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POLITICAL HISTORY OF KELADI DYNASTY

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Abstract:-Keladi was the first capital of Keladi Nayakas. The place is 6 Kms to the north of Sagar taluka. This place with a old fort in the middle of the dense forest is the center of attraction. Also Known as KeLadi Kote. Kote stands for Fort in Kannada. KeLadi is the name of the dynasty who ruled the place. Ikkeri situated 76 Kms to the north of Shimoga and about 3 kms to the south of Sagar taluka. This place was the capital of Keladi Nayakas for some years. Nagara is a 16th century place situated 19 Kms from Shimoga. Nagara was the last capital of the Keladi Kings. This was also known as " Beendanoor or Bednur "in the 16th century. This place was also capital of Keladi rulers and later on was captured by Hyder Ali.

Keywords:Political History , Keladi Nayakas , Political Contributions .

INTRODUCTION

After the fall of the Vijayanagar empire in the battle of Talikota in 1565, Tirumala Raya accepted the new states of the Nayakas of the south, retained the allegiance of Mysore and Keladi, and appointed his three sons as governors of the three linguistic regions of his kingdom—Telugu, Kannada, and Tamil. In 1570 he had himself crowned and thus officially inaugurated the Aravidu dynasty, the fourth and last dynasty of Vijayanagar. After the decline of Vijayanagara Empire, the Nayaks of Keladi (Ikkeri), who controlled much of Tulu Nadu, let it decline and internal skirmishes eventually led to it being controlled, at the end of 18th century, by the Sultans of Mysore, namely Haider Ali and Tipu Sultan. Keladi is a temple town in Shimoga district of the state of Karnataka in India. The Shimoga city got an independent identity under the Keladi Nayaka rule during 16th century, reaching its pinnacle under the rule of Shivappa Nayaka. The town Shimoga, on the banks of the Tunga River, lies about 274 km south west of Bangalore was once the home and stronghold of the Keladi Nayakas during 16th century AD. The fort, Church of Sacred Heart of Jesus and Government Museum are worth seeing. Gajanur, Tyaverekoppa, Agumbe, Jog Falls are scenic spots around Shimoga, well worth a visit. Keladi was the capital city of the Kingdom of Keladi, a feudatory of Vijayanagara Empire. After the disintegration of Vijayanagara Empire in the Battle of Talikota, the Keladi Nayakas created an independent kingdom and it remained so until it was annexed to Mysore Kingdom by Hyder Ali. Shivamukha => Shivamuga => Shimoga

Kanara was under the rule of the Keladi or Ikkeri Nayakas, who ruled first from Keladi, then Ikkeri and finally Bednur (modern day Nagar). Kallianpur, a hamlet of Tonse-East village about six kms. from Udupi, is situated on the southern bank of river Swarna (Kallianpur) and is about four kms east of the sea coast. It has the ruins of a fort belonging to the Vijayanagara days. It has temples of Kenchamma, Veerabhadra, Mahalingeshvara, Ganapati and Venkataramana belonging to the later Vijayanagara period. Kallianpur had its hey days during the rule of the Keladi Nayakas.

Main Political Contributions of Keladi Dynasty:

Saraswats flourished in the kingdom of Keladi Nayaks

The Keladi kingdom was founded towards the end of the 15th century by Keladi Chandappa Nayak and was

consolidated by his warrior son, Sadiashiv Nayak. A hundred years later, the Keladi kingdom had come to be recognised as an independent state having driven the Portuguese out of Mangalore, reduced the Jain, Brahman and other chiefs in Kanara and the adjacent areas, and taken the entire pepper trade under its control. The Smartha Saraswats in the state were employed on a large scale in the service of the Nagar kings. The Vaishnav Saraswats entered the service of the Nagar rulers at a later stage and many of them held very high offices in the state. Indeed, among the ambassadors of the Keladi kings who were mostly Brahmans, Vaishnava Saraswats almost always held the important posts of ambassadors to the Portuguese at Goa. One of the Hindu king of Keladi kingdom, was impressed by the diligence and skills of his Saraswat accountant, that he decreed that each village in his kingdom, be administered by a Saraswat. Eventually these Saraswats took on the name of the village as their last name. Shivappa Nayaka (1645-60), the great Keladi ruler who is renowned for his highly useful land settlement called 'sistu' had invited to his new capital Bidanur (also called Venupura) among other trading communities, Konkans and gave them sites to raise their market, according to Keladinripa Vijayam, a quasi-historical work. The title 'wadeyar' was also conferred by the Keladi rulers on the Gokarna Parthagali Matha Swamy Sri Narayana Teertha, according to the work called Guruparamparamritam. The important commercial treaty between the Portuguese and the Nayakas dated 1671 was signed on behalf of the Keladi Nayakas by Vithal Mallo (Mallya) and Gopana Shenoy. The embassy sent by Basavappa Nayaka in 1704 to Goa for important political negotiation was headed by a brahmin Damarsa Prabhu described as highly talented by the Portuguese records.

The Saraswat Brahmans claim descent from a Brahmin caste mentioned in ancient Hindu scriptures as inhabiting the Saraswati River valley. The reason for their generosity towards Saraswat Brahmans could be that many of these valmikis were from the banks of river Saraswati in Rajasthan and these valmikis were highly aryanised. The Valmiki himself was an Indo-Aryan who was educated Aryan Narada.

During the reign of Basavappa Nayaka I (1696 -1714), some people of Kanara accused the Gaud Saraswat Brahmin Shenvis of not being true Brahmans. The Saraswat Brahmans seem to have influenced Basavaraj education and writings in Sanskrit. The Aryans and Dravidian Bhils (Valmikis) were matrimonially intermixed to a great extent till Aryans divided into Aryan Brahmans and Aryan Kshatriyas after bloody war between forces of Sahasrarjun and Jamadagni's son Parasurama for Kamadhenu. Aryan Kshatriyas who got the support of Bhil warriors established a separate religion Jainism to counter the influence of Aryan Brahmans.

Basavappa Nayaka:

The Nayak dynasty was founded five centuries ago, by Basava, a village headman at Keladi. He had impressed the Vijayanagar King Sarvabhauma, and in recognition of Basava's skill and tactics of organising a small army, the title of Nayak was bestowed on him in 1499 AD. As Vijayanagar feudatories, the Nayaks spread their domain far and wide, as Basava Nayak's sons and grandsons took Bijapur and thereafter Tulu and Kerala areas.

Chaudappa Nayaka:

Chaudappa (1499 - 1530) from Keladi was the earliest chieftain to rule the area surrounding Shivamogga. In the early 1500s, a certain Chaudappa Gauda of the village of Keladi discovered some hidden treasure. In a dream, he was told that the treasure was his to take, provided he offered human sacrifice. Luckily for him, two of his servants volunteered for the task. Chaudappa used the treasure to build a fort at Keladi and put together an army. Thus began the dynasty that was initially a tributary of the Vijayanagar empire, but was independent by the 1600s. At its zenith, the Keladi empire covered most of south-western Karnataka and parts of northern Kerala, commanding the ports of Honnavara, Bhatkal, Bekal and Mangalore, and also included portions of the Ghats and extended to within 60 km of Mysore. The Nayakas were finally defeated by Hyder Ali in 1763, who often cited this win as having established his fortune.

Sadashiva Nayaka:

Sadashiva Nayaka (1530 - 1566) was an important chieftain in the Vijayanagar Empire and earned the title Kotekolahala from emperor Aliya Rama Raya for his heroics in the battle of Kalyani. Hiriya Venkatappa Nayaka (1586 - 1629) is considered by scholars as ablest monarch of the clan. Sadashiva Nayaka who was an important chieftain in the Vijayanagar Empire took over the coastal provinces of Karnataka. For the valour with which he fought the battle of Kalyani he earned the title "Kotekolahala" from emperor Aliya Rama Raya. He then moved the capital from Keladi to Ikkeri which is about 20 km away. Then Chikkasankanna ruled the kingdom from 1570 to 1580. He was an opportunistic ruler and took advantage of the defeat of Vijayanagar Empire in the Battle of Tallikota and grabbed a few provinces in present Uttara Kannada District.

Veerabhadra Nayaka:

Veerabhadra Nayaka (1629-1645) of the illustrious Keladi dynasty built the Keladi fort in 1640 after the fall of Ikkeri, the original capital of the dynasty at the hands of the Bijapur Sultan. The fort, which saw the growth of power of the Keladi dynasty, now stands as a monument to two-and-half centuries of its rule. Shivappa Nayaka, Veerabhadra's uncle, succeeded him in 1645 AD as the latter had no sons. Considered the most benevolent among the Keladi rulers, Shivappa Nayaka did much to improve and enlarge the capital. The fort, which is also known as the Shivappa Nayaka fort, offered excellent protection. The fort is entered by a gateway supported by two round bastions. The courtyard inside shows signs of a former guard room. Inside the third wall is a large open court facing which is a terrace overlooking the fort. Here appears to have stood the fort palace or citadel of Shivappa Nayaka.

Shivappa Nayaka:

Shivappa Nayaka : It was in 1645 that the most illustrious of the dynasty, Shivappa Nayak, ascended the throne. Known as Shistina Nayak because discipline was his leitmotif, he was noted for his systematised tax collection and other administrative reforms. His younger son Somasekhar succeeded him and was equally efficient. Shivappa (1645 - 1660) is widely considered as the ablest and greatest of the Keladi rulers. He was not only an able administrator; he also patronised literature and fine arts. His successful campaigns against the Bijapur sultans, the Mysore kings, the Portuguese, and other Nayakas of the neighbouring territories east of the western ghats helped expand the kingdom to its greatest extent, covering large areas of present day Karnataka. He gave importance to agriculture and developed new schemes for collection of taxes and revenues which earned him much praise from later British officials.

During this period, Shivaji Maharaj had established an independent and strong Hindu kingdom in Maharashtra after defeating the Moghul invaders of North India and Adil Shahi of Bijapur. In the Southern part of Mysore, the brave king Narasaraja was the ruler while Keladi was ruled by famous Shivappa Nayaka.

Shivappa Naik Palace is Situated on the banks of river tunga in the busy lanes of Shimoga city. A 16th century place built by Shivappa naik of Keladi. A good architectural piece built with rose wood. The palace is equipped with museum which has several interesting and rare archaeological collections of stone carvings and antiques of Keladi period. Recovered idols of Hoysala and Chalukya period from the early 16th century to late 18th century are displayed here.

Keladi Chennamma:

Keladi Chennamma ruled over a small state, Keladi, for twenty five years and proved herself a great and heroic queen. The valiant Queen Chennamma, who ruled for 25 long years from 1671 to 1696, no mean feat in those ancient times. Keladi Channammaji (1672-1697), the celebrated queen of the Keladi dynasty, succeeded her husband, Somasekhar Nayaka, and ruled the kingdom from this fort with great distinction up to 1697. Chennamma ruled wisely and ably and earned the love of her subjects. It was during her reign that a special bond was formed between the Marathas and the Keladi kingdom.

She came into prominence when she offered political asylum and protection to Raja Ram, son of the famous Maratta warrior Shivaji in 1685. After the assassination of her husband, there were intrigues, rivalries and internal fights in which some agents of the Sultan of Bijapur had a hand. She tactfully thwarted them and restored order. When the forces of Aurangzeb invaded Bidanur she fought with courage for several days, finally losing to a powerful army in the war.

In those tumultuous times, Rajaram, son of Chhatrapati Shivaji, was fleeing for his life. Mughal emperor Aurangzeb had already killed his brother Sambhaji when Rajaram came to Keladi asking for protection. Unwilling to spurn an asylum-seeker, Chennamma granted him refuge, knowing this would invite Aurangzeb's ire. As expected, the mighty Mughal army soon bore down on the Nayaka kingdom. But amazingly, the local army vanquished the Mughals, who floundered in its hilly terrain.

When the British wanted to secede the kingdom to their empire by putting forward the doctrine of lapse as Rani Chennamma's son was adopted, the queen refused to secede her kingdom after her husband's death. Aided by Rayanna, she fought British bravely but was defeated and imprisoned. Rayanna is considered by many historians as the pioneer of Guerrilla warfare in India. He continued this warfare till 1829. Finally he was captured by treachery and hanged in Nandagad in Belgaum district. At the time of being hanged he said "My last wish is to be born again in the country to fight against the British and drive them away from our sacred soil".

CONCLUSION:

The Keladi Nayakas were able administrators and continued the legacy of the rulers of Vijayanagar. They patronised art and culture and built palaces, forts and temples some of which are still standing. The Shivappa Nayaka

Palace in Shimoga and meticulously sculpted temples at Keladi and Ikkeri sprung up in the golden era of the Nayakas. For more than two centuries the kingdom of Keladi controlled the coastal and Malnad regions of present day Karnataka and fostered a rich tradition of trade with the English, the Portuguese and the Dutch. Finally other factors like the fall of Vijayanagar Empire, constant wars with Mysore kings and the harassment of the Marathas drained the treasure and resulted in the end of Keladi Kingdom.

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