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Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery

The People of India, Volume Eight

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H.H. THE LATE MAHARAJAH OF MYSORE.

province to reduce, or demand tribute from, all petty chiefs: and in its turn Seringapatam was attacked by Rend Oolla Khan, an officer of the Beejapoor government. Canterai Raj, the reigning Prince of Seringapatam, however, defended his fort bravely, and not only repulsed the Mussulmans, but pursued them across his frontier, inflicting considerable loss upon them. The Mysore family now left their former faith, which was that of the Jangam, established by Chun Bussappa, of Kalliani, in the twelfth century, and joined the Brahminical, as custodians of the sacred image of Runga. Thenceforth the little court was the resort of all Brahmins of learning and sanctity in the South of India, and became famous for its acts of charity and generosity to pilgrims and Brahmin visitors. The Rajah Canterai coined money, and the Canterai pagodas, still in local circulation, are lasting memorials of his reign: and he annexed many surrounding baronies to his territories. Canterai's successor, Dud Deo Raj, followed up the previous system, and in 1667 the possessions of the state extended very considerably southwards below the plateau of Mysore, and northwards beyond Hullabeed, or Dwara Samoodra, the former capital of the Bellal dynasty. Seringapatam was out of the line of Mahomedan and Mahratta invasions, which only skirted Mysore. It had been out of the way also of the struggles between the Rajahs of Beejanugger in their attempts to regain their kingdom, and their local contests with what remained of the Chola and Pandyan kingdoms of Kunchi and Madura; and the state was undoubtedly well governed. In less than a century the revenue had risen to 1,323,571 pagodas per year (about £500,000), and in 1700 there were nine millions of pagodas (about three millions sterling) in the treasury. The reigning Rajah Chik Deo Raj had also established a post office in his dominions, which was in full work, and affords proof of a degree of enlightenment which existed nowhere else in the south. The progress of the state through the stormy period of the seventeenth century was therefore creditable to its rulers.

It would have been impossible for the state, with its reputation for great wealth, to have escaped the predatory spirit which existed. The wrecks of Mahomedan armies had rallied round special leaders—the Nawabs of Kurnool, of Savanoor, and Kurpa; and Mysore was obliged to purchase peace by a payment to them of a million sterling in 1724. But Mysore was not by any means idle in the general scramble of that period, and whenever an opportunity existed, annexed territory in contiguity with its borders. Mysore, the Mahrattas, the Mussulmans, the French, and the English, were all struggling for the supremacy of the South of India, and with various good and bad fortune. But the Mysore state was not affected by them, and indeed kept aloof from all until the rise of Hyder Ali. It had acknowledged allegiance to the Emperor Aurungzeeb, and through His Highness the Nizam, the virtual successor to the Emperor in the Deccan, escaped the demands of the southern Mussulman commanders.

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