



A study on Maharaja Chamarajendra

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Abstract:- The princely states of India covered about 40 per cent of the Indian subcontinent at the time of Indian independence, and they collapsed after the departure of the British. This book provides a chronological analysis of the Princely State in colonial times and its post-colonial legacies. Focusing on one of the largest and most important of these states, the Princely State of Mysore, it offers a novel interpretation and thorough investigation of the relationship of king and subject in South Asia

Introduction:-

Maharaja Chamarajendra education and the three mothers Maharaja Chamarajendra Wodeyar's three mothers, two surviving ranis of the last maharaja, Ramavilasa and Sitavilasa, and Chamarajendra's biological mother, Devajammanniavar, were, at the beginning, strongly opposed to the British plan for educating the maharaja in a school with other boys. The thought of the young maharaja leaving the Mysore palace every day and going to the royal school set up in the Summer Palace, about half a kilometre away from Mysore fort, was distasteful enough for these mothers to react very aggressively against any attempts by the British to introduce this scheme. This was not only because the maharaja's sacred and dangerous body had to be kept within the palace like a god's idol in a temple, but also because the three mothers were well aware that those who controlled the body of the maharaja had control over the politics of the palace. The three mothers therefore did their very best to prevent Chamarajendra from attending the royal school.

In late January 1870, Chamarajendra missed classes for a whole week.¹⁹ It was reported that he had a slight cold and could not attend school on Thursday, whilst Sunday and Monday were holidays due to a Hindu festival. So, why a whole week's absence? The mothers subsequently insisted that after a child had been sick he should be anointed with oil prior to going out in the open air.

The maharaja was reported to be well by Friday, but they could not perform this particular ritual either on Saturday or on Sunday. On Monday, they still could not perform it, because the mothers had to go to Srirangapatna to take a bath in Kaveri river. Tuesday was then pronounced to be unlucky to perform the ritual. As Chamarajendra did not come to school on Wednesday, an alarmed Malleon sent the Comptroller of the Palace to inform the three mothers that excuses such as 'unlucky days' could not

be permitted to interfere with the maharaja's education. Devajammanni, his biological mother, insisted that she could not send him to school without the agreement of the other mothers (the two ranis), and they had forbidden her to send the maharaja to school. The maharanis also sent a message to Malleson, but he replied that he would receive no message from them on the subject of the maharaja's education.

Furthermore, he delivered to the eldest brother of Chamarajendra a message for his mother, Devajammanni, that her reply to Malleson that she would not send the maharaja to school without the order of the maharanis would be reported to the chief commissioner.²² These women were, of course, living within an extremely closed society, zenana, strictly regulated by orthodox customs and rituals. Yet it would be mistaken to Educating the maharajas understand the behaviour of the three mothers as a sign of their being simply ignorant or superstitious. They rather tactically used traditional religious restrictions whenever it suited them to justify what they wished to achieve. Religious excuses were not necessarily blindly followed by them but were carefully employed to manipulate a situation in which they had little other power to exercise. That the three ranis were making instrumental use of religion as a political language was evident from the fact that they quickly mastered other forms of political discourse as the need arose. In 1877,

First Maharani Ramavilasa and Second Maharani Sitavilasa met Viceroy Lord Lytton who visited Mysore. After their meeting, Ramavilasa sent a letter to the viceroy, which began: The present system of education [for] our son is apparently defective. He has made little or no progress in his studies, and this will be obvious to Your Lordship after a little conversation with him. We are extremely anxious that he should receive such an education as will hereafter fit him to govern this province with advantage both to his subjects and to himself, on the same enlightened principles of justice which is so characteristic a feature of British rule in India; and for this purpose, we with much difference, respectfully suggest that an English gentleman of ability from one of the Universities at Home be selected and appointed tutor to His Highness.

She listed other issues, such as the recent famine and its management, the lack of employment in Mysore region, house taxes, and an unpopular town magistrate of Mysore; but her anxiety over the education of her son, who was then 14 years old, was clearly highlighted as the main concern of the aging mothers (the youngest of the three, Devajammanni, biological mother of Chamarajendra, died in 1872). By then, the mothers had learned that education could be beneficial for their son, and that it might be wise to rely on the British to provide it. It was reported that Chamarajendra had managed to read and write Kannada freely only after a vernacular language class was added to the royal school in 1876 (Urdu was later added in 1877) and his ability to employ English was not great either.²⁴ The old mothers' concerns were therefore well founded, but it is amazing to see how swiftly they apparently began appreciating the effects of new English schooling, which they had detested so much at the beginning. It is likely that these anxious mothers in fact formed part of a larger strategic game. The office of Guardian was abolished in 1876, and their favoured British officer J. D. Gordon had been transferred and appointed as Judicial Commissioner of Mysore. The aging maharanis had clearly realised by then the advantages of having a

sympathetic British officer within their reach. In another letter to the viceroy, the First Maharani described Gordon as follows:

He not only conducted all our affairs with great consideration and justice, and paid every attention to our wants and wishes, but even after giving over charge of his guardianship, and when employed on other duty, he has all along evinced great interest in the Maharaja's education and advancement, and in our own welfare such an Englishman could clearly be an asset, and they succeeded in their attempt to have Gordon returned to the palace. The British re-instituted the post of Guardian and brought Gordon back to his former position. The maharanis thus successfully came to present themselves as modern mothers whose largest concerns were about their son's education: a role they learned to play exceedingly well.

The tour: going out of Mysore Another change that British Guardian G. B. Malleon brought into the young maharaja's life was the tour.²⁶ A Mysore maharaja had never shown himself in public, except on two occasions: his birthday celebrations and the Dasara festi-val. It was not only the maharaja himself: the Urs in general rarely left Mysore district or even the city of Mysore itself. Malleon, however, considered a tour a very crucial part of the education for boys from the ruling caste. He explained the necessity of a tour to the chief commissioner stating that 'nothing (would be) more beneficial to the young Urs than that they should see something more of the world than that presented to their view in Mysore, and especially an opportunity of noticing the action of railways, of steamers, and a sight of the sea'. He intended to take several young Urs nobles to Madras, but failed to do so after meeting with an accident. However, he received an invitation from the Countess of Mayo to visit Calcutta, and suggested to the chief commissioner that the visit might be a great opportunity. Naturally, this proposal of taking Urs boys to Calcutta caused the 'wildest excitement' in the palace. The second rani contented herself with a sarcastic remark to one of the young nobles, on his wishing her farewell, that 'none of the Urs, his ancestors, had ever dreamed of even crossing the Kaveri' (a river only 13 kilometre distant from Mysore).

The first rani, however, sent the whole party her best wishes for the journey. In December 1870, Malleon selected three promising boys from among the students of the royal school, namely Subramanyaraj Urs (Bettadakote clan), the second brother of the maharaja, Dalvoy Devaraj Urs (Kalale Dalvoy clan), and Munjundraj Urs (Mugur Clan), a cousin of the maharaja on his mother's side. Malleon's description of the journey was as follows: They had never seen a railway before, and they were struck by surprise and pleasure. What seemed at first to attract them most was the extreme comfort of the carriage. I had engaged for the three boys and myself a first class car-riage, and in this I took care that they should want for nothing.

The sound of the whistle pleased without alarming them. But when the engine started their pleasure was at its height. I never saw boys more animated. At last they went comfortably to sleep. When they awoke in the morning, we were nearing Madras. I asked Dalvoy [Devaraj Urs] whether he had travelled as pleasantly as in a carriage drawn by horses. He was emphatic; 'A million times more so', he said, 'there can be no carriage like a railway'. As we approached Madras the boys stretched their heads to catch a view of the sea. When they saw it, their wonder could not be restrained, so much larger, so vaster,

was t than they had imagined. The same evening and every subsequent evening, they asked to be driven by the sea, and nothing pleased them more than gazing on its expanse.

Five years later, the young maharaja himself experienced the outside world. In October 1875, the government of India desired that the Maharaja of Mysore and his suite with a suitable number of attendants should proceed to Bombay (the present city of Mumbai), to greet the Prince of Wales on his first visit to India. Malleon had kept this order secret for fear that it might upset the Mysore royals, since they had never allowed the young maharaja to visit even Bangalore. He then had an interview with the first rani on this subject. To his surprise, she did not object to the journey itself, but insisted that the maharaja should be accompanied by all the nobility of Mysore, and a retinue not less than that of the Nizam. He had difficulty in selecting the staff of young noblemen who were to accompany the maharaja, since the first rani demanded the inclusion of several young Urs whom he found less than desirable in manner, education, and appearance.

He choose, without any hesitation, Dalvoy Devaraja Urs, then an eighteen-year-old who had already made two journeys to Calcutta and one to the Himalayas, and Desa Urs, a boy of thirteen, a classmate and playmate of the maharaja, and included, unwill-ingly, Gopalaraj Urs, a (biological) brother of the maharaja, and Basappaji Urs, who had married his sister. The rani's insistence was that these young Urs should be selected as a representative of each upper Urs clan regardless of the nature of the individual boys. However, Malleon's concern was that the maharaja's company should be well educated, able to converse in English, and have good manners and a good appearance. In other words, to what degree they were Anglicised was what mattered. According to Malleon, the young Maharaja Chamarajendra had not felt at all confident about the journey until his departure, but his progress along the road towards Bangalore made a big impression upon him. As he drove from village to village, he was met with extreme enthusiasm.

The villages had been ornamented with no mean skill, which alone was enough to attract the attention of a young boy; and the teeming numbers of the crowds gathering to pay homage to their future sovereign impressed him considerably. The scene that appeared in front of him as he approached the heavily populated town of Bangalore was even greater. The atmosphere there was 'in expression of deep feeling, of enthusiasm, almost of worship, it was scarcely to be rivalled anywhere'.³⁰ A Hungarian nobleman, who happened to be in Bangalore, told Malleon that 'he had, never in the world, seen anything to approach the deep reality of feeling expressed there. He had seen his own Emperor hailed with acclamations at Budapest, on the great occasion when he had won the love of the Hungarians by conceding to them a national parliament. The enthusiasm had seemed great then, but this appeared more intense, more deep-seated still'.³¹ The British officers who received the maharaja at Bangalore were equally impressed by the scene. It appeared that they did not expect the degree of enthusiasm and excitement shown by the people of Bangalore, nor did they understand the significance of the visit of the maharaja. It was not simply a matter Educating the maharajas 'almost of worship', but was indeed worship. Huge crowds gathered, grateful only to have a darshan (view) of the maharaja and some of them were possessed with extreme joy at the sight

of him. The scene was probably similar to when people gather to see great gurus or saints in the present day. In the mind of many, if not most, of their subjects at this time the sight of a maharaja was extremely powerful, as powerful as the sight of holy men, if not even more so. On the evening of 27 October, the maharaja started out by special train for Bombay, accompanied by the chief commissioner, his guardian, his entourage, and his followers. It was the first time he had seen a railway, which delighted him a great deal. In Bombay, he exchanged visits with the governor of Bombay, the viceroy, and the Gaekwad of Baroda. On 8 November, the maharaja was in attendance with the other principal native princes to greet the Prince of Wales upon his landing, and subsequently drove in his carriage in the procession.

He exchanged visits with the Prince of Wales on 9 November and the 11 November. The maharaja also had an interview with one of the correspondents of the London daily newspapers. The interviewer met with the maharaja, Delvoy Devaraja Urs and Desa Urs and was very much impressed, especially by Delvoy Devaraja writing that with his 'excellent accent and admirable good taste he spoke English perfectly'. He knew all about the Franco-German war, ... understood even the principal of summer-drills in England, and expressed a desire to see the troops of all these nations himself (traditionally his clan occupies the post of hereditary Commander-in-Chief of the Mysore army). You Europeans, he said, are so well disciplined that I could learn much by travel, and I shall go to England on the very first opportunity.

Conclusion:-The response from the thirteen-year-old maharaja also made a favourable impression on the British news correspondent, in spite of the fact that the young prince was shy, especially with strangers.... [the Maharaja] chatted pleasantly about the sights of Bombay and its relative beauty when compared with his own capital. He was just going to the caves of Elephanta, and he intended to learn all he could while in the Presidency. He dwelt upon the pleasure of cricket, of which game he is very fond, and the advantages of underhand twist bowling, which he finds bothers the Mysorean cricketers exceedingly, and then upon the pleasures of sport. Thus fifteen minutes are so passed pleasantly, and concluded with a kind invitation to visit him at his capital and see his people. A more intelligent young gentleman I have never seen.³³The language of sport worked. It was certainly one of the devices that could create a link between people in the colonies and in the metropolis: a shared interest amongst otherwise distant and remote cultures

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