

# Role of Early Dewans: British Empire and the Mysore Kingdom – A Study

Dr.C.K.Kotrappa, Associate Professor of History, Government First Grade College, Davanagere.

## Abstract

This paper attempts to study how the concept of **Diwans** was conceived in the Mysore **Kingdom**, with **Diwan** Purnaiah as the first ever Prime Minister contributed to growth of Mysore as model state. Rising to the position of Diwan in those days was not that easy and required good communication skills, fine grasp of laws of various fields, good public relationship, etc. Holding Diwanship was something like walking on a tight rope. Special skills were required to be in the good book of the Maharajah and his royal household on one hand and try to maintain his rapport with the British officials on the other. There was no difference between a powerful Diwan and a juggler in a Circus, he had to put every step in the administrative corridor carefully. For many Indians, in the colonial era, it was a far cry to reach such a level and had to be content with a position of subaltern in character. The following lists the Diwans of Kingdom of Mysore through 1799 to 1947. The most notable of the diwans are: Diwan Purnaiah, Diwan Sir C. V. Rungacharlu, Diwan Sir K. Seshadri Iyer, Diwan Sir P. N. Krishnamurti, Diwan V. P. Madhava Rao, Diwan T. Ananda Rao, Diwan Sir M. Visveswarayya, Diwan M. Kantaraj Urs, and Diwan Sir Mirza Ismail. Many of the diwans are associated with several industrial and educational initiatives undertaken during their terms. These initiatives include almost all works assigned/ directed by the king, permeating activities like setting up and maintaining industries like Hindustan Aeronautics Limited, Visveswaraya Iron and Steel Plant, Mysore Lamps, Mysore Chemical and Fertilizers Factory, Mysore Paper Mills, Mysore Paints and Varnish Limited. The State Bank of Mysore was established in 1913. Dams for irrigation like Krishna Raja Sagara in 1924 and Hydroelectric Power Plants on Shivanasamudra Falls in 1902 and Jog Falls. Bangalore was the first city in India to get electric street lights in 1905.

*Key words: Princely state, nationalism, caste, Kannada, colonialism, Diwan, Mysore*

## Introduction

important phase in the making of modern Mysore. For the first time in India, democratic experiments were introduced by the establishment of a representative assembly. The next king, Nalvadi Krishna Raja Wadiyar, earned great fame as a saintly King-Rajarishi, and his kingdom was hailed as Ramarajya by Mahatma Gandhi as an ideal kingdom comparable to the one ruled by the historical hero Lord Rama.

Under British hegemony, the Wadiyars, freed from security concerns, shifted their attention to the patronage of the fine arts. They made Mysore a cultural center of Karnataka, fostering a number of famous musicians, writers and painters. The Diwans of Mysore played an important role in the transformation of Mysore into a progressive State. In this direction, the part played by C. Rangacharulu, the first Diwan after Rendition was very prominent. During the later part of the colonial period under the Crown, India produced a galaxy of prominent administrators who rose to the position of eminence and displayed their talents in full flow in the area of managing the princely states. Born in 1831, C. Rangacharulu entered the Madras Government service in 1850. Through his intellectual brilliance and administrative acumen, he soon rose in the official hierarchy and by

1859; he was working as Deputy Collector of Rajahmundry. Meanwhile he published two pamphlets one on "Bribery and Corruption in the Revenue Department" and the other on "Mirasi Rights in Changalpet and Tanjore districts", where he fearlessly exposed the evil that had taken root in the department. Rangacharulu served for eighteen years in Madras presidency, when destiny brought him to Mysore. In March 1868, His Highness Sri Krishnaraja Wodeyar III passed away. The British marched their troops into Mysore, sealed off the palace and put his treasures under lock. Major Elliot was appointed to prepare a complete inventory of the Maharaja's properties, scrutinize the expenditure of the palace establishment and settle the Maharaja's debt. C. Rangacharulu was appointed to assist him. Later Rangacharulu was appointed to assist Lt.Col Haines who was appointed by the Government of India as guardian of crown prince Sri Chamaraja Wodeyar X. In June 1869 G.B. Malleson succeeded Lt. Col. Haines and Rangacharulu continued as assistant of the guardian and was in addition appointed as the "Controller of the Palace."

Rangacharulu was keenly aware of his role in moulding the character of the young prince and training him for his exalted position. He jealously maintained the dignity and prestige of the prince. Once Col.Malleson treated the young prince with scant courtesy for which Rangacharulu protested. The Colonel grew indignant and asked "Who are you to tell me?" For which Rangacharulu replied "Both of us have been appointed to help the Maharaja and not to ill-treat him."

In 1874 C.Rangacharulu wrote a paper entitled "Fifty years of British administration in Mysore" This paper was published in London and created a great sensation. In this paper he pointed out the shortcomings of the British rule. In particular he exposed the defects and limitations of the British administration.

### **Objective:**

This paper intends to explore and analyze the significance of **Dewan** of the **Mysore Kingdom**, As able statesman and administrators. Also their unique distinction of serving the state with integrity for economic / industrial prosperity

### **Role of early Dewans : British Empire and the Mysore Kingdom**

Diwan, Purniah earned praise from the British for his progressive and innovative administration. In 1811, he retired from service following the sixteenth birthday of the boy king. In 1831, dissatisfied with the economy of the princely state and citing mis-administration, a situation brought about by corrupt local officials (tashildars), the British took direct control of the kingdom. King Krishnaraja Wodeyar III spent most of his time encouraging the fine arts, resulting in the development of Carnatic music and Kannada literature. For the next 50 years, Mysore was subject to the rule of commissioners, who were British-appointed officials. In 1876–1877, towards the end of the direct British rule, Mysore was struck by a devastating famine with estimated mortality figures which ranged between 700,000 and 1,100,000, or nearly a fifth of the population. Shortly thereafter, King Chamaraja Wodeyar, who had been educated in the British system, took over the Mysore administration in 1881, following the success of a lobby set up by the Wodeyar dynasty. From then onwards, until Indian independence in 1947, Mysore remained a princely state under the British Raj with the Wodeyars continuing their rule.

In May 1879, Rangacharulu was appointed as Revenue Secretary by the Chief Commissioner. On 25th March 1881 at a Durbar held at the Mysore palace, Sri Chamajendra Wodeyar X was invested with full ruling powers over the territories of Mysore and the new Maharaja in a proclamation issued on the same day appointed C. Rangacharulu as the Diwan of the State.

When Rangacharulu took charge as Diwan, the State had not yet recovered from the effect of the great famine of 1877. To carry out relief measures, the Government of India had advanced a loan of Rs. 80 lakhs at an interest of 5%. Rangacharulu Succeeded in persuading the Government of India to reduce the interest from 5% to 4% and to have the loan paid in forty-one yearly installments of four lakhs each. To reduce expenditure two districts, Chitradurga and Hassan and nine taluks were abolished. Four munsiff courts and three sub courts were abolished. The number of jails was reduced from nine to three. Owing to these measures, the State was able to save Rs two lakhs per annum. Rangacharulu believed that a good system of communication was essential for the development of trade and commerce. He floated a loan of Rs. 20 lakhs at 5% interest per year and started work on the construction of the Railway link between

Bangalore and Tiptur. Another unprecedented step taken by him was the establishment of Representative Assembly, the first of its kind in India. The Assembly consisting of 144 members met for the first time in 7th October 1881. The Representative Assembly consisted of persons drawn from all the cities, towns and other important places. Though not elected by the people, the members represented the interests of the people and they brought to the notice of the Administration the grievances of the people. A responsive Government used to attend to the redressal of the grievances of the people very promptly. This was, indeed, the first-step in introducing democracy in the State.

### **Rangacharulu the Administrator**

Rangacharulu had a passion for reading and possessed a large and well stocked library. Books on Philosophy, History, politics, literature and Journalism were included in his collection. He had great love for Kannada language and encouraged Kannada writer Basavappa Sastri to translate Kalidasa's Shakuntala in Kannada later the author was conferred the title "Karnataka Kalidasa" by Rangacharulu.

Towards the end of 1882, Rangacharulu's health broke down and he passed away on 20th January 1883. To commemorate his memory a Town hall was built at Mysore, which was opened by His Highness Sri Chamarajendra Wodeyar X in 1885. Diwan Rangacharulu was a great administrator who laid proper foundations for the future administration of princely Mysore.

Sir Kumarapuram Seshadri Iyer (or Aiyar) KCSI (1 June 1845 – 13 September 1901), was an Indian advocate who served as the Dewan of Mysore from 1883 to 1901. He was the second Dewan of Mysore state since the reinstatement of the Wodeyar family on its throne in 1881 and was the longest serving Dewan of the princely state as well. He is regarded by most as the Maker of Modern Bangalore.

### **Seshadri Iyer**

Seshadri Iyer was born in a Tamil-Speaking family from Palghat in the Malabar district of Madras Presidency which is in modern day Kerala. He had his early education in Calicut and graduated in arts from Presidency College, Chennai, in 1868. He was also a qualified lawyer.

Seshadri Iyer joined the services of the Mysore kingdom in 1868 and served as a district magistrate and later as Personal Secretary to the Diwan, Rungacharlu before being appointed Diwan himself. Seshadri Iyer was the longest serving Diwan of Mysore kingdom and served from 1883 to 1901.

Started the Mysore Civil Service Examinations were held for the first time in 1891 and the Department of Geology and the Department of Agriculture were founded in 1894 and 1898. Other notable achievements include the construction of the Vanivilas Sagar dam across Vedavati river, the initiation of the Shivanasamudra hydroelectric project in 1899 (the first such major attempt in India), electricity and drinking water (the latter through pipes) being supplied to Bangalore and the founding of the Archaeological Survey of Mysore (1890) and the Oriental Manuscripts Library.

Seshadri Iyer established the Kolar gold fields and Victoria Hospital and commissioned the Shivanasamudra hydel-electric power project. Seshadri Iyer had to deal with a devastating plague which afflicted Bangalore in 1898 and was responsible for the decongestion of streets and reconstructing the city in the aftermath of the plague.

### **Mokshagundam Visvesvaraya**

Sir Mokshagundam Visvesvaraya KCIE FASc (15 September 1860 – 14 April 1962), more commonly known as Sir MV, was an Indian Civil Engineer, statesman, and the 19th Diwan of Mysore, serving from 1912 to 1919. He started his primary education in Bangalore, received his BSc degree from the University of Madras, and then DCE (Diploma in Civil Engineering) from the University of Bombay through its affiliated institution and 3rd oldest Engineering College in Asia, College of Engineering, Pune. He received India's highest honor, Bharat Ratna, in 1955. He was knighted as a Knight Commander of British Indian Empire (KCIE) by King George V for his contributions to the public good. His birthday, 15 September, is celebrated as Engineers' Day in India, Sri Lanka and Tanzania in his memory. He was Chief Engineer of Krishna Raja Sagara dam in the north-west suburb of Mysuru city, Laxmi Talav Dam near Kolhapur in south-west Maharashtra, and also served as Chief Engineer to develop a flood protection system for the city of Hyderabad.

### **Mirza Muhammad Ismail**

Sir Mirza Muhammad Ismail (1883-1959) was a Diwan of the Kingdom of Mysore. A childhood friend of the king Krishnaraja Wodeyar IV, he acted as the king's private secretary (1923-1926) and later worked as the Diwan from 1926-41. His contributions include the development of the Brindavan Gardens and launching the first rural electrification programme in India. Like one of his predecessors Mokshagundam Visvesvarayya, he was known for being industry-friendly and it was during his tenure that Hindustan Aeronautics Limited was set up. Other industries started during his period as diwan include paper, cement, steel, fertilizers, sugar and electric bulbs.

The period of his administration was an eventful one. He built the superstructure on the foundations laid by Sir M. Visveswaraya. His period saw Mysore State make substantial progress in the field of industries, both in the private and public sectors. He was an able administrator and set an inspiring example to the officials by undertaking extensive tours and personally looking to the grievances of the people. A major part of his administration was spent in suppressing various kinds of public disturbances. He had to do a tight-rope walking in the face of popular agitations conducted by the Congress Party. He had to maintain good relations with the top Indian National Congress leaders like Gandhi and Nehru on one hand and on the other, he did everything possible to suppress Congress movement in the State. The Sultanpet Ganapathi Disturbances in Bangalore in 1928 called for the appointment of an enquiry commission headed by Visveswaraya. The Commission recommended the founding of the responsible government in the State. The disturbances made the Diwan somewhat

unpopular and helped Congress to gain ground in Mysore. He expanded the Bhadravathi Iron factory by adding a steel plant. A cement and a paper factory were established at the same place. The Hindustan Aeronautics Limited, Porcelain Factory and the Glass Factory all in Bangalore were established. The Sugar Factory at Shimoga and the Khadi Production Centre at Badanval were the other industries that were set up during his time. A Trade Commissioner was appointed at London. He was a great lover of gardens and parks and the founding of gardens, parks and beautiful squares in towns and cities was encouraged by him. The Cauvery high-level canal was also constructed, irrigating 120,000 acres of land in Mandya district. Sir Mirza Ismail designed the world-famous, meticulously planned Brindavan Gardens, located on the terrace of the Krishna Raja Sagar Dam, near the Mysore City. The gardens contain a number of fountains in all shapes and sizes and in the evenings they are tastefully illuminated giving the entire gardens a fairy tale look. During his time the Medical College was established in Mysore which he opened later.

In 1930, he was knighted by the British Government for his services to India.

### **Conclusion**

Rangacharulu was the first to establish a colony for Anglo Indians and Eurasians in India. Nearly 4000 acres of land near Bangalore was granted to them to establish a colony. The colony came to be known as White Field. During those days young men of Mysore had to go either to Madras or Bombay to pursue higher studies. To provide opportunities for bright young men of Mysore, Rangacharulu instituted scholarship for them. Sir M. Visvesvaraya, who later became the Diwan of Mysore was one of the recipients of such scholarship. Rangacharulu was a workaholic. He used to get up at 5'o clock in the morning and after finishing his morning chores used to grant interview to the people until 10 a. m. when he left for office. Common people had free and easy access to him. He kept a tight rein of the administration. No official from the lowest to the highest escaped his vigilant scrutiny. When he heard words of corruption or tyranny by an official, he would himself set out and conduct an enquiry on the spot. Mysore State was a state within the Dominion and the later Republic of India from its formation in 1947, out of the territories of the Kingdom of Mysore, until 1956 with Bangalore as its capital. The state was considerably enlarged in 1956 when it became a linguistically homogeneous Kannada-speaking state within the Union of India. It was subsequently renamed as the state of Karnataka.

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