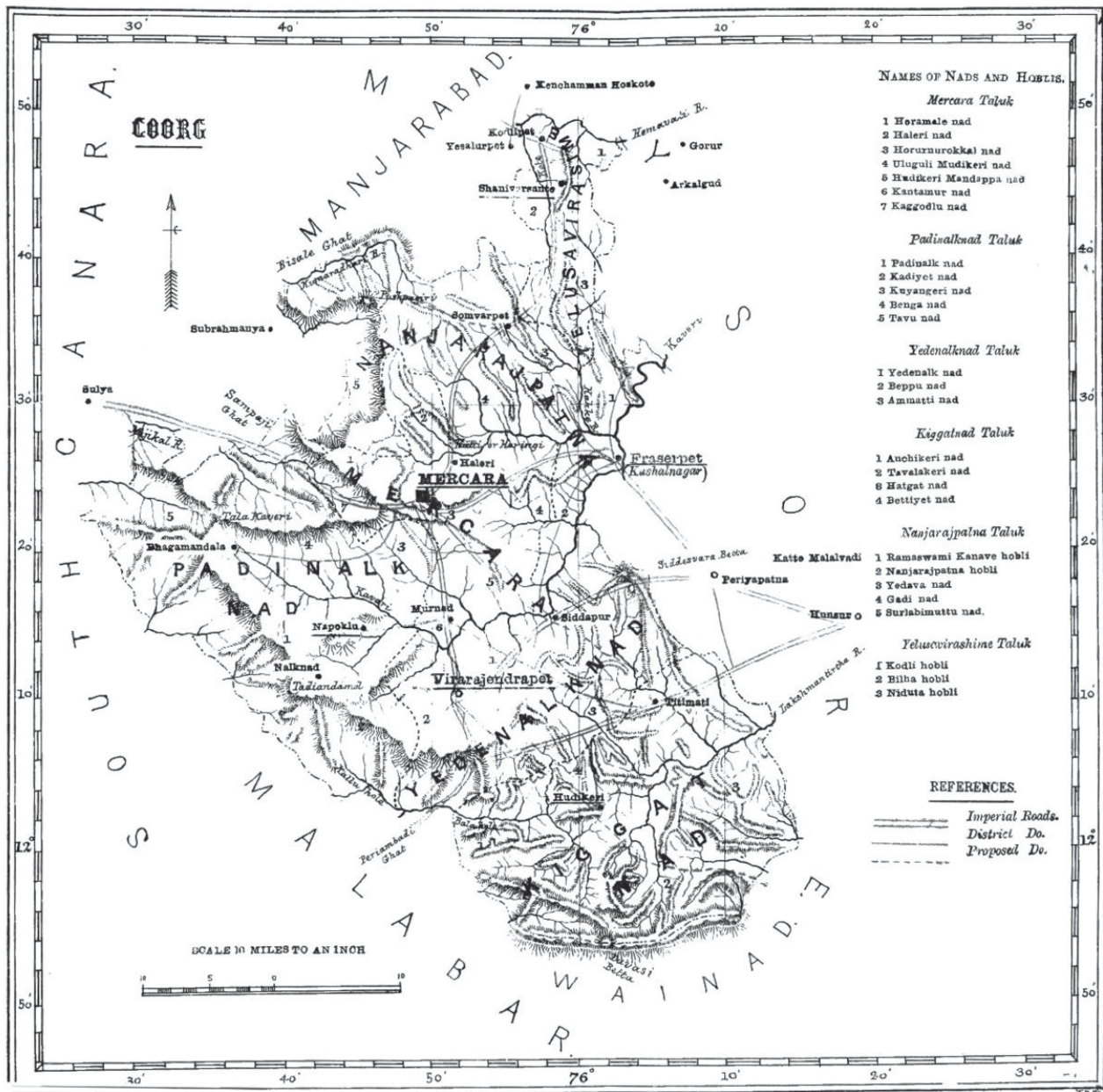


# THE COORG WAR

## & COLIN PATERSON



# COMMENTARY

## The Coorg War and Colin Paterson

*The conquest of the earth, which mostly means the taking it away from those who have a different complexion or slightly flatter noses than ourselves, is not a pretty thing when you look into it too much. What redeems it is the idea only. An idea at the back of it; not a sentimental pretence but an idea; and an unselfish belief in the idea— something you can set up, and bow down before, and offer a sacrifice to....*

*[Joseph Conrad, Heart of Darkness]*

The Coorg War of April 1834, or the Siege of Coorg, is long forgotten in the West. Just another colonial annexation on the other side of the globe a long time ago. A minor source of embarrassment for people who regard themselves as part of the post-Imperialist generation. It still has some significance among Indian scholars, perhaps because it encapsulates the long process of imperial assimilation in a single event and was also a test case of sorts for putting that process into high gear. Because the original version of the events was laid out by avowed Imperialists and subsequent versions by avowed Nationalists, the story comes with a ton of tiresome political baggage. Reader be warned, it has not been possible to remove every last speck of dross and present the unvarnished truth — both sides have told too many lies and believed too many lies over the two centuries since it took place.

Colin Paterson is, by contrast, not controversial at all. His name is not entirely unknown in parts of southern India, if you know who to ask. He was one of my ancestors, a common man with only a walk-on part in the drama. But, he gives me the excuse to break my own Author's Rule and use the first person throughout this Commentary. Useful also because I cannot always present the facts as just facts — they are too fuzzy. It will be necessary to offer opinions. Indian history is not my specialty. I delved into this particular event solely because of my ancestor and discovered I had opened a can of worms. But, it is an interesting tale, worth retelling, and some of the characters in it are worth remembering.

### Cast of Characters

The Coorg War is a bit like one of those Greek plays where mortals are crushed under the wheels of the gods' chariots. Or perhaps one of those 19th Century novels where the chief protagonists suffer unhappy fates but the bit players ride off happily into the sunset.

Well, if this is a play then we need a cast of characters. Let us begin with, stage left and wrapped in a red-and-white striped flag, the Honourable East India Company (the audience may 'hiss') with:

- The Governor-General of India, Lord William Cavendish-Bentinck, appointed by the British Crown at the pleasure of the EIC's Board of Directors. Of ancient lineage on both sides of his family and extremely well-connected, he looks like What the Empire Wants. An inherently decent man, but a Visionary, prone to Big Ideas and believed by some to be as mad as a hatter. He is gazing at an object in the far future that no one else can see.
- The Governor of Fort St. George, Sir Frederick Adam, head of the Madras Presidency. A War Hero, lionized for his part at Waterloo, where his brigade flanked the Imperial Guard. Stern of visage, and impatient.
- A trio. Messrs Cole, Casamajor, and Graeme, consecutive British Residents at Mysore, Coorg's larger neighbour, whose duties included Company relations with both kingdoms — Coorg was more than nominally independent, so it had no Resident of its own. They present virtuous faces but one sometimes imagines a sinister sidelong glance.
- Lt. Colonel James Stuart Fraser, Political Officer and titular commander of the Expedition to Coorg. That his parents christened him James Stuart says something. He belongs to Clan Fraser, but wears no kilt. Instead he is dressed as an army officer, and succeeds in looking both competent and slightly outraged.
- Kalpully Karunakara Menon, Special Agent for the EIC, looking like an old spy called out of retirement for one last job. A company clerk just dismounting from his palanquin. Also a Casus Belli in and of himself.
- Various and sundry European visitors to Coorg who help shift the background scenery and develop the plot. In particular a General Welsh (or Walsh) and a Doctor Jeaffreson, both dressed so there may be no question of their professions. Plus a bespectacled man with a pen behind his ear, Mr. Robert Montgomery Martin, a 19th Century Historian, and the Last Raja of Coorg's Advocate and Executor.
- Messrs. Binny & Co. of Madras, bankers to the Last Raja of Coorg, functioning as a Personification of the EIC's finance department. They look fussy and self-important. Like all bankers they are adverse to parting with their clients' money, because they have already spent it (pardon me, 'leveraged' it).
- The troops of the Madras Presidency: infantry, artillery, engineers, a few horsemen, and their officers. Most of them are Indians and look extremely tough. Plus three of His Most Britannic Majesty's regiments, rented from the British Crown at reasonable rates and suitable for (when not thrashing Corsican upstarts) putting down riots in penal colonies, thumping natives, and generally Carrying Forward the Empire. They look uncomfortably hot and awkward in their tall shakoes and tight uniforms. Some are having a smoke while leaning on their muskets, some are passing round a bottle of arrack, and some appear to be quietly stuffing bejewelled articles of silver into a large sack and swearing a blood oath.
- Colin Paterson, Assistant Surgeon attached to the Northern Column of the Expedition to Coorg; in later life he will become Chief Medical Officer of the Nair Brigade and Court Physician to not one but two Maharajas of Travancore, but at the moment he has a bewildered look — 'what have I gotten myself into?'.
- And, Her Majesty Victoria, by the Grace of God, of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland Queen, Defender of the Faith, not yet Empress of India, who makes a cameo, stage right, after the curtain has closed on the main drama; she is seen speaking first to the Last Raja and then to Colin Paterson as the spotlight fades.

*[For those wondering about 'His' Majesty's troops, the monarch in 1834 was not Queen Victoria but her uncle, William IV. By the time the Last Raja arrived in London she had been on the throne for a couple of decades.]*

And now, stage right, wearing black pyjamas, red sash, and red-striped turban, the Kingdom of Coorg with:

- Chikka Vira Rajendra Wodeyar of the Haleri Samsthanam, the Last Raja of Coorg. A most complex character indeed. Like Menon the Spy, a Casus Belli in and of himself. Apart from a vague aura of distain for his fellow actors his face is inscrutable. Beside him stands a slave holding half a dozen theatrical masks at the ready.
- His father, Linga Raja II Wodeyar, and uncle, Dodda Vira Rajendra Wodeyar, previous rulers of Coorg, both done up like Hamlet's Ghost. The latter, a modern Octavian, rebuilt the kingdom after freeing it from Tipu Sultan's grip. The former, a sinister Tiberius, usurped the throne from his brother's daughter.
- Chikka Vira's chief Dewan or minister of state, the sinister 'Kunta' (the Lame) Basava, with a large and demanding family behind him. Beside him is a chest of misappropriated silver and jewels guarded by black slave-soldiers. He twirls his moustache and leers at the audience.
- Certain other royals of the House of Haleri, notably the Raja's cousin, otherwise known as the deposed Rani Devamaji, and her bank deposit; the Raja's sister Devamma, plus her husband, the perpetually scheming and perpetually ineffectual Chenna Basavappa, who wants to be raja so much that it shows.
- Standing behind the Raja in a group, Apparanda Bopanna and Cheppudira Ponappa, Dewans of the Raja's Court, who can be seen whispering together, signifying they are Courtiers.
- Beside them, but slightly to one side, Madanta Appachu, commander-in-chief of the Coorg Army, looking suitable heroic, and his valiant 8,000 warriors, all clutching formidable hatchets and wearing even more formidable handlebar moustaches.
- Forming another group behind the Raja, two men dressed like Muslims: Mahomed Taker Khan, portly Friend of the Raja, and Kurreem Khan, a Pathan sword for hire. Behind them are 3,000 mercenaries dressed like Ali Baba's Forty Thieves.
- Standing apart, with folded arms and Cynical face, one Abhrambára, a *sannyási* (holy man) of dubious holiness.
- A throng of the people of Coorg — the Kodavas and other, lower castes — their chieftains to the fore.
- Finally, a richly dressed but despondent young man surrounded by a number of British Bureaucrats who are conferring together without including him. Together they symbolize neighbouring Mysore, onetime persecutor of the Kingdom, the reason Coorg and the British got together, and now simply a bellwether of what was to come.

## Sources

*The knowledge which the European writings produced on Coorg shows a considerable preference for the description of its despotic, depraved royalty. The Rajas are generally portrayed as mean, cowardly, and cruel, and their licentious criminalities are described with voyeuristic relish. But it is interesting that Lt. Conner and [Dr.] William Jeaffreson were less harsh in their judgment of the rulers than Moegling and Richter who wrote after the annexation... The Colonial construction of the native rule hugged the logic that the native ruler was everything the colonial ruler was not. The imperialist claim that only morons and monsters were pulled out of their disgraced thrones, produced such portraits as that of Siraj-ud Daula, Tipu Sultan, and Wajid Ali Shah, and the Coorg royalty was no different.*

*[B. Surendra Rao: Conquest Through Knowledge: A Case of the 19th Century 'Colonial Coorg', p.637]*

Rao pretty much sums up the problem. The study of Indian history prior to the 20th Century relies almost entirely on primary sources written by Europeans and for Europeans. There was a fascination in Europe for all things Eastern, dating back to the time of the Ottoman Wars and spurred by the Enlightenment. The trend was called Orientalism, and it loved to fasten on the exotic, the lurid, and the salacious.

Rao's quote is taken from a paper in which he discusses how nations are created from myths, and how sometimes it is the conqueror who creates that myth rather than the nation's own people. Coorg is the example he uses and his paper reminds one of the fact that the people of Coorg are of little help in separating the wheat from the chaff. When a foreigner visited Coorg during the Raja's own day it was always 'the Raja is our father and our mother, we love our Raja', and after he was deposed, 'the Raja was a wicked man who oppressed us'. How much of that change in tune was suppressed resentment and how much was calculated favour-carrying, is impossible to tell.

The coming narrative is chock full of such split personalities, the personality of the Raja most of all, but also the personalities of his opponents and the personality of the Kingdom of Coorg itself. And to the extent that later scholarship is just as partisan in the other direction as those 19th Century European writers who were the first to put their impressions on paper, it has only succeeded in splitting the personalities even further.

I tried to find sources that could be used to create a balanced view. It is not possible to find an individual account that is of itself 'balanced'. Of the period sources I think Menon is the best, but his is eyewitness testimony and can only illuminate a small part of the canvas. Also, Menon is a divisive figure in India even today. Some call him a traitor. Of the modern studies, Pandey's dissertation on Lord Bentinck is the most well reasoned I have come across, but he is also working from biased source material.

- The core text whom everyone seems to reference is Mysore and Coorg: A gazetteer compiled for the government of India. Vol. III by Benjamin Lewis Rice. While Rice wrote almost a generation and a half after the events, and while Rao's complaint about the European template cannot be overlooked, he was a highly respected historian and archaeologist who spent a lifetime studying

Indian culture. With a Government gazetteer there is always the question of 'spin', but I cannot see that he had any sort of agenda beyond scholarship and the enlightenment of the ignorant English bureaucrats who were periodically assigned to deal with the people of South India. If his facts are wrong it is because he could find no alternatives to weigh them against.

- Besides background and the larger picture Rice provides a decent campaign history, which can be augmented by a serialized work called The Expedition to Coorg, written by an official visitor to the kingdom who travelled there only a few months after the annexation. I could not find his name, but the initials are M.S., with the addition of I.W.S. The last three letters are some organization or other. Indian-Blank-Service, probably. There are gazetteers of all the organizations that existed at one time or another, but this one does not appear. From the tone of the writing the 'W' could easily stand for 'Westernization'. The account is a little confusing in spots, and the spelling of place names can only have been derived from a native guide who spoke with a mouth full of betel leaf, but most of it makes sense. It is unabashedly pro-British, but not anti-Coorg. There is no British literature that is anti-Coorg. It is all anti-Raja. In fact, the account might be more interesting simply as a measure of British attitudes at that time. In Rao's quote he says that it was the later commentators who were not as fair to the ex-Raja. But *The Expedition* already portrays the Raja as an Enemy of Mankind and his overthrow as a Good Thing. The three articles which composed the original serial can be found compiled as a single PDF.
- A final source for the campaign itself was History of the Services of the Madras Artillery, Vol II by Major P. J. Begbie, Madras, 1853. The section on the Coorg War is only a summary but it has a few extra details and challenges the other sources on some of the dates and numbers.
- As a counterbalance to the EIC's worldview there is the historian Robert Montgomery Martin's somewhat enigmatically titled, An exposition of British ingratitude, injustice, and breach of national faith to the sovereigns of Coorg. The work seeks to rehabilitate the Last Raja and takes the line that the EIC, having just (foolishly) been given Supreme Authority in India, overindulged in corporate greed, because, well... because they could. Besides being a historian, Martin was the ex-Raja's legal advocate and also one of his executors. Like Rice, Martin's work seems honest. But, like Rice, he is stuck with a particular set of facts, in this case supplied by the deposed Raja. The work is valuable because it does show things from the other side of the fence. All the same, it is glaringly selective in spots. Martin and Rice provide quotes from the same letters, for instance, but where Rice quotes the whole letter, Martin only quotes the parts that favour the Raja. It should be remembered his book was part of the legal campaign to obtain justice for the Raja's dependents after he passed away. And a vehicle for expressing Martin's frustration with Bureaucracy. The book was published in 1867.

- For the higher level relations between the British Crown, the EIC, and the various Princely States of India, there is a very useful doctoral dissertation by K.N. Pandey, Lord William Bentinck and the Indian States, 1828-1835, published in 2018. Pandey used both Company records and Bentinck's private papers, which is about the best one can hope for. He therefore describes things from the British perspective, but his portrayal of the Last Raja and of the events leading to the war are more believable.
- The papers of the EIC's native agent on the spot, Menon, are also valuable. He was an eyewitness from within the regime and had dealings with both the Raja and his chief minister. He also understood the culture. The difficulty with that, however, is that he makes allusions to things that a modern Westerner is likely to gloss over as unimportant — Holy Stones of Cassy, prophecies, and such like. I located his writings at the following online blog; it contains a wealth of similar material for anyone interested: <https://maddy06.blogspot.com/2022/09/menon-and-coorg-war.html>.

Three other works that may be informative or entertaining:

- B. Surendra Rao: Conquest Through Knowledge: A Case of the 19th Century 'Colonial Coorg'. (pp.632-639, Proceedings of the Indian History Congress 58th Session, 1997.) He does not go into the history of the war or any deep background, but his perspective is worth examining.
- Before Rice, the standard works on Coorg were by the missionaries Moegling and Richter. I did not use either, because I have been trying to find balanced source material, but older sources reference them. Moegling published An account of Coorg and the Coorg mission in 1855, and much is made of the fact that he was partly sponsored by one of the Raja's chief opponents.
- The story of the Last Raja of Coorg is such a fascinating one that someone should write a novel. And in fact, someone has. It is entitled *Chikavira Rajenda*, by Masti Venkatesha Iyengar, an award winning Indian author. I have not read it (I am not sure there is an English translation) but Indian literary circles highly recommend it, saying it provides a clear window into the past and treats the Raja in a balanced, if somewhat sensationalized, manner. The book was popular enough that it was going to be made into a TV series, but the people of Coorg protested that it made their last raja 'look like a devil incarnate'. That should give you an idea of the claims made against him, some of which even Indian researchers believe.

For the personal details of Colin Paterson I am indebted to my late father and my cousin Cathy, who collaborated on our family history for many years. I had long thought my family's Colonial connections were all on my mother's side, in Africa, but it appears my father's family had more than one link with John Company — some soldiers and some doctors — though none of them made any money at it and only Colin Paterson seems to have made a mark. Indeed his papers are preserved in an Official Collection: Papers of Surgeon Colin Paterson, 1832-1857. Royal Army Medical Corps Muniments Collection. RAMC/217.



## Colin Paterson Arrives in India

*Mr Colin Paterson M.D. admitted on establishment as an assistant surgeon and appointed to do duty under garrison surgeon of Fort St. George.*

*[Asiatic Journal Vol. 8, 1832]*

My link to great-great grandfather Colin Paterson is through my father's mother. There seem to have been a prodigious number of Patersons in her family. Colin's parents had thirteen children and that was only one branch. Our Colin was born at Lochgilphead, Argyllshire, in 1804. A great many of my father's people came from that neck of the woods, mostly named Paterson, Jackson, Lister, or Campbell. He was about 30 years old when he went on a military campaign for the first, and apparently only, time. Now... there are three kinds of Scotsmen: those who never leave, those born in foreign lands who want to go back, and those who cannot wait to escape. I think Colin was one of the latter. He had the chance to go back to Scotland after the Mutiny shook things up, but he ended his days in India.

As to why he joined the EIC I can only speculate. His father was a surgeon, and he followed in his footsteps, receiving a degree in medicine from Glasgow University in 1828, where he studied anatomy, medicine, surgery, midwifery, chemistry, and botany. He seems to have concentrated on anatomy and surgery but retained an interest in botany and chemistry that served him well later in his career. The subtext to Glasgow U. by the way, is that his training would have been both scientific and humanist. In those days universities were places to expand the mind, not to earn a checkmark for a high paying job in some narrow speciality.

I have no clue what he did in the years immediately after graduating; my money is on hospital work, with the dream of eventually opening his own practice. I know that in England during those days there were Corn Laws and riots (one of my mother's people was on the receiving end in the Peterloo Massacre), and a lot of emigration. So, perhaps Colin decided there were better opportunities out in the Empire. There is also the possibility of family connections. For example, there was a doctor named Andrew Paterson who died at Cannanore (Kanur) in 1830. I cannot find a link, though. A more interesting but extremely tenuous possibility that I cannot quite drop, though there is zero evidence, is that by a strange coincidence the wife of one of the key players in the coming drama was also a Paterson. Depending on what ancestry source you consult she was either born in England and spelt her surname with two 't's, or she was born in India, during the Napoleonic Wars, to the colonel of a foot regiment named Thomas Paterson. Also, her mother-in-law was a Campbell, from Argyle. I must emphasize I can find no connection between either of them and my ancestor. But... given the clannish nature of John Company Colin may have heard of the job that way. In that day and age one normally got a job by being introduced, not by filling out a resume. He put in an application to join the Company in 1831.

The EIC had within the last decade switched from being a 'too big to fail' trading concern propped up by the Government to an administrative arm of Empire. That would mean good prospects for someone wanting a secure

job but not interested in engaging in Trade. But, the EIC would have been interested in hiring him anyway:

*By 1764 the Company were so well established that regular medical services could be constituted in the three Presidencies, with fixed grades and definite rules for promotion. An attempt was made, too, to recruit a better average type of doctor for, though the day of antiseptics and anesthesia was still afar off, the general status of the profession had greatly improved.*

*[Proceedings of the Royal Society of Medicine, Vol 49 #13, November 1955, p.15]*

He was still single when he left Scotland. The Company had accepted him as an Assistant Surgeon (that was the pay grade) and he travelled to India aboard the barque *Sesostris* (out of London by way of Madeira), arriving at Madras (Chennai) on 21 February 1832 (OS), where he was immediately put to work. By the time he landed the seeds of the war he would witness had already been sown.

*['OS' and 'NS' stand for Old Style and New Style dating systems. The British retained the Julian calendar until 1851, which by the 1830s put them 13 days out of sync with the rest of Europe. Something that has to be constantly born in mind when reading old documents. Also, New Years' Day was in March.]*



*[The Sesostris in the Torres Straits (middle ship), 1841. A 488 ton barque, built at Hull and launched in 1818, she traded in the Baltic as well as taking the India run, and also transported convicts to Australia. She served as a troop transport in the Chilean-Peruvian War. Until 1813 only EIC ships were permitted to sail to India (otherwise they were deemed Interlopers), but after that year anyone could do so under license. On the occasion of Colin's transport she did not put in at Cape Town or Durban as you might expect, but only Madeira.]*

Colin's first assignment on arrival was to immediately turn about and take ship for the Malacca Straits, in charge of a sick officer who had been prescribed a sea voyage. The man was very ill but Colin pulled him through; they returned in December. As the patient was Military Secretary to the Governor of the Madras Presidency, this mundane bit of service was going to pay dividends in a few years time. In 1833 Colin did three months duty at the Garrison Hospital in Poonamallee, was transferred to the 4th Native Infantry at Vellore and then to the 2nd Light Cavalry at Arcot. These are all places on the Carnatic coastal plain, not far from Madras. On 1 March, 1834, he received orders to proceed upcountry to Bangalore and join the Expedition to Coorg, so we will leave him there for the present and introduce the major players.

## The Honourable East India Company



*The idea of consigning over to a Joint-Stock Association, composed of such heterogenous materials as the East-India Company, the political administration of an empire peopled with a hundred millions of souls, was so preposterous, that if it were now for the first time to be proposed, it would be deemed not merely an absurdity, but an insult, to the meanest understanding in the*

*realm... While the East-India Company were mere traders, it did not seem altogether unreasonable that they should have the direction of the small factories in which their commercial transactions were conducted. But from the moment they passed from the character of mere traders to be merchants and sovereigns at the same time, their position was one that was rather excused than defended, in the confident belief that when their commercial body should cease, their sovereignty would be at an end; and that though they might be allowed a Charter to trade, no one would ever dream of their asking for a Charter to govern — as that was the business, not of private individuals, but of the Government and the State. Now, the Bill upon the Table of the House took away from them entirely the mercantile character of the Company, prohibiting them even from having any further concerns whatever of trade; — commanding them to sell all their mercantile property, dismiss their mercantile servants, dispose of their ships, warehouses, and stores; and, in the same breath, it erected the members of this Joint-Stock Association — who were deemed unworthy of any exclusive privileges of a commercial nature being continued to them — into a governing body, to whose wisdom and to whose care was to be consigned the welfare and happiness of a population four times as large as that of all Great Britain, and living at a distance of at least 10,000 miles! The ground upon which this monstrous proposition was maintained, was, that the East-India Company had given such proofs of their capacity for business, and talent for government, that it was difficult to say in which they most excelled; and that in consequence of their excellent system of rule, India had progressively advanced in happiness and prosperity, with such a rapidity as made it dangerous to change that system, or hazard its destruction by placing its administration in other hands. He would venture to assert, on the contrary, that both as traders and as rulers, as merchants and as sovereigns, the Company had given such proofs of incapacity, as to justify our calling upon them to resign their trust to persons more competent to exercise it than themselves. If the House would give him but their patient attention, he would undertake to prove, by evidence the most unquestionable, the truth of these allegations; and if their truth should be established, all he would ask would be, that the House should pause before it consented to hand over the people of India for another twenty years, to be victims of such a system, and see whether means might not be devised, with safety to the people and honour to the Crown, for governing the country by the direct exercise of power through the Ministers of State, instead of through the agency of a Joint-Stock Association like the present East-India Company.*

*[House of Commons Debate, 10 July 1833, on whether the new 1833 EIC Charter be approved or no; Objection by Mr. Buckingham in the preamble to the 2nd Reading of the Bill.]*

If you just skipped the quote above, go back and read it. 1833 was a critical date in the Company's history. Of course, the quote expresses only the Opposition's official position, which, incidentally, was one of Imperial Expansion, not altruistic concern for the Indian population.

Ironically, the incumbent Whig administration of Lord Grey was Reformist — they were the ones who abolished slavery in the British Empire — rather than Hawkish. Nonetheless, they had no intention of giving up British rule in India. Lord Grey did not have a brand of tea named after him for nothing. They just felt the Company was a better option than direct rule by Whitehall ministers who had never been to India.

Some reader has probably already commented that calling the EIC 'honourable' is laying it on a bit thick. While I am inclined to follow the mob and rejoice that at least one multinational has crashed and burned, I should try to make it clear that popular opinion of what the Company was, at least at this particular time in its history, is quite a bit different from the reality. As of 1824 it was no longer a commercial enterprise. In fact, the Company was so successful for so long because it evolved constantly. The idea that the HEIC of the period 1800 through 1858 — the so-called Period of Company Rule — was driven by corporate greed is simply incorrect. Personal greed? Well, that depended on the individual. But it is perhaps noteworthy that doctors, like Colin Paterson, were, from 1824, forbidden to have side hustles — though they could still score plum appointments.

This is important because in the matter of the Coorg War, one accusation levelled against the Company, at the time as well as in future generations, was its desire to acquire yet another market. So far as Policy is concerned, that is simply wrong. However, if you were to say that certain Company officials, of the middling sort, were interested in opening up the kingdom on behalf of friends, relatives, and clients who were in Trade, you might be right. And then again, you might not.

Even during its heyday the Company had enemies who were just as willing to smear its reputation as it was to smear theirs. Not for its trading practices, as corrupt as those may have been, oh no. But because it was the source of wealth for their political opponents. That raises the question, if we accept that the Company told lies about its enemies — the poor Last Raja of Coorg, for example — then just how much of the modern view of the Company has been filtered through lies told about it? I doubt very much it will be held up as a 'force for good in the world' a century from now, but stranger things have happened.

The ones you should really point the finger at, at least so far as the Coorg War is concerned, sat in Whitehall and called themselves Cabinet Ministers. They wanted to use the Company to create an empire on the cheap, by contracting the job out to an organization with political and military muscle that already had boots on the ground. As you can see from Mr. Buckingham's quote, not everyone was on board with that idea. But you need to remember these men were True Believers. You need not agree with their worldview, but in their own eyes they thought they were fulfilling theirs and Britain's Destiny.

Some in Britain wanted no empire at all, some wanted an empire solely for foreign markets and emigration, some wanted an empire to address security concerns. Among those who wanted an empire, there was a deep split between those who only wanted secure markets and those

who had geopolitical aims. The latter wanted India to be governed in accordance with British Law, by a British Administration. They were the ones who pushed aggressive policies like the annexation of states whose rulers failed to meet the grade, against the advice of the 'old hands' who had at least some understanding of what they were dealing with.

There was also a third school of imperial thought, in that era of Progress and Uplift, that saw John Company as the rather dirty scaffolding needed to erect something noble, a Subcontinent lifted out of the darkness of Heathenism and Backwardness and remolded in the Western image of perfection. You think I am exaggerating for effect. Wait until we get to Lord William Cavendish-Bentinck. It was thanks to his efforts that the 1833 Bill passed.

### Origins of the Company

Why did it come to be called 'John Company'? Simple. One of the founding members was named John Watts. But after that had been forgotten the name stuck, because it was The Company. You see, the EIC came to India in 1615. By 1834 it had been a part of the fabric of the Subcontinent for over 200 years, longer than the lives of many modern nations. The French bid for trade primacy had been seen off in the 1760s, meaning there were few living who remembered a time when John Company had not been the *Sirkar* of all India — *Sirkar* from the Persian *Sarkar*, 'head of affairs', the Supreme Authority.

The EIC was founded in Elizabeth I's reign specifically to compete with the Dutch in Southeast Asia, and in those days had about it the spirit of Drake and Raleigh. But, the plucky entrepreneurs were driven out of that place with bloody noses. So they turned to India instead. Here, despite many setbacks (like the time an English pirate named Henry Avery robbed the Great Mughal's treasure ship in the Bab el Mandeb and the Company was nearly expelled), the traders formed a working relationship with the Mughal Empire and its satellites.

There was no question of deliberately carving out an empire as the Spanish had done in the Americas. Apart from the fact that the British were not thinking in those terms, they were far too weak. The Spanish got lucky. They found a land where all they had to do was breathe on people to conquer it. India tended to do that to foreign visitors instead. But, although the English initially confined themselves to their enclaves, they were forced by the French to follow the latter's lead and become immersed local politics. They were also submerged into the Mughal System. Defeated in a war with that Empire at the end of the 17th Century, the Company's high officials were made to swear fealty to the Great Mughal. This brought them into the 'big tent' and they quickly found themselves competing with some rather vicious heavyweights for a piece of the carcass. For the Empire was dying.

It was the Marathas, enemies of the Great Mughal, who initially propped the Empire up. They were enemies, but it was unthinkable that the Mughals disappear. They had dominated the Subcontinent for centuries — they defined it. The Marathas became the Empire's body and blood, but only for a time. They were internally divided and subject to all the usual whims of fortune that plagued Indian rulers.

John Company was not. It was not a confederation, or ruled by a dynasty (not in a legal sense, anyway), and it had a constancy of purpose no royal dynasty has ever enjoyed.

Down went the Marathas and in their place stepped the Company, to be the *Sirkar*, the Supreme Authority, wielding the Great Mughal's Seal. Until the Mutiny of 1857 the Company remained, technically, a vassal of the Great Mughal. In name only it is true, but appearances were everything in India. Even the rajas of the deep South, who were never Mughal vassals, legitimized their reigns by seeking confirmation from Delhi. If they were too far away even for that, they graded each other on who was tough enough to insult the Mughal envoys. The fact that the Company used the Great Mughal's seal gave it legitimacy. When its representatives claimed to be acting on the orders of the Emperor, everyone knew it was a lie, but all the sultans and rajas did exactly the same thing, so they had to abide by it, or the whole system would cave in — and then what would replace it?

Adaptability remained the EIC's chief advantage, more so even than the British Parliament, where its lobbyists were also MPs and cabinet ministers. By the 1830s it had not only gone from a small collection of trading posts, barely scratching a living, to a political and economic powerhouse, it had switched from the export trade to the import trade (thanks to the Industrial Revolution), and from there to tax collecting, financing, and providing muscle to various native regimes. The biggest complaint I came across when reading commentaries by Indian scholars was how the Company, having switched to imports, drained the wealth of the land and sent it to Europe. Always in the past, from before Roman times, it was the other way round. But by 1834 even the notion of India as a dumping ground for Birmingham's shoddy merchandise was taking second place to security concerns. That was a process that had been under way since the Napoleonic Wars.

### The Years of Company Rule and Further Acquisitions

The years 1801 through 1858 are known as the Period of Company Rule. This was when the EIC supplied structure to the Mughal Empire. It was also when the Company guaranteed secure markets for British industry. There was a steady drift from trading concern to local governing apparatus across these decades, and by 1834 the process was more than half complete.

Despite what you might think, forced acquisitions of new territory were not the primary focus, but since this Commentary deals with one such event we should take a look at how the ways and means developed over time.

The two chief means of territorial acquisition were through the Sword and the Pocketbook. The Sword only really came into play while the British and French tussled for control through a long string of proxy wars, and while there were still powerful native kingdoms to contend with, like the Marathas and Tipu Sultan of Mysore. What may surprise you is that at first, it was the native rulers who used the companies as proxies for their own squabbles. One should never rely on mercenaries for long, especially when they have their own sources of income. The Mughals made that mistake with the Marathas and repeated it with the British. The French and British soon turned the tables and

began collecting puppets. Occasionally a native state might try for the title but they usually wound up being steamrollered or brushed aside. By the 1830s the British were the only major power left in India — and that includes the Indian states. There were some truly independent kingdoms on the fringes of the Subcontinent, and a number of so-called Princely States with a degree of autonomy — sometimes quite a degree of autonomy — but these last, though they controlled perhaps two-fifths of the landmass, and though some had been Great Powers in the past, lacked the large populations and economic bases needed to go up against the Company.

The Pocketbook thus became a far more common method of acquisition. There were roughly three ways any European trading company got its financial hooks into a state. The first was through the tried and tested stratagem of 'foreign aid'. The companies were fighting each other for market share and would often back one raja against another to obtain trading privileges. In the early days the coastal kingdoms would seek to use the companies' naval firepower against their rivals. Later, the larger, inland kingdoms did the same with the companies' armies. Such 'rentals' came with strings attached. Sometimes the rajas turned the tables and made the companies fight each other for their own amusement, but generally they wound up on the losing end. This was not always through military or economic weakness, but because the states were medieval societies, prone to sudden upset, whereas the companies were held together by written charters and longterm policies that seldom wavered. It made them attractive partners for the native rulers, but...

Involvement in local politics was a consequence of offering foreign aid. This is before the Alliance System of the early 1800s that, shall we say, systematized the method. Despite a mutual lack of trust, personnel of the companies were regarded as reliable arbiters. They were not subject to dynastic whims and their viewpoints tended not to shift very much. Also, like the slave-soldiers some states employed, they were loyal through necessity (if they wanted to buy product). This meant they were often employed as guarantors of treaties and the like. Sometimes the factor of a trading post found himself on the local prince's inner council. Again, the prime example is the Mughal Empire; as it declined the Company became its chief prop, and this could be true for the smaller states as well. John Company was the only power on the Subcontinent that could afford a real standing army. Thus methods One and Two created a synergy.

(As an aside, while on the grand timeline the Company's usual method, once it became sufficiently powerful, was the simple old standby, 'divide and rule' — creating artificial cultural divisions like Muslim/Hindu, partitioning states with artificial borders and handing the pieces to other states, and cobbling together various mixtures to create brand new 'national identities' — these were relatively late-game strategies. Also, they were not so much the product of deep thought but organically emerging expedients common to all imperial societies. It was the Marathas, for example, who first tried to develop a Hindu national identity, not on behalf of the British, but to fight

the Mughals, whose Islamic religion seemed to be one of the key unifying pillars of that empire.)

Method Three was the financial hammerlock, and it was the one that was most often employed during this period. This requires some exposition, courtesy of Martin's book, because it came in a number of forms. It was common for rulers to both invest in the trading companies by offering loans to merchants wishing to establish a new network, and to take out loans themselves; they also used the companies as a banking service. (The alternative in the old days was to deposit a treasure hoard in a temple, where it would be safe but not accrue much interest.)

Whatever the reason for taking a loan, if the raja had trouble paying the interest he would award the companies the right to levy taxes in certain districts, or even sell or lease villages to them. After a while, many rulers found it more convenient to give the companies a monopoly on tax collection, or even to oversee the entire economy of a region, arranging to receive the bulk of the revenues while the companies took a percentage. Profligacy was an old problem for the Indian aristocracy because conspicuous consumption was more or less expected of them. But the problem had gotten worse during the early 18th Century — before either the French or British began manipulating the rules of the game — and as the Mughal Empire started to fragment chaos grew, leading to the rise of what can be described as a Mercenary Economy, centered on the Deccan. Mercenaries do not want to be paid in rice and beans, or even land. They want cash.

So, handing out concessions was ancient practice, but the companies did a far better job running an economy than the old unreliable mini-warlords and bandit chiefs whose gangs used to terrorize the countryside collecting the raja's back-rent. The companies were just as brutal, because they used the same gangs, but they were a lot more efficient. And, to tie things back to 'foreign aid', they offered a reliable security-services package in exchange.

But Coorg is a prime example of the other way the game was worked. In this instance it was the ruler who offered loans to the Company, partly to encourage trade in his kingdom but mostly in lieu of the tribute he was asked to pay after the Company defeated his enemy Tipu Sultan. The idea was suggested to him by the EIC but he saw it as the better option anyway.

In an ideal world such an investment would be ploughed back into the economy and the ruler would have an income stream based on the interest due him. The interest was often quite high. But trouble arose if the company could not, or did not want to, pay the interest. They would in any case want to renegotiate for a lower rate as frequently as they dared. Once the companies became militarily dominant there was usually the implied threat of force when they went to renegotiate terms. If a ruler knew what was good for him he would 'cheerfully' advance new funds to the EIC, and 'graciously' lower the rate of interest for his 'best friends in the whole world'. The Coorg raja who first gave loans to the Company managed to swallow his pride, but his descendant did not.



There were also sorts of variations on this theme. In the specific case of Coorg, Martin explains (p.6):

*It is a custom throughout India, and acknowledged in the Law Courts, for Hindoos to purchase lands or to take securities for moneys lent, in the names of their children or other members of their families. These investments are well known under the name of "Benamee" transactions. Veer Rajunder had a favourite daughter named Dewa Ammajee, who was styled by courtesy Ranee of Coorg. Her father caused some of the money lent to the Company, (186,840 star pagodas) to be inscribed in her name. When the loan of which this sum formed a part, was being paid off, to be replaced by a new one at a lower rate of interest, the Company asked Rajah Ling Rajunder, her uncle and heir, to accept a "Promissory Note" for 653,940 rupees = 65,000 [pounds] in lieu of the 186,840 star pagoda note.*

Veer Rajunder, or Dodda Vira Rajendra, was the old raja of Coorg at the time of Tipu Sultan; Ling Rajunder, or Linga Raja II, was his brother, who usurped Dodda Vira's daughter after she became more than 'styled by courtesy' the Rani of Coorg. Their lives will be gone into later. That promissory note plays a key role in the drama.



*[Martin's conversion from pagodas to rupees is one to one, no 'fiddling' with the values. Pagodas were the old monetary unit in South India. A Star Pagoda was worth 350 rupees and weighed in at 3 grams of gold. Star Pagodas were minted at Madras, but not until shortly after the Coorg War. Old pagodas could be gold or silver. This hints there may have been some manipulation by the Company, but upon reflection, it seems Martin was simply working with the latest data. In any case, if silver pagodas were converted to gold one-for-one, the raja would be the one to gain.]*

Martin sums the overall situation up quite nicely. He compresses and rearranges the timeline in spots, because after all he was making a legal argument before the Crown as an advocate, but the general picture is correct.

*In the last century, when struggling traders, they [the EIC] borrowed the money in dispute to buy pepper, spices, cotton, and other merchandize; and they paid 10 and even*

*12 per cent. per annum to the Rajah of Coorg for the loan of various large sums of money. As time rolled on this Company of Merchants became possessed of populous territories, and assumed supreme power. The moneys they had borrowed as merchants, and could not repay, they converted into a public debt secured on the taxes and revenues of the territories they had acquired. Their extension of dominion became so large that the Crown interfered in the shape of a "Board of Control," and by the appointment of Governors and Governors-General, subject to their recall and dismissal by the Court of Directors of the East India Company. The mercantile body was entrusted with a delegated sovereignty, allowed to raise a military force, and to hire for definite periods the regular troops of the Crown. As traders, the Company induced the royal family of Coorg to invest in their funds their surplus revenues and personal savings, on the express ground that, though the interest was small, the security was greater than that afforded in other ways. As sovereigns, the Company invaded the territory of an independent ally, seized by force and bloodshed on the much-coveted Principality, deposed the Rajah, detained him and his family prisoners and exiles for life, and confiscated every article of private property belonging to the family and their dependents that could be discovered, except their wardrobes. The "Promissory Note," issued by the Company in their mercantile capacity, they obtained possession of, while yet in professed friendship with their creditor, on the plea of ordinary business arrangements for the payment of the interest; in their capacity of sovereigns they withheld that interest, and eventually, in that same regal capacity, have striven to repudiate the whole debt. In other words, they borrowed money as Merchants and then went to war with their creditor as Sovereigns, seizing their own securities at the point of the bayonet.*

*These securities, unconfiscated, unappropriated, and unceasingly demanded by their acknowledged proprietor and his representatives, have now passed from the deposed Company into the power of the Crown as a part of the Public Debt of India, which is guaranteed by the Crown as a first charge on the revenues of India; and all the power, military and naval, of Britain is pledged to the payment of the Indian "Promissory Notes."*

*The question as regards the "Notes" now claimed has been complicated by treating them as at one time under the control of the Crown, and at another time as an asset of the Government of India. Practically, these two Authorities are one Power, and as such must be deemed responsible for the debts, obligations, and liabilities of the East India Company, whose vast territories of one million square miles, forty million sterling of annual revenues, and numerous valuable Buildings, Arsenals, Forts, Ships, and Stores, the whole valued in the aggregate at one thousand million sterling, were transferred to the Crown.*

*[Martin, An exposition of British ingratitude. p. 50]*



## Company Policies and Doctrines

*What is that to us? One must lament to see any portion of the human race under oppressive sway. But we are not charged with the quixotic obligation of vindicating the rights of all mankind.*

*[Lord Hastings]*

The EIC's strategic doctrine altered several times during the course of its lifetime. It began with a policy of seeking out the Dutch and getting beaten by them, changed to a policy of 'O Great Mughal, we are only puny traders, be merciful', then to a policy of 'you want us to slap your neighbour around? Sure, we can handle that, but it'll cost you', to a policy of 'beat it Frenchie, we're working this side of the street', and finally to 'you've got a nice kingdom here, Raja, it would be a shame if it should suddenly catch fire, like'. Once the Company had secured itself as the Mughal Empire's executive branch and cleared off all the foreigners, expansion actually stopped for a while. Having gorged, the beast needed time to digest.

The period of Company Rule began when the EIC beefed up its military position during the Revolutionary Wars with France, but from 1798 the practice of chaotically reacting to threats began to slow and a doctrine of Non Intervention was introduced. This was initiated by the *primus inter pares* Bengal Governor, John Shore, in 1798, and was heavily favoured by his successor, Richard Wellesley (1798-1805), who is more usually identified with it. He was the older brother of the Duke of Wellington.

It was Richard Wellesley who implemented the complementary Subsidiary Alliance system, its first adherent being the Nizam of Hyderabad. Mysore joined as a result of the Fourth Anglo-Mysore War — not all members joined voluntarily. The Subsidiary Alliance system was not too different from the way the Mughal Empire dealt with its vassals. The allies governed themselves but were militarily subordinate to the Company — tributaries, in effect. The ruler would be guaranteed protection, but had to maintain some EIC troops at his capital at his own expense, either by direct payment or by granting taxation rights, usually in the form of land grants, and could not have his own standing army (but he could have a police force). The EIC was to have exclusive trading rights; in fact, all other Europeans present in any official capacity had to be expelled. A Company official called a Resident lived *in situ* and was responsible for the state's foreign policy — which essentially meant all official correspondence between native rulers went through Company hands (and you can bet the Residents maintained a spy network to deal with all the unofficial and secret correspondence).

This system was almost entirely driven by security concerns. Profit was a side benefit, if it could be had, and sometimes it could not. Like all Government departments, the Company overspent and bled money. All that mattered was Security. Richard Wellesley himself stated (1804):

*His Excellency the Governor-General [of Bengal's] policy in establishing subsidiary alliances with the principal states of India is to place those states in such a degree of dependence on the British power as may deprive them of the means of prosecuting any measures or of forming any*

*confederacy hazardous to the security of the British empire, and may enable us to reserve the tranquility of India by exercising a general control over those states, calculated to prevent the operation of that restless spirit of ambition and violence which is the characteristic of every Asiatic government, and which from the earliest period of Eastern history has rendered the peninsula of India the scene of perpetual warfare, turbulence and disorder...*

Here is Rao's '*the Colonial construction of the native rule hugged the logic that the native ruler was everything the colonial ruler was not*' in action. Based on my own rather limited examination of the pre-colonial or 'medieval' period of Indian history, Wellesley's view of Indian politics, as European in slant as it may be, is spot on. The Mughal Empire had entered its dotage, and the Marathas, who tried to uphold it because they could conceive of no other central authority, had themselves collapsed under the weight and with great reluctance passed that baton to the British. There were no other powerhouses who could keep the peace once Tipu Sultan was dead (and he was a glory-hound with his head stuck in the past); most rulers were willing to trade freedom for security, and their people only cared that the rains came on time, and that both the murrain and the taxman passed them by.

Officially, Non Intervention did not survive the end of the Napoleonic era, and under the governorship of Rawdon Hastings (1813-1823) the number of wars and punitive expeditions undertaken by the Company significantly increased; under one of his successors, Amherst, there was a war with Burma, and also the first serious sepoy mutiny, at Barrackpore, in 1824. (It is no coincidence that Barrackpore is where the Great Mutiny also began.)

*[The Burmese War was not planned expansion. It was punishment for the murder of British traders. Burma was traditionally divided into a coastal civilization and an interior civilization. The coastal people welcomed the traders, but the ruler of the interior made war on the Coast and in the process killed the traders. For some reason the people of the interior never realized the British were capable of bringing artillery over the mountains...]*

However, Pandey points out that in practice this new aggressive trend encountered resistance both from the 'old hands' who had grown used to Non Intervention and from simple inertia. Non Intervention remained the norm. Despite Hastings' tenure seeing an increase in territorial expansion, he himself petitioned the Directors to lay down a tighter policy that would ensure the remaining independent states were not interfered with, arguing it would be better if they could be united in a full confederation under British protection. Amherst, generally regarded as one of the expansionists, also favoured non-interference. 'Direct action' should be taken only when a threat was perceived, and it had better be a significant threat. Yet their successful military campaigns naturally encouraged the opposite tendency, leading to a growing opinion that since British interests were more secure than ever it might perhaps be time to look at fixing the weak links.

This new trend can be called Westernization, but it was more than that. There was a spirit of social reform in Europe. Famously, in 1834 the British Crown, with the help of the Royal Navy, finally put an end to the Company's

West African slave trading. In India, similar objectionable practices were being curtailed. The 1830s were a pivotal time for the Company, and to an extent it was the Raja of Coorg's misfortune to inadvertently make enemies during such a time. He got his robes caught in the machinery.

*[It is rather ironic that although the EIC was by 1824 pretty much a limb of the Crown, it still engaged in outlawed practices like the slave trade. It was because of this 'Frankenstein's Monster' aspect that many wanted to not give the Company any more authority.]*

### The Saint Helena Act

In 1833 a truly seismic shift occurred with the passing of the Saint Helena Act. This was the Bill referenced at the start of this section. The Mughals were not quite brushed aside — their seal was still used and the Company was still the *Sirkar*, not the Government of British India, but the old empire was less relevant than ever.

*[It was called the Saint Helena Act because it also transferred control of that island from the EIC to the British Crown. This means, incidentally, that Napoleon had technically been a prisoner of the EIC. The Company was also contracted to do the resupply runs to St. Helena.]*

By the Act the EIC lost its China monopoly, but had its India monopoly extended for 20 years — thanks mainly to the efforts of the Governor-General of the day, Lord Bentinck, of whom more later. However, the Company was no longer allowed to carry out any of the few remaining commercial activities it had still pursued, except under contract to the Crown, and instead became a fully administrative body. What the extension of its charter did do was allow it to retain the rights to raise armies, wage war, and govern conquests. These rights were of ancient standing and were common to all the early European 'companies of adventurers' (and not, as Martin's text might lead one to think, an innovation newly tacked onto the Company's charter to facilitate its expansionism). You see how Parliament made use of existing corporate privileges to create a new branch of imperial government without having to entirely rewrite the laws? However, the EIC still functioned as a crown corporation, not a department. Dividends were still paid, but it was the Crown who paid them (at 10.5% over 40 years). The Crown assumed all outstanding debts and obligations, to be paid out of Indian revenues. The Act also tried (and failed) to create open competition for civil servants, but did manage to drop the religious bar to native service.

This restructuring also fostered an environment where a new doctrine could thrive, that of Paramountcy, the right of the *Sirkar* to act to protect its interests regardless of existing treaty obligations. Pandey gives a perfect example in one of the last letters sent to the Raja of Coorg before it was decided war was the only recourse (p.181):

*"it must rest with the Paramount Power to determine from the evidence adduced in each case, whether the refugees are really criminals or innocent persons who seek an asylum from unmerited persecution."*

*There was no reference in this letter to the terms of the treaties or to the existing practice between the two governments, but instead a straight and matter-of-fact*

*assertion of the right of the British government as the paramount power to decide things in a given situation.*

This concept was not entirely new — it had been around since the days of Wellesley and Hastings — but only in nebulous form. The removal of both external and internal threats to the Subcontinent (major nuisances like the Afghans were enjoying a period of weakness) meant it now began to gain traction very rapidly. The first test case was probably that of Mysore, in 1831, which will be covered in detail later on, but Coorg was another early example.

Paramountcy bypassed the Great Mughal as nominal overlord. The fiction had been that if the EIC made a treaty with a ruler the Mughal Empire was in the background, approving it. There was a moral obligation to honour the agreement. That still stood, but it was now recognized there were cases where the Company as *Sirkar* must act as the supreme arbiter. The thinking was not entirely selfish. In the spirit of that age there was a higher moral purpose, of improving the lot of the common people. But the popular philosophies of the day also said the end justified the means.

Perhaps surprisingly, these notions proved acceptable to many Indians of that day, most of whom had as much an idea of where it would all eventually lead as the Cabinet Ministers who dreamt it up (i.e., absolutely no clue). The Company was the *Sirkar*. One could only bow to its will. Non Intervention was still the rule, only broken occasionally. The ruler of Mysore, for example, voluntarily stepped down when asked to — and the Company's troops did not topple him, they were actually working for him. (Although... they could have been withdrawn, which would not have been helpful due to the major uprising he was dealing with.) Even the Raja of Coorg, though he took his people to war, ultimately agreed to abide by the new rules and sought legal redress instead of a second recourse to arms. It was only in subsequent decades, when things were taken further, that significant pushback came from the native rulers, culminating in the Mutiny.

This is not the place to discuss the Mutiny. There are many good books on the subject. To oversimplify, the Mutiny itself was just that. There had been mutinies before. Probably, the mutiny of the Imperial legions on the Rhine was no different in that regard. What made the Indian Mutiny really different was how the Doctrine of Paramountcy had swiftly mutated into a Doctrine of Lapse.

The case of Coorg does not involve the Doctrine of Lapse *per se*, but it could be seen as a precursor. Non Intervention had above all else meant the Company would not involve itself in questions of royal succession. In practice, of course, there was often some involvement, but the choice was ultimately left to the ruler. In the case of Coorg, the Company was made the guarantor of an old raja's will, yet it did not interfere when there was an internal coup. Intervention came years later, and though dynastic dynamics were part of the problem, they were not the immediate cause of the war.

However, the Coorg War is still an early instance of the Company not approving a successor, or installing a puppet when there was an interregnum, but assuming direct control whenever the succession was broken or

questionable, including when a woman or a minor was elevated to the throne. Such was the Doctrine of Lapse, which exacerbated the Mutiny — remember the famous Rani of Jhansi, who lost her kingdom because she was a woman. Coorg's case was one where things worked out to everyone's satisfaction, and there was no unrest in Coorg during the Mutiny. But of course, that gave the *Sirkar* a positive example to point to when the next case came up for consideration.

*[There was not much unrest at all in the South during the Mutiny. One is tempted to think this may have had something to do with the quality of the northern Administration.]*

In short, between the time the Last Raja of Coorg came to the throne and the time a target was painted on his back, the Company he and his forebears had deal with had gone. It was now an organ of the British Government. When a State and a group of Traders deal, differences in culture lead to embarrassment, sometimes offence, and sometimes to sudden understanding. But the State always has the upper hand. When rival governments convinced of their own superiority deal with each other it leads to conflict.

## The Governor-General of India



The title of Governor-General was created in 1773, just for the Bengal Presidency, which became the senior of the three presidencies in India, a first among equals. By the Saint Helena Act — in other words, during the incumbency of the man we have to deal with — the title was recast as Governor-General of India, with a Council of Four established to act as an Executive; together they had sole legislative authority for the Company in India. The Governor-General could be recalled at the whim of

the Directors (actually the Board of Control), but the Council was always harder to dislodge. By the Act, Madras and Bombay also lost most of their independence of action.

*[The badge above is from the 20th Century, but the motto fits the 1830s.]*

After the Mutiny the Council of Four would be replaced with a Secretary of State for India and a fifteen-man Council of India, based in London, with a mandate to rule the whole of British India and all affiliated princely states. At that time the Governor-General was styled the Viceroy, but it was an unofficial title that only appeared in the original charter document. The Council of India was dissolved in 1935. The Viceroy's post lasted until January 1950 (by then there were two, one for India and one for Pakistan). The last Viceroy of India was not Mountbatten, but Chakravarti Rajagopalachari.

The Governor-General at the time of the Coorg War, and the first to be styled Governor-General of India, was Lord William Cavendish-Bentinck (1828-1835). Born in Buckinghamshire in 1774, he was the son of the Duke of Portland, who was Prime Minister from 1807 to 1809. His

mother was the daughter of the Duke of Devonshire (who also had a very brief tenure as P.M.). The Portlands and Devonshires were extremely old and extremely influential families. The name Bentinck was originally Dutch, and the first Portland was a companion of William of Orange, added to the English peerage when William ousted his father-in-law James II in the coup of 1688. The family were therefore Whigs by tradition, which in the 1830s meant Liberal (but not Radical), mildly Progressive, and Solidly Entrenched.

Bentinck started out on the usual career path for one of his class, receiving a commission in the Coldstream Guards in 1791 (age 16); by 1798 he was Colonel of the 24th Dragoons. He served as Governor of Madras from 1803-1807, being made a major-general in 1805. His tenure at Fort St. George is regarded as 'unremarkably successful', except for one blot, the Vellore Mutiny of 1806, sparked because Bentinck gave orders that the sepoys were no longer to wear native attire. He seems not to have grasped that how a man dressed defined his caste. The mutiny was a bloody one, and Bentinck was recalled in 1807. Terms of office were usually longer than that. He then served in the Peninsula War — fought at Coruña — becoming a lieutenant general (brevet) in 1811. In the later campaigns that drove the French out of Spain he held his own Eastern Command on the Mediterranean Coast.

Given his social position he was of course simultaneously involved in politics. And not just politics, but geopolitics. Not one to seek prior permission, he pushed forward his own plan for regime change in Sicily, a Bourbon kingdom allied with Britain against Napoleon. Bentinck engineered the swapping of the reactionary incumbent for a more liberal scion, and gave Sicily a written constitution. His methods were heavy-handed, the Queen, his main opponent, calling him *La bestia feroce*. She seems to have regarded Bentinck as a closet Bonapartist. In 1816 the old king regained his throne and scrapped the constitution, but its aftertaste affected the revolution of 1848. Similarly, in 1814, Bentinck, by then C-in-C of Mediterranean forces, led a military expedition through Lucca, Tuscany, and Genoa (after signing a deal with Murat at Naples), where, dreaming of a free Italy (by that, he and everyone else always meant North Italy), he issued a public call for an insurrection to shake off the Corsican's Yoke. The British Government disowned his actions — North Italy was going to be given back to the Habsburgs and they needed Austrian support — and he was left to go it alone until the endeavour fizzled out with Napoleon's abdication. Lord Liverpool, then P.M., declared Bentinck 'mad'.

Postwar, Bentinck served as an MP until sent to Bengal in 1828. He did not 'get on' in politics, being regarded as a closet Radical. The Government at the time was Tory, and both Lord Liverpool and the Duke of Wellington mistrusted him. He tried unsuccessfully to be appointed Governor of Bengal in 1824. Only when Liverpool died and Lord George Canning took over did opportunity return. Canning was also a Tory, but more sympathetic to Bentinck's viewpoint. He was only in office for a few months in 1827, but that was all Bentinck needed. Wellington became P.M. early in 1828, but luckily the approval process had gone

too far (or Wellington had too shaky a hold on power) and Bentinck's appointment was not cancelled.

Pandey elaborates on Bentinck's independence of mind and unwillingness to be supervised, which people found annoying. Also his simplicity of taste and shunning of ostentation, which people found peculiar. Despite the gaffe leading to the Vellore Mutiny he had shown himself someone both the Company and the Crown could rely on. But, says Pandey (pp.21-22):

*Bentinck had the defects of his qualities. His independence of character ensured his firmness in dealing with difficult issues but it was also seen at times to make co-operation with others difficult. Thus in Madras he found it difficult to work amicably with his colleagues or with the chief justice (Sir Henry Gwillim). In Italy he could not co-ordinate his schemes with those of the Duke of Wellington in the Peninsular War, and thereby hampered the war effort of the allies in their crusade against Napoleonic France. While governor-general in India, seeing the desirability of a change in the seat of government, he was on the point of effecting his purpose without the prior consent of the home government, but he was restrained by them. The Duke of Wellington considered him "a wrong headed man" who if he went wrong would continue in the wrong line. "Other men," thought the Duke, "might go wrong and find it out, and go back; but if he went wrong he would either not find it out, or if he did, he would not go back."*



[William Cavendish Bentinck.]

Lord Bentinck would have been about 54 in 1828. He lasted the full seven year term in the post of Governor-General, so he must have got a few things right. His first

task was to fix the EIC's finances. There were fears its Charter would not be renewed unless its revenues could be made greater than its expenses. In this regard Bentinck was quite successful — he gained the Company another twenty years. But, he made a lot of enemies, particularly among the military wing, whose wages were severely garnished, among commercial interests who saw the opportunities for exploitation diminishing, and among the administrative personnel, who saw their chances for graft vanishing. In fact, he was virtually ostracized by the Calcutta social set (no great hardship for a man like him), and found himself violently attacked by the Press, whom he condescendingly ignored.

### Reform?

Bentinck was one of those who believed British India was secure enough that they could and should endeavour to help their neighbours modernize. Yet, perhaps thanks to his Mediterranean experiences, it appears he was reluctant to impose Westernization on the princely states. He much preferred the idea of leading by example. British involvement in most of the princely states had increased to such an extent that their presence was actually causing instability, the opposite of what was wanted. The native rulers had to somehow be persuaded to modernize and at the same time be weaned off the Company teat. The debate of his day was what form the changes should take. Outright assimilation? Federation under the British Crown? That last idea was tricky because the Company continued to use the Great Mughal as its figurehead.

Pandey (p.15) quotes a passage from a letter Lord Bentinck wrote to Lord Wellesley years before when he was serving under him as Governor of Madras — it has to do with the various small wars being waged in the name of Security — and comments:

*He welcomed the outcome of these wars as affording a hope of benefitting 'the great mass of the people whose rulers have been conquered' and of founding 'British Greatness upon Indian Happiness.' These words written when he was thirty, show the man. His solicitude for the welfare of the people under his charge was to become a prominent feature of his character, the mainspring of his activity and enthusiasm in subsequent years.*

The men probably most responsible for a more aggressive attitude on the part of the British were not Lord Bentinck, but his boss, Lord Ellenborough, who became President of the Board of Control in 1828, Ellenborough's successor, Baron Glenelg, and the Duke of Wellington. But a drift to Imperialism was anyway a feature of the age.

*[If the British relationship with the Mughals sounds vaguely like the Barbarian takeover of Rome it should. The parallel is not exact, but similar human dynamics were at play. And as for the other Classical motif, Britain becoming an Empire, men like Ellenborough were consciously following the Roman playbook, India taking on the same role in their minds as ancient Greece, Syria, and Egypt.]*

The BoC was the Cabinet post responsible for oversight of the EIC and Indian Affairs in general. After the Mutiny the post became that of Secretary of State for India. The BoC was routinely opposed by the Company Directors and the EIC's Secret Committee. 'Secret Committee' sounds

sinister, and there were indeed a number of such committees formed over the years that acted in a pretty shady manner, but this committee ought really to be called the Secret Political Committee, and it was simply a working group of the larger EIC Executive in London. Its job was initially to coordinate the movement of trade ships (hence the 'secrecy'), and later to issue political directives to the presidencies.

Ellenborough was a Tory, and served in the Wellington Administration. The Iron Duke had his own opinion of what was best for India, and it did not align with Bentinck's ideas. Ellenborough went further. He belonged to the school who thought Company Rule in India should be handed over to the British Crown. He was not without talent and regarded himself as an expert on Indian questions. He was also thinking geopolitically, with an eye on Russian expansion in Central Asia, and was an early player of the Great Game. Ellenborough would become Governor-General himself from 1842-1844. His term in India was far more controversial than Bentinck's; in fact he did not see his term out. Declaring he had come to bring Peace to Asia he found himself a slave of the same doctrine of Paramountcy that he had pushed when head of the BoC, presiding over a series of wars which he quickly lost control of, the first of which was a famous punitive Afghan campaign: "*An' we marched into Kabul, an' we tuk the Balar 'Issar, An' we taught 'em to respect the British Soldier.*"

Ellenborough stepped down from the BoC in 1830, but his aggressive policies were upheld by his successor, Charles Grant, 1st Baron Glenelg. Glenelg's ideas on Colonial Reform differed from those of Wellington and Ellenborough, and he crossed the floor to become a Whig (his contemporaries called him the Last of the Canningites). The Saint Helena Act was partly his brainchild. But although his thinking was more in line with Bentinck's, he only mildly toned down Ellenborough's agenda. As I said, a drift to Imperialism was feature of this age.

So, in the BoC's view Britain must take the helm in India, and while avoiding the complete eradication of other polities (unless it could be engineered), work to modernize them and correct their 'misgovernment'. To be fair, many of the remaining independent states were indeed badly governed, ruled by an overclass who treated their populations as exploitable resources and who at the same time could not be bothered to actually run their own affairs. And yes, although these had been inherent problems down through the centuries, John Company's presence did not help matters. Pandey says (pp. 8-9):

*These states enjoyed little peace. There were succession disputes and the rulers sometimes found it difficult to discharge the ordinary task of maintaining order in their territories. In many states the rulers were guided by no regular system in the conduct of government, acting under the influence of evil advisers who sought to advance their own interests. The people here had little protection against the arbitrary conduct of the subordinate officers who were either uncontrolled or were able to have their way in concert with men at the court. The Company's forces in the*

*subsidiary states protected the rulers from a fear of popular revolt and thus prevented a healthy check to misgovernment. Large sums of money were realised in arbitrary ways and spent equally recklessly. Things were drifting into chaos and it appeared to Bentinck that like the Carnatic, Tanjore and Benares in the past, many Indian states would in course of time be absorbed into British territories.*

Lord Bentinck found himself with some thorny diplomatic questions surrounding the hodgepodge of agreements and treaties made with various rulers over the years. They had been implemented under host of different circumstances, and reworked and modified — often part of the forced-loan gambit or stemming from some time when EIC troops were fighting as mercenaries — until it almost required an expert assigned to each state. Loopholes and inequalities abounded. Coorg was a prime example. The Company had nearly zero influence in the kingdom, thanks to the treaty signed during the wars against Tipu Sultan, but its rajas had loaned a large sum of money to the Company, also thanks to that treaty. (And thanks to the Wellesleys, who had signed it.) The Governor-General never was able to sort the mess out, but he did try.

Bentinck's other reforms can be collected under the 'Westernization' heading. He was heavily influenced by the Utilitarian philosophy popularized by Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill — both of whom he knew personally — which can be boiled down to the well known phrase, 'the greatest good for the greatest number' (*sotto voce* 'the privileged classes can go hang'). His great belief was that English Education would pull India up from the mire. To his credit he tried hard to bring Indians into the Government, but met with tremendous opposition.

Under Lord Bentinck, English replaced Persian in the schools (1835) and the law courts. The courts themselves were reformed. A Calcutta Medical College was opened, the first in Asia to use the latest Western techniques, and it had no official caste or religious barriers. Opinion of its success is mixed. More controversially (at the time), his administration abolished both *sati* (*suttee*) and *thuggee*. *Sati* is the practice of widows burning themselves on the funeral pyre. Under Bentinck it was made a criminal offence (1829), as was infanticide and human sacrifice. Though traditionalists objected there was also acceptance among many that it was time for a change. The suppression of the Thugs was similarly both opposed and applauded. The popular conception of *thuggee* as a sadistic murder cult as depicted in the movie *Gunga Din* owes much to British propaganda, but its devotees did come from those castes who practiced hereditary banditry, and they did engage in some ritual murders. Rao's idea that the British created new cultural identities in India also applies to the Thugs, some of whom started laying claim to all sorts of outlandish behaviours that originated in the British imagination (and thereby making things worse for themselves when they were caught). Harkening back to his ill-fated attempt to make the sepoys wear British uniforms, Bentinck, in a much more sensible move, also abolished flogging in the Indian Army.





*[An older William Cavendish Bentinck. The words on the pedestal read, 'who during seven years ruled India with eminent prudence, integrity, and benevolence; who, placed at the head of a great empire, never laid aside the simplicity and moderation of a private citizen; who infused into oriental despotism the spirit of British freedom; who never forgot that the end of government is the welfare of the governed; who abolished cruel rites; who effaced humiliating distinctions; who allowed liberty to the expression of public opinion whose constant study it was to elevate the moral and intellectual character of the nation committed to his charge. This monument was erected by men who differing from each other in race, in manners, in language, and in religion cherish with equal veneration and gratitude the memory of his wise, upright and paternal administration.'*

*The statue has been moved around over the years, but no one has regarded his memory with enough hatred to topple it or have it melted down. His legacy in India is fairly positive.]*

While his reforms probably seem uniformly sensible to a modern person, at the time they were regarded as 'newfangled foreign interference'. And as the Koran says, all innovation is of Hellfire. Also, Bentinck seems to have been one of those men who are convinced they have the

cure and intend to ram it down people's throats for their own good even if they choke on the medicine.

As for the reform of the princely states, well, he still preferred to lead by example. The Crown, despite the abandonment of the Non Intervention Policy by some of the EIC leadership and the BoC, still supported this idea. So, the Governor-General tried the experiment of allowing the various princely states — all of them, not just the ones which seemed stable — to have a shot at reforming themselves. Where the Company was riding herd, the hand was lifted. But... as the months passed the word he got from men on the frontlines was disheartening. He modified his ruling. As a last resort, in cases where misgovernment was egregious and the people were suffering unduly, Intervention would be permitted, as a Duty to be performed. It would not matter in such a case what Public Opinion thought.

The first test of this modified doctrine came in 1831, in Mysore. I will go into that affair in some detail later, because it has a bearing on what was to come in Coorg. In addition to both those kingdoms, the policy was applied in the small states of Cachar (1832) and Jainta (1835). In Bentinck's mind these were cases of invasive surgery to assist a stricken patient. If you were to ask him if he had become an Annexationist, he would have vehemently told you "absolutely not".

### **The Presidency of Fort St. George**

If Lord Bentinck was not the sort of man to authorize the annexation of a territory for selfish reasons — but might do so for altruistic ones — what of his subordinates?

The East India Company's presence in India had from very early times been split into three Presidencies: Bengal (the North), Madras (the South), and Bombay (the bit given to the Company by Portugal). Though Bengal was the chief presidency, Madras, or Fort St. George as it should properly be called, was where the EIC first began its territorial push, spurred on by French rivalry; by the 1800s the Presidency had acquired a lot of territory, whether under direct or allied control.

There were two Governors of Fort St. George during the period we are interested in: Mr. Stephen Rumbold Lushington (1827-32) and Sir Frederick Adam (1832-1837). By chance, Colin Paterson met both of them, but he left no record of his impressions. Lushington was the man Colin reported to on his arrival at Madras and who appointed him to his first post. He was 51 when he was appointed Governor. His father was a church minister. Educated at Rugby, he went out to India in 1792 as a translator. During the Napoleonic Wars he returned to England and ran for Parliament. After a few tries he was successful and held a seat until 1830 (yes, he was indeed absent from Parliament for the years he was out East; that was allowed). Between 1814 and 1827 he was Secretary to the Treasury. The thing he is most noted for is a passion for Education; he founded schools in England and was asked to do the same in the Madras Presidency. This is perhaps why he got the post of Governor of Fort St. George, as part of Bentinck's education drive. He sounds the typical pedantic Whig administrator, but he was not all sweetness

and light. Modern scholars call him ‘reactionary’. His predecessor, Brigadier General Sir Thomas Munro, had been an extremely able man, a successful soldier and administrator who was well liked by the people of the region for his fair dealing. Lushington went to great pains to have Munro’s equally able staff rooted up and dismissed, to be replaced by his own creatures. He also ‘dissed’ some of Munro’s policies, particularly the short-lived *ryotwari* land revenue system. (With some justification.) His dismissals were protested in the highest quarters, but the Directors mostly stood behind Lushington.



[Stephen Rumbold Lushington]

I should digress about the tax system, because its strengths and weaknesses play into the situation in Coorg post-annexation. The *ryotwari* (*ryot* = peasant) system taxed the cultivators directly. This was a fairly new idea and had some very positive features, in theory. It cut out the middlemen. It allowed the peasant, as the titled holder of the land, to do what it liked with his holding, without the Government being able to stop him, provided he paid his dues. The downside was that to be efficient it required payment in cash. This was not a problem under the older, *zamindari* system, where the local feudal lord, or *zemindar*, collected from the peasants in kind and paid cash taxes (tribute in the old days) that he generated from the sale of the produce. The *zemindar* might be an extortioner, but at least the peasants had the means to pay him. They could not pay so much as a *pice* in cash and were forced to turn to the moneylenders, who were even worse extortioners than the old *zemindar*’s bullies.

Sir Frederick was a different character altogether. If you study the Napoleonic Wars at all you should know his name. He was the brigade commander who flanked the Imperial Guard at Waterloo. He was only 46 when he took

over the post of Governor of Fort St. George. A career soldier, he was born in Fifeshire, the fourth son of minor aristocracy. He joined the Army at 14 and trained as an artillery officer. He made major in 1803, aged 22. He served in the Netherlands and Egypt, was posted to Sicily, and fought in the Peninsula, being twice wounded. Likely through his connections to the Duke of Wellington, in 1824 he was made Lord High Commissioner of the Ionian Islands, an independent federal republic that flourished under British protection from 1816 to 1864. (This was a post Lord Bentinck had also angled for but did not get.) Sir Frederick was highly popular there, doing much to improve the infrastructure. In 1831 he was made a Privy Councillor for the Crown. That body advised the monarch on when to exercise royal privilege and issued Orders in Council for such things as town charters and the regulation of institutions; it also had a judicial function and used to be the final court of appeal for the British Empire.



[Sir Frederick Adam, c.1848]

Like Lushington, not much is recorded about his time as Governor at Madras. He assumed the role right after Colin Paterson arrived, and it was his military secretary whom Colin accompanied on a trip to the Malacca Straits.

Part of the conspiracy theory surrounding the annexation of Coorg is the idea that Madras engineered it. Most of the time this is averred to be without Lord Bentinck’s connivance. The Raja is supposed to have been provoked by the deliberate withholding of his income and his reputation smeared. Lushington sounds like the sort of person who might have indulged in such things, but he was gone by 1832, and was not the kind of ‘old hand’ who might have been playing by the old rules. Sir Frederick is an even less likely suspect. On the evidence of his career



alone it is extremely unlikely. Furthermore, he had only just arrived in-country when the trouble started. However, as a hard-charging senior soldier it would be completely in character for him, when his staff told him there was trouble in Coorg, to seek a military solution to the problem. No matter how able a man he was, finesse and a deep-rooted understanding of the local situation were not on the table. That was a problem that would only get worse in India as the decades passed.



[Fort St. George]

### The Residents

The next rung down the ladder is where you will find the names most often associated with an annexation conspiracy theory.

The concept of Residencies predated the Subsidiary Alliance system, and was copied from the practices of the Dutch and French. A Resident was a political officer of the Company, of fairly senior rank, attached to the native government of a kingdom, with the dual charges of handling diplomacy (both with the Company and on behalf of the ruler they were embedded with) and of making sure the ruler toed the line. A Resident could be either a civilian or a military officer. In the old days the Resident was also the trade representative, the intermediary between the local ruler and the European merchants; now, the Residents were involved with the entire economy. What the ruler got out of the deal was better security than he or his ancestors had ever experienced, and an opportunity to spend his days hunting or chasing his harem, instead of actually ruling. A secondary responsibility of the Resident, once the Crown began meddling in the Company's mandate, was the implementation of Westernization. Success in this area depended on the attitude of the ruler, but the allure of 'Progress' is not confined to Westerners; there might also be some sort of subsidy involved.

It was inevitable that the men assigned to run those early trading posts would find themselves dragged into local politics. This is human nature, but was also essential for survival. It is also human nature that a Resident, having been given the power of a vizier, would start to act and think like a vizier — and also that his hosts would expect it of him. If he did not, he would lose Face, the Company would lose Control, the Directors would lose Money, and the Crown would have to deal with a Crisis.

Coorg had no Resident. This was part of the deal. Though at the mercy of the *Sirkar* because of the disparity in raw power, Coorg was in fact as well as theory, independent. If there was any need to negotiate then the Residency of Mysore was called upon. This fact adds weight to Martin's argument that the Company's invasion was unjustified because they claimed they were chastising a subordinate. We will return to that point.

There were three Residents of Mysore during the period covered by the narrative. Arthur Henry Cole (1780-1844) was the fourth son of the Earl of Enniskillen and had been educated at Trinity College, Dublin. Arriving in India in 1802, he served as Resident from 1812 until about 1825, after which he returned to Britain to begin a political career. When he first arrived in India Lord Cornwallis described him as 'a very fine lad, and modest, and well behaved'. He is remembered in Mysore chiefly for the city park in Bangalore named after him, and for his regulation of liquor. In the 1820s he found himself under investigation due to rumours that he was tinkering with Mysore's finances, but he was exonerated. Relations with Mysore were beginning to deteriorate at that time so the accusations may have had political roots. On the other hand, salaries were low in those days and opportunism was still a desired trait among state officials. However, Cole seems to have preferred, per the Company directives of his day, to let the natives steer their own course and confine himself to Company business. This was true with respect to his dealings with both Coorg and Mysore.



[A.H. Cole]

Unfortunately I could not find portraits of the other two Residents. It is always helpful to have a picture when assessing a person's character, and these two men had more to do with the Coorg War than Cole. What the latter did was set a precedent for how to deal with the rajas of Coorg that the others did not follow.

James Archibald Casamajor or Casamaijor was born in 1787, to a company official at Madras, becoming a 'writer' (company clerk) himself in 1803, aged about 16. By 1809 he was a registrar at Seringapatnam (Srirangapatna), the old Vijaynagara capital (Mysore city was the current capital of the state). In 1811 he was, like Cole, investigated for financial irregularities while acting as Military Paymaster; he was also exonerated. The investigation did not stop him rising to become a judge. In that capacity he became known for his philanthropy. When Cole retired in 1824, Casamajor, then in his late thirties, was made Resident of Mysore, where he remained until May 1832. The year before, as you shall hear, there had been a major uprising and in 1832 the state was 'put under administration' — run by a Company-appointed Commission. However, the Residency remained open until Casamajor's transfer.

*[The best opinion I have heard for why the word 'writer' was used for a clerk is that it comes from the Dutch 'scrivener', which meant 'clerk', but was translated literally into English as 'scribbler' or 'writer'.]*

Casamajor went from there to be appointed a member of the Council of Fort St. George — that is part of the governing body of the presidency, at Madras. Thus, he was the Resident dealing with the Last Raja of Coorg prior to the war, and after he was transferred he became strategically placed to make the Raja's life even more miserable, as will be seen. The two men despised each other.

In 1836 Casamajor was made Resident of Travancore & Cochin for two years. (Cochin had been conquered many decades ago by Travancore, but the peculiar circumstances of that event meant the states had a certain degree of separation.) Casamajor retired 'to the Hills' as the saying went, in 1838 — retirees wanting to stay in the land typically moved to the salubrious Nilgiris Hills district which lies south of Mysore; the chief town there is Ooty. But, he must have had second thoughts, for by 1839 he was living in London.

From the point of view of the Raja and his advocate Martin, Casamajor is the true villain of the piece, a shifty, scheming character, out to get the Raja. Whether this is true or not remains to be seen; he had been under investigation for financial irregularities, after all, but that was one of the risks of his job. It is a minor point, but Martin says he became Resident in 1830, which hints the historian was relying entirely on the Raja for an interpretation of his character and ability. For if he had been appointed in 1830 he would have been a newcomer riding roughshod over all the prior arrangements the Raja had with the Company. In fact, Casamajor had been born in India, was well acquainted with the situation in Coorg after six years as the neighbouring Resident, and only began 'interfering' with the regime when ordered to do so.

Mr. Henry Sullivan Graeme was another man the Raja did not like, but Martin exculpates him. He took over when Casamajor left. He had been one of Munro's team, and had even acted as an interim Governor for a month or two in 1827, when Munro suddenly died of cholera and someone had to hold the fort until Lushington arrived. He was viciously attacked by Lushington, but unlike some of the others his career was not wrecked. He has a road named after him in Chennai (Madras), and his name is widely associated with Munro's policies on land reform.

Graeme was actually the Resident of Nagpore (Nagpur), but since Mysore's new ruling Commission was still being set up when the Coorg Question began to brew he was put in charge of the diplomacy for both states on an 'interim' basis between 1833 and 1834. Graeme was a complete unknown as far as the Raja was concerned, which was not helpful to either of them.

## The Armies of the EIC

The EIC had three armies, one for each of its three presidencies: Bengal, Bombay, and Madras. In some periods all three were individually larger than the British Army. They remained in existence under the Raj until 1895, when the unified British Indian Army was created. The armies' collective history began in 1748, at the end of the First Carnatic War. Before then the EIC hired locals to act as guards and watchmen, but in the event of war had to rely on European civilian volunteers and the odd draft of Company troops sent out from England; there was an erroneous belief that only Europeans made good soldiers. Bengal was the first to make use of the so-called 'warrior races', though as auxiliaries for hire, not company soldiers. The first real sepoy unit was the Madras Regiment, created in 1748 by Major Stringer Lawrence, who is regarded as the Father of the Indian Army. The Regiment copied French practices. But, it was Robert Clive who pushed for the universal 'sepoy regiment', within the Presidency of Bengal. The concept spread from there.

While unit traditions within each presidency were distinct, for the men came from a variety of castes and communities, each army had the same basic structure, incorporating all arms: infantry, cavalry, and artillery, with supporting assets. The officers were Europeans and the common soldiers and NCOs were Indian. After the Napoleonic Wars many Line officers transferred to service with the Company but the EIC also sponsored direct commissions and even maintained its own officer cadet school in England. Both these factors seem to have helped address a unique feature of the earlier EIC armies, their lack of a proper command structure. Before the turn of the 18th Century there were no officers of General rank.

The sepoy regiments used the notation 'Native Infantry', or 'N.I.' to distinguish them from regiments of the British line, known as 'Royal' or 'H.M.' regiments. How they were dressed depends on the source material. We have seen that Lord Bentinck faced a mutiny when he tried to make the troops wear proper uniforms, but it is also stated that the men wore modified European military dress, and a sample can be seen in the 'pattern book' shown on the next page. Those are of course 'dress' uniforms. Coats were issued but rarely worn. In the old days even the Europeans went

barefoot. Unit strengths always vary by both period and circumstance, but one paper strength given for a standard N.I. single-battalion regiment is 865 men.

Each battalion was drawn from a single caste or unified community. You need to remember that before the 20th Century there was no concept of a 'nation' of India. No one thought twice about 'serving the enemy' — the Company was not the enemy, it was the *Sirkar*. Service with the Company either reinforced a man's status within his community (if he was, for example, a Rajput) or augmented it (if his family had, say, been peasants), just as in past days men earned renown by seeking service under a famous warlord. The pay was low, but regular, and the Company offered the chance to acquire booty on active service. Moreover, there were benefits no native prince could ever provide: a pension, that would carry on and support a man's family after he was gone. I imagine also that the soldiers would be allowed to bring their sick dependents to be treated by regimental surgeons like my ancestor, and have access to other perquisites. These were the physical manifestations of a spiritual client-patron relationship between the Company and the sepoy that fostered extreme loyalty. There was also the intangible 'success factor' — the notion that the Company was favoured by the gods. John Company never suffered for lack of recruits; indeed, it took potential recruits away from its enemies.

*[Indian society is so confusingly structured that division by caste is not always the best way to classify people, thus there is also division by 'community'. Within a community there may be many castes, but to an outsider they all look the same.]*

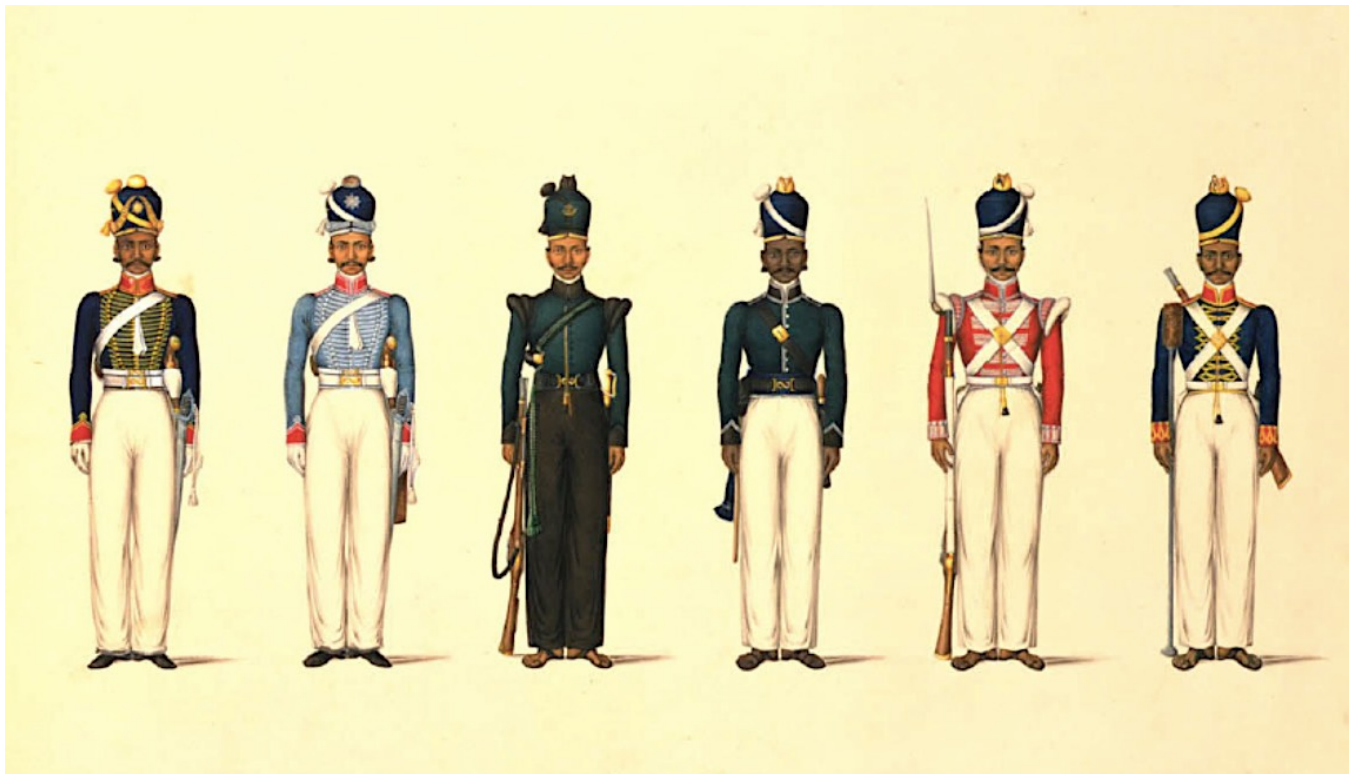
*[Below; sepoy uniforms circa 1834. From left to right: horse artillery, cavalry, rifles, sappers, line, foot artillery.]*

The cavalry initially retained the ancient Mughal *silledar* system — *silledar* cavalry were paid and equipped by the state but were 'warriors' rather than 'soldiers' and might even be led by Indian officers. Paper strength, once these units had morphed into standard light cavalry, was 628 men.

Royal Regiments made their first regular appearance in India in 1748, to deal with the siege of Pondichéri. They continued to appear throughout the rest of the century as the British warred with the French. By the end of those wars keeping British regulars on the books was a matter of habit, but under the Company's new structure they were rented from the Crown for fixed periods of time.

In 1824 a major reform took place, standardizing the TO&E and doing away with an experimental two-battalion system that had been introduced to reduce the number of native leaders. (Typical political interference and no one liked it.) In that year there were 170 Sepoy and 16 Royal regiments in India, numbering roughly 200,000 men. In wartime the authorities might also risk calling on a variety of independent kingdoms for assistance, though this was not done during the Coorg War. That would happen most often on the Frontier, when the Afghans, for example, went on the warpath and attacked everyone indiscriminately. More typically, the reverse was true, the Company providing a battalion or two to allied states to help prop up the regime.

In the Madras Army, proportionally the cavalry came to about 10%, the artillery about 8%, Royal battalions 5%, and light foot regiments also 5%. About 20% of the sepoy regiments were given rifle companies of 60 men. All the cavalry were classed as 'light', and the lance was a common weapon along with the sword. Infantry were armed with the India-Pattern Brown Bess (adopted by the





entire British Army during the same period) which was a bit lighter and shorter than the classic musket. Introduced in 1797, it was phased out in 1854. The riflemen (called 'fusiliers' in the sources) were armed with the Baker rifle, which remained in service until the 1840s.

The Artillery was broken down into horse and foot, the horse artillery being organized in a brigade of 4 European and 2 Native troops, and the foot arranged as 4 European battalions of 4 companies each plus a single Native battalion of 6 companies. The artillery park provided a variety of both cannon and howitzers, and mortars. In the Coorg War a mix of six-pounders and 5.5" howitzers were fielded, plus some very effective 5.5" mortars. Madras also had a corps of Sappers and Miners, mixed European and Native all ranks, numbering about 1,800 men.

Bengal's Army was quite a bit larger, with 74 as opposed to 52 N.I. regiments, a number of which were classed as Volunteers; two were classed as Grenadiers. There were no attached rifle companies. Cavalry was also numerous, with about the same number of light cavalry regiments but twice that again in Irregular Cavalry which used the *silledar* template. The Artillery was slightly more numerous than that of Madras, with 3 brigades of horse and 9 battalions of foot.

Bombay had a different mix of artillery, a smaller sapper corps, much less cavalry, a couple of grenadier regiments but no light infantry regiments, and there were no attached rifle companies. But it had many irregular units of cavalry, infantry, and a number of police corps, plus a marine battalion.

During the Mutiny the Bengal Army was almost completely dismantled, through desertion or wholesale disbandment, whereas the Madras and Bombay regiments were almost untouched; modern Indian Army units thus continue to trace their lineage back to these regiments. Because many were Muslim units the Pakistan Army also traces its lineage to these formations. During the Coorg War the sepoys performed solidly and there seem to have been no desertions, though their officers were concerned some of the younger recruits might decide to duck into the jungle and go home (they would have been butchered by the locals had they tried).

*[Below: top, Indian-Pattern Brown Bess; bottom, Baker Rifle]*

The EIC's order of battle for the expedition against Coorg is given later, but here is a list of the regiments involved, along with some brief unit histories. So far as can be ascertained, all the sepoy regiments came from the Madras Presidency. (The presidency armies did not number their regiments sequentially, so there are duplicates.)

Elements of three British battalions took part: 39th of Foot (Dorsetshire), 48th of Foot (Northamptonshire), and 55th of Foot (Westmorland). All three were veteran formations with long histories, and they still exist in some form today.

- The 39th's first incarnation was in 1689, though its official birthdate is 1702. It took part in the various European succession wars. During the Napoleonic Wars it served in Italy, the Peninsula, and at Waterloo. In 1825 it was sent to the colony of New South Wales (Australia), partly to act as convict guards and partly to build infrastructure. In 1830 it helped quash a local insurgency there. In 1832 the regiment moved to India, fighting in the Coorg War and the Gwalior Insurgency (1843) before participating in the Crimean War. It later served in Canada and Bermuda before being sent back to India for a spell.
- The 48th was raised in 1741. It first served in the War of the Austrian Succession but spent much of the 18th Century fighting in America. During the Napoleonic Wars it served at Malta, in the Peninsula, and at Waterloo. Like the 39th it was sent to New South Wales (in 1817) but was serving in India by 1824. After the Coorg War it next saw action in the Crimean War.
- The 55th was raised in 1755, spent most of the 18th Century fighting in America, and during the Napoleonic Wars spent most of its time in the West Indies, though it also participated in various 'descents' against Holland; in 1813/1814 it was operating there. In 1819 the regiment was sent to Cape Town and fought in the Fifth Xhosa War. I could find no arrival date for India. After the Coorg War it was sent to China (1841) to fight in the First Opium War before returning to Europe to fight in the Crimea. It returned to India in 1863, fighting in the Bhutan War of 1864.

Elements of no less than eleven Native Infantry regiments participated: 4th, 5th, 20th, 22nd, 24th, 31st, 32nd, 35th, 36th, 40th, and 48th (no relation to the 48th H.M. regiment). Without an extensive search of the Indian Army archives only a few notes can be made.



- The 4th was at Assaye and ultimately became an elite pioneer unit, disbanded in 1933. It and the 5th were raised in the 1750s.
- The 20s series were raised in the 1780s and 1790s. The 22nd fought in the First Burma War (1824-26). The cadre of the 24th is now in the Pakistan Army.
- The 30s series were raised in 1800 (maybe later in the case of the 36th). The 35th participated in the Second Burma War (1852) and was actually disbanded before the 20th Century, in 1882. The 31st and 32nd are now in the Pakistan Army.
- The 5th, 24th, and 36th had attached rifle companies. The first two regiments only contributed those companies to the Coorg campaign; some sources say the 36th brought its Rifles and others say not.
- Some sources name the Bombay Regiment. This unit, always composed of Europeans and now merged with the Royal Dublin Fusiliers, was raised in 1661 to serve as Bombay's garrison, after that place was given to England as part of Catherine of Braganza's dowry to Charles II. Neither Rice nor *The Expedition* mention it, and it seems to have been substituted in error for the 48th N.I. which might have belonged to the Bombay Presidency.



[Above: top, 6-pounder cannon of the Madras artillery; bottom, a 5.5" howitzer]

No cavalry units are recorded in the expedition's order of battle, but there indications of a mounted presence. It seems clear from the narrative that several cavalry units were used to patrol the borders. The sources list the artillery personnel and pieces that took part in the campaign but do not name the specific battalions that

provided them. In any case, artillery 'brigades' and 'battalions' were administrative units. When war broke out they would send off batteries and detachments in every direction. As mentioned above there were six-pounders, and 5.5" howitzers and mortars. Each of the columns had its own body of sappers and miners.

#### **Tactics, Drills, etc.**

A lot could be said about military tactics, and much of it could be condensed to the statement that armies of the period still employed the methods of the Napoleonic Era. The Company armies had developed modifications due to the nature of their various opponents and the environment, but in general terms they fought like European armies of the period. Troops still stood in line, skirmishers were used for harassment and reconnaissance, cavalry was the decisive arm of attack and also used for scouting, foraging, and law enforcement, and artillery was crucial for victory. Cavalry was, actually, the weakest arm, completely overmatched by its native counterparts, but by this point there were no enemy states with large bodies of cavalry left to deal with. The EIC now enjoyed a virtual monopoly of violence, finding itself opposed (whenever a raja was stupid enough to declare war) mainly by scratch armies of peasant-cultivators, freebooters, and tiny palace guard units.

In India the value of artillery was even more apparent; Indian cannon were an old technology, but they had remained old, suitable only for static positions, and were outclassed by the techniques developed in Europe. There is also another factor, seldom discussed, which applies both to cannon and muskets. The Company monopolized production and supply of saltpetre and gunpowder and made it illegal for anyone else to engage in that trade. This advantage manifested itself in many ways, from cannon that were more reliable and accurate, to the fact that the soldiers could do live-fire training on a monthly basis — something that even modern militaries have trouble accomplishing (though in their case this is due to nickel-and-diming bureaucrats).

According to the narrative of the Coorg War it would appear the H.M. regiments were used to spearhead assaults, but this did not mean the sepoys were second-rate. They were renowned for their steadiness — but that made them more anvil than hammer. All used the same drills; the fact that several of the Madras sepoy regiments had rifle companies indicates they had been keeping pace with the latest European innovations. In fact, the H.M. regiments were probably composed of lower quality material, despite their famous lineages.

The cavalry branch was probably the least changed by European developments and Indian cavalry were still the masters of the European arm. It was received wisdom that a strong cavalry arm was still capable of defeating a Company army — but as I said, there were no more states in India that possessed such cavalry, for the men were all under the *Sirkar's* colours. During the Coorg War, the brief appearances of cavalry show it to have been a tactical game-changer.

But, the Coorg War was waged almost exclusively with artillery and infantry, and both sides recognized that the

decisive element was the British cannon. The Coorgs had a large artillery park of their own but no means of using it. Most of the time, once the Company guns were brought up, the Coorgs abandoned their positions and melted into the jungle — which was what the textbooks advised when fighting Company armies without your own cavalry. The problem for the Coorgs was that their kingdom was just too small to ‘trade space for time’.

The fighting took the form of separate columns advancing along narrow roads hemmed in by jungle. Native guides were employed, but they were hard to find and harder to keep, and might also be spies. The British regulars spearheaded the columns, assisted in some cases by the Rifles. Skirmishers were thrown out on the flanks, but only when necessary, as they had to push through the jungle and slowed the columns down. Whether to use them or not seems to have depended on whether the column was suffering casualties from the flank or not.

When resistance was encountered the enemy would be fixed in place by skirmishers (they were usually defending a barricade or stockade) and the guns brought up. If this did not scare them off, they would be outflanked while the skirmishers and artillery kept them occupied. That was the theory. In practice it worked occasionally. Sometimes the enemy slipped away immediately, without loss, while the British floundered around, and at other times they resisted bitterly, to the point that, despite their fire superiority, the British were forced to retreat.

### **Colin Paterson's Job**

Medicine in India was, like everything else associated with the Company, in the process of transformation. We have seen how Colin escorted a patient for a ‘sea cure’ before being assigned to a garrison hospital at Poonamallee (now a suburb of Chennai). His next posts, with sepoy regiments at Vellore and Arcot, were also in the Lower Carnatic.

Although the Indian Medical Service can claim its start in 1612 it cannot be regarded as a true medical corps during the period of Company Rule. That reorganization only came in 1881. There was no Surgeon General until 1886 (actually, there had been one in 1614 but the post disappeared). However, things had progressed from the days when a doctor was the personal physician of some officer, who looked after the troops in his spare time. Though a civilian branch, it had become semi-militarized. Each army had its own allotment of surgeons (and lesser beings like apothecaries) that formed its Medical Service, the men rotating between service at a garrison hospital and specific regiments. There were no official base hospitals, but the garrison surgeons were effectively just that. In 1843 the civilian titles were equated to military ranks, so that Colin's rank of Assistant Surgeon equated to Lieutenant. The personnel were as mixed a bag as one could imagine — just like the Army it was possible to buy one's Place as a physician regardless of qualifications — but by Colin's day the number of incompetents was rapidly dwindling.

Pay was regular but nothing to write home about. According to the RSM Proceedings (p.15):

*The remuneration of a surgeon in the eighteenth century was not high. In Bombay, where it was higher than in the*

*other provinces, a senior surgeon could command as much as £90 per annum, but by 1729 that sum had been reduced to what must seem to have been their current market rate, £36 a year. There were, however, three sources from which a surgeon might supplement his income. He might be fortunate enough to secure one of the few really lucrative appointments, such as the Residency Surgeoncy at Lucknow, which carried allowances paid by the Vizir of Oudh for attendance upon his family: he might participate in the issue of prize money; or he might frankly and unashamedly indulge in trade. Many considerable fortunes were built up at that time, not from professional earnings, still less from official pay, but from contracts and trading. An early instance is found in the career of an Indian Assistant Surgeon who, by his death at the age of 97, had accumulated more than £130,000, mostly by judicious investment in land and country produce. But, by a General Order of 1826, commercial speculations were forbidden to all officers of the Company, and those practices gradually came to an end.*

So, no country club membership for Colin. But if Company pay was not high it was at least better than what the Army offered. And one could still obtain membership in some club or other, simply by virtue of being an educated European.

As for what the job entailed, the focus was on treatment and palliative care, not prevention. If one does not know the cause of a disease it is a little hard to prevent it. Cholera, for example, was still believed to be caused by ‘bad air’, though theories were being advanced that it was some sort of ‘seed’ rather than the air itself. Colin devoted a lot of time to Cholera; for some reason it was endemic around every army base.

In addition to the usual twisted ankles, heat stroke, alcohol-induced delirium, and boils, there was always the risk of a major outbreak of disease. As I suggested when talking about the sepoys, Colin probably saw to the care of the soldiers' dependents. Even if it was against regulations I cannot see a doctor refusing to treat a patient. He had studied midwifery, but somehow I do not think the women of that culture would have let him deliver a baby...

On campaign, the go-to procedure for wounds remained ‘amputation’. But, it would depend on the skill and background of the surgeon. If he had discovered or been taught some way of saving a limb then the soldiers under his care were lucky, but there were still many surgeons who had only a vague notion of what they were doing. Colin's appointment was part of a larger trend to not only find competent doctors, but to overhaul the whole system.

In a garrison there would be a rudimentary hospital, with beds and stores and a routine to follow — and here again one might find a senior surgeon with an obsession for hygiene; actually, such things were more likely as one went up the ladder of seniority. In the field the essential tools would be loaded onto an unsprung bullock cart managed by native servants; orderlies were a thing of the future. And the wounded had the joy of riding in similar carts. There might be a hospital tent, or the surgeon might commandeer a peasant's hut.

Only after the scandals of the Crimean War would the Army begin to seriously alter the way its medical corps operated. The Company had the money to do things better, but perhaps not the personnel.

One surprising thing doctors were often used for were embassies. But if you think about it, of course native princes were eager to obtain their professional services, and they were (except for the occasional black sheep) educated gentlemen who could be asked for advice, or employed to convey diplomatic correspondence (a bit like the scribal Brahmins). Colin would be give such a role later in his career; in the case of Coorg two European physicians played a diplomatic role, one during the reign of the Last Raja and one in the reigns of his father and uncle.

Such special duties also allowed those with a scientific bent to poke into all sorts of rabbit holes in the pursuit of Knowledge. Again according to the RSM Proceedings (p.15):

*Quite apart from their excursions into trade, the Surgeons of the Company were frequently employed on activities outside the practice of medicine. Many were distinguished naturalists, who studied and wrote about the Botany and Zoology of India, while others were among the first to study the languages and religions of the East. James Anderson introduced cochineal into India and played a large part in the introduction of silk, sugar cane, coffee and American cotton. The use of lac dye was discovered by another surgeon, David Turnbull. Others made extensive travels — among them Alexander Hamilton, whose views on the Calcutta Hospital have been noted above. Hamilton was one of the first Europeans to visit the forbidden city of Lhasa. John McNeill, profiting by his knowledge of Persian, entered the diplomatic service, where he rose to become Minister Plenipotentiary to the Shah from the Court of St. James, and eventually Privy Councillor.*

This is another avenue Colin would pursue in his later career, and I expect he used what free time was given him to keep up his scientific interests. It would be a few years yet before he married.

## The Kingdom of Coorg

What would Colin Paterson have seen as he bumped his way on a bullock cart down the dusty track that led into the Heart of Darkness? Green and brown. Green and brown everywhere. Dried brown rice paddies lining the streams and river banks, with tall, clustered palm trees behind. Thickets of bamboo with gaps of tall grass between them. Bushy new growth, and patches of triple canopy jungle overshadowing a spice plantation. Every so often a clearing with one, two, four small bungalows. A sense of exotic and probably dangerous life teeming just outside the circle of human existence. The roar of a tiger or the trumpet of an elephant. The smells of germinating plant life and the feeling that things were going to get very wet, very soon. Humid, but not so very hot. More like an English summer with a storm in the offing than the oven of India. And then a fallen teak tree lying across the track. Drat it, another blasted Coorg roadblock. *Och weel*, that will give me time to put a sketch of those flowering vines in my notebook.

Coorg still exists as a district in the state of Karnataka. The word 'Coorg' is supposed to reference 'mist', or 'hills', or 'west', or 'steep'. Its real name in English should be Kodagu; 'Coorg' is an archaic anglicization. I am going to stick with 'Coorg' in most places to give the narrative the proper Colonial ambiance. The travel brochures describe Coorg as 'India's Scotland', I suppose due to the natural beauty and cool climate, and maybe partly due to its old affinity with Britain. But the label fits for another reason. It is inhabited by the same kind of ornery independent-minded Highlanders. If you come as a guest, the hospitality is boundless. If you come as an enemy, you are going home in a bodybag.

The author of *The Expedition* describes the kingdom as it was in his day (pp. 200-202):

*Coorg, or Codugu-malé, sometimes called Semustan, is a mountainous and woody district of the Southern India, situated between the province of Mysore and the British provinces of Malabar; and considered to extend from the Tambatcherry pass on the south, to the confines of the Bednore country on the north. It has no manufactures; the natives exchanging the produce of the soil for the manufactured goods of the low countries. It is a healthy and fertile country. The rice of Coorg is proverbial for its size and whiteness; and cardamums, pepper, and other spices, abound. The forests contain almost every tree, useful or beautiful, to be found in India. The banian, teak, Allighinnū (a species of poon adapted for masts); the Doopada (Fateria Indica), whence exudes a gum used as incense; the wild Areeka, tamarind, black wood, and fac; the mimosa adoratissima; white sandal wood; the Gabbala tree, from whose bark slow matches are made; the Kyooloo, whose bark makes excellent ropes; the reed from which the natives make their pens: with many other useful plants. These forests afford shelter to prodigious quantities of game: elephants abound, as do tigers, bears, bison (the gayal of India), black deer, and almost every sort of small game.*

*Coorg may be divided into two parts, viz., Upper and Lower Coorg; or, perhaps, I should call the former Coorg Proper, as the lower part has been conquered, or acquired by treaty, by the hardy race of mountaineers, occupying a range nearly 5000 feet above the level of the sea. The highest point in this range of Ghaut is Podiandamalé, which is 5682 feet above the level of the sea; and, indeed, in no part of this range is the summit much under 5000 feet high. The whole comprises an area of about 2165 square miles, of which the lower districts occupy 580, and Coorg Proper, 1585. Although Coorg does not possess more than one river, the Camandarry, which may be termed navigable, it has many other smaller streams, which, beginning in June to increase their body of water, may be navigated with rafts until November or December. Their currents then are, however, very strong; and, descending from either side of the Ghauts, they are broken into rapids, and are dangerous to traverse. One little stream that the force under Colonel Fowles crossed in April, dry-footed, was, at the end of the following July, so dangerous that I feared, neither could I find any one who would swim my horse across it, and I was forced to drive him in and make him try it — sink or swim. He succeeded, after being rolled*



*about a good deal; and as I was forced to proceed on duty, I was fortunate in being able to get across by means of a bamboo and rattan bridge, which was then on the verge of being swept away.*

*The frontier of Coorg rises in strength in some places nearly impracticable; in others, of comparatively easy access. Thus the mountain passes towards the sea are very strong, and wind through a forest country defensible at every step. The boundary toward Wynaad [south of Coorg], partly marked by the Bramagerry hills, is almost impracticable at any time, much more so with a hardy and active enemy in front. On the other hand, the southern boundary of the country toward Mysore is comparatively open, whilst that part to the north is densely wooded, and was strongly stockaded. I have said this much relative to the frontier; as the attacking forces differed in their shares of success and hard work, and the cause is to be sought for in the comparative difficulties of the country they were engaged in, and the comparative willingness with which Indian troops opposed to us fight behind stockades or in the plain. At the time we invaded Coorg it was in a fine state of cultivation, from its mountainous and woody nature, but thinly inhabited, though by a brave and hardy race. The land revenue of the Rajah might amount annually to half a lac of pagodas; to which 20,000 more may be added, which he made by import and export duties, traffic, fines, confiscations, etc.*

*[1 lakh = 100,000. The term is not strictly monetary, but if no other indication is given it will refer to rupees.]*

The Kaveri River, which has its source at Tala Kaveri, only 50 Km from the Arabian Sea, flows for 800 Km to the Bay of Bengal. Within Coorg it is not 'navigable' in the modern sense, though it averages 30 metres in width. Canoes and rafts could be used, but there are rapids and numerous fords where the water can be too shallow. The Kaveri is also regarded as sacred.

The easiest means of access from the Mysore side was by way of the Kaveri River valley, which runs toward the northeast corner of the kingdom. Most of the eastern border with Mysore was and is thick jungle (now state forest) with no roads. The exception was the Company-built Grain Road which the author of *The Expedition* used to ascend to the plateau. A minor road today, it runs from Kanur to Mysore city on a northeast line, crossing Mysore's border on its southeast segment.

The country as a whole is high, hilly plateau rather than mountainous, averaging 800 to 1,000 metres above sea level; the Western Ghats only line the western and southwestern edges of the kingdom and curl around the capital, Madikeri (called by its British name, Mercara, in this Commentary). In modern times the interior has suffered some deforestation, but essentially remains the same mix of cultivated patches and belts of jungle, with tiny hamlets scattered everywhere. There is a bit more urbanization now, but not a great deal.

There are only a few passes exiting onto the western coastal plain. The southern Tambatcherry Pass on the border with Wynad (where there was actually a road of sorts) did not feature in the military campaign, but two others did. One was the Grain Road already mentioned.

This used the pass first taken by General Abercrombie in the war against Tipu Sultan. The route was fairly direct but lay well south of the capital. The other pass debouched onto Lower Coorg, otherwise known as the Sulya (Sullia) district. Lower Coorg was a mountain-girt basin, with a spur of the Western Ghats jutting westward to the south of it, and the chain coming down almost to the sea north of it. The Sullia district did not extend to the coast, but occupied the foothills above the plain; it also had extensive jungle coverage. Lower Coorg was a bit of problem for the Company, because it lay so close to the coast, and especially to the administrative city of Mangalore. The district had communities and castes affiliated with the peoples of the outside world and was more likely to cause trouble. *The Expedition* specifically mentions the *mapillas*, the Indian Muslims of the Coast, who were always restive.

### The Coorgs

Do not call the Coorgs a 'tribe'. That smacks of 'untouchable', of *Dalit*. They are a community ranking as a warrior caste. Until the annexation there were actually three distinct layers of society in Coorg: the ruling Haleri dynasty and its Court, who were mostly Lingayat Hindus with some high Brahmins, the caste known as Kodavas or 'proper' Coorgs, who followed their own customs and may be thought of, somewhat inaccurately, as something like minor gentry and yeomen (or Scots lairds), and then a variety of other castes and communities, including Muslims and Christians. Although their kingdom was quite isolated, thanks to the policies of its rulers, the Kodavas were not 'backwoods bumpkins'. In the following century several chiefs became founding members of the I.N.C., and Coorg provided at least one field marshal to the Indian Army. Their status as a 'warrior race' predated British labelling.

The Kodavas have lived in Coorg 'from time out of mind'. Or, according to the pedants, congealed into an identifiable political entity sometime between 300 BC and 300 AD. No one knows for sure where they originated. Various claims include:

- Descendants of Alexander the Great's Greco-Bactrians, who migrated into or were forcibly resettled into the region when those kingdoms collapsed around 200 BC.
- Emigrants from Georgia in the Caucasus.
- Aryans, or the more politically correct Indo-Aryans.
- Kshatriyas or Indo-Scythians. Which apparently are not the same thing as Indo-Aryans.
- The remnants of Mohenjo-daro, a civilization that flourished in Pakistan around 2500 BC.

All these theories are advanced partly due to the people's looks, which are not 'typical' Tamil (whatever that means), and partly due to their martial culture. The arguments are fortified by the fact that the Kodavas are a small community, yet have never been absorbed into the cultures around them.

Another theory is that they were the descendants of the regional Kadamba kings of the 3rd to 6th Centuries. Opponents of this view note that the Kodavas have a history that predates the Kadambas, and say that the Kadambas may have been the overlords, but the Kodavas



always had foreign overlords, right down to John Company, so that proves nothing. Other scholars dodge the issue by saying nothing for certain is known before the 9th Century, and not much after it, either, prior to the British crafting a national narrative for them.

It does seem that the Kodavas, like most of the inhabitants of South India who do not belong to the despised aboriginal tribes, emigrated from farther north. There seems to be some evidence that they were deliberately resettled by a rising northern empire, so perhaps they are Greco-Bactrian after all. But scholarship can also be found that argues the Kodavas are in fact fully indigenous.

Most language scholars place the Kodava language within the Dravidian family. That is, to a group of languages believed to have originated in the Indus Valley, or possibly southern Iran or Iraq, which predates the arrival of Indo-Aryan speakers from Central Asia. As the Dravidians are thought to have been pushed south by the Indo-Aryans the predating is not that 'pre-'. There are two dialects, Southern, and North/Central. Kodavan is apparently not quite the same as the other Dravidian languages like Telugu and Malayalam and Kannada, spoken by their neighbours, and there are some who claim it is a distinct, and much older, language that simply has a lot of Dravidian loan words. It has its own script, for example, called Thirke, which cobbles together characters from neighbouring languages. 'Thirke' means 'temple', which I expect means it was a sacred writing used only for inscriptions and royal proclamations. There is no ancient Coorg literature to work with, only inscriptions.

Besides being noted warriors — chiefly guerrilla fighters or 'light infantry' — they lived by rice and spice farming, and cattle herding. Spice cultivation was probably forced upon them by their ancient overlords (Malayalam-speaking people whose Coast culture had relied upon spice since ships first made an appearance there) in the same way the British later introduced coffee and tea plantations. The staple food was boiled rice or noodles, supplemented by vegetables. There was no ritual objection to fish or meat, except beef, of course. They may not have been 'real' Hindus, but they were Hindu to that extent. Chicken and pork were the most common meats; ghee (clarified butter) was only used by the wealthy, or during festivals. Hunting was a very important part of social life. A lot of Company officers visited Coorg for the excellent shooting.

The Kodavas were noted for their skill with firearms, chiefly matchlocks, and also for a pair of unique fighting knives which come in two varieties, one like a hatchet, with a broad blade, and the other more like a combination machete-sword. These weapons continue to have cultural significance. When a boy is 4 he undergoes the first of a number of rites of passage, starting with being given the traditional long black coat called a *kuppya* and red cummerbund called a *chele*. At age 10 he is given his *picha-katti* (*peecheekathi*), the 'machete' sword, which is tucked in the sash. At 15 he receives the *udu-katti* (*odikathi*) or 'hatchet', which is a curved sword that can also be used for chopping, and his first gun. This signifies he is a man and requires him to learn how to properly use his tools and become a functioning member of society. As a

man he carries these weapons everywhere, by right. Firearms are not just a way of life, they are sacred, and are venerated during a festival called Kailpodh (Kailmurtha or Kali Poldu), or the Festival of Weapons and Harvest, which is celebrated in the home. When a male child is born a musket is fired; it is fired again when the man dies. In the old days the men went armed even in the presence of the Raja. And today, the Kodavas are the only people in India, so far as I am aware, who do not need a license to carry a firearm. This is thanks to the deal they struck with the EIC; the *Sirkar* was not permitted to interfere in their 'religious or civil usages'.



Towns were nonexistent. Certain castes created small villages, and there might be groups of administrative or trading buildings, but the Kodavas lived a purely rural existence in what are known as *okka*, sometimes buried in the forest, and otherwise spread out among the lands under cultivation. *Okka* are patrilineal family groups, where all the males have the same family name and all members, in theory, occupy the same dwelling, known as an *ainmane*. This is a large house on a bungalow pattern, usually single story with a semi-enclosed veranda, sometimes with an atrium, sometimes with two stories and a stepped roof. The building is so central to an *okka's* identity that although surviving examples may no longer be residences they are

still maintained as shrines. Several *ainmane* located near each other made up an *uur*, or village, which included not just the houses, but the associated lands.

Each *okka* had its shrine to the clan founder, called a *kaimada*. Besides ancestor worship, some *okkas* had sacred dances and oracles specific to their family; all held the hearth-fire sacred and worshipped their weapons. Classical Hindu practices were superimposed on these folk beliefs by association with the ruling class.

Apart from the cult of Cuvery Purana, the sect that worshipped the Kaveri River, the dominant Hindu system in use was that of Lingayat, but this was practiced by the upper crust, who were not Kodavas. One needs to set aside 'racial' notions here. Identity was not set by nation or race, but by what customs one practiced. Therefore, a person whom a scientist would define 'racially' as Kodava might practice Lingayat ways in order to join the elite, and would themselves identify and be identified as Lingayat from then on (with the caveat of being of 'lesser birth').

Hinduism is an odd religion for a Westerner to get their head around, mainly because until modern times it was not a single religion. It was the Marathas, in the late 17th Century, who first tried to gather all the strands of what could be called a Hindu way of seeing reality into a single religion in the way that Islam is a single religion — and that was why they did it, to combat the power of Islam. Europeans, with their compartmentalized way of seeing the world, found this a useful construction and reinforced the notion, so that now a person can say they are a Hindu and outsiders will think they 'get it'. In reality there are many religions within Hinduism — but even using the word religion is not quite right. There is a common pantheon, and then there are the multiplicity of regional variations, local deities, importations from other religions... hopefully you get the picture.

The Lingayat way or school focuses on the worship of Shiva, who is one of the three aspects of the Creator in the Hindu worldview. Shiva is the 'god of Destruction' aspect — but only the destruction of ignorance and evil — and regarded as the first among equals of the trinity of himself, Brahma (the actual Creator aspect), and Vishnu the Preserver. The exact balance is argued among the various branches of Hinduism, with the Lingayats taking an extreme position and saying Shiva is the only god. Since the Lingayat way arose in the 12th Century it may be the idea received some input from Islam. The Lingayats are not the sole branch of Hinduism that takes this view. What distinguishes them is an advocacy of social equality and religious toleration, and an opposition to the caste system, or at least to a rigid caste system. They reject the formalized Hindu scriptures and rituals in favour of a personal connection to the Divine, making them comparable to the mystic schools in other religions.

It was a good fit for Coorg, where the Kodavas stuck to their folk beliefs but tolerated other religions, such as the small Christian presence. This was found mostly in the south of the country, where at the time of the war there was a Catholic chapel run by an Indo-Portuguese priest. The religion least tolerated was Islam, but this was not, it seems, for ideological reasons. When Tipu Sultan occupied

Coorg he deported a sizeable number of people to Mysore, where they were forcibly converted. They had a sad history. 12,000 of them took the opportunity of a lull in the fighting in the 1790s to return home, but they were shunned by their own people as traitors. Such converts were known locally as *maaples*; the equivalent communities on the Coast were known as *moplahs* or *mapillas*, but those were predominantly of Yemeni origin and had been Muslim since the days of the Prophet. During the war these Muslim outcasts were some of the Raja's most loyal troops.

But the most important fact to keep in mind is that the Kodavas have always, in all practical matters, ruled themselves. On a day to day basis the people were looked after by chieftains who were the patriarchs of the various *okkas*. They had overlords, certainly, but those were always outsiders. So, when every so often the time came for them to swap one pack of foreigners for another, the matter was always relatively simple — provided the Kodavas were properly compensated.

## The Haleri Samsthanam

Coorg was always 'debatable land', routinely claimed by more powerful neighbours. Some of these overlords become recognizable in the 9th Century. At that time the kingdom was split between two royal houses, the northern Kadambas and the southern Gangas. In the 11th Century the Gangas were defeated by the Cholas, a name that may be familiar. Rule in the North changed to the Kongalvas, and in the South to the Chandalvas, both of whom were vassals of the Cholas. These are all just names of dynasties, who ruled mainly but not exclusively within Coorg itself; the people of the land remained the same throughout. Things were shaken up at one point by the invasion of a Muslim adventurer named Alauddin Khilji, resulting in the Chandalvas becoming the dominant party for a time.

After the empire of Vijaynagara arose in the 14th Century Coorg fell under its sway, but seems, as usual, to have retained *de facto* independence, probably by paying sufficient tribute (or possibly by murdering all the envoys sent to extract it). Vijaynagara was an empire that ran on a federal model; its rulers appointed governors — called *Nayakas* — to administer its provinces. They could be great nobles in need of a reward, but sometimes local chieftains were raised up in thanks for loyal service, and this was the case with the Ikkeri, minor warlords living in the highland Shimoga district between Coorg and Goa. When Vijaynagara fell, the various *Nayakas* who had orbited around it became independent rulers, and so the Ikkeri *Nayakas* likewise founded a state in southern Kanara that stretched from the Arabian Sea, across the Western Ghats, and onto the inland plateau. It was called by various names, but most commonly Bednur or Keladi. They did not rule Coorg, but...

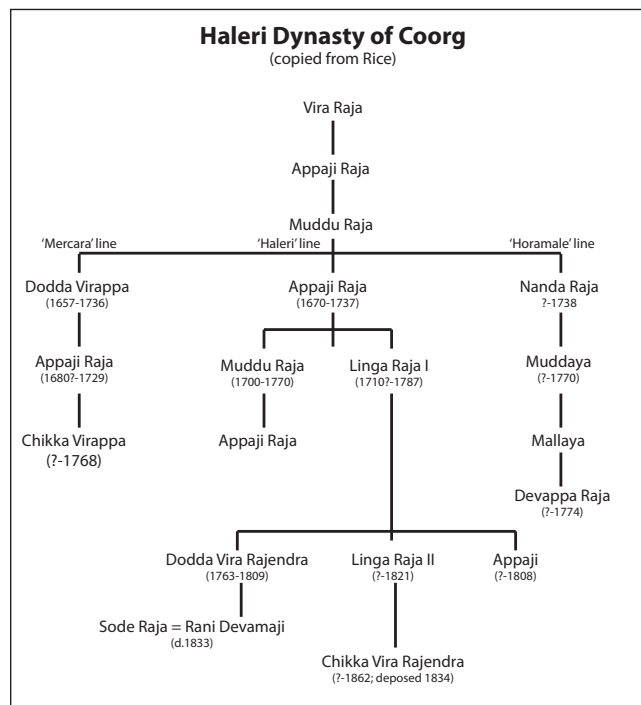
Legend has it that sometime around 1560 or 1580 a member of the Ikkeri dynasty, one Vira by name, left, or in some accounts fled, his kingdom and made his way to Coorg in the guise of a monk. Perhaps he really was a man who had broken with his old life and taken a vow of pilgrimage, or perhaps there had been some 'unpleasantness' and he left not just 'in the guise' but in disguise. No one seems to know. The kind of monk he was

also varies, usually either Jangama or Lingayat. The Jangamas are also devotees of Shiva and tend to be itinerant gurus, known for educating both kings and peasants in the ways of right living. But, despite the snug fit of Jangama most believe him to have been a Lingayat because the upper crust in the future Kingdom of Coorg were Lingayats. Whatever the case, this monk settled in Halerinad, a small district very close to Mercara (Madikeri, the modern capital of Coorg) — the tiny village capital of Halerinad being called Haleri.

Like all of this part of India the land was subdivided into administrative units called *nads*. The word is from Sanskrit and relates to 'flow' or 'stream'; probably the word came into use for districts because the settlements were laid out along waterways. Each of the nads in the Coorg area was governed by its own 'mini' *Nayaka*, who together formed a loose coalition.

The royal monk attracted followers and soon became powerful enough to gain control of his village. After which he seems to have swiftly gained influence over the whole of Halerinad; his methods are reminiscent of a 1960s California cult-guru. At this point he switched from accepting the donations due a holy man to demanding taxes. He then subdued the other *nads* and their rulers, at first only demanding tribute, but later putting the chiefs to death (this according to Rice).

Vira established a dynasty, the Haleri, which had in all twelve rulers before it ended; thirteen counting a short-reigned queen. 'Samsthanam' equates to 'dynasty' (technically it means something a bit different, but that is close enough). Muddu Raja, the third ruler (1633-1687), moved to Madikeri (muddu-raja-keri = Mudduraja's town), making it his capital.



Rice has this to say about the Lingayat rulers of Coorg and their relations with the original inhabitants, the Kodavas (p.100):

*With the ascendancy in Coorg, of the Haleri princes, who spoke Kannada or Canarese, this language became the written official medium, and counteracted the Malayalam influence. But however great the latter may have been, through the intellectual superiority of the Malayalam people over the savage Coorg mountaineers, who dreaded their supposed supernatural powers, it never laid a beneficial hold on the Coorg mind by imparting the means of acquiring knowledge in the Malayalam tongue. It is true the horoscopes which the Kanyas wrote, and still write, for the Coorgs are in the Malayalam language, but they are unintelligible to the Coorgs. Thus it was left to the Coorg Rajas of the Haleri house to mould, or rather to disfigure the Coorg mind, into the character in which the English found it on their assumption of the government in 1834.*

*That it was of the most pitiable description we have enough evidence to adduce. Lieut. Connor thus describes the condition of the people under Linga Raja, and the picture applies equally well to the times of his predecessor and of the late Raja: — "The chief of Codagu exercises an authority that knows no restraint. He shares in common with the gods the homage of the people, and a more than ordinary portion of eastern humiliation is observed towards him; he is approached with a reverence due alone to the deity, and addressed with all the servility fear could yield or despotism claim; in his presence, in which no subject dare be seated or indeed within the precincts of his fort, the subject clasps his hands as in the act of prayer — the last sign of slavish vassalage — and he is accosted in a language quite correspondent with this suppliant attitude; his subjects know no duty more imperious than attending to his mandates, which, received with veneration, are executed with singular precision, and his projects of whatever nature seconded without enquiry; nor would the most presumptuous hazard an opinion as to the propriety of his commands or actions. But fear alone produces this instantaneous compliance with his will, however capricious; and obedience is maintained by an exemplary severity that, however it may command submission, cannot create affection.*

*The rigorous exercise of such unbounded power will of course be tempered by customs and usages, which, having the force of law and sanctity of religion, must challenge some respect, but the real situation of the people is complete slavery. Under so arbitrary a sway, safety of person and permanency of property must depend on the precarious will of the ruler; political freedom forms no part of the elements of an Asiatic system of government, nor perhaps is it desirable it should; but the inhabitants of this little State are interdicted from almost any share of that practical liberty which their neighbours enjoy."*

*[Malayalam is the language of the southwest corner of India, and also its culture. When Rice mentions 'Malayalam' he is referencing his earlier comments on former dynasties, which were also alien rulers.]*

Both the notion of rulers as divinities with magical powers and the addiction to horoscopes were widespread in India.

Actually, they have been widespread pretty much everywhere in the world at one time or another. If one dismisses part of what Rice records as European Orientalism, the rajas of Coorg come off sounding not that much different from a French royal dynasty, or the Caesars. It would help explain how a foreign adventurer was able to gain a hold on the country so easily.

### **Coorg and the Outside World**

Coorg was always something of a hermit kingdom. Few of their neighbours were willing to pick quarrels with the Haleri, except for Mysore. That kingdom desired an outlet to the sea. Most disputes that did arise were over the control of border villages, for the tax revenue, or were incidental to plundering expeditions, which the Kodavas enjoyed making.

Before the rise of Haider Ali Mysore always got the short end of the stick. She was quite weak in those days — the late 17th and early 18th Centuries — and Coorg trounced her armies repeatedly, though usually on her own turf. The Haleri had no cavalry and their subjects were guerrilla fighters; only after a significant win could they occasionally risk coming out into the open to raid enemy lands.

Rice has this to say about those wars (p.103) — he is commenting on an official history of the rajas of Coorg commissioned by Dodda Vira Rajendra, whom we will get to in just a bit:

*... the Coorgs, in their plundering expeditions into Mysore, the provinces on the western coast and the districts to the north of Coorg, pillaged without mercy the unfortunate towns, villages and farmhouses which fell into their hands. Remnants of the spoils of the low countries may yet be treasured up among the hoards of the wealthy families of Coorg. Noses, ears and hands were cut off by the Coorg banditti — they deserve no better name— without ceremony, for the sake of the jewels attached to them. The Coorgs became proverbial for wanton cruelty and sensuality in all the surrounding districts to which they extended their ravages.*

*Lastly, the Raja is most careful not even to hint at the system of terror by which he ruled his country. Human life seems to have had very little value indeed in his sight. He had been trained in a bad school. Haidar had cut off one whole branch of the family of the Coorg Rajas; Vira Raja's nearest relatives had died in prison at Periyapatna, the victims of hunger and disease: at Kurchi, his own wives and children were cut off in one night by the robbers sent from Kote and led by a traitor, a Brahman. He had thus grown up amidst bloodshed and rapine. No wonder that he would not spare those who were, or whom he conceived to be, his enemies among his subjects.*

In the later 18th Century Mysore became a powerhouse under the Muslim rule of Haider Ali and Tipu Sultan, who usurped the dynasty that had reigned in that kingdom since the time of Vijaynagara. Haider Ali first conquered Coorg in 1763 but lost it again in 1765. In 1768 one Linga Raja, the brother of the defeated Haleri ruler, in turn defeated Haider Ali in a border battle. This led to the settling of the current dispute but it also brought the two men into contact.

Thus, when a struggle for power later broke out in Coorg, Haider Ali backed Linga Raja with an army and Linga Raja promised to pay an annual tribute of 24,000 rupees in return. This in 1775. Linga Raja I died in 1780, leaving two sons and a daughter, all of whom were minors. Haider Ali appointed a regent to oversee his 'friend's' dynasty. Mysore took over the administration of the kingdom and established some forts to better control the populace. But a rebellion broke out anyway in 1782, which drove out the weak Mysore garrison. Haider Ali died before he could deal with the problem, leaving it to his son, Tipu Sultan.

In 1783 Tipu marched through Coorg — he happened to be returning from Mangalore to his capital Seringapatnam and thought it would be a good idea to show the flag. He left a new garrison at Fort Mercara, the chief fortress at Madikeri. He also called a durbar, to use a northern term (a general meeting of the chiefs), at which he accused the Kodavas of rebellion and plundering, and polyandry. Tipu was a good Muslim. (But polyandry was a feature of Malabar culture, not practiced so much in places above the coastal plain.) They were told they had one last chance to behave or he would exterminate them. This annoyed the chiefs, who called up their men and sacked Mercara, then defeated a column of 2,000 Mysore troops.

In 1784 Tipu formally invaded with a corps of 32,000 men. Critically, he also had a battalion of French troops, under General de Lally, a Frenchman of Scots-Jacobite descent. The Kodavas had difficulty in dealing with the mercenaries and many of the locals were captured, taken to Mysore, forcibly converted, and enrolled in Mysore's army. Tipu also took some royal women for his harem. A puppet ruler named Janulabin was installed at Jaffarabad — Tipu's new name for Mercara. He also established the town of Kushalnagar on the north bank of the Kaveri, where that river first becomes the border, to fulfill a prophecy concerning a newborn son. (The British in turn would rename it Frazerpet, after the Political Agent who led the expedition in 1834.) Four years later, however, the Kodavas liberated the eldest son of Linga Raja, Vira Rajendra, from the fort at Piriapatna. This place, a Mysore fort, lies on the Coorg border. Why Tipu locked him up in a fortress bordering Coorg is inexplicable. Sloppy. Very sloppy. An army rallied around Vira Rajendra and with their guerrilla tactics they became a continual thorn in Tipu's side. By 1790 they had destroyed most of the forts Mysore had erected to subdue the kingdom. This is when the EIC enters the picture.

Of course with the French on the scene the British would inevitably turn up. Mysore had been in the EIC's sights for some time anyway, regarded as an existential threat due to Haider Ali's expansionist dreams and French meddling. The British commander at Bombay, General Abercrombie, met 'Dodda' Vira Rajendra (Dodda means 'the elder') at one of the passes on the southwest edge of Coorg and cut a deal with him, on 25 October 1790. Both sides saw great advantages in an alliance.

By the treaty, the EIC would protect his kingdom and would never interfere in Coorg's internal affairs. In exchange Vira Rajendra would help the British defeat Tipu Sultan and the French. In 1791 the Bombay and Madras



Presidencies combined their forces in a grand campaign. Coorg's role was to give Abercrombie's Bombay Column safe passage up the escarpment and through the kingdom to its rendezvous with destiny outside Seringapatam. The Kodavas did some useful fighting on their own account, too. After a few years of extremely hard campaigning interspersed with the odd truce Tipu was finally cast down (1799). Mysore was partitioned among the EIC's allies and its rump forced to become a protectorate of the Company. From now on Dodda Vira was considered a 'Friend of the Company', or words to that effect.

In 1792 the Raja founded the municipality (it cannot really be called a town, since it was just a collection of five hamlets) of Virarajpet (Virajpet) on the site where he and Abercrombie first met, and when Abercrombie was given the Bengal Presidency the two met again at Cannanore (Kanur) and the formal treaty was signed. Among other things the Company built the Grain Road from Cannanore to Bangalore, running through Virajpet, thereby establishing a market in the kingdom. The Raja was encouraged to invest in the Company; later (and Roman allusions are again apt) Dodda Vira made the Company the Executor of his Will. Meanwhile, he invested roughly 180,000 gold pagodas and put 3 lakhs of rupees on deposit with European bankers on behalf of his favourite daughter. The Company also wanted him to pay the 24,000 rupee annual tribute that Tipu had previously been collecting, but the Raja bargained them down to just an elephant per year. (Which was likely to cost the Company more than it was worth in fodder.)

*[According to Rice, the British chose to drop the demand for tribute because Coorg had been so very helpful.]*

Martin provides a summary of the treaty (dated 26 October 1790):

1. *A firm and perpetual friendship shall subsist between both parties as long as the Sun and Moon shall endure.*
2. *Tippoo Sultan and his adherents shall be "considered as the common enemy of both parties" — that the Rajah shall "do his utmost to distress the enemy; admit the English troops at any time to pass through his dominions, should they have occasion to penetrate the enemy's country from the Malabar coast — furnish such supplies of provisions as his country can afford, at reasonable rates; and join the English army with such a force as he can spare whenever any operations are carried on above the Ghauts or in the country of Tippoo Sultan."*
3. *The Rajah gives to the East India Company, "the preference in purchasing, at a reasonable and moderate price, such articles of commerce as are produced in his country [cardamons, pepper, rice, etc.]," and engaged not to permit any other European nation to interfere in this respect.*
4. *The Coorg Rajah "shall be considered as the friend and ally of the Company; in no manner subject to the control or authority of Tippoo, of whom he shall be declared totally independent."*
5. *The representative of the Governor-General of Bengal, the Governor of Bombay and the Rajah of Coorg, in*

*testimony of the perpetual friendship that shall subsist between both parties, which neither party will ever disturb, jointly call "God, the Sun, the Moon, and the World to witness this agreement and mutual pledge of faith."*

So much for the Regime. The Kodavas also prospered. Mysore was no longer a threat and they had a trade route running through their property. Although... for a bunch of rapacious mountaineers that does not sound particularly beneficial. No more raiding and they could not even steal from the caravans? Still, the British were very popular among them, and they in turn were admired as a newly discovered 'warrior race'. The Europeans visited rarely, mainly coming for the shooting, which meant lucrative side jobs during the 'tourist season', and otherwise they let them carry on their ancient practices.

*[It was Dodda Vira Rajendra who added 'Wodeyar' to the family name, which has led some sources to conclude he was of the Mysore line, a puppet who later rebelled, instead of a native Haleri. The word, which has several spellings, is not specific to a dynasty; it means 'lord'. In a similar way the word Nayaka, which means 'governor', came to be used as a dynastic name by otherwise unrelated royal families who wanted the cachet of a connection to Vijaynagara.]*



*[Dodda Vira Rajendra, by John Smart]*

### **Dodda Vira's Will**

Recall that many rulers offered loans to the Company, which then wound up being used as leverage against them. As we have just seen, Dodda Vira was no different, but he was wily enough to avoid the pitfalls. Just to give one example of his acumen, his pleading of poverty became a byword, yet on his death it was discovered he had salted away 40 lakhs of rupees. But the loan he gave the Company always loomed large in the minds of the rulers of

Coorg, and it would become a bone of contention between the Last Raja and the Company. Martin comments in a footnote to his explanation of this loan (p.6):

*Some time previous to the death of the Rajah [Dodda Vira], he became much alarmed with the fear that the East India Company would seize his territory, which he well knew they coveted. This fear increased to a monomania on the death of his favourite wife without the birth of a son. Alarmed, also, for the safety of his property, of which he was a frugal manager, he transferred the sum of rupees 653,940, into the name of his daughter, Dewa Amajee, thinking that, as the "Promissory Note" which represented this loan was a purely commercial transaction, and that the money was guaranteed by the Governor- or Governor-General in Council — and made payable to "her executors, administrators, or her or their order," this sum at least would be safe from their grasp. Little did the Prince know the unscrupulous character of those whom he so confidently trusted.*

In my opinion Martin exaggerates the danger, but small rajas like Dodda Vira were always in terror that they would be dispossessed at the slightest provocation, so his point is still valid. Ironically, I think there was less danger when the EIC was merely an acquisitive trading house. The danger increased exponentially after the Company became an instrument of Government, headed by reformers and Westernizers like Lord Bentinck, and out-of-touch cabinet ministers back in Whitehall. Even then, if the Last Raja had his head screwed on properly he could probably have avoided trouble. No such luck.

### Police State

Dodda Vira was a good friend to the Company, but he was an autocrat, and he had violent tendencies. These were kept in check while his beloved Rani Mahadevadamma was alive, but she died in 1807. Having no son, he remarried, but had no success siring an heir during the last two years remaining to him. According to Rice, Dodda Vira began to suffer fits of rage, and to succumb to paranoia. Some scholars have suggested there may have been hereditary insanity in the family.

He is reputed to have ordered the deaths of hundreds at the hands of his *Siddis* — African slave-soldiers traditionally employed in India — including high officials and members of his own family, and, that on the occasion of a failed coup against him he personally slew 25 rebels and enjoyed recounting the experience afterward. Rice describes this coup (p.134):

*The Raja had surrounded himself with an African bodyguard, and eunuchs from Mysore had charge of his harem. But the guards of the palace and all the military officers, with very few exceptions, were Coorgs. No longer able to bear the iron yoke, they conspired against the Raja's life. The day and the hour were fixed. All the Coorg guards, who held the gates of the fort and the entrances of the palace, being of one accord, his destruction seemed to be certain. But a few minutes before the signal was given, the secret was betrayed to Vira Raja. He was roused by the impending danger. With great presence of mind he imitated Haidar Ali, who had in similar circumstances gained time by placing a bundle of clothes on his bed covered with a*

*blanket. The Coorgs rushed in and cut in pieces the form which they mistook for the sleeping Raja. Next moment they discovered that the Raja had fled, that he had at the last moment been warned. They were paralyzed.*

*Vira Raja in the mean time had run out and summoned his Africans. The fort gates were shut. Some three hundred Coorgs had assembled in the palace yard. The Africans received orders to cut them down to a man. The Raja himself took his post at a window and fired upon the terror stricken conspirators. They allowed themselves to be slaughtered like sheep. Vira Raja himself boasted of having shot twenty five of them. The rest fell without resistance under the swords of the Siddis, who waded ankle deep in blood. An old Jemadar, who had been eyewitness of the dreadful scene, said that the blood ran out of the palace yard as the rain in a heavy monsoon day. Three hundred Coorgs, by his account, fell that morning in front of the palace. Coorg tradition says eight hundred. Both accounts are probably correct, for Vira Raja would, as a matter of course, destroy many of the families of the fallen conspirators, ordering the men to be killed and distributing the women among the slaves. Such was Coorg Raja fashion.*

*This massacre took place in the end of 1807, or early in 1808. The Raja reported his suppression of a dangerous conspiracy to the Governor of Madras and the Governor General. The Raja's account was not credited at Madras. It was rather thought that he had acted on some sudden impulse of passion; for his cruelty and sanguinary temper were sufficiently known. Yet the Government did not consider it their duty to interfere, partly from regard to their faithful ally, partly from ignorance of the extent of the fearful slaughter.*

I do not think Rice made all this up. He was creating a reference gazetteer for government employees, not writing propaganda to justify Company expansion. And, he used eyewitness sources. Furthermore, belying Martin's charges against the EIC, this state of affairs did not cause the Company to make a play for his realm. Quite the reverse. Dodda Vira's behaviour was not regarded as particularly unusual, and it was considered none of the Company's business, so long as he remained a friend of the British. It had been a coup, and his reaction was understandable from the point of view of an absolute monarch, but there was also in his culture a practice known as *kuthinasa*, the killing of family members at the outset of a new reign, similar to the Turkish practice of having all potential rivals strangled.

The fact that he employed *Siddis* I find interesting; the Nizam of Hyderabad used to own a corps of some 10,000 of them. They were black slaves, imported by Yemeni Arabs from their trading entrepôt at Zanzibar, specifically to be used as soldiers. Most converted to Islam after their capture, but there were some Christians, and most also retained their folk beliefs.

The most notorious political killing in Dodda Vira's reign, which is well documented, may fall under the heading of *kuthinasa*, but was executed (pardon the pun) on behalf of the next generation. This was the attempt to murder both his brothers, Appanna (Appaji) and Linga Raja, with a view

to protecting his eldest daughter, Devamaji, for he had decided she should be the one to inherit the throne. On the Coast, dynasties were matrilineal but the kingdoms were usually fronted by men. Elsewhere, society was paternalistic, but queens were quite common. I wonder if she resembled his dead wife?

All of what follows took place within just a few months, and only shortly after the failed coup. There was the marriage of Devamaji, 8 years old, to a distant kinsman, the Raja of Sode, a man much older than her. Before Dodda Vira's death he had been acting as chief Dewan (minister) and was intended to serve as Regent until the Rani grew up. It was at this time that Dodda Vira issued the loan to the Company in her name. Then came the assassination attempt, followed just a few months later by Dodda Vira's own death.

The attempt was, so it is said, conceived during a bout of insanity. To quote Rice (p.135):

*His melancholy warned him of his approaching death. And if he were carried off on a sudden, who would be the friend and guardian of his daughter? Appaji, his proud brother, who had never loved him, and who had long kept sullenly at a distance, or even the dull mean-spirited Linga Raja, might covet the wealth and power of the throne, murder the helpless children and seize the great prize.*

*But no! He was yet alive and omnipotent in Coorg, he could yet defend his beloved Devamaji and her sisters. The executioners are called.*

Dodda Vira repented of his orders at the last minute, but not in time to save Appanna, who was beheaded. Linga Raja fled to his country estates and laid low.

The great Dodda Vira Rajendra died in 1809, a wreck of a man. Legend says he was tormented nightly by the ghosts of his dead brothers (but of course only one of them died, so it is just a legend). With arms-length support from the Company his daughter did ascend the throne, reigning for a short time with first her husband and then her uncle Linga Raja as Regent. How long she sat as Rani is a little unclear. Some sources say just under three years, but she was deposed in 1810. Most likely there was a period of co-rule with her father to pad out her official regnal years. In reality of course, she never ruled at all. When he was about 34 and she about 11, this second Linga Raja launched a coup and deposed her with the help of a different Appanna, a Dewan named Kshauryakere.

*[Sometimes the title Dewan is treated as if it belongs only to the prime minister, which can be confusing because the word should apply to all ministers of state.]*

Rice goes into the coup in some detail. According to him, the Rani's reign got off to a rocky start when the Raja of Sode was almost immediately accused of having forged Dodda Vira's will. The Company got involved as Dodda Vira's executor, but though the will showed some legal irregularities, it was decided they were probably committed accidentally by Dodda Vira himself; the will still expressed his final wishes. Nevertheless, shortly after this verdict the Kodava chiefs held a conclave at the palace and voted on whether to remove Raja Sode and replace him with Linga Raja as Regent. The latter was sorely disappointed when

the vote was negative. But, Kshauryakere Appanna encouraged him, and thanks to the latter's standing in the community, persuaded the chiefs to change their minds. Then followed, after a suitable interval, the deposition of the Rani.

It is interesting to note that even under the 'absolute authority' of the Haleri, the Kodava chieftains still exercised a democratic prerogative. Some European sources (but not Rice) speak of the Haleri indulging in arbitrary rule as if their power had no limits, but they were clearly limited by the customs of the land.

Martin has a different story entirely. He says the Rani voluntarily abdicated. She had received Dodda Vira's seal from his dying hands, but Linga Raja argued her rule was illegitimate, and the EIC, which conducted another investigation, concurred that female rule in Coorg was 'unconstitutional'. Rice says something similar, though he notes that there had never been such a constitutional limitation. Where Martin and Rice differ is in the manner of the Rani's deposition. As evidence of Linga Raja's good faith and honest dealing, Martin provided a copy of a letter written by the Rani to the Governor-General of the day explaining the circumstances.

I have read the letter, which can be found on page 8 of Martin's book. Personally, I do not believe in the letter. I think the only person who did was Martin. Of course, he lived in an age before police states became the norm. It is too perfect. That letter could be used by any modern police state, just swapping out the words Dear Uncle for Dear Leader, or Our Great Comrade. How much the child understood is an unanswerable question. She was only 11 (or possibly 14, which would make a big difference). She very well could have regarded Linga Raja as her Dear Uncle and done as he bid out of respect, or she might have been told by her faithful attendants that her life would be in danger if she did not abdicate. The letter was very obviously written for her to sign by an erudite professional scribe.

Rice provides an eyewitness to these events, a British doctor in attendance on Linga Raja, who by his own admission was 'duped' by him into believing he was a harmless and mild man only interested in doing what was best for the kingdom. Well, since god-king Linga Raja II was the kingdom, there is no contradiction in that. Once they learned the truth, however, the British again shrugged their shoulders and made no change in their dealings with Coorg. None of their business. Pandey offers a condensed version of what Rice records (pp.169-179):

*Vira Raja, with whom the treaty of 1793 was made, died in 1809, and in accordance with his latest wishes his daughter Devamaji became the Rani of Coorg. But before long she was supplanted by her wily uncle Linga Raja who in a short time made himself absolute in Coorg. As the British government had pledged itself to recognise the wishes of the late ruler in the matter of succession, Linga Raja could not be sure of the support of the British government and so he sought to isolate his country from British intercourse and be even suspicious of the British. Colonel James Welsh on a private visit to Coorg in 1811 found him distrustful of the British even to the extent of apprehending an invasion*



*of his kingdom. He found the Raja hospitable but saw with surprise that he could not hold free communication with people and that every word he uttered was promptly conveyed to the Raja.*

Both Rice and Martin cite a General Welsh or Walsh, who made an extended visit to Coorg. Martin uses him as a character reference for Linga Raja, because the General at first was very impressed with the new ruler; he seemed to be beloved by everyone. But Martin omits the second part of the General's account, where he describes at length how he learned he was being spied upon every minute and all his words reported — fortunately they were favourable words — and of how he managed to talk privately to a couple of men whom he knew, who had come to the kingdom to advance themselves and now wished they had not, and discovered Linga Raja was a paranoid despot who abused and killed people whenever he felt like it. Though Martin was selective in what he recorded even he has to admit, after remarking that European visitors were always treated to a lavish hospitality, that Linga Raja guarded his borders closely and prevented his people dealing with the outside world.

Some of the things imputed to Linga Raja can be probably discounted as local exaggeration. Like most people, the Kodavas were only too ready to stretch the truth about their former rulers. It was said Linga Raja enjoyed meting out punishments himself (favouring bow, gun, or knife). If he could not be bothered, the victims were simply thrown off a cliff. Mutilation for minor crimes, including mouthing off, was common. He was accused of having people imprisoned and killed to obtain their property. Some of the punishments sound traditionally 'Indian' in nature, but some sound like they were picked out of a book about the Caesars and could easily be European embellishments. The ex-Rani does not appear to have been mistreated. She ultimately had four children. Under Linga Raja they lived in obscurity, but they did live.

One story recounts how Kshauryakere Appanna was the only man who could control the Raja, for a while at least, and even lecture him on his conduct. He used to point out that he could have helped the Raja of Sode to take the throne instead. Inevitably Linga Raja tired of him, charged him with treason, and had him and some 'accomplices' nailed to trees, a common punishment. When forced to plead guilty, the Dewan retorted, 'I am guilty indeed of one crime — of having made a wretch like you Raja of Coorg.'

Of all this the British knew very little. Welsh may have passed on what he had learned, but from the Company's point of view Linga Raja was behaving himself. They refused to return Doddra Vira's promissory note when Linga Raja asked for it but continued to pay him the annual interest. As my own bank is just as reluctant to give me back any of my investments I do not see anything sinister in this.

Linga Raja II died at the end of 1820 or 1821 (the sources vary, possibly due to confusing the OS/NS dating). Rice (p.162) has this to say:

*In 1820 the miserable tyrant died. He believed that he was destroyed through magic arts and demoniac influences employed by secret enemies. He had held possession of*

*Coorg for eleven long years. The complete ignorance of his subjects, whom he managed to isolate entirely from the surrounding countries subject to the East India Company, combined with the terror of his arm kept up by frequent executions, and a system of treacherous espionage fostered by the Raja among his terrified slaves, laid the Coorgs prostrate at the feet of their rapacious and blood-thirsty master. He died, forty five years of age, amidst the gloom of dread superstitions. His queen, who preferred death to the fate which she thought awaited her from the hatred of the young Raja, swallowed diamond powder, and was buried with Linga Raja in a splendid sepulchre near the tomb of Vira Rajendra.*



*[Linga Raja? Drawn in 1830, many believe it to be of his son Chikka Vira instead, based partly on the name it bears. But, Linga would have been about 30 years old at that time and this portrait appears too young. It may be of either of them as boys or young men, copied perhaps from another artist's work.]*

His son, Chikka Vira Rajendra (Chikka meaning 'junior') enjoyed a smooth succession — he had been elevated during his father's lifetime, which was a common practice. He was just 20. Ten years earlier General Welsh had described the son thus (Martin p.9):

*'a handsome boy, dressed in a General's uniform with a sword by his side, recalling to mind the old French prints in which the girls are dressed in hoops and farthingales, and the boys with bag-wigs and small swords.'*

A word about Linga Raja II's widow. Death by ingesting diamond dust is exceedingly painful. I know of two confirmed examples, one a modern African warlord who mistook the powder for cocaine, and the other the



Renaissance sculptor Chellini, whom Borgia agents attempted to assassinate by this means (but the agent was greedy and substituted ground glass which only gave Chellini indigestion). Assuming Rice is correct when he says she committed suicide in this manner, was it indeed because she had no desire to live under her son, or was it a case of her wanting to perform Sati in a land where it was not practiced? Rice was knowledgeable about such customs and would probably have mentioned such a thing. Was she his stepmother? Did his parents mistreat him? One thing that is clear is that she was *not* killed just before the invasion, as was claimed by some of the British at the time. Not exactly a point in Chikka Vira's favour, but not a strike against him, either. It is also revealing that, unlike many queen mothers, she was not apparently in a position to dominate her son. One of the advantages of being made a god.

### The Last Raja of Coorg

*I want you clearly to understand that there was nothing exactly profitable in these heads being there. They only showed that Mr. Kurtz lacked restraint in the gratification of his various lusts, that there was something wanting in him—some small matter which, when the pressing need arose, could not be found under his magnificent eloquence. Whether he knew of this deficiency himself I can't say. I think the knowledge came to him at last — only at the very last. But the wilderness had found him out early, and had taken on him a terrible vengeance for the fantastic invasion. I think it had whispered to him things about himself which he did not know, things of which he had no conception till he took counsel with this great solitude — and the whisper had proved irresistibly fascinating. It echoed loudly within him because he was hollow at the core....*

*Joseph Conrad, Heart of Darkness*

Chikka Vira was the Last Raja of Coorg. And according to who you read, he was either a deeply wronged man, his reputation blackened by the EIC to justify their seizure of his property, or a deranged tyrant. Or something between the two extremes.

According to Pandey (pp.170-171):

*... he did not feel his position secure any more than his father and was willing to adopt a ruthless policy to get rid of his rivals. Soon after his accession he put to death a number of persons he considered dangerous to himself. He inherited from his father a cruel and vindictive disposition and also a suspicion of the British government. And he walked also on the path trodden by his father. The country was cut off from British intercourse, and Vira Raja had no mercy on those who incurred his suspicion or enmity. To screen the affairs of his kingdom from the eyes of the British government he tightened restrictions on the people leaving and entering Coorg. This had the effect of practically sealing off his country from the surrounding territories. Visitors and travellers were permitted to enter his country only after obtaining a passport and were closely watched during their stay there. Any infringement of these regulations was summarily punished.*

No one has really questioned whether the actions of Dodda Vira or Linga Raja were as described by Rice and others —

there are enough witnesses to make it hard to discount every story — but because Chikka Vira got himself deposed, he has acquired champions. This means his character has a range of interpretations:

- He was worse than his father, a monster who should have been executed as an example to tyrants everywhere.
- He was just as bad as his father, and it was high time the British dealt with that foul regime.
- He was no better than his forebears, but after all, that was the culture he grew up in. The British should not have interfered.
- He lived an isolated life and did not know any better. His crimes were enabled by wicked councillors. They should have been removed and he left to rule with better councillors.
- He was at the mercy of his evil Dewan, Kunta Basava, who committed crimes in the Raja's name without the Raja's knowledge. Or, with his knowledge but without his being able to stop him.
- He was the victim of lies told by the EIC, who wanted to default on the money they owed him and annex his kingdom for its revenues (and free hunting privileges).

Chikka Vira at one time or another selected from all of the last three options. It is a point against him that he kept changing his story. His chief advocate, Martin, picked the last option. Many who actually met him put the blame on his councillors, exonerating him to a greater or lesser degree — but some of them changed their opinion.

In the eyes of his own people he is said to have been less cruel than his forebears. The saying went that his namesake, the old raja, had put to death some 5,000 people, Linga Raja II 3,000, but Chikka Vira no more than 1,500. Vice, not undue cruelty, was reputed to be his problem, and he has been described euphemistically as 'a man of bohemian tastes'.

Of his biographers only Martin claims he did not start his reign with a purge. Such a purge did apparently take place. However, it only targeted a few people: his relatives, those who had fallen afoul of his father and not yet been dealt with, or those against whom he had a grudge. In other words, a case of *kuthinasa*. A conservative estimate puts the number killed at a mere 28 persons, mostly from one family. In a curious foreshadowing of what would happen a decade later, a relative of his, named Channa Vira, escaped to Mysore, but Mr. Cole, the current Resident, believed the Raja's letters stating the fugitive was a runaway farmer, and had him sent back; he and his family of twenty-one were slain at a place called Kantamurnad. Cole asked for an accounting of the man's fate but never got one. This was in 1823.

Some other charges laid against Chikka Vira — mostly made after he was deposed, and mostly by the local populace, not the British — were his insistence on the right to slay anyone who defied his will, along with their entire family, and the keeping of his father's younger wives for himself, plus 100 concubines. The populace did not see having many wives as anything particularly unusual for a raja, but they found his keeping his father's widows

disgusting. Also, claims were made that the concubines had been taken unwillingly from his subjects. According to legend, after the royal proclamation of his desires had been made, as a precaution every eligible young woman was quickly married off. Their families were then punished with flogging or had their ears cropped, and some were imprisoned. It was also said that the Raja took mothers' milk in his food as a medicinal ingredient and that the concubines that provided it were housed in a special 'stable'. I gather there were other stories 'too abominable to repeat', as a 19th Century Orientalist would phrase it.

There does not have to be any truth in any of this, but there probably is some. (As his train, when he went into exile, included 50 palanquins for his harem, 100 concubines is not an exaggeration — two women per litter. I feel sorry for the bearers.) When he was deposed his subjects would naturally try to ingratiate themselves with the *Sirkar's* representatives by telling tall tales, but there had been various nasty rumours before — otherwise he would not have been deposed in the first place. Because the kingdom's borders were sealed tight rumours would be magnified, and of course people fleeing into exile would make up stories because they had a grudge against the Raja. There is a case in point we will discuss in some detail. On the other hand, the British found enough physical evidence to at least prove the political murders to their own satisfaction.

The trouble is, all the Europeans who had personal dealings with Chikka Vira tended to like him. They did not think him capable of such actions. Martin was in regular contact with him for over a year and never changed his opinion, continuing to advocate his cause even after he passed away. One could argue that they were in London then, that Martin never went to Coorg, and that the Raja was on his best behaviour, but his English secretary held the same opinion, and so did the British who dealt with him for the fourteen years he lived in exile at Benares. Even Menon, the spy whom he imprisoned during the crisis, believed he had merely been led astray by his chief minister. Martin says (p.9):

*The Rajah was a high-spirited, intelligent, home-bred lad, utterly inexperienced in business or State affairs, with very exaggerated notions of the importance of his independent kingdom, a vague idea of the Company as an assured and powerful friend, and a pleasant impression of Englishmen in general, founded on the traditions of the Mysore wars, and on the conduct of the guests, to whom his father had acted as a gracious and munificent host. Owing to his imperfect training, his remarkable intellectual powers were never developed. Had he been taught the English language, he would have needed no other advocacy than that of his own honest pen to refute the calumnies against him, so easily invented, so recklessly propagated, so readily believed. His uncle and namesake Veer Rajunder had learned prudence in the school of adversity; he numbered, as we have seen, Englishmen of the highest class among his personal friends, and yet, or perhaps, on this very account, he thoroughly understood the danger of his position as an independent prince; and had, in fact, need of all his judgment and the influence of his friends, to enable him to hold his own against the Company, who had pledged*

*themselves to him as firm and faithful allies as long as the Sun and Moon should endure.*

In what might be labelled 'balanced' accounts Chikka Vira comes off as a man with a weak and petulant personality, uninterested in governing his kingdom and preferring to drink with his wives and write bad poetry. He appears as a man with the habit of taking rash actions, and then, instead of apologizing if he was wrong, or advancing a quasi-logical reason why he acted that way to cover his mistake, he would tell an obvious lie, then backtrack, then make up another lie.

Martin's opinion does not absolutely negate this version, for the Raja he met was much older and wiser, and had been schooled in adversity for many years. The stories might suggest that he was leaving things in the hands of his ministers and was not really in touch with what was going on around him until he was suddenly thrust into the middle of it, but this surely cannot be entirely the case.

Martin goes on to list several things he himself believed about Chikka Vira. He held liberal principles (in a European sense) and welcomed Christian missionaries. His justice was fair, and administered by local magistrates similar to English JPs. Also, although he devoted much time to the hunt, he was not 'dissolute', as his detractors claimed, but very conscious of his ancient lineage and his responsibilities to his kingdom. Martin suggests that it was Chikka Vira's natural desire to play the host to his Company guests that led some of them to desire his kingdom for the Company, but that fortunately, during his first fifteen years or so on the throne the British Residents, their staff, and their own superiors, had all been men of integrity who opposed the expansionist aims of others.

Personally, I think Martin is pushing things too far. His source for all that was the Raja himself. No man wielding absolute power has the strength of will to remain a saint, and having read the careers of Lord Bentinck, Casamajor, Sir Frederick, and the others, they do not seem the sort of men who would connive at an annexation for its own sake. Bentinck absolutely not. Even Martin did not believe he was party to the 'conspiracy'. I do agree, based on what Menon described, that the Raja was very conscious of his dignity and his lineage. That could have been the case even if he was a debauchee. As for the bit about fair justice, that is an Englishman's take on the democratic element of the regime, for local justice was meted out by the Kodava chiefs, in consultation with a ruling class which was otherwise disconnected from the people's daily lives.

Martin also includes the report of a Dr. Jeaffreson, who was summoned to attend the Raja during a medical emergency in 1830. An English officer of the 54th of Foot accompanied him and bore witness. The letter runs to several pages, but the gist of it is that the reports that were already being circulated about the Raja's evil living were simply untrue:

*'We are particularly gratified at finding that this prince was easy of access to his ryots [peasants], listening patiently to their grievances and manifesting towards them the utmost consideration and kindness; this ensured him in return their loyalty and affection as a proof of which whenever we travelled with the Raja into interior of the*

country, hundreds of natives, men, women and children with curiosity crowded my companion and me — an Englishman being a rara avis [rare bird] in those parts — and received the Raja with every demonstration of respect and attachment. It gives me the greatest satisfaction to mention this, being aware that the most sinister reports for interested purposes were industriously propagated to the Raja's prejudice.'

This was a common first impression of Chikka Vira. Some changed their opinion and others did not, and the question is, why?



[Chikka Vira Rajendra. The young girl beside him is his favourite daughter, Gouramma. Her presence and his 'imperial' indicates this portrait must have been made when he was in exile. The full picture shows Indian servants but it was probably done in London. Artwork can be a funny thing. In the original colour portrait Gouramma looks like a sulky brat.]

For those who do not believe the Raja was anything other than an overprivileged young man growing up in a bad environment, weak-willed and manipulated — which was, incidentally, the Company's verdict on the neighbouring Raja of Mysore — there is a made-to-order villain, Kunta Basava. Chikka Vira himself blamed Kunta for everything (when he did not simply deny something took place). He was Chikka Vira's chief Dewan.

The story goes that this man had been the boyhood friend of Linga Raja and took on the role of 'uncle' to Chikka Vira. His entire recorded life is one giant trope: the evil vizier, old, wily, and warped, thwarted in his most secret ambitions, of low origins — he had been the no-caste boy who looked after the palace dogs — and of course lame, a Sure Sign of Evil. This is not to say the stories are untrue. I can think of two comparable cases without even trying: the Duke of Buckingham and the Russian Empress Elisabeth's boyfriend. Stripped of lurid details, Basava still appears as a low-born manipulator who had upset the cosmic order by making himself the most powerful man in the kingdom, with many enemies who longed for the day when the Raja's protecting wing would be removed. Future events would show also that he had a large and demanding family.

It may or may not also be relevant to the Raja's cause that Chikka Vira was prone to 'attacks' of some kind — Dr. Jeaffreson had treated him in 1830 and Martin says he was

ill again in 1833. He may very well have been mentally disturbed, perhaps through some physical ailment. That would explain why his behaviour was so erratic and why he seems to have such a decidedly split personality. There were suggestions that insanity ran in the family but it could also have been the environment he was raised in, or even something like allowing himself to be dosed with mercury by a quack astrologer. Or, it may be that he had no clue how to conduct himself but did whatever he felt like, and no one stopped him because he was a god.

A last point in his favour is that, barring the concubine stories, it was mostly the aristocracy who were affected. For most people, Chikka Vira's reign was not oppressive, merely arbitrary. The Kodavas found cause to complain of Kunta Basava, thanks to a mutual hatred, but not their Raja. Taxation was very light for an Indian state (could that be because the EIC was not embedded?) and the people were allowed to run their own affairs. Crime was rare, and so were lawsuits. The Kodavas and the other common people had been taught to reverence their rajas as gods, but they also had consultation rights. Pandey notes that toward the end some exactions were felt, like a *corvée* for fortifying the border, but by that time the entire kingdom was expecting an invasion.

## Conspiracy Theories

*People who believe in conspiracy theories have never had to chair a committee.*

Brian Train

I have alluded several times to the theory that the EIC annexed Coorg as part of a larger scheme to conquer India. This is not just a case of people looking back and stringing all the events into a coherent narrative. Some, like Martin, believed it at the time. Since we are dealing with the Honourable East India Company there is a tendency to automatically believe in the theories, but one should be careful. But it is more likely that the thing took place organically — that is, the Raja of Coorg simply fell under the chariot wheels of Progress. Yes, there were men in Whitehall who treated the peoples of Asia as chess pieces, but in any of these sorts of grand shifts of fate there are far too many pieces for any one person, or even cabal, to manipulate. The best that can be managed is a tentative nudge here and there, which often as not rolls the wheels back on oneself. Humans love to plot, but plots rarely work as intended. Furthermore, we tend to see patterns and connections where there is no real connection.

In the specific case of Coorg, Martin was convinced that elements of the Company, of whom the Resident Casamajor was the outstanding example, plotted to defraud the Raja and remove him from the picture to prevent any 'blowback'. To do this they waged a propaganda campaign against him that has permanently blackened his character, sustaining it even after he had been deposed. Martin exonerates Lord Bentinck, and does so by saying he was ill when the events took place; he did suffer an apoplectic attack (probably heat stroke) after a visit to Mysore in 1832. The idea seems to be that Bentinck was not privy to these 'middle management' schemes and was simply presented with a set of plausible lies to persuade him to bless the endeavour in the name of Utilitarian Uplift.

Martin strengthens his arguments with some convincing facts. First, the desirability of the kingdom. Though it was being run like a police state it was quite wealthy for its size, highly productive, and the climate was pleasant. Moreover, it was both strategically placed and set up like a natural fortress. The desire to acquire such a place is freely admitted in the Company literature. Second, there was the Company's promissory note to Dodda Vira and Coorg's finances in general. He points out that in addition to the constant 'dishonourable' renegotiation of the interest rates there was the refusal to give back the principal to Linga Raja II, which was supposed to be his right, and finally, the withholding of the interest payments to his son, Chikka Vira.

I think what is known of the nature of Company Rule at this time quashes much of the theory. A lot of the charges being thrown about could apply to John Company in earlier times, but not so much now. The corporation was already an administrative branch of the British Government. While the Crown's servants were indeed aiming to make India a more secure market and would absolutely argue that unreliable rulers needed to be removed, that was a trend that was still being resisted by the men on the ground. Non Intervention remained the *de facto* policy. Coorg was one of the few exceptions, which Lord Bentinck came to regret but where he believed he had been forced to act.

The propaganda angle is a tricky one, because they did blacken the Raja's character. The question boils down to what statements, if any, were true, what statements were outright lies, and what statements twisted the facts. Also, did the lies and exaggerations originate with Company personnel, the Raja's internal enemies, spontaneously through the 'Chinese Whispers' dynamic. If you are hoping the coming narrative of the war will make all clear, wish for something else instead.

I deliberately avoided consulting Moegling and other period historians with a reputation for Orientalism so as to not become too biased against the Raja, but even so the best that can be said about him is that he was a product of his time and a product of his environment. In his day his judges were all Europeans, steeped in both a Christian and (ironic as this is) an Enlightenment heritage, so you can imagine what they had to say about a 'heathen' autocrat. The opinions formed at the time certainly contributed mightily to his deposition, but Chikka Vira was not the only 'benighted heathen' ruler in India and the Company did not act against all of them. With respect to the 'conspiracy', the point Martin, and Chikka Vira himself, make, is that the propaganda began before the war — in fact, long before war was considered as an option. That has to be borne in mind. Unless, of course, it was not propaganda generated in a Company office but rumour seeping out of the hermit kingdom...

As for the Government of Madras, or Resident Casamajor in particular, those decision makers do not seem to have been the sort of men who would plot to defraud a raja. I do think someone like Sir Frederick would quickly turn to a military solution if there was a crisis of some kind, but that is not the same thing. One might come up with a conspiracy theory along the lines of mid-level Company

officers being frustrated by Bentinck's economy-drive and wanting to get back at him, or forcing his hand because they were believers in Empire acting in collusion with the Board of Control, but that thread is very, very thin.

What actually seems to have happened is the Company officers suddenly realizing how valuable Coorg was *after* it had been invaded. One can then make the argument that they would do everything in their power not to give it back, especially to a ruler they mistrusted. The same argument can be advanced for why they never set up a puppet ruler. But this still does not explain why Coorg was invaded in the first place.

On the question of the promissory note Martin is on firmer ground with his claims that Chikka Vira was defrauded, but even here it seems to have been more of a case of 'Bankers' Claws' than anything deliberately underhanded. Try asking your bank for the entire principal of your investments in one lump sum and see how long you can put up with their excuses before you give up and let them keep the money.

As for stopping the interest payments on the promissory note, I think there were two unrelated factors at work. First, that happened in 1833, and in that year the Company was undergoing a seismic shift with the passage of the Saint Helena Act. What put the wind up the Raja initially was the transfer of his monies from Calcutta to Madras. Historically, independent allied princes like himself had the privilege of dealing with Head Office. Now, without explanation, he had to deal with the local branch. But, what had happened was that Bombay and Madras had just lost their independence of action. They were now indeed just branch offices of Bengal; some bright spark probably decided that Madras could handle the finances of South India and let Bengal put its feet up. Unfortunately, said bright spark had no idea they were making a paranoid raja even more paranoid. The bureaucratic reshuffling could also delay the payment of the interest. Nonetheless (according to Martin), Casamajor sat on the promissory note and personally ordered the payments stopped — but that was late in 1833 when war looked very likely and funding the Company's enemies would have been silly.

On the other hand, the Resident was certainly a bird of ill omen. He was in Mysore when their raja was removed. One could argue that he went out his way to provoke Chikka Vira. After all, as an old hand he should have known how to placate him. Maybe he was just tired of dealing with spoiled narcissists who thought they were the center of the universe.

Martin's conspiracy theory, and others very similar to it, are of long standing, and the facts, whether selective, rearranged, or straightforward, have been raked over for almost two centuries. But, I would like to put up an entirely different conspiracy theory that no one seems to have paid any attention to: an India-wide plot to undermine Company Rule two decades before the Mutiny.

I exaggerate for effect. Let us call the conspiracy the Plot of the Brahmins. Before we begin, I should mention there is also a better documented subplot involving a man called Chenna Basavappa, which will be gone into later. That was just an internal coup attempt (of which the British knew nothing until it had failed). The Plot of the Brahmins, if we



pretend for the moment that it was real, reached as far as Benares on the Ganges.

### The Plot of the Brahmins

*'What is in the Brahmin's books, that is in the Brahmin's heart... neither you nor I knew there was so much evil in the world'.*

Colloquially, a Brahmin is a Hindu priest. They are the highest of the four classical Hindu castes (in a European milieu they would be the First Estate). There are many varieties of Brahmins, based on geography and linguistic culture. In the South scholars divide them five ways. Their main expected function, regardless of regional variation in customs, was to carry out the six Vedic rituals (studying the Vedas or holy texts, performing sacrifices for oneself, giving gifts, teaching the Vedas, sacrificing as a priest, and accepting gifts).

But, like other ancient priesthoods, besides officiating at sacred rites and acting as spiritual advisors they were also philosophers, scribes, and administrators. Indeed, some Brahmins were army commanders, like the Medieval prince-bishops of Europe. Trade was not an avenue denied them, and the humbler sort could even make a living by farming or the trades. In origin the name meant something closer to 'master' or 'teacher' than 'priest'. In early times one became a Brahmin through one's lifestyle and virtue, not by birth, but, as usual with such divisions of human society, over time the office became hereditary. In the days when Buddhism was widespread the Brahmins were more of a rural priesthood; whenever Hinduism flourished they became part of the elite.

Even under the Mughals and the various Muslim sultanates that preceded them, the Brahmins continued to thrive as administrators, tax collectors, judges, and royal advisors. They took on the same roles for the European companies; some communities of Brahmins even supplied the EIC with sepoys. Brahmins were often employed as couriers because their persons were inviolate. But, though most Brahmins got by on secular work, their priestly standing meant they were always at the forefront of any social or spiritual reform movement.

Therefore, it would be in keeping with their role in Hindu society for the Brahmins to be at the back of Chikka Vira's rather risky stand against the Company, as part of a wider reaction against Company Rule. It is odd that Lingayat raja would take advice from a Brahmin, because the latter were all about the Vedics and the Lingayats rejected those texts and did not think much of those who taught them, but one of Chikka Vira's most prominent Dewans was a Brahmin.

This is not pure speculation on my part. I have some scanty evidence to offer. But it is very scanty. The only two sources I could find that allude to such things are the spy Menon's records and the Raja's own Proclamation of War.

That proclamation, by the way, is another argument against a Company conspiracy. The language is offensive enough that Martin suppressed it in his book and only printed the Company's response. And that is the key point. He is at pains to point out that the Company never issued a formal declaration of war but only made a proclamation — which is fair enough, except that a declaration of war was, in the

Company's view, not required in the first place — but he misses the main point, that it was issued in response to a proclamation from Chikka Vira.

Both proclamations are given in full later in this Commentary. The gist of the Raja's proclamation is that if the British attack him he will wipe them out, and he calls upon his neighbours to rise up with him. Now, Coorg had been deliberately kept isolated from world affairs for a few decades by this point, but the Raja cannot have been so ignorant as to think he could crush the *Sirkar* on his own. Some of his ministers advised against provoking the Company; one of them was physically struck by Kunta Basava for advocating peace. So, the chief Dewan at least belonged to the War Party. But where did the Hawks get the idea they could win?

Here is a passage from Menon's writing. He was commenting on Chikka Vira's fall.

*All things considered it appears to me that what has happened may be attributed to the Rajah's youth and pride, the bad advice of his servants, and the Mussalman who came from Mysore. The Circumstance of Government not having taken notice of the bits of oppression formerly practised with the view of preventing recurrences. The delusion inspired by the Letters received from Cassy setting forth that all Countries would fall under the Halery Samstanom, and that the Hon'ble Company would be ruined.*

The two key bits are 'the Mussalman who came from Mysore' and 'the Letters received from Cassy'. There is apparently both a Hindu and a Muslim component to this affair. The traces of the Muslim angle have been almost completely effaced. For the war Chikka Vira obtained the services of 3,000 mercenaries, most of whom appear to have come from Mysore. They may have been descendants of Kodava converts or they may have been adventurers. We will go over the trouble in Mysore presently; it is enough for now that that kingdom was in the sort of unsettled state that allows mercenaries to thrive, with a separatist region that had kinship ties with the Haleri trying to restore the Ikkeri monarchy. The funny thing is, none of that had anything to do with Muslims. However, a secondary reason why the Government of Madras, at least, wanted to deal quickly with Coorg appears to have been growing unrest among the coastal *mapillas*, whom they feared Chikka Vira might league with. The Raja counted a number of Muslims among his close confidants, notably a man named Mahomed Taker Khan, and another called Abbas Ali who seems to have no point of origin but who came in for his share of the blame from the Raja. He is probably the 'Mussalman who came from Mysore'. The root of this Muslim unrest was probably tied to a general economic depression in the South; since the Muslim communities were primarily merchants they were probably very agitated.

The 'Letters from Cassy' are really what turns this into a Plot of the Brahmins. 'Cassy' is Kashi, or Kasi, otherwise the holy city of Varanasi, or Benares, 1,600 Km to the north, on the banks of the Ganges. Varanasi is one of the oldest cities in the world, and it is the spiritual center of Shivaism. And with those inciting letters came a very special gift, a Sala Gramom, a Holy Stone of Vishnu.

*Salagramams* are black ammonite or fossilized stone that can be found in river beds; these come specifically from the Kali Gandaki River in Nepal. Their first appearance as religious relics has been dated to the 8th Century AD. Hindus to this day believe they are a physical manifestation of Vishnu, highly auspicious and extremely sacred. The stone garlands his statues wear are made of 108 such fossils. The stones have many ritual uses, but the one that might be most applicable here is this: anyone who worships a collection of 100 such stones not only becomes a saint upon their death (*Maharloka*), but is reborn as an emperor.



If Chikka Vira had merely been a possessor of the Stone, it might be a coincidence. He would have seen it as an amulet of victory, had his troops swear on it — that sort of thing. The fact that the priests had sent him such a wondrous gift at such an opportune time could also be coincidence. He would certainly have seen it as a sign from the god, though perhaps he originally requested it because, for example, he had been unable to make a pilgrimage, or because he had been ill. But, there are also the Letters. From what Menon records they apparently told the Raja he was part of a great movement — nay, the leader of a great movement — to cast down the *Pheringhies*. It is noteworthy that there was also a restive spirit in Coorg's southern neighbour, Wynad, seemingly tied to a prophecy that the EIC's days were numbered.

Yes, this is what happened before the Mutiny. In the 1850s the belief in the Company's immanent fall was fed by badly understood newspaper reports from the Crimean War and outright Russian propaganda. But the whole motif is very common in India. I think this particular iteration ties into popular frustration with Company Rule exacerbated by the economic situation, and if one remembers that Lord Bentinck was making unpleasant waves in Bengal with his suppression of ancient practices, one might find a reason why the priests at Benares would send a prophecy to Chikka Vira inciting him to rise up.

Despite his ethnological credentials Rice does not mention any prophecies. He only says the news of unrest in Mysore penetrated the bamboo curtain of the Kingdom and troubled the inhabitants with rumours of what might be coming. The Letters and the Stone, and the Mussalman from Mysore are all facts, but they may be completely unrelated. Or, perhaps, Chikka Vira related them in his mind and had a dream which tied them all together. I advance the theory that there was a conspiracy to provoke a

general rising on the Subcontinent, which mainly fell on deaf ears and which was probably badly conceived in the first place because it was dreamt up by a small clique of discontented priests, but which the isolated and superstitious Chikka Vira bought into. Were the prophecies generally repeated around Coorg or only whispered to the Raja in secret by opportunists seeking royal favour? Someone needs to investigate and either prove the theory or disprove it.

If you wonder at anyone being gullible enough to believe in such prophecies it may be worth noting that Chikka Vira, according to Menon, who saw the things, issued his troops magic amulets guaranteed to stop bullets. They had about as much value as the magic water used by the Mau Mau movement in Kenya. But before you shake your head at such ignorance you would do well to remember that people in New England were still digging up graves and driving stakes into corpses to kill vampires as late as the 1890s.

### Abhrambára

There is one more conspiratorial tale to tell, the case of the *sannyási* Abhrambára. A *sannyási* is a Hindu religious ascetic akin to the Greek Cynics, though for an ascetic he seems to have been rather too worldly. According to Rice's sources he looked more like a *faqir* (the Muslim equivalent), with a long beard. So, he could be tied up with either the Muslim or Hindu angle. Or his appearance might be completely unrelated.

He was first heard of in 1833, operating in the Manjarabad district bordering northern Coorg, which had been near the heart of the unrest in Mysore. He had a following who believed he performed miracles, and he was noted for composing verses. There is no indication as to what the verses were about, but put alongside the other prophecies it is possible they had to do with the Haleri acquiring world dominion. Some were recited in the Raja's palace, and Chikka Vira expressed a desire to meet the composer.

Abhrambára was a Cynic, and his meeting with Chikka Vira followed the same pattern as Alexander the Great and Diogenes. That is, the Raja asked him questions and Abhrambára insulted him back. The answers to the Raja's questions were curt, and became progressively more insolent, but Chikka Vira dared not oppose a holy man. He sent him away, then repented, but Abhrambára would not return. But, this was not to be his only appearance in Coorg and he will be accorded his very own Plot.

### The Annexation of Mysore

*Ride with an idle whip, ride with an unused heel,  
But, once in a way, there will come a day  
When the colt must be taught to feel  
The lash that falls, and the curb that galls, and the sting  
Of the rowelled steel.*

*Kipling, Life's Handicap*

The unrest in Mysore is important to the story of Coorg both because it influenced Company policy and because it influenced the thinking of the Haleri regime.

After Tipu Sultan died in 1799, at the end of the Fourth Anglo-Mysore War, his state, which he and Haider Ali had expanded to the Arabian Sea, was divided up. A section in

the east, plus the coastline, went to the Madras Presidency; Coorg got its independence back. Hyderabad, the Company's ally (and which retained its autonomy until after Partition in 1947) got parts of the north (some of which had originally been taken from it by Haider Ali). The rump was made a princely state under the suzerainty of the Company, with a titular ruler in the five-year-old Wodeyar Krishnaraja III, a Regent in the form of Tipu Sultan's experienced old Dewan, Purnaiah, and a Company Resident. The latter, per the Alliance System, handled foreign policy for the Mysore state and maintained a small standing army, paid for out of tribute agreed upon at the peace. For the first decade or so things were fine, but after Purnaiah and the Queen Mother died, the Raja's attempts to go it alone floundered. He was not, apparently, a bad man, or unintelligent (he is famed to this day for his cultural achievements), but like so many Indian rulers he was a) completely disconnected from the common people, and b) profligate.

Under Purnaiah's administration the rump state had accumulated a huge surplus. This the young raja gave away, solely to enhance his prestige. He also alienated lands, mainly to the temples, and gave gifts to the Brahmins. This was ancient custom in India, and expected of him, but there were ways of doing it without bankrupting the State. It also did not sit well with the British, who had given up such foolishness two centuries ago, when they took the head of their own king. By 1831 the state debt amounted to more than 17 lakhs of pagodas. As Pandey says (p.47):

*The embarrassed state of the finances had prompted the resident and the minister to advise the Raja to resume many of them [alienated properties], but he had resisted such advice. He considered it derogatory to his character and authority to withdraw what he had given by a royal decree.*

The parallel — foreshadowing is perhaps a better term — with Coorg is this: internal troubles arose, after which, as the price of fixing the problem, Mysore was annexed. From the point of view of Chikka Vira it surely must have appeared that history was repeating itself, that the Company was following some sort of template. But the circumstances were not the same, and neither were the outcomes. And, from the Company side they might just as easily have been worried about a spill-over effect destabilizing the wider region as plotting to assimilate all of India.

*[I wonder too, if the Brahmins of Mysore were upset when the British started reorganizing the finances and clawing back some of those land grants... the Plot of the Brahmins again.]*

The Mysore troubles were called the Nagar Revolt, which lasted from August 1830 to September 1831 — right around the time Chikka Vira was also having some internal troubles. In Mysore's case, however, the cracks appeared at the bottom, not at the top, and it was all related to taxes.

The Nagar district, in the mountainous west near Shimoga, had, like Coorg, been annexed by Haider Ali. Of old it had been part of the Ikkeri Nayaka kingdom of Bednur, the same dynasty that spun off the Haleri. Bednur's system of land tax was regarded by the people of Nagar as fair and equitable. Haider Ali introduced innovations that were not

fair, but he was an iron-fisted warlord. Krishnaraja Wodeyar tried to improve on his methods but only succeeded in making things worse.

It was the same old story. Previously, taxes had been taken in kind. That meant tax revenues fluctuated wildly with the rise and fall of the price of produce. Of late prices had dropped steeply. Some would like to blame this on British imports, but it was probably the climate. At any rate, it is what led the regime to experiment with Haider Ali's model of cash-based taxation. But for a cash economy one needs a healthy trading community or a manufacturing base, and Mysore had neither. The lack of manufactures might be partly the fault of the British — the Industrial Revolution being fed by export to places like India — but the lack of trade in general was a local problem, and it was the usual thing, internal tariffs and customs dues, and the bribery that went with them, which concentrated the business in the hands of a few men. Lack of efficient trade meant also the road network was falling into ruin.

So, a cash-base tax system was trialled. Unlike Munro's experimental *ryot* system, the State did not tax the peasants directly, but hired tax farmers, who bid for the right to collect taxes. This made it a hybrid of the two methods. Like the Roman *publicanii* of the Bible, these tax farmers were absolutely hated, and the massive bribes they paid to secure contracts spread the corruption around; even high state offices started going up for sale.

*[This is all reminiscent of France before the Revolution. Mysore got off easy.]*

While Mysore had officially become a Muslim kingdom, that label was derived in large part from forced conversion, and most of the Nagar population remained Lingayat; tax farming was not one of their ancient traditions. The Mughals had had to hire warlords like the Marathas to beat the money out of their Hindu peasantry, but the Marathas were long gone and John Company's soldiers had orders not to get involved. This should be borne in mind when reading modern commentators who say the Company invaded because Krishnaraja Wodeyar failed to pay tribute. True, one can blame the tribute requirements for the Raja's need to raise taxes, but if he had not squandered what his Regent had collected there would have been no financial difficulties to begin with. The British never forced him to spend his capital.

Nagar was what a modern government would call a 'separatist region'. It had its own identity and a number of well respected local leaders who stepped up and challenged the central authorities. The latter were represented locally by a bevy of Brahmins who belonged to their own special court faction and who did as they pleased. I have said before that Lingayats as a rule have no time for Brahmins.

Things get a bit murky because apart from Lingayat spiritual leaders and elder chieftains, there was also Budi Basavappa. Budi was in actuality a simple farmer named Sadara Mulla, twice arrested for robbery, but he was groomed to act as a pretender to the Ikkeri Nayaka dynasty, obtaining the royal signet rings from a holy man who had guided the last Ikkeri king. Who exactly sponsored him is uncertain. He carried spurious credentials claiming the EIC supported him, and this is also advanced as evidence the

Company had a Master Plan. But what evidence there is suggests the credentials were not just fake, but not credentials at all. Pandey says they were nothing more than a pass issued by one of the Company's circuit courts issued in his fake 'royal' name, which he waved about to bamboozle his unlettered followers. As a court-issued document it would of course have the Company Seal on it. Pandey also notes the immediate object in creating a Raja of Nagar was not regime change for the British, but simply to get rid of the *Faujdar*, the man appointed by the central government to run the district.

*[A faujdar was simultaneously the military governor, local judge, and revenue officer.]*

Back in 1827, when the tax troubles began, the Raja sent out a couple of his own officials to settle the problem. One was lenient and the other, the head of the Brahmin faction, backstabbed his partner by claiming he was taking bribes, so the Raja sent out a relative, one Veera Raj Urs, to take charge. This man rolled back whatever progress had been made by the original commissioners and began applying the whip.

By 1830 the peasants had had enough. Budi was the figurehead behind whom the Nagar farmers rallied; he launched an uprising by proclaiming himself King of Nagar in April of that year. Once they had a leader the war was on. It spread as far as Bangalore and Chitradurga, well to the east of Nagar — well to the east of Mysore city for that matter. The insurgents, ever claiming the *Sirkar* supported them, promised lower taxes and the restoration of the Ikkeri Nayaka.

The protests were noisy but mainly peaceful, involving anywhere from 6-20,000 persons depending on the venue. The regime applied force, killing at least 50 and injuring 200 just in Nagar, but roughly 10% of the state police joined the insurgents (some of them were owed 18 months backpay). Swapping out Raj Urs for the former governor of Nagar (who had of course been dismissed in disgrace) accomplished nothing. The savage reprisals led many peasants to flee to Company territory. I think it was this refugee crisis which forced the Company to act. The neighbouring districts had been suffering from the same agricultural depression.

Casamajor was Resident at this time. All along he had advised Krishnaraja Wodeyar to present himself to his people and hear their grievances in the traditional manner, or at least send his Dewan. But, he did also agree to keep a regiment of foot and two squadrons of cavalry on alert at Bangalore. Krishnaraja Wodeyar dipped his toes in the mess by going to the town of Manjarbad, well away from the heart of the problem, dismissing the odd official along his royal progress. But at a 'town hall meeting' in Manjarbad he imperiously ordered the people to disperse. When they responded in a manner not compatible with his dignity — they ignored him and drowned out his words by blowing conch shells and the like — he ordered his escort to disperse them by force, then returned to his palace.

Ultimately the insurgency took on a more formal military character, with various Nagar forts changing hands. The rebels enjoyed initial success and the regime's troops could make no headway. By 1831 some Company soldiers were

involved, at the request of Raj Urs and another high official. They were needed to deal with the forts. Company cavalry also turned back a force of opportunistic Marathas coming south to aid Budi Basavappa (April 1831), and the 24th of Foot was brought in to secure the 'pacified' areas around Shimoga. This allowed the regime's own forces to get a handle on the situation and the Company troops were mostly returned to their cantonments.

A peace treaty was signed in June 1831, a few days after the separatists' capital, Nagar, was captured. By then Basavappa had fled to Hyderabad and the rebels' chief military leader, Rangappa Naik, was believed dead. The official death toll ranges from 164 to 240. The regime's top general claimed his men accounted for 700.

*[Budi fleeing to Hyderabad does not necessarily mean that state was involved, though it does not rule it out, either. Perhaps the Nizam coveted Nagar. In India it was common to seek refuge in neighbouring states, and hospitality was usually extended by custom; even political enemies of a fugitive (as opposed to blood enemies) might be induced to harbour him if the bribe was large enough.]*

It was at this point that Lord Bentinck uncharacteristically ordered a full annexation. The state was in Madras' bailiwick but Governor Lushington made a personal inspection and decided the problem was above his pay grade. The unrest was affecting Company holdings across the whole of the South. Under the terms of the 1799 treaty an intervention in such circumstances was permitted.

Lushington recommended taking over Nagar district and nothing else, primarily because the populace there was entirely estranged from the Mysore regime and had never been part of ancient Mysore in the first place. Casamajor by contrast argued they needed to maintain the integrity of the state and keep the raja as a figurehead over a *dewan*, or council, backed by the British. The raja was not a bad man, just incompetent to rule. Bentinck overruled both arguments. His concern was for the People to be well governed, not merely for the State to be run efficiently. The other options were only half measures, such as had been used in the past, and would only lead to reoccurrences of the same problems.

Though this was annexation, it was not absorption. Mysore continued to exist as an entity. The regime made no resistance, the raja voluntarily abdicating without physical coercion (not that he had a choice). The Company appointed a committee to look into the troubles. After a year, it concluded that the 'Maharaja's style of ruling and personal character' were to blame, but conceded that some factors had been out of his control. Tax policy was not mentioned as a primary cause; this is advanced as an argument that the British manipulated the events. Bentinck ordered the kingdom to be administered by a Mysore Commission of four men (October 1831). At least Mysore got a good man to oversee it. This was Mark Cubbon, Resident from 1834, a well respected statesman who put the kingdom back together again. In 1881, the Commission was dissolved and Mysore was again ruled by its own raja.

Years later an examination of the situation by third parties concluded that the Raja's 'style of rule' was much less of a factor than the Company made out. It was averred that the



EIC had wanted control of the whole of Mysore and arranged for the unrest to take place. As Bentinck was in charge at the time, he was blamed. According to Pandey, who examined both the Company records and Bentinck's own writings, this was not the case. The Company was never interested in acquiring Mysore; like most of the princely states it had a meagre population and no economy worth exploiting. Later, of course, Bangalore would become the 'Manchester of India', as it is now 'India's Silicon Valley', but in the 1830s Mysore would have been an unwanted expense. The takeover was simply one of the inexorable steps of Utilitarian Progress.

It is worth mentioning that as early as 1834 Lord Bentinck came to believe he had overstepped his bounds. He felt also that the 1799 partition treaty had been unfair. It had been engineered in the days when expansion and annexation were much more the goal of the Company. He concluded that Casamajor's solution, or something like it, should have been the one to adopt. But Bentinck's recommendation that the raja be restored to his throne was turned down by the Board of Control, after he had left his post and could not appeal the decision.

## Casus Belli

*For why? — because the good old Rule  
Sufficeth them, the simple Plan,  
That they should take who have the power,  
And they should keep who can.*

*Wordsworth, Rob Roy's Grave, 1815*

Curiously, each side's immediate *casus belli* was quite different, but both became focused in the person of a single man — Karunakara Menon. For Chikka Vira the list of grievances was as follows:

- The refusal to hand back the fugitive, Chenna Basavappa (no relation to Budi) and rumours the British intended to install him as a puppet. We will get to him.
- The stoppage of the interest payments on the Haleri loan to the Company and the refusal to give back the principal.
- The massing of troops on the border.
- The sending of spies into Coorg. By this the Raja means Menon. We will see if he was in fact a spy.

For the Company the list included:

- Chikka Vira's failure to render an account of his actions with regard to the rumoured deaths of some high profile individuals.
- The treatment of Chenna Basavappa.
- His growing insolence toward the Company.
- The 'kidnapping' of the so-called 'spy' Karunakara Menon, who was an accredited envoy.

The Company had begun to fret about Chikka Vira as early as 1826. His father and uncle were understood to have been tyrants, but nothing was ever really proved, and what minor blips appeared on the radar were discounted or deemed not important enough to warrant upsetting the status quo. The son was at first thought to be quite a different proposition. He seemed friendlier and less secretive. Though he

continued his father's seclusive policies this was put down to habit or to the fact that he was still too young to have evolved his own method of rule.

Nevertheless, slightly worried about rumours that were reaching him, Casamajor, acting Resident of Mysore in 1826, sent a deputy to investigate. Because the borders were sealed from the inside this required an official visit. The deputy was also to ask about reopening the Grain Road, built by the Company for Dodda Vira but shut down by Linga Raja II. This was in the hopes that if a regular stream of visitors passed through the kingdom, even under heavy supervision, the current tension might relax.

Chikka Vira gave the impression of being highly suspicious of his visitor, particularly when the question of the Road came up, and to questions about his own rule he gave a lot of non-answers. The deputy was impressed by his presence, though, and described him as intelligent and curious about the outside world.

All this information being digested by the Government of Fort St. George, Governor Munro (he of the *ryot* system of taxation) ultimately decided that how the Raja ran his country was no concern of the Company, and another four years passed. But for some reason Munro made a request that the Raja submit a Report on Capital Punishment in his kingdom. This Chikka Vira never did. (Personally, I do not blame him. Who likes filling out mindless questionnaires composed by bureaucrats with too much time on their hands?) The request seems to have backfired, making the Raja even more suspicious and even less inclined to change his tune.

A particularly contentious issue was the notion of the reciprocity of exchanging fugitives. Chikka Vira later claimed he had been greatly wronged by Casamajor in this regard (for reasons that will become clear very shortly) and he never ceased to bring it up in conversation ever after. Martin defended his attitude on legitimate legal grounds, but in fact there never had been such an agreement. Exchanging fugitives was regarded by the Company as simply a matter of courtesy. Chikka Vira, however, had scrupulously adhered to the practice, or so he told himself, and had made it a bellwether for the Company's attitude toward him.

It was against the background of the worsening unrest in Mysore that Casamajor paid his own state visit to Coorg, in 1830. It did not go well, on any level. Chikka Vira found the Resident's visit so distasteful that he wrote to Lord Bentinck to have him recalled. This was done, insofar as he was ordered to leave Coorg, but he remained at his post in Mysore, and remained in charge of the Company's dealings with the kingdom. After the septic Mysore affair burst Casamajor left that place for Madras, but he was still concerned with Coorg. Unfortunately, the Raja took the view that he had disposed of the vile personage for good and all and gained the moral high ground. From the Company's viewpoint his intractability grew and he began to put on 'unbecoming' airs.

The Raja later told Martin that he never liked nor trusted Casamajor. He was from the outset a 'rude and discourteous' person. Well, he probably was. Pandey mentions in passing that the Resident reminded the Raja

that his tiny kingdom was surrounded by Company territory so he had better watch himself. Not the most diplomatic attitude to strike. Chikka Vira was sure Casamajor was doing everything in his power to discredit his regime and his own person by spreading vile rumours. He later claimed the Resident prohibited European visits to the Raja without a passport, and told the Raja this was to prevent abuses of hospitality. Martin says the Raja, who enjoyed meeting travellers, regarded this step as an insult and an attempt to isolate him, and there was much angry correspondence. Of course, it was Chikka Vira himself who maintained that system of passport control, instituted by his father.

### Flight of the Fugitives

It was perhaps his dealings with Mr. Cole back in the 1820s that led the Raja to believe the EIC would not interfere when he began another purge. Depending on whom one believes, it was either 1) an attempt by Kunta Basava to get hold of the wealth of certain prominent people; 2) an attempt by the Raja to do the same and also get rid of some rivals; 3) a preemptive strike against a coup; 4) a paranoid knee-jerk response to perceived external threats; 5) it never happened at all.

Number three appears to be closest to the truth. Martin mentions no purge, but neither does Chikka Vira. Others do, often adding graphic details. The purge seems to have been real, the chief targets — though the Raja is also said to have killed his tutor (a man named Muddayya) in a possibly unrelated incident — being the remaining members of Dodda Vira's family.

It started with the ex-Rani, Devamaji. Some time before 1833 — the sources are not at all clear — her husband, the former regent Raja Sode, was murdered in the palace; she also was brought to the capital and hanged in company with a sister, Mahadeviammaji. It is said this was after she had revealed the hiding place of her treasure hoard in hopes of being spared. She would have been in her early thirties. Her three remaining children (one had died of natural causes much earlier) were also killed.

Some said the ultimate object of those killings was to gain control of her inheritance, but a more realistic reason advanced in the sources is that Chikka Vira had become paranoid about her because she was his senior cousin, she had actually sat on the throne before, and he had no legitimate heir. It might also be that the Company's questioning about his family's condition, their asking for reports about capital punishment in his kingdom, and similar questions, pushed the Raja to make a clean sweep.

Different sources provide different timelines. The only sure fact is that his family were all dead by the time British arrived in 1834. The year 1832 is given for the Chenna Basavappa affair, which we are about to discuss, but that better-documented coup-related purge is sometimes mixed in with the purge of the Raja's own family and sometimes kept separate. It may be everything took place within the same timeframe, or there may have been a gap between the two events. Given that Basavappa was married to the Raja's sister, it is most likely that everything happened at once, beginning in 1832. It is also possible that

Basavappa's actions doomed the family, though it may be that he instead took action in order to avoid their fate.

Were the Raja's family executed? Chikka Vira claimed they had been dead, of natural causes, for a long time. Chenna Basavappa said they were freshly murdered and that he had only just escaped the same fate. From reports written during and immediately after the military campaign it sounds as if evidence of the killings was produced for the British to see, and that it was fresh. If claims had been made by Company officers at a later date it would sound more like propaganda justifying the invasion after the fact, but the revulsion in the immediate reports is palpable.

So, who was Chenna Basavappa? According to the Raja in his letters to the Mysore Resident he was a low-caste nobody who had married the Raja's sister in 1830, against the royal will. Nevertheless, Chikka Vira provided an estate and an income for the couple. The low-caste part is not believable. According to Basavappa himself he had royal blood. And this is actually confirmed by the Raja in a justification published many years later in a London newspaper. He must have forgotten the original lie. Not only that, this was Basavappa's second wife and the first had also been one of Chikka Vira's sisters. His present wife was called Devammaji (after the ex-Rani; her name is usually shortened to Devamma to avoid confusion).

What happened next depends, yet again, on who you believe. The bald facts are that the couple fled their house, were pursued, crossed the Mysore border, where there was a brief fight and some bloodshed, and turned up on Casamajor's estate in Yelawala asking for protection.

Chikka Vira said they drugged two of the servants he had sent to minister to them, brutally killing one, and fled because they had just learned their plot to depose him had been discovered. When the border guards tried to detain them Basavappa shot the commander and another officer (the brother of the commander).

Basavappa said they had been under house arrest, and the two servants were security 'mindors'. He admitted drugging them; one was hung up and he guessed must have accidentally died of exhaustion. He admitted the fracas at the Frontier and added that they had to abandon their child, who was murdered.

The Raja asked for an extradition, but the Resident refused. Martin's version makes it sound like Basavappa headed straight for Casamajor's estate, as if perhaps the two were in cahoots. He made a stronger case that the laws of nations require those accused of crimes be extradited to the country where they have been charged — including cases involving foreign nationals. In the Raja's case there was an additional argument that the Company had '*so strenuously insisted upon [this] as one of the first conditions of alliance between them and the Coorg Government*' (Martin, p.16). But (p.17):

*'An official communication containing the particulars of the murderous outrage which had been committed by Chen Buswah [Basavappa] was forwarded to Mr. Casamajor, and the bodies of the murdered officers were embalmed, and sent with witnesses and depositions that the facts might not be controverted. The Resident contemptuously replied*

*that Chen Buswah had sought the protection of the East India Company, and no matter what were his alleged crimes, he would not be given up to his Sovereign.'*

Contrast this with what Pandey reports (pp.177-178):

*The fugitives told the resident that the reason for their flight was that the Raja entertained a criminal passion for his sister Devammaji and had made an incestuous proposal to her through a confidential female servant Badri and had threatened her with dire consequences if she refused. The story could have been a mere concoction told by the fugitives to escape repatriation, which they knew to be certain under the practice between the two governments unless they could say something to excite sympathy and support. But the resident had heard some rumours previously of the gross sensuality of the Raja and of his acts of severity. He had formed an impression that the mind of the Raja was somewhat abnormal. And so he was inclined to believe the story on account of the "distinctness and simplicity" with which it had been told and to give protection to the fugitives. His action was upheld by the government of Madras.*

There are a few more facts that help clear some of this up. Basavappa did not act alone. It turns out he was the head of significant opposition faction in the kingdom. The party that fled for the border numbered 68 persons, of whom 21 made it out alive. This accounts for his being able to overpower his guards and beat off an attack by the border patrol. If the dead agent did not die accidentally either one of Basavappa's party or the Raja's party could have done it — there was a story making the rounds that Chikka Vira ordered the deaths of 50 people when one of his pet elephants got loose, so killing a man for incompetence is no stretch of the imagination. If the claims that the Raja was arbitrarily adding noble women to his collection are true, it might explain how Basavappa was able to form a faction.

Most important of all was something that Chikka Vira did not mention when he asked for the fugitives back — Basavappa had just put forward his infant son's claim to the throne. That son was now dead, killed during the flight. (This part of the story is a bit odd; they are supposed to have left him behind by accident?) What is not clear is whether Basavappa rallied support for a coup after the family purge began, whether his plotting sparked the purge, or whether the two occurred at the same time by coincidence.

As a Victim, Basavappa was not a sympathetic character. Casamajor and the rest of the Madras Government soon found out he was just as shifty and untrustworthy as Chikka Vira said he was, but he had a wide following. Pandey comments that the assembling of 68 plotters within the confines of a small police state was no mean feat. Basavappa's attempted coup is probably where the accusation that the Company intended to install him as a puppet comes from. But there is a lack of consistency in the claim. If he was a pretender with a large following, why do the Raja's champions also say he was a man of no value? Is this a case of Budi Basavappa's spurious claims of EIC support being confused with Chenna Basavappa's actions? In any case, Basavappa clearly did not rely on the

Company for aid in his initial coup — the borders were sealed, remember. What he would have needed was recognition after the fact, something he never got.

Unwilling to even correspond with Casamajor, Chikka Vira made an application for extradition directly to Governor-General Bentinck, but no reply was received. Though the Raja did not know it, the fate of the earlier fugitive, back in the 1820s, with the similar name of Channa, weighed on the minds of the Company personnel and they had already determined not to give the latest exiles up. In fact, the Raja received a request from Casamajor asking for an accounting of the remainder of Basavappa's party. Even the Raja's personal friend, Dr. Jeaffreson, who was allowed to visit the kingdom around this time, presumably for medical reasons, was no help. Coming so soon after the events in Mysore, this did not look good to the Raja. If Chikka Vira had not been paranoid before, he was now. He ordered the borders double-sealed.

Outside the Kingdom there were rumours circulating that inflated the purge into a general massacre. Basavappa's faction was probably behind these rumours, not Casamajor as Chikka Vira thought. According to Martin, Dr. Jeaffreson was sent up from Bombay to find out the truth. His visit probably coincided with a second round of negotiations being conducted in 1833, when Martin says the Raja was ill and the real reason for the visit would have been to tend to the Raja. But, before he started his journey Jeaffreson was asked by a number of influential people to find out the truth about the rumours. They had become convinced their relatives and connections they knew in Coorg had been murdered. The doctor was able to assure everyone that this was not the case, having spoken to some of the 'dead'. But Jeaffreson did not say there was no purge at all.

Hostile takeover or intervention, the EIC was coming for Chikka Vira. But, there was still hope that a clash could be avoided. Despite his personal dislike of the Raja, Casamajor decided to overlook the killings, which were neither fully proven (despite what Basavappa said) nor the Company's affair, and merely gave Basavappa's party asylum. Lord Bentinck, meanwhile, was not looking for a repeat of Mysore. All he would do, in December of 1832, was order Madras to monitor the situation and not give up the fugitives.

### **Where's My Money?**

I keep harping on Dodda Vira's promissory note — that is, the note the Company gave him when they took out their loan. Set against a tale of purges and coups and prophecies it seems rather banal. But to Chikka Vira it was a devouring fixation and it made him even less willing to listen to reason. There were many who said the Raja was prone to avarice, but it might be that neither he nor his father had a clear understanding of how banking systems work (a relatable point for most of us) and would have preferred to have stashed all their money in a pit guarded by cobras. Chikka Vira became convinced he was being robbed. From the Company's point of view... well, not much is said about it on the Company side of the ledger, which is suspicious. Nevertheless, the simplest answer seems to be a

combination of administrative restructuring and clerical backlog.

The details are these. Remember that, when it could, the EIC tried to pay off existing loans and then renegotiate for the same amount at a lower rate. In 1822 the Coorg loan dropped from 6% to 5%. I should probably not call it the Coorg loan. It was not a state loan, but a personal one. Of course the rajas of Coorg were the State, but as Martin explains it, from a legal perspective it was given out of personal funds and treated as such. Ten years later, in 1832, negotiations were going forward for a new loan at 4%. As you would expect, the rajas always kept hold of the promissory note, but when there was a renegotiation it was returned to the Company and the new note was received in exchange. This time, Chikka Vira forwarded the old note but only received a receipt for it. He did receive the first interest on the new loan, in May 1833, but he felt uneasy. Martin later came to the conclusion there was something underhanded going on.

To the restructuring and clerical backlog surrounding the Saint Helena Act can also be added the change of command that took place in 1832, with Governor Lushington being replaced by Sir Frederick Adam. This combination of factors could have resulted in the notes being pigeonholed pending instructions. I would not rule out laziness on the part of the clerks. Martin says Casamajor, who had just transferred back to Fort St. George himself, sat on the notes, presumably because of his antipathy to Chikka Vira.

The May interest for 1833 was forwarded, but the September interest was stopped. Then, on 8 February 1834, shortly before war commenced, Fort St. George at last forwarded both notes to Messrs. Binny & Co., the bankers actually handling the transaction, along with a letter stating that the *Sirkar* had yet to be informed of the Raja's desire to have the interest forwarded to him; the bank forwarded this letter to Chikka Vira and held the notes pending a reply. For Martin, this was a clear sign of shady dealing. For me, it smacks of commonplace bureaucratic ineptitude. At least the Raja was spared having to dial a 1-800 number. But the whole affair is almost as murky and vague as the Raja's prophecies.

Chikka Vira relied on the interest to fund his extensive household; he was naturally upset when it did not arrive. He was even more upset not to be told of the change of procedure, only discovering in September of 1833 that his funds were frozen, after the next semi-annual instalment never arrived. As Martin says (p.20):

*Whether the Rajah was being dealt with as an independent prince by a great ally, or as an inconveniently heavy creditor by a powerful debtor, the character of the transaction is much the same. The effect could only be to exasperate and alarm the Rajah.*

Pandey gives a good summary of the situation from a modern perspective (p.182):

*A number of factors had contributed to upset the Raja's mind. He had viewed askance the re-opening of the road through his country. The requisition of the government of Madras for a report on capital punishment had also filled his mind with misgiving. Further in 1831 the assumption of*

*the Mysore government was carried out. It set people in Coorg talking vaguely about the fate of the Raja's country. According to an observer, after the dispossession of the Raja of Mysore his own days appeared to him to be numbered. In this context the flight of the fugitives would appear to be the last straw to unsettle him. Some strong expressions of Casamajor that his country was small and surrounded on all sides by British territory and as such should modify its form of government also added to his irritation.*

*In his heated imagination he saw a conspiracy against his rule countenanced and supported by the British government. Before long he expected to find British forces marching into his country to dispossess him. The invasion of his country became so much an obsession with him that the best assurances of the governor of Madras and the governor-general that the British government nourished no hostile intention or ill-feeling towards him and that it would permit no attack on his territory from any quarter appeared to him to be of little consequence unless accompanied by the restitution of the fugitives.*

### Clock's Ticking

By 1833 intervention was looking more and more likely with every passing day. Martin complains, in a lengthy footnote on p.19 of his book, that the Madras Government had been planning a coup for months. That they were already discussing ways and means is surely true; it is not clear exactly when planning started. But contingency plans always have to be made well in advance, even in our modern age of instant communication. It would be even more necessary where the official policy had, until recently, been one of noninterference.

According to Rice:

*On the 18th January 1833, Sir F. Adam, Governor of Madras, addressed a long letter to the Raja of Coorg, giving him a sound lecture on the principles of good government, warning him most earnestly, and positively demanding compliance in future with the order of Government communicated to the Raja in 1827, to report all capital punishments taking place in Coorg.*

Casamajor paid another state visit early in 1833. Graeme was the new Resident, but only *ad interim* while the Commission was being set up. Casamajor was a familiar figure. (But if Martin is right about his bid to dispose of the Raja then Casamajor would have to handle things personally.) Both men held their noses and conducted the interview, but things went about as well as the last time. The Raja dug in his heels and took a high tone; his interviewer adopted a paternalistic attitude. They discussed the fate of Basavappa's party and the ex-Rani; Chikka Vira claimed she and the other royals had all died ages ago... of natural causes, yes, yes... very sad. He, on the other hand, wanted to know when the rebel and the rest his party would be extradited. He also seemed obsessed about his money. It was after this interview that the decision was made to stop the Raja's interest payments, which rather does make the bureaucratic shuffling described earlier look like a deliberate ploy to string him along.



Pandey describes the Raja's state of mind (p.183):

*The nervous mood of the Raja rendered all efforts at negotiation fruitless. The degree to which his mind had been affected was overwhelming. In his imagination he saw preparations for an attack and British forces round his kingdom. When, under the orders of the government of Madras, Casamajor paid a visit to the Raja in January 1833 to dispel his fears of an armed invasion, the Raja thought that Casamajor having posted forces around Coorg was coming with a large army accompanied by Channa Basava. And so he desired Casamajor to bring with him the same number of people as he had brought when he had visited him in November 1826. In the same way when H.S. Graeme, the resident at Nagpur, was sent on a similar errand in October 1833 at the request of Casamajor, whom the Raja considered to be personally hostile to himself, the Raja thought that he too was coming on no friendly purpose and refused to receive his visit. Consequently both the missions proved ineffectual.*

According to Martin, Kunta Basava ordered some of the nobility to watch the Raja, ostensibly against kidnap. He might also have been worried that the Raja was contemplating suicide. 'Kidnap' sounds dramatic, but the special agent the Company was about to send to Coorg was notorious for doing exactly that to another raja some years before. On the other hand, since Chikka Vira was the source of this information, he may have been hinting that his chief minister was controlling his actions and that he was therefore not to blame for what happened. One can believe that or not. There is no way to really know.

In September 1833, a day or so after learning he could not draw the interest on the promissory note, the Raja called a council of his nobles and representatives of his people, and informed them the Company was planning to invade. The only real indication of this was the sighting of various bodies of troops on the border and his own paranoia. The real invading columns were probably not even assembled by that date, and if they were being assembled they were a long way from the frontier. The troop concentrations may have been patrolling cavalry or soldiers engaged in suppressing bandits in Mysore. Some of the troops may also have been associated with Mr. Graeme's upcoming mission.

Chikka Vira's ministers and the Coorg chiefs pledged their loyalty, and according to Martin were so enraged that Casamajor had to move Chenna Basavappa farther away, to Bangalore. (Casamajor was no longer the Resident, so this sounds odd.) Other sources say this was because Chikka Vira had sent a team of assassins against the fugitives; the men were amateurs and were quickly arrested. The Raja ordered the watch on his borders redoubled and roadblocks constructed.

As mentioned in Pandey's quote, Graeme tried to meet with Chikka Vira in October of 1833, but the Raja refused any further contact. There are several versions of this incident. In some accounts he simply refused to meet, due to his by now intense distrust of the Company. Martin clarifies things in one way by saying he was seriously ill at the time and could see no one. It may have been a political illness.

Dr. Jeaffreson would not have been the first to be deceived by a feigning raja; Chikka Vira's father had done just that.

According to Rice and Pandey, however, Graeme was ordered to undertake a special mission to Coorg in a last-ditch attempt to defuse the situation. But, the rumours of warlike preparations within the kingdom scared him. Instead of visiting the Raja with a small ceremonial escort he marched a huge column of soldiers up to the border and summoned the Raja (very politely) to come to his camp. When one remembers that Graeme was someone knowledgeable in the ways of Southern India, to make a gaffe such as this he must have been very scared indeed. Naturally, this sort of aggressive display was not helpful.

With each party expecting to be assassinated if they crossed the border, negotiations were carried on by letter, meaning everything was at the mercy of the translators. Both parties became more and more irritated. Martin (p.20) picks out a few highlights. In a letter from Mr. Graeme to the Rajah, dated 6th November, 1833, there was the following passage: — *"By the perpetration of murder, and the exercise of tyranny over your subjects, you will cause mismanagement in your kingdom: this does not become you, and you are recommended to refrain from such a course of conduct."* The Rajah replied to this communication, on the 10th of November, 1833 in these words: — *"The contents of your letter, dated the 6th inst., greatly surprised me. You charge me with the diabolical crimes of murder and tyranny. I beg of you to let me know the names of the parties I have put to death — the place — the date, on which I am charged with the crimes alleged against me: then I shall be able to furnish you with full particulars and information."*

However:

*On the 17th November, Mr. Graeme answered as follows: — "Camp, Mysore, 17th November, 1833. I am in receipt of your letter, and in reply, after many humble apologies, beg to state, that it was a mistake of the translator. I do not bring such charges against you, and beg of you to forgive me. What I meant was this: that you should prevent your officers from doing anything of the sort."*

Graeme's last letter to the Raja came on 9 February, 1834, the day after the bankers' letter asking for instructions was sent out. Whatever soothing balm his apology may have had, Graeme's letter washed it right off again. If the bankers' letter was included in the parcel Chikka Vira would have been livid. Although, to see such a run-of-the-mill bureaucratic query sent out in the midst of all this high diplomatic drama actually makes it look as if the pen-pushers had no clue what was going on around them; so much for a conspiracy to defraud.

In the Resident's letter he claimed, on highly selective evidence according to Martin, that Chikka Vira and his Coorgs were dependents of the Company and owed allegiance to it and the British Crown. However selective the Raja's own memory may have been when describing these events to Martin in later years, this claim by Graeme was patently untrue unless one stretched the facts — but as Graeme himself admitted, he had not bothered to read any of the old documentation covering Coorg's relationship with the Company, because it was written in either Persian

or Canarese, which Graeme could not understand (that also seems odd for a man who had spent so long in India). As a matter of fact, there was some correspondence in English that described the relationship as an alliance (but nothing about 'dependence'), that correspondence being between Governor-General Wellesley and Dodda Vira. Graeme's letter also included an ultimatum: *"it is the intention of the English Government to make war against you unless you release Kunnuguna Manoon (Canara Menon) [Kulpilly Karunakara Menon]. This must be done in six days from the receipt of this letter."*

Menon's role in the affair will be explained very shortly. He was the immediate *casus belli*.

The real importance of Graeme's letter is the paradigm shift in Anglo-Indian relations that it contains. The idea of Paramountcy has emerged. Pandey explains (p.181):

*His attitude became more clear in a letter to the Raja on 21 November 1833. Its tone though conciliatory was firm. It reminded the Raja of the co-operation of his ancestors with the British government and expressed a wish for the continuance of amicable relations between the two governments. The Raja was asked to rid his mind of any suspicion of the intentions of the British government with regard to his state or authority. But at the same time Bentinck asserted the right of the British government as the paramount power to decide the repatriation of the refugees [Basavappa et.al.]. The British government, Bentinck said, had no desire to shelter offenders in its territories but,*

*"it must rest with the Paramount Power to determine from the evidence adduced in each case, whether the refugees are really criminals or innocent persons who seek an asylum from unmerited persecution."*

*There was no reference in this letter to the terms of the treaties or to the existing practice between the two governments, but instead a straight and matter-of-fact assertion of the right of the British government as the paramount power to decide things in a given situation.*

*The force of these assertions was however lost upon the Raja who looked to the practice between the two governments and who failed to comprehend why when fugitives had been restored to the Coorg government in the past such persons whom he considered particularly obnoxious should be granted protection.*

Chikka Vira, isolated from world affairs as he was, had no clue what the Governor-General was talking about, but it sounded very bad.

On 17 February 1834 Bentinck, having come down to Madras to view the situation in person, sent a last letter. He made no mention of 'crimes', but only of Menon's incarceration and disrespect shown to the Company's Resident. According to Pandey, his hope was that Chikka Vira would not feel a loss of Face if he submitted to the *Sirkar* in person. If this did not work, well, the plans were laid. But, *"I shall avoid the contest if I possibly can and do it effectively if I cannot"* (Pandey, p. 184).

Planning appears to have been fairly advanced by this point. As I remarked before, there is nothing nefarious in that. Wars require plans; if the plans are shelved before it comes to war, so much the better. Apparently there were

some Boys' Own enthusiasts at Fort St. George who believed they only needed a single regiment and a few guns, but the Adjutant-General, who had made a proper study, thought 10,000 men would be needed. The troops required were distributed in various garrisons, some at quite a distance from the scene of the action, and three battalions of British regulars would also be called upon. The forces had to be organized into five separate columns, timed to begin the campaign simultaneously.

### The Spy Menon

*I wanted a mission, and for my sins, they gave me one.*

*Apocalypse Now*

Time to discuss Kalpully (Kulpilly) Karunakara Menon. A *casus belli* personified. Inevitably, what he was doing in Coorg depends on what source you read. The Raja called him a spy, the British called him an envoy. Like every diplomat ever spawned, he was both, but, as Chikka Vira ultimately had to admit, he was chiefly an envoy. I would call him a 'special agent'. He did spend time obtaining information about the situation in Coorg, but that was because he did not want to go in blind. According to Menon's own report, his main job was to be Graeme's eyes, ears, but most importantly, voice, at the Raja's Court. In this sense he was more envoy than spy. It fits with his 'day job' as a secretary.

Martin, adhering to Chikka Vira's initial view, says (p.19):

*Canara Menon was in reality a spy... Mr. Græme was instructed to obtain information on [whether 10,000 men would be needed to take the Raja]; and as he was afraid to venture into Coorg himself, and as no person was permitted to pass the Mysore frontiers without a pass from the British resident, and no one was admitted into Coorg at those frontiers without the authority of the Rajah, Mr. Græme devised a plan of sending an intelligent, crafty native (who had been often employed by him on secret matters as a detective), to enter Coorg from the Malabar side unobserved: by stealth he reached Mercara, where he began his inquiries and intrigues until discovered by the Coorg government. When apprehended, Canara Menon had no passport, and no authority; he refused to give up his name at first, and not until he thought his life in danger did he acknowledge himself to be sent on a mission of investigation by Mr. Græme. But he told so many lies during his examination, and the Coorgs were so alarmed by the fear of a British invasion, that they objected to release Canara Menon even when demanded by Mr. Græme as his servant, because they dreaded his communicating to the British the state of the Coorg army, and the defences of the passes. Such a feeling was very natural in mountaineers, who prized their independence, and had maintained it for many years against Tippoo, and against the East India Company.*

There are a few flaws in this account. Not releasing Menon because of information he might divulge seems logical, except that according to Menon himself he was permitted to communicate with Graeme, though not to talk to any of the locals. Also, though threatened with death, he was at times under a very loose house arrest, and even allowed a sword. The Raja called Menon 'low-caste'. Compared to

the Raja that was true, but he was hardly a street sweeper, and he was by his own account treated like a gentleman on those occasions when he was not being abused as a spy. Eventually, Chikka Vira told Menon he was being held as a hostage for the exchange of Chenna Basavappa. Once again, the Raja was being selective in what he later told Martin.

The latter's charges really boil down to whether Menon was carrying the proper credentials or not. What Menon himself said was that he received a *rahadari*, a passport, which is not quite the same thing as diplomatic credentials. It did mean he was 'to be extended every courtesy due his rank'. Also, he never entered the kingdom covertly, but came with a party of thirteen people. Some were servants, which attests to his status, and some were assistants. He had a Brahmin with him, probably to act as secretary.

But, how could Menon be a *casus belli*? Unless you think the EIC was looking for any excuse for a war, it was simply because he was a valued and high profile Company employee and the *Sirkar* always took care of its own. Letting him rot in jail was bad optics.

Menon's official job title was *Sheristadar* for the Collector of Malabar — that is, chief secretary to a regional tax collector. But, he was also officially retired, and had been living quietly on an estate north of Calicut when the Company called on his services. He had been used on special jobs like this before, including one famous case where he played a vital role in the trapping and killing of another of the Company's enemies, Pazhassi Raja, in 1805.

Pazhassi Raja and the Cotiote War are worth looking into. Pazhassi Raja, the Lion of Kerala, is celebrated in India as an anti-colonial hero. As ruler of the once powerful Malabar Coast kingdom of Kottayam, he was a neighbour of Coorg's, and he fought against both Mysore and the British (including the future Duke of Wellington) until he was betrayed, some say by a man he had embedded as a double agent in the EIC's administration (who was not Menon). The actual killing took the form of an ambush by a party of Company soldiers. The success was credited to Menon but some think he received the glory only because the Company official coordinating the operation had a beef with the officer commanding the detachment that actually did the job and wanted to deny him the credit. It has resulted in Menon being labelled a traitor by some modern Indians. Others call him 'pragmatic' for seeing which way the wind was blowing. He seems to have been somewhat uncomfortable with his part in the affair. Dodda Vira Rajendra also played a part in that war, by preventing Pazhassi Raja from entering his country. But he is not called a traitor.

There were two of them on this current job, Menon and Dara Sait, the latter a Parsee merchant from Tellicherry, the main EIC factory for Malabar. The Malabar tax collector, Mr. Clementson, was their 'handler'.

*[The Parsees (Parsis) were Zoroastrians, Persians who had fled the Islamic tidal wave, arriving in India probably in the 8th Century.]*

Menon tried twice to enter Coorg. The first time was in October 1833. On the 12th he left Calicut, reaching the border post on the Stony River by the 17th. He was refused

entry, despite his passport, and went to Vayathur, a village not far from the border, where he remained until the 24th. This is where he set up his intelligence gathering operations. It appears that, despite Chikka Vira's paranoia, the Grain Road was in fact open to trade, because Menon canvassed a number of Muslim caravans returning from Coorg. Menon did not spend much time at Vayathur. By 28 October he was at Tellicherry. Then on 1 November a letter came from Graeme requiring him to proceed to Mercara. This was just when the Resident was planning to enter Coorg and visit the Raja, and Menon was instructed to meet Graeme at the capital.

The sequence of his actions make it appear that Menon was at first acting primarily as a spy, trying to gauge the temper of the Kingdom. It is not clear if his reports got through to Graeme before the latter's summons or not. Probably not. It seems more likely that Graeme came to a snap decision to go ahead with the embassy while Menon was still collecting intelligence. With this summons, however, he took on the official task of envoy. A new passport was issued.

Graeme was already at Piriapatna, where the Grain Road exited the eastern border of the kingdom. As we have seen, the Resident balked and never entered Coorg. However, this time Menon was allowed to enter the kingdom. Some secondary sources state that this was an ambush and that he was kidnapped when he reached Mercara, but that is not true. He was allowed to proceed to the capital because he and Graeme were to form a diplomatic team there. He travelled openly, with staff and servants, probably by palanquin as befitted his station (pictures of the palanquin's remains exist, which incidentally demonstrates how important a person he was). The notion of a 'trap' may originate in the fact that Menon was told there were three other gentlemen newly arrived at Mercara, and that he mistakenly thought this was Graeme's party. His arrest actually came much later, and mainly because Graeme never showed.

Menon arrived at Mercara on 5 November 1833, visited the palace within the fort, and was immediately directed to take up residence at a bungalow near to a guard post, about a mile outside the town. This could be called house arrest, but he was allowed to buy food, and he and the others with him were allowed to keep their weapons. He would remain in Coorg for five months and have no less than fourteen interviews with Chikka Vira, the first being on 11 November.

That first interview was perhaps the most ticklish. He had only just finished explaining to Chikka Vira that Graeme was a most honourable man whom he knew well, when Kunta Basava challenged him:

*I answered that Mr. Graeme was a very respectable and honorable Gentleman and that I was well acquainted with him. I had scarcely made the answer when the Dewan Bassawapen observed nearly in these words, 'Samy! This person (alluding to me) came last year to Stony River, Vyathoor, Payanoor, made inquiries about matters relating to this Samstanom. And said that the whiskers of all the Coorghers would be shaved off and people from Malabar employed in this country.'*

*This was related by persons who came from Malabar. "This is the man who formerly seized the Kotiote Rajah, and he is friends to the Phiranghies."*

*His object in coming here is merely to obtain information about this country.'*

*On which I stated, that there are many Brahmins and people of their caste, carrying whiskers employed in the Cutcheries in Malabar. That if ever it should be required to employ in that country as public servants people from Malabar, the Hussoor Cutcherry alone contained a sufficient number.*

*That I had heard that many persons sent to that country and by making false representations, such as they knew would be acceptable, returned after receiving presents.*

*That stories of such persons should not be relied upon and that the Gentlemen under the Hon'ble Company never deviated from truth.*

The bluff worked, at least for now. The Raja seems to have been of two minds about Menon. He postponed judgement and went off on a hunt. Before doing so he gave Menon some flowers and the latter gave the Raja a bottle of lavender water.

The next interview was two days later. Chikka Vira had just received Graeme's letter accusing him of heinous crimes. Menon succeeded, partly, in calming the storm by explaining the Resident had no one with him who could properly write Canarese, and further turned it to his account by saying that was why he had been sent. Two days later, the Raja seems to have decided to make use of Menon and subjected him to a rant about Casamajor not returning Basavappa and the Company mustering troops on his border. (This suggests the preparations for war were being pushed more aggressively than Bentinck imagined, but perhaps the Raja was exaggerating.)

From Menon's account it becomes clear that Chikka Vira had no idea what he was up against:

*...the Rajah's subjects are disposed to wage war. That it was with a view of not violating the friendship which has long subsisted between himself and the Honorable Company that he did not all this while take any such measure; but that he could not forbear any longer and that accordingly he would, without delay, send a force to seize and bring back those who had escaped from his country. That if the Company wished to resist him, let them to do so. That the wish of possessing themselves of his Country will be the ruin of the Company. They would lose their authority and his (the Rajah's) Government would rise and extend itself. And that Persons well acquainted with the state of things have written them so." To this I observed that he would not succeed in carrying on a war against the Hon'ble Company. That they have extensive Forces and Territories.*

*Out of the latter, Malabar alone, which is under your Superintendence, contains upwards of 11 lacs of souls, out of whom 2 lacs may be estimated as good fighting men; so that if they were required to take the field there would be more men than trees in the jungle of Coorg. That therefore any measure he intended to adopt should be after due considerations of the Hon'ble Company's powers and the*

*discipline of their troops and his own means and circumstances. That if measures be adopted without due considerations, I further mentioned that Velely Tamby, a former Dewan of the Travancore Sirkar, thoughtlessly and from not knowing better, attempted to wage war with the Hon'ble Company; the result was an immense loss to that Sirkar.*

*That the Dewan himself was executed and the Ellia Rajah, who joined in his plans banished to Chingleput. The Rajah hereupon observed that none would ever be able to do any thing of the kind towards his Samstanom, of which proof would soon be evinced.*

The next interview was on 18 November, and involved Menon signing an invitation to Graeme. The standoff, with the Resident camped on the border, had been going on for 20 days now; on this occasion the Raja was batting the ball back to the Resident. Chikka Vira inquired after the envoy the next day, but they did not meet again until 26 November, when a bunch of letters arrived from Graeme that needed interpreting. Menon was hardly a passive hostage!

He almost engineered his own escape. Which makes it sound like he was a free agent up until the end of November. He offered to take messages down to Malabar — or Mysore if Chikka Vira preferred — and help work out a deal from that end. He also complained his regular business back in Malabar was piling up and he needed to attend to it! Clemenston had also got a letter through requesting his return. There was some back and forth and the Raja seemed willing to give it a go. The other agent, Dara Sait, had recently entered the kingdom in his capacity as a merchant and made his presence known. It was discussed whether he, or he and Menon together, should return to the British and try and persuade the shy Mr. Graeme to cross the border. But during the discussion, which took place on 1 December, Kunta Basava again put his oar in. Menon was complaining that he had only been prepared to stay a couple of weeks:

*Whereupon the Rajah said that if I wanted money for my expenses he would supply me therewith, that as Darashaw [Dara Sait] was come he intended to hold a consultation before finally determining upon any thing. When the Rajah had said this his Dewan Bassawapen and the Moonshies present observed, "That Phirangy called Graeme will never come here, Swamy. This man (alluding to me) is said to be even by people who came from Malabar a deceitful person and his object in coming here is no other than to gain intelligence. There is no occasion for further consideration. We only entreat permission to go and seize those who ran away from hence."*

*They said many other things in haughty and improper language. On the 4<sup>th</sup> December I went up to Cokadap and met the Rajah there and both of us proceeded to where Darashaw was. The Rajah then said that the Letter which I addressed to Mr. Graeme on the 2<sup>nd</sup> was not despatched. That an answer to the Letter which the Rajah wrote requesting Mr. Graeme to come to Maddakery is expected in two days.*

*That after the receipt of the expected answer it will be determined what to write to that Gentleman. The Rajah*



*having ceased to speak Darashaw said, "Swamy! Whatever the person (alluding to me) may write to Mr. Graeme, the Governor or any other Gentlemen will be attended to. In consideration of his having seized the Kotiote Rajah the Sarkar has presented him with a Palankeen with a separate allowance for it. On receipt of his letter Mr. Graeme will not fail to come."*

*[A moonshee, from Hindi munshi, is a secretary, often given the job of interpreter.]*

The rest of December was spent without anything being done. Chikka Vira was prevaricating. Dara Sait was sent away, the Raja saying he was too old and 'inconsistent' to serve as a representative. More letters were written. Sometimes Menon was told he would be writing a letter that day and no one would turn up at his bungalow to dictate. He began to be wary of signing letters, because they tried to have him sign without allowing him to read them. He managed to persuade them to read the letters aloud so he could judge the contents. But, he always signed, just so his people would know he was still alive.

Things changed decidedly for the worse in January. This was when Graeme's letter threatening reprisals if Menon was harmed arrived. On 11 January 1834 he was given a reply to sign:

*I remarked I had not seen the letter which Mr. Graeme was said to have written me. That unless I was made acquainted with the real state of things, I would not sign what it pleased them to prepare for my signature. They answered that the order is that I must sign, if I would not do so, I must stand the consequence and accordingly desired me to hear the arzee read over. On its being read over to me I found it was written in an improper style in consequence of which I said I would not affix my signature to it, they then saying that they would report my refusal to the Rajah went into the Fort. Shortly after the Rajah came out of the Fort and sent for and asked me what was the reason for my not signing the Paper which was written out for that purpose. I replied that I never saw the Letter which Mr. Graeme is said to have written to me, and submitted the impropriety of my signing the reply to a letter which I had never seen. On which the Rajah said that, that Letter was unfit to be read over to me, nevertheless that I might hear it read which was then read out, and I found it to contain that if a hair of my head was hurt that Samstanom would be crushed and many other things which incensed the Rajah very much.*

*He then observed "come what will I have determined upon declaring war. If those who ran away from hence be sent back from Mysore you will be allowed to return, if not you will suffer the consequence when War is commenced." The Rajah said many other things in an authoritative tone. I had not other alternative but to put down my signature, but in this instance also not in the usual way.*

*[An arzee, or arzi, is a petition or request. The suffix to the root arz indicates it is one being submitted rather than received.]*

It is unclear if this was the Raja's intention all along, to hold Menon as a hostage, but probably that had only been one option of several. The last time the envoy spoke with the Raja before the dénouement of the affair was on 7 February. They met in the open. Chikka Vira was standing contemplating his ancestors' monuments. They spoke of

Menon summoning the rest of his family, of the Raja arranging everything for them, and then the talk drifted to unimportant things.

Menon was never allowed to talk to the locals, even though they were allowed to come and gawp at him, but he occasionally got around that restriction. Incidentally, Menon agrees with Martin that the Raja was no raging psychopath. The only display of temper he ever saw was the time the Chikka Vira chopped a bundle of three plantain tree boles in two with a single blow of his machete, as a sort of silent demonstration. On the other hand, the royal servants routinely taunted Menon with the threat of being nailed to a tree.

On 20 March they moved the envoy and his party to a more secure location, in Fort Mercara, and took away their weapons. He mentions eight sword sticks, five swords, and four guns. There were also three 'plates' (gorgets): one for him signifying he was a delegate, and two more for 'the peons'.

Conditions at the fort were bad. They were shut up in a stable most of the time and had to dig their own well to get water. They were moved once more, on 1 April, to Nalknad, near the Raja's 'second palace', to a house next door to Kunta Basava's home. Here they were locked up most of the day and night but allowed to take meals provided for them in the open air. Of course, this move was because the Company's columns had crossed the border.

Most of the letters Menon was forced to sign (now done in a way that signified he was under duress) were probably those addressed to Graeme. But by March Chikka Vira had also sent letters to Sir Frederick Adam and Lord Bentinck, and issued a formal proclamation against the British Government. The Company officially described the letters and proclamation as 'most insolent'. All this served to do was convince the British that Chikka Vira had to go, and the sooner the better.

### **Chikka Vira Rajendra's Proclamation**

*'Proclamation published for the information and guidance of the Hindus, Musalmans, Palegars, Public servants, Ryots, Chetty Merchants, and people of other castes in Hindustan.*

*1. It is well known that the Kaffers, Nasara (Christians), low Pheringhies, with the view of converting people of other religions to their dirty faith, have ill intentionally polluted the Devastanams, Muszeeds, and other temples at Bangalore, Cuddapah, Mussulibunder, Nagpoor, Eameetpet and several other countries, sent out their padres and ruined them. This circumstance being certainly too well impressed on the mind of every one, what more need be said?*

*2. Those who have from time to time strenuously attempted to convert, by force, people of other religions to their faith, have by the commands of God perished—but set this aside, an instance in proof of this may be given. Tippu Sultan attempted to force all the other religions to embrace his religion and with this view ruined a great number of people, destroyed the Hindu temples and committed various sorts of oppressions; which acts not being acceptable to God, he was destroyed. This fact is well*

*known to all of you. Now the Kaffers, Nasara, low Pheringhies have in like manner commenced to destroy the religion observed by people of different castes, and to introduce their own religion. When evil comes, people lose their senses. "When death comes, medicine avails naught; thus then their end is fast approaching. There is no doubt of it. The Hindus and Musalmans having respectively consulted their Shasters have found, that if for the protection of their religions, these Kaffer, Nasara, Pheringhies be now fought with, God will help us and make us successful. There is no doubt of this, so let all be fully convinced of it.*

*3. These Kaffers, Nasara, low Pheringhies have now wickedly determined to wage war with the Halery Samsthanam, and have accordingly collected some black people of Hindustan whom they are going to send in front, that they may all be cut down and the race thus annihilated in some degree, thinking that by these means they will be able easily to convert the rest to their faith. It is therefore to protect people of all castes against such invasion, the Halery Samsthanam have determined to meet with arms these Kaffers, Pheringhies, Nasaras. Accordingly, if all of you will join the army of the Halery Samsthanam, you will not only be defended but you will also render the devastation of those Kaffers, Pheringhies quite easy; after this is done you will be protected and enabled to live happy and contented, following the religion of your respective castes unmolested. Do not think that another such opportunity will offer itself again.*

*4. To avert the evil which threatens you now, we have taken all this trouble and published this proclamation. Should any of you pay no attention to it, but keep yourself neutral, you will at last find yourselves under the yoke of the Pheringhies, lose your caste, and experience the greatest misery to the end of your lives, and after death you will not be admitted before God for having thus sinned against him. Do not doubt this. Therefore, if you people of all countries, join the Halery Samsthan and help it, you will meet with every kind of protection from it and be able to live happy. Accordingly it is expected that all of you will come forward and help the Halery Samsthanam.*

*5. P. S. It is further hereby commanded. Those Nasaras, Kaffers, Pheringhies will, in order to get possession of the Halery Samsthan, spare no pains to gain you over. They will even give ten where one would be enough. Let not this allure you and make you swerve from your real intention or lead you to entangle yourselves; for after they attain their object, they will oppress you and violate your religion. Be sure of this.*

There are a few interesting points in this rather rambling declaration. I have to wonder if the Raja did anything more than sign the document, which sounds as if it was drafted by one of his Muslim pals. This proclamation is the best source other than Menon for some sort of prophecy about Chikka Vira's greatness. The use of the word *Ferenghi*, from the Persian word for European foreigners, always carried the whiff of Crusader — the word Frank had an even stronger connotation. It is an odd term for a Hindu to use, but Persian was the language of most native courts except for those in Malabar, where neither the Mughals nor

Vijaynagara ever reached. The proclamation seems to be on the one hand comparing the Company's pushing of Christian missionary efforts (something that actually occurred afterward) to Tipu Sultan's Islamization efforts, in order to stir up the Hindus, while seeking to whip up Muslim fury by calling the EIC a band of Crusaders. Chikka Vira was ordinarily a friend to his small Christian community, so this is decidedly odd. There were no pogroms during the campaign, not even the threat of one. Yet only religion is being emphasized. No mention of the missing promissory notes, even though the Raja had discussed them in full council earlier. No suggestion the people should save their raja's throne. Some of the points, such as the losing of caste, are old bogeys in India. Rather ironic that a Lingayat should play the caste card. Incidentally, for anyone wondering why a Hindu is invoking a single deity, remember that Shiva, or Mahadeva (which is probably the name the translator converted to 'God') is regarded by Lingayats as their only deity. Martin does not mention this proclamation at all, but only the Company's own Proclamation, which was in fact a response.

### **The Company Response**

A response was issued in the name of the Governor-General and passed on to the Raja's representatives through Colonel Fraser. Martin casts aspersions on Fraser's legitimacy and suggests that as this document was not a formal declaration of war, the attack on Coorg went against the law of nations. But, as we have seen, the Company and the British Crown were drifting into the notion of Paramountcy; in their eyes this would not be a war between equals but an internal disciplinary matter for the *Sirkar*.

*The conduct of the Raja of Coorg has, for a long time past, been of such a nature as to render him unworthy of the friendship and protection of the British Government.*

*Unmindful of his duty as a ruler, and regardless of his obligations as a dependent ally of the East India Company, he has been guilty of the greatest oppression and cruelty towards the people subject to his government, and he has evinced the most wanton disrespect of the authority of, and the most hostile disposition towards the former, from whom he and his ancestors have invariably received every degree of kindness and protection.*

*It would be needless to enumerate the several instances of his misconduct but it is sufficient to state that, in consequence of asylum having been afforded in the British Territories to his own sister Devammaji and her husband Channa Basavappa, who to preserve their lives had fled from his oppression, the Raja has presumed to address letters replete with the most insulting expressions to the Governor of Fort St. George and the Governor General of India, that he has assumed an attitude of hostility and defiance towards the British Government, that he has received and encouraged the proclaimed enemies of that Government, and that he has unjustifiably placed under restraint an old and faithful servant of the Company, named Kulputty Karnikara Manoon, — who had been formally deputed by the British representative for the purpose of opening a friendly negotiation, thus committing a gross outrage, not only upon the authority by whom the*

above named individual was deputed, but upon the established rules of all civilized nations, by whom the persons of accredited agents are invariably held sacred.

*The ancient alliance and the firm friendship which had so happily subsisted between the predecessors of the present Raja and the Honourable Company, have caused his errors to be treated uniformly with indulgence. The most earnest remonstrances have been in vain tried to bring him to a sense of his obligations, and it is not until further forbearance would be culpable, that His Excellency the Right Honourable the Governor General, at the suggestion and with the concurrence of the Right Honourable the Governor in Council of Fort St. George, has resolved on employing the only means left of vindicating the dignity of the Sovereign State and of securing to the inhabitants of Coorg the blessings of a just and equitable government.*

*It is accordingly hereby notified, that a British army is about to invade the Coorg territory, that Vira Rajendra Wodeyar is no longer to be considered as Raja of Coorg, that the persons and property of all those who conduct themselves peaceably or in aid of the operations of the British troops shall be respected, and that such a system of government shall be established as may seem best calculated to secure the happiness of the people.*

*It is also hereby made known to all British subjects who may have entered the service of Vira Rajendra Wodeyar, that they are required to place themselves under the protection of the British authorities, by whom they will be kindly received, and their rights and privileges respected, and that such of them as may in any way render assistance to the enemy, will be considered as traitors and punished accordingly.*

*This proclamation will be carefully made known in Chitaldroog, Raidroog, Mysore, Bellary, Malabar, Canara, in order that the relatives of such persons as have taken service in Coorg from those places or adjoining districts, may adopt the earliest means of communicating its purport to the parties in whose safety they are interested.*

To this the Raja replied in turn (a text again not documented by Martin in his book):

*In answer to a proclamation of bad Englishman, son of a whore, who in a state of forgetting Mahadeva (God) and through pride had written on a paper whatever occurred to his mind, for the purpose of giving information to the inhabitants of Halery Samsthan, and fastened the same near the boundary, I the slave of my Master's Majesty, let you know as follows, that the proclamation (containing the evil subjects) which was fastened in the boundary by the wicked Englishman, the son of a slave, is not at all possible even to be seen with our eyes or heard with our ears, and in the very time of tying the said proclamations, which are replete with indecent subjects, the hearts of all of us who are the servants of the king's feet were inflamed as the fire through wind. The wicked Christian European, the son of a slave, who resolved to prepare this, should be beheaded and his head thrown out, the hands, mouth and head of the person who wrote this should be cut off, the generation of the low caste blasphemer and bad European should be burnt down. These hopes are to be soon effected. All the above subjects are certain. All the wicked Europeans, the*

*sons of whores, have evil intentions. Very well, very well, we will fill up all your bellies according to your wishes.*

*Be this known to you, written on Sunday, 6th decreasing of the moon, month of Phalgun, of the year Vijaya, corresponding with 30th March 1834.*

Although Martin never mentions the Raja's haughty written attacks on the Company he does make a case that the Company was in the wrong (p.23):

*This "Proclamation," which was widely circulated in several languages, was full of false imputations; but even had they been capable of proof, the Governor and Council of Fort St. George [Madras] had no legal authority to declare war on their own account. It was not true that the Rajah of Coorg was "a dependent ally of the East India Company;" he was a sovereign and independent Prince. There was not even a British ambassador, or envoy, or accredited agent at Coorg, as there had been at Seringapatam, at Caubul [Kabul], and at other Indian States, when the East India Company made war against them. The Company had no more authority in Coorg than they had in Bokhara or in Pekin. The Rajah was not "guilty of the greatest oppression and cruelty towards the people subject to his government." The charge brought against him by Mr. Graeme had been explicitly withdrawn, and it was now reiterated by the Madras Government, whose officers were subsequently proved by a Public Commission to have been at that very time practising the most horrible tortures in the collection of their revenue. He had not been unmindful of his duty as a ruler, and the best refutation of this charge lay in the enthusiasm with which his subjects rallied round him. He had not evinced "the most hostile disposition against the East India Company, from whom he and his ancestors have invariably received every degree of kindness and protection." The fact was precisely the reverse. The circumstance of Chen Buswah [Basavappa] being a murderer, and of Canara Menon being taken as a spy without credentials, are suppressed. The Governor in Council at Fort St. George is declared to be acting on behalf of the "Sovereign State;" and on these grounds Lieutenant-Colonel Frazer announces that "Veer Rajunder Wudeer is no longer to be considered Rajah of Coorg, and that a British army is about to invade the Coorg frontier!"*

While the evidence presented by modern sources and the evidence turned up after the war shows that Chikka Vira did commit political murders, it does seem odd that the Company's proclamation is so adamant about his crimes before they were fully proven. Martin's attack seems justified in this regard. Because, when Colonel Fraser met with the Raja to take his surrender, he was at first quite ready to believe the rumours of mass killings and other crimes were exaggerated, and that the Raja was simply misguided; also, there is the evidence of Mr. Graeme's retraction, which Martin cites. On the other hand, the Company officers very quickly dropped their view of Chikka Vira as victim once they had had a look around the kingdom. But even this could be, with a slight stretch of the imagination, put down to their sudden realization of what a plum they had just been handed and a desire to make sure the Raja was never reinstalled. This constant switching of

attitude is what makes discerning the truth of the matter so hard.

On 1 April, the Raja was given a copy of the formal declaration of war against him — which according to Martin must be the Company proclamation, which would hardly give enough time for Chikka Vira to write a response, so perhaps there was a real declaration of war after all. Even if that is true, it was not issued with the usual diplomatic niceties — the enemy was already across the border.

## Hostile Takeover

*If therefore such internal disturbances are held to be proofs of mismanagement on our part, the Supreme Government has the remedy in its power. We may put them down by direct interference in the internal affairs of such states.*

*From such interference in my opinion worse evils would arise, difficult but more objectionable disturbances, and I expect, if non-interference have a fair trial, that is, be steadily and consistently pursued for a sufficient time, that internal dissensions and disturbances in protected states would cease.*

[Lord Metcalfe, Governor-General Bentinck's senior advisor. Quoted in Pandey, p.37]

## Plan of Campaign

*He's out there in the jungle... with this Montagnard army... that worship the man... like a god..., and follow every order... however ridiculous.*

*Apocalypse Now (misquote)*

The bulk of the following information comes from Rice and from *The Expedition to Coorg in 1834*, with some corroboration from the *Madras Artillery Service History*. It should be born in mind that most of the places named within the kingdom are not towns, villages, or even hamlets, but sections of countryside associated with a group of scattered farmsteads or a shrine. A place might be labeled as a 'village', but only to give a sense of the location's importance.

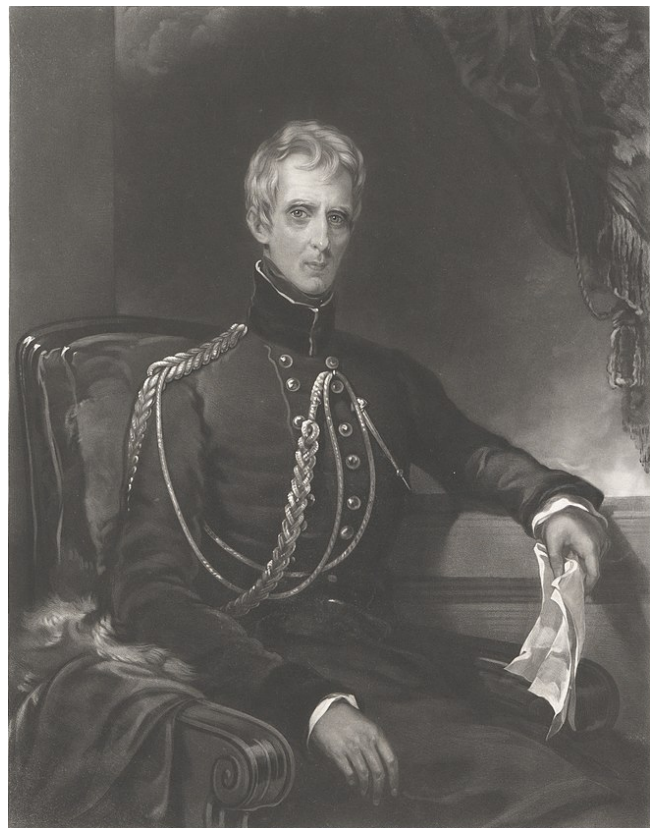
The man given overall command of the Expedition was Lt. Colonel James Stuart Fraser, Political Agent for Mysore. Operational command was given to Brigadier Lindesay, C.B. The difference in ranks was not an issue; Fraser accompanied the headquarters solely as Political Agent.

Martin has nothing good to say about Fraser, that 'so-called' Political Agent. In reality, he may have been a wise choice. Most of his career in India was spent dealing with the French. They still occupied Pondichéri and Mahé, and Fraser worked at both places. More than that, he belonged to Clan Fraser and had some sense of how clan societies functioned. Ironically enough, only a century before a Fraser had been the last peer hanged in Britain, for crimes not so dissimilar from those the Raja was supposed to have committed.

His given names are a dead giveaway for his family's sentiments: 'James Stuart'. Born in 1783, like my ancestor Fraser was educated at Glasgow University, but he studied languages and astronomy. In 1800 he became an officer in the Madras Army. 1828 seems to be the year he was first given diplomatic duties, at Mahé. After that he was

regularly picked for such jobs. He appeared on the scene late in the proceedings against Coorg. At that time he was about fifty years old.

After the Coorg War he served in Mysore as a Commissioner but also helped with the Coorg annexation. As will be seen, Coorg was not annexed in an official sense, so still did not get a Resident. (Kushalnagar, on the Kaveri River, was renamed Frazerpet; the administration habitually moved there during the rainy season.) He remained in the Army, becoming a major general in 1838; the following year he was posted to Hyderabad, where he served for about twelve years before returning to England. He lived to be 86. Chikka Vira had to deal with him at the end of the campaign and did not like him, but after all, the man was demanding his surrender and deposition. The French seem to have got along with him, which is a tough thing for anyone to pull off.



[Colonel J.S. Fraser]

The military arrangements were finalized as the winter of 1833 turned into spring. It would not be an easy affair. Though heat and rain were not major problems thanks to the altitude and season of the year, altitude could be a problem in and of itself. The expedition to Coorg would in places involve struggling along narrow routes up steep inclines. There would be belts of jungle to work through, with the humidity boosted by a high canopy. Only 7,500 men, and 20 cannon and mortars, could be spared. They were assembled during the month of March, 1834, and organized into four columns (five counting the HQ) as follows:

- Eastern Column drawn from Bangalore, under Lt. Colonel Steuart, with part of H.M. 39th of Foot, and the



4th, 36th, 35th, 48th Native Infantry, with a detachment of artillery, sappers, and miners. Accompanying it as a discrete column was the expedition's HQ, under Brigadier Lindesay. The HQ staff and the 39th each counted 450 men and the Native Infantry 2,400. There was also the 60-man Rifle Company of the 5th NI, who were dispatched a few days late (arrived 5 April) and were not involved in any fighting. Logistical and siege support was provided by 300 men of Madras' Sappers and Miners corps. Fire support was provided by a company of foot artillery: 3x 12-lb howitzers, 2x 5.5 inch howitzers, 2x 5.5 inch mortars, and 1x 6-pounder cannon. The HQ Column consisted of Staff, part of H.M. 39th, 4th N.I. and 35th N.I., and 6 artillery pieces. It numbered 1,730 men plus 230 sappers. The Eastern Column itself consisted of the rest of H.M. 39th, the 36th N.I. and 48th N.I., 70 sappers, and 2 pieces; the 36th had a rifle company.

- Western Column from Cannanore (Kanur) on the Arabian Sea, under Lt. Colonel Foulis, with part of H.M. 48th, the 20th N.I. and 32nd N.I., plus 200 sappers and a half-company of artillery (4x 6-lbers & 2x 5.5-inch mortars). Total 1,700 men.
- Northern Column from Bellary (Ballari) under Lt Colonel Gilbert Waugh with H.M. 55th, 9th N.I. and 13th N.I., the Rifle Company of the 24th N.I. (60 men), plus 200 sappers and 6x 6-lber cannon. (And, Assistant Surgeon Colin Paterson.) Total 1,760 men. Ballari is about 280 Km northeast of the Coorg border.
- Western Auxiliary Column from Mangalore (also on the Arabian Sea), under Lt. Colonel Jackson, with elements of H.M. 48th and 40th N.I., plus 34 sappers and no guns. Total 584 men. Officially there were no guns, but *The Expedition* notes the presence of two pieces, and also a small detachment of cavalry. Both seem to have been added at the last minute and were apparently volunteers who wanted in on the action.
- The 51st N.I. was also part of the operation, but it was deployed to neighbouring Wynad, south of the kingdom. The detachment, under a Captain Minchin, was sent to Manantoddy (Mananthavady), situated on the Cannanore-Mysore high road beyond Coorg's southern border. Even today this part of the highway is pretty rough and only qualifies as a secondary road. The deployment was probably made to keep an eye on the unrest in Wynad while at the same time warning of any movement through the Tambatcherry Pass.

[Rice limits the expedition to 6,000 men and four columns, which indicates he lumped the HQ in with the Eastern Column. I have come across sources that name the Bombay Regiment (the oldest European regiment in the Company) as a participant in lieu of H.M. 48th; this seems to be a mistake.]

The troops were supplied with 250 rounds per man (50 for the riflemen) and sufficient spare flints, with two months supplies and medicines. The ordnance had its 'usual' complement, whatever that was. The columns also each had a train of carts and a nameless mass of bearers, as well as camp followers and native guides and interpreters. The overall set up had not changed since the Napoleonic Wars. The officers still had their personal baggage wagons and

servants. And most likely, any idle body who wanted to come along to earn a few *pice* carrying a bundle would not be driven away.

The stated objective of the expedition was to 'secure the person of the Rajah'; he 'was no longer to be considered as Rajah of Coorg' (*Expedition to Coorg*, p. 463). *The Expedition* advances this as the main reason for the use of separate columns. Obviously there were logistical reasons, too — the need to draw troops from multiple garrisons and move them quickly, and the restrictions of the terrain — but each column would also block one of the few roads leading into and out of the kingdom. It would be impossible for the Raja to escape except by fleeing through the jungle, and it was unthinkable that he would abandon his Court dependents in that manner. Such things were not 'done', even by feckless rajas. *The Expedition*, reflecting a belief held by the Europeans at the time, goes on to suggest his own people might have murdered him if he did not try flee. I doubt that. They might have murdered Kunta Basava. But since the Kodavas were allowed to bear firearms in their Raja's presence one would assume he was sure of their loyalty.

None of the accounts of the campaign explain the whole action coherently. They do as I have done here, describing the actions of each column in turn. Rice at least gives enough of an explanation to make an analysis feasible, and *The Expedition* brings in a lot of details that help fill in the gaps. As far as can be determined without reading the original documentation the plan of campaign was as follows:

- The Eastern Column would start from Piriapatna, the Mysore fort located on the Grain Road just outside the eastern border of the kingdom. The Eastern Column would immediately split, one detachment with GHQ, called the HQ Division, heading due north to Bettadapura then west to cross the Kaveri River at Hebaale, north of Kushalnagar, on the first day. This was most likely to avoid a contested river crossing at Kushalnagar, which was one of the few urban centers in the kingdom and had a fort built to 'modern' standards by the Mysore regime. Otherwise they would just have used the main road to Mercara that ran through the town.
- The rest of the Eastern Column would start on the road to Kushalnagar but divert due west and cross the Kaveri at a lightly guarded spot. It would then march cross-country to Nanjarayapatna, a place in the middle of nowhere. The force would then carry on southwest to cut a north-south road leading from Mercara to Virajpet on the Grain Road; the road leading to the Raja's Palace at Nalknad in the western mountains connected to this road as well. Looking at a map, it would make much more sense to use the Grain Road, which bore southwest, making a right at the junction of the Siddapura-Mercara road that ran northwest, or simply carrying on straight through to Virajpet, dropping off a garrison or two along the way. Although the Grain Road had become decayed, and although one can assume the British thought it would be blocked with tree-falls, it was surely a faster route. But it would have meant dealing with Siddapura, which is usually marked 'heavily fortified' on the old maps. As for

marching on Nanjarayapatna, the only reason I can find for such a movement is that it was the site of the 'Raja's farm'. My assumption is that it was a royal property where there was a chance the Raja might be found hiding, or alternatively, where Menon might be incarcerated. Taking it would also cut the Mercara-Siddapura road without the need to storm Siddapura.

- The Northern Column would start a day earlier, on 1 April, march south from the village of Kenchamma Hosakóte, cross the Hemavathi River at the border, and, after fighting through expected opposition at the Bukh Pass and Somwarpet, where there was a key road junction and minor ford, cross the Harangi River and link up with the HQ Division on Day Three. Both those columns would then proceed to Mercara. It might be necessary to assault the fort there. Taking Mercara could net the Raja but it would also allow the British to meet with the regime's Administration and perhaps work out a deal.
- Once reaching Virajpet, meanwhile, the Eastern Column would link up with the Western Column coming from Cannanore along the Grain Road through the Huggul Ghaut and double back along that road, clearing it all the way to the eastern border, while the Western Column proceeded to Nalknad Palace.
- The Western Auxiliary Column, which was very small, would act as a corps of observation in Lower Coorg. Its task was supposed to be intercepting parties of the enemy coming down the passes and making a play for Mangalore. It was to proceed from the coastal fort of Kumbala to Bellare on the Buntwall Road, which ran southeast from Mangalore through that place and up the Western Ghats to Mercara. As it happens the column seems to have behaved more aggressively than this, which was not a good idea.

### The Defenders

According to Martin, Chikka Vira always devoted much care and attention to his small army, which numbered perhaps 8,000 men. Its members were called the *chaudigára*, and they originated with the bands of watchmen that the very first raja had formed to guard his own home.

From Martin we learn the force had two tiers, a regular component and a farmer-militia. I am going to call the regular component the Chaudigára, because calling them 'regulars' implies they had a high degree of unit cohesion. Indians living in backwater kingdoms who had not served as sepoys did not go in for drill and discipline, they followed the 'cult of the warrior'. Like the knights of old, they trained continuously from their youth, but only practiced individual fighting skills and bodily fitness. This made them formidable fighters but indifferent soldiers.

It is not clear if the 8,000 men were only the Chaudigára because all the Kodava men were required to do regular duty on rotation for fifteen days out of the year, while local folk memory says that nearly every man in the country was under arms during the invasion. This is quite possible, because the population of Coorg was not that large, and non-Kodavas would not rate inclusion. In wartime the

chiefs were required to muster with their followers like a Highland clan or Medieval host.

According to Rice (p.114), describing the army in the time of Tipu Sultan:

*As the Jamma Coorgs held their land by a military tenure in return for the immunities which they enjoyed, all able bodied men of this active and warlike peasantry constituted the Raja's military force, which, though irregular in its organization, was kept in constant practice of its duties. For the personal services of the Choudigaras or Coorg soldiers as guards, for a period of fifteen days at a time, enjoined by the Rajas and admitted by the ryots, were rendered with cheerful obedience.*

*Under the chief command of the Raja, the force, numbering at times from six to ten thousand Coorgs, was subdivided into bodies of various strength, the smallest numbering from ten to a hundred men under a Jemadar; any larger and more indefinite number was commanded by the Kariagara, who again acted under a Sarva-kariagara or General; both were distinguished by a gold banded scarlet head-dress, the kombu toppi. As the Coorg force was not a standing army, it received no pay. Whilst on active duty as guards, or during warfare, the soldiers were maintained at the public expense, and being remarkable for their predatory habits, they largely shared with the Rajas in the spoil. Without discipline and organization, the Coorgs displayed their strength chiefly behind their stockades and kadangas. In the open field they rarely faced the attacks of regular troops.*

The Chaudigára were equipped with muskets — mostly matchlocks — sword (the *udu-katti* hatchet), and shield. Most of the militia was armed with bows. Long outdated, matchlocks were still preferred by independent rulers in India, because although slow, they were more reliable in the humid climate and did not require hard-to-obtain flint. India produced the best gunpowder in the world, but Britain had the best flint.

The kingdom also possessed about 100 cannon, stored among a number of forts. Most of these were light pieces that could be attached to swivel mounts and used atop walls. The heavier guns will have been old, badly maintained, and hard to shift. The forts themselves were mostly ruins from the time of Tipu Sultan. But, though there were few real forts remaining the Kodavas were masters when it came to erecting hasty entrenchments, and they were given several months to prepare.

The Chaudigára were also supplemented by 3,000 mercenaries hastily purchased from Mysore and perhaps a few other places, where no doubt there were many discontented warriors at a loose end. Nagar being an old district of Bednur there may have been kinship ties with the Haleri. The Raja seems to have placed great hopes in their performance, perhaps related to the prophecies of victory. Mahomed Taker Khan, who described himself as a friend of the Raja, and who played significant role in Chikka Vira's inner circle at this time, may have been the entrepreneur who provided them.

The chief advantages for the Kodava guerrillas were an intimate knowledge of the country and the ability to

operate on interior lines. The enemy columns would take four or five days to march from the borders to the capital even if not under attack; the locals could swiftly concentrate. Even the long road down to Lower Coorg could be traversed by them in less than a day. The chief advantage of the mercenaries seems to have been that they were a relatively disciplined body who could, in theory, stand up to the Company troops in open fight. If they were ex-sepoys or Mysore police they would have understood military drill.

Chikka Vira's forces appear to have been arranged in a cordon, covering all the approaches to the kingdom, and particularly the various fords across the Kaveri River, using a mix of preexisting and new stockades and lesser fighting positions. In the north there was a substantial fortified position at Somwarpet. It can be inferred similar fortifications existed at Kushalnagar and Siddapura because the British bypassed those locations, but there is no confirmation. The routes approaching the various stockades were sown with abatis and deadfalls.

Contrary to Company fears there seems to have been no intention to conduct raids outside the kingdom. Though there are slight indications that plunderers from Lower Coorg had crossed the border they must have been pulled back very quickly. Coorg and its Raja were in a purely reactive stance.

3,000 out of the 11,000 were retained as a reserve at Mercara, half Chaudigára and half mercenaries. Menon, from his prison in the fort, also reported seeing 200 horses and 8 large guns. The fort also had 2 emplaced cannon, and there were actually 28 guns and mortars in storage, and 22 wall-pieces. The horses were probably not cavalry mounts though they could have been used that way in a pinch. Likely they belonged to the mercenaries, but they could have been from the royal stable.

The various frontline positions seem to have been composed of between 1-200 Chaudigára each, augmented by peasant militia from the surrounding farms. As will be seen, after only a couple of days fighting the Raja called a truce, and gave orders to avoid contact. Most of the peasants, apart from the curious, probably went home then.

Fighting would continue in Lower Coorg until 6 April, and anyone seeking excitement and loot went down to the plain to find it.

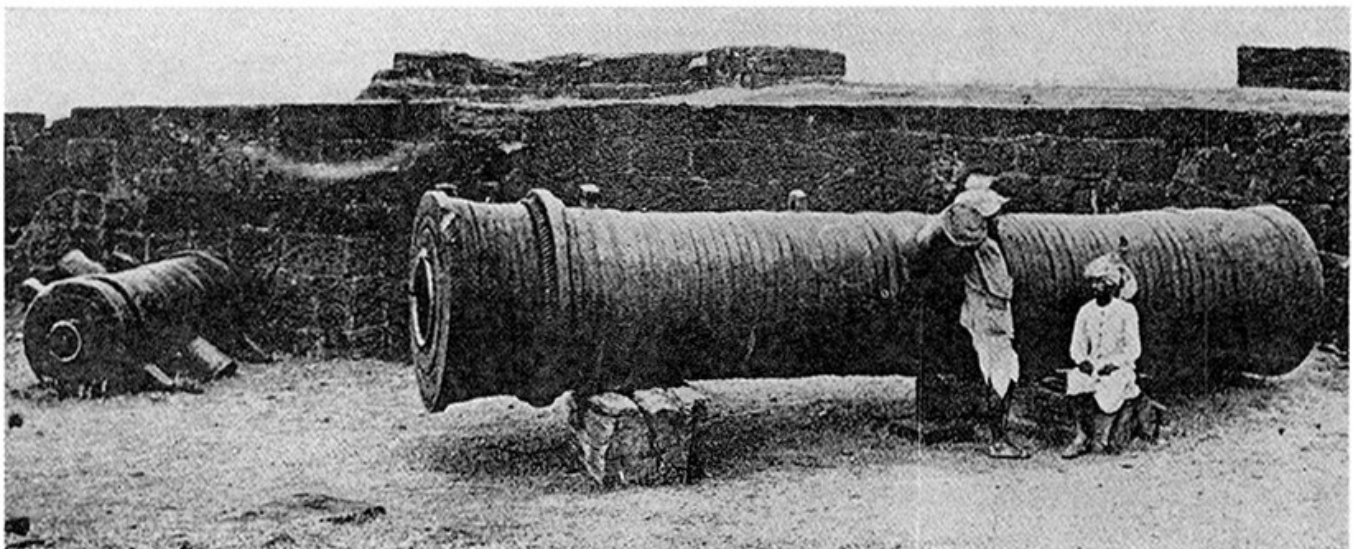
There are a couple of other points to note. The case of Chenna Basavappa shows there was factionalism at Court, and it can be assumed that in a clan-based society like Coorg's there were rivalries among the Kodava families. They would all work to repel an invader, but some were more or less disaffected, depending on whether the Raja favoured their clan or not. *The Expedition* says Chikka Vira held hostages to make his men fight. Perhaps that was true in a few cases, but the claim might derive from the oaths they swore. There was at least one clan in the northern zone whom the Raja made his favourites and it is unlikely their families were held hostage. In the case of senior officials, their families, living on a pension at the palace, would always be hostages. That was the whole idea. Why do you think Louis XIV forced his nobles to live at Versailles?

Finally, just to show how far behind the times Coorg was, Menon recorded the following in one of his meetings with Chikka Vira. They were discussing the preparations for war:

*I replied that myself and the Gentlemen had heard that all the Bungalows had been washed black. That stockades had been erected in the principal roads. That plates had been struck and his subjects ordered to carry the same around their necks, and that warlike preparations were being made. Whereupon the Rajah said, that all that was done because he had determined to carry on war against the Phirangies.*

*That the Shuvamoodrah (plate) would protect his people against destruction. And that therefore he ordered all his subjects to wear them and to come with them to pay him reverence. I answered that if he persevered in such hostile views, if he continued to shelter Sayapa Naik, his Samstanom would be ruined, that then it would be too late to remedy the evil, and suggested again that whatever he meant to do should be done after mature consideration. The Rajah answered, "Everything will be known the course of a short time."*

*[Below: sample Indian artillery pieces (at Bijapur)]*



It may be that they took Menon's gorget away believing it had magical properties. Menon does not elaborate about Sayapa Naik, and none of the European sources mention him at all. He (a *Naik* is a policeman or a corporal) may have been 'old business' of some kind, related to the Nagar uprising; perhaps Chikka Vira had decided that if the Company would not give up Basavappa, he would not give up fugitives from Company justice. Or, he could have had something to do with the letters from Benares and the prophecies.

Perhaps the greatest obstacle to success was the Raja himself. Perpetually on the verge of a nervous breakdown, he waffled. First, he called on his army to defend the kingdom to the death, which everyone was quite happy to do — 'just like the good old days, eh Vijay' — and then he retired to his Palace. Rice thought he should have been out on the front lines, showing himself to his men, even if he let his generals handle the practical matters. Remaining calmly at home receiving dispatches while reciting verses or playing chess only works if one's command is united. Worst of all, he entertained hopes of making a last-minute deal.

There is one other factor. Chikka Vira had become convinced Chenna Basavappa was being groomed by the British to replace him, but besides that worry, which proved groundless, there were more rumours troubling him. These were about a different claimant, a man whom he had supposedly killed in the 1920 purge, who was said to be alive and with the British. His name was Prince Virappa. The evidence suggests he and the other prisoners in that first purge did all die of starvation within three months, but the prince's wife, Rájammáji, who still lived in the kingdom, had long claimed her husband was still alive, and now people were beginning to believe her. So far as I can tell his existence was a complete invention which the Company, strangely enough, had no hand in creating, but it sowed confusion all the same. I suspect it was part of a power play by Chikka Vira's Brahminical Dewan, who had his own 'spin-off' show after the annexation.

Thus, after inciting his troops to resist, the Raja shortly after proclaimed a truce and ordered his people to avoid contact with the columns. In this change of heart Menon, at least by his own account, played a pivotal role.

## Right Hook — The HQ Division

As planned, on 1 April the HQ Division hived off from the Eastern Column at Piriapatna and marched north to Bettadapura, about 13 Km north of Piriapatna and likewise 13 Km east of the intended crossing point on the Kaveri River at Hebaale/Sulekotte. Hebaale is about 8 Km downriver (northeast) from Kushalnagar, and on the far side of a significant tributary, the Harangi, that has its confluence with the Kaveri between the intended fording spot and Kushalnagar. That tributary, which comes down from the mountains on a ESE line, is powerful enough that today it feeds its own canal. Hebaale lies on the west bank of the river, at some distance from it. The Kaveri makes a great bend around the place and the ford was on the northeast side, at Sulekotte, where there was a border post under Company control.

The Kaveri formed the kingdom's border along this whole sector. Today most of the land down by the river consists of rice-paddies and pasture fields cut up by hedgerows, ditches, and patches of forest, and it was probably the same then. This part of Coorg was the easiest to traverse.

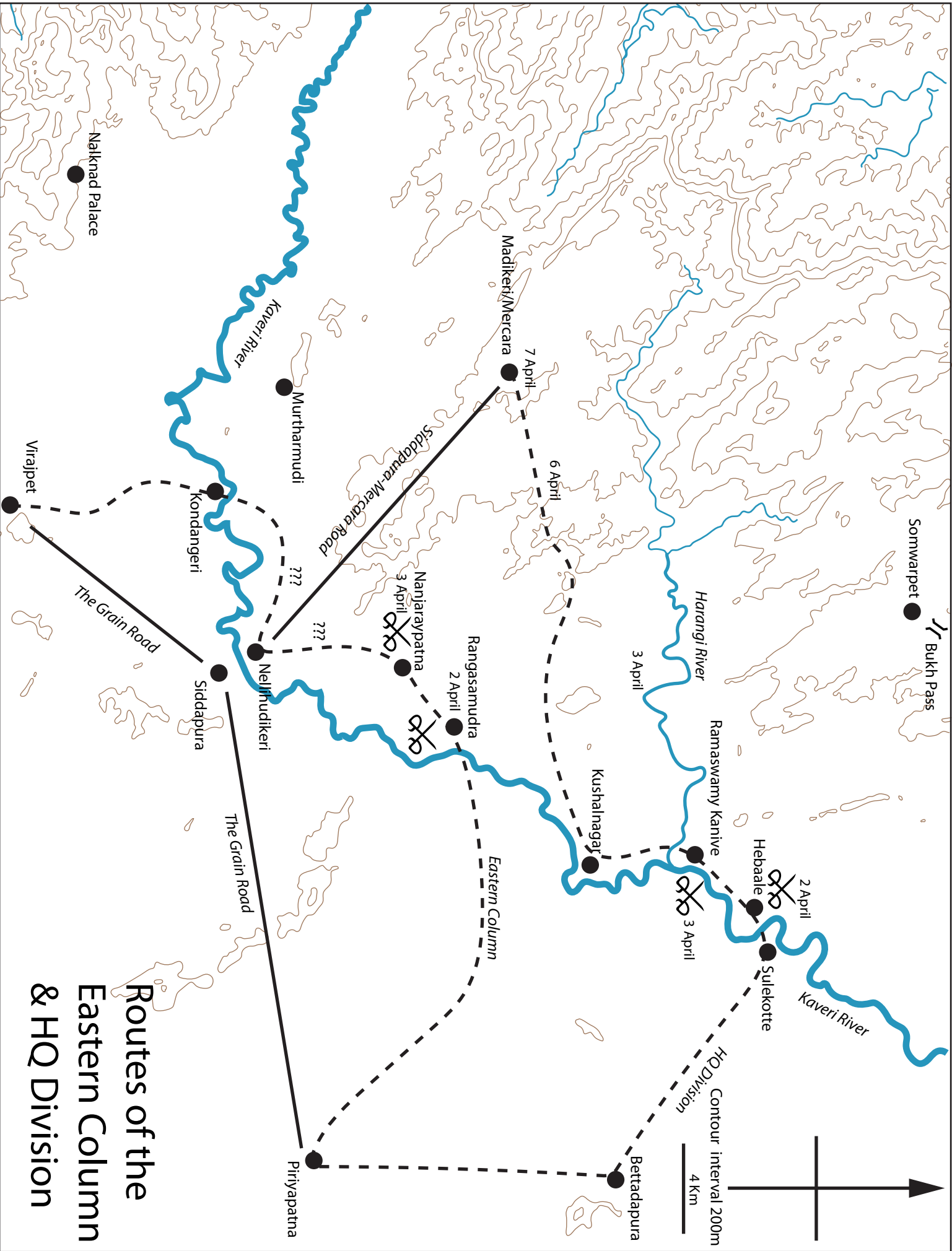
On the morning of 2 April the HQ Division crossed the Kaveri, somewhat behind the Eastern Column's timetable. The Northern Column had already penetrated the country the day before, and its expected line of march lay about 16 Km to the northwest of the crossing, so in theory the three columns might have aided one another, though with significant effort.

The crossing was opposed by 100 or 200 Kodavas defending 'a rude wall of mud and stone with a range of loopholes near its upper part' [*Rice p. 176-177*]. According to Rice, Colonel Fraser went out into the ford with a white handkerchief, only to be fired on by a *jinjall*. Two more shots were fired, so he scampered back. Since the crossing was now officially opposed they deployed the artillery and blasted the stockade with grapeshot and ball while the advanced guard made the crossing. The enemy scarpered once the guard reached the middle of the ford. The Division camped on the far bank.

[Below: HQ Division's crossing point on the Kaveri River, looking north. Hebaale is some distance away, off the left side of the frame.]







*The Expedition* says there were 200 Kodavas. Rice says 100 ‘Musalmans’. Since he also calls them Coorgs it may be they were some of the Muslim community. Or, they could have been mercenaries. They were commanded by a Coorg *Káryagár* (a field officer). 60 of them had matchlocks or manned the *jinjalls*. The rest had swords. Rice says ‘a very few had firearms’. By that he probably means modern flintlocks. There were also around 50 peasants armed with bows and arrows.



[*Jinjalls* were those long-barrelled ‘trench guns’ the Ottomans loved, with an effect something like a 50-cal sniper rifle; an accurate weapon for their day, they were commonly used in siege warfare and could be put onto a fixed mount. The picture above shows a similar Ottoman rampart gun.]

As would be the case with the Eastern Column, the nature of the ford made it difficult to move the guns across. The outposts suffered a night attack, but took no losses.

On 3 April the HQ Division marched to the pagoda of Ramasamy Curnaweye, now called Kanive. Its full name is Ramaswamy Kanive (Ramaswamy = Lord Rama). The Kaveri narrows briefly just at this spot, and there are rapids. Kanive is about 3 Km southwest of Hebaale and the next major obstacle, the Harangi River, is about 2 Km farther on. At Kanive there is small but famous ancient temple known as Rama Lingeshwara. The sources call it a pagoda, but it was not a large edifice. It was sited on a high bank overlooking the river, with access to the usual waterside landing for ritual washing. If the construction was anything like the present day, the actual shrine was enclosed by a walled compound, making it a defensible site.

And indeed the pagoda was held by the enemy in what Rice calls a ‘strong position’. Nonetheless, it was either abandoned on the column’s approach (according to *The Expedition*) or after a quarter of an hour’s skirmishing (Rice), after which the Division crossed the Harangi. Once across they encountered a barrier lodged in thick jungle. According to Rice this position held 350 men, mostly Coorgs. By a rapid assault supported by artillery the position was secured. The Column had three men wounded and took 12 prisoners and a cannon; the enemy lost 8-10 killed (this per *The Expedition*; Rice says ‘half a dozen’).

And that was the extent of the HQ Division’s campaigning, for a truce came into effect the next day. On 4 April they advanced only 8 Km, slowed by the large number of obstacles placed by the Kodavas, chiefly large tree trunks. A few disgruntled enemy took potshots at them, but the inhabitants had been ordered not to engage the invaders. One of the Raja’s Dewans, a Brahmin named Laksmi Náráyana (remember that name), entered the camp accompanied by Mahomed Taker Khan. It is probable that they asked Fraser to call a halt, since this was also requested of the other columns, but Fraser would only agree not to fire first in any encounter. The envoys also told

him Menon had been released (in some accounts of this embassy he was actually present), which was one of the two conditions for ending the invasion, but the other condition remained to be fulfilled — the Raja had not surrendered himself. Still, the Kodavas respected the truce when the Column resumed the advance.

On 5 April they were met by another minister of state, Dewan Apparanda Bopu, and 400 of his armed retainers, who offered to escort Fraser to Mercara. This offer was accepted. The column camped a few kilometres short of the capital that day. At 4pm on 6 April (7 April per *The Expedition*) Fraser took the surrender of Fort Mercara, swapping the Raja’s flag for the Union Jack (not the Company flag) to the accompaniment of a 21-gun salute. General Lindesay garrisoned the fort with a company of the 39th and camped the rest of his men on the high ground surrounding the settlement.

### **A Stroll in the Park — The Eastern Column**

The Eastern Column had the twin goals of cutting the Mercara-Siddapura road and of joining forces with Western Column coming up the Grain Road to clear the region around Virajpet. *The Expedition’s* account is rather confused thanks to the use of place names that have no equivalent on any map, old or modern. Rice is much clearer, but he omits a lot of details. He says the column marched due west to Rangasamudra, roughly 23 Km WNW of Piriapatna. Rangasamudra is more of a plot of land than a settlement, centered about 2,400 metres west of the river in a shallow valley pointing west, which gives access, eventually, to the Mercara-Siddapura road. There is a small pagoda there, too, but it is not mentioned in the accounts. The Column would take the road northwest toward Kushalnagar then turn west after about 13 Km and march cross-country for another 9 Km or so to the river.

[To give an example of just how badly *The Expedition* mangles place names, it says the crossing took place at Kungas Amoodum. That is how a Britisher of the 1830s pronounces Rangasamudra.]

The Eastern Column set off from Piriapatna at 3am on 2 April, reaching the banks of the Kaveri River by 10am (*Service History* says noon, which suggests the artillery and baggage may have been two hours behind). The distance traveled varies with the source material, but was about 22 Km. This fits a 13 Km march on the road to Kushalnagar and 9 Km west to the river. The column’s speed would average 3 Km an hour, faster on the road and much slower on the last stage. They had to cut a road through the jungle, but this seems to have been done fairly quickly, which again points to the use of the main road for most of the distance.

The Kodavas’ cordon of outposts included the intended crossing point. On the far side of the Kaveri was a breastwork manned by 300 men. Unfortunately, the defenders let the jungle guard their flanks. The Rifles of the 36th N.I. started up a fire-fight (which almost dragged in some of the other units, a tactical no-no) and the artillery commander, Lt. Montgomery, brought up a gun to further occupy the enemy’s attention while a pair of line companies crossed the river on either flank and began to encircle the position. The defenders quickly fled and only lost 6 (*Rice*) or 10 men (*Expedition*). The Kaveri’s bed

being rocky, it took until 4:30pm for the guns to be shifted across, and camp was made for the night. Some harassing fire took place, so the troops slept under arms, but there was no night attack.



*[The ground on the west bank of the Kaveri, near the crossing point; the river lies in the low ground beyond the tree line.]*

The next day the Column was delayed because the baggage was still on the other side of the river. It did not finish crossing until noon. Colonel Steuart had also lost the use of his local guides, who did not fancy going any further. Still, once the baggage arrived he delayed no longer but set out, sometime in the early afternoon. The Column marched toward Nunjarpet (Nanjarayapatna), about 4 Km SW from the camp. The oddest thing about this line of march is that it seems to favour taking the most difficult route, over some hilly ground called the Attur Forest.



*[Looking west up the valley of Rangasamudra from a spot near the Kaveri.]*

After a march of maybe 3 Km, when they had about a kilometre to go, the Column encountered another breastwork. This was a formidable post, multiple thorn-covered barricades atop steep slopes, creating a wall 50 feet in height. The place had been reinforced by 300 mercenaries rushed down the road from Mercara the previous night. The reinforcement commander was a 'Mogul or Patan' called Kurreem Khan, who was taken in the ensuing action.

*[‘Mogul’ means nothing other than that Kurreem Khan identified as such, embracing Mughal culture; Patans or Pathans are Pashtuns; ‘Afghan’ tended to be used for the northern tribes of that region and ‘Pathan’ for the southern, but it is only a loose definition. Their presence in India as mercenaries and warlords goes back well before the Mughals arrived, but their appearance in the South seems to date from the days when the Mughal Empire was expanding. Kipling’s Kim has the likeable Afghan rogue, Mahbub Ali, who is always being described as a ‘faithless Pathan’ despite his unwavering loyalty. Apparently that opinion*

*was not confined to the ‘racist’ British. They were regarded in the South as big talkers and bigger thieves.]*

Many of the stockades, despite their size, were well camouflaged, but the defenders opened fire too soon and revealed their position. The Column employed the same tactics as before, though there was stiffer resistance. The enemy lost 7 or 8 killed before they abandoned the post. According to *The Expedition*, the Raja had placed great hopes both in this position, which was a control point for the surrounding countryside, and in Kurreem Khan, and the loss of the place in such a short period of time, and his capture, were twin blows to morale at the Palace. The fort may have been directly associated with the ‘Raja’s farm’ (or it might even have been that place), since it was not on the main thoroughfare. The British, who camped in the works, found it to be a square stockade a half-mile broad. *The Expedition* says that the Mercara-Siddapura road lay just beyond this position, suggesting it runs through Nanjarayapatna, but it is actually some 3,500 metres farther on. Since there was no more fighting this does not really matter, but it is as well to be accurate.

The Column remained in camp. One of the gun carriages had been wrecked and needed to be fixed. Meanwhile, parties were sent out along the road in the direction of Mercara to tear down other defensive positions. According to *The Expedition*, Steuart never intended to march to Mercara but at first ordered the road cleared in that direction because he thought it led to where he did intend to go; on learning the correct lay of the land he allowed the work to continue as a blind.

His next objective was not Mercara but Virajpet. Virajpet sat astride a crossroads. East and west ran the Grain Road. North, a road went to Mercara, and a short distance along on the way to Mercara there was a side road leading west to the Raja’s palace at Nalknad. South, the same road ran to the border with Wynad. Rice is no help determining the route because the Raja’s flag of truce was about to be enforced and there was no more fighting, barring a few potshots; the flag met the Eastern Column late on 4 April. Rice only says the Column crossed the Kaveri again at Kondangeri — that is, where the Mercara-Virajpet road crosses the river. On a straight line it is just over 10 Km from Nanjarayapatna to the ford at Kondangeri, but it was most likely reached either by marching due west to the road and then south, or by first taking a short dog leg south to the Siddapura ford at the village of Nellihudikeri and then following the river west.

At 4am (*Service History* says 5am) on 4 April camp was broken and the column snaked its way 13 Km to Aracanel, reaching there by sunset. This is confusing. Were they not going to Kondangeri? Aracanel is yet another place name that the author of *The Expedition* has pulled out of a hat. Rice gives no details. I have a strong suspicion that Aracanel refers to a large betel nut plantation; the stimulant is obtained from the areca palm. One possible march route would be to take the Mercara-Siddapura road south for 3 Km to Nellihudikeri and then head west for 10 Km along the north bank of the Kaveri to Kondangeri. Only the account of the Western Auxiliary Column’s movements is more confusing than this.



A link-up was achieved with the Western Column, coming from Virajpet, at Mootoodanoor on 7 April. According to the *Service History* the place was south of the Kaveri. From Virajpet to the ford at Kondangeri it is 11 Km due north; Mootoodanoor must lie on that section of road. Naturally, after investigating maps and satellite images there is no such place. A possibility is the hilltop hamlet of Mythadi, 4 Km south of the ford. Yes, I know it looks nothing like 'Mootoodanoor', but at least it starts with an 'M'. One other possibility is that Mootoodanoor is one of the five founding villages of Virajpet. This seems more likely because Rice never mentions Mootoodanoor but says the two columns met at Virajpet; from there, elements of the Eastern Column proceeded from Virajpet up the Grain Road to open the Siddapura Pass into Mysore.

The Column suffered only 3 men wounded during the entire campaign. Coorg casualties are unknown but may have been around 20 men.

### Up'ards! — The Western Column

On 31 March the Western Column headed out from Cannanore into the foothills of the Western Ghats. They had to reach the border, where the foothills become the mountains, by the following day. While the ascent was going to be steep and hazardous, the road was at least passable for heavy equipment. Despite the Column's name it actually approached the kingdom from the south, following the Grain Road.

There is no data until 2 April. It is slightly under 50 Km in a straight line from Cannanore to the border. The column probably marched from Cannanore northeast to Irrikur the first day (30 Km) and on 1 April headed east along the banks of the Irikkoor River for 13 Km before turning left at Irrity to follow the Valiya Puzha north. The Valiya Puzha is a major tributary of the Irikkoor, flowing down from the Coorg plateau. They probably traversed half the remaining distance before halting. The first resistance came on 2 April, at a ford over the Stony River that marked the official border.

Identifying this ford, and the subsequent route up the escarpment, was difficult. Only *The Expedition* provides a detailed account of the route, which was traversed by the author a few months after the war. There is a major confluence at the spot of the ford, where a number of feeder streams join the Valiya Puzha. The sources often suggest that river is the same as the Stony River, but it seems more likely the latter was, technically speaking, a tributary called the Kall Hole, which drops south from the top of the escarpment and dog-legs east to join the Valiya Puzha at the confluence. Once across the ford there are two passes, or 'ghauts', to use the period term, that could have been taken to get to the top. The name of the pass was the Huggul Ghaut. Of course, the only maps that show it are too badly drawn to be of any use.

The first possibility would be to follow the modern Highway 30. Although it is still the chief route for commercial traffic and heavily congested, the road is very narrow and windy. It seems logical, therefore, that this highway was built over the old Grain Road, especially since it is still being used for the same purpose. And, it ends up at the right place. However, if this was the route,

then according to *The Expedition* the Stony River (whether that be the Kall Hole or the Valiya Puzha itself) is on the wrong side of the road. It seems very unlikely the author would have made a mistake since he walked the same route.

The second option is to follow the Kall Hole, meaning a short march westward along its northern bank before turning north. This puts the Stony River on the correct side of the line of march and fully identifies it as the Kall Hole, which has a rocky bed and is an intermittent stream. The problem is, there is no road. None whatsoever. Satellite images are not much help. After gazing long enough one begins to imagine seeing the line of it. Early 20th Century ordnance maps already show Highway 30 as the only route up the escarpment. Nevertheless, the line of the Kall Hole fits the description. Furthermore, after reaching the top one comes to the hamlet of Heggala (Huggul), which is bypassed if using Highway 30. Also, there was a significant fort/customs post called the East Ukudu which would be better sited at Heggala, and is so sited on very old maps. True, the top of the pass on Highway 30 has a giant sign reading 'Coorg Gate', but who knows when that name came into vogue.

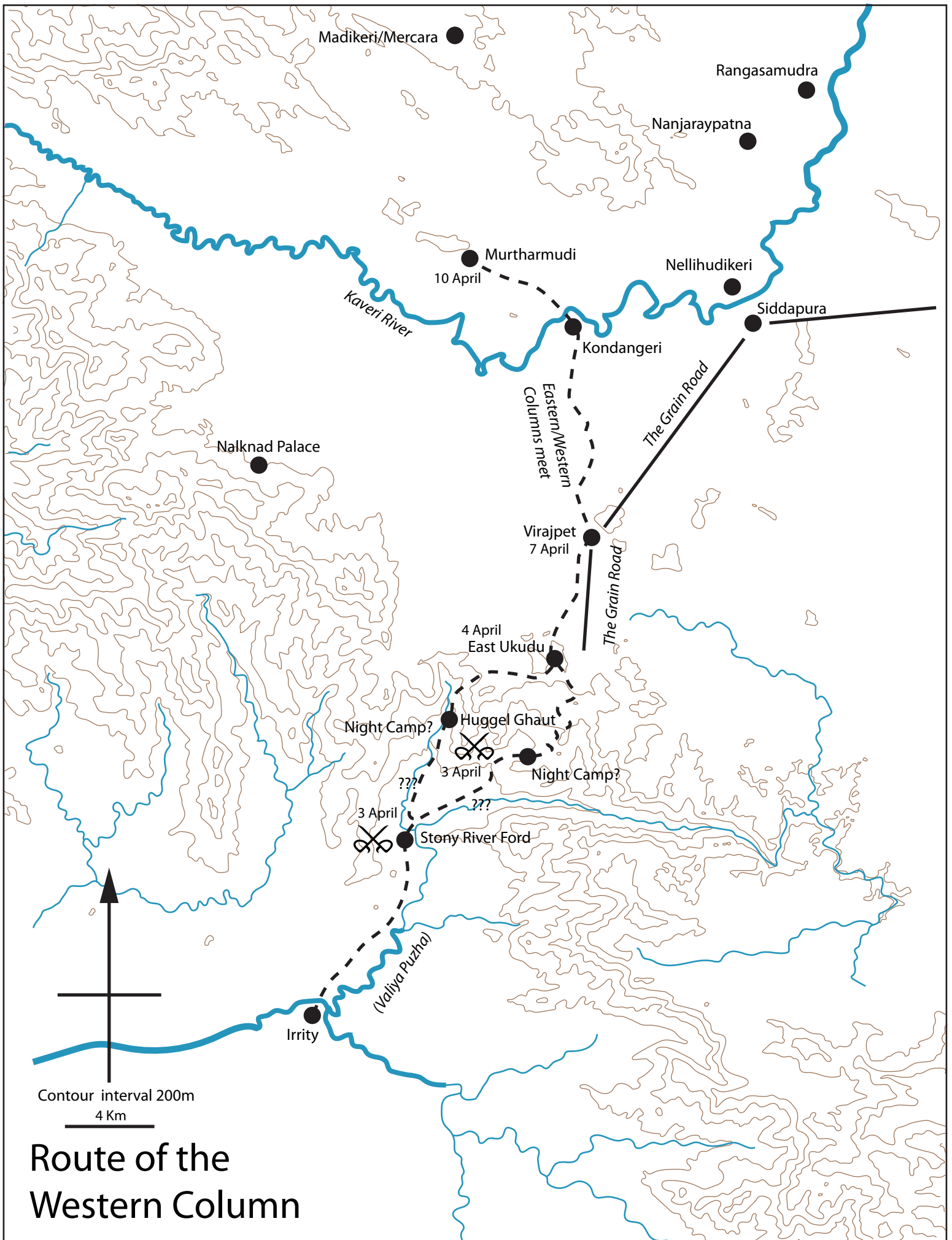
Given that both routes remain candidates, both are shown on the accompanying map. The distances and difficulty are roughly the same.



[Site of the ford seen from a modern road that takes the eastern bank of the main tributary of the Valiya Puzha. The bridged depression is the ford, and the Kall Hole passes through the gap in the hills. If the author of *The Expedition* is correct, the Column followed the stream west — that is, through the gap — before heading north (turning right) up the escarpment.]

The road from Irrity follows the Valiya Puzha, but not very closely until it approaches the ford. It then passes through a narrow gorge right by the river, the road being on the western or left bank. The confluence is on the far side; the slope descends to the ford. Today the Kall Hole is bridged in two places, and there is a third bridge a bit lower down on the Valiya Puzha that connects to the eastern bank of that river. In 1834 there were the same two options for crossing the Kall Hole: either the ford (now a bridge) at the confluence with the Valiya Puzha, which was wide and rocky, or a foot bridge erected by the Company about 200





Route of the Western Column

metres to the west. The Kall Hole flows between high, steep hills just there, which enabled the engineers to build at that spot. The bridge was stoutly constructed of wood but not suitable for heavy traffic like cannon, and it was only connected to the main road by a footpath. During the campaign the Stony River was bone dry, but the author of *The Expedition* records having (during the rainy season) to send his horse across the raging waters of the ford while he took the bridge and praying the beast did not drown. (The location of the foot bridge is another suggestion that the road followed the Kall Hole and not Highway 30.)

Colonel Fowles halted his column at a clearing in the jungle about 3 Km short of the ford. There were no habitations but there was a small stream. All around was thick jungle, right down to the river bank. After making camp about noon, at 2pm a patrol was sent forward which discovered an enemy picquet protecting the ford on the near side. This was just outside the bounds of the kingdom, which may explain why no defences had been erected. The picquet was driven back across the ford and into a stockade, where the Coorgs rallied. Probing this position the patrol suffered the loss of a popular junior officer of the 48th, Lt. Erskine, shot in the neck. They buried him back in the clearing by the stream. The Column remained encamped there overnight without being harassed.

The next day they tackled the stockade. Thanks to the jungle cover they were able to make a thorough reconnaissance at close range. The defences amounted to a three-sided stone-and-mud wall about seven feet high, with bamboo tubes used to make loopholes, enclosing a couple of preexisting buildings. There was so little water in the stream that the men could cross dry shod, but they debated using the bridge, which afforded access to a hill overlooking the stockade from its western flank. However, a frontal assault was decided upon because they could bring the cannon right down to the bank of the Kall Hole without being seen. The guns, under a Captain Taylor, opened up at 6am. Three rounds of grape and canister were enough to allow a storm, led by the men of H.M. 48th, which drove the enemy out of its position. A private of the regiment killed one of the enemy chiefs in the melee, and a lieutenant was wounded.

After reorganizing and getting across the ford the Column began the ascent to the top of the pass. Regardless of the choice of route it was an ascent of 1,500 metres over a distance of 10 Km or so.

To their dismay, but hardly to their surprise, the defenders had scattered tree-falls and abatis all along the way, and kept up a constant harassment, running out of the jungle to fire their matchlocks, then ducking back to reload, and falling back to the next position along as the one before it was enveloped. The pass became narrow. *The Expedition* says that the column's left had been pretty open earlier in the day but now 'became precipitous', the stream tumbling down through a ravine beside the road. The enemy had emplaced some *jinjalls* on the heights across the stream, but the angle was too great and they could not actually hit anyone. For some reason, the right flank of the column, which was jungly but more easy of ascent, was not screened at first, and light casualties were taken due to

flanking fire until skirmishers were put out (elements of H.M. 48th and grenadiers from the 32nd N.I.). These were also used to turn the various positions that were encountered.

Besides the roadblocks, which were everywhere, the Column counted another two breastworks and two stockades. Clearing them of enemy took until 3:30pm. Removing the deadfalls so the guns could be brought up took ten hours of backbreaking labour. In some places the engineers gave up and just cut a new road. No chainsaws or bulldozers in those days. As they pressed forward the defence became more desperate, the Kodavas fighting hand to hand. The Coorg hatchets were fearsome weapons, but they did not have the reach of a musket and bayonet. And, they were unable to match the British in volume of fire.



[Highway 30, somewhere high in the pass. There is no way to obtain a picture of the more likely route along the Kall Hole without hiking the forest (apparently there is a spectacular waterfall). Apart from the modern metalled road the terrain would be about the same either way. The highway does not appear to have any steep sections. Instead, it consists of a never-ending series of switchbacks that rise imperceptibly, except to a person on foot, who would find it extremely tiring. The same seems to be true of the Kall Hole route. Only near the top does the incline become steep.]

From Rice (p.180):

*The first stockade was taken with trifling loss; but from that time till four in the afternoon a series of hard conflicts was maintained in carrying the successive barriers, which the enemy defended with bravery, maintaining at the same time a continued skirmishing from the wood. The last stockade was only captured by attacking it in reverse as well as in flank. In these achievements Capts. Butterworth and Macdonald greatly distinguished themselves. Also a volunteer, Thomas Bell, son of Col. Bell of H. M. 48th Regt. excited the admiration of the Commanding Officer for his "conspicuous bravery in every attack and skirmish with the enemy."*

By 4pm a halt had to be called. The men were exhausted. They found a flat area about 5.5 Km above the entrance to the pass and camped, setting up a cannon and a mortar in an advanced position to cover themselves and posting picquets on some high ground to the east which dominated the campsite. There was the usual harassing fire in the night, but the enemy were repulsed by the heavy weapons and suffered a critical loss.

*The damp air of the jungle, and the elevation to which the force had attained, made the night appear intensely cold; but all were tired enough to sleep; and the night was*

*passed with only one disturbance, occasioned by a number of lights appearing in the jungle in front, which were withdrawn on a shell being thrown amongst them. I have heard it said that by good practice, assisted by good fortune, this shell pitched into a fire around which some of the leaders of the Coorgs were sitting with their men; and, bursting, killed and wounded many, which, in addition to their loss of 4 chiefs and 250 men, which they had experienced during the day, so discouraged them that they did not oppose the advance of Colonel Fowlis the following morning.*

*[Expedition, p. 38]*

The loss of a chieftain was a significant event. It meant the loss of the head of an extended family.

At 6am on 4 April the column resumed its march, but they were soon pleasantly surprised to receive a flag of truce and a letter from the Raja. They were asked to halt pending negotiations, but Fowlis, like the other commanders, refused, saying only he would not fire unless fired upon, because he had been ordered to march to Virajpet. The flag was put at the head of the column. It was still a tough march, for they had many obstacles to clear. The enemy were present 'in great numbers', but retreated, even abandoning the stout stockade called the East Ukudu — the guard house used to control the merchant traffic in time of peace — at the head of the pass, which was reached after five or six hours of hard climbing. A detachment was left to secure it, and the rest of the column continued for another 2.5 Km until a suitable clearing could be found. Here, to their amazement, once they encamped they found the locals anxious to set up a bazaar for them! In particular they supplied the Column with grain. This was especially welcome since the baggage train took until nightfall to reach the summit. *The Expedition* says that the bulk of the Kodavas who still wanted to fight had taken themselves off to Lower Coorg in hope of loot, for the Western Auxiliary Column was being picked apart.

The next day the Column made an easy march of 8 Km from the East Ukudu to Virajpet. From here, on 7 April, it marched to Mootoodanoor (or Virajpet?), where it met with advance elements of the Eastern Column before crossing the Kaveri River and proceeding to Mootramoody (Murtharmudi) on 10 April. That is per *The Expedition*, as you can tell from the confused account. Murtharmudi is 13 Km south of Mercara and 15 Km from Virajpet. Part of the time lag will have been due to crossing the Kaveri. A garrison was left at Virajpet: 2 companies of the 48th N.I. detached from the Eastern Column and 30 men of H.M. 48th from the Western Column, plus one 12-pounder howitzer under a Colonel Brook of one of the 48th regiments. The rest of the Column remained based at Murtharmudi for several days, though it seems they sent parties out on various tasks.

One source lists British casualties as 13 killed and 36 wounded. *The Expedition* says 11 killed and 34 wounded; perhaps that does not include camp followers. Estimated Coorg casualties were 250, including 4 chieftains, plus the unrecorded losses caused by the rogue shell.

### **Colin Paterson's Busy Day — The Northern Column**

When we last left Colin he had just received orders to proceed to Bangalore. That was on 1 March 1834. On 17 March he was attached to the medical staff responsible for the Artillery, Sappers & Miners, and HQ of the Northern Column (the foot regiments had their own medical staff). As an aside, it shows the Raja was exaggerating the threat against him back in September of 1833; staff deployments were still being handed out five months later.

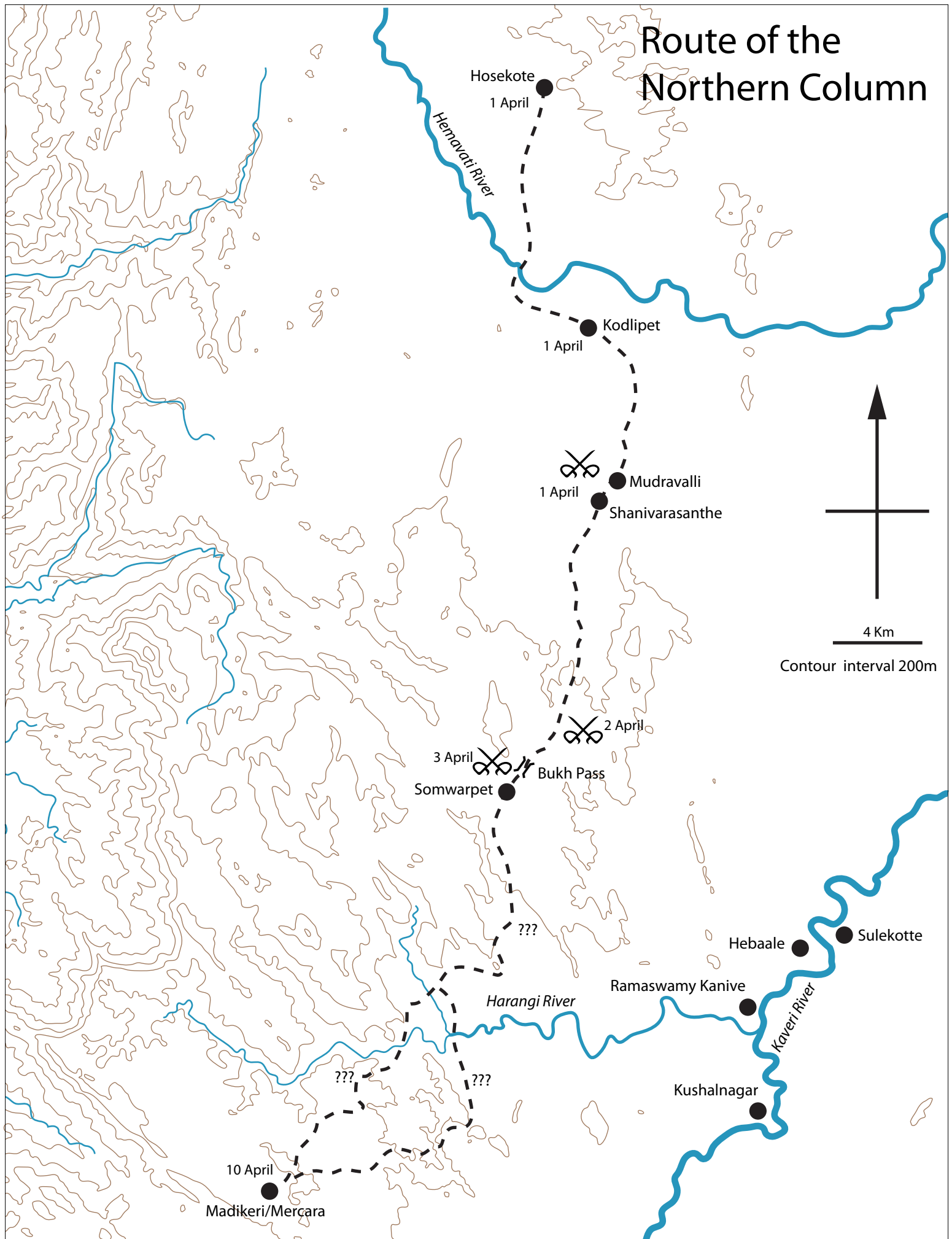
Although I earlier tried to paint a picture of what he would have seen on the march I have been unable to determine whether Colin actually accompanied the Northern Column into the Kingdom. Medical service was split between a garrison branch and a regimental branch. Surgeons routinely switched back and forth, but they were two separate command structures. His last posting was to a regiment, but that was the 2nd Light Cavalry, which did not go on the campaign, and the records seem to show that he was now under a garrison command. Furthermore, he was given temporary charge of the column's Field Hospital and appointed Medical Storekeeper (they must have been short-staffed). The field hospital was located at 'Rensminah Ooscothah'. Even the clerk who typed that name had to put a question mark beside it. But it is in fact a butchered rendition of Kenchammana Hosakóte, the Column's base camp, located a few kilometres outside the border. All that is recorded of his service during the war is an entry:

*'Approval of conduct for attention to sick and wounded brought to the notice of Officer Commanding Northern Column and Sup.G. Surgeon Mysore Division by Captain/now Major General/J. Lawrie, commanding Depot'.*

If the field hospital remained where it was the poor wounded would, after being patched up by the regimental surgeons, have had to bump their way in bullock carts for three days along bad tracks to reach Colin's hospital. On the other hand, because there is no record of the Coorgs attacking the 'line of communication' it may be that the columns were entirely self-contained, in which case the field hospital would have been with the baggage train, which did come under attack a few times. It is fun to imagine Colin clad in a bloodstained apron and brandishing a bone-saw, bawling out a Kodava in broad Scots for breaking into the hospital tent, 'get oot o' it ye bluidy wee Coorgi!' One could also speculate about what he thought of the Raja when they finally reached Mercara. However, I strongly suspect the base camp never moved.

The Northern Column left the bustling metropolis of Kenchammana Hosakóte on 1 April. This is not the ancient town of Hosakóte, located on the other side of Bangalore and noted for a famous battle, but a village about 4.5 Km north of the Hemavati (Hemavathi) River, which forms the border with Coorg along that part of its length. The ford, which is not specifically named, would be roughly 45 Km north of Mercara, whether following a straight line southeast from Hosakóte or at a spot near the modern bridge by Harihalli. There are a few shallow places and some tracks leading to and from the river banks in the southeast direction. But, remembering the cannon and the train the ford at Harihalli seems more likely. It would only add 2-3 Km to the day's march.

# Route of the Northern Column





Marching on a line southeast from this ford the first enemy village entered was Kodlipet. *The Expedition* says this was a place 'of considerable size'. When they entered the village they were met by a crowd of curious townsfolk who might have joined the column as guides but were unfortunately scattered by a roving squadron of Mysore Horse. Since they were unarmed they were probably not Kodavas. Kodlipet might have been a place annexed by Coorg in earlier times.



*[The ford over the Hemavati, looking along the projected line of march to Kodlipet. Coorg is on the right bank. Although the river looks deep, there are fords, especially in the dry season – one can be seen in the distance. If the Column instead took the straight line across country to find a ford it would strike the river at a spot somewhat to the left of the clump of trees on the left bank.]*

The column then made its way southwest by a short valley, 2-3 Km long, to the larger valley of a tributary of the Hemavati, the Gaudahalli Hole, which flows down from the south; this they followed, marching parallel to the route of the modern highway. The shallow valley averages 500 metres across and features numerous rice paddies, which were dry at that time. *The Expedition* recounts (p. 466) that, about 8 Km south of Kodlipet:

*...when the advanced guard had ascended a hill, and was entering some dry paddy fields, a matchlock fire was opened on it from a thick jungle on the left [east], distant about 150 yards, which was returned; and Colonel Waugh directed a 6-pounder to open on the jungle, whilst detached parties were sent round the skirts (the jungle, though of some extent still being isolated); but the enemy contrived to make their escape without loss. The column reached Santee [Sunti or Shunti, a tiny hamlet] at about four P.M., and the camp was formed on some rising ground. Distance marched, about twelve miles: country open at first, but latterly dotted with large patches of jungle. The 55th had one man only wounded, and the Deputy-Assistant Quartermaster-General, Captain Simpson, had his horse shot under him.*

Rice says this position, held by about 200 men, was actually at Kodlipet. According to him, camp was made at Shanivarasanthe, after a second, very brief action at Mudravalli, about 1,400 metres NNE of Shanivarasanthe. I am inclined to follow Rice. Sunti is a tiny place among the hills, another 8.5 Km farther south. It is a possible campsite, but the Column had already had a long day's march and had fought two actions.

From Shanivarasanthe southward the terrain becomes rougher, the hills forming multiple ribs running north-south, and the jungle thickens. A day's march or so to the west the wall of the Western Ghats juts up. The next

obstacle would be the Bukh Pass, about 22 Km south of Kodlipet, which led down to the provincial 'town' of Somwarpet, the only significant village between the Hemavati and Mercara, Kushalnagar being the only other 'urban' location in all of northern Coorg.

The pass lies on the watershed between the tributaries of the Hemavati and those of the Harangi; the Kushalnagar-Mercara road runs parallel to the Harangi on that river's south bank. Somwarpet controlled the north-south road and a secondary road running from Mysore down to the coast through a pass outside the bounds of the kingdom.

Though lacking villages the region was thickly dotted with homesteads, and from the hour it set out on 2 April the Column was engaged in a running fight with the Coorg 'minutemen' defending their homes. They broke camp at dawn and almost immediately came under fire, the enemy targeting the baggage train. The attackers withdrew, but launched another ambush about 7am when the Column passed by some habitations on the verge of a patch of jungle. In both these affairs the men of Coorg let the advance guard pass by before attacking, so now flankers were detached from the column. Another ambush occurred at 9am. This time, the British flanking party on the right stumbled over the enemy position and spooked them into retreat across some paddy fields; taking cover in a belt of jungle on the other side, the enemy commenced a ragged fire. The flankers, reinforced, formed a skirmish line and assaulted the position with the bayonet, driving the enemy off — the men, under a Captain Longworth, pursuing the enemy so far they almost lost the Column. Again, at 11am, the enemy attacked the baggage. Reinforcements were sent back to deal with the problem and managed to kill several of the attackers while only losing a single man.

At 1pm the Column came up against a well-sited stockade. The position lay at the crest of a steep slope, accessible from the front only by a narrow pathway, not suitable for artillery.

*The advanced guard had now been marching and skirmishing for five hours, and advantage ought to have been taken of this halt to relieve them; but it was not done, and, after a short halt, Captain Longworth, with twenty Europeans, and thirty of his own men [9th NI], was again detached, receiving orders to proceed to a large tree, distant a mile and a half; to halt there until he saw the column make a move, and heard the advance sound, when he was to push on over some wooded heights in his front, and then, inclining to his right, he would fall in with a stockade, or breast-work, which he was to take in flank or rear.*

*Captain Hutchinson, 31st, was also again detached, with orders of the same sort, excepting that he was to incline to the left. No guides were given to these parties, nor was there a path to guide them in the direction of the stockade. The result of this combined movement was, that Captain Hutchinson, having taken too wide a circle, found himself in the rear of the advancing column; whilst that under Captain Longworth made little advance, owing to the difficulty of the ground and jungle.*

*The remainder of the advanced guard, under Lieut. Colonel Perry, got into the fire from the stockade at two P.M. A gun*

*was then brought forward, and fired round-shot with some effect; but the Brigadier coming up, it was ordered by him to be loaded with grape, which, however, could not be fired, as from the formation of the road it would more have endangered his own men than the enemy.*

*I must now return to Captain Longworth's party. He had forced his way as rapidly as possible through a very dense jungle, and at last came to a deep and almost impracticable ravine. He had partially succeeded in surmounting this obstacle when he heard the recall sounded, repeated several times, and firing in his rear. This made him think the recall was for him, and, retiring, he came upon the road in rear of the column, which had then halted.*

*The advanced guard, with the grenadiers of H.M. 55th, and 9th N.I., were warmly engaged in front; and Captain Longworth was also ordered to proceed to the front and join in the attack.*

*By this time Lieutenant Robertson, with twenty men, and Captain Warren, 55th, with ten more, having been ordered up, had arrived at the point of the road where it turns to the right. Advancing from tree to tree, in front of his men, Captain Warren discovered the stockade, the proper right of which was on higher ground than the left. Thinking there was a probability of being able to fire from this high ground into the stockade, he proceeded in that direction, when he found the party under Captain Longworth already there, and Lieut. de Warren, 55th, who commanded the Europeans with him, had fallen into a pitfall. Thinking it difficult to pass in this direction, and seeing many men fall, he ordered the party of H.M. 55th to advance, passing by the right; another party going to the extreme right: whilst the party of support, under Lieutenant Robertson, H.M. 55th, followed, inclining to the left, and Captain M'Lean and Lieutenant de Warren going up under cover of the trees and a thick bamboo jungle, to the extreme left. When this formation of attack had been completed, Captain Warren ordered the charge, and, cheering on his men, led them at the double up the hill. The ascent was so steep and difficult that a halt was necessary about half way, to enable the men to recover their breath: they delayed for a few moments under cover, when another cheer was given, and a rush made at the work, which was crowned almost simultaneously, Lieutenant Robertson with the grenadiers of H.M. 55th getting over at the embrasure in the very teeth of the gun. The enemy, struck with a panic, deserted their post en masse, losing but one man killed. He was the last to leave his gun, and was shot through the head when running down the hill after his comrades. A prisoner was also made, he was lurking in the bushes, and wore a Coorg medal on his arm.*

*[Expedition pp. 469-470]*

*The Expedition records 15 wounded, mostly among the 55th, and one KIA, plus one officer shot in the arm by an arrow. The Column advanced another 1,600 metres and encamped, with the enemy remaining nearby but out of range. Some secondary sources, and even Rice, confound this action with the key battle at the Buhk Pass, fought the next day, resulting in an account of a single battle with two separate grand tactical manoeuvres. The fight just*

*described had been at a small outwork that guarded the northern approach to Somwarpet. It is safe to infer the other approaches were similarly protected; on most old maps Somwarpet is depicted with the usual 'fortress' symbol. And so it would prove.*

*A further march was begun on 3 April, with the men expecting hard fighting, but confident. They also expected to link up with the HQ Division that evening at the Harangi ford. The Column set out at dawn but found the road so bad they could only make 3 Km, and after two hours the guns had only managed to traverse 800 metres. The route was absolutely choked with felled trees.*

*A Major Bird of the 31st N.I. was Field Officer of the Day and led the Advanced Guard, consisting of 80 men of the 55th, 160 sepoys, and 80 pioneers. Sometime between 7am and 8am they heard the guns of the HQ Division in action at the Pagoda of Kanive. By 9:30am they were approaching a wall of jungle in which they knew the enemy must be waiting. Colonel Waugh ordered the column to leave the road by the left, well out of range of an enemy breastwork he had spotted. After advancing a little further, out of the enemy's arc of fire, they stopped to wait for the guns.*

*Our flankers and the rifles lay well covered in the jungle, covering the working parties; and, although we knew it not at the time, the stockade was within a mile and a half of the spot which afforded them such excellent cover. Its position was on the top of a range of heights of considerable elevation, inclining slightly to our left, thickly studded with jungle and magnificent teak trees to the very summit, affording every advantage for a reconnaissance. The force had now halted nearly two hours, and the guns had come up; no reconnoitring parties had, however, been sent out; the skirmishers were drawn in, and the advance, under Major Bird, was ordered to proceed. This advance, which was the attacking party, had thus two duties to perform, which can scarcely be both well done in a close, woody, country — namely, to reconnoitre and attack. The first, in close cover, ought to be effected by pushing on an officer, a few sharp non-commissioned officers, and some intelligent men, well and closely supported, who should advance and retire from and to their supports according to circumstances, and the force of the enemy opposed to them; when, the object being attained, the stockade should be battered in front by the artillery, and then stormed, should it not be possible to turn its flanks. Should that, however, be practicable, a charge in the rear of each flank, with a few rounds in front from the artillery, followed up by a front attack, soon settles the affair.*

*Major Bird, indeed, on advancing, sent for Captain Hutchinson, and ordered him to form a reconnoitring party with half the advance. This was done, and they took a détour to their right in hopes of reaching the left flank of the stockade; but before that could be done the recall was sounded, and the advance was again concentrated.*

*The intention of the Brigadier was doubtless to attack the stockade or barrier on each flank with the divided advanced guard, and in front with the artillery. But the guns could not be brought nearer than three-quarters of a mile to the stockade; and owing to the ignorance, or, more probably, treachery of the guides (who ought to have been*

marched as prisoners, which might have prevented their treachery, and shot when they had accomplished it), both intended flanking parties were brought up directly in front of the centre of the stockade, where they were exposed to a cross fire, and suffered greatly.

The advance, under Captain Hutchinson, intended to attack the left flank of the stockade, obliqued slightly to the right; and being headed by a guide who possessed the confidence of the Brigadier, he hoped speedily to effect his object. Instead of this, however, he was led through deep ravines, and amongst felled trees, and was brought up to within a hundred yards of the front of the stockade, when it was reported to him that Major Bird, who was supposed to have gone off to turn the right flank, was in the rear, following up the same desperately bad road that Hutchinson's party had been led into. Hutchinson, therefore, halted for Major Bird, who having joined him, the whole waited a short time previous to attacking, to enable the pioneers to join. The advance was thus all together in front of the stockade, and near the barrier-gate subsequently denominated by the natives the "Gate of Slaughter". This gate was flanked by small bastions, on one of which a small gun, protected by gabions, was mounted. A deep ditch, partly filled with a very strong and formidable thorn, ran along the face of the stockade, which extended on either side of the gateway for half a mile. A strong palisade without, with a glacis, covered the inner walls. There were many weak points in the work, it is true; but the whole was so perfectly screened by jungle that it would have taken several hours to have properly reconnoitred it.

When halting in this position down came the anticipated volley of musketry. Cheerful huzzas responded to the fire, and Major Bird and Lieutenant Heriot, H.M. 55th, instantly led on the leading sections, which divided to the right and left, and rapidly commenced a roar of musketry along both breasts of the stockade. Eight or ten pioneers now came up and advanced to the barrier, but were almost instantly either killed or wounded. Captain Hutchinson then, by order of Major Bird, went down the pathway he had formerly ascended with his men, and which was exposed to a cross fire from both flanks of the stockade, in the hope of being able to bring up some more pioneers. In returning with these he was shot through the wrist.

Lieutenant Heriot, finding his men fall very fast, ordered them to fall back behind some bushes, which afforded but slight protection. From this position rush after rush was made at the palisades, but without success: in one of these Lieutenant Heriot fell severely wounded. Major Bird now made several gallant but ineffectual attempts to bring up the ladders, but they failed, and the barrier-gate was left unforced. So destructive was the fire on this spot, that nothing could approach it and live: a party of pioneers made the attempt, but they were all instantly killed or wounded, with the European pioneer who led them on. Three serjeants of H.M. 55th, and many privates, now lay dead near this spot; and a report having been made to Colonel Waugh, who was in the rear with the guns at the open space before the road turns into the jungle, of the untoward state of affairs, he ordered up a fresh reinforcement of eighty Europeans. A reinforcement of fifty Europeans and the greater part of the 31st N.I. had

previously been sent. Lieut.-Colonel Mill, who commanded H.M. 55th, placed himself at the head of these, and was marching off, when the remainder of his corps called out — "Let us all go with old Charley; we will not be left behind," and followed their comrades: nor can I at present understand how these men could pass Colonel Waugh, without his having seen them, and prevented their advance had he thought fit.

As soon as Colonel Mill reached the scene of action he perceived what a hopeless case it was. The Europeans he had brought with him only increased the confusion: they opened a brisk but useless fire against the loopholed walls and bastions, and a great many of them thus fell, increasing the already large list of casualties. Lieut.-Colonel Mill himself fell shortly after reaching the ground: he remained much exposed, encouraging his men, and was shot through the lungs. Ensign Robertson, 9th N.I., had been killed early in the action; and Ensign Babington, 31st N.I., was here killed by a jinjall ball. Lieutenant Heriot, H.M. 55th, when being carried off the field, where he had so nobly behaved, and so much distinguished himself, was again hit; the ball passing through his left arm, which lay over his heart, and passing off by his left side.

Many officers had been wounded; the troops had been under fire for four hours, and finding their efforts totally ineffectual, became dispirited; but no order had as yet been given for the retreat. It is possible Colonel Waugh had been misled as to the strength and position of the place, and of the impracticability of its being taken at the point attacked; for nothing could have exceeded the gallantry of the troops employed in the assault. It was remarked that Lieutenant de Warenne, H.M. 55th, when the scaling-ladders were brought up, was seen using every possible exertion to fix them at the barrier with his own hands, whilst under a very heavy fire.

Major Bird, finding how impossible it was to force the works of the enemy, or to check their fire, now consulted with the next senior officer; and they decided on a retreat, which was effected with great difficulty. The severely wounded could not be removed from the position, an attempt to carry off the body of Lieut.-Colonel Mill having entirely failed, two of the carriers being killed.

[Expedition pp.34-36]

Rice says (p.179):

'But the stockade, known as the Buck stockade, was exceedingly strong; outside, protected by thick bamboos and trees and surrounded with a deep ditch, and inside, built of mud walls faced with stones and pierced with innumerable loopholes which commanded the approaches in every direction. The intrepid Coorgs who held it were commanded by Madanta Appachu, a fine old Coorg, of tall stature and martial bearing, who ever since the British accession was a most loyal and devoted servant of Government.'

The Kodavan victory at the Battle of Somwarpet or Bukh Pass, is still celebrated in the region, as is the defending general, Madanta Appachu, one of their own. Rice goes on to say Madanta Appachu became the Head Sheristadar of Coorg and died in 1876. Thanks to his energy and skill, the



British were given a serious drubbing. The official report says 48 killed and 117 wounded. The severely wounded had to be left behind, and were slain when the men of Coorg sallied. The Kodavas set fire to the jungle and tried to overrun the Column, but the withdrawal remained orderly. Nonetheless, the enemy continued to harass the Column all the way back to its old camp, and then all through the night.



*[Group photo of Madanta Appachu's family; the source from which the photo was taken says the tall man standing at the back is the General, but surely it should be the seated man? Nevertheless, the four boys are apparently the General's sons.]*

Colonel Waugh, who had made only half the distance to Mercara, resumed his advance after the Raja's truce came into force. The Column reached the capital on 10 April, joining forces with the HQ Division, which was then in the process of handling the Raja's surrender. There are no details of the route taken, but the most likely would be to press south from Somwarpet to the banks of the Harangi along a minor road, fording the river, which is quite wide, probably consuming an entire day in the process, then striking the Mercara-Kushalnagar high road several kilometres east of the capital and making good time for the remainder of the journey.

Colonel Waugh's conduct was examined and no blame was attached to him for the failure to take the stockade. He had been given a tough job and the dice were against him.

*[Because it is called the Battle of Somwarpet, because Somwarpet can be classed as an 'urban centre' of sorts, and because the defensive works were so massive, it might be thought the attack was made against the town itself. Some sources suggest the stockade predated the town, since the Kodavas had no interest in establishing towns until relatively modern times. The argument*

*against the site of the fort also being the town is that the stockade occupied the high ground; the town is in the valley.]*

### **Jackson in the Valley — Western Auxiliary Column**

The Western Auxiliary Column was structured as an observation corps; critically, it lacked artillery support. This fact makes its movements appear somewhat strange, though there must have been a logic to them. Like the other columns Jackson's had the secondary goal of cutting off the Raja's potential escape route, but its main purpose was to prevent parties of Coorgs getting down on to the Coast and causing mischief. The borders of Lower Coorg, or Sullia district, came quite close to the coast, though no two maps seem to show the same borderline. Depending on the map, the coastal strip outside Coorg was between 15 Km and 35 Km wide, so it would be very easy for a band of warriors to erupt across the border without much warning. The Column, small as it was, consisted of nearly the whole garrison of Mangalore — some elements had also been sent off to augment the Western Column — and there was a fear that malcontents might loot the Company treasury in that city before the garrison could return. This lent an urgency to Jackson's orders that made things harder for him.

The general lay of the land is as follows: a flat coastal strip that was a mix of farms, jungle, and mangrove swamps, backed by forested foothills that were perhaps 40-50 Km from the beaches, laced with plantations and farms, then the Western Ghats themselves another 30 Km or so farther east. North and south were big rivers, coming down from the mountains to the Arabian Sea, and the mountains themselves, which curved like the horns of a buffalo toward the coast. The borderline ran from southwest to northeast across this basin, and the main axis of advance for either side's forces was the Buntwall Road, which came out of Mangalore, crossed the northern river — the Netravathi — and passed through Buntwall before heading southeast up into the foothills. At Bellare the road bent south and headed into Sulya or Sullia, the capital of Lower Coorg. This lay among the foothills on the southern river — the Payaswani. From Sullia the road followed the Payaswani up into the Western Ghats on a southeast line, emerging onto the Coorg plateau and running all the way to Mercara. Only a little south of this route, among the highest peaks, is the source of the Kaveri. The basin of Lower Coorg was perhaps 60 Km wide and 35 Km deep. There was only one pass to worry about, the one used by the Buntwall Road. Two other passes existed within Lower Coorg south of the Netravathi but they climbed to the plateau far to the north; one road did not go into Upper Coorg at all and the other connected to Kodlipet but was not a main thoroughfare. There were many stockades in the district, some made of stone.

Now... if the object was to cover Mangalore and secure the main enemy axis of advance surely the Column ought to have stuck to the Buntwall Road all the way from the city. Bellare was the final objective. On most old maps it is shown as a border post, meaning there would have been little need to trek through any part of Lower Coorg at all. The author of *The Expedition* gripes that it was a bad spot to observe from, but the location actually put the Column within equal striking distance of just about everywhere in Lower Coorg. Some secondary sources erroneously claim



the Column was bound for Sullia town, but even if that were true, Sullia was also on the Buntwall Road. Rice adds that Jackson was ordered not to split his forces. This would have been easier to do if they had stuck to the main road.

Instead, the Column took the coast road south from Mangalore to the small port of Coombla (Kumbla), a point in line with Bellare, and marched east in a zigzag pattern, by bad roads, encountering a number of enemy stockades which it was ill-equipped to deal with. Rice says Jackson was required to discover what sort of presence, if any, the Coorgs had on the coastal plain, and push them back. There was a general expectation that the enemy would not fight very hard, if at all (see the quote a few paragraphs farther on).

It is only my opinion, but I think Jackson was ordered to follow the borderline of the Lower Coorg basin, see what was up and disrupt any enemy concentrations. Once he reached Bellare he would have command of the main road and could halt there without covering the rest of the distance to the Netravathi, which was heavily jungled. It seems unlikely he would be allowed to cross the border before 1 April, but that may have happened. If so, he made no deep penetration.

The Column started assembling at Kumbla on 24 March and began their part of the campaign at 3am on 29 March. Rice provides a better account of the route than *The Expedition*, which as usual is full of badly spelled place names, but he is still hard to follow. Kumbla is a small port about 35 Km south of Mangalore, situated on the inland side of one of the ubiquitous lagoons that line the coast. In 1834 it had a nearby fort that could be used as a depôt.

Officially the Column had no cannon, but unofficially a young volunteer turned up with a pair of light guns shortly before the advance inland began. According to Rice, the 50 sappers that were to accompany the Column were held back at Cannanore. No reason is given.

Dawn broke about 6am, when the Column was some 12 Km out of Kumbla. Despite this being the coastal plain the road was a hard one. Shortly after dawn the advance guard surprised an enemy picquet and took 3 prisoners. Another 3 Km farther on was the stone stockade the enemy had been guarding. *The Expedition* names the location Baylu-cotta. Hazarding another guess, this was a border post. Though well to the west of Bellare, as I said the borderline ran northeast. At Baylu-cotta there was a fight. To quote from *The Expedition* (p. 465):

*Government, hoping the Ryots [peasants] would gladly join us against their ruler, had energetically commanded that their troops were, on no occasion, to fire first. The Rajah, to compel his people to fight, had seized their families, to be put to death in case of treachery on the part of their fathers or brothers. Colonel Jackson, thus situated, was under the necessity of placing a storming-party on an open glacis about forty paces distant from a stone wall five feet high (outwork), whilst he took the remainder of the force to our left of the stockade, to show our force, and parley with the Soubadar in command.*

Rice adds that the captured men said they were also under orders not to fire first. But, they faced the dilemma of also

being ordered to hold the stockade unless forced out. *The Expedition* continues:

*About 100 men, posted to defend the wall, were, through curiosity, drawn off to listen to the conversation between the chiefs, when the storming-party climbed the wall, and the Coorgs retreated behind the real stockade — a mass of firelock-men being stationed in the gateway, with their gallant chieftain in the van — who, though, as he said, unwilling to fire, and unable to cope with the force against him, would defend the post with his life should the Feringies attempt to force it.*

*A party of H.M. 48th, under Lieutenant Webber Smith, was then ordered to march through the gateway, but to wait until fired on before using their bayonets. The Coorg chieftain did his duty, but, fortunately for the attacking party, was not supported. He put his double-barrelled gun (many of the Coorgs had English double guns) to the breast of the officer, who (the first barrel having missed fire) had time to turn the second with his hand. This having gone off, was the signal of attack. The place was instantly forced, without loss on Colonel Jackson's part, and with but few of the Coorgs reported killed and wounded. The brave Soubadar was cut down, but not taken prisoner; and all those who saw him that day were glad subsequently to hear that he was likely to recover from his wounds.*

*[H.M. 48th had been split between this column and the Western Column.]*

I have discussed the question of whether the fighters' families were hostages. It is possible that since this region was not a true part of Coorg there may have been communities with little loyalty to the regime. After the annexation the reverse seems to have been true, but the loyalty at that time was to a certain Dewan, not the Raja.

A march was made to Uppanangalla on 30 March. Neither this place nor Baylu-cotta is easily identifiable. Uppanangalla is probably Ubrangala, 18 Km ESE of Kumbla, and Baylu-cotta is thus perhaps Bela, which is 12 Km from Kumbla. Rice says the march on that first day was 9 miles or 14 Km, not 12 Km, but the road would not have been straight. On 31 March the column arrived at a clearly identifiable site, a pagoda near Belluru, roughly 8 Km ENE of Ubrangala. By the following day, when war was officially to be declared, they had arrived at the pagoda of Ishwarmangala, 9 Km away on the same line of march. To get there involved negotiating some jungly hills but they had no encounters. All the land through which they passed was mixed jungle, woodland, and plantation, with few large open areas, and the place names merely referring to scattered groupings of farms. Landmarks were confined to pagodas and temples, of which there was a famous one at Ishwarmangala.

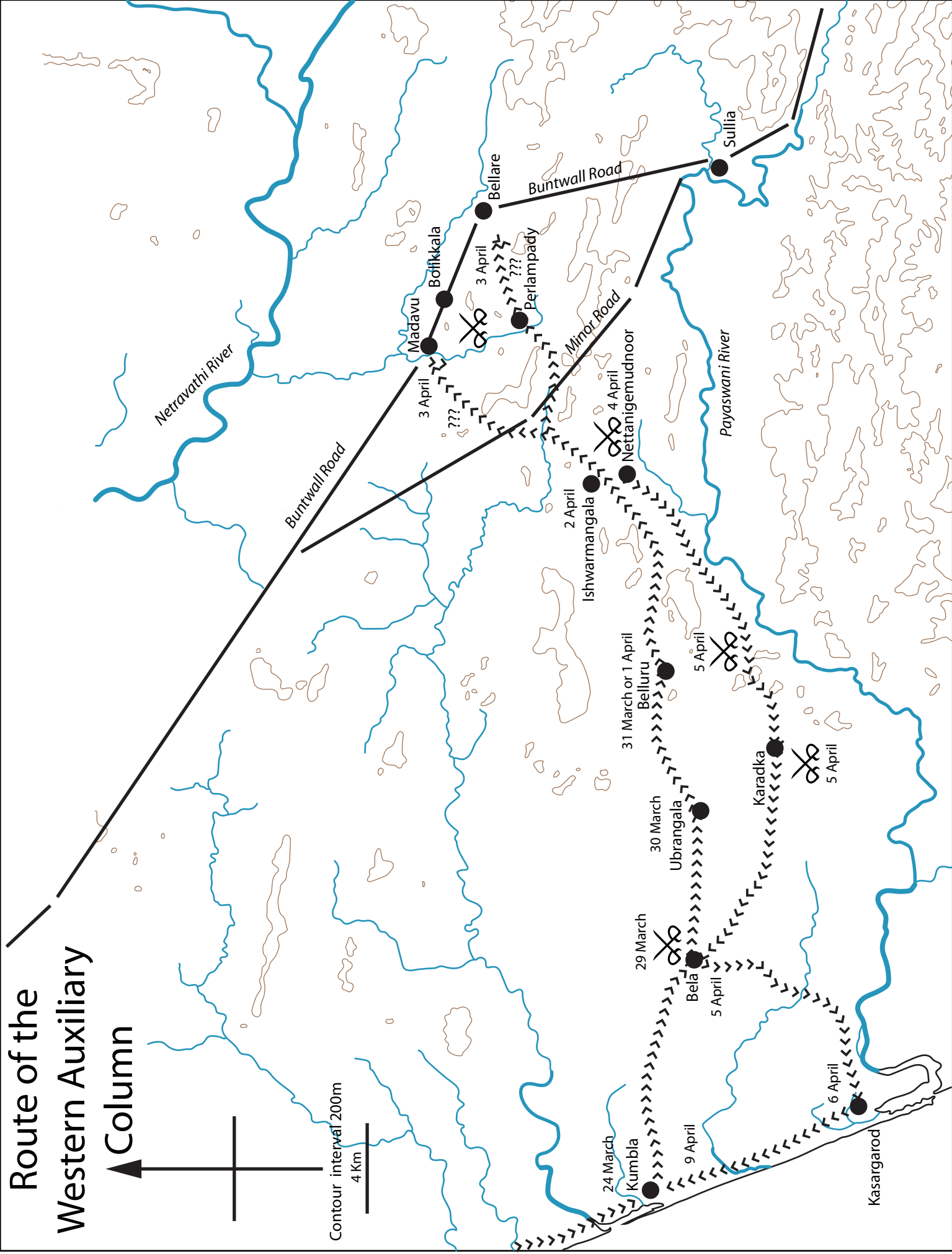
*The Expedition's* narrative is slightly different. It says the two days after taking the stockade at Baylu-cotta were spent making reconnaissance and collecting weapons for disposal (predominantly knives, bows and arrows, and some old matchlocks). Then, on 31 March a long reconnaissance was made, travelling about 9.5 Km out and back, to investigate another stockade which was found to be empty. The locals said its garrison had been pulled back to Mercara. *The Expedition* assumes that the Column was

# Route of the Western Auxiliary



Contour interval 200m

4 Km



still at Baylu-cotta. Therefore, when it says they marched 8 Km on 1 April to that abandoned stockade they would (cross-referencing with Rice) have arrived at Ubrangala. Only on 2 April did they, according to *The Expedition*, march the 16 Km to 'Moodenoor/Es-warmungal', which is the pagoda of Ishwarmangala. Moodenoor is hard to find because Rice does not mention it. Best guess is Nettanigemudnoor, about 1,500 metres south of the pagoda. The ultimate goal, Bellare, was 14 Km in a ENE direction from Ishwarmangala. Sullia was about 16 Km southeast.

Jackson was somewhat relieved that the enemy had retreated and taken the pressure off Mangalore. They had perhaps been ordered back in a last ditch attempt to defuse the situation; at this point the Raja had not been handed the declaration of war and the actions so far could be glossed by both sides over as typical 'border bickering'.

Up to now the Column had been following the line of the Payaswani River — not actually on its bank, but closer to it than the Netravathi. Now they would bear northeast. At Ishwarmangala it was learned that the enemy had occupied a stockade about 9 Km away, its original garrison reinforced by another 250 men commanded by a *Serishtadar* come down from the pass above Sullia. Rice says this stockade was in the neighbourhood of Madhur and Bollary. This presents a problem. On a modern map Madhur is 40 Km away, near the coast. This will not do. I think 'Madhur' is Madavu. This place is about 10 Km northeast from Jackson's camp. It is on the Buntwall Road; Bellare is about 6 Km southeast of Madavu. Bollary, which sounds like it should be Bellare, may be Bolikkala, a small place also on that road, about 700 metres east of Madavu. (The sources never spell 'Bellare' as 'Bollary'.)

*[Sending a Serishtadar, a senior court secretary, suggests Chikka Vira wanted someone trustworthy in charge. The man seems to have known his business.]*

On 3 April — Rice has the column pausing on 2 April so the days are now reconciled with *The Expedition's* account — Jackson organized a reconnaissance. Rice says one large party and *The Expedition* says one large, one small. Either the small one was irrelevant to Rice, or it detached from the main party at some point. Following *The Expedition*, the small group was to head to the Buntwall Road to investigate reports of enemy traffic, and the other was sent toward Bellare. This was against orders not to divide the Column, so perhaps Rice's version is correct. According to him, the whole consisted of 3 officers, 40 Europeans, and 80 Sepoys. *The Expedition* says 120 Sepoys instead of 80. Also, there were the two volunteer light guns and a handful of cavalry involved; the latter may have been separately patrolling the road. The commander of the party was a Captain Noble of the 40th N.I. It was he who had secured the enemy picquet on the first day's march.

The first party only travelled about 5 Km, encountered nothing, and returned. That is not far enough to reach the Buntwall Road, but it would reach a secondary route cutting across the line of march northeast of the camp, a sort of 'bypass road' that also went to Sullia. Alternatively, they could have been dropped off from the main body as it crossed that track.



*[The road through Madavu, looking east. This only provides a sample of the terrain. Whether the Column passed this way for sure is unknown. By following this road one eventually reaches Bellare, on a line down the right side of the picture frame. In the distance on the right is the 100 metre hill, roughly circular; that dominates the countryside and which would have been a good spot for a stockade.]*



*[Sample terrain at a spot on the direct line to Bellare from Ishwarmangala, not far from Bellare and looking west from the crest of a saddle between the hills — the direction the Column would have approached from if had it come this way. The Column could just have easily been marching on a direct line to Bellare as hooking north to Madavu, except for the place names recorded.]*

The main patrol group had a harder time, even though it was a much larger force. They departed about 7am. The road was bad and rough and their guides led them hastily by many shortcuts. Somewhere near Madhur/Madavu they came across the abandoned weapons and rice of a picquet. The Coorgs had melted into the jungle. 3 Km farther on, according to *The Expedition*, they stumbled onto the stockade, almost literally. They turned a bend in the road and there it was, at the top of a slope about 90 metres away, situated in a saddle between two jungle-clad hills. It cannot be determined from the accounts whether they were now on the Buntwall Road, or if this was a defile leading to that road, or if they were looking at one of a number of passes south of the road on a direct line to Bellare. Examining a map, any of those situations is possible; there is a significant hill, roughly 100 metres high, south of Madavu, with smaller hills all around it, but the direct route to Bellare has even more highly defensible saddles.

A reconnaissance was attempted around both sides of the position, the British getting within 45 metres, but there were Coorgs in the jungle. A couple of shots were fired as a signal, and the enemy sprung their ambush, firing from

both sides of the road and from high in the trees. The party took 20-30 casualties and their bearers and guides scattered. The British immediately fell back, hastily reorganised, and decided they had bitten off more than they could chew. They began to retreat.

*The Expedition* surmises the bearers were probably murdered but the guides may have switched sides. Certainly the guides did them a mischief, because as the Column retreated, they lost their way due to the various shortcuts they had been led along. Fortunately the Brigade Major, Captain M'Cleverty, had a good head for terrain and extricated party in a fighting withdrawal. Interestingly, the officers rode horses; all of these were lost, though the cavalry detachment was not. This detachment appears out of nowhere in *The Expedition's* version of the action. Either it had been there all along but was left under cover with the cannon, or it was encountered by chance on the road and commandeered.

Eventually the land opened out enough that the Coorgs would not follow them, but they did continue to harass the party by outpacing it on jungle bypaths and laying ambushes.

*The Expedition* records a gruesome event. During the retreat Ensign Johnstone, the volunteer in charge of the guns, was killed, or at least struck down, among the rearguard. The rest of the party did not miss him until they had descended a valley and climbed the next rise. Then he could be seen with a couple of the enemy near him. Later, it was learned one of those men had vowed to drink the blood of an English officer, and had availed himself of the opportunity. This may be legend, but it was widely believed in Coorg; the man was said to have boasted of it and to have earned a reward from the Raja. The author of *The Expedition* had it first from Colonel Fraser, the Political Agent, who might have been fibbing, but it was corroborated by some of the Kodava chiefs he spoke to. The author wrote that he was offered the chance to speak to the man himself, but declined.

The pursuit lasted until they had almost reached the main camp at Ishwarmangala. Ammunition was running low and the men were becoming exhausted, but the firing could be heard from the camp and two separate relief parties were sent out, who drove off the enemy just as they were about to overwhelm the band. In all, Noble's command suffered 30 (or 34) killed and 36 wounded, plus the loss of 16 bearers and other followers (2 wounded), and the 4 horses of the officers.

The enemy now surrounded the camp; a party that set out to find some of the stragglers was set upon and driven back, and strong picquets had to be kept all night. The Coorgs tried to slip a couple of spies past the picquets but they were caught and no attack followed. *The Expedition* says (p.41):

*It is very much to be regretted that this little force had not two or three small guns; they are always useful, besides having a great moral effect on the natives on both sides. Some of the defences employed by the Coorgs were simply trunks of small trees, seven or eight feet high, wattled together, crossing the road, and defended on their flanks by deep ravines or tangled jungle. A few six-pounder shot*

*would speedily ruin this little obstacle, which, however, becomes much more serious when it is necessary to charge up a narrow road to it, and cut it down in the face of a numerous musketry. In addition to this, our troops are exposed to great disadvantages in endeavouring to outflank these barriers. The jungle in which they are placed is almost invariably dense; and struggling through this, with cross-belts, pouch, bayonet, scabbard, and, above all, with the heavy and useless shako, is enough, under a hot sun, speedily to exhaust the strongest man. What little warfare there now is, or may be, in the southern parts of India, must be principally in jungle, where rifles and light artillery are the most useful arms. The natives dread artillery, and a few shells thrown into a stockade would ensure its speedy abandonment.*

All Rice says of this entire episode is that Noble's men were first attacked just as they had received orders to fall back from the stockade because the reconnaissance was complete — there was never any intention of attacking the place — and that they lost 2 officers and over half the men in the group, mostly killed.

Jackson reluctantly decided he could not continue his mission and ordered a retreat to the coast. Rice describes the retreat in general terms but *The Expedition's* account, though more detailed, is a bit confusing. First, there is mention of the Chief of the village of Padampolly, who told Jackson he could obtain fresh bearers and water at the pagoda of Moodenoor. In *The Expedition's* account Moodenoor and Ishwarmangala are lumped together. Why did Jackson not already know he could get water there? Had the main column followed the recce group and set up an interim camp closer to Bellare? There is a place called Perlampady, about 8.5 Km NE of Ishwarmangala, 4 Km due south of Madavu and 6 Km from Bellare. Jackson might have moved forward and set up camp near there, though it seems odd he would change his base while he had recce parties out. This bit of country, which is on the far side of that intervening minor road they <may have> examined, is quite hilly, and there are several places between Perlampady and Bellare that could be the place where the stockade was located. But Rice clearly states they were making for 'Madhur', and if that is Madavu then Perlampady is well off the line of march. Maybe the chief paid the camp a visit.

The next day, 4 April, it was found that most of the remaining camp followers, demoralized by the fate of the recce party, had deserted, making it hard to find enough bodies to shift the baggage and the wounded. They were also short of water. Jackson decided to retreat to Moodenoor (so *The Expedition* says), in response to the village chief's suggestion. But, after passing by dry paddy fields and through belts of jungle, they found the village recently abandoned. Fortunately there was water — the typical village tank or cistern. The Coorgs did not attack during the march thanks to a strong skirmish screen, but they now occupied a hill some 200 or 300 yards from the camp and within range of the tank, and sniped at the British all night. The remaining sixty bearers deserted.

*[The only tank I could locate on a modern map near the supposed retreat route is just to the east of the center of Ishwarmangala (which is still only a strip-village) but there is no way to tell if the*



construction is that old. Tanks were often associated with the pagodas, but that tank is not, so far as I could tell.]

*The Expedition* says (pp. 218-219):

*Lieut.-Colonel Jackson might have killed some of his commissariat bullocks, which, with the rice he had, would have enabled him to maintain this ground for some time against a larger force than the Coorgs could at that moment have brought against him; but it was impossible to check desertion. Harsh measures to the followers would have closed the chance of procuring more; and it was possible that some of the younger Sepoys, perpetually fired on by the hidden Coorgs, and harassed with nightly watching to protect the camp, might have yielded to the temptation held out to them of throwing off their accoutrements and escaping into the jungle. With stockades in front and rear, and discontented Mapillays from Canara, attracted by the hope of plunder, joining the Coorgs, the force thus situated would, unless strongly supported, have been ultimately cut off to a man. It may be said that dependence might have been had on the assistance or success of the other forces; that they would succeed was more than probable — but that they would have sent support in time I much doubt: and the Coorgs proved by their conduct on the 5th and 6th that they were no longer under the control of their Rajah, and, if the stronger party, would have killed and plundered all they could. Their policy during their many previous wars, either with the low country chieftains to the westward, or with the Mysorians, was to allow them to enter the country with but little opposition, to lead them on with the appearance of conquest, to abandon a few old arms, and to retire to the strongest positions in the interior of their mountain hold — which, being nearly impregnable, exhausted the provisions and patience of their adversaries, who, on attempting to retire with the glory of having penetrated so far, found the stockades they had forced or turned so easily on their advance re-garrisoned with a more determined enemy on their retreat. Thus, checked in front, and harassed on the flanks and in the rear by an active enemy, who, secure in his knowledge of the jungle paths, laughed at their confusion, and spared neither sick nor wounded who might fall into his hands, the general result of a small force entering Coorg was its utter extinction — should it not have been attacked in scorn, and plundered and driven back on its first entrance into the country. The force under Lieut.-Colonel Jackson was too strong for the latter plan, independent of the chance of plunder which the second gave, which was attempted, and very nearly with success.*

In this case the conduct of the Kodavas is not being exaggerated. That is exactly what they did to the armies of Mysore. In one particular campaign they killed 15,000 of the enemy, and in the next campaign an entire Mysorian corps fled in blind panic, because after entering the jungle they encountered absolutely no resistance and became convinced they were all about to be slaughtered. *The Expedition* is probably right that the Kodavas' main objective here was simple plunder. After the order for the truce reached those fighting in the Huggul Ghaut many headed for Lower Coorg. They would hold off on the truce for as long as they could get away with it.

From Moodenoor the Column retreated to the village of Korica. Best guess for this location is Karadka, 8 Km southwest of where Moodenoor is supposed to be. It was a tiring march, under fire the whole way. The baggage train was a literal shambles, but some transport was cobbled together — the officers cheerfully sacrificed their own tents and pack animals. There would have been a small river in the way but it was probably dry. The advance guard, led by Jackson himself, was ambushed in a gorge — perhaps the dry riverbed — about halfway to Korica. Fortunately, the enemy had secured themselves so cunningly from British return fire that they could not actually hit much themselves, and there were only 9 casualties. However, the Coorgs got among the baggage, killed some of the wounded and camp followers, and took a few prisoners, whom they tortured within earshot; they tossed a mutilated corpse on the trail in front of the Column. The ammunition bullocks (and the ones carrying the arrack) bolted into the jungle and it took a long time and a lot of effort to round them up.

The Column pushed on, the men (some of whom had broached a cask of arrack) swearing to butcher any Kodavas they encountered, and when the enemy attempted to cut off the rearguard again by taking up firing positions along a low mud wall that intersected the trail, they were attacked so vigorously that they suffered 20 or 30 casualties and faded away; the ammunition was also recovered in this encounter. Jackson now began what modern armies call 'bounding overwatch'. He sent a party to occupy an open hill, and proceeded to flush the Coorgs out of the nearby jungle, spoiling their next ambush. Eventually the Column reentered open country but they were sniped at all the way. At Karadka/Korica a half-hour halt was made, then the column resumed its march, bound for its first campground near Baylu-cotta, which was gained at last about sunset on the 5th of April. Assuming Baylu-cotta is Bela, that would be 11 Km northwest of Karadka.

One final obstacle was encountered before the night's camp was reached, a barrier of wattled tree-trunks nearly 3 metres high. It blocked the road and extended for some distance on either side. Without cannon (they must have been abandoned), Jackson had to envelop it from both sides, which cause the Coorgs to retreat. *The Expedition* says (p.220):

*On the arrival of the advanced guard on the encamping-ground, a young bullock which had followed it for a short distance was shot (of course, quite accidentally), and proved a great addition to the breakfast of the morning of the 6th, which was the 3rd day the troops received nothing but a couple of mouldy biscuits per man, having to work hard both day and night.*

This was not the end. The Coorgs were still feeling warlike. Jackson learned there were nearly 3,000 of them observing the camp and erecting obstacles. The numbers are suspect, because that is about one third of the Raja's army, and at this date a similar number were encamped at Mercara, but they may have included local militia or members of the peasantry.

Fearing his way forward was blocked, Jackson decided to cut southwest across country to Kasaragod, 11 Km south of

Kumbla. This was a march of 10 Km over more open ground. There was supposed to be a road, but the column could not find it, and they could hear the Coorgs periodically firing their matchlocks to signal the column's route. However, their guides seem to have been helpful for once, leading them onto a rocky ridge-line that the enemy dared not assault. By moving along this they were able to reach Kasaragod by 6pm on the 6th. Here, one of the Kodavas came in bearing the flag of truce which was supposed to have been delivered two days ago.

The Column reached Kumbla on 9 April; relieved from the strain, the men promptly came down with jungle fever. Fortunately there were no deaths. Jackson requested a Board of Inquiry (held in September) but he was exonerated, and even commended for his behaviour.

Overall Company losses on all fronts during the campaign were: 16 officers killed or wounded (including 2 Native officers), 139 European and 144 Native soldiers, with 9 Native troops missing, 4 followers killed, and 16 missing. Total losses for the Kodavas are not known but since an estimated 250 became casualties in the Huggul Ghaut alone they probably lost a similar number.

### At the Palace

*The issue of the war had already been decided by the success of the Eastern Column in occupying Mercara, the capital. Life and honourable treatment being offered him by Col. Fraser, if he would surrender, the Raja availed himself of so favourable terms and returned within the stipulated time of three days from Nalknad to Mercara, after a vain attempt to gain at least 15 days' time, to march in proper princely style with his women and baggage. He entered Mercara Fort at noon of the 10th April, accompanied by his unarmed attendants (Pahara Cbowkee) and his women, and was received with due respect at the outer gate by the officer commanding the Fort.*

[Rice, p.183]

Naturally, no one has written a campaign history from the Kodavas' side. Such things were not entirely unknown. Dodda Vira once commissioned an official dynastic history. However, his nephew was hardly likely to do the same. According to local legend nearly every person able to bear arms had answered the Raja's call. This will still mean only the Kodavas. They were highly motivated, and conditioned to obey their god-king, but on the flip side they were a clan society, used to debating courses of action among themselves, and the Raja was not giving them close supervision — thus they did not always obey the truce. There may not have been a fixed plan of campaign beyond 'hold the line'. Chikka Vira simply turned the tap on, and then turned it off again with the proclamation of a truce. The chiefs would organise the defence.

The Commander-in-Chief, Madanta Appachu, fought in the front ranks at Somwarpet, and it is hard to gauge what influence he could exert on the other sectors. One assumes he had subordinate generals who could maintain some degree of coordination between the various fronts, but it was probably pretty rudimentary. However, the enemy columns were isolated from each other. If the two sides were roughly equal in command and control ability, it

would come down to tactics and firepower. The Coorgs still had the tactical advantage in hit-and-run fighting, and twice repulsed assaults on their stockades, but they had a hard time standing up to artillery. British losses in the set-piece fights seem to be due mainly to poor execution.

What of the Court? Every aristocratic society has factions. Coorg appears to have had the usual varieties. There was Chenna Basavappa's faction, though that was probably in disarray, and the British were not going to use him as a puppet, despite the rumours. There was likely a clique, probably a very small but influential one, attached to the chief Dewan, Kunta Basava — he was universally feared and hated. And there seems to have been a 'loyal opposition' who were against the Dewan but not against the Raja. They would have been the ones who afterward claimed the Raja was the victim of his chief minister. There was also the usual tension between Hawks and Doves. Each minister's retainers would have enjoyed a certain amount of rivalry. Basava was low-caste, at least one minister was a Brahmin, and there were a handful of Kodavas who had adopted the Lingayat way to advance themselves. There was also a Muslim group, some of whom may have been foreigners with connections in the kingdom and some of whom were descendants of Tipu's converts, also dependent on the Raja.

Kunta Basava would back the Raja to the hilt because without him he was a dead man. The Muslims would do the same, though outsiders might be loyal only as long as things seemed to be going well, then they would pack up and leave, or stand aside. The other officials had to weigh things more nicely. The author of *The Expedition* calls the Commander-in-Chief, Madanta Appachu, a 'traitor' for switching sides but that is viewing things from a Nationalistic perspective. By his logic Robert the Bruce was also a traitor. Madanta Appachu continues to be revered in Coorg. He and the other officials who facilitated the surrender, in accordance with Chikka Vira's divine will, secured themselves in their high offices and ensured those offices were passed on to their families. Ministers switching sides was so common in Indian regimes as to be completely unremarkable. In fact, it was expected of them. But if Chikka Vira had shown more backbone they would have calculated it was wiser to stick with him (and tried to be the first to throw each other under the bus when their loyalty was questioned).

What of the Raja? Where was he during the war? He owned two palaces, the Official Residence inside Fort Mercara and the 'super-sized' *ainmane* his uncle had built at Nalknad. There seems to have been a third palace under construction at the capital, too. It is sometimes unclear which palace he was at when he did certain things. Nalknad palace was only 25 Km from Mercara; the Raja and his full entourage might take two days to cover the distance, but a messenger on horseback could make the round trip in four hours or less, and a man on foot could do it in a day at a walk. According to Rice, upon the outbreak of hostilities Chikka Vira had immediately withdrawn to Nalknad, along with his harem and treasury, his attendants, who numbered a few thousand, and his military band. According to the Raja, he did so after he proclaimed the truce on 3 April. Menon says he left much, much earlier:

*The Rajah at this time gave orders to remove all his property from Maddakery to Mankanad [Nalknad], for which purpose a large number of men and elephants were employed for 8 or 9 days, and on the 18<sup>th</sup> of March the Rajah himself with his family proceeded to Mankanad. I heard that the removal of his Treasure required two trips of 24 Elephants and 20 Horses.*

*[There is always a question of dating from British sources prior to 1851, because of the (by now) 13 day difference between Old Style used by the British, and New Style, used by everyone else, but Menon uses 1 April as the start of the campaign, so his days ought to line up with Rice and the others. But, 18 + 13 = 31, so it just may be the case that Raja did leave at the end of the month. I think not. Menon would not flip back and forth in his dating, because the calendar system did not change until after he was long dead.]*

Menon's report reveals the concerns of the Regime. Kunta Basava, you will remember, lived next door to where he was incarcerated:

*On the morning of the 2<sup>nd</sup> the Dewan came to the House in which I was and after looking about told the Guard not to oppress me much, to allow me to walk about in the compound during the day time. I then called the Dewan aside and asked him what was the object of the great preparations which were going on and of my person being thus detained. He answered that there was no objections to telling me the cause. And then said that large force belonging to the Pherangees [foreigners] had reached the Frontiers by five different roads for the purpose of carrying me away. That by that time War must have commenced. That he was at a loss to know what would be the result, that I was the cause of all this and asked me what was to be done?*

*This was spoken privately. I answered, that I had already predicted this. More than once. That if war had commenced the Hon'ble Company would not fail to seize the country and the Rajah run the risk of losing his Life.*

*If my life was lost the Sirkar would lose nothing. But that many lives in this country should be lost on my account was a matter of much concern to me. The Dewan hereupon asked me what was proper to be done to avoid the War and I replied that no time should be lost in sending out white flags signifying Kabool (submission) and that if I together with Vakeels was sent out to the Camp, I would exert my utmost to settle the matter in a satisfactory way after seeing Mr. Graeme, the Collector and other Gentlemen. The Dewan became sensible of the propriety of my suggestions, and said he would communicate the same to the Swamy. That except my assistance they had now no other alternative left. Begged me not to think of what had passed and said that the Lord Sahib, with whom I was acquainted had come to the Neelgherry Hills. The Dewan then left me to go and see the Rajah.*

Menon describes his final interviews with Chikka Vira, which give the clearest available picture of the situation 'at HQ'. Rather than summarize, I think it best to simply let him tell the story:

*On the morning of the 4<sup>th</sup> Friday at about the Rajah accompanied by four persons came on foot to an elevated spot near the House in which I was and sent for me.*

*On my approaching him, the attendants were desired to withdraw to a distance and the Rajah said that he is fully sensible of all that I had previously stated to him.*

*That the Dewan communicated to him the conversation I had with him. That the Kabool flag was already sent out and asked me what else to be done in order that matters might be settled without injury to himself. This was spoken in an entreating and distressful tone. I asked the Rajah whether Hostilities had commenced. He answered that intelligence was received that they had in some quarters.*

*[Kabool = submission]*

*I observed that matters were then in a wrong way. That all the assistance in my power would be afforded. On which the Rajah proposed a return to the Palace and consider the subject. We accordingly walked up to the Palace, which was about a quarter of a mile distant, and the attendants were again desired to withdraw.*

*When both of us were seated the Rajah resumed the subject saying that after he sent out the Flag, the firing from the party coming up the Stony River Road ceased but that they continue to advance and asked me in a sorrowful way what was to be done. I proposed that myself and the Vakeels [secretaries/assistants] should be immediately sent to the Troops coming up the Stony river road, as it was likely the Collector and other Gentlemen would be in the Camp. The Rajah then said that the Lord Sahibs of Bengal and Madras were on the Neelgherries. That as I was acquainted with the Lord Sahib of Bengal, was a good opportunity for me to exert my endeavours.*

*That this Samstanom would never forget the assistance that I might render it and that I should not think of the conduct evinced towards me until then. All this and many other things were said in an entreating way, to which I replied, that I would assuredly afford such assistance as laid in my power and tried to comfort the Rajah.*

*The Rajah then said, that when he thinks of what he had hitherto done me, he cannot feel convinced of the sincerity of my promise. That the only way of removing the doubts in his mind would be for me to swear upon the Sala Gramom (Holy Stone from Cassy) and execute a Kaychit.*

*That as I had not up to that time any thing from him for my expenses, I should accept some trifling Presents, and that I should take my meal there that day. To which I replied that nothing of what he mentioned was required to induce him to trust to me, and that I will render him all the assistance in my power. The Rajah then observed that as his mind was in a distressed state, I should not oppose his wishes.*

*Recollecting that the Rajah was a person devoid of good sense, and wishing to obviate further trouble which he might be induced to occasion at that critical period, as well as to escape with my life somehow or other, I assented to subscribe to the oath and Kychit he proposed. The letter was accordingly prepared and on hearing it read over I found that my name was inserted as Sheristedar Karoonagara Menon, and that it contained [sic. 'contained'] some other objectionable words.*

*[Kaychit is the noun, Kychit the verb. Hard to find a dictionary definition, but it is clearly an oath sworn on a sacred object. Sala Gramom = Salagramam. These are ammonites or other fossilized*

stones, usually black in colour and found in river beds, which are worshipped as manifestations of Vishnu. They are still regarded as very sacred objects.]

On which I observed that "Sheristedar" was my public designation which I could not make use of without the Sirkar's Permission. And suggested that my name should be simply used.

This was acceded to and the Kychit having been drawn out accordingly, I affixed my Signature there, a copy of which I beg to submit herewith. The Rajah then ordered that the Dewan Bassawapan, Moonshee Kallyaman, and a Brahmin should accompany me taking with them the Sala Gramom in order that I may swear upon it after bathing myself.

The Rajah also directed that the Guard placed over me may be withdrawn and a place near the Palace prepared for me for that night.

And desired me to return in the evening as he had to consult with me on several matters. I promised to do so and left the Palace accompanied by the Dewan and the Moonshee. Reaching the place of my Habitation I bathed and took the oath to the effect specified in the Kychit.

The Guards immediately withdrew and the Karistan returned to the Rajah. At 4 o'clock P. M. a messenger came to desire I should proceed to the Palace taking with me my Baggage and the people with me. We went up and stopt under a Pandal erected in the Compound and at 8 o'clock Moonshee Kallyaman came to me from the Rajah and asked me what road I purposed taking the following day; and what was required.

I replied I intended to write to Periapatam and Stony Rover intimating that I was coming. That as soon as I get my arms, Palankeen and Horse I would proceed to Veerarajapett and after enquiring the Road by which Mr. Grame and the Collector were coming in I would proceed to join them.

So far, no one knew what effect the flags of truce had had. By midnight they still did not know. Menon promised to set out at 6am that morning to try and find someone in authority on the other side. But in the morning the Raja sent for him again:

The Rajah again begged me not to think of the past and added, if I would protect that Samstanom my Tarwadd (Family) would feel the good effects of it as long as it lasts and that as far as experienced persons have said, there appeared reason to expect that that Samstanom would prosper. What the Rajah said was seconded by the stout Mussalman.

The Rajah next said that as I should forthwith start for Virarajapett he had ordered a Canarese Writer to be in readiness to accompany me, and begged me to set out without delay.

On which I said that I would start as soon as I got back my arms, Palankeen, Horse, Breast Plates etc. In which the Rajah said that in the bustle and confusion which occurred some of my guns and other things had been mislaid.

That 3 swords and 2 pistols were only forthcoming, that they could not find the Breast plates. That the whole would follow me and that I should not delay on that account. I

replied that it would be quite enough if the arms were sent after me, but that I should wish to have the Peon's breast plates.

The rajah then ordered another search when the Belts were found but no plates. The Swords and Pistols were then returned to me, and the Rajah then presented me with a Crooked Knife the handle of which is covered with Gold, with the waist belt in which it is fixed, the whole is worth about 80 Rupees and I begged the Rajah to accept of a Sword with a Silver belt and other apparatus worth about 120 Rupees. On which the Rajah observed that what I have him in return was worth double the value of what he gave me; and wished me therefore to accept of a further present of a Donate and Turband, and after I left him, he sent me a Kincab Mungarkah and a pair of Silk Trowser, the whole will be worth about 200 Rupees. The Guns and Swords were from time to time sent to me, but I did not get back Crooked Knife, 4 Belts with Silver Clasps, the Gun case, shooting tackle and sundry other articles, the whole worth about 100 Rupees as well as 1 Silver breast plate belonging to the Sirkar.

Menon had still not departed by the time Colonel Fraser's letter arrived demanding his release. This was about 11am; it was the first Menon or the Raja had heard of Fraser.

The Rajah asked me what was to be done, and I answered that as it appeared that Colonel Fraser is sent as an agent of the Lord Sahib, the Rajah should lose no time in proceeding to that Gentleman. He answered that he was not acquainted with that Sahib, that as it was time of War he could not so soon wait on the Colonel, that after the troops should withdraw, and his own force be recalled, he would fix upon a spot to meet the Colonel.

This was said after a consultation with the Mussalman and other Servants then present on which I observed that the Troops advancing by different routes would not stop until they reached Maddakery and again suggested that the Rajah should without loss of time go and see the Colonel. That he was not acquainted with the Colonel and the other Gentlemen's temper. That it required some consideration before he could determine upon going to meet them, that I should forthwith proceed to Colonel Fraser by the Maddakery road along with two Karistans, that he would write a letter to Colonel Fraser requesting the Troops to halt where they are without advancing and entering the Maddakery Fort. That if after our arrival in the Camp, we should find that there would be no harm in the Rajah's going to meet the Colonel, to send a messenger to him to that effect, and if he should also receive a suitable answer from the Colonel he would not hesitate to go and see him. I answered the Rajah that I would go but that he should furnish me with an order directing his people to attend to my advice; and to afford me assistance which he agreed to do.

Accordingly myself with two Karistans were despatched from Maknaad [Nalknad], and before I started the Rajah delivered to me some letters which yourself [Clementson] and Mr. Graeme wrote to me which were not made over in due time.

Some of them had been opened by the Rajah. 2 o'clock the Rajah sent me a Rahadary [passport] directing his subjects



*to attend to my advice and to furnish me with the required supplies and sent also my Peon and Palankeen. The Rajah also gave presents of Cloth to the people with me, the whole valued about 60 Rupees.*

*[Hard to find a definition for Karistans. What was meant was 'court officials representing the Raja'.]*

The Karistans in question were the Brahmin Laksmi Náráyana and Mahomed Taker Khan. Both men can be presumed loyal to the Raja, the one being a despised Brahmin and the other described by the Raja to Fraser in the letters Menon carried as a *Moplah*, possibly a Muslim convert, but with that particularly spelling more likely someone from the Coast. They left the palace at 3pm on April 5 and arrived at the capital at dawn the next day. Fraser had not yet arrived, but Menon on his own authority ordered the Coorg garrison commander to raise a white flag over the fort and dismiss all but 70 of his men. (This surely has to have been approved by the Karistans.) The party then traveled down the Mercara-Kushalnagar road for something over 6 Km, to where the British were encamped.

Chikka Vira seems to have wanted Menon's help with the negotiations, but Fraser dismissed him. He may have been a little suspicious, since the agent had been forced to sign some of the Raja's insulting letters, but really, in the circumstances, his services were simply not required, as the Company had definitely decided to depose the Raja.

*That Gentleman [Fraser] then said that as I was under your orders I had better return to you soon. That if I wished to go to the Lord Sahib I should go by the Periapatam road, that there was no interruption for posting or cause for fear on the road. I begged the Colonel to allow me a Guard for my protection on the road, and that Gentleman said that until the Rajah shall have come and settled every thing no Guard could be spared but if I wanted money I might have it. I stated I would call the next day and make known my determination. The next day my brother Ram Menon and the Tahsildar of Kotiote Koonda Menon, with some others arrived at Maddakery and went to Colonel Fraser. I also went up to the Gentleman, when he was pleased to say that as my Brother and the Tahsildar were come, it would be better for me to return with them, as no Guard or Bearer could then be spared, and accordingly desired me to return.*

*As Darrashaw [Dara Sait] was in the Camp as the Colonel had desired me to return and considering many other circumstances I thought it would not be proper for me to remain any longer at Maddakery. Accordingly on the 9<sup>th</sup> I quitted that place and on my way waited on Colonel Fraser and other Gentlemen, who came with the Force from Cannanore which was encamped about eight miles to the South of Maddakery.*

*Those Gentlemen were much pleased at seeing me, and asked me many questions. And I gave them all the information in my power. Colonel Joules then proposed to me to stay there until the Rajah should come in, as I might be useful in obtaining intelligence. I remained there that day. The next day some of the persons who were at Maknaad with the Rajah came to me and said that the Rajah had started from that place with the intention of meeting the Gentlemen at Maddakery and I took them to*

*Colonel Joules and communicated the intelligence. The Colonel gave them a present of 2 Rupees and at 2 o'clock P. M. gave me leave to proceed on. And as there was a Havildar Party returning to Cannanore they were directed to go along with me.*

*The Colonel also desired me to procure and send from Veerarajapett a quantity of Horse Gram. We reached Veerarajapett at 8 P. M. and I waited on Colonel Brack and the other Gentlemen and gave them a brief account of what had occurred. The Colonel then said that I had better defer my journey to the next day making previously some arrangement for procuring supplies as the required quantity was not to be had.*

*[Horsegram is a nutritious bean grown for horse feed but also used in many South Asian recipes.]*

*The Colonel gave a Naik's Party for my protection that night. The next day I sent a Bullock load of Horse Gram to Colonel Joules's Camp for which Koonda Menon Tahsildar paid. I then sent for the Rajah's Karistans and the merchant in the Pettah and showed the Rajah's Rahadary and made arrangements for the necessary supplies being furnished. This settled I took them to Colonel Brack, and with that Gentleman's leave, left the Place soon after. On the road I met the Gentleman at Kandy Wadikel and from hence returned the Guard that accompanied me. At Keyparamaba Koona Menon Tahsildar remained behind for the purpose of sending up Provisions, and I proceeded on to Tellicherry, which place I reached on the 13<sup>th</sup> April.*

*[A naik is a corporal, and 'corporal's guard' is what is meant here.]*

To finish with Menon, he died in 1842. Upon his release Chikka Vira had given him an elephant and other gifts. He was also rewarded by the Company with a tax-free holding and a lavish pension — actually, he already possessed these, but they were now guaranteed to his family. His part in the drama is often misunderstood, perhaps confused with his earlier mission, which is also murky.

Once Menon departed the peace process continued. There seem to have been five senior officials involved on the Coorg side. Laksmi Náráyana and Mahomed Taker Khan have been mentioned. They acted with the full approval of Chikka Vira. Kunta Basava remained in the background and does not count here. He was already making plans to take care of Number One. Two more officials, who seem to have acted independently of the Raja, were the ministers Apparanda Bopanna and Cheppudira Ponappa. The latter was an enemy of Kunta Basava. Both men were Kodavas, not part of the Haleri elite. They had been against the war from the start. It was Apparanda Bopanna who met with Colonel Fraser's column and brought them to the capital with an escort of 400 of his own men, and who later formally surrendered Fort Mercara. The fortunes of both Dewans rose under the British; one of Ponappa's descendants became the Chief Minister of Coorg. The fifth person of importance was Madanta Appachu, who surrendered himself and 500 of his men. The General's behaviour shows some of the mixed feelings at work in the kingdom. Before Chikka Vira passed into exile, Madanta Appachu went and prostrated himself in a sort of 'forgive me Godfather but it is better this way' moment.

Although it seems as if the latter three men acted independently of the Raja's commands, it is difficult to say if that was really the case. The idea is mainly suggested by the fact that no mention of them is made in Menon's talks with the Raja, and the fact that while Chikka Vira was still dithering they had already surrendered. However, it should be borne in mind that the 'flags of truce' were literally 'flags of *kabool*', that is 'submission' to the will of the Sirkar. If *kabool* had been decreed, surely that meant the men were free to submit themselves.

Remembering how Linga Raja came to the throne after a 'town hall' meeting of the chiefs, and how they were talked round by one of his ministers, obviously the Kodava chiefs could not be left out of the equation. It is odd to think of democratic process within an autocracy, but they were probably the most critical component of the regime. If they voted for continuing the war, the Court might be stuck. Thus Madanta Appachu rendered valuable service by personally surrendering. Once he and the ministers threw in the towel, the lesser chiefs agreed to a palaver with the Company. The Kodavas fully expected to be absorbed into the Company's holdings, but their attitude seems to have been a shrug of the shoulders — if it was the will of the gods, who were they to argue. They would be pleasantly surprised.



[Nalknad (Nalaknad) Palace. Open to the public. Yes, this is almost the entire palace. The property has a gatehouse and one or two utility buildings. The palace at Mercara is much more imposing; this is a country retreat.]

### Chikka Vira's Submission

*It is represented that I [the Raja] received yesterday evening, about 5 o'clock, your Persian letter under date 17th April, 1834, and understood the contents thereof. When that great Sirkar (ruler) expresses such a desire, I can do nothing. It is well, agreeably to the contents of your letter addressed to me under the instructions of His Excellency the Right Honourable the Governor-General. When I prepare to remove from this place, my family and my people are so overwhelmed with grief that our senses fail us, and we are as if about to die. I have no other protection but that of God, and of yourself. As I am unable to exercise any power, I cannot make any preparation for my journey with my family. I therefore beg to state that, whenever you will be pleased to make all these necessary preparations, I will be ready to depart.*

[Martin, footnote on p.25]

The above date must have been adjusted for at that time the British were still using the Old Style and 17 April would be either 30 April under the New Style (five days after he

departed into exile) or 6 April OS (which is one of the two dates given for the occupation of Mercara).

According to *The Expedition*, Mercara surrendered to Colonel Lindesay on 7 April, without making any resistance, and the British flag was hoisted over the fort. Rice says Bopanna and Fraser met on 5 April and entered Fort Mercara the next day, at 4 pm. There may have been an unofficial and an official ceremony. Very often besiegers used to take possession of a fort's gate as a token of capture and the former garrison depart after a specified number of days.

Fraser was only too happy to conclude a peace as speedily as possible, given the unsettled state of the surrounding lands. Two of his columns were crippled. Martin's account makes much of the repulse of 'three' of the five columns, and he is no doubt right that if the Raja had not asked for a truce the situation could have been dire. But the Western Auxiliary Column was never intended to be anything other than a corps of observation, and he is wrong about the Western Column, which was hacking its way through the defences slowly but effectively. He also hints the Company would have had trouble suppressing a general rising in Mysore if they had suffered a defeat, but elsewhere paints the Coorgs in a David-and-Goliath manner by comparing their entire population of 100,000 to the 100,000 troops surrounding them. One cannot have it both ways.

Securing Mercara did not <technically> end the war. The whole point had been to secure the person of the Raja, but he was being coy. Rumours abounded. Chikka Vira was skulking in fear and trembling. Chikka Vira was preparing for immolation of himself and all his wealth to deny both to the hated British — this is the version Rice records, and Menon says something similar. It could be nothing more than the braggadocio of the Raja's servants, but remembering the Raja's own claim that Kunta Basava ordered him watched he may have been feeling suicidal. The British found the palace at Nalknad in the process of being shut up, with firewood stacked all over the place, but the Raja later said it was just being shut for the season.

He was immobilized by indecision. Dewan Basava had disappeared into hiding and his ministers were parleying with the enemy, along with his best general. Even the spy Menon had left. For perhaps the first time in his life he had no one to advise him. And, even if they could advise him, none of them had been in such a situation before.

The British were fairly confident there would be no last-ditch stand at the palace. They now had Menon's report on the Raja's state of mind, and it was evident, according to Rice, that the natives were impressed with how 'easily' the British had penetrated to the capital. I bet the Kodavas were not at all impressed — they had just opened the door for them. But if their god told them not to fight they would not fight. It was a common feature of wars in India that a ruler would throw in the towel if he felt he was losing. In olden days he would calculate there would be opportunities to intrigue to his advantage if he remained alive. But, times had changed.

There was some sort of ruckus on the 9th, when men of the 51st N.I. took a few casualties in an ambush by some diehards (or the troops may have been pilfering and got

what was coming to them), but on 10 April the Raja travelled to Fort Mercara, arriving there that night, and surrendered his person. He was accompanied by a body of 2,000 or 3,000 unarmed dependents and 50 palanquins containing his harem.

*Col. Fraser thus reports to the Governor General his first interview with the Raja on the evening of the 11th April. "The Raja of Coorg having sent me a message yesterday morning that he wished to see me, I called upon him at five in the evening and he detained me until past seven. When I first went in I found the whole palace [the one at Mercara] almost entirely dark, in consequence of the windows being closed and blinds let down all round it, for the purpose of preventing the inner apartments of the palace being overlooked or its inmates seen by the officers and men of the company of H. M. 39th Regiment doing duty in the Fort. The Raja himself came out a moment afterwards, from behind a veil which separated an inner apartment from the front verandah. He took me by the hand, which he continued to hold, but seemed for some minutes so frightened and agitated as not to know what to do or say. I addressed him in Hindustani and enquired after his health, to which he replied in the usual terms. At length one of his attendants suggested to him to go to the upper part of the palace. To this he silently assented, and while he still held me by the hand, we proceeded through one or two passages and ascended a flight of steps, where all was so perfectly dark that I was obliged to feel my way along the walls with my disengaged hand. Arrived in an apartment in the upper part of the building, where the windows were entirely closed, and where there was no light whatever but from a common lamp set upon the ground, he seated me by him on a sofa.*

*It is impossible to repeat the desultory remarks which he continued to make to me for about two hours, and he himself repeatedly observed that he was weary and unwell, that his head was confused and he knew not what he was saying. The principal object he seemed to have in view was to justify his first proceedings in regard to his demand for the surrender of Channa Basava, founded as he said it was upon previously understood agreements, and the letter to him from the Resident in Mysore under date the 1st August 1828. He said, that he detained Kulputty Karnikara Manoon only because this person had promised to procure for him the surrender of the fugitives, and that he thought he would be a useful mediator between him, and the British Government. To some remark I made upon this subject, the Raja replied that he was an ignorant man, and knew not that he was doing wrong, or acting in a manner contrary to the usage of other countries. He spoke repeatedly and earnestly of the friendship which he and his ancestors had ever entertained for the English, and prayed for my intercession with the Governor General that he might not be removed from his Fort, but allowed to remain and judged by the tenor of his future conduct. He often repeated that he was young, that he was ignorant and unacquainted with the customs of the world, that he had never benefitted by the advantages of society, and that in all his late proceedings he had been misled by evil councillors such as Abbas Ali and others, whom he plainly designated as villains. I am led to believe that this account of himself is*

*just, that he is a weak and ignorant person, spoiled by the possession of early power; and that the feelings and superstition which nature gave him, instead of being perverted to evil purposes as they have been, might have taken a different and far better direction had he been guided by judicious advisers and had a more frequent intercourse been maintained between him and the officers of the British Government...*

*In the course of my conversation I acquainted the Raja, that the future determination of his fate depended not on the least on myself but entirely on the pleasure of the Governor General; but in order to prevent his entertaining any hope of which the disappointment hereafter might in consequence be more painful, I acquainted him that I had not the least hope that under any circumstances whatever would he be permitted to remain in the fort of his country."*

*[Rice pp.184-185]*

Rice goes on to say that Chikka Vira laid the blame on Kunta Basava and finding (p.185):

*'that his deposition and removal were determined upon, he felt uneasy at the thought that Kunta Basava, the accomplice of all his atrocities, was likely to be delivered or to give himself up to Colonel Fraser, who had fixed a prize of one thousand rupees upon his apprehension, looking upon him as 'the worst and most dangerous character in the whole country.' In all his enquiries about the Raja's doings, Colonel Fraser was constantly referred to Devan Basava for information, as if he was alone possessed of the secret of all the acts of murder that may have been committed, and as if the Raja himself had been little else than a young man devoted to his own idle or sensual pursuits, leaving to his Devan the exclusive charge and direction of any species of cruelty and convenient crime.'*

The meeting took place at the palace in Mercara. Once formally deposed and arrested at the end of the above interview, the Raja was returned to Nalknad. Rice says he was under guard, but it would appear the guard was dispatched later, for he also says (p.181):

*On the 13th April a detachment of [the Western column], under Major Tweedie, marched without opposition to Nalknad and took possession of the Palace. It is rumoured that part of the Raja's hidden treasure there got wings after the arrival of the troops; but they did not find the Devan Kunta Basava, who was to be sent a prisoner to Mercara.*

*The Expedition provides much detail about the state of the palace of Nalknad. Modern pictures show an edifice constructed in a similar manner to the typical Coorg extended-family house, with a larger footprint than usual, and of two stories. The building itself was in no way a fortress. But, the road to it was, according to the eyewitness account of *The Expedition* (p.225):*

*...crowded with defences. The first half-way the road is tolerably good, but I counted no less than fourteen cuddungs or breastworks, some with broad ditches filled with the strong black thorn; and one timber stockade. Many of these cuddungs are old works, and, twisting about the jungle in all directions, return nearly to the point they started from; others are circles, and all are very difficult to*

[Rice, p.186]

turn. The latter half of the road is nearly impracticable for artillery, and might be defended inch by inch; however, both breast-works and stockades occur, but I did not count them. The whole distance is through dense forest. Nackanaad itself is strongly situated on the summit of a small but steep hill. Though commanded at the distance of 500 or 600 yards, it would have cost much time and labour, and many lives, to reduce it, had the Rajah chosen to put his own person in peril.

Chikka Vira was very upset about the looting of his palace. The attitude of both the general soldiery and their officers was that the treasury was spoils of war. Some accounts say Fraser thought it wiser not to try and undo the theft, but the claim of Spoils of War was later upheld by the British Crown and the money disappeared into the maw of British India's Treasury. There were 16 lakhs of silver on the books, of which 10 (Rice) or 13 (Martin) lakhs were expropriated. The balance, according to Martin, had already been stolen by Chenna Bavappa. That sounds extremely plausible. But before you become too enraged, none of that money belonged to the people of Coorg, not even as State funds; it belonged to the Raja alone, and he did not walk away entirely penniless.

### The End of Kunta Basava

The Raja's chief minister, on whose head a price of 1,000 rupees had been placed, was found by the Company troops a few days after the surrender, hanging on a tree in the *katerchi* — 'the place of town business' — at the foot of Mercara hill. A doctor of the 35th examined the body and pronounced 'suicide' despite strong evidence to the contrary (such as the extra ropes used to haul the body up being left lying around). Nonetheless the verdict was universally accepted. Case closed. The doctor must have been one of those opinionated medical men no one wants to argue with. Only much later did the truth come out.

According to Rice's sources, Basava had fled into the jungle and lived for a few days in the mountains with a Kuruba family, but bounty hunters were out looking for him, and on 14 April he was brought in. The Coorgs did not bother to inform the British. This was personal business. He was secured pending instructions from on high. At midnight word came from the Raja. Upon which they strangled the Dewan and strung him up. Rice is sure the Raja wanted to eliminate a witness and punish a man who had led him to his own ruination. The order might have come from someone else in his name, but Chikka Vira had few, if any, ministers left about his person.

*Kunta Basava was a Badaga of the lowest extraction, who had risen from a dog-boy to the Devanship under Linga Raja, and having ingratiated himself with Vira Raja by pampering to his vicious propensities, he retained his post. He hated the Coorgs as much as he was hated by them, and maltreated them whenever he had an opportunity. Shortly before the outbreak of the war, Kunta Basava assaulted the Devan Chepudira Ponnappa in the presence of the Raja, because he dissuaded him from fighting against the Company. With his clenched iron fist Basava gave him a blow on the temple, which sent him to the ground for dead. The accomplice of the Raja's crimes perished with ignominy...*

[The Kurubas are indigenous to South India. Their name means 'shepherd' and that is what their caste (the third largest in modern Karnataka) did for a living. The Badaga are by contrast not a caste. They are a tribe indigenous to the Nilgiri Hills, the part of the Western Ghats around Ooty, immediately south of Wynad. Ironically, the name means 'northerner'. Their customs are quite distinct from other Hindus and they have their own language. Being 'casteless' they would naturally be despised (and still are) by 'true' Hindus. Under the Raj they had status as a Scheduled Tribe to protect them from the worst abuses, but that status has since been removed.]

### The Annexation

*'The British who had known the strategical importance of Coorg in controlling the neighbouring districts of Mysore, Malabar and South Kanara and who liked the pleasant and temperate climate of Coorg, were determined to bring Coorg directly under their rule. Therefore, to justify the rather unjust and hasty deposition of the Raja, Colonel Fraser, who was the officer in command of the British forces and the political officer of the Company, made a pretense [sic] of consulting the wishes of the people as to the future administration of the State. He called for an assembly of the headmen and principal officers of the State in front of the European guest house at Mercara. When the headmen and officers found that they would be treated as if they were the masters of the country, they were greatly pleased with the sudden change from abject servitude to a kind of consequential independence and readily agreed to be ruled by the Company. The upshot was that Colonel Fraser issued a proclamation, which declared that Coorg was annexed because it was the express wish of the people of Coorg to be ruled by the British Government.'*

[Mysore State Gazetteer. No date available.]

*On every principle of right and policy, you should abstain from interference unless the peace of the British territories should be disturbed or the interests of anyone of your allies or Dependents seriously affected.*

[Letter of the Secret Committee to the Governor of Bengal, 1823. In Pandey, p.34]

I have two complaints about the *Mysore State* editorial above. The first is that it makes the Kodavas look like ignorant peasants. The other issue is that the second half is copied verbatim from Rice (without credit) and the first half has been added by the modern editor to twist his wording. It feeds off an opinion that the ordinary Kodavas suffered the most, not just due to the conflict, but because Chenna Basavappa was appointed over them — Aha! The EIC all along intended to annex the kingdom and put in their own puppet. But this is hogwash. He was the last person they would have installed as a puppet. No puppet of any kind was in fact installed. To be fair, though, Rice (p.194) says Chenna's obscurity was not for want of trying:

*Channa Basava and Devammaji, after their return from Bangalore, had their confiscated farm at Appagalla with all its former belongings restored to them, and Government not only increased the land...but gave them also a pension.... Yet they were not satisfied. Channa Basava having received so much attention at Bangalore, flattered himself with the hope of eventually being seated on the*



*Coorg throne as the only remaining male relative of the ex-Raja. On his return he assumed the title of Arasu or king, petitioned Government to grant him for a residence one of the three palaces at Mercara, Haleri or Nalknad, as his house at Appagalla was 'like a cow shed,' 'unhealthy' and 'unpropitious.' He also wanted the panya or Raja's farm at Nanjarajpatna, and the charge of the Rajas' tombs at Mercara, for the maintenance of which Government allowed Rs. 2,000 per annum. But the Coorg Headmen exposed his designs so plainly in an official report to Government, that it is quite refreshing to read their clear and telling arguments, which evince a most loyal disposition to the new Sirkar. They plainly state it as their private opinion, 'that Channa Basava is obnoxious to the Coorgs, and that if he be aggrandized in any respect, a discontent will be created in the country.' Thus he remained in his obscure position as a farmer at Appagalla. He died on the 3rd August 1868 at his farm.*

If Chikka Vira could be found guilty of trying to murder Chenna Basavappa, it would be justifiable homicide.

As a matter of fact, a month before, when Lord Bentinck issued his final instructions in case war could not be avoided, he expressed a desire that if they could find a lawful heir who was also acceptable to the people of the country, they should replace Chikka Vira. This does lend credence to the idea of Basavappa being made a puppet, because he was technically an heir, through his wife. But, his infant son had been murdered and he seems to have had no other. Prince Virappa was only a rumour, being used by an entirely different party.

However, during the campaign it was driven home to the British just what a natural fortress Coorg was. So the Gazette is not wrong in claiming the British desired it for themselves. The error is in saying they had wanted it for a long time. In fact, it was only this campaign that made them fully realize the kingdom's strategic importance.

As for Lord Bentinck, he swiftly came to believe they had just deposed one of the cruellest men who had ever walked the earth. To quote Pandey (p.197):

*Before surrendering, the Raja had put several of his kinsmen to cruel death. Bentinck was shocked. His palace had been "a positive charnel-house and his immediate relations his principal victims". The "Coorg War" he said had resulted in the overthrow of "one of the most bloody tyrants that ever reigned". The absence of a legitimate male heir further helped him to decide in favour of annexation.*

Were the kinfolk killed as a 'mercy', to prevent the British from contaminating them? Or, vindictively because the Raja blamed them for his deposition? Did he intend to kill himself, too, but lost his nerve? These killings, if they did occur, seem often to be confounded with the purge made a couple of years before, which only clouds the matter further. The Raja denied everything until his dying day.

Chikka Vira departed into exile either on 12 April (OS — that is, 25 April NS). The Raja cannot have been rendered destitute by the looters of his palace, for it is said that when he set out into exile — his military band, on his orders, playing *The British Grenadiers* — he and his train made a

ludicrous spectacle, weighted down with badly concealed treasure. They took the road the HQ Division had used, and buried the treasure at Sirlecote, since they heard the roads in Mysore were infested with bandits, and in any case he was to be allowed to carry away only 10,000 rupees. The hoard was discovered later by a local man — some say a Brahmin (Rice says a *Káryagára*, a military commander) of Nalknad, who accompanied the Raja and thus knew its location — whose surprising rise to wealth led to its immanent discovery, at which he promptly told the British where the remains of the horde lay; if he could not have it all to himself at least his neighbours would not get it. He received a reward of 1,000 rupees from the *Sirkar* 'for his loyalty'.

Martin, following Chikka Vira's recollection, has a different version. He says the Coorgs were incensed that the exiles were despoiled by their escort as they prepared for their long march. Not every Kodava was likely to be that upset; the complaints would have come from among his few-thousand-strong retinue. But, only the Raja says he was despoiled, every other account says they buried the treasure and it was later stolen by a local man.

Chikka Vira assured his people he would be back after he had sorted out this misunderstanding with the Governor-General.



[Madikeri/Mercara. In the foreground the Raja's Guest House for use of visiting Europeans; Fort Mercara in the background.]

### The Treaty

Calling what happened to Coorg an annexation is a close-enough shorthand for the final result, but it is not precisely what happened. Because the Company never installed a Resident. It was more along the lines of the Kodavan clan-oligarchy taking the place of the Raja.

According to an article in the *Calcutta Review*, Vol. XXVI, January-June 1856, pp. 199-192:

*The Representative of the Governor General now entered negotiations with the remaining Dewans and other principal men, which must have puzzled them not a little, but which they turned to pretty good account after having comprehended their novel position.*

*They were induced, however to express anxiety for the maintenance of their religion and especially begged of Colonel Fraser to stop the pollution of their country by the killing of cows for use by the European troops. Their*

*petition was at once granted; the butchers were ordered down to Fraserpet (Kushalnagar), a distance of twenty miles from Mercara, and to this day the beef consumed by soldiers and other European residents at that station is carried up from Fraserpet.*

And (p. 202):

*Whereas it is the unanimous wish of the inhabitants of Coorg to be taken under the protection of the British Government, His Excellency the Right Honorable the Governor General has been pleased to resolve that the territory heretofore governed by Vira Rajendra Vodeya shall be transferred to the Honorable Company. The inhabitants are hereby assured that they shall not again be subjected to native rule and that their civil and religious usages will be respected and that the greatest desire will invariably be shown by the British Government to augment their security, comfort and happiness.*

Indian scholars note that similar requests regarding the sanctity of cows by other states had been denied by the Company, but in those cases the states in question had been under Muslim rule for centuries, whereas Coorg had been occupied by a Muslim ruler and liberated when Tipu Sultan fell. The key point is that the Company had not conquered the country. They had been given the keys to the kingdom, and to ensure the keys were not lost the Company had to form a compact with the Kodavas.

Martin provides a different slant. According to Chikka Vira, before he went into exile he asked the chief men and his ministers to compile a testimonial (presumably to be incorporated into his plea with the Governor-General), and 400 of them confirmed that they had been entirely satisfied under his rule. Presented with this statement Fraser asked them what sort of Government they preferred, given that the Raja had been deposed, he was told (Martin, p.26):

*The following representation is made by the undersigned officials, Wallundar, and inhabitants of Coorg (here is inserted a long list of official titles, such as Curleka, Dewan, Shamlyn, etc.), in consequence of having been graciously desired to say, without fear or doubt, what system of government we wish to be established in Coorg, he Rajah Veer Rajundeer Wadeer being deposed.*

*1. We do not wish that any substitute should be placed over us as a Rajah. We all consent to be governed according to the rules and customs of the British Government, if an English Sirdar is placed over us to examine into our grievances and to protect us.*

*2. The removal from this country to another place of Veer Rajundeer Wadeer, the descendant of that race which has, for so many generations, governed us and our forefathers, causes us pain and brings shame upon us. We therefore represent our grief to the British Government, and pray that the Rajah may be allowed to remain here, although deprived of all his power and authority. We will still remain obedient to the great Government. In the time of the Sultan, the great Rajah and his subjects were strictly faithful servants of the Superior Government. If, in the same manner, and as we have before petitioned, the Rajah is retained, and protected here, all the people of this country*

*will greatly rejoice. What more shall we state to those who know all things?*

*Dated 18th April, 1834. (367 Signatures attached to this Paper.)*

Rice includes the same document but interprets the negotiations slightly differently (p.188):

*The representative of the Governor General now entered into negotiations with the remaining Devans and other principal men, which must have puzzled them not a little, but which they turned to pretty good account after having comprehended their novel position. They no doubt had expected that the Principality would without ado be converted into a Company's taluk, and indeed the Headmen of the lower districts of Amra-Sulya at once petitioned for the annexation of their districts to Canara. The Coorgs were surprised to find themselves treated almost as an independent body. The chief men being assembled in the unfinished palace — the site of which is now occupied by the Central School — Col. Fraser informed them of the deposition of the Raja and called upon them “to express their wishes without apprehension or reserve, in regard to the form of administration which they desired to be established for the future government of the country.” “The Devans and the Karnik or principal accountant, a person of coequal rank with the Devans, then went round the assembled multitude, who sat in perfectly quiet and decent order, as is usual in native Durbars, and after taking the votes of all present, returned to the place where I sat, and acquainted me that an unanimous wish had been expressed to be transferred to the British Government, and to be ruled in future by the same laws and regulations which prevailed in the Company's dominions.” (Col. Fraser's Despatches to the Governor General.)*

*Not being quite sure whether the Rāja would not in the end be allowed to remain in Coorg, and wishing to be on the safe side, they added a proposal to permit the Rāja to stay amongst them at Mercara. When they were most positively informed that he must leave the country, they were greatly relieved and readily acquiesced in the orders of the Sirkar. In other respects the Coorgs were treated as if they were the masters of the country, and were greatly pleased with the sudden change from abject servitude to a kind of consequential independence. The upshot was, that Col. Fraser issued a proclamation which declared that Coorg was annexed because it was the wish of the people to be ruled by the British Government.*

It must be restated that the people of Coorg had been ruled by foreigners for longer than they could remember and did not much care so long as said foreigners administered justice fairly, respected local custom, and left the people alone.

On 7 May 1834 the EIC formally obtained suzerainty over Coorg by a proclamation of the Governor-General, and this was ratified by the chieftains. The Kingdom was's civil and religious usages were still to be left alone (although this did not stop the later missionaries and planters). Fraser left Coorg in September. For the record, the Kodavan Highlanders gave the Scots Highlander a glowing testimonial, a gold cup, and an authentic Kodavan outfit.

## The End of Chikka Vira Rajendra

*Vira Raja... was buried in Kensal Green cemetery in London — but as a heathen. True to his character in Coorg, he remained a stranger to the influence of Christian faith and morality in England.*

*[Rice, p.193]*

*...he knew the Rajah to have been at heart imbued with Christian principles, though he had not formally adopted Christianity.*

*[Martin, p.39, quoting the minister who officiated at the burial.]*

Chikka Vira asked to remain on the throne, even if it meant having a British Resident, but that was out of the question. At first he and his entourage of about 60 went to Bangalore, thence to Vellore down on the Carnatic Plain, and finally to Benares, which was the Company's chosen place of exile for naughty rajas who held divine status. So much for prophecy. The EIC confiscated the promissory notes and his hoard, but Chikka Vira still had enough funds to live in the manner befitting a prince. His enemies said it was the jewelry he stole from the murdered Rani, but in fact he was drawing a pension of 6,000 rupees off the tax revenues of the kingdom.

Chikka Vira's European caretakers all seem to have been impressed by his character. This is a point in his favour. The rajas of Coorg had each been masters at hiding their harsh system of rule from their neighbours, and particularly from the British, so that visitors always thought the best of them, but Chikka Vira lived a blameless life at Benares for 14 years. That is a long time to keep up appearances. Although... he did maintain contacts within Coorg and periodically upset the British by starting rumours of his immanent return.

In 1852 Lord Dalhousie, then the Governor-General, gave him permission to travel to England to seek legal redress for the monies that he believed had been stolen from him by the Company. With him went his ten-year-old daughter, Gauramma, his favourite. She was to be educated in England. It was said the ex-Raja wanted to remove her from pernicious influences. Although he never converted, upon their arrival in England she was baptized by the Archbishop of Canterbury himself, with no less a personage than Queen Victoria standing as her godmother (she was christened 'Victoria'). After the Raja's death the Queen adopted her. She married an English captain very much older than herself; it was not a happy situation and she died of TB in 1864.

Chikka Vira's last years were spent in and out of one court after another, trying unsuccessfully to get his money back. Depending on who you read, his obsessive focus on this issue was due to poverty, a baffled feeling of being wronged, or greed. Martin says his income came from the interest from the promissory notes. Rice and others say it was tax revenue from Coorg. A solution may be that the stipend came from taxes but was backed by the notes. That provides a non-nefarious reason why he could not have his principal back. Martin devotes half his 60-page book accusing the Company, and the Government, of all sorts of quasi-legal tricks; he claims the EIC's chief desire was to avoid being sued.

Chikka Vira's reputation was mud, but there were many like Martin who opposed the Company's underhanded practices and he might eventually have obtained some redress. It was the Mutiny that ultimately defeated him. As soon as the Crown assumed full control in India his suit was thrown out. The promissory notes were lumped in with the 'spoils of war', and anyway, the ex-Raja had failed to pay the tribute due from his family — Tipu's annual 24,000 rupees. Now that really is unfair, because, if the reader can recall that far back, Dodda Vira had successfully talked the Company down from 24,000 rupees to an elephant a year. A petition to Queen Victoria, despite her interest in his welfare, proved useless:

*I am directed by the Secretary of State for India in Council to inform you that he has received Her Majesty's commands to state, in reply to your petition, that a copy of it will be sent out to the Governor-General of India in Council for his observations in respect both to your continued residence in England and to the desired provision for your family. When an answer from that authority has been received, his Lordship will be prepared to consider the subject in Council.*

*[Martin, p.39]*

He does seem to have been allowed a longer stay in Britain, but his executors had no more luck than him in obtaining satisfaction. The Crown claimed the monies were now part of the 'revenue of India' and thus no longer private funds.

Chikka Vira died in 1859, aged about 60 (although Rice's dynastic tree gives the year as 1862). To the last, rumours surrounded him. It was said he died while enroute to his bank, in 'mysterious circumstances' connected to his safe deposit box. Actually, he died in bed. Per Martin (p.39), "*Despairing of redress, the Rajah sunk under the sickness of hope deferred; he died, his English Secretary truly remarked, of 'a broken heart,' at Paddington, on the 24th-25th September, 1859*". Martin, as one of the Executors, saw to the funeral arrangements. They gave him a Christian burial, at Kensal Green cemetery in London. It seems somehow fitting that a man 'of bohemian tastes' should be buried in the same cemetery as Freddy Mercury.

*[Death by broken heart is a medically proven way to die, I am told.]*

In 2014 the Government of India upheld a claim by a flour-mill owner from Mysore to be the legitimate heir of the Haleri dynasty, through Chikka Vira's father Linga Raja II. According to the news article I read, the Kodagu District's Deputy Commissioner's office in the Palace had just been ordered to vacate the premises. That was ten years ago. I do not know what the present situation is.

## The Character of Chikka Vira Rajendra

*I mean, what are they gonna say when he's gone?  
'Cause he dies when it dies, when it dies, he dies! What  
are they gonna say about him? He was a kind man? He  
was a wise man? He had plans? He had wisdom?  
Bullshit, man!*

*Apocalypse Now*

Opinion on Chikka Vira Rajendra, Last Raja of Coorg, remains split. There are those who say he was a monster, and those who say the EIC and/or the British Government cynically slandered his reputation with the deliberate object of acquiring and retaining his kingdom. Englishmen like Martin championed him equally with later Hindu Nationalists. His opponents point to contrary evidence. And, the Raja is his own worst enemy — his statements lack consistency.

In 1856 the Daily News of London published an epistle of Chikka Vira's entitled '*A Prince dethroned by The East India Company*'. Written three years previously, it is rather long and most of it is a recap of the events, but you can find it in Martin's book. It was not written by the Raja. The flow of words is English; even if he had learned the language he would still not have been able to write it in the manner of a native speaker. It was probably composed by his English secretary. Here are a few excerpts.

*I myself have rendered the Company services on numerous occasions, and have received testimonials from them of a most flattering nature; but during the last few years of my reign their behaviour towards me materially changed; and eventually led to my dethronement and banishment.*

About Chenna Basavappa:

*I immediately sent a formal demand to the Honourable East India Company (to whose territory he had fled) to surrender Chenna Basawa as a prisoner, to be tried for the murders he had committed; to which they replied that they could not deliver up a party who had fled to them for protection. I afterwards, on several occasions, made similar requests, but with the same ill success. This preyed on my mind exceedingly, particularly as the outrages committed by Chenna Basawa were frequently commented on by my subjects; and therefore, instead of my anger being appeased by frequent allusions to this circumstance, it was constantly aroused, particularly as all my attempts were futile.*

About Menon:

*Some months after this event, a party arrived at Coorg, alleging that he came from Malabar for the purpose of seeing Mr. Graeme (a member of the Madras Government); but, as he had no credentials, I thought it probable he was a spy, and ordered him to be detained as a hostage to compel the Company to do me justice by delivering up Chenna Basawa and I was assured by those around me that this step would be the means of effectually accomplishing the object.*

And the follow up:

*To my surprise, however, the Company merely sent a formal demand for their messenger (as he afterwards in reality turned out to be), which, not being complied with,*

*was followed by another. This I likewise considered I was not bound to obey. In consequence I was declared to be no longer an ally of the Honourable East India Company, and informed that my territories were annexed to the British possessions. Without any further notice an army was despatched against me, and troops entered my country at five different points. Finding myself in actual hostile collision with the British Government (whom I had been taught to consider from a child as my friends and protectors), I ordered flags of truce to be despatched, and surrendered myself.*

*This was done for the purpose of saving bloodshed, as the onslaught would otherwise have been terrible. The Coorgs had congregated in an immense body, and were all armed to the teeth, prepared to do the most deadly execution. My palace was searched by the troops, and the valuables taken there from to the extent of £30,000, and the proceeds divided among the soldiery as prize-money.*

And exile:

*Thus I became a state prisoner, and was hurried out of a country which had given me birth, amidst the lamentations of thousands of my subjects, who hovered around my cortege, weeping and bemoaning my hapless fate. Such expressions you will easily conceive, sir, however gratifying to the recollection now, then only served to render my position less endurable. In addition to this mark of respect from the poorer classes of my subjects, some hundreds of the nobility signed a memorial (which was thrust into my hand while I was being hurried away) expressing the most heartfelt sorrow at my departure, and concluding with a hope that my exile would be but temporary, and that I should return to my subjects again as their King, with renewed honour, and such expressions of kindness which made my heart, already filled with grief, ready to burst with feelings such as no words can express.*

He also complains about the attacks on his reputation:

*To make the already overflowing cup of bitterness more galling, I am described in Thornton's History of British India as tyrannical, haughty, and everything that a prince or ruler ought not to be, and in fact that my whole life was one of vice and infamy; but from the foregoing you will easily perceive that such is false, and the historian, in chronicling these words, must certainly have endeavoured to dish up details relative to myself in such a manner as to please the parties for whom his work was written—not knowing or thinking that the party on whom he had lavished so many disgraceful epithets would ever be in this country to confront him, and not only to deny the truth of the statement, but to be willing, ready, and able to prove, that there is no foundation for that which he has written. The same writer has stated that the inhabitants of Coorg wished to become subjects of the Honourable East India Company; but this is not true either. That they submitted I will admit; but wherefore? They had lost their own sovereign, and as the weaker party, and without a leader to direct them, were forced to give into the stronger, let their feelings be what they might.*

This is what he said about himself when interviewed by Colonel Fraser:



... he himself repeatedly observed that he was weary and unwell, that his head was confused and he knew not what he was saying. The principal object he seemed to have in view was to justify his first proceedings in regard to his demand for the surrender of Channa Basava, founded as he said it was upon previously understood agreements, and the letter to him from the Resident in Mysore under date the 1st August 1828. He said, that he detained Kulputty Karnikara Manoon only because this person had promised to procure for him the surrender of the fugitives, and that he thought he would be a useful mediator between him, and the British Government. To some remark I made upon this subject, the Raja replied that he was an ignorant man, and knew not that he was doing wrong, or acting in a manner contrary to the usage of other countries. He spoke repeatedly and earnestly of the friendship which he and his ancestors had ever entertained for the English, and prayed for my intercession with the Governor General that he might not be removed from his Fort, but allowed to remain and judged by the tenor of his future conduct. He often repeated that he was young, that he was ignorant and unacquainted with the customs of the world, that he had never benefitted by the advantages of society, and that in all his late proceedings he had been misled by evil councillors such as Abbas Ali and others, whom he plainly designated as villains.

[Rice pp.184-185]

The Raja's reasons for detaining Menon have already been countered by Menon himself. Yes, the envoy was to help in the return of the fugitives, but as a bargaining chip. By Menon's own account, it is true that, prior to his house arrest, his aid was given willingly, and later Chikka Vira decided he could help with the surrender negotiations. But there was a point in time when Menon was in danger of losing his life, and this the Raja omitted to mention.

But what did others believe?

The verdict of Martin, (p.59):

*The Rajah was a high-spirited, intelligent, home-bred lad, utterly inexperienced in business or State affairs, with very exaggerated notions of the importance of his independent kingdom, a vague idea of the Company as an assured and powerful friend, and a pleasant impression of Englishmen in general, founded on the traditions of the Mysore wars, and on the conduct of the guests, to whom his father had acted as a gracious and munificent host. Owing to his imperfect training, his remarkable intellectual powers were never developed. Had he been taught the English language, he would have needed no other advocacy than that of his own honest pen to refute the calumnies against him, so easily invented, so recklessly propagated, so readily believed. His uncle and namesake Veer Rajunder had learned prudence in the school of adversity; he numbered, as we have seen, Englishmen of the highest class among his personal friends, and yet, or perhaps, on this very account, he thoroughly understood the danger of his position as an independent prince; and had, in fact, need of all his judgment and the influence of his friends, to enable him to hold his own against the Company, who had pledged themselves to him as firm and faithful allies as long as the Sun and Moon should endure.*

[Martin, p.9.]

The verdict of the author of *The Expedition*, visiting Coorg immediately after the annexation:

*... the Rajah said that he had no power in his country, and that he had been compelled to go to war. This we knew to be false; and his violent and scornful manner to his traitor General convinced every one how gladly he would have used his late despotic and tyrannical power; but the tiger was enchained. He had had power but a week previous to murder his mother and all his brothers and sisters, and to throw their bodies into one pit, burying with the corpses of his family the sword that murdered them. But, thank God, his reign and race have passed away; and it is much to be regretted that other native governments, carried on in a manner equally infamous, should be allowed to continue. Oude, Nagpore, and the Nizam's territories are wasting away under the despotic blight that oppresses them. Our non-intervention system prevents the residents from interfering to hinder any meditated enormity; and when to the barbarous ruler a disciplined corps of our troops is lent, nominally to protect him from foreign aggression, but virtually to uphold his rule the poor Ryot, beholding in despair the fearful odds of riches, discipline, and power against any attempt of his to meliorate his condition, emigrates or dies. But this subject I leave to those who can prove, from statistical tables, the deterioration in character and diminution in number of the peasantry; the consequent deficiency of the revenue, and increasing desolation of the land.*

[The Expedition, p.223]

The verdict of Menon:

*All things considered it appears to me that what has happened may be attributed to the Rajah's youth and pride, the bad advice of his servants, and the Mussalman who came from Mysore. The Circumstance of Government not having taken notice of the bits of oppression formerly practised with the view of preventing recurrences. The delusion inspired by the Letters received from Cassy setting forth that all Countries would fall under the Halery Samstanom, and that the Hon'ble Company would be ruined.*

But Menon also wrote in his report:

*After the English troops entered the Muddakery Fort and hoisted the Flag under a salute, I went to Muddakery ambalom [temple]. A man of the Bhuardar caste aged about 20 years [who] used to cook for the Dewan Bassavapen was also there. This person told my servant, as [to] what he heard the Dewan say, that the real object of remaining me [sic] to the fort, was to nail me and the 13 persons who were with me to the tree standing on the road through which the English Force might pass, for which purpose nails had already been prepared. That the Rajah's palace within the fort as well as the new one constructed outside of it was to be burnt down, for which purpose they were filled with firewood that we might consider ourselves very fortunate in having escaped the fate that awaited us. On this being mentioned to me I enquired after the man but could not find him out. On sending people to both of the Palaces, all the rooms had firewood placed in them, some*

of them in the palace within the fort, were being closed for the Rajah's residence on his return.

*The general belief is that the lives of myself and of the others with me were not put an end to in the evil manner that was intended in consequence of the Rajah having been frightened from what was stated in the letter addressed by Mr Graeme and by the Right Hon'ble the Lord Sahib as well as in the proclamation for they strongly stated that if my life was put an end to or any injury done to me the Rajah would meet with the same fate and lose his Country.*

The verdict of Colonel Fraser after his meeting the Raja on the night of April 10/11 was much the same as Menon's:

*I am led to believe that this account of himself is just, that he is a weak and ignorant person, spoiled by the possession of early power, and that the feelings and superstition which nature gave him, instead of being perverted to evil purposes as they have been, might have taken a different and far better direction had he been guided by judicious advisers and had a more frequent intercourse been maintained between him and the officers of the British Government...*

But just two months later, on 7 June:

*Gradually light began to break in upon the darkness of Coorg affairs, as soon as it became known that the Raja was to leave the country. Colonel Fraser wrote on the 7th June to the Governor General: "The Raja is cunning, false, hypocritical, and well capable of deceiving those around him who happen not to be aware of the past events of his life. But in my opinion he has forfeited every claim to indulgence, and I think that his atrocious character would render it discreditable to the British Government to concede more to him than was granted to him — life and honourable treatment."*

*The cruelty to his subjects and the massacre of his relatives were fully established, and in reply to an official report on the subject, the Governor General's Secretary wrote to Col. Fraser: "With regard to that portion of your letter, dated 29th May, which treats of the murders perpetrated in Coorg between the period of the flight of Channa Basava and his wife to Bangalore, up to that of the surrender of the ex-Raja, I am desired to observe, that these atrocities are of such a description as to render it exceedingly doubtful in the opinion of the Governor General whether any indulgence beyond that of granting him his life should be extended to the author of them. At the time when the ex-Raja surrendered, no conception was formed that his cruelties had been carried to so enormous an extent as would now appear to be the case, nor indeed would it seem possible for the imagination by any effort to ascribe to one individual the perpetration of so much wickedness as may now, with too great an appearance of reality, be imputed to the ex-Raja."*

[Rice, p.189]

The author of *The Expedition* and even Rice could be dismissed as propagandists, as could Fraser if he were writing long after the event. But when the Political Agent was at first inclined to give the Raja the benefit of the doubt yet after making a proper investigation pivoted 180

degrees within a couple of months, something was obviously wrong, at least to Western eyes.

And the Kodavas have also left their opinion:

*Whilst in exile six sons are said to have been born to Vira Raja by his several wives, in addition to the infant Chitrasekhara, who was six months old when his father left Mercara ... A few years ago they sent emissaries to Coorg to obtain wives from amongst the leading Coorg families, though they themselves are Lingayats. They were evidently anxious to re-awaken an interest amongst the subjects of their father; but their overtures were unsuccessful; the Coorgs one and all declined the preferred alliance.*

[Rice p. 194]

I will leave it to you to form your own opinion. My own has boxed the compass several times. I think it is pretty much settled now, but I will not add any more bias one way or the other.

## The Coorg Rebellion of 1837

This title invites jaded laughter from anti-imperialists. There is just one small problem. The Kodavas, or at least most of them, fought *for* the Company. Actually, they dealt with the rebellion pretty much on their own.

Just like every other aspect of Indian history during the period of Company Rule, there are two distinct narratives. The European version tells of a minor uprising, limited mainly to a caste called the Gowds. The Nationalists treat it as an early bid for independence. In some ways the affair has more relevance among Indian scholars than the Coorg War. What follows is gleaned mainly from European sources, or Indian scholars using those sources, but I came across a good summary from a purely Indian point of view, by Dr. Gowri Naidu, called [The Rebellion of Kalyanswamy \(1837 A.D.\)](#), published in the IJCRT (vol. 3, issue 4. Nov. 2015).

I have an inherent distrust of Nationalistic history — including that of my own people. It always comes with an Agenda. Unfortunately, so does Imperialist history. Calling this uprising a bid for independence seems a bit of a stretch when one considers that there was next to no national feeling in India at that time. All the same, it seems probable that discontent with Company Rule was much more widespread than the British recorders of those times would like one to believe. For what it is worth, I advance my theory of the Plot of the Brahmins, and it is noteworthy that a Brahmin acted as one of the guiding hands in this affair, though what I could find of his motivations appear to be entirely selfish.

There were two aspects to the uprising, also called the Amara Sullia Rebellion. One resulted from discontent among the peasantry in Lower Coorg and the other was an aristocratic plot, also centered in Lower Coorg but intended to affect the whole kingdom. The peasant unrest was very much due to the nature of Company Rule and could almost be considered a separate but overlapping event except for the fact that the same players were involved in both elements; the plot was due to dissatisfaction among the elites with the new status quo.

The region known as South Canara, which used to be the Ikkeri Kingdom of Bednur, and which technically encompassed Coorg, had been simmering with unrest for some years. Partly this seems to have been due to the same economic depression which played a part in the Nagar Revolt in Mysore, and partly it was due to the Company's efforts to rewrite the way people were expected to live their lives. This included such things as English education, English justice, missionary efforts, a government monopoly on salt and tobacco, and that old bogie, a cash-based tax system. Coorg had been immune to all this while it was independent. Whether the Kingdom was still immune at this point varies with who you read, but the consensus is that it remained relatively untouched. There would be attempts by the Europeans to ignore the promise not to interfere with civil and religious usages, an outstanding example being the missionary efforts of men like Richter, but those mainly occurred later on. It was the people of Lower Coorg who experienced a stark change, beginning in 1835.

Again, there are two narratives. One says the people of Lower Coorg requested to be placed back under the administration of South Canara and the other says the Company simply made the administrative change in the name of Efficiency. The districts affected were in Lower Coorg, specifically Amara-Sulya, Putter, and Bantwala. These had been given to Coorg by the British in 1804. Some Kodavas lived there, but they were not truly 'Coorg lands'. After Chikka Vira was deposed they fell either by choice or fiat into the purview of Mangalore. The sudden exposure to life under Company Rule caused an equally sudden flare up of anger, which was harnessed by some of the Coorg elites who had their own grievances.

European sources claim the heart of the trouble lay within the Gowd community. These were a people similar in many respects to the Kodavas. Some ethnologists argue the Gowds adopt whatever customs their current overlords use. They had once been a power in their own right, with a claim to have been the progenitors of the Ikkeri and Haleri. Most were farmers, but they had their own elite. There was a community of them in Upper Coorg as well, living on the western slopes of the mountains, but their base was in the foothills. According to modern scholarship this focus on the Gowds derives from Richter's work and should be viewed with caution; the discontent was much, much wider spread. All the same, the hands that guided the rising were directly connected to the Gowd community, and it was that community which took the first step.

This rebellion reminds me most of the 1745 Rising of Bonnie Prince Charlie — something I have studied in detail. While the common people were upset with foreign rule, the elites, those within Coorg, desired to turn back the clock and regain their old authority. These origins are very much like those of the '45. The two risings also depended on a royal claimant who was not particularly effective. Likewise the events, though somewhat different in character, have the same dynamics. And, the effort would turn out to be just as futile.

Stage one of the rebellion was initiated by our old friend the *sannyási*, Abhrambára. He turned up in Coorg in 1835,

like a bad penny, with a new schtick — he was now Prince Virappa returned from the dead. Remember that in 1834 Chikka Vira had been much troubled by a rumour this prince was still alive and being sponsored by the EIC. Well, before that rumour could be fully put to bed, Abhrambára reappeared. According to Dr. Naidu, when he last left the Kingdom he had gone to reside at Sullia, with a Gowd of his acquaintance named Mallappa Gowda. He seems to have taken no part in the Coorg War. But, with the first stirrings of postwar discontent he revealed himself to the people of Coorg.

He never claimed to be the prince in disguise, that was left to others. It was recalled how insolent he had been to Chikka Vira. It was said he had been aided to escape the Raja's prison, had gone to Mysore, and had taken up the life of a *sannyási*. The fact that Abhrambára looked nothing like Prince Virappa was explained by 'smallpox'. The prince's wife, Rájammáji, had been only 8 years old when she was married and perhaps could not remember what he looked like. He was given a formal questioning — not by the British but by the prominent men of the kingdom — and his denials were couched in such a way that they made the claims about him appear true.

He hung about Nalknad for a while, picked up a few dozen followers, then left the kingdom again. It would seem that there was not much interest in the return of the Haleri. But he did not go far. He stopped at Kenchamma Hosakote (where the Northern Column had started its march in 1834) and soon issued a proclamation that he was indeed Virappa returned. At this point the plot sputtered. Two of his followers (both named Basava) were arrested by the Coorgs in Malabar and questioned concerning Abhrambára. They confessed he was a fraud and implicated one of Chikka Vira's former ministers, who was arrested by Dewan Ponappa, handed over to the British, and sent to jail in Bangalore. Abhrambára/Virappa got as far as declaring there would shortly be a 'disturbance' in Coorg before he was also arrested, by the British, and likewise tossed in Bangalore jail.

*[What a Coorg investigative team was doing in Malabar is not explained. It is interesting to note that they had such agents.]*

According to Dr. Naidu, Abhrambára, or Swami Aparampara as he calls him, intended to launch an attack on Fort Mercara, on 5 December 1836. Presumably, this information was also collected by the Coorg agents and passed along to the British. Seen from this angle, Abhrambára appears to be the chief actor, not a puppet. However, he would still have needed a sponsor within the Kingdom. Labeled a political prisoner, he was released 30 years later. Even after all that time the first thing he did was visit Coorg, twice, but after being sent away the second time he at last expired on the road. Maybe he really was Prince Virappa. Meanwhile, thirty years before, his prophecy had come true.

If you follow Rice's account the sponsor was none other than Dewan Laksmi Náráyana. Now, where have I come across that name before? Oh yes, he was the Brahminical Dewan of Chikka Vira, who accompanied Mahomed Takar Kahn to Colonel Fraser's camp and helped smooth the Raja's deposition. Unfortunately, Dr. Naidu notes the

Dewan as one of the pro-British leaders, which is a bit of a poser.

I think in this case it would be better to follow Rice — to a point. I can see him painting some anti-British nobleman as an arch-plotter, but if the man was pro-British that would be counterproductive as well as unfair. Rice's story is that after the war Laksmi Nārāyan was made one of a commission of four Dewans installed by the British to carry out Kunta Basava's former role as prime minister — that is, the Company was following a similar model to Mysore, but instead of using Company officials they employed elements of the old administration. This certainly marks him as pro-British. But, the other Dewans, who were Kodavas, sidelined the Brahmin. Shut out of the magic circle, he revived the idea of putting up a pretender, and further whipped up the growing discontent in Lower Coorg through a brother who lived in Sullia; said brother had connections among the more wealthy Gowds. This is all quite plausible, but I think Dr. Naidu's version is more accurate with regard to Lower Coorg and the nature of the discontent throughout the region. I am inclined to think Laksmi Nārāyan was the man who sponsored Abhrambāra within the Kingdom, whatever the latter's own agenda may have been. With the Dewan's arrest the affair would move forward on a different track.

According to Dr. Naidu, when Abhrambāra was captured his friend, one Kalyanswamy or Kallianswamy, took up the baton, styling himself the brother of Prince Virappa and advancing a similar claim to the throne, under the name Nanjudappa. The rebellion is sometimes called by his name. Execution of the uprising had by this point been delegated to two men, Kedambadi Rama Gowda and Hulikadida Nanjaiah. The first lived in Sullia, and was (if Rice is correct) possibly a contact of Laksmi Nārāyan's brother; the second lived in Upper Coorg. The two executors suppressed the news of the arrests and groomed a Lingayat peasant named Putta Basava to play the part of Kalyanswamy. Abhrambāra's (or Kalyanswamy's) letters and seal were passed around, and the spurious Kalyanswamy was acclaimed as Raja of Coorg to a select few.

Rice downplays the events in Lower Coorg significantly. In his account the troubles began with a mob assembling at Sullia. Though badly armed they succeeded in attacking the hated Mangalore Collector at Puttur (a major town on the Buntwall Road not far from Mangalore) and driving off the two companies of sepoys who served as his escort. (Was the Collector still Clementson?) This brought in more recruits and a march on Mangalore was begun. Once there, they broke into the jail before looting the *kacheri* and setting fire to it. They also burned down some houses on the nearby hills. The Europeans fled aboard a ship to Cannanore, believing it was a general insurrection. This was exactly what had been feared in 1834. Even the Commandant felt impelled to evacuate his garrison, but since he had no boats they stayed, and it soon became clear that this was nothing more than the usual riotous mob, leavened with a criminal element from the jail. By the time reinforcements arrived order had already been restored.

*[The word Kacheri has multiple meanings. In the context it probably means the law court and associated businesses.]*

Dr. Naidu paints a somewhat different picture. The original plan, before the real Kalyanswamy was arrested, was for a rising to begin on 5 March in Upper Coorg and on 6 April in Lower Coorg. However, thanks to the removal of the major players, Upper Coorg was put on hold. On 29 March a pro-British notable named Altur Ramappayya was assassinated. It was he who had revealed the original conspiracy to the British. The assassination may have been undertaken as an act of commitment by the rebels; it is regarded as the start of the Rising.

On 29/30 March the Government office and treasury at Bellare was looted. On 30 March the spurious Kalyanswamy appeared there and declared that if the people helped him reclaim the throne and expel the British he would remit all taxes for three years and abolish the duties on daily consumables — something which was a major source of grievance. Orders were given to interfere with the postal service and interdict other traffic, to sow confusion.

The main body of the rebels proceeded from Bellare to Mangalore, reaching Buntwall (Bantwal) on 2 April, where a number of prominent men and their followers joined, though some of the local elites decided to stand with the British. While the main body proceeded to Mangalore on 3 April, a separate group headed for Kumbala, reaching it on 6 April. This group was defeated by pro-British elements, but the unrest continued to spread in other directions, until most of South Canara was in turmoil. According to Dr. Naidu the revolt also involved a number of Company employees who were able to swiftly mobilize the peasantry. He makes the point that although the Gowds formed the core because they formed the bulk of the population, this was not something confined to just one community, or even exclusive to Hindus.

The actual advance on Mangalore played out as described by Rice. Dr. Naidu adds that one body of reinforcements was stopped by the British from crossing the Nethravathi River and its leader drowned — from the way he writes it sounds as if the man was first arrested and then tossed in the sea. Far from being run out of town, however, the rebels in Mangalore held the place for two weeks, until 16 April. The rebels held the town and the surrounding countryside while the garrison remained penned up in the fort. Kalyanswamy was officially proclaimed Raja at Mangalore. But this was the high-water mark of the Rising.

Because support for the restoration of the Haleri within Coorg was virtually nonexistent the rebels had decided to first create a base of operations at Mangalore and muster an army. That took time, and of course enthusiasm began to wane, while pro-British elements began to sap at people's commitment. The rebels had done a lot of plundering, which was not to everyone's taste. As happened to Bonnie Prince Charlie in his march on Derby, the insurgents lost the momentum. When that happened they were already defeated.

Rice's account of the rebellion within Coorg is much more detailed, perhaps because there was no need to downplay the events, which were very positive for the British. According to him the risings that would secure the conquest of Coorg were to take place among the Badagas



of Lower Coorg — Kunta Basava's people — at Panje, Bellare and Subrahmanya, and in Upper Coorg at Nalknad and Beppunad, plus in the North among the Sivachari clan, who were Chikka Vira's golden boys. Bellare, as we have seen, quickly fell to the rebels, but in Upper Coorg there was less success. A few Kodavas did congregate at Sullia. Most of the Kodavas hesitated, unsure whether to believe the claims of the spurious Kalyanswamy, and unsure whether they wanted to back him even if the claims were true. Meanwhile, the Company Superintendent — per the treaty Coorg had no Resident, but there was a liaison officer present — a Captain Le Hardy, tried to locate the rebels. According to Rice (p.198):

*Captain Le Hardy, the Superintendent, was on the alert. After consultation with the Divans, he left Ponnappa at Mercara, and marched with Bopu and a body of troops in the direction of Sulya, as far as Sampaji, whither the insurgents were expected to move according to Bopu's information. When Capt. Le Hardy, after a long and tedious march, had reached Sampaji at the foot of the Ghats, no rebels were to be seen, and he learnt that they had moved towards the Bisli-ghat and North Coorg. It was impossible to follow the insurgents through a tract of forest hills, difficult of passage even for travellers. He returned therefore to Mercara, and marched to the supposed rendezvous of the rebels through the upper districts of Coorg. When he arrived there, still accompanied by Bopu, no insurgents were to be seen, and intelligence now reached his camp that the enemy was at Sampaji. He forthwith marched to Sampaji by way of Kadama-kall. Again no rebels.*

*The Superintendent began to doubt the fidelity of his Divan. On his return to Mercara he was told by the other Divan, Ponnappa, who seems to have borne Bopu a grudge, that information had been received in the mean time of several of Bopu's relatives having joined the insurgents. Capt. Le Hardy's suspicions were thus confirmed. He called Bopu and charged him straight with treachery. 'Go down to your friends the rebels' he said; 'Be an open enemy. Go, and I will come after you; and if I catch you, you shall be hung.' Bopu, who was as faithful a servant of the Company as his friend Ponnappa, was terribly alarmed. Appearances were certainly against him; yet he was innocent. But how was he to gain the confidence of the Chief, which he had evidently lost. The man broke out into tears, and protested his fidelity with the eloquence of despair; 'Do you stay, and let me quell this miserable rebellion' he said. 'If you give me liberty to act according to circumstances and take all responsibility upon myself, I will set out immediately and bring you the ringleaders alive or dead.' Capt. Le Hardy felt that the man was true, and permitted him to do as he pleased.*

This, by the way, was another common motif in India: two high officials, otherwise 'friends', betraying one another over some perceived slight. Rice continues (pp.199-200):

*The Coorgs from Beppu-nad and other districts had in the mean time collected at Mercara. A party of some sixty men was despatched to the north under Subadar Appachanna. Bopu, with another troop, marched straight down to Sampaji. Two lictors of his own fashion preceded the Coorg*

*Consul, namely two coolies, each of them carrying a load of fresh cut sticks. The Divan evidently intended to give the rebels a licking in the literal sense of the word. His best Nalknad friends gathered around him; three of them marched a little in advance of the Divan to scour the way before him; for Chetti Kudiya, who had been the late Raja's master in shooting and great favourite, a man of the Male-Kudiya tribe, who could hit it was said the eye of a flying bird, had sworn to shoot Bopu dead the moment he saw him.*

*The party had not proceeded further than the Raja's Seat, and were just descending the Ghat, when they met, two unlucky wights, — Muddaya a former Subedar, and Appaiya a late Parpattegar. They were well known to Bopu. They had failed to give him information of the insurrection; they must have known things, and had they sent him a message in due time, it would have saved him the danger of utter disgrace and ruin, from which he had barely escaped. He therefore ordered some of his followers to seize the fellows, and others to take out a fresh stick for each and give them a good dressing. The two unfortunate men, at once seized by rude hands and stripped of their coats, demanded explanations; they were answered by blows. They protested their innocence, though no charge had been brought against them. Bopu did not stop to expostulate. Blows were the answer. They cried for mercy, fresh blows followed. After a while they were left half dead on the ground and Bopu marched on. Half way down the Sampaji pass he met with a party of Nalknad Coorgs, men of his own acquaintance; they were armed, but dared not fight the Divan; he at once ordered them all to be seized by his men, who were much more numerous, and administered a severe castigation to all except one, who escaped by telling all he knew about the movements of the insurgents. Bopu went on gloriously. He redeemed the promise given to Captain Le Hardy. The Subedar of Nalknad had been drawn into this foolish affair. Bopu sent him word and then had a meeting with him, when he prevailed on him without difficulty to withdraw from the rebels and to return to the allegiance he had sworn to the Company. The loss of so influential a man was a great blow and discouragement to the petty insurrection. It was put down with little shedding of blood, beyond that which was drawn by the 'Lictors,' and from that time Coorg has been at peace.*

[*'Appachanna' is Madanta Appachu. Subedar means General. A Parpattegar was a revenue inspector.*]

'Bopu' is Apparanda Bopu, the Dewan who escorted Fraser to Mercara. General Dyer should have studied this little campaign of his.

Kunta Basava's extended family and client base seem to have been at the core of this part of the affair. Whether the Kodava chiefs felt they needed to demonstrate loyalty to the Company, did not like the idea of another foreign raja coming in after they had just got rid of one, or were simply opposed to the rebel clans with their links to the old dynasty, is debatable. The consensus seems to be that they were quite happy with the new arrangement.

Kalyanswamy was captured and executed on 19 June 1837, and the unrest, bereft of a focal point, subsided for the present.

The Government received such a scare that they went overboard in their praise of the Coorgs, offering to share out 20,000 rupees of the ex-Raja's buried treasure, which had only recently been revealed. The Kodavas asked for gifts instead, and received horses, jewelled swords, and a specially-struck Coorg Medal that no European was permitted to wear. If you search the internet for information about Coorg you will see this medal everywhere, on billboards, mugs, t-shirts, etc. It is a symbol of Coorg national pride. More valuable were the *jaghirs* — estates that came with a requirement of military service but that could be either inherited or sold, and provided a tax revenue, plus pensions for three generations. Coorg maintained its loyalty through the Mutiny all the way to Independence. In 1861 a Disarming Act was passed in India. The Coorgs were specifically exempted. They are still exempted.

The Coorg Medal is 2 inches in diameter and made of gold weighing 7 *tolas* (a *tola* being 180 grains, or roughly 11.66 grams). If the gold chain is included the weight is 11.5 *tolas*. The obverse shows a Coorg warrior in traditional dress striking a pose and the reverse has a representation of crossed Coorg knives, one the *picha-katti* and the other the *udu-katti*, surrounded by a wreath, with the words: 'For distinguished conduct and loyalty to the British Government. Coorg, April 1837.' The same inscription is on the obverse in Canarese.



## Further Adventures of Colin Paterson

*From Major General W. Cullen, Resident at Travancore and Cochín. To Colin Paterson Esq. M.D. Physician to His Highness The Rajah of Travancore:*

*Sir*

*I have the honour to forward to you Extract from the Fort St. George Gazette of the 1<sup>st</sup> Instant, appointing you Physician to His Highness the Rajah of Travancore.*

*I have at the same time to request that you will be so good as to continue to afford medical aid to the Residency Establishment until the arrival of Dr Reid.*

*I avail myself with great pleasure of the occasion, to acknowledge your zealous and able professional services during the period you have been attached to this Residency, not only in the kind aid you have on all occasions so cheerfully afforded to the members to the Residency, but for the unwearied attention and solicitude you have shown in promoting the objects of that useful Institution His Highnesses Charity Hospital, and in the formation and Instruction of the Class of Native Medical Subordinates.*

*I have the honour to be*

*Sir, your most obedt. Servant.*

*W. Cullen, Resident.*

*Resident's office, Trevandrum, 23 July 1844*

For Colin Paterson, Coorg was merely a brief adventure. Unfortunately, no record of his impressions exists. It would be interesting to know what he thought of Coorg. His column made it to the capital eventually. Did he have the chance to leave the field hospital and visit Mercara? Did he see the Raja? A small garrison was left behind in the kingdom but he was not attached to it.

For a decade after the campaign he acted as medical officer in various posts before being seconded to Travancore. That was a remarkable kingdom. Located at the very southwest tip of India, during the 18th Century it became a highly militarized state, almost like Prussia, and just as expansionist. Its ruler, Anizham Thirunal Marthanda Varma I, ended his career by devoting his kingdom to Vishnu, making his dynasty vice-regents and securing his descendants forever. The donations that poured in from pilgrims was added to the wealth pouring in from the spice trade and the kingdom became immensely wealthy. Travancore defeated the Dutch in war and put the British in their place, but later allied with the Company against Mysore, after which it became a princely state for its own security. However, it was always well administered and did not lose its nominal independence until Partition in 1947.

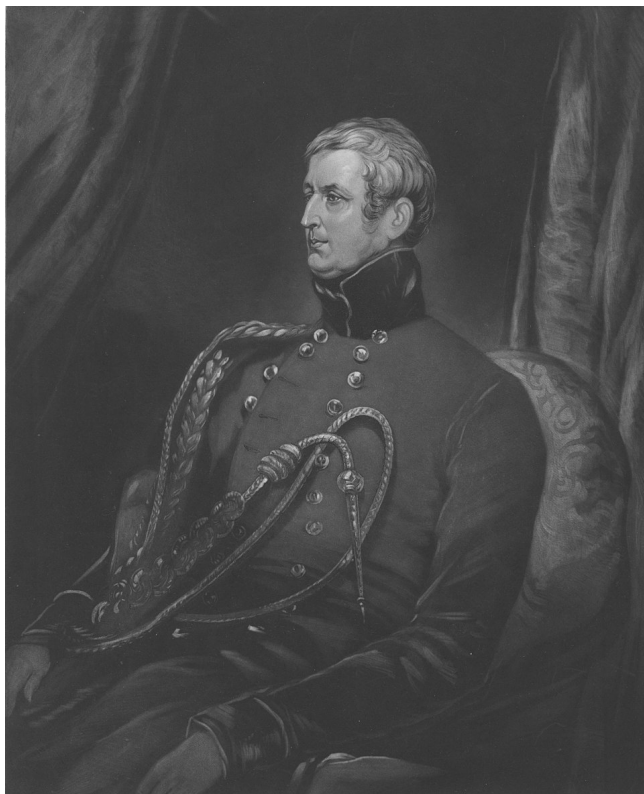
Colin served there for a number of years, briefly under the British Resident, Major General Cullen, and then as the Maharaja's personal physician and chief medical officer of the famous Nair Brigade — a unit that still exists. He got himself commemorated in a painting of the Maharaja, now in the Kerala State Museum, showing him explaining anatomy with the help of an ivory skeleton (it was taboo for royalty to touch bone). Unfortunately I could not locate a copy of the picture to include here.

His first posting after the Coorg War, in 1835, was 'doing regimental duty', but in October he accompanied the Commander-in-Chief — that was Sir Frederick Adam —

and his military secretary (the man he had tended on the sea voyage) to the Nilgiri Hills. Here he remained until 1841 as that district's Medical Officer before transferring to the Residency at Travancore, where he worked for two years before receiving the very special appointment to the Maharajah's Court. From the Greenock Advertiser dated 1 October 1844, quoting an article from the Bombay Times dated 16 July 1844:

*Colin Paterson Esq M.D. has been appointed head Physician to his Highness the Rajah of Travancore, vice Eaton resigned; and Assistant Surgeon James Reid to be Residency Surgeon at Travancore, vice Paterson. Dr Paterson is a native of Argyllshire.*

While serving at the Residency he wrote a *Medical Report of Travancore* which is still used as historical source material. He also appended to it an account of an expedition he and the Resident made to the rugged Agastya Hills on the border of the kingdom. I had understood this to have been of a military nature, but reading the account it turns out to have been pet exploratory project of the Resident, Cullen, who invited his friend Colin along. He must have been on good terms with the Resident, for he later incorporated the man's surname into his daughter's own. They shared an interest in botany.

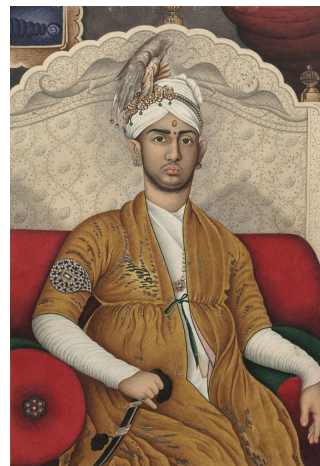


*[William Cullen, Resident of Travancore]*

That section of the border, lying north of the capital but in the southern part of the country, had never been fully explored. Now it is a hub for regional eco-tourism. The trip was a peaceful one (despite the coolies running off for fear of elephants and tigers) and only took a few days. They reached the summit of the main ridge (over 4,000 feet; the highest peaks are about 6- and 7,000) that allowed them to

see the country on both sides, as far as the sea. His notes wax lyrical on the delights of the climb.

Colin actually served two Maharajas, for Swathi Thirunal Rama Varma II died on 26 December 1846 and Paterson continued in his post until 1851, under Uthram Thirunal Marthanda Varma II, a younger brother of Rama Varma. Rama Varma had been a gifted polymath and an enlightened ruler. His employment of Paterson was not, apparently, something forced on him by the Company; he requested a European doctor so he could learn the latest techniques of medicine, and ordered him to found clinics for the common people, such as the one at Thycaud (now a suburb of Thiruvananthapuram), which became a general hospital. The Maharaja similarly employed a European engineer in his new engineering department, with an eye to improving transportation links. This was a tradition going all the way back to the first maharaja, Marthanda Varma I, who hired the Walloon mercenary Eustacius de Lannoy to be his siege-master. His namesake, Marthanda Varma II, continued the family's progressive outlook. He abolished slavery in the kingdom. But, at the same time, both men continued their dynasty's hard-line policy on Caste; Travancore to this day is still the most caste-conscious state in 'egalitarian' India.



*[Left: Swathi Thirunal Rama Varma II. Right: Uthram Thirunal Marthanda Varma II]*

Five years after his appointment to the Court Colin married the daughter of a Company military officer, by whom he had four children, all, like their mother, born in-country. By a 'stranger than fiction' coincidence, a business client of mine told me they had read a popular Indian bodice-ripper set in the Kerala of those days, which has a sympathetic character who perfectly matches Colin. But, he never married an Indian princess. His bride was Scottish.

Thanks to Colin's training in botany and chemistry the Maharaja also put him to work documenting anything that might be of scientific interest, from flora and fauna to local customs and of course, local diseases. In 1850 he discovered and published his discovery of an effective treatment for cholera which in his opinion reduced the mortality rate by about 15% more than the treatment then available in England.

In 1851, at the direction of the Maharaja's Dewan, Colin assisted in preparations to send various articles to Queen



Victoria's Great Exhibition in London. Unfortunately, he left the Maharaja's service the next year (though the correspondence dealing with this is dated 1851), for the very banal reason that the Maharaja was unaware his recent promotion to full Surgeon meant another application for his services had to be filled out. Oddly, his promotion had come in 1849! I will forego expressing my opinion about Bureaucrats as a species. Though it is also possible Colin or his superiors wanted a change, perhaps due to his marriage, and played the usual 'papers not in order' card. And, he was apparently not in the best of health. According to the Maharaja's correspondence he was sorry to lose him and there were inquiries as to whether he could be retained. But, he was attached to his old unit from before the Coorg War, the 3rd Light Cavalry, and by 1856/57 was Garrison Surgeon at Bangalore.

After the Mutiny he returned to Britain with his family, but only briefly. I am not sure if this was simply a spell of leave, or whether the British Crown's assumption of control in India shook a lot of apples out of the tree, but doctors were always in demand and he would return to India. Meanwhile — and this may have been the reason for his trip — he was presented to Queen Victoria at her levee, on 28 April 1858.

From The Times, Thursday 29 April 1858:

*Her Majesty's Levee*

*Her Majesty, the Queen held a Levee yesterday afternoon at St James' Palace...The following presentations to the Queen took place, the names having been previously left at the Lord Chamberlain's Office and submitted for her Majesty's approval... Dr Colin Paterson, Madras Army, late physician to his*

*Highness the Rajah of Travancore, on return from India, by Viscount Gough.*

*[Viscount Gough of Goojerat and Limerick was an Anglo-Irish peer. He had commanded in the First Opium War, and the First and Second Anglo-Sikh Wars. He would eventually be made a field marshal. The title has only just gone extinct.]*

Colin drops out of the record for a couple of years. His sons were enrolled at schools in Britain, but that was the custom. The last news of him is his death, in 1863, age 58, at Nagpur, where he was serving as Deputy Inspector General of Hospitals. The family returned to Scotland, his widow dying in 1876. When his wife passed away the family fortune amounted to £128, 18s, 9d. A purchasing power of roughly £3,800 in today's money, or roughly a month's house rent where I live.

*[The Resident of Travancore presenting a letter of thanks from Queen Victoria to Marthanda Varma II., in response to his gifts to the 1851 Great Exhibition, on the occasion of General Outram's visit. This scene appears in at least two forms. The original was a sketch done in 1851 and published in 1852 for the Illustrated London News. The two are not identical. The original has fewer Europeans in it. The version below, done in 1860, may have been a response to complaints from some of the omitted participants. I believe Colin Paterson was represented in both versions but I chose this one because his place in the scene has been independently verified — see the red box.]*





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