

MADAKARI NAYAKA V, THE LIONHEARTED RULER OF CHITRADURGA –A VIEW

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ABSTRACT

During the 18th and 19th century the Bedas played a prominent part in the politics of southern India. Being efficient soldiers and agile horsemen, they were employed by the Marathas and Mughals in their armies. **Madakari Nayaka** had been a valiant soldier with the shrewd colors of an administrator. In his political career he allied himself with Haider Ali, the paramount power of the Mysore Kingdom at certain points of time and at other times with the strategic Marathas. It was during his time that Haider Ali attacked the Chitradurga Fort leading to the heroics of "Onake Obavva". Chitradurga at that time was caught between two major powers like Mysore under Hyder Ali and the Marathas; both eager to spread their influence over small principalities and gain their allegiance. In 1762 after subduing the palegars of Rayadurga and Harapanahalli, Hyder. Madakari Nayaka was a brave soldier, a shrewd administrator and a generous chief. His generosity to the soldiers and generals has been described as beyond limits and was wondered at by the recipient themselves.

KEYWORDS-BEDAS, CHITHRADURGA, NAYAKAS, MADAKARI NAYAKA, HYDER ALI, TIPPU, VAKKALIGA, VEERASHIVA.

INTRODUCTION

The members of the Valmiki community in Karnataka known as Bedas have a glorious past. In the history of Hindu culture, Valmiki, the author of epic Ramayana and Kannappa, the devotee par excellence, belonged to the Bedara community. During the 18th and 19th century the Bedas played a prominent part in the politics of southern India. Being efficient soldiers and agile horsemen, they were employed by the Marathas and Mughals in their armies. The tradition of enlisting the Bedas in royal services began during the rule of Hoysala Ballala III and they were commanded by his famous general Narasimha. The ruler of Kampili also had a Beda battalion. After the decline of Vijayanagara kingdom the Bedas ruled principalities like Chitradurga, Holalkere and Hiriyyur.

Nayakas of Chitradurga

Nayakas of Chitradurga were the rulers of the place who had ruled parts of eastern Karnataka from 1300-1779 CE. It was during the rule of Hoysala Empire as well as Vijayanagar Empire that the feudatories of the kingdom of Mysore were the independent rulers of the kingdom.

The chieftains of the kingdom who were present from the early times sketch their origins as the chiefs of the local region (Dandanayakas) of the Hoysalas during their rule over Karnataka who had invited upon the attention and appreciation of the Vijayanagar kings by the sheer acts of their bravery and valour and were allotted as the governors of the region under the empire.

Some other accounts of the history brings it to the forefront that the chieftains under the Vijayanagara empire were from Davangere district in Karnataka and some Marathi records confer the Kala Pyada in dedicated admiration for the chivalrous tone in their character. Chitradurga Fort used to be their stronghold and the heart of the present province Timmanna Nayaka of Matti had been one of the chieftains from Matti in Davangere taluk as and when the rule of Saluva Narasimha was in presence and he was the one who ruled the Davangere district and Chitradurga district.

Obanna Nayaka I (1588-1602) is also known as Madakari Nayaka I. Kasturi Rangappa Nayaka I (1602-1652) was a brave soldier who went in a perpetual rebellion against the Sultan of Bijapur. In the year 1602, Obanna Nayaka was succeeded by his son Kasturi Rangappa Nayaka and his reign was the one full of conflicts with the neighboring chiefs.

A series of civil wars and battles took place with the Paleyagar of Basavapattana in numerous place and territories such as Mayakonda, Santebennur, Holalkere, Anaji, and Jagalur, all of which ultimately remained as parts

of Chitradurga territory. Madakari Nayaka II (1652-1674) Rangappa Nayaka was victorious in numerous battles and was succeeded by his son Madakari Nayaka II in 1652. He killed Shah Adb Allah in 1671 in a battle at Chitradurga.

Obanna Nayaka II (1674-1675) His rule saw civil unrest. He was killed by his own men. Shoora Kantha Nayaka (1675-1676) His rule saw civil unrest. He was killed by his own men. Other rulers of this dynasty were Chikkanna Nayaka (1676-1686), Madakari Nayaka III (1686-1688), Donne Rangappa Nayaka (1688-1689) Bharamappa Nayaka of Bilichodu (1689-1721) was one of the great Nayakas of Chitradurga, and he was in the way of becoming a Maratha ally and fought in the battle of Dodderi in 1695 but had to pay tribute later to the Mughals for supporting the Marathas.

He fought many pitched battles against the Mughals, and is credited for building many temples and irrigation tanks. Madakari Nayaka IV (1721-1748) was a Maratha feudatory. He was killed during continued hostilities against the Nayakas of Davangere Kasturi Rangappa Nayaka II who was the son of Kasturi Rangappa Nayaka II, finalized his reign in the Mayakonda territory and it was with the aid of the Maratha Sardar Murari Rao and the Subedar of Advani that he achieved his success. Myth has it that Kasturi Rangappa Nayaka indulged in several expeditions to the north and south, and in the latter direction gained some possessions in the Budihal region. Even he maintained close ties with the Subedar of Sira. He died in 1754 without an heir.

MADAKARI NAYAKA- (1758-1779)

Madakari Nayaka had been a valiant soldier with the shrewd colors of an administrator. In his political career he allied himself with Haider Ali, the paramount power of the Mysore Kingdom at certain points of time and at other times with the strategic Marathas. It was during his time that Haider Ali attacked the Chitradurga Fort leading to the heroics of "Onake Obavva". Later having been betrayed by the Marathas and some local officers, Madakari Nayaka was defeated by Hyder Ali, taken prisoner and killed. The Chitradurga Nayakas form an integral part of Kannada folklore.

Chitradurga also known as Chintakal and Chinmaladri had been of strategic importance from the days of the Hoysalas. During Vijayanagar times it was the seat of a viceroyalty and a special mint to coin 'Durgi Pagodas', so called after the Durga (fort) had been established.

The Nayakas of Chitradurga continued to issue the same type of coins long after the Vijayanagara Empire had fallen. The rulers of Chitradurga known as palegars were known for their valour, good Administration and for being far-sighted in their policies. They were great patrons of Brahmins and bestowed villages on Brahmins who were not even their own subjects. They also restored temples previously ruined by Muslim invaders and gave grants to mathas to feed the poor.

Though religious and orthodox, they were liberal in their outlook. They were also known for their public works and with the help of French engineers, they built very strong fortresses and other works of public utility. The principality of Chitradurga came to an end when its last ruler Madakari Nayaka V was overthrown treacherously by Hyder Ali in 1779.

Madakari Nayaka was the son of Bharamappa Nayaka of Janakal Durga and succeeded Kasturi Rangappa Nayaka as the ruler of Chitradurga in 1754 at the age of twelve.

It is interesting to note that Madakari Nayaka V was elected by the prominent people of the town. On the hope of wresting control of this principality, the chiefs of Rayadurga, Harapanahalli and Savanur unitedly attacked Chitradurga in 1759 and a battle took place at Hosakere in which Chitradurga emerged victorious.

Caught between the Devil and the Deep Sea

Chitradurga at that time was caught between two major powers like Mysore under Hyder Ali and the Marathas; both eager to spread their influence over small principalities and gain their allegiance. In 1762 after subduing the palegars of Rayadurga and Harapanahalli, Hyder Ali asked Madakari Nayaka to submit. When Madakari Nayaka procrastinated, Hyder's cavalry overran the whole principality of Chitradurga and Madakari was forced to compromise by paying a fine of two lakh pagoda and four lakh pagodas as tribute. Madakari Nayaka also agreed to assist Hyder Ali with 1500 horse and 10,000-foot soldiers in his expedition against Bednur.

Harassed by Hyder, supports the Marathas

Though Madakari accepted Hyder Ali's suzerainty, paid annual tributes and assisted him in conquering the state of Bednur, the exacting of annual tribute appears to have put Chitradurga into great financial difficulties and in the year 1766 owing to the harassment of Hyder Ali, Madakari Nayaka was compelled to sell off even the valuables of royal ladies. Peshwa Madhava Rao disputed Hyder Ali's right to levy contributions from the chief of Chitradurga whom he considered to be under his protectorate. Hence when Madhava Rao led an expedition against Hyder Ali in 1767 Madakari joined him and later when Madhava Rao decided to lead another expedition against Hyder in 1770, he solicited the support of Chitradurga and Madakari Nayaka readily agreed. Madakari Nayaka played an important role in the capture the fort of Nijagal near Nelamangala which had

eluded the Maratha army even after a siege of three months. Madakari Nayaka also helped Triambak Rao, the Maratha general who marched against Hyder Ali in 1771.

Back in Hyder Ali's fold

After making peace with the Marathas, Hyder Ali in November 1772 sent Saiyid Mokhdum to Chitradurga and extracted tributes from Madakari Nayaka. Later in 1776 Madakari Nayaka helped Hyder Ali when the latter besieged Gooty and captured its ruler Murari Rao Ghorpade. Hyder Ali then directed Madakari to annex Murari Rao's possession of Pagonda, Madakshira, Penukonda and Kodikonda. In early 1777 Mysore was attacked jointly by the army of Marathas under Parashuram Bhau and the Nizam's army under Ibrahim Khan Dhoonsa. Hyder Ali asked Madakari for assistance. But Madakari had realised Hyder Ali's design and refrained from helping him.

Madakari had earlier allowed Shivaram Bhau, nephew of Murari Rao of Gooty to escape from Madakshira to Poona by the way of Chitradurga. Hence Hyder Ali had deputed his Newswriters (spies) to keep a close watch on Madakari.

This act of Hyder irked Madakari who sent his wakil Purushottam Pant to the court of Poona to persuade the Marathas to undertake expedition to Srirangapattana. Madakari was assured by the Marathas that they would send a huge army and permanently release him from Hyder Ali's interference. The refusal of Madakari to assist him was a sufficient pretext for Hyder Ali to lead a campaign against Chitradurga. Hyder Ali had for long coveted possession of the celebrated fort of Chitradurga and was jealous of the power and distinguished bravery of the palegar and his formidable troops. Hyder Ali was helped by Krishnappa of Rayadurga who was an adversary of Madakari Nayaka.

Hyder besieges Chitradurga fort

Before launching his attack Hyder Ali proposed that Madakari Nayaka surrender his capital and accept service under him with a jagir of annual value of rupees fifty thousand. Madakari refused and Hyder Ali began his siege in July 1777 and it continued for three months.

During the siege the daring Bedas used to attack the enemy soldiers on every Monday and used to carry a certain number of heads of the enemy soldiers and offer it at the shrine of Goddesses Kali situated in the fort. The killed soldiers numbered around 2000. As the siege prolonged without any success, Hyder Ali proposed that if Madakari paid thirteen lakh pagodas and promised his allegiance to him, he (Hyder Ali) would forgive the past conduct of the Nayaka. Madakari Nayaka agreed to his proposal and paid five lakh and for the remaining amount sent his brother Parashuramappa as hostage.

In the meantime, Madakari Nayaka received information that the Marathas were on their way to attack Hyder Ali and hence he gave elusive reply when Hyder Ali demanded that he (Madakari) join him in his fight against the Marathas.

Hyder Ali then left Chitradurga to face the Marathas. He brought over the Maratha general Manaji Phakde and the non-cooperation by the Nizam forces led to Hari Pant who led the Maratha forces against Hyder Ali to retreat back to Poona. Hyder Ali now once again turned his attention towards Chitradurga.

The final siege of Chitradurga

During Hyder Ali's absence, Madakari Nayaka had plundered Channagiri, Basavapattana, Sante Bednur and other places and Hyder Ali had despatched Tipu against him. Madakari Nayaka had to return back to Chitradurga followed by Tipu who besieged the fort and he was joined by Hyder Ali who came with 40,000 horses and 60,000 infantry and this happened during In March/April 1778. As usual Madakari Nayaka and his followers valiantly defended the fort and in their attempt many of Madakari Nayaka's relatives and chiefs were killed or wounded and even Madakari Nayaka and his brother Parashuramappa were wounded by a bullet shot.

Meanwhile two detachments of ten thousand horses each one under Shivaram Ghorpade (nephew of Murari Rao) and Pandurang Tatya (brother of Gopal Rao of Miraj) and the other under Parashuram Bhao advanced to provide relief to Madakari Nayaka. Hyder Ali sent a contingent under Muhammad Ali and Sripat Rao who defeated Parashuram Bhao and captured Shivaram Ghorpade and Pandurang Tatya.

Muslim soldiers' defect to Hyder Ali's camp

Meanwhile Muharram festival occurred and the commanders who manned Muslim soldiers of Chitradurga asked Madakari Nayaka for permission to perform their ceremonies outside the fort and promised to return back; reluctantly Madakari Nayaka allowed them to go and once outside the fort Hyder Ali seduced them to his fold.

The Gallantry of Obavva

Hyder Ali who was finding all his attempts to defeat Madakari Nayaka by storming the fort sent his spies to watch the movements of the people entering and exiting the fort and they discovered a secret passage through which people used to enter and exit from the fort. One mid-day Hyder Ali sent a contingent of troops to enter the fort

through that secret passage. At that time the sentinel or horn blower guarding the passage had gone for lunch and his wife Obavva had come to fetch water from a well situated near the secret passage.

When Obavva heard some noise and saw the enemy soldiers making attempts to enter through the secret passage, she hurriedly went to her house and so as not disturb her husband who was having lunch, she took a pestle and returned back to the secret passage and waited for the enemy soldiers to emerge.

When she saw the enemy soldiers emerging one by one, she pounced upon them by delivering a blow on their head by the pestle and killed them. This continued till the arrival of her husband who by blowing his horn alerted the soldiers of Chitradurga. But unfortunately, in her fight with the enemy, Obavva was stabbed by an enemy soldier and she died. It is said that even her enemies admired her heroism and patriotism. Obavva's figure is chiselled on a stone of the fort wall at one of the gates and her image is to this day worshipped by people of the surrounding villages.

Capitulation of Chitradurga

A number of factors like betrayal of his Muslim soldiers, the hardship faced by his people due to the prolonged siege, drying of resources, lack of external military support, loss of his close associates and lastly his folly to order the execution his own father-in-law when he went to pay obeisance to a deity (situated outside the fort and near the place where the enemy were entrenched); which Madakari Nayaka interpreted as colluding with Hyder Ali which led his brothers-in-law to switch their allegiance to Hyder Ali, all made Madakari Nayaka's will to fight dwindle. Also, Hyder Ali finding it impossible to storm the fort renewed his overtures for peace. He promised on oath to assign the country to the Nayaka upon which the latter in good faith went to the enemy camp with fifty attendants.

He was accommodated in a tent and Hyder Ali sent 4000 troops who surrounded the Nayaka tent and captured him. Hyder Ali's troops entered the fort and hoisted their flag. The Nayaka and his family were taken to Srirangapattana as prisoners and their personal properties seized. Madakari Nayaka died of his wounds and a month later his brother Parashuramappa also died.

Influential and respected Palegar

Madakari Nayaka was a brave soldier, a shrewd administrator and a generous chief. His generosity to the soldiers and generals has been described as beyond limits and was wondered at by the recipient themselves. Family pensions were given to soldiers who died in the battle and those who lost their horses in the battle field were given with horses. The Nayaka also used to give rewards for his soldiers for eliminating the enemy soldiers. Undoubtedly, he was the most influential and respected chief of his age.

Muhammadan Chelas

Had Madakari Nayaka routed Hyder Ali's army and become victorious, what change these would have been in the history of southern India it is difficult to tell. The heroic exploits of the people of Chitradurga to protect their independence have now become legendary in the annals of Karnataka. Hyder Ali who had seen the stern stuff the Bedas of Chitradurga were made of, thought that they would make excellent soldiers when trained. Hence, he took 20,000 of them to Srirangapattana and converted many of them to Islam and enlisted them in a battalion called Muhammadan Chelas, who were greatly of help to Tipu.

The Aftermath

Among the family members of Madakari Nayaka who was taken as a prisoner was Dodda Madakari Nayaka, the nephew of Kasturi Rangappa Nayaka. He submitted to the terms of Hyder Ali who released him and made him Bakshi in charge of 6000 troops. Dodda Madakari Nayaka helped Hyder Ali in his encounters at Arcot, Trichinopoly, Cuddapah and Vellore where he displayed his courage. Pleased with his acts Hyder Ali enhanced his pay.

After the death of Hyder Ali, his son Tipu who had long desired to convert Dodda Madakari Nayaka to Islam asked him to join him (Tipu) at Coimbatore. But Dodda Madakari Nayaka who knew his intention refused to meet him and instead sought service under the ruler of Travancore and stayed there from 1791 to 1799.

After the death of Tipu, Dodda Madakari Nayaka left Travancore for Madras to seek the support of the British for reinstating him as the ruler of Chitradurga. But the British who had already committed to instal Krishnaraja Wodeyar III as the ruler of Mysore did not wanted a rival at Chitradurga and hence refused to heed to his appeal and Dodda Madakari Nayaka had to be satisfied with a hereditary pension.

CONCLUSION

The Bedas of yore who were valiant warriors, rulers and patrons of Sanatana dharma are today listed as backward tribe. Not only the Bedas but also the Kurubas, Vokkaligas, Veerashaivas are also classified as backward. But history tells us that it was the members of these communities who once ruled kingdoms and principalities and patronised Hindu culture. They lost their power and status after being attacked by Muslims and due to the exploitative economic policies of the British.

The Kurubas who founded the mighty Vijayanagara kingdom, the Veerashaivas who were ruling over Keladi and Coorg and the Vokkaliga chieftains ruling over Bangalore, Chikkaballapura and other places were wrested of their powers by the Muslim rulers of Bijapur, Golkonda, Ahmednagar and by Hyder Ali and Tipu Sultan. But the British rulers and later the Marxist historians blamed the loss of power and the subsequent economic backwardness of these communities upon the Brahmin community with a sole intention of breaking Hindu unity.

Even a person with little common-sense can tell that the rulers of these communities patronised Brahmins by giving them land (agraharas). How can a donee (here the reference is to the Brahmins) with no political, muscle and money power can act as oppressor? Even today it is these communities who are playing an important role in politics and occupy high political offices.

It should be remembered that the criteria for identifying the backwardness of a community by the Miller committee constituted by the Maharaja of Mysore was on the basis of their percentage in government services and educational institutions. As the percentage of Brahmins was large in both government and educational institutions all other communities except the Brahmins were labelled as backward. But the most amusing fact is that today even the Urs community to which the rulers of Mysore belonged and who ruled for several centuries are classified as backward.

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