 1834. Located at the foot of the Ghats and covered by dense forest, the Puttur-Sullia belt always had nominal commodity production. Shyam Bhat says: *"Under the Rajas of Coorg, the revenue was paid in kind. The Collector of South Kanara now demanded cash payment of revenue to the Government. As a result of this, the peasants of these Magnes had to sell their products soon after the harvest when the price would be generally low. In such a critical situation the ryots were laid under tribute by the money changers. In addition to this, they were exploited by the middlemen and also by the merchants among whom were Konkani of Buntwal. This community which performed the Bania role in the local context was naturally disposed to look at the changes favourably..."*¹⁹⁰

That too at a time of a crash in prices, the impact of this new revenue measure led to a sudden crisis in the agriculture of the region; apart from the other general factors resulting from British colonial rule.

B. Organising the Uprising

Without going into the details of events which may be found in Shyam Bhat's and Purushatham Bilimalai's theses, we learn that the original Kalayanaswamy who laid claim for the throne in Kodagu was arrested without publicity. An imposter in Puttabassappa, a Lingayat peasant of Shanivarsante area was presented as Kalyanaswamy and the claimant to the throne, with Rama Gowda of Kedambadi near Sullia, backing him. Kalyanaswamy issued a proclamation stating that if he were brought to power the demands of the peasantry would be met. These included, according to Bilimalai:



30. Map of districts influenced by the guerrilla war led by Kalyanaswamy

- 1) The tribute, which the people were paying to the British, would be scrapped.
- 2) Kalyanaswamy ought to be recognised as the King of Kodagu.
- 3) The peasants who partook in making Kodagu independent from the British be exempted from paying all taxes for three years.
- 4) The people would not have to pay any of the taxes which the British had imposed on them.¹⁹¹

People hailing from Gowda, Sthanika, Malekudiya, Chettikudiya, Karthu Kudiya, Bunt, Muslim and Brahmana backgrounds responded to the call and supported Kalyanaswamy's rebellion to become king.¹⁹²

The killing of Ramappaya, the brother of the former Dewan of Kodagu, Lakshminarayanaya, who was notorious for his oppression of the people of Sullia, on 29 March 1837, marked the beginning of the rebellion.¹⁹³

On 29 and 30 March, there were outbreaks at Amarasullia which included uprisings in Kedamabadi, Kujagodu, Bellare and Subramanya. *"In Bellare the insurgents attacked the government office and looted the treasury. There they acquired a supply of cash and some arms in addition to those which they already possessed. From Bellare the troops of Kalyanaswamy marched a little North-East to Puttur and then through Buntwal to Mangalore. In all these centres, the rebels attacked the public offices and looted treasuries"*.¹⁹⁴

As the main body of Kalyanaswamy's contingent with about 1,000 men thus marched to Mangalore so that it could garner enough support from there before attempting to take Madikeri, there were coordinated uprisings in Bungwadi, Vittla and Kumbbla.

"When the main force was at Buntwal a small troop was sent to Kasargod on 2nd April and it looted the treasury there. On the 6th April the rebels marched to Kumbbla... From Buntwal the rebellion spread to Uppinangady. Mulki was another centre of the uprising. From Buntwal the forces of Kalyanaswamy reached Mangalore on 3rd April... After entering the city, Kalyanaswamy broke open the prison gates and freed the prisoners. He took over the treasury and set fire to the houses of the English officers at Mangalore. For nearly two weeks Mangalore was in the hands of the rebels... In the course of the rebellion, the insurgents destroyed Government buildings, and stores en route were taken possession of, the tappal communication closed, and the public mail fell into the hands of the rebels... The insurgents blocked public roads, attacked and humiliated public servants who were loyal to the British... They kept under their custody certain government officials—Tahsildars, Peshcars, Head Moonshe, Gumastha, etc, after they attacked their offices... attacking the government depots of salt and tobacco they sold them... It was according to the British, an instance of the violation of the rules and regulations of government monopoly over these two products".¹⁹⁵

C. Quick Suppression

The struggle was suppressed as quickly as it started. British forces from Kannur and Bombay were mobilised and the resistance of the insurgents could not be sustained. Mangalore was recaptured after a few skirmishes on April 16. Kalyanaswamy who escaped from Mangalore soon found that the resistance in other parts of Dakshina Kannada was also put down. Sullia fell on 24 April to a contingent led by Bopanna and Bellare yielded to the British on 30 April. The enemy then proceeded to focus its attention on capturing Kalyanaswamy and

Ramagowda. It announced a reward of Rs 10,000 for Kalyanswamy's head and Rs 5,000 for the other leaders. Then British forces blocked the pathways which led beyond the Ghats as Kalyanaswamy planned to cross over to Nagar territory. Subsequently, with the help of informers he was captured in the first week of May 1837 and was publicly hanged in Madikeri.

The landlord-usurers and compradors had an active role in assisting the British all along." *Ranga Baliga [a Gowda Sarsawat Brahmana] of Buntwal helped the British officers and soldiers to escape from the attack of the rebels to Mangalore... He was a rich landholder and flourishing merchant of the region... Padi Subbayya Shanbogue of the Kudulu family helped the British in putting down the rebels*".¹⁹⁶

None of the demands of the peasantry were met. Yet, the British played a cruel joke on the people by granting to Ranga Baliga's family exception from paying the revenues for the next three generations, while the Shanbhoga of Padi was gifted with a golden double bangle.¹⁹⁷ Dewan Bopanna who took great initiative in joining the British effort to suppress the rebellion was gifted with all the treasure that was found with the insurgents.¹⁹⁸ A few other privileged Kodavas got jagirs.¹⁹⁹ Some were also gifted with Kembatti Holeyas and other slaves by the British government.²⁰⁰

The rebellion which sought to muster support in Kodagu failed to do so and instead moved in a western direction towards Mangalore, mobilising the peasantry from the southern and central parts of Tulunadu. The oppression of British colonialism was yet to be felt by the people of Kodagu and in its absence, the Kodavas failed to rally strongly behind Kalyanaswamy whom, they also knew, was an imposter. Thus the purely feudal nature of the demand kept the Kodagu peasantry from taking a significant part in the uprising. Instead, it is interesting that a demand which concerned the people of Kodagu was successful in rallying the peasantry of Tulunadu. In fact, as we saw in the case of the koota struggle, the impact of British colonialism on the masses of Dakshina Kannada was quite severe and thus it was they who moved at Kalyanaswamy's call since the demands that he had articulated had been theirs for several years already. However, Kalyanaswamy's pre-occupation in seizing Madikeri stunted the scope of the movement which could have assumed explosive proportions had it focussed on Dakshina Kannada.

The military thinking of the insurgent leaders was to organise brief preplanned armed marches on Mangalore and Madikeri. They expected this by itself could propel them to power and drive the British out. There was the usual feudal underestimation of the power of British colonialism and at the same time, as a result almost no appreciation of the role of the peasantry or intelligent utilisation of the favourable terrain. The army of Kalyanaswamy was composed of former retainers and enthusiastic peasants. It is evident from its battles, that it was unprepared for any kind of head on war. Hence even before the peasant masses found an opportunity to participate in any significant way in the struggle, the rebel army was defeated and its leadership crushed. Yet Purushotham tells us of instances of peasant initiative in the armed struggle, which

would have surely picked up had the movement been sustained and led to its acquiring the characteristics of a peasant guerrilla war.²⁰¹

4. HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PEASANTRY'S ARMED STRUGGLE

A. The Question of Guerrilla Warfare

During the first half of the nineteenth century, Karnataka society made several bold attempts to overthrow colonialism. Popular armed endeavour, which decorated these decades, expressed itself in the form of guerrilla warfare, mobile warfare and positional warfare. When the peasantry fought from villages, it adopted guerrilla warfare. When the deshghathis fought from their principal towns, they followed up their insurrections with positional fort warfare. However, in Dhondia Waugh we notice an exception: He executed mobile warfare for a period and fought most of his battles in the field. Of all, he possessed the largest number of horsemen and, he sought to repeat the warcraft of the Mysore army in which he was groomed.

Of these forms let us pay attention to guerrilla warfare—the mode which widely engaged not only the masses but also the enemy.

A common socio-military feature of the time was that people bore weapons. As Principal Collector of the Ceded districts, Munro wrote in 1804 in a minute entitled *On Disarming the People*, that “*There are very few of the inhabitants without a sword. Most of them have in addition either a pike or a mathchlock and many have both.*”²⁰²

Feudalism protected itself through its retainers by arming them. When the marauding excursions of the palegaras became frequent in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the broad masses of the peasantry had to arm themselves for their protection. The firearms once introduced by feudalism to conserve itself, with the passage of time, became a tool for the masses to use against feudalism, making its decay and collapse far easier and all the more imminent.

The marriage between colonialism and feudalism, leading to the absorption of a section of the retainers and the liquidation of most, set the pace for the establishment of the modern Indian state. The emboldened depredations of the mighty Raj were met by the masses with an ample challenging display of arms. Munro expressed these fears quite frankly when he wrote that the armed peasantry “*are ready to join in any combination for exciting disturbances.*”²⁰³

Further, he felt that while they might be collected forcefully from the zamindars, the basic part of all arms would still remain uncollected and the purpose of such a measure not served since “*they would not be got from the men in whose hands they are likely to prove dangerous.*”

²⁰⁴

Munro saw the crux of the problem, as the disarming of the masses of the peasantry. Unless that was done the empire was unstable, “*dangerously*” exposed to the “*excited*” tremors caused by the stormy “*combination*” of swords, matchlocks and pikes.

A social condition in which the masses possessed firearms and chose to use them against ravaging social oppression was a point of significance for the quick transition of the struggle between classes or the national struggle into warfare in general and guerrilla warfare in particular.

A second socio-military feature of the time was the unemployment of former soldiers and retainers. This is a point we have touched upon in Part I of this *Volume*.

In 1857, by which time the entire Indian subcontinent was subjugated, the total strength of the British Indian army stood at 2,40,000 men. Of these, 40,000 were British.²⁰⁵

But if all the armies on the soil of the Indian subcontinent before they were defeated or won over by the British were to be added up, it would have surpassed the strength of the British Indian army at its zenith, several times over. The Mysore army itself had about 1.4 lakh regular troops. If all the pre-conquest armies of Karnataka alone were put together, their numbers would be close to what the British Indian army possessed in 1857. Going by the ratios of the time, the total number of armed retainers for pre-conquest Karnataka would have been anywhere above 3 lakhs. In other words Karnataka alone had armed forces upwards of 5 lakhs in the late eighteenth century.

As a matter of policy, the British refused to recruit soldiers from the former Mysore army. The impact of this stratagem continued down the ages and Old Mysore has very few soldiers in the Indian army today—a fact that stands out in bold contrast with a Kodagu or Belgaum or Bijapur. The Wodeyar maintained only 40,000 of the 1.8 lakh kandachara peons. And this was meticulously sliced as the first decade of British rule had rolled. Again, the British took a few from the armies of the Maratha feudatories. In all, they employed a few thousand of the former soldiers at best. Some thousands were entrusted to the loving care of the Mysore Raja, the Nizam, the Haleri kings and the many subsidiary princelings. Most of the 5 lakh odd soldiers of pre-British Karnataka were therefore unemployed.

These former regular forces and particularly the retainers had their weapons about them. As the exasperation from British domination increased, these retainers and soldiers regained their lost wit. With weapon and wit they formed the principal body of commanders and men around whom the guerrilla armies were built. The horde of evidence from Sangolli Rayanna’s war insistently emphasizes that the retainers constituted the ready midrib. They were the fierce and sprightly substratum that launched the guerrilla war.

There was another aspect to the social life of the retainers, which endowed them with that extra ounce of guerrilla vehemence. Under the rule of Haidar Ali and Tipu Sultan or under the rule of the deshghathis, the militia was granted lands as a mode of payment. These retainers possessed private property and belonged basically to the class of poor or middle peasants. They had freed themselves from slaving for the feudal lords. In *Volume I* we have estimated that about 15% of the total Mysore population of the late eighteenth century was made up of poor-middle and rich peasants who owned their lands and lived a life removed from direct feudal exploitation.²⁰⁶ These classes of the peasantry were seedbeds for the germination of ideas favouring the bourgeois democratic revolution in the villages. By far, the biggest chunk of this category of independent peasants was made up of the armed retainers. When life became unliveable due to laissez faire tax farming and the extortive bestiality of the feudal-bureaucratic reactionaries, and when their existence as independent peasants became a threatened reality compelling them to forsake their land to cover their debts to the state, they filled powder and hatred deep down the barrels and fired their matchlocks. More often than not, the retainers triggered the uprisings. They were the vanguard of guerrilla warfare in Karnataka.

Karl Marx said that by creating an army, “*British rule simultaneously organized the first general centre of resistance which the Indian people was ever possessed of.*”²⁰⁷ This centre led insurrections and seized cities in 1857. But, by unemploying the former armies and armed retainers of Karnataka, the British also simultaneously organized the dispersal of guerrilla warfare in the countryside.

Guerrilla warfare was resorted to in Karnataka when the rebels had no consolidated territory from where to launch their war, or had lost it, as in the case of Kittur. It is thus in the nature of this mode of warfare, that it is conducted when consolidated territory, the principal towns and cities, lie with the enemy. Hence it is inherently valid that this mode of warfare opens scope for the powerless to taste and establish their power. This endows guerrilla warfare, generally, with an intrinsic popular and progressive character.

Mao Tsetung wrote: “*The essence of guerrilla warfare is thus revolutionary in character... Because guerrilla warfare basically derives from the masses and is supported by them, it can neither exist nor flourish if it separates itself from their sympathies and cooperation.*”²⁰⁸

Guerrilla warfare is the most easily accessible mode of warfare for powerless rural masses. And, as a result, it also carries with it the stamp of spontaneity, a decentralised nature and desultoriness.

Summing up the experience of the Spanish guerrilla war, Marx wrote in 1854 that the guerrillas “*formed the basis of an actual armament of the people*”.²⁰⁹

Guerrilla warfare bore an organic and indivisible relationship with the people. It emerged as their “*actual armament*” and it relied on their extensive support and backing, unlike other modes of warfare.

Guerrilla warfare comes spontaneously to a rebellious peasantry. It makes fewer demands on military skill and equipment, finesse and training. Its decentralized nature and the smallness of its formations make command and coordination within a unit, relatively easy to achieve. The shetsanadies of Kittur or the kandachara peons of Mysore were a supplementing ancillary force to the regular armies of these kingdoms. They had inferior arms and poor training. They knew little of military strategy and tactics and were not drilled in the manouvres of regular armies. Hence, it was patently herculean for a Sangolli Rayanna or a Manappa to conduct regular warfare. They were also compelled by these conditions of their life to launch a slinging hit-and-run war. Their battle lines and positions were continuously shifting. They avoided pitched battles in order to preserve themselves. Concealment and surprise became watchwords. They harassed through endless stings. When the rebels failed to see these features, they invariably suffered defeat.

Pervasiveness as much as persistence on the one hand and the intensity of the guerrilla wars and armed struggle on the other landed like shot in the English vocabulary, a new word: *riot*. David Arnold tells us that the volatile nature of the “*ryots*” who invariably protested with arms, and in doing so, made blazing attacks on the enemy and its property, rendered the ryot as the sure, unmistakable and singular source for the word *riot*. And, do the Kannada and Telugu languages not tell us that they have always known the peasant as *ryot*?²¹⁰

B. Malnad in Guerrilla War

Kalyanaswamy’s struggle was crushed even as it had started to draw out the initiative of the peasantry in the armed struggle. The one month of its existence was obviously too short a period for the realisation of a peasant guerrilla war. In the case of Sangolli Rayanna’s struggle, who fought his war for four months, we do find a better articulation of the peasantry’s creativity in conducting a guerrilla war. It threw up some basic characteristics. However, the Nagar struggle, with its armed phase illuminating three of its four-year old history further developed the form of peasant guerrilla warfare. It was more instructive since it was sustained and expansive. The peasant masses, through their sacrifice, could later teach the working class to develop it and draw up the concept of protracted peoples’ war in which peasant guerrilla war remained a key component. Mao Tse-tung, leader of the international working class did this with great theoretical ability and practical agility and gave back to the oppressed people of the world a military line for their fight against feudalism and imperialism nearly a century after these struggles shook Karnataka.

The peasant armed struggles also demonstrate to us, in Karnataka, of the role of the Malnad in sustaining it and thus ensuring its protractedness. The Malnad which runs for about 700 kilometres from north to south in Karnataka with its spectacular tree cover and populated by a restive peasant population which has demonstrated its will against feudalism and colonialism, emerges as a fighting front of no inconsequential formidability. Just as the Malnad has given birth to most of the swift flowing westerly rivers and meandering easterly ones, thereby sustaining life in Karnataka's narrow coast and sprawling plains; so also it was under the protective cover of the Malnad that peasant guerrilla war in Karnataka was tried out and developed. It goes without saying that the Malnad which has played this historic role, will, with its advantageous terrain, play this role once again in history; this time waging and enriching protracted peoples' war, with the armed struggle reaching out from the midst of its foliage and coordinating with the peoples' war in the plains in eliminating feudalism and driving out imperialism from our land. Sangolli Rayanna demonstrated the role of the Malnad in Belgaum, Uttara Kannada and Dharwad; later the Nagar struggle brought it further southwards to encompass Uttara Kannada again, Shimoga, Chikmagalur and Hassan; while Kalyanaswamy, followed it up by carrying it to Dakshina Kannada and knocked on the doors of Kodagu. Thus guerrilla war had traversed the entire length of the Malnad. In a span of about eight years the Malnad was to prove again and again, by engaging state forces in all the nine districts of Karnataka in which it runs through. The Malnad, stretching from north to south and stitching together 9 of Karnataka's 21 districts, can, as history has taught us, become a corridor for waging, sustaining and developing protracted peoples' war if properly coordinated with the peoples' war in the plains. This apart, Lushington the Governor of Madras, was only articulating about the strategic importance of the 2,000 km odd long Western Ghats of which Karnataka's Malnad formed the biggest part, when he wrote on 12 April 1831: *"I feel that the Nuggur province is so peculiarly situated that it cannot continue in his [Raja's] possession without great injury not only to the interests of His Highness and the happiness of the people, but the mutual welfare of both states [ie, British and Mysore] in Mysore and in Canara and Malabar"*.²¹¹

Elphinstone, writing from Bombay also spoke in similar terms of the possible fallout of the armed resistance in Kittur to Maharashtra and Goa regions. Again, Wellesley in a letter that he wrote way back in 1804, said: *"I hesitate to engage in a war with the Kittur state. Only if it becomes inevitable, or only if it is possible to mobilize all our forces will I fight a war with Kittur. Just like Wynad, Coorg, Ballum, Bednur and Soonda, Kittur too falls in the Western Ghats. Like those places this too is extremely difficult terrain for our army."*²¹²

Thus, piecing all this together, we realise that the Malnad has a strategic role for the future of armed struggle in Karnataka. At the same time it brings out the strategic importance of the entire Western Ghats in knitting together the states of Maharashtra, Goa, Kerala and Tamil Nadu with Karnataka in India's road to liberation.

C. Revolution Waylaid, Nationhood Impaired

In *Volume I of Making History* we chose to classify Karnataka's middle ages into early, middle and late stages of feudalism. The stage of early feudalism belonged to the period of its consolidation as a social system in Karnataka and the stage of late feudalism was taken as the final stage, leading up to the overthrow of feudalism by the victory of the bourgeois democratic revolution.

Of course, prospect for the bourgeois democratic revolution was preempted with the conquest of the Kannada nationality by the British; altering thereby the entire course of social development since then.

From the time of the outbreak of the Vachanakara movement in the twelfth century—also causing the transition of Karnataka from early to middle feudalism—class struggle against feudalism constituted the trend in impelling social development. The outbreak of popular struggles against the palegara warlord class starting with the turn of the seventeenth century and the consequent utilisation of this by Chikkadevaraja Wodeyar and subsequently Haidar Ali and Tipu Sultan, leading to the elimination of this layer of feudalism opened up prospects for the development and consolidation of the merchant bourgeoisie. On the one hand while a layer of the feudal class above the village level, ie, the palegaras, had been eliminated; on the other, the Shanbhoga and Patel who were entrenched within the village, became the mainstay of the semifeudal social system. During the final decades of the eighteenth century, the Karnataka social formation witnessed the birth of industrial capitalists and the penetration of capitalist relations in the countryside leading to the weakening of feudal authority due to the destruction of a layer of the feudal class. As Haidar and Tipu fought the British with impeccable chivalry, they were—objectively—securing the further maturation of social conditions leading to the overthrow of the feudal order by the rising bourgeoisie with the aid of the peasantry. All that Karnataka needed then was some more time so that the peasantry and the various other oppressed classes could combine under the leadership of the bourgeoisie and follow through with the victory of the bourgeois revolution.

The bourgeoisie was born. It had to come of age. And, the struggles of the peasantry and artisans against feudalism would have allowed the bourgeoisie to mature, launching it into the realm of politics, and provide effective leadership to the revolution. What was missing, during the rule of Haidar and Tipu, as we have recounted in *Volume I of Making History* was peasant assertion. And this was because it had just then waged an effective battle against the palegaras and was basking under the sun of subsequent reforms it had been able to win. The equanimity of the peasantry of Karnataka in the last quarter of the eighteenth century was only the calm before a storm.

However, it was the cold gale that picked up from the Atlantic that rendered the British masters of Karnataka. This upset prospects of the Kannada nation's bourgeois democratic revolution.

First, it eliminated native political rule by defeating the Mysore army under Tipu Sultan in 1799, vanquishing the Marathas in 1818 and purchasing the subsidiary loyalty of the Nizam of Hyderabad and Virarajendra of Kodagu.

Second, it set to work, putting to death the still lisping infant industrial bourgeois elements and the youthful national mercantile bourgeoisie, by wrecking native industry and trade.

Third, it strengthened the hands of the decadent and moribund feudal class, and in fact pushed the peasantry, artisans, sibling workers and native army into the menacing outstretched embrace of the feudal lords. It effected a partial feudal relapse.

Fourth, it broke up the growing unity of the Kannada home market. The increasing unification of the economy of the Kannada nation, the unity between agriculture and industry and the forging of a centralised kingdom—were overrun, with the result that Karnataka was shredded into a few dozen fragments.

The compound effect of all these policies was the emasculation of the just born industrial capitalist. It was throttled to death while still in the cradle. Hence the bourgeois revolution was left without the native bourgeoisie to lead it. The body politic had forfeited its head.

However, the body, composed principally of the peasantry, was intact: still alive and kicking. The conquest of Karnataka meted out blow after blow on the peasantry: its meagre surplus was unscrupulously drained, agriculture was in dire straits, famine stalked the land, torture and physical punishment systematized and inflicted on the peasantry by the corrupt bureaucrats and feudal lords was the crown of thorns gifted by the British bourgeoisie. The peasantry was not just pushed but whiplashed into rebellion.

From 1829 onwards right up to 1837, for eight full years, the peasantry rose up, arms in hand. Not in one village or one district or one region; but across the length and breadth of Karnataka, fighting a guerrilla war against the colonial-feudal state, routing the feudal classes at the level of the village.

The cardinal features of this struggle must be appreciated to fully comprehend its historical significance.

First, the struggle was pointedly antifeudal. It gave no quarter to the feudal lords and it sought to wipe them clean. The struggle was thus a continuation of the centuries-old antifeudal tradition of the masses. Rather, it was in a sense, its culmination.

Second, it should have been, in every sense, its culmination; because, while the layer of feudal lords above the village, ie, the palegaras had been already eliminated in the Mysore region, the biggest part of what remained of the feudal class was composed of the Patels and Shanbhogas within the village. And, the peasantry severely battered this underlying social base of the feudal order with utmost determination and resoluteness. The peasantry destroyed colonial power across hundreds of villages, either having eliminated or overcome the resistance of the feudal collaborators at the village level.

Hence what took place in these eight eventful years was nothing but the antifeudal bourgeois revolution—without of course, the bourgeoisie. What was staged was a social play of dramatic proportions, but without a director at its head. It was an epic tragedy. The British ladies and gentlemen must have cackled with laughter, but the masses of Karnataka shook with chagrin. It was, willy nilly, a bourgeois revolution; but bereft of the bourgeoisie.

Third, we observe that the struggle subdued the feudal lords not just across villages, but in several taluk towns as well. Innumerable fortresses, which housed the colonial-feudal bureaucracy, had been taken; and what is more, Nagar, the headquarters of an entire fujdari was kept by the rebels repeatedly and for long.

There can be no doubt that Budi Basappa Nayaka must have been hailed and the reinstatement of the Ikkeri palegaras must have been proclaimed. Did this not have a feudal ring about it? Of course it did. But that was only because the Kannada bourgeoisie which should have been in the lead had been strangled before it could set to speak. This could happen because it was a bourgeois revolution without the bourgeoisie.

Fourth, despite the apparent couching by the peasantry of its demands in a feudal idiom, yet powerful traditions of political democracy had been evolved. The koota provides a glimpse of the potential of the period and it opened a window on a new era. The koota assumed the nature of a representative political institution. It grew from the village, it extended to the taluk and it pervaded entire districts. It had put forth its own executive council. It already had a visible three-tier structure and the district koota came to be called the *mahakoota* or the *grand congress*. If the Kannada bourgeoisie was indeed alive, and if indeed it had had the opportunity to lead, can one altogether deny the possibility of a mahakoota or some such institution being established for the Kannada nation—a congress representative of the bourgeoisie in power? And, in such an eventuality what should have prevented a mahakoota or something resembling it for the Kannada nation as being Karnataka's parliament; its homebred institution of political democracy?

Fifth, the three peasant uprisings, taken together, covered most parts of Karnataka. We already learn that Raichur was restive and Bellary was bubbling having struck a sympathetic chord. The rebellion was national in proportion, covering most of the territory of the Kannada nationality. Had it been led by the Kannada bourgeoisie, the overthrow of feudalism and

colonialism would have occurred across Kannada national territory and with the establishment of a truly national institution of political democracy, it would have led to the consolidation of the Kannada home market by the Kannada bourgeoisie across the frontiers of the Kannada nation.

Sixth, one observes that the peasantry's war against feudalism, its desire for democracy, was undertaken in the context of colonial occupation. Centuries of antifeudal struggle, with unhesitating certainty, transformed simultaneously into an anticolonial struggle. It was a rolling of the antifeudal historic tendency into the anticolonial. The two tendencies got intertwined. If colonialism on the one hand entangled itself with decadent feudalism; the people on their part who had all along been waging class struggle against feudalism focused their energies and endeavours embarking upon a twin task: the elimination of feudalism and the overthrow of colonialism with its comprador entourage.

The case of Japan in the mid-nineteenth century demonstrates, most lucidly, how the growing antifeudal struggle of the masses took an anticolonial direction with the attempt by the colonialists to occupy the country. It was by overthrowing the Tokugawa Shogunate which was transforming into a puppet of the West, that the bourgeois democratic revolution could succeed in Japan.

But, Japan achieved the restoration of the Meiji only because it succeeded in keeping its infant bourgeoisie alive. Japan had its bourgeoisie in the head of its social revolution.

But the sorrow of Karnataka was that she had forsaken her bourgeoisie.

The peasant uprisings of the 1820s and 1830s signified the latent brightness of the bourgeois revolutionary prospect. It came after the loss of its infant bourgeoisie. But at the same time, by targeting feudalism and striking at colonialism, it pointed unmistakably to the future course in the making of Karnataka's destiny.

Notes on Part II

¹ Saki, *I*, Pp375-404

^{1A} RH Kulkarni, p 1

² NK Narasimha Murthy, Pp97-98

³ K Rajayyam, *South*, Pp 100-103

⁴ Shama Rao, p 347

⁵ Ashok Shettar, *Thallura Deshgathi*, Balanna Seegihalli ed, p 48

⁶ Lewis Rice, *Mysore*, p 297

⁷ K Rajayyam, *South*, p 100

⁸ cited in, MV Krishna Rao and GS Halappa, *I*, p 86

⁹ Shama Rao, p 346

- ¹⁰ *ibid*, p 347
- ¹¹ Frederick Engels, *The Revolt in India*, in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The First*, p 149
Also see Karl Marx, *Guerrilla Warfare in Spain* for his description of the third period in the Spanish war when “*guerrillas aped the regularity of the standing army, swelled their corps*” and were “*frequently overtaken, defeated, dispersed and disabled*” by the vastly superior French; in William J Pomeroy ed, p 56
- ¹² Karl Marx, *The Revolt in the Indian Army*, in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The First*, p 37
- ¹³ *ibid* p 41
- ¹⁴ Karl Marx, *Dispatches from India*, in *ibid*, p 52
- ¹⁵ Karl Marx, *The Revolt in the Indian Army*, in *ibid*, Pp 36-7)
- ¹⁶ PN Chopra et al, *History*, p 131
- ¹⁷ *ibid*, Pp 131-132
- ¹⁸ Karl Marx, *Notes*, p 113
- ¹⁹ Philip Haythornthwaite,
[The Colonial Wars Source Book](#), *Mutiny at Vellore: 1806*
- ²⁰ GR Gleig, *I*, p 362
- ²¹ *ibid*, *II*, Pp 31-32
- ²² Burton Stein, *Thomas*, p 70
- ²³ N Shyam Bhat, *A Study*, p 121
- ²⁴ *ibid*
- ²⁵ GR Gleig, *I*, p 252
- ²⁶ *ibid*, p 250
- ²⁷ N Shyam Bhat, *A Study*, p 121
- ²⁸ *ibid*
- ²⁹ *ibid*, p 122
- ³⁰ *ibid*, p 126
- ³¹ *ibid*
- ³² Shama Rao, p 350
- ³³ MV Krishna Rao and GS Halappa, *I*, p 90
- ³⁴ *ibid*, Pp 94-95
- ³⁵ SB Chauduri, *Civil*, p 174
- ³⁶ Saki, *I*, Pp 568-570
- ³⁷ Suryanath Kamath, *Sangolli rayanna, Samagra Sameeksha*, p 8
- ³⁸ Ashok Shettar, *Thallura Deshgathi*, Balanna Seegihalli ed, p 49
- ³⁹ Suryanath Kamath, *Sangolli*, p 10
- ⁴⁰ Sadashiva Wodeyar, p 59
- ⁴¹ *ibid*, p 61
- ⁴² *ibid*, p 69
- ⁴³ *ibid*
- ⁴⁴ *ibid*, Pp99-106
- ⁴⁵ MV Krishna Rao and GS Halappa, *I*, p 141

- ⁴⁶ Karl Marx, *The Future Results of the British Rule in India*, Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The First*, p 35
- ⁴⁷ Suryanath Kamath, *Sangolli*, p 36
- ⁴⁸ BS Ramabhata, Pp 22-3
- ⁴⁹ M Shama Rao, p 482
- ⁵⁰ MS Krishna Rao and GS Halappa, *I*, p214
- ⁵¹ HJ Stokes, *An Historical*, p 88
- ⁵² M Shama Rao, p 482
- ⁵³ MV Krishna Rao and GS Halappa, *I*, p 111
- ⁵⁴ David Arnold, *Police*, p 1
- ⁵⁵ Frederick Engels, *Anti-Duhring*, p 184
- ⁵⁶ HJ Stokes, *An Historical*, p 82
- ⁵⁷ ibid
- ⁵⁸ Srinivas Havanur, *British Daakhalegalu Roopisidda Sangolli Rayanna*, Suryanath Kamath ed, *Sangolli*, p 108
- ⁵⁹ ibid
- ⁶⁰ CV Mathada, *Sangollirayannana Horaatada Parisara Maththu Aithihyagalu*, in ibid, Pp 91-92
- ⁶¹ Suryanath Kamath, *Sangolli Rayanna: Samagra Sameekshe*, in ibid, p 18
- ⁶² HJ Stokes, *An Historical*, p 83
- ⁶³ MV Krishna Rao and GS Halappa, *I*, p 168
- ⁶⁴ ibid, p 180
- ⁶⁵ Suryanath Kamath, *Sangolli Rayanna: Samagra Sameekshe*, in ibid p 23
- ⁶⁶ *Records from Maharashtra State Archives*, Selected by Dr SK Havanur, in Suryanath Kamath ed, op cited, p 142
- ⁶⁷ Srinivas Havanur, in Suryanath Kamath ed, op cited, p 125
- ⁶⁸ ibid, p 145
- ⁶⁹ MV Krishna Rao and GS Halappa, *I*, p 137
- ⁷⁰ ibid, p 169
- ⁷¹ ibid
- ⁷² ibid, p 179
- ⁷³ ibid, p 168
- ⁷⁴ Suryanath Kamath, *Sangolli Rayanna: Samagra Sameekshe*, p 27
- ⁷⁵ ibid p 32
- ⁷⁶ MV Krishna Rao and GS Halappa, *I*, p 169 CV Mathada, *Sangolli*, in Suryanath Kamath ed, op cit, p 83
- ⁷⁷ H Stokes, *An Historical*, p 84
- ⁷⁸ ibid, p 83
- ⁷⁹ Srinivasa Havanur, *British*, in Suryanath Kamath, ed, op cit, p 113
- ⁸⁰ H Stokes, *An Historical*, p 84
- ⁸¹ ibid

- ⁸² Suryanath Kamath, *Sangolli*, p 32
- ⁸³ H Stokes, *An Historical*, p 85 Suryanath Kamath, *Sangolli*, p 31
- ⁸⁴ Suryanath Kamath, *Sangolli*, p 36
- ⁸⁵ H Stokes, *An Historical*, Pp 84-85
- ⁸⁶ M Shama Rao, Pp 416-417
- ⁸⁶ (RH Kulkarni, p 11)
- ⁸⁷ *ibid*, Pp 417-418
- ⁸⁸ MH Gopal, *The Finances*, Pp 250-251
- ⁸⁹ M Shama Rao, p 419
- ⁹⁰ Suryanath Kamath, *Sangolli*, p 16
- ⁹¹ N Shyam Bhat, *A Study*, Pp 259-262
- ⁹² *Copies*, From the Acting Chief Secretary, to the Governor General, 16 May 1831, p 82
- ⁹³ Alexander J Arbuthnot, *I*, p 216
- ⁹⁴ *Copies*, From IA Casamaijor, Resident, To the Chief Secretary, Fort William, 5 Jan 1831, p 15
- ⁹⁵ Sebastian P Joseph, *State*, Pp 10-11
- ⁹⁶ BS Ramabhata, p 40
- ⁹⁷ *ibid*, Pp 26-7
- ⁹⁸ *Copies*, From IA Casamaijor, Resident, To Chief Secretary, Fort St George, 6 Dec 1830, p 11
- ⁹⁹ M Shama Rao, p 420
- ¹⁰⁰ *ibid*
- ¹⁰¹ *ibid*, Pp 420-424
- ¹⁰² *Copies*, From IA Casamaijor, Resident, To Chief Secretary, Fort St George, 5 Jan 1831, p 15
- ¹⁰³ Siddalinga Swamy, p 53
- ¹⁰⁴ M Shama Rao, p 428
- ¹⁰⁵ *ibid*, p 430
- ¹⁰⁶ *Copies*, Signed by 24 Persons, To the Governor General, Pp 67-70
- ¹⁰⁷ *ibid*, Letter to Acting Chief Secretary to Governor Genral, p 81
- ¹⁰⁸ M Shama Rao, p 427
- ¹⁰⁹ *Copies*, From IA Casamaijor, To Chief Secretary, Fort William, 5 Jan 1831, p 15
- ¹¹⁰ N Shyam Bhat, *A Study*, Pp 261-262
- ¹¹¹ M Shama Rao, p 426
- ¹¹² *Copies*, From IA Casamaijor, To Chief Secretary, Fort William, 5 Jan 1831, p 15
- ¹¹³ MSA, From Cameroon, Sircy, To Chief Secretary, Fort St George, 22 Jan 1833
- ¹¹⁴ BS Ramabhata, p 34 and p 48
- ¹¹⁵ *ibid*, p 52
- ¹¹⁶ M Shama Rao, p 449
- ¹¹⁷ *ibid*, Pp 449-450
- ¹¹⁸ *Copies, II*, From J Briggs, Senior Commissioner, To H Chamier, St George, Bangalore 20 Jan 1832, Pp 332-333
- ¹¹⁹ MSA, From Terikerry Poligar, To The Commissioner Bahadur, 31 March 1832

- ¹²⁰ BS Ramabhata p 20
- ¹²¹ *Copies*, From Casamaijor, Camp Holyhonore, To Richard Clive, 20 May 1831, Pp 362-363
- ¹²² *ibid*, From Casamaijor Mysoor, To Richard Clive, 29 April 1831, Pp 217-218
- ¹²³ BS Ramabhata, p 46
- ¹²⁴ *Copies, II*, From Briggs, Senior Commissioner, Bangalore, p 277
- ¹²⁵ Karl Marx, *Investigation of Tortures in India*, Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The First*, p 72
- ¹²⁶ Karl Marx, *The Indian Revolt*, in *ibid*, p 85
- ¹²⁷ Siddalinga Swamy, p 53
- ¹²⁸ Karl Marx, *The Indian Revolt*, in *ibid*, p 85
- ¹²⁹ M Shama Rao, p 434
- ¹³⁰ *ibid*
- ¹³¹ *ibid*, Pp 434-435
- ¹³² *ibid*, p 435
- ¹³³ *Copies*, From Rochfort, Nuggur, To Casamaijor, p 183
- ¹³⁴ MSA, Arzee of the Peishkar of Banwasi to Cameron, 23 Jan 1833
- ¹³⁵ BS Ramabhata, p 28
- ¹³⁶ *ibid*
- ¹³⁷ Saki, I, Pp 386-391
- ¹³⁸ BS Ramabhata, p 28
- ¹³⁹ *Copies*, From Casamaijor, To Richard Clive, Chief Secretary of Government, Fort St George, 8 March 1831, p 168
- ¹⁴⁰ *ibid*, p 169
- ¹⁴¹ *Copies*, From Casamaijor, Camp Seemogah, To Lt Col Evans, Commanding Field Force, Seemoga, 29 May 1831, Pp 384-385
- ¹⁴² BS Ramabhata, p 40
- ¹⁴³ MSA, From Cameroon, Sircy, To The Chief Secretary, Fort St George, 22 Jan 1833
- ¹⁴⁴ MSA, From Cameroon, To Madras
- ¹⁴⁵ *Copies*, From Rochfort, Comadroog, To Casamaijor, 4 March 1831, Pp 170-171A
- ¹⁴⁶ M Shama Rao, p 435
- ¹⁴⁷ *ibid*
- ¹⁴⁸ Karl Marx, *State of the Indian Insurrection*, Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The First*, p 57
- ¹⁴⁹ *Copies*, From Rochfort, Comadroog, To Casamaijor, 4 March 1831, p 171A
- ¹⁵⁰ *Copies*, From Casamaijor, Mysoor, To Richard Clive, Fort St George, 19 Apr 1831, p 199
- ¹⁵¹ M Shama Rao, p 431
- ¹⁵² *ibid*, p 434
- ¹⁵³ *ibid*, p 435
- ¹⁵⁴ *Copies*, From Rochfort, Nuggur, To Casamaijor, p 183
- ¹⁵⁵ *Copies*, From Capt I Clemons, Camp at Garzanoor, To The Major of the Brigade, Field Force near Seemoga, 23 May 1831, Pp 376-377
- ¹⁵⁶ *Copies*, From Lt Col R Evans, Camp Anantapore, To Casamaijor, 3 May 1831, p 341

- ¹⁵⁷ *Copies*, From Casamaijor, Camp Seemogah, To Lt Col Evans, Commanding Field Force, Seemoga, 29 May 1831, Pp 384-5
- ¹⁵⁸ *Copies*, From Casamaijor, Camp Seemoga, To Richard Clive, 25 May 1831, p 371
- ¹⁵⁹ *Copies*, From Capt G Hutchinson, Camp Cumsee, To Acting Major of the Brigade, Camp Ananthpoo, 21 May 1831, p 373
- ¹⁶⁰ *Copies*, SB Lushington, President's Minute, 12 April 1831, p 62 *ibid*, IR Lushington, President's Minutes, 12 April 1831, p 485
- ¹⁶¹ M Shama Rao, p 445
- ¹⁶² *Copies*, From Casamaijor, Mysoor, To Lt Col Evans, CB Commanding 15 Reg NI on March to Seemogah, 17 Apr 1831, p 210
- ¹⁶³ *Copies*, From Casamaijor, Camp Holyhonore, To Richard Clive, 20 May 1831, Pp 362-363
- ¹⁶⁴ MSA, From F Lushington, Yelwaul, Mysore, To Cavendish Bentick, Governor General, 21 April 1832
- ¹⁶⁵ *Copies*, From Casamaijor, Camp Seemogah, To Lt Col Evans, Commanding Field Force, Seemoga, 29 May 1831, Pp 388-389
- ¹⁶⁶ MSA, From F Stokes, To Fort St George, 29 March 1833
- ¹⁶⁷ MSA, From Cameroon, Mulghy, To Fort St George, 16 February
- ¹⁶⁸ MSA, From Cameroon, Sircy, To Chief Secretary, 4 February 1833
- ¹⁶⁹ MSA, From Cameroon, To Madras
- ¹⁷⁰ MSA, From NS Cameroon, Magistrate for Canara, Sircy, To Officer Commanding Mangalore, 17 Jan 1833
- ¹⁷¹ MSA, From Cameroon, Sircy, To Chief Secretary, 4 Feb 1833
- ¹⁷² *Copies*, From Lt Col Evans, Camp Anantapore, To Casamajor, 3 May 1831, p 341
- ¹⁷³ MSA, From Cameroon, Mulghy, To Fort St George, 16 February
- ¹⁷⁴ *Copies*, From Capt I Clemons, Camp at Garzanoor, To the Major of the Brigade, Field Force near Seemoga, 23 May 1831, p 378
- ¹⁷⁵ *Copies*, IR Lushington, President's Minutes, 12 Apr 1831, Pp 482-483
- ¹⁷⁶ *Copies, II*, From John Briggs, Senior Commissioner, Bangalore, To Chamier, Chief Secretary, St George, 18 Jan 1832, p 277
- ¹⁷⁷ *ibid*, p 279
- ¹⁷⁸ *Copies*, From Casamaijor, Resident, To Richard Clive, Acting Chief Secretary to Government, Fort St George, 24 Feb 1831
- ¹⁷⁹ *Copies*, From Capt G Hutchinson, Camp Cumsee, To Acting Major of Brigade, Camp Ananthpoo, 21 May 1831, p 374
- ¹⁸⁰ *Copies, II*, From J Briggs, Senior Commissioner, Bangalore, To H Chamier, St George, 20 Jan 1832, Pp 332-333
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- ¹⁸² *Copies*, From IA Casamaijor, Resident, To Chief Secretary, Fort William, p 17
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- ¹⁹⁹ TP Vijaya, *Jamma*, Pp 41-42
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- ²⁰² Alexander J Arbuthnot, *II*, p 211
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- ²⁰⁵ Karl Marx, *The Revolt in the Indian Army*, Karl Marx and Fredeick Engels, *The First*, p 37
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- ²¹⁰ David Arnold, *Looting*.
- ²¹¹ *Copies, I*, SB Lushington, President's Munute, 12 April 1831, p 64
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Key to Abbreviations

IESHR: Indian Social and Economic History Review.

QJMS: Quarterly Journal of the Mythic Society.

IA: Indian Anthropologist.

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APPENDIX-I

The Subsidiary Treaty of Mysore¹

July 8, 1799

A Treaty of perpetual friendship and alliance concluded on the one part of His Excellency, Lieutenant-General George Harris, Commander-in-Chief of the forces of His Britannic Majesty and of the English East India Company Bahadoor in the Carnatic and on the coast of Malabar, the Honourable Colonel Arthur Wellesley, the Honourable Henry Wellesly, Lieutenant-Colonel William Kirkpatrick and Lieutenant-Colonel Barry Close, on behalf and in the name of the right Honourable Richard, Earl of Mornington, K.P., Governor-General for all affairs, civil and military, of the British nation in India, by virtue of full powers vested in them for this purpose by the said Richard, Earl of Mornington, Governor General; and on the other part by Maharajah Mysore Kishna Rajah Oodiaver Bahadoor, Rajah of Mysore.

Whereas it is stipulated in the Treaty concluded on the 22nd of June 1799, between the Honourable English East India Company Bahadoor and the Nawab Nizamood-Dowlay Asoph Jah Bahadoor, for strengthening the alliance and friendship subsisting between the said East India Company Bahadoor, His Highness Nizamood-Dowlah Asoph Jah Bahadoor and the Peshwa Pundit Pradhan Bahadoor, and for effecting a settlement of the territories of the late Tippoo Sultan, that a separate government shall be established in Mysore, and that His Highness Maharajah Mysore Kishna Rajah Oodiaver Bahadoor shall possess certain territories, specified in Schedule C, annexed to the said Treaty, and that, for the effectual establishment of the Government of Mysore, His Highness shall be assisted with a suitable subsidiary force, to be furnished by the English East India company Bahadoor; wherefore, in order to carry the said stipulations into effect, and to increase and strengthen the friendship subsisting between the said English East India Company and the said Maharajah Mysore Kishna Raja Oodiaver Bahadoor, this Treaty is concluded by Lieutenant-General George Harris, Commander-in-Chief of the forces of His Britannic Majesty and of the said English East India company Bahadoor, in the Carnatic and on the coast of Malabar, the Honourable Colonel Arthur Wellesley, the Honourable Henry Wellesley, Lieutenant-Colonel William Kirkpatrick and Lieutenant-Colonel Barry Close, on the part and in the name of the right Honourable Richard, Earl of Mornington, Governor-General aforesaid, and by His Highness Maharajah Mysore Kishna Raja Oodiaver Bahadoor, which shall be binding upon the contracting parties as long as the sun and moon shall endure.

Article 1.

The friends and enemies of either of the contracting parties shall be considered as the friends and enemies of both.

¹Rao, C Hayavadana, *III*, Pp 1260-1268

Article 2.

The Honourable East India Company Bahadoor agrees to maintain, and His Highness Maharajah Mysore Kishna Rajah Oodiaver Bahadoor agrees to receive, a Military Force for the defence and security of His Highness's Dominions; in consideration of which protection His Highness engages to pay the annual sum of seven lakhs of star pagodas to the said East India Company, the said sum to be paid in twelve equal monthly installments, commencing from the 1st of July Anno Domini 1799. And His Highness further agrees that the disposal of the said sum, together with the arrangement and employment of the Troops to be maintained by it, shall be entirely left to the Company.

Article 3.

If it shall be necessary for the protection and defence of the territories of the contracting parties, or of either of them, that hostilities shall be undertaken, or preparations made for commencing hostilities against any State or power, His said Highness Maharajah Mysore Kishna Raja Oodiaver bahadoor agrees to contribute towards the discharge of the increased expense incurred by the augmentation of the military force and the unavoidable charges of war, such a sum as shall appear to the Governor-General-in-Council of Fort William, on an attentive consideration of the means of His said Highness, to bear a just and reasonable proportion to the actual net revenues of His said Highness.

Article 4.

And whereas it is indispensably necessary that effectual and lasting security should be provided against any failure in the funds destined to defray either the expenses of the permanent military force in time of peace, or the extraordinary expenses described in the third Article of the present Treaty, it is hereby stipulated and agreed between the contracting parties, that whenever the Governor-General-in-Council of Fort William in Bengal shall have reason to apprehend such failure in the funds so destined, the said Governor-General-in-Council shall be at liberty, and shall have full power and right either to introduce such regulations and ordinances as he shall deem expedient for the internal management and collection of the revenues, or for the better ordering of any other branch and department of the Government of Mysore, or to assume and bring under the direct management of the servants of the said company Bahadoor such part or parts of the territorial possessions of His Highness maharajah Mysore Kishna Raja Oodiaver Bahadoor as shall appear to him, the said Governor-General-in-Council, necessary to render the said funds efficient and available, either in time of peace or war.

Article 5.

And it is hereby further agreed that whenever the said Governor-General-in-Council shall signify to the said Maharajah Mysore Kishna Raja Oodiaver Bahadoor that it is become necessary to carry into effect the provisions of the Fourth Article, His said Highness Maharajah Mysore Kishna Rajah Oodiaver

Bahadoor shall immediately issue orders to his aumils or other officers either for carrying into effect the said regulations and ordinances, according to the tenor of the fourth Article, or for placing the territories required under the exclusive authority and control of the English Company Bahadoor. And in case His Highness shall not issue such orders within ten days from the time when the application shall have been formally made to him, then the said Governor-General-in-Council shall be at liberty to issue orders, by his own authority, either for carrying into effect the said regulations and ordinances, or for assuming the management and collection of the revenues of the said territories, as he shall judge most expedient for the purpose of securing the efficiency of the said military funds and of providing for the effectual protection of the country and the welfare of the people. Provided always, that whenever and so long as any part or parts of His said Highness's territories shall be placed and shall remain under the exclusive authority and control of the said East India Company, the governor-General-in-Council shall render to His Highness a true and faithful account of the revenue and produce of the territories so assumed; provided also, that in no case whatever shall His Highness's actual receipt or annual income, arising out of his territorial revenue, be less than the sum of the net revenues or the whole of the territories ceded to him by the fifth Article of the Treaty of Mysore; which sum of one lakh of Star Pagodas, together with the amount of one-fifth of the said net revenues, the East India Company engages, at all times and in every possible case, to secure and cause to be paid for His Highness's use.

Article 6.

His Highness Maharajah Mysore Kishna Raja Oodiaver Bahadoor engages that he will be guided by a sincere and cordial attention to the relations of peace and amity now established between the English Company Bahadoor and their allies, and that he will carefully abstain from any interference in the affairs of any state in alliance with the said English company Bahadoor, or of any State whatever. And for securing the object of this stipulation it is further stipulated and agreed that no communication or correspondence with any foreign State whatever shall be holden by His said Highness without the previous knowledge and sanction of the said English company Bahadoor.

Article 7.

His Highness stipulates and agrees that he will not admit any European foreigners into his service without the concurrence of the English Company Bahadoor; and that he will apprehend and deliver up to the Company's Government all Europeans of whatever description shall be found within the territories of His said Highness without regular passports from the company's Government, it being His Highness's determined resolution not to suffer, even for a day, any European foreigners to remain within the territories now subjected to his authority, unless by consent of the said Company.

Article 8.

Whereas the complete protection of His Highness's said territories requires that various fortresses and strong places situated within the territories of His Highness should be garrisoned and commanded, as well in time of peace as of war by British troops and officers, His Highness Maharajah Mysore Kishna

Raja Oodiaver Bahadoor engages that the said English Company Bahadoor shall at all times be at liberty to garrison, in whatever manner they may judge proper, all such fortresses and strong places within His said Highness's territories as it shall appear to them advisable to take charge of.

Article 9.

And whereas, in consequence of the system of defence which it may be expedient to adopt for the security of the territorial possessions of His Highness Maharajah Mysore Kishna Rajah Oodiaver Bahadoor, it may be necessary that certain forts and strong places within His Highness's territories should be dismantled or destroyed, and that other forts and strong places should be strengthened and repaired, it is stipulated and agreed that the English East India Company Bahadoor shall be the sole judges of the necessity of any such alterations in the said fortresses; and it is further agreed that such expenses as may be incurred on this account shall be borne and defrayed in equal proportions by the contracting parties.

Article 10.

In case it shall become necessary for enforcing and maintaining the authority and government of His Highness in the territories now subjected to his power, that the regular troops of the English East India Company Bahadoor should be employed, it is stipulated and agreed that, upon formal application being made for the service of the said troops, they shall be employed in such manner as to the said company shall seem fit; but it is expressly understood by the contracting parties that this stipulation shall not subject the troops of the English East India company Bahadoor to be employed in the ordinary transactions of revenue.

Article 11.

It being expedient for the restoration and permanent establishment of tranquility in the territories now subjected to the authority of His Highness Maharajah Kishna Rajah Oodiaver Bahadoor, that suitable provision should be made for certain officers of rank in the service of the late Tippoo Sultan, His said Highness agrees to enter into the immediate discussion of this point, and to fix the amount of the funds (as soon as the necessary information can be obtained) to be granted for this purpose, in a separate article, to be hereafter added to this Treaty.

Article 12.

Lest the garrison of Seringapatam should at any time be subject to inconvenience from the high price of provisions and other necessaries, His Highness Maharajah Mysore Kishna Rajah Oodiaver Bahadoor agrees that such quantities of provisions and other necessaries as may be required for the use and consumption of the troops composing the said garrison shall be allowed to enter the place from all and every part of his dominions free of any duty, tax or impediment whatever.

Article 13.

The contracting parties hereby agree to take into their early consideration the best means of establishing such a commercial intercourse between their respective dominions as shall be mutually beneficial to the subjects of both Government, and to conclude a commercial treaty for this purpose with as little delay as possible.

Article 14.

His Highness Maharajah Mysore Kishna Rajah Oodiaver Bahadoor hereby promises to pay at all times the utmost attention to such advice as the Company's Government shall occasionally judge it necessary to offer to him, with a view to the economy of his finances, the better collection of his revenues, the administration of justice, the extension of commerce, the encouragement of trade, agriculture and industry, or any other objects connected with the advancement of His Highness's interests, the happiness of his people and the mutual welfare of both States.

Article 15.

Whereas it may hereafter appear that some of the districts declared by the Treaty of Mysore to belong respectively to the English Company Bahadoor and to His Highness are inconveniently situated, with a view to the proper connection of their respective lines of frontier, it is hereby stipulated between the contracting parties that in all such cases they will proceed to such an adjustment, by means of exchanges or otherwise, as shall be best suited to the occasion.

Article 16.

This Treaty consisting of 16 Articles, being this day, the 8th of July, Anno Domini 1799, settled and concluded at the fort of Nazzarbah, near Seringapatam by His Excellency Lieutenant-General George Harris, Commander-in-Chief of the Forces of His Britannic Majesty, and of the Honourable English East India Company Bahadoor in the Carnatic and on the Coast of Malabar (recitals of names of other English officers as in Art. 1)...., the aforesaid gentlemen have delivered to the said Maharajah one copy of the same, in English and Persian, sealed and signed by them, and His Highness the Maharajah has delivered to the gentlemen aforesaid another copy, also in Persian and English, bearing his seal, and signed by Luchumman, widow of the late Kishna Rajah, and sealed and signed by Purneah, Dewan to the Maharajah Kishna Rajah Oodiaver. And the aforesaid gentlemen have engaged to procure and to deliver to the said Maharajah without delay a copy of the same, under the seal and signature of the Right Honourable the Governor-General, on receipt of which by the said maharajah the present Treaty shall be deemed complete and binding on the Honourable the English East India Company and on the Maharajah Mysore Kishna rajah Oodiaver Bahadoor, and the copy of it now delivered to the said Maharajah shall be returned.

APPENDIX-II

Some Details About the Guerrilla War Under Sangolli Rayanna's Leadership*

Date	Place of Attack	Strength	Day/Night	Results	Night Halt
5 Jan 18307	Bidi	60	Night	Taluk Office Rs. 1,909 confiscated, Records and office burnt. 1 killed on both sides	
7 Jan	Nandagad	1,000	Night	No destruction Collected money from merchants and the killedar	Samshergad forest
8 Jan	Khanapur	3,000	Night	No details of the "loot"	Samshergad forest
9 Jan	Itgi			Rs. 5,000 collected from landlords	
11 Jan	Jakkanayaka- Nakoppa			Houses of reactionaires burnt	
12 Jan	Sampgaon	400 6 horses	Before daybreak	Taluk office burnt. Records destroyed Clash while retreating. 8 insurgents killed. 25 wounded 15 government sepoy join Rayanna	Deshnoor hills
13 Jan	Sangolli Marikatti	1,000	Night	Office burnt. Land records destroyed Attack by another batch of rebels	
14 Jan	Haliyal Belagunda	500 500		Encounter with enemy. 2 rebels die. 4 injured. Rayanna injured in leg by bullet.	Balagunda hills 4-5 day rest

21 Jan	Gondolli	250	Day	Ambush on camping enemy forces. 45 minutes battle. Enemy reserves close. Retreat by rebels. 8 rebels die. Some desertions	
8 Feb	Kittur	250	Day	Rayanna was not present. Led by Degave Sooranayaka. Caught in enemy pincer. 78 rebels die. 36 injured. 85 captured. No losses for enemy. Only injuries. Rayanna left with 25 men. Soon joined by 60 new guerrillas.	
7 Apr.	Gidadahubbli		Night		Deshnoor hills

***Note:**

1. This table is partial and incomplete. It does not fully or adequately describe Sangolli Rayanna's guerrilla campaign.

The insurgents were active for most of the time. But details of his other actions or that by other leaders are lacking.

2. The enemy also faced several losses. But information about that is lacking.

3. Information for this is culled from:

- a. Suryanath Kamath, *Sangolli Rayanna: Samagra Sameekshe*
- b. GS Halappa and Krishna Rao, *Volume I*
- c. Sreenivasa Havanur, *British Dakhalegalu Roopisidda Sangolli Rayanna.*

APPENDIX-III

A Select List of Assaults by Guerrillas During the Nagar Peasant Armed Struggle

From
Briggs,*
Senior Commissioner,
Bangalore.

List of several representations of assault on villages in Mysore since the proclamation announcing the transfer of the management of the country to the British Commissioners [in 1831].

SI No	Date of Letters	From Whom Received	Place of Attack	Supposed Place Where Attack Originated	Number of Assailants	Nature of Injury Sustained
1	27 October	Amil of Enkalawa	Koopened	--	50	Plundered property of Shanbhoga, banyan and potter of the village
2	-do-	-do-	Mangunhully	—	30	Robbed whole property of shepherd of the village and cut off ears and nose of his son
3	29 October	Amil of Luckwully	Boosannahully Guzzinah Dhoogkerry	--	60	Sacked the whole village
4	3 November	Amil of Chikmagaloor	Hurepapoor	Supposed to be part of band of Rungappa Naig	60	Burned houses and wounded 3 men with swords
5	6 November	Amil of Holulkera	Singunhully	—	40	Sacked the village

6	-do-	-do-	Gollerhutti	—	40	Carried off sheep of village
7	7 November	Amil of Doddery	Chitenakenhully	—	20	A night attack in which one man hurt and wife burned by torches seriously
8	-do-	-do-	Benkapoor	—	20	Day attack. One house sacked. 17 bullocks driven off
9	9 November	Infantry Command of Bellare	Eswurhully	Band of Rungapa Naig under command of his son Kengappa Naik	20	Village plundered. 2 houses burned. Shanbhoga mutilated by cutting off his ears and nose
10	-do-	-do-	Kulapoor	-do-	20	3 brahmins killed and their women plundered
11	-do-	Amil of Luckwully	Jugurmagry	—	—	Attacked and sacked the house of Hulgy Dedia and [?]
12	10 November	Amil of Billoor	Eshwurhully	—	200	Burned the house and farm of the Potail. He lost 32 head of cattle besides mutilating the Shanbogue and cut off the village

						treasurer's right hand and violated their women
13	11 November	Amil of Toomkooor	Housegerry	—	20	Night attack on village. Highway robbery on ryots
14	-do-	-do- Doopunhully	Holly	—	20 corn stacks	Plundered the
15	13 November	Amil of Goribanda	Luchmysagar	—	—	Night attack on the house of the Shanbogue in which one man was wounded and a woman severely burned with torces
16	-do-	Post Office writer of Malloor	Hassanhully Ossoor Aukoosgerry	A band headed by Krishnaiah Shanbogue of the Palegar of Bhery	—	Attacked herds of 3 villages and wounded the herdsman
17	15 November	Amil of Chengerry	Gopunhully	—	—	Plundered the houses of the village
18	-do-	-do-	Wurunhully	—	50	Murdered one Dalvoy a villager
19	19 November	Amil of Luckwully	Wider Dhikka	—	40	Put to the torches some

						inhabitants and robbed them of their concealed property
20	-do-	Commandant of Infantry of Sakrapatan	[?]	Band of Rungappah Naig	40	In plundering the country no details mentioned
21	1 December	Commandant of Shikarpoor	Hosoor Karengal	—	20	Attacked and plundered both villages
22	3 December	Amil of Chitledroog	Rampoor	—	—	A man found murdered in the vicinity
23	-do-	Amil of Bedry Honully	Dooshoony	—	—	A gang forcibly entered the treasurer's house at night, put himself and wife to torture and carried off his own property as well as that of government in his charge
24	4 December	Amil of Azumpoor	Benkenhutti Chetenhully Tipgondohully Honyhully	—	140	Sacked all four of the villages
25	5 December	Amil of Sakrypatam	Hoscattah	—	—	The Potal seized and detained for 2 days
26	-do-	Post Office Writer of Sakrypatam	Rooksagur	—	40	Shanbogue was attacked

27	-do-	Writer of Terrykerry	Reelkerry	A band headed by Shaikh Ally Kauderhan	40	Carried off a quantity of grain from the village
28	6 December	Amil of Terrikerry	Karyhully	—	50	Carried off 18 herd of ploughing cattle
29	-do-	Amil of Hurryhur	Lingapoor	—	12	One man killed and several women burned with torches
30	-do-	Amil of Luckwully	Hebbry Nundy	—	12	Murdered a merchant of the town and burned his house
31	-do-	Amil of Byrandroog	Bhyrandroog	—	—	Carried off the cattle of Nanjoonda Potail
32	-do-	Post Office writer of Alimpoor	Gouday Hosally	—	—	Burned a part of the village and wounded 2 men. Burned some women
33	-do-	-do-	Koaigkerry Kenchapoor	—	—	Plundered both villages
34	-do-	Post Office writer of Shikarpoor	Mulharpoor	—	20	Attacked and plundered the house of the shepherd, wounded him on the head with sword
35	7 December	Fouzdar of Seemoga Amil of Seemoga	In the jungle of Palgarah	—	20	Attacked 4 Bramins (travelers) of

						whom 3 were killed and one severely wounded
36	9 December	Amil of Luckwully	Nullah near Kulpally	—	40	Murdered the Government officers
37	-do-	Amil of Terry Kerry	Kunchunhully	—	40	Seized the Potal. Sacked his house
38	-do-	Post Office writer of Azampoor	Kerry Yarumgal	—	—	Plundered the village
39	10 December	Amil of Terrykerry	Jumpundally Pass	—	—	Plundered and wounded some merchants bringing cumblies for sale
40	-do-	Inamdar of Eryhully	Nebrigon	—	—	Murdered 4 persons in the jungles two of whose heads were suspended on the trees and the other two heads carried off
41	11 December	Amil of Tomkoor	Gooloor	—	40	Night attack on the house of Linga Jocky which was sacked and his son wounded
42	-do-	-do-	Bannuur	—	40	Committed a burglary and robbery on the house of the Shanbogue

43	12 December	Post Office writer of Murdy	Naiknully	—	2	Plundered a shopkeeper
44	14 December	Post Office writer of Chickmagaloor	Kuldenren	—	—	Sacked the village and wounded several of its inhabitants
45	15 December	Amil of Serah	Girnutunhally	—	40-50	Attacked the house of the village treasurer the whole of its inhabitants were killed the children thrown into the fire and the property plundered
46	-do-	PO writer of Great Balapoor	Near the Oojny Hills	—	12	Night attack on a farm community of a few huts all sacked
47	-do-	Amil of Chikmagaloor	Murlygaon	—	200	The whole of the village sacked, 4 houses burned to the ground, the government Shekdar murdered as also 3 or 4 children
48	17 December	Amil of Biloor	Belwary	—	—	4 or 5 persons wounded
49	-do-	Amil of Yertorah	Yertorah	—	—	Plundered the house and property of Narain Bhut a Brahmin

50	18 December	Hagalwary	Nonanoonkhera	—	—	Plundered two houses belonging to merchants
51	19 December	PO writer Luckwully	Hangore	—	—	A band entered the town for the purpose of murdering one Runga a principal inhabitant who having made his escape they sacked his house and destroyed his property
52	-do-	-do-	Tarsidgawn	—	—	A band entered the twon and carried off one Hoonaiyah without molesting any other person
53	-do-	Amil of Great Balapoor	C Bedrinally	—	—	Plundered the village and wounded some of its inhabitants
54	-do-	PO writer Luckwully	Kurwapy	—	—	Murdered one man and wounded another desperately
55	-do-	Amil of Luckwully	Yerybyle	—	20	Murdered one Lingaiah and destroyed his property
56	-do-	Fouzdar of Munzerabad	Belwary	Band of Runguppa Naig		100-150 Murdered one

						man and sacked the village
57	-do-	-do-	Warnusey	-do-	-do-	Plundered the village and wounded the men who are not expected to live
58	-do-	-do-	Chitchetedly	-do-	-do-	Sacked the houses of the two Potails and inflicted 8 or 10 wounds on Keswaiah the Shanbogue. The government troops afterwards attacked this party killed six and took 2 prisoners whostated that Kengpah (Rangupah Naig's son) was among the slain; but the bodies had been so eaten by the jacals that it was impossible to recognise his person
59	-do-	Amil of Hassan	Keatenhully	Band of Rungupah Naig	-do-	Night attack on the village. Some Bramins houses plundered
60	21 December	Amil of Luckwully	Koley	-do-	-do-	Sacked and destroyed the property of one

						Rungunna a principal inhabitant
61	-do-	-do-	Hebby	-do-	-do-	Set fire to the village
62	-do-	PO writer of Terry Kerry	Raoshypoor	-do-	50	Attacked and wounded one Garo Budraya the village Potal
63	24 December	Amil of Koomsy	Dad Mutty	-do-	50	Set fire to 9 corn stacks and drove off 30 head of laden cattle which they met on the road which they plundered and let loose
64	26 December	Amil of Sorwah	Hapoor	-do-	-do-	Attacked and sacked the house of Govindia the Potal whom they carried off
65	-do-	PO writer of Sakrapatan	Attygerry	-do-	-do-	Gooroo Buswaiah Potal of the village seized and murdered in the jungle
66	-do-	PO writer of Luckwully	Seenymanny	-do-	-do-	The PO writer's house attacked and in his absence his mother was severely wounded by a sword

67	-do-	-do-	Eryhully	-do-	-do-	The house of Dod Tamappa forcibly entered. Himself and his wife tied up, while their property was seized and carried off and destroyed
68	27 December	-do-	[?] hully	-do-	50 or 60	Entered the house of one Veraiah a principal inhabitant. Cut off the ears and nose of his son, burned all his property and molested the females of his family
69	-do-	Foujdar of Nuggur	Haswully	Anwutty	Arsaiah and Oorchiah	These two individuals having formerly quitted the village returned and murdered one Govindapah a Bramin
70	-do-	-do-	-do-	-do-	-do-	The Fouzdar writes that one Horsy Gudliah and Wasnoru Veera Bhadriah are still out in the Kondapoor talook belonging to Mangalore from whence they

						prosecute attacks on those people who pay taxes to the government
71	30 December	Amil of Luckwully	Mailullaholy	Anuratty	-do-	Entered the village applied lighted tapers to the ends of the fingers of women
72	1 January	Amil of Gomminaya-kapollem	Bujapully	—	—	A gang of robbers entered the tent of an officer of the 4 Rgt NC and carried off 2 boxes which were afterwards found used returned to the owner
73	2 January	Amil of Sosla Talacaud	Cottagaul	—	—	Committed burglary on the houses of the Sanabhoga Nanjoza and one Nunji beat them and carried off their property
74	-do-	Amil of Milcottah	Milcottah	—	—	Attacked and plundered the house of Soobammanal
75	-do-	Killedar of Gooda Bunda	Moodegobba	—	20	Plundered the house of Audi Reddy
76	4 January	Peshkar of Cenny Nugger	Hoosor	—	—	Broke open the hose of one

						Moodoo Buswasathi and carried off a number of brass materials and c
77	-do-	PO writer of Kestaru	Hoosooru	—	—	A gang attacked two peons and left them tied to a tree in the jungle near Godud
78	-do-	Amil of Anavattee	Jed	—	—	Burned several houses
79	6 January	Amil of Cortagire	Kitta	—	—	A night attack on the house of one Sunjeevaiah in which his property was carried off
80	-do-	Pashear of Chamrajnuggur	Hoongnoor and Chendalauady	—	—	Forcibly entered the houses of two ryots and carried off their property
81	7 January	PO writer of Bedadi	Kengeri	—	—	Broke open 2 houses in the village and carried off the property, attacked the Tapal Peons and wounded them severely
82	8 January	Foujdar of Nuggur	Konkoon- mulagaan	—	10	Attacked the peons who had taken the wife of their leader

						of the gang prisoner. Fired upon them and carried the women away
83	-do-	-do-	Chookoopah	—	—	A peon named Singar attacked a traveling Bramin on the highway and robbed him of all his property. The thief and the stolen property are found
84	-do-	PO writer of Swarrogi	Nanwally	—	25	Entered 5 houses in the village and carried away the property
85	-do-	PO writer of Suckrypatam	Atgun	—	—	Broke the head of Toorvagauda an inhabitant of Atgun
86	-do-	Amil of Adjampoor	Yaminapoor Rajemakerahally	—	—	Sacked the villages, murdered 2 inhabitants and burned a woman also carried away sircar money

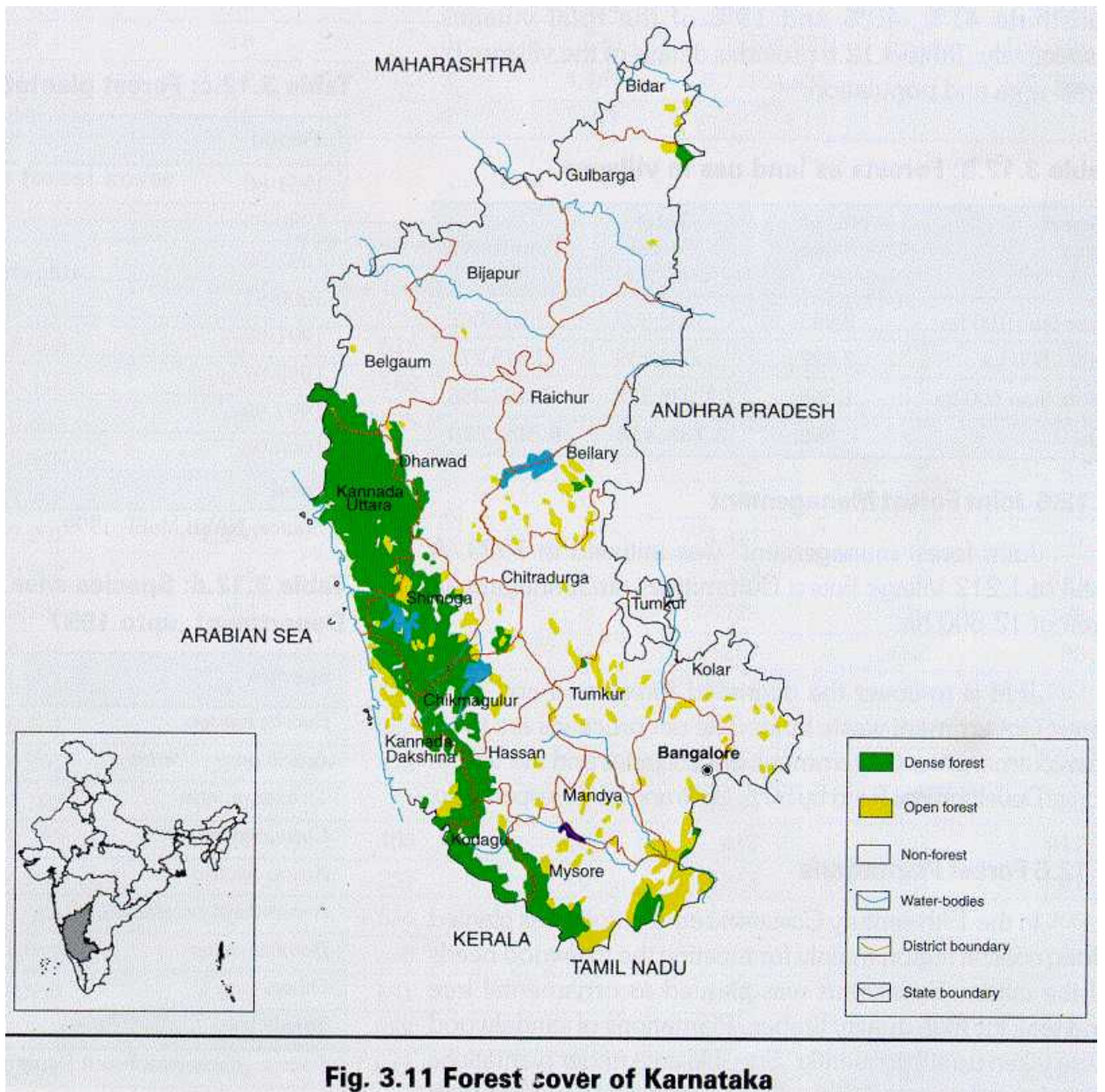
Note:

The nature of most of these attacks are not to be misunderstood, they are made principally out of revenge on the local magistrates and on the inhabitants in order to deter them from the payment of the taxes till redress is obtained. The total inefficiency of the police and the ill success of the local troops can arise only from the want of information supplied by the people, who themselves are prevented from affording it either from fear, or disaffection to the Government.

*Briggs to [?], Secret Correspondence, volume II, Pp 263-267.

**The government troops afterwards attacked this party, killed six and took 2 prisoners who stated that Kengpah (Rangupah Naig's son) was among the slain; but the bodies had been so eaten by the jackals that it was impossible to recognise his person.

[?] indicates that the writing is indecipherable.



My last wish is to be born again in this country to fight against the British and drive them away from the sacred soil.

--Sangolli Rayanna
Sometime before he was hanged on 26 January 1830

The author is an activist associated with the revolutionary movement. He has put in several years of research in writing this book.

Rs. 150 in India
US \$ 10 overseas

Front Cover: Francisco Goya, *The Shootings of May Third 1808*, oil on canvas, Museo del Prado, Madrid, Spain, 1808.

The painting depicts the shooting of Spanish peasant guerrillas outside a village by French troops during the long drawn Spanish war against French occupation.

Back Cover: A contemporary painting of Sangolli Rayanna on horseback kept in the shrine at his graveside.

ⁱ Forrest, George W, *Selections*, p 2