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HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF NAYAKAS OF CHITRADURGA: A TALE LESS CELEBRATED

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Abstract

History always cherishes the achievements and ruling of great emperors and eminent monarchs. The achievement of many small kings and their kingdom appears to be insipid, due to lack of spectacular narratives. But, as it could be traced in history, without the support of these small kings and feudatories, large kingdoms and so-called monarchs, would not have functioned effectively. These small kings and feudatories have always stood by their masters and demonstrated heroism during critical hours. For instance, during Vijayanagara empire, the rulers encouraged and implemented provincial administrative system, which provided feudal type of government, in which chieftains of small provinces were given autonomy in local administrative matters. In exchange these feudatories were contributing a large sum of money annually or at a regular interval of time. This feudal administration finally led to the growth of several small dynasties of rulers in tiny principalities and these rulers were called as "Nayakas". In fact, there were many Nayakas representing different provinces. Nayakas of Chitradurga were prominent amongst them. Leaving their history and contribution is like missing many links in a long chain, which we know, will not sustain. The Nayakas of Chitradurga have demonstrated a strong and efficient local administration and played a vital role in safeguarding the empire local Muslim invasions. By providing the necessary military strength, which was required to beat off the Muslim attempts to snub Hindu Kingdoms of South India, these feudatories have contributed for safeguarding the native culture, tradition and to preserve the rich heritage of the land. Therefore, making an attempt to record the contributions and works of Nayakas of Chitradurga has been made through this research paper. This paper highlights the historical growth of Nayakas of Chitradurga and highlights their Socio, Economic, Political and religious activities, with the help of available sources.

Keywords: Contributions, Feudatory, Local administration, Nayakas, Small kingdoms.

Introduction

Nayakas are often referred as 'Palegararu'. As identified by Sir James Murray "In the course of their conquest, the kings of Vijayanagara reinstated some of the original kings in their original ancient positions. They also appointed some of their trustworthy and servants, pleased by their fidelity and abilities, to manage tracts of uncultivated waste land with instructions to clear away the forests and to bring the lands for agriculture purpose with a view to accommodate the growing population and to increase the wealth of the state. As per the royal command, these governors formed many 'Palayams' or 'Palepats' and new establishments cleared away the forests and recovered the country from robbers and bandits, who had infested it. Those who established the 'Palayams' under these sovereigns were distinguished by the title of 'Paleyagaras' in due course". As governors, these Paleyagaras were most faithful and trusted. They not only looked after the welfare and protection of their own people but also safeguarded all persons from the ravages of their rival chieftains, paying tribute and became proprietors of lands. These Paleyagaras were originally either public servants of government or renters of districts, who revolted in times of disturbances. Some of them received their villages at first in 'Inam (Gift)' as personal allowances and some got them by usurpation.

The Chitradurga chieftains received their provinces in Holalkere, Hiriyyuru and Chitradurga from Vijayanagara Empire. According to an inscription, dated 1568 AD, The Tirumala Raya of Vijayanagara granted Holalkere seme (Place) to KamatagiMadakeri Nayaka. The Chiefs were 'Bedas' by caste of the KamatagiVamsha and claimed to be of 'Valmiki Gotra'. Golonel Wilks records that "Chitradurga Nayakas ruled Holalkeri, Hiriyyuru and Chitradurga region from 1568 AD to 1779 AD. In the latter part of the 17th century, they extended their kingdom to even Sante Bennuru and Harappanahalli. They frequently fought with Bidanur, Marathas and Moghals".

The rise of Madakari Nayakas

During Vijayanagara times, Chitradurga was the seat of Viceroyalty. As earlier stated, it was in the hands of 'BedaraPaleyagaras'. At the time of the final disruption of Vijayanagara Empire, Madakeri Nayaka was the ruler. The successor of Aliya Ramaraya, held a nominal sovereignty over the domains, while these Nayakas had the real power. Despite these Nayakas were functioning independently, yet they owed a nominal allegiance to Vijayanagara Empire.

Later, the Vijayanagara King Appointed Thimmappa Nayaka as Nayaka of Holalkere, afterwards as Nayaka of Hiriyyuru and finally as Nayaka of Chitradurga, for his courageous exploit and successfully aiding the royal troops in an expedition against



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Gulbarga. According to a Kannada Sources, Gulbarga showed enmity against the Vijayanagara Kingdom. Therefore, the King order the Prince Salo Narasinga Raya to attack Gulbarga. Despite repeated efforts, he could not conquer it. Then the king of Anegondi asked Thimmanna Nayaka to attack Gulbarga. The combine army conquered the fort within short time. The sovereign honoured Thimmanna Nayaka with a golden Shankha (Conch) and Chakra. This Matti Thimmanna Nayaka founded the Madakari Dynasty, during the declining days of Vijayanagara Empire by his personal Prowess. This brought him the nominal distinction of the Nayaka of Chitradurga. Linganna Kavi, in his master piece 'Keladi Nripa Vijayam' calls him as Kasturi Thimmappa Nayaka. He ruled from 1568 AD to 1583 AD. At a later period, Thimmanna Nayaka developed the dis-pleasure of the sovereign and was imprisoned at Vijayanagara, where he died.

According to Linganna Kavi and the inscription of his time, Thimmanna Nayaka was succeeded by Madakari Nayaka. Epigraphs also shows that Thimmanna Nayaka had a son called Kasturi Rangappa Nayaka I, whose records date from 1576 AD till 1689 AD. After him Sarjappa Nayaka succeeded him and ruled from 1590 AD to 1605 AD. After him Hiriyachikkanna Nayaka succeeded him, who ruled from 1606 AD to 1627 AD. Later Immadi Madakari Nayaka came to power. Tarikere Nayaka attacked the Devapur fort, which was in the possession of Chitradurga Nayakas. But Immadi Madakari Nayaka defeated the Tarikere army at Horakere. He built the lower fort of Chitradurga and repaired the gate of the fort. He divided the kingdom into different parts and appointed the Dalavayis to administer these divisions. Several other rulers followed the lineage.

Contributions and Achievement of Nayakas

Subedar Sher Khan of Harihar requested the help from Nayaka, as Samsher Khan of Hyderabad wanted to attack his region. Samsher Khan of Hyderabad came with huge army to attack Harihar. So, the Nayaka went to Baregudda with Sher Khan and designed a war strategy to deal with this. Causing, on the approach of night, lights to be fixed to the branches of the trees and horns of the Cattle at his encampment, near Batihill, and the musicians to play as usual on their instruments as if the army was still there, the Nayaka marched with nearly the whole force by a circuitous route and threw himself into the fort from the West and thus drove off the besiegers.

However, in 1679 Ranadullaha Khan of Bijapur invaded this area. Harappanahalli was also attacked in the same year. The Nayaka sent his army under the leadership of Dalavayi Chikkappa and Horake Nayaka, and attacked the Budihal fort. In the meantime, the Nawab of Golkonda attacked the Ramgiri fort. So, the Nayaka, withdrawing the army from Budihal, concentrated on the Ramgiri fort. Here the Golkonda army was defeated by the Chitradurga army.

The growth of independent Madakeri dynasty

The open declaration of sovereignty was made by Kamageti Baramanna, by calling himself as 'Arasu' (King) and made a grant in A.D. 1700 for the god of the fort of Shinganagiri. This Baramanna Nayaka-I came to the throne probably in 1700 AD and assumed for the first time in the history of Madakeri Nayakas, the full symbols of Sovereignty. In A.D. 1711, this Nayaka gave to his treasurer- Naranappa, the village of 'Gouda Muktenhalli' from his kingdom. Three years later in 1714 AD, he made a grant of the village of Pilekaranahalli for the services of the god Venkataramana of Chimmanagiridurga. In 1716 AD this same ruler devoted to Rangappa an officer of store granary the Vallenahalli village in the Bilichodusime, in the kingdom he was ruling with all rights. He is recorded to have given away the village of Demalavanahalli in the Kadaganursime in the kingdom that he was ruling, to the holy Raghunath tirth Shripad of Vyasarayamath. That this ruler was of the Valmiki gotra is mentioned in a record of 1718 AD in which he is stated to have given away the village "Haluvadhava" in the Durgi sime while ruling the kingdom. Hence again the reference to the independence of Chitradurga is made apparent.

He was the first chieftain of Chitradurga, who came in direct contact with Marathas. Shantaji, a Maratha ruler came with a huge army to fight against Kasim Khan. Looking at this huge army Kasim Khan took refuge in Dodderi fort. Baramanna Nayaka sent a huge army to aid Shantaji. Due to this, Dodderi fort was captured and Kasim Khan was killed. After this incident, the Nayaka was punished by the prince Bidar Baksha. In this battle he seems to have felt his heavy hand as he made humble submission and promise of loyalty. Baramanna Nayaka was forced to be an ally of Mughals and he co-operated with them in many of their campaigns. So, this co-operation between the Marathas and Chitradurga appears to have ended soon. In 1748 AD Somashekar Nayaka II of Bidanur fought the battle of Mayakonda against Chitradurga. In this battle Baramanna Nayaka secured the alliance of Chandasaheb, who was released from the prison of Satara through the designs of duplex, was marching South. In the battle of Mayakonda, the Chitradurga army encountered with disastrous result that of Bidanur, which was assisted by the forces of Raidurga, Harappanahalli and Savanur. Baramanna Nayaka was slain in the battle in single combat of elephants by Somashekar Nayaka. Chandasaheb's son fell at his side and he himself was taken prisoner by the Bidanur troops. On the death of Baramanna Nayaka, the Kasturi Rangappa Nayaka III ascended the Chitradurga throne. He ruled from 1748 AD to 1755 AD. From 1756 to 1777 AD, another three kings ruled Chitradurga.



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In January 1763, Hyder Ali attacked the Chitradurga fort for the first time and at this time, the Palegara of Chitradurga was Madakari Nayaka Raghavappa. He attempted to evade and procrastinate. But Hyder Ali over ran the country, as a result Nayaka found it prudent to compromise. He paid four lakh rupees as tribute to Hyder Ali. Hyder Nama mentions this. Hyder Ali easily took the possession of the city of Bidanur with the help of Chitradurga Nayaka and put an end to the powerful Palyapat of Bidanur. The Chitradurga Nayaka had thought that he would end the family feud with Bidanur by foreign help. He wanted to avenge the battle of Mayakonda. But unfortunately for him his associate proved to be his enemy.

In 1771, Hyder Ali turned his attention towards the chief of Cuddappah, Kurnool, Bellary, Adoni and Chitradurga. He marched for the rout of Harappanahalli and Juremah in the neighbourhood of Chitradurga. The Palegara Rangappa IV, fearing the spoliation and desolation of his country, sent a vakil to the Hyder Ali with three lakh rupees as one day's entertainment for the army. The Nawab Hyder Ali accepted the money and allowed him to rest under his powerful protection and having by suggestion and advice pointed out the path he was supposed to pursue. Later Rangappa IV established alliance with the Marathas. All place under Hyder Ali's domination up to Nijagal fort was besieged. When Peshwa Madhavrao I himself with all his army came for the siege of Nijgal, the Nayaka joined him. Several attempts made by this large Maratha force to mount the hill and scale the fort walls were successfully repulsed. A large breach was made in the fort wall, where the Marathas advanced almost six times, but every time were beaten back. At this crisis, the Chitradurga Nayaka attacked the fort and secured victory for Peshwas.

Hyder Ali again besieged the fort in 1777 AD. The ruler Ranghavappa IV sent his minister Purushottam to Haripant Taty applying for successor. But Haripant was himself very uneasy as he was not quite sure of his own hold on his troops. Receiving no assurances from the Maratha Chiefs, the ruler began to negotiate with Hyder Ali, who insisted that he should be paid fourteen lakhs as 'Nazarana'. The Chitradurga chief agreed to pay it in installments. Later, there was confusion with respect to valuation of Chitradurga coins, hence, the fight started once again. The ruler Raghavappa IV made frequent sorties and killed a large number of Hyder's troops. Hyder having come to terms with the ruler of Chitradurga. But the chief of Chitradurga now broke in terms of the treaty in the hope of getting Maratha aid.

The down fall of Chitradurga Nayakas

The last king in the line of the Chitradurga Nayaka was Baramanna Nayaka II. Placed between the Marathas and Hyder Ali, Baramanna Nayaka occupied a perilous position. Hyder Ali already tried twice to invade the Chitradurga fort. In 1777 AD, Hyder Ali was threatened by the invasion of allied armies of the Marathas and Nizam Ali, the Chitradurgapalegar having received information that Hyder's fortune would shortly be reversed, held back from sending the usual contingent of troops to his assistance. Hyder posted in a strong position at Gutti, found means to avert the danger and immediately marched upon Chitradurga to punish it, rejecting the offer of the Chief to pay a large fine. The siege was continued for months without success. Hyder after a successful career of conquests over the country between the Tungabhadra and the Krishna, once more sat down indignant before Chitradurga. However, Hyder Ali could not capture Chitradurga for by his courage but by foul means. Baramanna Nayaka II after finding himself betrayed, threw himself at the mercy of Hyder Ali. He and his family were sent to Srirangapatnam as war prisoners. Thus, the Nayaka dynasty, which was formed in 1568 AD, had flourished over 200 years.

Research Methodology

Objectives of the study

1. To understand the Lineage of Nayakas of Chitradurga and to record their growth
2. To find the contribution of Nayakas as fiduciary for the development of Vijayanagara.
3. To explore the history of Nayakas as independent rulers in the region.
4. To identify the reasons for the downfall of Chitradurga Nayakas.

Type of Research: It is a historical research.

Sources of Data

Primary data: Primary data has been obtained from the following sources. (a) Epigraphical sources (b) Copper Plate inscriptions (c) Records of foreign travelers (d) chronicles and other Literary Sources.

Secondary Sources: Secondary data has been procured from various books, Ephigraphia Karnataka, Various articles published in several national and international journals, websites etc.,



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Findings of the study and Inferences

- Small kings and feudatories have always stood by their masters and demonstrated heroism during critical hours. During Vijayanagara empire, the rulers encouraged and implemented provincial administrative system, which provided feudal type of government, in which chieftains of small provinces were given autonomy in local administrative matters.
- Feudatories were contributing a large sum of money annually or at a regular interval of time. This feudal administration finally led to the growth of several small dynasties of rulers in tiny principalities and these rulers were called as “Nayakas”.
- The Nayakas of Chitradurga have demonstrated a strong and efficient local administration and played a vital role in safeguarding the empire local Muslim invasions. These feudatories have contributed for safeguarding the native culture, tradition and to preserve the rich heritage of the land.
- Nayakas are often referred as ‘Palegararu’. As identified by Sir James Murray “In the course of their conquest, the kings of Vijayanagara reinstated some of the original kings in their original ancient positions.
- The Chitradurga chieftains received their provinces in Holalkere, Hiriyuru and Chitradurga from Vijayanagara Empire. According to an inscription, dated 1568 AD, The Tirumala Raya of Vijayanagara granted Holalkere seme (Place) to Kamatagi Madakeri Nayaka.
- The Vijayanagara King Appointed Thimmappa Nayaka as Nayaka of Holalkere, afterwards as Nayaka of Hiriyuru and finally as Nayaka of Chitradurga, for his courageous exploit and successfully aiding the royal troops in an expedition against Gulbarga.
- Thimmanna Nayaka was succeeded by Madakari Nayaka. Epigraphs also shows that Thimmanna Nayaka had a son called Kasturi Rangappa Nayaka I, whose records date from 1576 AD till 1689 AD.
- The open declaration of sovereignty was made by Kamageti Baramanna, by calling himself as ‘Arasu’ (King) and made a grant in A.D. 1700 for the god of the fort of Shinganagiri.
- The last king in the line of the Chitradurga Nayaka was Baramanna Nayaka II.

Conclusion

The Chitradurga Nayakas political career lacks the unity and national sentiment. Internal jealousy and non-cooperation with neighboring prince, was the Chief cause of the decline and fall of Chitradurga. While individually they were clever and brave, they totally lacked the corporate spirit so essential to their independence. This disunity brought about the destruction completely. For defeating the neighboring countries, they tried to take the help of foreign rulers. The Nayaka wanted to end the family feud by taking the help of Hyder. Unfortunately for him his own associate proved to be his enemy.

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