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Royal Patronage and Animal Welfare: The Relationship Between the Maharaja of Mysore and the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, Madras.

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Abstract-- The history of animal welfare in colonial India has generally been examined through the activities of colonial governments, European humanitarian organisations and emerging legislation. The role of Indian princely rulers in supporting animal welfare institutions has received comparatively less attention. This article examines the relationship between the Maharaja of Mysore, particularly Maharaja Krishnaraja Wadiyar IV, and the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (S.P.C.A.), Madras, during the early decades of the twentieth century. The study is based primarily on an important archival file from the Mysore Palace Office concerning donations to the Society and its annual Animal Shows. The documents cover the period from 1913 to 1931 and reveal a sustained relationship involving financial contributions, honorary association and royal patronage.

The evidence shows that the Maharaja regularly contributed Rs. 50 towards the Society's annual Animal Show from at least 1913 and continued this practice during the 1920s. By 1928, the Society described the Maharaja as one of its Vice-Patrons and appealed for an additional annual contribution towards its maintenance. Although this additional request was not sanctioned, the annual Rs. 50 contribution towards the Animal Show continued for several years. The documents also reveal the educational and humanitarian objectives of the Society, including the treatment of injured animals, maintenance of a hospital and Pinjrapole, prosecution of cruelty cases and organisation of Animal Shows designed to encourage better treatment of animals. The relationship therefore represents an interesting example of princely patronage extending beyond the geographical boundaries of Mysore. At the same time, the refusal of an additional maintenance grant in 1928 and the discontinuation of the annual donation in 1931 because the Society was located outside Mysore indicate the limits of royal patronage. The article argues that the relationship between the Mysore Maharaja and the Madras S.P.C.A. should be understood as part of the wider history of philanthropy, humanitarianism and princely public culture in colonial South India.

Keywords-- Mysore, Krishnaraja Wadiyar IV, Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, Madras, animal welfare, princely patronage, Animal Show, colonial India

I. INTRODUCTION

Animal welfare emerged as an organised public activity in India during the nineteenth century. The establishment of Societies for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCAs) was closely associated with the development of colonial legislation, urban institutions and humanitarian ideas. The Madras Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals was established in 1877 and became one of the important institutions concerned with the prevention of cruelty and the treatment of animals in South India.

The development of animal welfare in colonial India, however, cannot be understood only as a colonial initiative. Indian social, religious and ethical traditions had long emphasised compassion towards living beings. The colonial period brought these ideas into contact with new institutional forms such as animal hospitals, SPCAs, veterinary organisations and legislation. Scholars such as Samiparna Samanta and Saurabh Mishra have demonstrated that animal welfare in colonial India was connected with public health, veterinary science, urbanisation, agriculture, labour and changing ideas of humanitarianism.

Within this broader history, the role of Indian princes deserves greater attention. Princely rulers were important patrons of educational institutions, hospitals, cultural organisations and charitable causes. Maharaja Krishnaraja Wadiyar IV of Mysore, who ruled from 1894 to 1940, was particularly associated with social, educational, economic and cultural development.

The present study examines one relatively unexplored aspect of his public patronage: his relationship with the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, Madras. A 44-page archival file preserved through Mysore Palace records provides valuable evidence of this relationship. The file contains correspondence between the S.P.C.A., Madras, and the Mysore Palace Office concerning donations, Animal Shows and the Maharaja's position as Vice-Patron.

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study has four main objectives. First, it examines the nature of the relationship between the Maharaja of Mysore and the Madras S.P.C.A.



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Second, it traces the financial contributions made by the Maharaja to the Society's Animal Shows. Third, it examines the purposes for which the Society sought royal support and the activities that the Society undertook. Finally, it analyses the significance and limitations of princely patronage in the development of animal welfare during the colonial period.

III. METHODOLOGY AND SOURCES

The study follows a historical and descriptive methodology. Its principal source is the Mysore Palace Office file titled *Donation of Rs. 50 to Society*, covering 44 pages and containing correspondence from 1913 to 1931. Since much of the material consists of scanned official correspondence, the visual examination of the original pages is particularly important.

The earliest document in the file is dated 1913 and records a donation of Rs. 50 to the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, Madras. Subsequent documents provide evidence of recurring donations during the 1920s and early 1930s. The archival evidence is supplemented by published works on Mysore history and the history of animal welfare in colonial India.

The Maharaja of Mysore and the Context of Public Patronage

The Maharaja referred to in the documents was Krishnaraja Wadiyar IV, commonly known as Nalwadi Krishnaraja Wadiyar. He was Maharaja of Mysore during the period covered by the archival correspondence. The Mysore government itself describes his reign as a period in which Mysore developed significantly in areas such as urban planning, public institutions and infrastructure.

His reign also witnessed substantial attention to education, public health, social reform and economic development. Contemporary and later histories of Mysore emphasise the expansion of modern institutions during this period. M. Shama Rao's *Modern Mysore*, published in 1936, provides an important contemporary historical account of the transformation of the state during the Wadiyar period.

The Maharaja's relationship with the Madras S.P.C.A. should therefore be placed within this larger culture of institutional patronage. His support for the Society was not an isolated act but formed part of a broader pattern in which the Mysore Palace responded to requests from public, educational, charitable and cultural institutions.

The Madras Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals

The Madras S.P.C.A. had been functioning since 1877. The 1928 appeal preserved in the Mysore Palace file provides a detailed picture of its activities.

According to the Society, during the preceding year it had secured convictions in 2,613 cases of cruelty. Injured or diseased animals were removed from the control of their owners and sent either to the infirmary for treatment or to the Pinjrapole for care and rest. The Society described itself as the chief agency for suppressing cruelty to animals in the region.

The Society's work extended beyond prosecution. It maintained a hospital, a dogs' home and a Pinjrapole or refuge for old animals. It also undertook educational activities by publishing leaflets, encouraging students to write essays on animal life and organising the Magic Lantern Exhibition on the kind treatment of animals.

This combination of enforcement, treatment and education is significant. The Society did not understand animal welfare simply as punishment for cruelty. It also sought to change human attitudes towards animals. Its Animal Shows were one of the most visible methods through which it attempted to encourage kindness and proper care.

The history of the Madras Pinjrapole was also connected with the Society's activities. Later legal accounts describe the Pinjrapole as an institution inspired by the S.P.C.A. and intended to provide shelter for animals that could no longer work.

The First Evidence of Mysore Patronage: 1913

The archival file begins with evidence from 1913. The first page records a donation of Rs. 50 to the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, Madras.

A series of documents dated November 1913 makes the purpose of the donation clearer. The Palace Office communicated to the Honorary Secretary of the S.P.C.A. that the Palace Controller had been instructed to remit Rs. 50, representing His Highness's contribution towards the Animal Show for the current year. A subsequent letter from the Palace Controller forwarded the cheque for Rs. 50 to the Society.

The Society formally acknowledged the payment and described it as the Maharaja's contribution towards the prizes for the Animal Show of 1913.

This correspondence establishes two important points. First, the contribution was not simply an informal personal donation; it was processed through the official machinery of the Mysore Palace. Second, the donation was specifically connected with the Animal Show rather than with the general maintenance of the Society.

The Animal Show as an Instrument of Animal Welfare

The Animal Show occupied an important place in the Society's programme.



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The archival evidence demonstrates that these exhibitions were designed not merely as recreational events but as a means of encouraging humane treatment.

The programme for the 1922 Animal Show, for example, included prizes for the best-cared-for bullock in a bandy, Jutka pony, Dhobie donkey, poor man's dog, soldier's dog, draft bullocks, calves, milk cows and hackney horses. There were also competitions concerning shoeing and the care of animals.

The 1923 programme similarly included awards for well-cared-for working animals, dogs, bullocks, donkeys, cows, calves and horses, as well as a category for children's pets.

These categories reveal the practical nature of the Society's objectives. Animals were not considered only in abstract moral terms. The Society focused particularly on animals used for transportation, agriculture, milk production and domestic purposes. The underlying message was that owners should demonstrate responsibility by maintaining animals properly.

The Society itself explained that cruelty among poorer and less educated sections was often associated with ignorance. The purpose of the Animal Show was therefore to encourage owners to look after their animals better, take pride in their condition and treat them with kindness.

The Maharaja's Regular Contributions During the 1920s

The relationship became more clearly institutionalised during the 1920s. A December 1921 letter from the Society's Honorary Secretary appealed to the Maharaja for the usual contribution towards the Animal Show. The letter specifically stated that the Society had received a contribution of Rs. 50 every year from His Highness and requested that he might be approached for a contribution as usual. The Palace Office subsequently authorised payment of Rs. 50.

The payment was duly made in December 1921, and the Palace correspondence recorded that the Rs. 50 was the Maharaja's donation towards the Animal Show.

The same pattern continued in 1922. The Society again requested the usual contribution, referring explicitly to the fact that it had received Rs. 50 annually from His Highness. The Palace Office approved the payment, and a cheque for Rs. 50 was subsequently sent to the Society.

The Society acknowledged receipt of the money and recorded it as the Maharaja's donation towards the Animal Show for the year.

In 1923 the pattern was repeated. A December 1923 Palace communication sent a cheque for Rs. 50 to the Society as the Maharaja's donation towards the Animal Show scheduled for January or February.

Thus, the archival evidence demonstrates continuity rather than a single act of charity. From 1913 through the early 1920s, the Rs. 50 annual contribution became an established feature of the relationship.

The Maharaja as Vice-Patron

An important development appears in the correspondence of 1928. On 8 May 1928 the Honorary Secretary of the S.P.C.A. appealed directly to the Private Secretary of the Maharaja of Mysore. The letter stated that the Maharaja had been connected with the Society as one of its Vice-Patrons for several years.

This is perhaps the strongest evidence of the nature of the relationship. The Maharaja was not simply an occasional donor. He was formally associated with the Society in an honorary capacity.

The Society nevertheless distinguished between the Maharaja's annual contribution to the Animal Show and financial support for its general maintenance. The 1928 appeal explained that the Society had been receiving Rs. 50 annually from His Highness for its Animal Show but had not received a contribution towards the upkeep of the Society. The Society therefore requested a regular annual contribution to strengthen its financial position.

The request reflected the Society's financial difficulties. It explained that the interest earned from its funded capital was barely sufficient to meet even one month's expenditure. The Society therefore sought additional support to expand its work and secure its stability.

IV. THE LIMITS OF ROYAL PATRONAGE

The Palace response is equally important because it demonstrates the limits of princely philanthropy. In September 1928 the Palace Office informed the Society that an additional contribution towards its upkeep could not be sanctioned.

The refusal should not be interpreted as opposition to animal welfare. The established Rs. 50 annual contribution towards the Animal Show continued. The Palace records indicate that the annual contribution was regarded as customary and was authorised again in subsequent years. The documents therefore suggest a distinction between support for a specific public event and an open-ended commitment to an institution's recurring expenditure.

This distinction provides an important insight into the financial culture of princely patronage. The Maharaja's Palace was willing to support a visible public event with a fixed annual contribution, but it was more cautious about assuming responsibility for the long-term maintenance of an institution situated outside Mysore.



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V. CONTINUED SUPPORT: 1929 AND 1930

The relationship continued into the late 1920s and 1930. Palace records from 1929 refer to the annual Rs. 50 grant to the Society for the Animal Show. The Palace Office recorded that the amount had been given every year and authorised the payment for the current year.

In January 1930, the Society acknowledged receipt of a cheque for Rs. 50 from the Maharaja as his donation towards the Animal Show to be held in March. The Society thanked the Maharaja for the contribution.

The continuity of these payments demonstrates that the relationship survived the refusal of the additional maintenance grant in 1928. The Maharaja's patronage therefore remained meaningful, although it was restricted to the established form of annual support.

VI. DISCONTINUATION OF THE DONATION IN 1931

The final stage of the relationship is particularly revealing. In February 1931, the Palace Office informed the Society that it was regretted that the Maharaja's Rs. 50 donation for the Society's Animal Show could not be continued.

The internal Palace note explains the reason more explicitly. It stated that there did not appear to be sufficient reason for continuing the donation year after year to an institution situated outside Mysore.

This decision provides a useful understanding of the territorial limits of princely philanthropy. Although the Maharaja had been a Vice-Patron of the Madras S.P.C.A. and had supported its Animal Shows for many years, the Palace ultimately considered the geographical location of the institution an important factor in determining whether public funds or royal donations should continue.

The decision does not erase the earlier relationship. Rather, it shows that royal patronage operated within practical financial and territorial considerations.

VII. HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

The relationship between the Mysore Maharaja and the Madras S.P.C.A. is significant for several reasons.

First, it demonstrates that animal welfare was part of the wider philanthropic culture of princely India. The Maharaja's support shows that concern for animals could become an element of public patronage alongside education, health, culture and social reform.

Second, the relationship illustrates the interaction between colonial humanitarian institutions and Indian princely authority. The Madras S.P.C.A. was a colonial-era organisation, but its activities depended upon a wider network of supporters that included Indian rulers.

The organisation therefore cannot be understood exclusively as a British institution.

Third, the Animal Shows reveal the practical character of early animal welfare. The Society sought to influence everyday relationships between humans and working animals. Prizes for well-cared-for bullocks, horses, donkeys, cows and dogs encouraged owners to understand humane treatment as part of responsible ownership. This corresponds with broader historical scholarship showing that livestock occupied important economic, social and environmental positions in colonial India.

Fourth, the relationship provides an example of the way humanitarian ideas were institutionalised. The Society combined legal prosecution, veterinary care, animal shelters and educational campaigns. Its approach was therefore broader than simply preventing physical cruelty.

Finally, the case contributes to the history of Mysore's public culture. Krishnaraja Wadiyar IV's reign is often remembered for education, economic development, public health and social reform. The archival evidence adds another dimension by showing that the Palace also participated in the emerging institutional culture of animal welfare.

VIII. OBSERVATION AND FINDINGS

The study produces several observations. The first is that the Maharaja's association with the Madras S.P.C.A. was long-standing. The evidence begins in 1913 and continues through the 1920s.

The second observation is that the annual contribution was remarkably consistent. Rs. 50 was repeatedly provided for the Society's Animal Shows in 1913, 1921, 1922, 1923 and during the later 1920s. The Society itself referred to the contribution as an annual and customary payment.

The third observation is that the Maharaja's relationship was honorary as well as financial. By 1928 he was described as a Vice-Patron of the Society.

The fourth observation is that the Palace differentiated between event-based charity and institutional maintenance. The annual Animal Show contribution continued, but the request for a general annual maintenance grant was rejected.

The fifth observation is that the relationship had geographical limits. The Palace ultimately discontinued the contribution because the Society was located outside Mysore.

These findings suggest that the Maharaja's patronage should be understood neither as purely symbolic nor as unlimited institutional support. It was a sustained but carefully defined form of public philanthropy.

IX. CONCLUSION

The relationship between Maharaja Krishnaraja Wadiyar IV and the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, Madras, offers a valuable example of the intersection between princely patronage and animal welfare in colonial South India. The archival evidence demonstrates that the Maharaja supported the Society's Animal Shows with an annual contribution of Rs. 50 from at least 1913 and continued this practice through the 1920s. The Society regarded him as a Vice-Patron and repeatedly approached the Palace for support.

The Society itself represented a developing institutional approach to animal welfare, combining prosecution of cruelty, veterinary treatment, animal shelters, education and public exhibitions. Its Animal Shows attempted to transform everyday attitudes towards animals by rewarding owners who maintained their animals properly.

At the same time, the Palace records reveal the practical limits of royal philanthropy. The Maharaja did not agree to an additional annual contribution towards the Society's upkeep in 1928, and in 1931 the established annual donation was discontinued because the institution was located outside Mysore. This demonstrates that princely patronage was shaped by financial considerations and by a sense of territorial responsibility.

The history of the Mysore Maharaja's association with the Madras S.P.C.A. therefore adds a small but important dimension to the history of both Mysore and animal welfare in India. It shows that the development of humane institutions was not exclusively a colonial or European process. Indian rulers participated in these networks of humanitarian activity, while also adapting their patronage to their own administrative priorities. The surviving Palace correspondence makes it possible to see animal welfare not as a marginal subject but as part of the wider history of philanthropy, public culture and social responsibility in princely India.

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