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Political milieu during Kempe Gowda: The founder of Bangalore

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Abstract

The Yelahanka Nadu, the minor principality contributed to the glory of Vijayanagara Empire during the early part of the 14th Century AD. Hiriya Kempegowda was one of the three confidants of King Krishna Devaraya which had brought him great reputation. The political dilemmas and the stalemate that cropped up after the demise of Sri Krishna Devaraya became the causes for the rise of Kempegowda, Contemporary political climate came to encounter the spreading popularity of Kempegowda who had by 1537 founded New Bangalore. This Paper deals the Historical significance, Political situations, and contributions of Kempegowda during his Tenure.

Keywords: Yelahanka Nada Prabhus, Bairava, Sri Rangaraya, Talikote, Dore Mane (Royal adobe).

Introduction

Vijayanagara Empire that rose during the early part of 14th Century manifested itself as a great source of cultural enrichment to Indian History, and the reign of the rulers of the empire stands out as a resplendent chapter in the cultural and political history of the country. Hampi dazzled as the capital of the great empire, also was the epitome of the cultural glory and remains today, though in ruins, as a heritage cultural site of world stature. The minor principality of Yelahanka Nadu contributed greatly to the glory of the Vijayanagara Empire, the Yelahanka dynasty started off as farmers but proceeded to rule for over three Centuries as the vassals of the Vijayanagara Empire, from 1367 to 1728, whose fortunes rose and declined with that of the empire itself. The Yelahanka dynasty rulers were profarmer, and their reign was marked by exemplary administration, thus becoming the stuff of lore and legend. Many principalities-Keladi, Chitradurga, Mysore, Madurai, Madugiri, Sira, Hagalavadi, Srirangapatna, Ummathur, Basavapatna, Hosakote, Chikkaballapura and Kolar flourished in Southern India when the Moghals reigned over the north of the country, and at the sametime the Vijayanagara empire was at its zenith. According to an estimate Yelahanka Nadu had spread across the districts of the present day Kolar, Bangalore, Ramanagara and Tumkur. Overtime Ahuthi, Yelahanka, Bangalore, Magadi, Savanadurga (Nelapatna) had become the capital cities or towns.

The purpose of this exploration is to assess the political milieu during the times of Hiriya Kempegowda, Immadi Kempegowda, Mummadi Kempegowda, Dodda Veerappa Gowda and Kempa Veerappa Gowda between 1510 and 1728. Yelahanka Nadu Prabhus rule was marked by the policy of adhering to the noble principles of truth, justice and deliverance of the subjects from predicaments posed by life. The basic concept of their governance had the foundation of service to mankind proclaimed and celebrated in the epics of India. The rulers engaged themselves at that time in propeople deliberations which brought them the exalted status of kings and monarchs although they were among the many vassals the mighty Vijayanagara empire. But a grateful populace heartily hailed them as their 'Nada Prabhus'. As testimony to their noble intentions and great deeds the statue of Hiriya Kempegowda stands with folded hands in front of the idol of Sri Gangadhareswara at Sivaganga, a picture of humility. A tribute and mirror to Kempegowda's eminence. Kempegowda was a humble farmer at heart and his attitude and actions were reflections of his mind which materialized a farmer's republic amid an empire emblematic of the power of soldiery. The relations between the Vijaya Nagara monarch and his vassals greatly contributed to the rise of the empire.

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The Chola and Pallava kingdoms were surrounded by minor principalities but the fulcrum of power remained in the hands of the rulers and it was a loose federation. Overtime the nucleus power declined resulting in dilution of the wholeness of this kingdom as agriculture spread unchecked. The situation needed and deserved a local chieftain to settle the uncertainties and paved the way for Kempegowda to fill the Vacuum of a Nada Gowda, a farmer leader or a clan head. Those were the times when whoever assumed the vanguard of farmers by constructing tanks, lakes canals and temples to automatically endear themselves to the populace who accepted him as their leader whole heartily [1]. A vast network of informants existed during Sri Krishna Devarayas rule, who helped investigate and collect information about what went on behind the King's back. Secrets of the court, attitude of vassals, the gossip of the queens apartments, the finances of the state, facts about the armed forces, opinions of the learned and the laity were all reaching the ears of the King Through spies [2].

Hiriy Kempegowda was one of the three confidants of King Krishna Devaraya which had brought him great reputation. Kempegowda was obliged to pay annual tribute to the Kings Treasury and also helped recruit men to the Kings Treasury army. Military bases at the strategically located forts of Ramgiri Sivaganga, Savanadurga, Bhairava Durga, Huliyyuru Durga and Huthari Durga, came into existence and were reinforced Kempe Gowdas soldiers who fought by the side of Rayas forces in the hostirot Thalikote battle, and two of his brothers Kempa somiah and Basaviaha paid with their lives for the Vijayanagara Emperor [3]. The political dilemmas and the statemate that cropped up after the demise of Sri Krishna Devaraya became the causes for the rise of Kempegowda, Contemporary political climate came to encounter the spreading popularity of Kempegowda who had by 1537 founded New Bangalore, but also had won the hearts and minds of the people by executing various welfare works like tanks and temples and also had greatly assisted the business community.

Kempegowda's onward march and political ascendance was most eye-catching and naturally, the other chieftains became jealous of him but Kempegowda's steady growth included the 12 villages that accounted for 30000 gold sovereigns in income to the royal treasury of King Achuta Raya, which he obtained as a gift from the King. This only added to the jealousy of already disgranted. he chieftains of Channapatna and Devanahalli rose against Kempe gowda who effectively defeated them, but by the time of Sadashivaraya's rule intrigue reached such proportions that Kempegowda was jailed at Anegondi [4] and the incident was nothing but a contradiction of monumental size considering the stature of Kempe Gowda who gave his all to the Vijayanagara rulers. Kempegowda's unchecked progress and increasing popularity and recognition as being close to the King and his major decision to introduce his own currency "Bhairava" earned the wrath of chieftains and he became a victim of high political intrigue and treason. His release from captivity may have been the consequence of his decision to emboss the nomenclature of 'Vijaya' on the coins which led to the dilution of the hatred against him. Dr. Nagaraj has inferred from his field studies, when he came upon a grainsized coin carrying the nomenclature of 'Vijaya' [5] on it that Kempegowda had atoned for his over zealousness. But it cannot be understood why the Keladi Nayakas who also had minted their own coins were left untouched but

Kempegowda alone was targeted. It is surmized that the opponents had plotted to divest Kempegowda of Bangalore and hand over it to the Channapatna chieftain Jagadevaraya thus putting an end to Kempegowda's proclaim stature in southern principalities Self - sufficiency, brotherhood, cooperation that were the hallmark of people and the society in general that pervaded in Kempegowda's territories. Each village had its own system of administration, self contained checks and balances and those that breached the moral code of conduct were fined heavily.

Immadi Kempegowda was commanded by his Emperor to lay seize to SriRangaraya of Sri Rangapatna made him flee to Talkad [6], take possession of Magadi and Savanadurga by defeating Talari Gangappa in 1623AD contributed greatly to the fame of Second Kempegowda. A land mark event of Second Kempegowda's life was when he earned the title of 'traitors nightmare' [7] after he saved his king the third Venkatapathi Raya of Vijayanagara from the infamous plots of his enemies. The enemies of Immadi Kempegowda were never tired of their attempts to ruin him and joined hands with Mohammed Adil Shah of Bijapur who waged a strong attack.

The chieftains of Harapanahalli, Kanakagiri, Sandur, Ujjani, Rayadurga, Dodderi, Kundarpi, Chikkanayakanahalli, Hiriyur, Beguru, Narasimhapura, Tadapatra were cajoled and organized to attack Kempe Gowda under the leadership of Ranadullah Khan and Shahaji. Kempe Gowda was brought to his knees and forced to embrace defeat and as per the agreement reached in 1638AD [8], Bangalore and Ramagiri were ceded to Tipu Sultan and the great Kempe Gowda was reduced to surrender his son to the Sulthan along with a sizeable tribute. In a rearrangement of governance and sharing of spoils the territories of Sira Bangalore and Kolar were assigned to Shahaji. But Shahaji blundered when he broke his promise and failed to offer military assistance when Kanthirava Narasaraja Wodeyar laid seize.

Belavangala Narayanappa pledged his support to Kempegowda (Immadi) and their friendship has become the subject of local ballads. Mummadi Kempegowda ruled with authority, but he was pious at heart. Bangalore was retaken by Mummadi from Shahaji's son, Ekoji. Thus redeeming he lost pride of Kempegowda lineage. He was an ardent worshipper of Lord Shiva and greatly supported religious centers.

The Kingdom of Mysore was going through great turmoil as a result of intolerance and conflicts between the sects of Shaivas and Vaishnavas, the Wodeyars chose to take advantage of this explosive situation for their political ends. In a dispute that arose between two groups of kins of Kempe Gowda dynasty. The Wodeyars over ran the territories of Amruthur, Jinnagara, Huliyyurdurga and Kunigal. Serious differences arose between Muddu Krishna Raja Wodeyar of Hulikal and Kempa Veerappa Gowda which became ammunition for political revenge. The Wodeyars arrested Kempa Veerappa Gowda in 1728AD at Nelapatna near Savanadurga and incarcerated in the Sri Ranagapatna Jail following the amalgamation of his territories in to the Mysore kingdom.

Kempa Veerappa Gowda, recorded his grief over the demise of kingship and loss of territory on a palm leaf from the jail at Sri Rangapatna to his kin, and this message stands witness to the tragic end of a ruling family's fortunes and ultimate demise. Hulikal in Magadi taluk still is inhabited by

descendants of the legendary Kempe Gowda family and people address them with reverence as 'Dore Mane' meaning 'Royal Abode'.

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