CHAPTER – II
TOWARDS RURAL ASSERTION AND POLITICAL FORMATION

The colonial dispensation always had a fear of local insurgencies in South India, particularly after a chain of insurgencies occurred against the British in the beginning of the 19th century. These struggles were named the south Indian rebellion or the rebellion of the local potentates by the historians. After the fall of Tipu Sultan, survivors of the Paleygar families, former chieftains and other local magnates desired a revival and resurrection. Although these rebellions were suppressed by the British, they continued to persist intermittently throughout the first three decades of the nineteenth century. These rebellions were, Koppal (1819), Bidar (1824), Sindgi (1824), Kittur (1824), Sangolli Rayanna’s Guerilla War (1829-1830), Belagutti (1835), Nagar Rebellion (1830-31), Kalyana Swami Rebellion (1837), Badami (1840), Nippani (1841), Chitradurga (1849), Bidar (1852). Perhaps, Karnataka was unique in having a continuous history of rebellions against the colonial rule. It is also interesting that all these rebellions took place before 1857, the first war of Independence.

In 1831, when the British directly took over the administration in Mysore, one of the first steps to be taken was to issue the *Kavalapatras* (Title deeds) for the ryots who had fought and suppressed in 1831. Even during the Commissioner’s rule, efforts were made to see that the localities and the peasants were least disturbed. According to Bjorn Hettne, even the collection of revenue became a process of least interference at the local level\(^2\). The localities and the local potentates always waited for an opportunity to strike against central penetration or interference. That is why even in 1830–31 when the peasant rebellion took place, there was also a political dimension to the struggle, which was centre versus periphery\(^3\).

The Rendition of the state took place on 25 March 1881. At 7’O in the morning amidst universal good wishes and every demonstration of joy on the part of the people, the Maharaja was placed on the throne at Mysore under a proclamation of the Viceroy and Governor-General of India in Council.

The ceremony of installation was performed in an impressive manner by the Governor of Madras, the Right Hon. W.P. Adam and during the

inauguration a gentle shower⁴ of rain descended and the Maharaja signed the *Sannad* or the Instrument of Transfer. The Instrument of Transfer described in twenty four articles the conditions upon which the administration of the Mysore State was transferred to him by the British government. By the Fifth Article, the subsidy of 24½ lakhs of rupees hitherto paid to the British government of Mysore was enhanced to Rs.35 lakhs. In addition to the payment of Tribute, the state was also bound to contribute towards the increased expenditure of war. This indefinite liability for contribution⁵ in time of war was commuted by the Treaty of 1807 into an obligation to maintain a body of 4,000 effective horses. With the Instrument of Transfer, with war commuted to an obligation to maintain a cavalry force for external service into one to pay Rs.10½ lakhs of rupees per annum by way of an addition to the existing subsidy.

In 1881, the British Indian government in consideration of the financial position of the State, remitted for a period of five years (till 1886). The enhanced subsidy due under the Instrument of Transfer permission was extended for another 10 years. The Island of Srirangapatna which was part of the British India since 1799, though leased to the government of Mysore since 1811 for Rs.50,000/- a year, was made over to Mysore by free grant.

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⁵ *The Instrument of Transfer*, Karnataka State Archives, Bangalore, March 1881.,
The Bombay government wanted to take advantage of the situation by annexing Sorab taluk and part of Shikaripura, but the home government refused to sanction it.

One of the interesting aspects\textsuperscript{6} of the change of government was that Rangacharlu was appointed the Dewan with the British initiative. The position of the Resident was strengthened. An executive Council was formed with the Dewan as the Ex-officio President with three Councillors. They were the following members.

1. Justice TRA Thamboo Chetty
2. Rao Bahadur P. Krishna Rao
3. Rao Bahadur A. Sabhapathi Mudaliar

When the Maharaja assumed\textsuperscript{7} office of the exalted position, the financial position of the State was bleak. After the disastrous famine which had taken a toll of one fifth of the population, there was a debt of Rs.80 lakhs to the British exchequer. Dewan Rangacharlu addressed the Ryots and the merchants of Mysore, immediately after the installation of the Maharaja. This was certainly an unusual step of looking towards the non-official sections of the society. While addressing them, he stated that His Highness

\textsuperscript{6} History of Legislature, p. 19.
\textsuperscript{7} Ibid.
the Maharaja was deeply interested in their welfare and that he was ready to hear their grievances and find solutions to them\(^8\).

This was the beginning of an idea of a deliberative Assembly of the merchants and the ryots. Both the Maharajah and the Dewan had a historical sense about what happened during the rule of Krishnaraja Wodeyar III when the administration distanced itself from the problems of the people which ultimately led to the 1830-31 peasant rebellion. They also knew that a corrupt bureaucracy had played a crucial role in the circumstances leading to the rebellion. Therefore, Dewan Rangacharlu who sought the co-operation of the officials, pleaded with the representatives\(^9\) of the ryots and the merchants to get closer to the administration with their grievances. Infact, Dewan’s meetings with the officials and later with the ryots and the merchants after the installation of the Maharaja showed his great political acumen. In a way, Dewan Rangacharlu inaugurated an administration which proved to be responsive to the grievances and demands of the people.

But the formation of the executive council was not received well in Mysore by the general public and the press. They wanted greater representation by the Mysoreans in the executive council. They believed

\(^{8}\) *Ibid.*

\(^{9}\) *History of Legislature, p. 19.*
that the official members would only stand with the Dewan and the Dewan in association with the British Resident wanted to control everything through the Executive Council.

In fact, the individual members of the executive council did not have any power to take independent decisions\textsuperscript{10}. But he could enjoy the luxury of providing any amount of advice to the Dewan and the Dewan took the final decision. In fact, the local press was extremely hostile to the constitution of the executive council. They wanted the Council to have non-official members as well as more locals. The newspapers, which stood for the cause of Mysoreans, naturally raised their objections against the nature of the executive council. \textit{Karnataka Prakasike} and \textit{Vijayadwaja} wrote editorials criticizing the functioning of the Council\textsuperscript{11}.

The members of the Assembly began to speak openly making their demands. Regarding the re-organization of the Executive Council, there was substantial discussion in the Assembly. In 1890, the members of the Assembly introduced a significant subject which related to the selection of a member of the Assembly as a non-official member to the Executive Council. Their argument for such a move was intended for better representation of the

\textsuperscript{10} \textit{Statesman}, January 1, 1881.

\textsuperscript{11} \textit{Native Newspaper Reports, 1881 January to March}, Tamil Nadu Archives, Madras.
public interest in the government. However, the Dewan argued that it was not possible to include a non-official member in the Executive Council. However, the members of the Assembly\textsuperscript{12} continued to argue that the Assembly should be allowed to elect one or two members to the Executive Council of the Maharajah and that the Maharajah alone should alone preside over the Executive Council and not the Dewan. Venkata Krishnaiah, a leading member of the Assembly introduced the subject, and explained that the proposal was to enlarge the Maharaja’s Council, so that it might contain equal number of non-official members. Another demand raised in the Assembly was that the Maharajah himself should preside over the Executive Council instead of the Dewan. However, the Dewan did not agree with the Assembly and stated that it would be inexpedient to have any one member who was not a responsible servant of the government\textsuperscript{13}.

With regard to the selection of the additional members from the Assembly to the Council members had divergent viewpoints. According to Nanjunda Rao M.H, who was a landholder from Davanagere opined that it would be better to consult the entire Assembly on important mattes, as was done earlier, instead of one or two elected members. Another member from

\textsuperscript{12} Proceedings of the Representative Assembly (hereinafter called PMRA, KSA), 1893, pp. 37-39.
\textsuperscript{13} PMRS (KSA), 1893, pp. 37-40.
Sorab Taluk said that it would be better to consult the entire Assembly instead of one or two elected members, expressing their viewpoints\textsuperscript{14}.

In fact, right from the last decade of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century, the members from the rural area had a stand which can be interpreted as pro-establishment. When the question of nominating a member of the European planter community was taken up, it was stoutly opposed by the native planter representative. Srinivasa Rao, who represented the native planter community argued that if they nominated a member of the European planter community, they should also include one, representing the native planter community. Another member Subbaiah went to the extent of arguing that it would be better to leave it to the government, what was good and suitable!

A large chunk of those who were\textsuperscript{15} from the rural areas normally stood by the Dewan and the administration. They did not find it necessary to make demands for changing the structure of the executive council by including members from the Assembly or forming a Legislative Council on the fashion of Travancore Legislative Council. These leaders like Seshanna from Goribidnur questioned as to how a few men in the Executive Council could perform better than the members of the Assembly. Similarly another

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., p. 40.
\textsuperscript{15} PMRA, Oct. 1894, KSA, pp. 34-35.
member Mr. Venkataramaiya, who was a Shanbog from Channarayapatna taluk made the allegation that it was only the residents of Mysore city who are asking for an enlarged Executive Council.

On the other hand, a group of educated urban, upper caste members were more interested in reducing the so called Madrassi dominance in the Executive Council and the administration directly managed by the Dewan. The Mysorean versus Madrasi conflict was essentially narrow in nature because it was basically Brahmin versus Brahmin conflict. When Chamarajendra Wodeyar passed away in Calcutta on Dec. 28, 1894 at a young age of 32, it once again created a political crisis. The Dewan wanted to declare himself the Dewan Regent and it was also indirectly supported by the British and the press in the Madras Presidency.

In Mysore, M. Venkatakrishnaiyya and P.N. Krishna Murthy took the leadership to mobilize public opinion against making Dewan Sheshadri Iyer the Dewan Regent till Prince Krishnaraja Wodeyar attained maturity. Hence, under the leadership of M. Venkatakrishnaiyya, an unusual public meeting was held in Mysore city on 30 January 1895. This was perhaps the first public meeting of the modern style in Mysore State. Even the Indian National Congress had not entered the phase of large public meetings for

\[16\text{ibid.}\]
grievance redressals in other parts of India. Hence, this public meeting became the first demonstration of resistance against the Presidency lobby (Madras lobby is not the correct expression).

This meeting passed the resolution that the Maharani herself should be appointed the Regent and the Executive Council should have five members including the Dewan and two of them should be non-official members. The resolution was moved by Amble Anniah Pandit and seconded by Ramanuja Iyenar. It is interesting that the meeting decided to depute Shri Venkatakrishnaiyya to the Viceroy to appraise him about the situation. The Mysore lobby became successful in the end. The urban lobby took up the question Regency not because of its love for the royalty but because of its competition with the Presidency lobby. But the British assumed that the Mysore lobby represented the loyalty towards the royalty and hence they did not want to hurt the feelings towards the royal family.

But the real loyalty towards the royal family could be noticed more among the rural members who did not look at the royal family and Dewan as representing conflicting interests.
In February 1895, after prolonged discussion, the British government took the decision to appoint the Maharani as the Regent till her son attained the age of maturity. The British government also named the Council as Regency Council. The British also wanted to reduce the power assumed abnormally by Dewan Sheshadri Iyer who had almost become a second Purnaiah. Even in the literal sense, Sheshadri Iyer wanted to become another Dewan-Regent like Purnaiah, who became the all powerful Dewan Regent in the beginning of the 19th century when Krishnaraja Wodeyar III was a minor.

**Peasant Identity and the Emerging Politics**

The famine of 1876-78 was disastrous in the Mysore State. Almost 10,50,000 people got wiped out in these famines. The cost of loss of livestock was estimated to be Rs.10 crores. These famines were the after-effects of the survey and settlement started by the British Commissioners during the fifties and sixties of the nineteenth century. The ryotwari system of the Bombay model was experimented in Mysore and it had certain fundamental drawbacks. Even in the Madras Presidency, when the ryotwari system was introduced, after a decade, the after effect could be noticed in the

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19 *Report on the History of Mysore Famine, 1876-78*, Bangalore, 1878, p. 50.
form of severe famine in several districts of Tamil Nad. Ryotwari system extended a cash nexus in to the rural arena, resulting in the rise of the rural money-lender and the exploitation of the ryot, who did not have the resources to invest in cultivation.

When the Rendition took place in 1881, whether it was the Maharajah or the Dewan had to focus their attention on the disastrous after effects of the famine. The most important aspect of the Mysore famine was that it continued unabatedly for three years, without any serious attempt to salvage the situation. Available foodgrains from the affected areas were actually transported outside Princely Mysore to other provinces by the profit-making internal traders. They knew very well that when famine persisted for two to three years, people completely lost their purchasing power, whether it was the ryot or the agricultural labourer. They could only starve and die like cattle in the streets in the absence of state intervention. The colonial intervention during famine was callous. And in another three years, they abdicated their responsibility owing to their dismal failure. And that was the historic rendition which urban Mysoreans celebrated as a great victory, they thought they had fought and got it. It was almost a voluntary abdication of direct rule after three years of consistent dereliction of responsibility in a famine-torn province.
As far as the ryots were concerned, they had nothing to celebrate in 1881. That is why the Dewan of Mysore himself was worried about the disastrous consequences of the famine. The new administration was also conscious of the political fallout of the then prevailing situation in the state. 

*The Statesman* published from London and Calcutta stated thus: “Ruined, despairing and embittered – such is the condition of the masses of peasantry. It is in equal measure true of Mysore….” In fact, Mysore had the worst experience than any other state in India. The destruction of cows and bullocks were estimated to be around 29,99,000 (Twenty Nine lakhs), sheep and goat 22 lakhs, horned cattle 1 lakh 27 thousand.

The annual mortality rate was estimated to be 1 lakh 50 thousand. The loss of human lives in three years was estimated to be more than 10 lakhs. Apparently the famine wiped out 1/4th of the state population. In fact, prior to famine the State population was around 50 lakhs. In less than three years almost 10 lakhs people perished in Mysore. Thus 1/4th of the population perished in less than three years.

On the top of this, the state was asked to pay the enhanced subsidy of 35 lakhs rupees. There was a debt of 80 lakhs rupees on the state exchequer.

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21 *Statesman*, No. XI, April 1881.
Mysore was predominantly an agricultural state. Virtually its non-agricultural production had come to a standstill in the 19th century under the British rule. On the other hand, in the second half of the 18th century, state had flourishing trade and manufacturing. But in the 19th century with the decline of manufacturing and trade under the British rule, agriculture alone remained the source of income.

Therefore, the administration decided after 1881 that this annual meeting would be conveniently held at Mysore immediately after the Dasara festival which occasion will offer an additional inducement to those invited to attend the meeting. It was first of all decided to ask the Local Fund Boards of all the districts to select from among themselves and others of the districts the persons who are to be deputed to represent their respective districts at the meeting. In order to represent the landed interests of all the taluks, as well as the interest of trade, they should send one or two cultivating land holders from each taluk, possessed of general information and influence amongst the people and three or four leading merchants for the district generally.23

The State insisted that a list of them should be sent before hand to this office, in order to arrange for their accommodation at Mysore. They may be

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allowed a small sum from local funds to meet the actual expenses of their travel.

Thus by an executive order issued on 25 August 1881, the Representative Assembly was brought into existence. It was to meet at Mysore immediately after the Dasara Festival. To start with it was a meeting of the Representatives of the land-holders and merchants from all parts of the state.

The voters of the Representative Assembly\(^{24}\) included those who paid certain taxes or owned landed property and this electoral college was asked to elect a prescribed number of Representatives to the Representative Assembly. However, over a period of time there was gradual, slow improvement in the method and quality of selection.

According to the revised rules of 10 June 1894 the maximum number of members of the Assembly would be:

| 1. Elected members for 66 taluks | … | 212 |
| 2. Members deputed by 8 Municipalities at District headquarters | … | 23 |
| 3. Members deputed by the 17 other Municipalities with a population of 5000 or more | … | 17 |
| 4. Members deputed by Local Fund Boards | … | 18 |
| 5. Members deputed by Associations | … | 6 |

| Total | … | 272 |

\(^{24}\) History of Legislature (The Mysore Representative Assembly), p. 25.
The List of Associations who\textsuperscript{25} could send Representatives to the Assembly.

1. North Mysore Planters Association
2. Kolar Gold Field Mining Board
3. The Bangalore Rate Payers’ Association
4. The Nagar Sabha, Shimoga District
5. The South Mysore Planters’ Association.

In 1892, two more Associations were added to the list. They were the following:

1. The Melkote Yadugiri Sadamodi Vardini Sabha
2. The Mysore Rate Payers Association.

In July 1893, the Hon.Secretary, Mysore Liteary Union requested the government to extend to the union the privilege of sending a representative to the Dasara Assembly.

From the above tables, it is clear that out of the 276 members, 212 were from the taluks, invariably representing the rural population. It was of utmost importance of the administration that the ryot population was kept in good humour. That is why, in his first official address to the delegates of the Assembly pointed out the necessity of such political measures.

\textsuperscript{25} History of Legislature (The Mysore Representative Assembly), p.62.
“…. such arrangement by bringing people an immediate communication with the government would serve to remove from their minds, any misapprehensions in regard to the views and action of the government and would convince them that the interests of the government are identical with these of people”.

Over the years, the nature of municipal taxation had changed. With the expansion of cities like Bangalore and Mysore, with new amenities and new extensions, the urban housing taxation became a new phenomena. The Mohatarfa was extended to these city dwellers who included European planters, retired army officials, business and professional classes. All these urban dwellers styled themselves as rate payers and they also formed the Rate Payers Association in Bangalore and Mysore. These associations managed to get representation in the Representative Assembly. In this way, the merchants, money-lenders and small manufacturers began to wield their own influence on the administration because they were basically a moneyed class who could manipulate the decisions with their money power and influence. That is why, when the Rate Payers’ Association of Bangalore demanded representation, the Mysore Rate Payers’ Association also followed suit.

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27 Ibid.
The Report of Mr. Caird to the British government on the condition of India argued that the fears and apprehensions in the minds of the rural population who lost everything during famines could be removed by giving them opportunities to ventilate their grievances through the representable institutions. He emphatically argued that the representative institutions, when they are created, would allay the widespread feeling of discontent now pervading the land. He also emphasized that these representative institutions would help to keep open the barriers between the rulers and the ruled. He also hoped that these institutions, would help to strengthen England’s position in the East.

Linkage with the Interior

Even during the period of the British Commissioners an attempt was made to focus attention on the rural arena. In 1862, the Local Fund Committee or Local Board was formed. And in 1874, before the commencement of the disastrous famine it was further modified. The District Board consisted of officials and a few non-officials of the locality. Since the ownership was the major criteria under the British law, the Inamdars and rich peasants normally got represented in these Local Fund Boards. These Boards normally had two meetings in a year.

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28 The Statesman, “A Cry for Representation” (Letter to the Editor), Jan 1, 1881.
The colonial state establishing its linkage with the interior was very significant not because of its financial or economic significance. On the other hand, these local Boards were a fore runner to what was in store after 1881 with the formation of the Representative Assembly. When the Assembly was formed in 1881, the Local Boards underwent structural changes. The officials were replaced by *Inamdars, Jodidars* and the rich peasants\(^\text{29}\).

Thus, the Local Boards had a different purpose. They began to function as the spring Board to get into the Assembly. The government notification dated 14 May 1891 formulated Rules regarding the Constitution and Conduct of business of the Mysore Representative Assembly. Regarding the qualification for the members, the Rules of 1891\(^\text{30}\) stated that:

1. (a) every person who pays on his own account, annually, to the government, land revenue or *mohatarfa* (House and shop tax) of not less than an amount specified in the accompanying schedule A for that taluk can be qualified.

\(^{29}\) *PMRA, 1881*, Appendix-A, p. 17.

\(^{30}\) Constitution and the Rules of Procedure 1891, dated 14 May 1891.
(b) Every person who is owner of one or more entire Inam villages with a total beroz of Rs.500/- per annum and who ordinarily resides in the taluk and

(c) every graduate of any Indian University whose ordinary place of residence is in that taluk.

2. Persons qualified as above will be invited to meet at the headquarters of their respective taluks in the first week of the month of Ashada, on a specified day. At such meeting, they shall nominate, from among themselves, Members for the Representative Assembly to meet at Mysore at the forthcoming Dasara.

In addition to these rules, the Local Fund Board was also permitted to depute two of its members to the Assembly. Each Municipal Board was also similarly permitted to depute a member of their body to the Assembly.

Thus, by the close of the 19th century, the Maharaja’s administration gave great emphasis on the rural, cultivating classes, irrespective of the fact whether they were jodidars, rich peasants or the marginal peasants as long as they could fulfill the property qualifications. Although this was a concerted attempt to reach out to those sections suffered so much in the famines, the entire exercise taken up by the government through the Local
Fund Board and the Dasara Assembly had certainly lot of things in store for the coming decades in terms of social and political mobilization.