

## INTRODUCTION.

### I

The following pages contain Ânanda Ranga Pillai's Diary from January 1756 to June 1757. These 18 months did not witness any renewal of Anglo-French hostilities in South India; but they did bring news of the outbreak of the Seven Years' War in Europe and of Clive's capture of Chandernagore in Bengal; so that they include events which directly led up to the tragic epilogue of Lally's and Leyrit's conflict amid the closing scenes of that tragedy of ill-founded ambitions which Duplex had inaugurated. On the causes of this ultimate downfall, the present instalment of the Diary throws much new light. Leyrit has always remained an obscurely sinister figure; but the present volume continues that enlightenment which the last one began. There we saw the new Governor, silent, undemonstrative, almost morose; eager for aid of the Chief Dubâsh's knowledge and experience, but decently reluctant to pursue measures which the low standards of the age and country would have ranked as corrupt. Here we find developed the consequences of a quality which is always cumulative in its operation. Leyrit was silent, he was obstinate, but he was also weak; and under him the government visibly fell into

hopeless disorder. Ranga Pillai mentions many details in which he had no personal interest. The Second, as Sepoy Paymaster, draws for twice as many as were actually with the colours; one officer appropriates part of the Turaiyûr peshkash; another levies a rupee on every traveller passing by Gingee; the Company's servants oblige the merchants to supply them with cloth while the Company's Investment has still to be provided. In short, as the diarist observes, Dupleix might have taken money for himself, but he had at least kept a sharp look-out for the misconduct of others, whereas Leyrit suffered all to do very much as they pleased. And his indolence extended beyond mere indifference to financial dishonesty. A striking episode exhibits him on a visit to the ancient forts of Gingee passing carelessly on and ignoring the outcries of the palankin-bearers on whom one of his followers had drawn his sword.

The results of the Governor's personal weakness were heightened by the weakness of his official position. He was not regarded as likely long to hold his high office. More than once we hear discontented councillors muttering that he had never been appointed by the Company, but had succeeded merely by the orders of Godeheu. His position must then have seemed to depend on Godeheu's ability

to uphold in France the policy which he had adopted in India; and no doubt many who had learnt at first hand what an inexhaustible fertility of resource was possessed by Dupleix, reckoned not without probability that even if the latter failed in procuring his own restoration, he would at least succeed in reversing Godeheu's policy and overthrowing those who had been selected to carry it out.

## II

The Europeans of Pondichery were thus in a condition of progressive discontent and demoralisation; and the Indians living under the French flag were still more uncertain of the future. Astrologers had been predicting a time of universal misfortune for the peoples from the West—predictions which were confirmed by the news of the Great Earthquake at Lisbon and the re-opening of the struggle between the English and the French. At times Ranga Pillai seems to have fancied that the former were specially marked by Fate for destruction. When he hears that they had lost Calcutta to Siraj-ud-daula and Vizagapatam to Bussy, he thinks it is the beginning of their complete expulsion from India, so little could he gauge the real significance of these ironical events. But he judges more

shrewdly the portents which appear in Pondichery itself—when, for instance, on the Feast of St. George—the Governor's name-day—the flag hoisted in honour of the occasion is blown from the mast, and when the umbrella catches fire in Vinâyakan's marriage-pandal. "Such evils and injustice," he reflects, "were seen when Arcot, Madras, Trichinopoly, Tanjore, Golconda and Delhi were in their days of decline."

No doubt his presentiments of evil were sharpened by his sense of personal wrongs ; his administrative functions had been almost suspended by the growing activity of Leyrit's private dubâsh, Kandappan, so that he had little more share in the government of the town itself than he had had in the later days of Dupleix' rule ; his moral sense was severely offended by the bribes which Kandappan exacted by the aid of his position, and by the rise to influence and dignity of the despised *Ārombâttai*, Vinâyakan, by means of the wealth which he had improperly obtained at the Company's expense ; he was himself growing old and inactive ; he complains of lassitude ; he loses his appetite ; his wife dies ; and though he performs her funeral rites with great magnificence at a cost of 5,000 pagodas, and was received by the Governor with extraordinary honour, he must often have felt that

his best days were past. This feeling perhaps dictated his reminiscences—regrettably bald—of former Governors, and his praise of Dupleix, of whom at one time he had had little good to say.

Meanwhile the condition of the territories that remained under French control was low. They had been ruined by war ; the cultivators had lost their cattle and seed-corn ; but one family remained where formerly had been ten ; and ryots who used to till 20 cawnies could not till one ; then the rains failed ; and in the following autumn the Carnatic was ravaged by small-pox. Popular alarm and excitement was reflected in the stories of the appearance of the Goddess Mâriamman in strange forms in divers places ; men gave themselves out as possessed by her ; others took vows and made offerings ; there was evidently an epidemic of religious excitement. Ranga Pillai's attitude towards this is highly interesting. He records the stories as they reach him without comment ; but when one of his agents wrote to say that the Goddess had appeared to him in human form, demanding gifts, the diarist replies in a vein of ironic sarcasm, recommending an indelicate alternative instead of sanctioning the gifts which his agent had promised.

## III

In these circumstances the diarist's position as renter was peculiarly difficult. Famine and disease raised difficulties that of themselves rendered the full realization of the land revenues impossible ; but besides these arose those obstructions, tolerated by Leyrit's feeble government, which, Ranga Pillai alleges, rendered the collection of the revenues altogether impossible. In the introduction to the previous volume, I have already pointed out the difficulties which arose from the conduct of the sureties and of the commandants. In the present volume we find these difficulties developed to their conclusion. In the first place the sureties were not required to make good the obligations into which they had entered ; but worse than that, they even put forward claims to the repayment of sums which they said they had advanced to the sub-renters but which Ranga Pillai said were the sums which the sub-renters had promised them for their guarantee. Whatever they were, Ranga Pillai was obliged by the Governor to pay what they demanded. So far as the sureties were concerned, it was evidently a case of "Heads I win, tails you lose ;" and as evidently individual interests, here as in the case of the Investment, were being preferred to those of the Company.

In the second place Ranga Pillai's agents were obstructed in various ways by the commandants of the various parties scattered through the French Carnatic. For example, if a poligar were pressed for payment, complaints would be sent in to the Governor that the renter was using undue severity ; and Ranga Pillai even alleges in a letter to the councillor Boyelleau, printed as an appendix to the present volume, that his *amâldars* were imprisoned till they had purchased their release, and that defaulting ryots easily bought effective protection from the military officers in their neighbourhood. These assertions rest upon the diarist's own testimony ; but he is unlikely to have invented the enquiries which Leyrit made from time to time, obviously at the instigation of the commandants ; and our own experience in the same area shows that interference such as Ranga Pillai asserts to have taken place was far from impossible under a Governor far more capable than Leyrit and amidst a service far less demoralised than that of the French Company.

Then again there was a group of councillors at Pondichery decidedly opposed to Ranga Pillai's management. It was composed of Moracin, du Bausset and Delarche. All had been intimately associated with Duplex, and all had been opposed to Godeheu who had

restored the Company's dubâsh to an active part in the administration. Moracin had married Dupleix' niece, Mlle. de Kerjean, after the death of her former husband, de Choisy; du Bausset was acting as attorney in charge of Dupleix' affairs in India; and Delarche, through his knowledge of Persian, had been employed in various matters which the diarist certainly regarded as appertaining to himself. As against these, Ranga Pillai's party in Council consisted of the Second, (Barthélemy) and Boyelleau, neither of whom was on the best of terms with the Governor, and the first of whom, on Ranga Pillai's own showing, was devoted to his own private interests. Accordingly when Ranga Pillai fell so far behind with his payments that he seemed to have realized less than half the revenues due, circumstances provided his enemies with a weapon of attack which his friends found it very difficult to ward off, the more so as the Pondichery treasury was almost empty.

Another circumstance contributed to their difficulty. Shortly after Leyrit's arrival, Ranga Pillai had undertaken the management of his private trade and other pecuniary interests. But private trade had decayed since the palmy days when Lenoir had made an honest fortune out of it; and the impoverished Carnatic afforded few of those political

plums which had promised to Dupleix such inexhaustible possibilities of wealth. Moreover when occasions arose offering a chance of profitable negotiations, Leyrit did not always consult Ranga Pillai, nor, when he consulted him, did he always use his agency. Hence a breach appeared between the two. The *Courtier* resented the advice and influence of others, and tended more and more to neglect this very important branch of his duties, while Leyrit began to regard him as a man of large promise and small performance. Early in the present volume, it may be noted, Leyrit is complaining that Ranga Pillai has neglected his private trade; and a little later we find him refusing a diamond because it is too dear, and afterwards annoyed because the diamond has been taken away.

Another matter added its wedge to the widening breach between the Governor and the *Courtier*. Leyrit, it appears, on the statements of Desvaux and others, was inclined to regard the amount of Ranga Pillai's lease as net revenue, whereas the latter contended that it was gross revenue and that he was responsible only for the balance remaining after the revenue establishments and contingencies had been paid. The Governor did not know enough to judge whether this claim was well or ill-founded; and at last it was decided

to send out three councillors to inspect the country and examine the revenue accounts. This was in June 1756.

One of these, M. Guillard, was deputed to inspect the Srirangam country, which was not included in Ranga Pillai's lease; the other two were sent, M. Boyelleau to inspect the country of what we should now call the Gingee district, and M. Desvaux that of the Tiruviti district. Against this measure the *Courtier* and Flacourt (renter of Srirangam, though Bâli Chetti had been reported to the Company as holding the farm) loudly protested, as likely, nay certain, to throw the revenue management into confusion, to encourage the ryots to withhold the revenue, and to injure the Company's interests. In these objections, there was no doubt a measure of truth, but I should suppose them to be far from the whole truth, though we have no certainty in the matter and can only judge the balance of probability. It is inherently likely that the revenue administration was fundamentally bad. If it was not, the Carnatic must have been very different from those other provinces of India which were on the eve of falling under British control. Ranga Pillai himself, growing old, and as we know, little capable now of much exertion, did not, and indeed could not exercise that close personal supervision which

we may assume to have been indispensably necessary. His personal administration may well have been entirely honest; it probably was; and yet the general administration may have been, and probably was, extravagant and corrupt.

Of the inspectors sent into Ranga Pillai's country, one, Boyelleau, was favourable to him, the other, Desvaux, was not. The latter is alleged to have coerced the ryots and others into furnishing such accounts as he desired. No such complaints were made about Boyelleau; yet we find that in the Gingee country out of a revenue of 1,59,000 rupees, 80,000, or more than half, had been absorbed by the *sibbandis* and other items of expenditure, and more than a quarter had still to be collected. In these circumstances the Pondichery Council cannot be blamed for desiring a reform, or for regarding Ranga Pillai's management as inadequate.

The measures which they took were in principle the same as those taken by the English in Bengal in the like case. They appointed supervisors—Desvaux for Tiruviti, Boyelleau for Gingee, and Guillard for Tirukkôyilûr and Vriddhachalam—but these took even less share in the actual administration than their early English counterparts in Bengal. They were concerned with the

revenue collection only ; and only one of them, Desvaux, was prepared to undertake any personal responsibility for that. The other two merely appointed Ranga Pillai's *amaldârs* and renters ; indeed Guillard explicitly told the *Courtier* that all he was going to do was to appoint a deputy to report the daily news and inform him how the collections were going on. Though Ranga Pillai's management may well have needed reform, the Pondichery councillors were evidently not the persons to effect it.

The fact is further illustrated by the curious procedure which the Council followed in this matter. One would have expected the defaulting *fermier-général* to have been summoned before the Council and examined, his accounts and explanations required and considered, and at last a formal resolution adopted. But nothing of the sort took place. Ranga Pillai hears of the appointment of the inspectors indirectly. No formal communication seems to have been made to him. And the transformation of the inspectors into supervisors was similarly obscure. Ranga Pillai hears indirectly that the Governor has given Desvaux *parwânas* for the *mâhals* placed under his charge ; the next day Boyelleau sends for him and discusses the transfer of the Gingee country as a matter

already known. This was on September 19 and 20 ; but the management was not formally taken away from the *Courtier* until November 7. Then Lenoir was appointed to examine and report on the accounts ; but so little care was taken of the matter that they were still unsettled at the close of the volume.

#### IV

Politically the Carnatic continued to enjoy that truce which had brought to an inconclusive end the struggle inaugurated by Dupleix. The only train of events of any interest in this connection was the reduction of Mîr 'Abd-ul-rahmân whom Pâpayya Pillai had entrusted with the fort of Elavânasûr when he had control of the French revenues. At the moment the centre of political interest lay in Bengal ; and this instalment of the Diary includes those pregnant events—the capture and recovery of Calcutta, and the fall of Chandernagore ; the last entry of the present volume is dated two days after the battle of Plassey. To Ranga Pillai the fall of Calcutta heralded nothing but the approaching expulsion of the English from India. That was entirely natural ; but it seems not a little curious that he should not know the name of the ruling Nawâb of Bengal. At first he hears that the English have been attacked by 'Ali Virdi Khân ; then the name

of their antagonist becomes Qâsim Pâdshâh. Presently he records gossip that the English after recovering the city had all been surrounded and slain. Amid such errors, omission to refer to the Black Hole can have no significance. Of the capture of Chandernagore, as one would expect, we have longer references and much more detail. It was indeed a matter which nearly affected many at Pondichery. Lenoir was so upset by the personal losses which the event portended that he was unable to pursue his investigation into Ranga Pillai's revenue accounts. In this connection we find copied into the Diary a French narrative—probably one which the diarist received from one of his friends—supplemented by a more elaborate narrative in Tamil, which appears to be based on the French with the addition of details either omitted from the first by careless copying (evident in other respects) or gleaned from conversation. But here, as in the case of events at Calcutta, omissions and inaccuracies are far more noticeable than any other feature of the news that reached the diarist's ears. One is driven to the conclusion that Bengal seemed far away, and that there was little real touch between the two provinces, in spite of the trade-relations between them.

## V

Finally we have various references to the progress of Bussy in the Deccan. By 1756 the difficulties to which Bussy had been constantly exposed had come to a crisis; but interesting as the events were, and comparatively near as was the scene of action, the Diary rather illustrates the sort of news that was flying round Pondichery than adds any definite details to our knowledge of events. In part this may have been due to the financial decay of the city. In 1754 Dupleix had protested a bill for a lakh of rupees drawn on him by Bussy, and Godeheu had confirmed the protest. The result was that the principal sowcars had recalled their agents from Pondichery; and at this time the bankers were incomparably the best-informed class of Indians outside the inner circles of the larger Courts. The Madras Government made a practice of checking the news sent in by their *vakîls* with the news received in the sowcars' shops; so that the closing of these agencies in Pondichery not only marked its financial inferiority but also deprived it of a useful source of political information. Ranga Pillai's news was mainly derived from Arcot, and was sometimes sowcars' news, sometimes news current in the durbâr of Muhammad 'Alî.



Two or three points in this section of the Diary deserve a few words of comment. The same news-letter seems to have stated that Salabat Jang had made peace with Bussy and that he had sent a *parwâna* to Muhammad 'Alî. The underlying inconsistency of these two statements does not seem to have aroused comment; and yet Salabat Jang's *parwâna* was evidently only part of that policy of replacing French by English troops which had long been under consideration. Bussy had been dismissed; Salabat Jang's ministers were resolved to destroy him if they could; and the 'peace' was but a transparent subterfuge. Yet Leyrit did not place under orders the troops designed to relieve Bussy until almost a month later.

The same spirit of evasion and delay was evinced regarding the reception of Salabat Jang's letters to the Governor and to the King of France announcing his reasons for dismissing Bussy. No audience was accorded to the messenger who had brought them until news had come of Law's successful march and the subsequent agreement. In this case the forms of oriental diplomacy permitted the letters to lie unopened and undelivered until they had answered themselves.

The third point relates to the destruction of Bobbili. In its first form the news that Ranga

Pillai received was that Vijayarâma Râjâ and Bussy had come to blows, the former being slain and Vizianagram being taken and plundered. This purported to be—what assuredly it was not—the contents of a letter from Bussy to the Governor; but so unsettled was the character of the times, so shifting the alliances, so uncertain the part which any state or man would play, that this story could be recorded, without a hint of doubt although, as the diarist was to learn three days later, it was the exact opposite of the facts.

## VI

Thus the volume comes to an end, in the middle of 1757, at a time when the French could still hope for a successful issue of the struggle. Bussy had expelled the English from the Northern Circars; he might march on, recover Chandernagore, destroy Calcutta, and repeat in Bengal his successes of the Deccan; and an expedition from Europe might destroy Madras. Yet the battle of Plassey—that momentous and ill-contested action—had been fought and won; the wealthiest province of India would supply treasure with which the English troops would be paid and fed, while Lally's men starved or deserted. Ill-omened too was the disorder of the Pondichery Government; it meant that

Lally would be distracted from his campaign by a thousand quarrels and abuses. When to these was added the weight of English superiority at sea, French hopes were evidently fated to disappointment.

## ANANDA RANGA PILLAI'S DIARY.

JANUARY 1756.

*Thursday, January 1.*<sup>1</sup>—As it was the European New Year's Day, I rose early, and, taking Chiranjîvi Annâswâmi, and Appâvu, in the usual fashion, visited M. Leyrit, the Governor, M. Barthélemy the Second, M. Guillard and the other councillors, officials, *sous-marchands*, the religious and the priests, in the proper order, with bouquets and limes, offering our good wishes for the New Year. We returned home by noon. Owing to the troubles, town and country had already lost their beauty; but now the rains have failed, and famine has fallen like a mill-stone falling on a sore finger. I have dwelt here these 33 years but never have I seen so bad a year. May God deliver the people from these evil days.

*Sunday, January 4.*<sup>2</sup>—At half-past seven this morning, I went to the Fort, and paid my respects to M. Leyrit, the Governor. I reported that certain persons were ready to visit him. He told me to bring them; so they brought their nazars to the Governor as follows:—

	Pagodas.
The Company's merchants in money ...	1,000
In cloth ... ..	100
Sungu Sêshâchala Chetti ..	43

<sup>1</sup> 21st Mârgali, Yuva.

<sup>2</sup> 24th Mârgali, Yuva.