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THIRUMALAI NAYAK AND RAGHUNATHA THEVAR POLITICAL RELATIONSHIP

M.JEENDAS

Ph.D. Research Scholar, Department of History,
V.H.N.S.N. College, Virudhunagar, Tamilnadu.

Abstract:

The Mysore Rajah had developed ill will and hatred against the Nayak of Madurai, as had happened in their alliance and country alliance against the Bijapur Sultan and Vijayanagar Empire. Hence Mysore Rajah named Kanthira Narsa Rajah was defeated the Rajah by the Thirumalai Nayak in 1625¹. Therefore, in order to average his defeat the Rajah wanted to teach a lesson to the Nayak of Madura. With this intention he had gathered force of considerable strgn invaded the Nayak territory of Sathyamangalam and finally captured Satyamangalam in 1656². Subsequently on his way had antagonised the people up to the gates of Madura.

KEY-WORDS:

Political Relationship , Depredations , Physically And Mentally.

INTRODUCTION

Thirumalai Nayaks was sick bed at that time got alarmed of that Raja of Mysore and the depredations of the enemies. Under this disastrous situation he had sought the assistance of Raghunatha Sethupathi once again³. The faithful vassal accepted the situation and swiftly sent a larger and powerful army towards Madurai to the punish the marauders. Encouraged by this, the Nayak himself collected a considerable fore and placed it under a Brahmin general Ramappiyan to crush the enemy⁴.

However on the enemy the Mysore ruler's men bribed the Nayaks general and made them inactive. Having noticed of the situation the Raghunatha Sethupathis army mobilised the Nayak and his men in a straight manner against the mysorians. In the endeavour, a tough battle was ensued and in it the Nayaks backed Sethupathis won a decisive victory and arrested the Kannadigas March⁵. Immediately Raghunatha Sethupathi hurried to

Madurai at the head of 25,000 Marava Soldiers to succor Thirumalai. The mysorians were blacked and arrested by the Sethupathis and Madurai was saved⁶. Thirumalai Nayak was immensely pleased of the impressive victory over the Kannadigas assisted by the Sethupathis and gave him the title "Thirumalai Sethupathi". Again Raghunatha Sethupathi was also relieved of paying the tribute forever. In addition to it he gave some villages such as Thiruppuvanam, Thiruchuli and Polli – Madam as a reward to his service⁵.

Raghunatha Sethupathi got one more opportunity to help his master Thirumala in 1656. It was when poligars of Ettaiyapuram formed confideracy of poligars agaist Thirumalai Nayak⁹. In this occasion also Thirumalai sought the services of Ragunatha Sethupathi. Under this function Raghunatha Sethupathi sent as army in support of the Madurai Nayak to quell the uprisings poligars of Ettayapuram. Finally he was oppressed and killed⁶ on the part of Nayaks, it was really a big victory and pleased Thirumalai Nayak very much. Hence he gave additional rights to Raghunatha Sethupathis and made him the power of protector

and master over the pearl fishery in Ramnad. Out of these the Nayaks lost an important source of revenue in Ramnad⁷.

Thus for several years the Sethupathis and the Nayak maintained cordial relationships and there was absolutely nothing to mar the cordial relationship between the two⁸. During these years, Raghunatha became powerful and strengthened his position to a great extent. Now, assessing the growth and rise of Raghunatha after the suppressing of the Muslim rising, the Nayak ruler began planned to attack the Sethupathis possessions in Ramnad⁹. With this end in view he had made a surprise attack against Raghunatha by seizing Tirupattur, Pudukottai, Manamadurai and the fort of Kalaiyarkoil¹⁰.

The attack of the Nayak army was a rude shock to Raghunatha Sethupathis. However he managed to recover some of the lost region from the Nayaks. But after that Raghunatha Sethupathis was not able to recover himself from his affected health. The act of his overlord upon the Sethupathis led to his protracted ill health. Finally in 1672 Raghunatha Sethupathi died by leaving the Marava throne to his nephew, Rajasurya Thevar, the son of Narayana Devar.¹¹

Rajasurya Thevar ruled the country of Ramnad since 1672 only for 6 months. His unnecessarily involvements in the war between Alagiri against Chengamaladesa made his restless. Alagiri was supported by Chokkanatha the Nayak of Madurai¹². Whereas Rajasurya Thevar had supported his rival Chengamaladesa. Hence, the infuriated Nayaks forces captured and finally killed Rajasurya Thevar. After his death, there was confusion in the Ramnad Sethupathis territory as he had left no son¹³ for the succession. But Rajasurya Thevar was succeeded by Athana Raghunatha as Sethupathi for about three months in Ramnad territory which had created the problem of succession. After a period of long uncertainty and confusion Raghunatha alias Kilavan Sethupathi had assumed throne in the Sethupathi Country in 1672¹⁴.

KILAVAN SETHUPATHIS POLITICAL RELATIONSHIP WITH NAYAKS

To begin with the political relationship between Kilavan Sethupathis and Madurai Nayaks were good to an extent. However, in due course of time, Kilavan Sethupathy became virulent and designed to assert his independence from the clutches of the ruler of Madurai called Chokkanatha Nayak¹⁵. Kilavan Sethupathis accession to royal throne began with his ruthless murder of two claimants over the Sethupathis family.

In the beginning Kilavan Sethupathis started his rule with a show of loyalty to the Nayak of Madurai Chokkanatha Nayak. By that time, Chokkanatha Nayak was suffering heavily at the home and abroad encircling of multifarious enemies¹⁶. Amidst the situation the Nayak Chokkanatha had enthralled with the deceitful men in the court, who organised a plot to usurp him from power. Under this crisis, he became sick both physically and mentally. Taking advantage of the situation his enemies in the court depicted him as insane and implicated with several unlawful charges and finally was arrested. Again Rustum Khan taking advantage of this confusion and his ill health seized the power for his and finally released the king and made him a puppet under him¹⁷.

Kilavan Sethupathi the ruler of Ramnad had also developed some sort of ambition over the situation wanted to inter in the affairs of Madurai politics to his favor. Consequently he had with his friends Govindappiayan and Chinnakatti Nayak of Kannivadi forcibly interfered in the Madurai political affairs and organized a plot against the king's protector, Rustumkhan and finally killed him Trichnopoly. Subsequently made Chokkanatha Nayak as the Nayak of Madurai. Hence the indignant Nayak bestowed the title "Para Rajakesare" upon the Sethupathi and transferred the services of his general Kumara Pillai to the Sethupathi¹⁸. Kilavan Sethupathi realized the pitiable condition of his overlord Madurai Nayak who was under the grip of him. Hence, he had contrived a plan of asserting the independence from the hands of the Nayaks of Madurai under the guise of his good relationship.

In the meantime, Chokkanatha Nayak died and he was succeeded by Muthuvirappa Krishnappa Nayak (1682 – 1689) for the throne of Madurai, during his administration, he had planned to transfer the Nayak capital from Madurai to Trichopoly. After the transfer of the capital to Madurai the Nayak concentrated much upon the territories around Trichopoly and not upon the places around Madurai, Taking advantage of the favorable situation and the Nayaks serious involvements upon the second Mysore war, Kilavan Sethupathi strongly interfered upon the political affairs of Madurai¹⁹.

The hatched idea of Kilavan Sethupathi came to true when Chengamaladesa to take revenge over the Muthuveerappakrishnappa Nayak. It had provided the golden opportunity for Kilavan Sethupathi to declare the independence of Ramnad²⁰. After declaring his authority over Ramnad, in 1683 he had succeeded in annexing some territories of the Madurai Kingdom, by aligning himself with the Maratha ruler of Tanjore E.Koji. Subsequently Sethupathis and the Maratha ruler E Koji had aligned with proceeded to

attack the Nayak of Madurai²⁰.

Before the Kilavan Sethupathi a shrewd diplomat entered into an agreement with the Maratha general Chengamaladasa by which he promised to give the region between Pambar, Pudukottai for twelve years in 1686²¹. In return Kilavan Sethupathi had promised to assist E Koji the Maratha ruler against Madurai Nayak. With the help of Kilavan Sethupathi the Maratha general Chengamaladasa invaded Madurai and captured Arantangi, Tirumayam, Piralalai and some other place²². These places were under the direct control of Rani Mangammal of Madurai region. Therefore, she had made an all out effort to thwart the enemies and planned to regain the lost territories. In order to recover the lost regions Rani Mangammal sent Dalavay Narasappaiy in 1700 to Tanjore. After subducing the Marathas, Ranimangammal concentrated her attention upon Kilavan Sethupathi as he had made an agreement with the Tanjore rulers²³. Again she had an ambition of the thing out the growing power of Sethupathis.

In the war that ensued between this power Rani Mangammal tasted defeat and felt that, she had wasted the energy and wealth by waging war against Kilavan Sethupathi. In the battle, Kilavan Sethupathi proved his might by a series of encounters against the Nayak of Madurai with his victory, he had asserted the independence of Ramnad in 1702²⁴. After becoming independent ruler at Ramnad, Kilavan Sethupathi consolidated his position. He was succeeded by Kattaya Thevar and during the period also Sethupathis strengthened their position in Ramnad²⁵. During his reign, over notable incident occurred was that, when Chanda Sahib captured Madurai region, its claimant Bangaru Thirumala and his son took refuge at the hill Vellikurichi the fort belonging to the ruler of Sivaganga, Chanda Sahib, the Nizam deputy chased the enemy, but could not enter upon the hill Vellikuri, in fear of the rule of the Sethupathis over Ramnad region²⁶.

As for as the political relationship between the Nayaks of Madurai and Sethupathi of Ramnad, it was most appealing and significant one²⁷. As the Sethupathis were petty chieftains and pligars in the beginning got write and been powerful in due course of time by aligning with the Nayaks whenever they required their assistance. They had thwarted their allegiance whenever they wanted to show their might and wanted to assert their power. In their endeavour, they hold an amenable relationship with the Marathas when Kilavan Sethupathi wanted to establish a powerful territory at Ramnad.

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