CHAPTER II

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE KEŁADI NĀYAKAS

2.1 Historical Background:

The medieval period of South India witnessed several setbacks, ups and downs, emergence of new kingdoms and clashes between the kingdoms. The downfall of the Hoysalas of Dvārasamudra created an arena for the upcoming Vijayanagara rulers to fulfill the needs of the age. The needs of the age demanded bravery, as well as the protection of native 'Hindu Dharma'. The Vijayanagara kingdom emerged as a strong power to withstand the invasion of the outsiders. To effectively strengthen the hands of Vijayanagara rulers there was a dire need for subordinates who could fight on behalf of their kings and check the spreading influence of the rulers of Bijāpur. The Keḷadi Nāyakas were such devout subordinates under the Vijayanagara monarchs, who, in times of need, gave a helping hand to their overlords.

The origin of these rulers is still shrouded in mystery, as is the case of many dynasties. The epigraphical sources do not throw much light on this problem. The earliest known record of these rulers is that of Cauḍappa or Cauḍagauḍa of Keḷadi.1
'Śivatattvaratnakara' (S.T.R.), the Sanskrit encyclopaedia, composed by Hiriya Basavappa Nayaka (1697-1714), one of the Keladi rulers, gives an account like this - Cauḍappa, the founder of the Keladi dynasty was the son of Basavappa. Cauḍappa, a farmer, got a treasure-trove, while ploughing his field. With the help of this treasure, he made himself the chief of the village and gathered an army. The 'Keladi Nripa Vijayam (K.N.V.)' composed by poet Liṅgaṇṇa during the 18th century, informs us that Cauḍappa and Bhadrappa were the sons of Basavappa and Basavamāmbe. They were agriculturists in 'Pallīvayulu' village (in the present Sagar Taluk, Shimoga District).

When this news reached the emperor of Vijayanagara, he sent for him and recognising his ability, assigned him the administration of the areas around Keladi (The present Malnad region). Liṅgaṇṇakavi says that the Vijayanagara emperor gave eight maganes of Keladi, Ikkeri, Perbayalu, Yalagala, Mōdūru, Kalise and Lātavaḍī (the name of one place is missing in the script). According to Aigal, the missing name was of Candraguttī.

After returning from Vijayanagara, Cauḍappa was enthroned at Keladi in the year 1500 according to the K.N.V.
Thus Cauḍappa began to govern a small principality under the suzerainty of the Vijayanagara Empire.

2.2 The Early Rulers:

2.2.1 Cauḍappa (About 1500-1540):

We have not yet got the inscriptionsal evidence as to when actually did Cauḍappa start ruling these territories. According to the K.N.Y., he ascended the throne at Keḷadi on 8-1-1500.

The only available inscription (stone) of this ruler is found at Nāḍakalasi (Sagar Taluk, Shimoga District).\(^8\) The date corresponds to 9th December, 1506. It records the grant of land to one stone-engraver 'Virappayya's' children. The inscription is peculiar in two ways. Firstly, it mentions the rule of succession, descending to sister's son, which is often found in parts of Malnaḍ and Dakṣiṇa Kannada District (known as Aliya-Santanam). Secondly, the grant to the stone-engravers is rarely found in the inscriptions of these rulers.

Curiously enough, the inscription does not refer to him as 'Nayaka', which was a suffix to their names among the Keḷadi rulers.
Another inscription, which mentions his name, belongs to his son, Sadāśiva Nāyaka. It also does not refer to him (Caudappa) as 'Nāyaka'.

Caudappa shifted his capital from Keḷadi to Ikkērī in the year 1512, where, he is said to have constructed a fort, palace, treasury, stable, elephant stable, godown, city, market, and other structures. Caudappa is also said to have built a stone-temple - Rāmēśvara temple at Keḷadi and endowed some villages to the daily worship of the god.

2.2.2 Sadāśiva Nāyaka (1540-1565):

Sadāśiva Nāyaka, the son and successor of Caudappa ascended the throne on July 5th, 1514, according to the K.N.V. He is said to have assisted the Vijayanagara rulers in many wars. According to the S.T.R., Rāmarāya, king of Vijayanagara, invited Sadāśiva Nāyaka to assist him in his campaigns. It is a known fact that Rāmarāya was the de facto ruler of Vijayanagara, who made Sadāśivarāya, the real ruler, his puppet.

From the inscription found at Kumbhakāśi (Kundāpur Taluk, Dakshiṇa Kannāḍa District), it is learnt that the governorship of Tulurājya was
bestowed upon Sadāśivarāya Nāyaka of Keḷadi. Inscrip-
tion Nos. 373, 392 of A.R.S.I.E., 1926-27 also speak
of Sadāśivarāya Nāyaka, governing the Tulurājya.
Another inscription says that he was given the title
'Rāya Nāyaka,'15 by the Vijayanagara king Rāmarāya, and
was appointed as the Viceroy of Gutti, Bārkur and
Mangalore, in lieu of his eminent military services.
"It was for his military prowess and political wisdom
that the Keḷadi territories grew into a strong and
stable state".16

On behalf of the Vijayanagara king, he captured
the fort of Kalaburgi and Kalyāṇadurga. He defeated
'Barīd Pādāshahā', probably Amīr (1504-1542) or Āli
Barīd (1542-1579), Vazīr of Bījāpur Sultān, Nizāmshāh
of Aḥamadnagar (probably Būrhan), Sāluva Nāyaka of
Gutti, Matti Timmaṇṇa Nāyaka of Chitradurga and Tulu
chiefs.17

As a reward, Sadāśiva Nāyaka was given eloquent
titles from Rāmarāya - Kōte Kōlāhala, 'Ēkāṅga Vīra',
'Balavanta', 'Aridalemeghadambaradīvapradīpa', apart
from the territories allotted for his governorship.18

The K.N.V. says that he reached as far as
Kāsaragōḍ (in the present Kerala State) and erected a
victory pillar there. At the instance of his overlord, Sadasiva Nayaka defeated the following paleyagars (local chieftains) - Ikkeri Mallanaguda, Nellur-Puttegauḍa, Nurguppe Puṭṭegauḍa, Puṭṭanna of Kānale, Puḷėyagar of Sirivante, Yellagalli Puttegauḍa and others. He also consolidated their territories.

Apart from his military prowess, Sadasiva Nayaka is also remembered as a patron of religious institutions, as a founder of agraharas and as a builder of temples. He built the Sadasivapura agrahara on the banks of the Kuśavati river, constructed Ḫśvāra temple at Ikkeri, built the Nandi pavilion in the Rāmeśvara temple of Keladi and constructed Pārvati temple at the left side of Rāmeśvara temple at Keladi.

Sadasiva Nayaka also installed a Sivalinga in his own name and constructed a temple, endowed lands liberally. He also granted lands to the Subrahmanya temple at Kukke (Dakṣiṇa Kannada District).

2.2.3 Dodda Saṅkanna Nayaka (1566-1570?):

The historians differ in their views in identifying this ruler. Was he the younger brother
of Sadāśiva Nāyakas? Was he the elder son of Sadāśiva Nāyaka? Was he the same person as 'Bhadra', the younger brother of Sadāśiva Nāyaka? Was he the person who secured the title "Immaḍi Sadāśiva Nāyaka"?

Dr. K.D. Swaminathan, Dr. B.R. Gopal, N.L. Lakshmi-Narayana Rao, Dr. G.S. Gai and Dr. A. Sundara have opined in different ways. The sources for their arguments are the Kannada literary work K.N.V., Sanskrit work S.T.R., Telugu literary sources like Rāyakavacamu of Visvanathanayanayya, Kṛṣṇarāya Vi-jayam of Kumāra Dhūrjaṭi and few inscriptions.

The K.N.V. says that Doḍḍa Saṅkanna Nāyaka was the elder son of Sadāśiva Nāyaka and he ascended the throne in about 1545.

S.T.R. says that Sadāśiva had two wives, of whom the elder gave birth to Doḍḍa Saṅkanna Nāyaka and the younger, to Cikka Saṅkanna Nāyaka.26

The Telugu sources say that before 1516, Kṛṣṇadevarāya, while marching towards Tulurāya, visited Ikkēri and was honoured by Sukkula (Saṅkula) Nāyaka.27

Inscriptions of 1533 of Basrūr, 1535 of Kōṭēsvara28 and 1536 of Uppūr (all these three are
from Kundapur Taluk, Dakshina Kannada District), inform us a ruler of this province as Saṅkaṇṇa Nayaka.

The other contemporary inscriptions differ in identifying this ruler as evidenced by Sātenahallī inscription of 1580 (Hirekerur Taluk, Dārwāḍ District), Veṅkaṭappa Nāyaka's inscription of 1592 and Tāḷaguppa inscription of 1661 (copper plate).

Sātenahallī inscription says that Saṅkaṇṇa Nāyaka's father was Immaḍī Sadaśīva Nāyaka. Dr. B.R. Gopal views that Sadaśīva Nāyaka himself was Immaḍī Sadaśīva Nāyaka. He also identifies him with Doḍḍa Saṅkaṇṇa Nāyaka.

In the inscription of 1592, it is stated that Veṅkaṭappa Nāyaka was the son of Immaḍī Sadaśīva Nāyaka and the grandson of Sadaśīva Nāyaka.

In the Tāḷaguppa inscription of 1661 Immaḍī Veṅkaṭappa Nāyaka is said to be the son of Siddappa, the grandson of Saṅkaṇṇa Nāyaka and the great grandson of Sadaśīva Nāyaka.

Dr. A. Sundare, in his recent work Keladi Arasara Kālada Vāstu Mattu Mūrti Śilpa analyses all the available inscriptions and comes to the conclusion that Bhadra, Doḍḍa Saṅkaṇṇa, Sukkula (Saṅkula) Nāyaka
and Immadi Sadasivaraya Nayaka - all these names refer to the younger brother of Sadasiva Nayaka.36

With regard to the rule of Dodda Sañkaṇña, both K.N.V. and S.T.R. are in agreement about a number of events during his reign. The K.N.V. states that when Virupañña Wođeyar of Jambūru troubled Dodda Sañkaṇña Nayaka, he defeated him and conquered Jambūru and Uđugani forts. Virupañña Wođeyar complained to the Vijayanagara king. Rāya (probably Rāmarāya) sent words to him. Dodda Sañkaṇña Nayaka entrusted the kingship to his younger brother Cikka Sañkaṇña Nayaka37 and met Rāmarāya. Rāya ordered him to return Jambūru and Uđugani to Virupañña Wođeyar and be in the capital city (of Vijayanagara) for some time. There, two sons were born to him - Rāmarāja and Veṅkaṭappa Nayaka. Vijayanagara ruler, Rāmarāya, wanted to conquer the Goa fort from the Portuguese. He sent Sañkaṇña Nayaka with his own younger brother Viṭṭalarāya. Goa fort was captured and they returned triumphantly. Rāmarāya honoured him and sent him back to Ikkeri.

The K.N.V., also says that, entrusting the kingdom to his younger brother, Dodda Sañkaṇña Nayaka went on for a pilgrimage to the religious centres. He established a matha at Kāsi and renovated the
tanks. He also installed Śivaliṅgas at many religious centres. At Vārāṇasi, Doḍḍa Sāṅkaṇṇa Nāyaka constructed Jaṅgama Ghaṭ and Jaṅgamapura village.

He visited Prayāg, Nepal, Haridvār, Kedār, Kāśmīr and established Jaṅgama matha there. On his return, he saw the Aghorēśvara at Paithāṇa (in the present Maharashtra State) and copied the details of the idol.

He also saw the Vīrabhadra idol at Ālavlīlī of Māsūra sīme and brought it to Keladi and constructed a stone temple to the right side of the Rāmēśvara temple and established Vīrabhadra idol there.

The S.T.R. says that he constructed a stone temple at Ikkerī, named Aghorēśvara temple. The K.N.V. says that Doḍḍa Sāṅkaṇṇa Nāyaka built the Aghorēśvara temple and liberally endowed for its worship. He also constructed tanks and beautiful gardens.

Doḍḍa Sāṅkaṇṇa Nāyaka again joined hands with his overlord in defeating the Muslims. He also defeated Bhairādēvi, the 'Pepper Queen' of Gerasoppa, and marched towards Jambūru and Uḍugaṇī forts. He captured them and marched towards the Arabian sea. The K.N.V., indicates that he had conquered a fort in the sea, but does not mention its name. He also defeated

2.2.4 Cikka Saṅkaṇṇa Nayaka (1570-1580):

Cikka Saṅkaṇṇa Nayaka had already acquired enough experience in the administration before coming to power. By the time he ascended the throne, Vijayanagara empire was shattered at the hands of the Bahamani rulers in the battle of Rakkasa-Taṅgaḍi (1565). Political vaccuum was created among the paḷeyagārs of Vijayanagara regarding their overlord. Eventhough Tirumala (younger brother of Rāmarāya) shifted the capital to Penukoḍa and ruled there, the political power and glory of the empire was lost.

From the inscriptions, it is revealed that the Vijayanagara palace official - treasury officer and Saṇabōva (Saṇubhōga ?) 'Cinnabhaṇḍārada Nārāṇappa' and other officials came to Ikkeri after the downfall of the Vijayanagara empire and lived under the patronage of Cikka Saṅkaṇṇa Nayaka.

Both the K.N.V. and S.T.R. are silent about the part played by the Keladi ruler during this historic battle. In the absence of the authentic sources, or
corroboratory evidences, it is difficult to draw a clear picture about the relationship of Keladi with the Vijayanagara empire during this crucial period.

Cikka Sañkanna Nāyaka consolidated the inherited territories and strengthened it. He defeated Salabath Khan of Bijāpur and overpowered Arasappa Nāyaka of Sode. He also defeated Bhairadevi of Gerasoppe. Cikka Sañkanna Nāyaka was murdered by Rāmarāja Nāyaka, the son of Doḍa Sañkanna Nāyaka.

2.2.5 Rāmarāja Nāyaka (1580-1586):

Rāmarāja Nāyaka succeeded Cikka Sañkanna Nāyaka in the year 1572 at Ikkeri.

We find several lithic records of this ruler. The Soraba stone inscription No. 55 mentions that Rāmarāja Nāyaka granted a village Keñcanahalli in Soraba síme in Edenāḍ of Candraguttīvēnṭhe of Bana- vāseya pannirchāsīra, as an agrahara, to Uḍupī Śrī Kṛṣṇa, Vādirājatīrtha Śripāda and Bankapur Raghunidhi- tīrtha Śripāda - to enable Sadaśivarāya Nāyaka to attain salvation. Rāmarāja Nāyaka gave a 'netta-
rugodige Umbālī' to one Malarasa in the Hennagerī village (Sa 21, E.C. VIII). Rāmarāja Nāyaka also
granted lands to run chaultries and to Brahmins. He granted lands to revive the agrahāra-Sadasivapura on the banks of Kuśāvati river, which was established earlier in the name of Sadasiva Nayaka, by his chief minister Madappayya.

2.2.6 Venkaṭappa Nayaka I (1592-1629):

According to the K.N.V. Venkaṭappa Nayaka I succeeded Ramaraja Nayaka on 4th December 1582. The sources differ about the date of his accession.

During his regime, the Keladi kingdom expanded from Mirjan in Uttara Kannada upto Candragiri river in Kasaragod (Kerala State). The later records mention that he ruled the Keladi kingdom independently.

Till 1614 Venkaṭappa Nayaka I remained loyal to his overlord at Penukonda. Venkaṭappa Nayaka I was the first ruler of the dynasty, who declared himself as an independent ruler.

Venkaṭappa Nayaka I was a brave warrior, who had secured the title 'dōkhandēraya', as he used to swing the swords in both the hands during the war. He triumphantly marched through Hosāngaḍi, Kadiri, Baggavaḍi hōbli and Kollūr. He liberally endowed
grants to Śrī Mukāmbika of Kollūr and arranged for the daily worship. He also defeated Bhairarāsa Woḍeyar of Kārkāla and conquered Koppa, Kārkāla, Kaḷasa and Khāṇḍya. He conquered Śirāli (Uttara Kannāda District) and Basrūr (Dakshiṇa Kannāda District). He defeated the Tolhar of Sural, Siriya of Keḷanāḍ and other neighbouring rulers.

In the coastal area, he constructed several new forts and renovated the old forts. He constructed the forts at Kalyaṇapur, Mallikārjunagiri and Kaṇḍlūr. He strengthened the forts at Mūlike, Kumblē, Kaśaragōḍ, Koḍeyāla, Muḍabidare, Uḷḷāla, Puduvaṭṭu, Beḷlāre, Kāṇthamaṅgala, Bandyaḍka, Kandaṅkūli, Bācī, Śīśīla, Candragiri, Kiḍuṭu and Muḍagoḍeyāla.

Veṅkaṭappa Naẏaka I defeated the Baṅgavāḍi arasa in about 1612. He also defeated the petty pāḷeyagārs of Satalalu, Beḷavandūr, Hechche and Maṇḍagadde. Veṅkaṭappa Naẏaka I defeated Hanuma Naẏaka of Hoḷehonnūr and erected a victory pillar at Ḥānagal. He conquered Haratāla and Eṇḍehalli, renovated the fort and gave it a new name - Ānandapura.

In 1606 Veṅkaṭappa Naẏaka I defeated Bhairā-devī and conquered Gerasoppe territory, which was considered as one of the richest provinces of the
The Portuguese were trying to establish themselves by constructing the forts along the coast. He conquered Honnāvar, Basrūr and Bhaṭkal forts and held the monopoly of pepper trade in the coastal area. The European traders had to be friendly with him. A treaty was signed at Goa between the Portuguese and Veṅkaṭappa Nayaka I.

Along with the military conquest, Veṅkaṭappa Nayaka I richly endowed the temples and agrahāras. In 1613 Veṅkaṭappa Nayaka donated a village Huvinakere (Kundapur Taluk, Dakṣiṇa Kannada District) for the Punarpratiṣṭhāpane of Uḍupi Śrī Kṛṣṇa and for 'Amṛtapadi' of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

Inscriptions T1 38 and T1 39 of E.C. VIII mention that Veṅkaṭappa Nayaka I endowed land grants to a mosque at 'Bhuvanagiri durga'. This was a fort namely 'Kavale durga' which was conquered by him. He renamed it as 'Bhuvanagiri durga'61 and built a stone fort, a palace, a Mahattina matha and an agrahāra at Bhuvanagiri durga. Veṅkaṭappa Nayaka I also conquered Bidanūru and made proper arrangements for the worship of Nīlakaṇṭhēśvara. He renovated and extended the Kollūr Mukāmbikā temple at Kollūr.
Venkatappa Nayaka I was a great builder of temples, mathas, palaces and agraharas. He defeated again Bhairarasa Wodeyar of Karkala and renovated the matha at Sringeri. He, thus, secured the title "Sringeri Punarpratishtapaka".62

Venkatappa Nayaka I erected Tandavisvara idol and a palace at Anandapura, along with a tank, well and garden. He constructed a 'Nataka sala' at Ikkeri. The K.N.V. says - "Ikkeriyaramaneyol Vicitratara racanakausalyadim natakasaleyam nirmanangaisi .....".63

At Bhuvanagiri he built a palace, treasury, godown, stable, elephant-stable, Kalyanamahal and watchpost. He also built Visvesvara temple, Laksmi-narayana temple and Sikharasvara temple, sank a pond and raised a garden.

Venkatappa Nayaka I established a town called 'Sadasiva Sagara' (in between Keladi and Ikkeri) in the name of his predecessor (at present this town is called Sagara). There he constructed Mahagaapapati temple, a tank, a storeyed palace and a garden by name 'Candavana'.

On the banks of Varada river, he established an agrahara - 'Visvanathapura', a temple dedicated to Visvesvara. He also constructed a tank near Keladi, a
palace and a sports building which had storeys. Veṅkaṭappa Nāyaka also constructed the Raṅgamaṇṭapa of Raṃśvara temple at Keḻadi, a tank called 'Sampe-kaṭṭe' (for irrigation) and a garden.

On the banks of Tuṅgabhadrā river he built an agrahāra called Vīrāṃbāpura, in memory of his mother. Vīramāmbe, one of his wives, donated two life-size bronze images of dvarapālakas to the Kollūr Mūkāmbikā temple on the auspicious day of Śivarātri.

Veṅkaṭappa Nāyaka built jangama mathas at Śankaranārāyaṇa Gurupura, Bārakūru and other places, and richly endowed them. 64

During Veṅkaṭappa Nāyaka's period, both Sanskrit and Kannada literature received his patronage. Some of the Sanskrit works of his period may be mentioned as follows:

1. Śivāṭṭapadi by Tirumala Bhāṭṭa
2. Commentaries on Tantrasāra by Raṅgaṇātha Dīkṣita.
3. Mānapriyā, a work on horses, composed by Āśva Paṇḍita.
4. Tattvakaustubha composed by Bhaṭṭōji Dīkṣita.
Tirumala Bhaṭṭa also composed Śivagīte in Kannada, which was the 18th chapter of Uttara Khaṇḍa in Padma Purāṇa.

During Veṅkaṭappa Ṛayaka's period, an Italian traveller, Pietro Della Valle visited Ikkeri (on 23-11-1623) and gave a valuable and detailed account about the Ikkerī fort, palace, the people, their customs, festivals and schools.65

Thus, Veṅkaṭappa Ṛayaka I was a great warrior, a prolific builder, and a patron of art and literature. He showed religious catholicity towards all religions. According to Dr. A. Sundara, he also gave financial assistance to the 'Candranātha Svāmi Tribhuvana tilaka Caityālaya' of Mūgabidare.66

In foreign policy, 'never indeed did any other monarch of Keḷadi maintain diplomatic relations with the Portuguese and other foreigners as ably and successfully as Veṅkaṭappa. Veṅkaṭappa is perhaps the ablest and the greatest among the crowned heads that ever sat on the throne of Keḷadi'.67

Veṅkaṭappa lost his son Bhadrappa Ṛayaka. So he had to train his grandson, Vīrabhadra Ṛayaka, son of Bhadrappa Ṛayaka, in the field of administration.
He nominated him as his heir apparent. Venkaṭappa Nayaka died in 1630.

2.2.7 Vīrabhadra Nāyaka (1629-1645):

Vīrabhadra Nāyaka succeeded his grandfather in 1630. He stayed for about 8 years at Tīrtha-rajapura (present Tīrthahalḷi) on the banks of Tuṅgā river. During his reign, he had to face internal conspiracy from among the relatives and external danger.

A close relative and aspirant to the throne Vīra Woḍeyar (also known as Vīrappa Nāyaka), was supported by some nobles in the court and with their support Vīrappa Nāyaka became the king at Ikkerī.

Vīrabhadra Nāyaka, soon took shelter at Bhuvanagiri durga. This state of things continued for some time as we find inscriptions belonging to both the rulers at this time. But, after sometime, Vīrappa Nāyaka died and soon Vīrabhadra Nāyaka occupied Ikkerī.

Vīrabhadra Nāyaka had to face an attack from Raṇadullā Khān of Bijāpur. Keṅgā Nāyaka of Basava-paṭṭaṇa, who was under the control of Vīrabhadra Nāyaka, revolted. Vīrabhadra Nāyaka captured his Jagīr. Keṅgā Nāyaka complained to Mahammed Adil Shāh, sultan of...
Bijapur. The sultan who was waiting for a chance to occupy the wealthy kingdom of Keladi, did not waste this chance. He sent his army with Raşadullā Khan, the commander in-chief. In confrontation, Virabhadra Nayaka could not withhold his attack, fled to Bhuvanagiri durga. On December 30th, 1637, Ikkeri was plundered. Virabhadra Nayaka was pursued by Raşadullā Khan up to Bhuvanagiri durga, which was besieged by him. At last a treaty was signed between them. Keladi kingdom came under the sway of Bijapur suzerainty.

The English wanted to have control over the pepper trade in the coastal Karnataka. Peter Mundy, an English traveller, visited the Ikkeri palace and the royal court on 25-1-1637 and has left a valuable account of the city and the king.

As Ikkeri was completely devastated during the war, Virabhadra Nayaka found Bidanur (present Nagara of Hosanagar Taluk, Shimoga District) suitable for his new capital city, as it was in a strategic position amidst the Western Ghāts. In 1639, Virabhadra Nayaka made Bidanur his new capital and constructed a fort and a palace there.

Virabhadra Nayaka possessed far less ability
than his grandfather, but held together with great difficulty the possessions handed over to him by his grandfather. Virabhadra Nayaka defeated Kenga Hanumappa Nayaka of Basavapattana, defeated Bhairava of Karkala, offered help to Venkatapatiraya II of Vijayanagara when attacked by the sultan of Bijapur. He had commercial contacts with both the Portuguese and the English. But, as the strong influence of Venkatappa Nayaka was nonexistent, there were civil wars and rebellions in the State.

Amidst all these political disturbances he endowed liberally to the temples and the mathas. He died of old age in 1645 at Kandaluru (Kundapur Taluk, Dakshina Kannada District).

2.3 The Later Rulers:

2.3.1 Shivappa Nayaka (1645-1665?):

Shivappa Nayaka, the successor of Virabhadra Nayaka, was one of the ablest and greatest rulers of the Keladi kingdom. He ascended the throne in 1645. He was an able administrator and an organizer. As a diplomat and statesman, he was second only to Venkataappa
Nāyaka'. According to Dr. Chitnis, 'he was a veteran soldier, an able commander; He brought back all the territories under his sway once again, which were once conquered and annexed by Veṅkaṭappa Nāyaka. Stretching to the Arabian Sea, including Āraga, Gutti, Bārakūru, Maṅgaḷūru and coastal Karnatakā, he was the undisputed master of a vast area'. His kingdom was bound by Arabian Sea in the west, Citradurgā in the east, Śrīraṅgapatnā in the south and Bijāpur and Māraṭhā province in the north.

Śivappa Nāyaka occupied Maḷave, Kaṭṭe Kīḷūr, Bēkala, Cittārī, Candragiri and other places. He defeated the ruler of Nilēśvar (in Kerala State) and erected a victory pillar and defeated Bhairarasa Woḍeyar of Karkāla. He drove the Portuguese out of Honnāvar fort with the help of the Dutch. He also took possession of the fort of Gaṅgolli (Kundapūr Taluk, Dakshīṇa Kannāga District), from the Portuguese. He suppressed many rōwolts. Śivappa Nāyaka was driven back off by the Mysore forces.

Śivappa Nāyaka enriched the city of Bidanūr by inviting artists, architects, dyers, bronzesmiths, potters, goldsmiths, carpenters, artisans, mechanics,
He occupied Ikkeri, Soraba, Udugani, Mahadevapura fort, Sode, Tarikere and Savanur, after the death of Mahammad Adil Shah of Bijapur.

Śivappa Nayaka gave refuge to the last ruler of Vijayanagara at Vellūr (Bēlūru ?) - Śrīrāngarāya, when he was chased by the Bijapur Sultan. Śivappa Nayaka gave the administration of Sakrēpaṭṭaṇa to him.

The revenue administration of Śivappa Nayaka was noteworthy. The new land revenue was called 'sist'. He measured the lands and divided them into several categories according to their average produce and calculated the tax to the kingdom. He did everything possible to acquire more land by cutting dense forest and encouraged agriculture. This method enhanced the revenue of the kingdom and at the same time did not burden the cultivators. Bidanūr became a busy and flourishing centre for trade under him, as he encouraged the trade.

Śivappa Nayaka, liberally made grants to several religious centres like Śiva and Viṣṇu temples, patronised Śrīngēri mātha, built an agrahāra called Śivarājapura and endowed it to the Brahmins. He also made arrangements for the continuance of the regular religious traditions at Varāṇasi. His liberal grants
mentioned in E.C. VI Sg 13, E.C. VIII T1 81 bear the testimony to his religious bent of mind.

According to K.N.Y., he died at Bidanūr in 1661. His samādhi is said to be at Kalmaṭha of Bidanūr.

2.3.2 Veṅkaṭappa Nāyaka II (1661-1662):

After Śivappa Nāyaka, his younger brother Veṅkaṭappa Nāyaka II ruled for a short period of one year. During his tenure, the Dutch also maintained commercial contacts with the Keladi rulers. But the relationship with the Portuguese was strained.

Dr. A. Sundara opines that this ruler might have been evacuated from the throne, but he lived at least till 1665. According to the inscription of 1665 at Vārānasi, Śivappa Nāyaka and Veṅkaṭappa Nāyaka II jointly renovated the Kapiladhārātīrtha pond at Vārānasi.

2.3.3 Bhadrappa Nāyaka (1662-1664):

According to the K.N.Y., Bhadrappa Nāyaka, the elder son of Śivappa Nāyaka ascended the throne at Bidanūr in 1662.
He defeated the chiefs of Siriya, Sōde, Chikkanayakanahalli, Honnavalli, Kandugere and Budihala. The Bijapur ruler, Adulashah (Ali Adil Shāh II) sent an army with Shaji, Belūla Khān, Syed Vilās and Sharajakhān to defeat Bhadrappa Nāyaka. They besieged the Bhuvanagiri durga, where Bhadrappa Nāyaka lead a large contingent. In the battle, he drove back the enemies with great difficulty. Then he sent an ambassador, Hūvayya to Ādil Shāh and agreed for a treaty.

Bhadrappa Nāyaka is praised for his generosity and piety. At Tīrthahalli, he made Tulāpurusadāna and Hiranyagarbhādāna. He also established three agrahāras—Bhadraśapura, Śivarājapura and Veṅkaṭāpura. Bhadrappa Nāyaka liberally endowed lands to Kṛṣṇānanda Swāmi maṭha at Muḷabāgīlū. He also built several mahattina maṭhas at various places in his kingdom.

Bhadrappa Nāyaka went on a pilgrimage to Kollūr, Basrūr, Kundāpura, Kōṭēśvara, Śrīngērī and Kigga. He made land grants to these deities for daily worship. He endowed land grants to Śrī Veṅkaṭēśvara temple at Gaṅgolli, built by Narāyana Mallya.

The K.N.V., says that Bhadrappa Nāyaka died in 1664.
2.3.4 Sōmaśekhara Nāyaka I (1664-1671?):

Sōmaśekhara Nāyaka, the younger brother of Bhadrappa Nāyaka ascended the throne in the year 1664. He was an efficient diplomat. He maintained friendly relationship with the Dutch, the Portuguese and the English. Dr. B.S. Shastri explains in detail the commercial contacts, the peace treaties and the fights between these foreign powers for the supremacy over the several forts in coastal Karnataka.

After Sōmaśekhara Nāyaka was enthroned, he occupied Belagōdu, Kaṇatūr and Bēlūr which belonged to the Mysore Woḍeyars. He helped in settling peace at Tarīkere. Sōmaśekhara Nāyaka I gave liberal grants to the mathas and other religious institutions. The Srīngārī matha also received the traditional patronage at the hands of Sōmaśekhara Nāyaka. The last days of this ruler were miserable.

The K.N.Y., says that Sōmaśekhara Nāyaka was murdered by the conspiracy of a commander of Bijāpur - Jinnōpanth, who came to Bidanūr and camped at Mahānāvami bayalu.

But according to E.C. VIII, Tīrthahalli, 77, 78, this ruler might have lived at least upto 1677.
Dr. A. Sundara comments that Cennammāji, wife of Hiriya Somaśekhara Nayaka, might have ruled the Keladi kingdom in her husband's name.  

There were intrigues in the royal family for the succession. A relative of Somaśekhara Nayaka, 'Kutsita Śivappa Nayaka' might have ruled for 3-1/2 months, according to the K.N.V.

A stone inscription kept in the 'Śivappa Nayaka's Museum' at Shimoga mentions one Śivappa Nayaka's name and about his death in Saka Varsa 1601 neya Bahudhānya Samvatsarada Āsvīja Suddha Sōmavāra. But the usual epithets of the Keladi rulers are not mentioned here. Dr. A. Sundara opines that this ruler might be the one 'Kutsita Śivappa Nayaka' mentioned in the K.N.V. The year mentioned in the inscription corresponds to 1679. Conspiracy went on, and finally, with the help of Kasaragōḍu Timmaṇṇa and Subbunisa Kṛṣṇappayya, Cennammāji became the ruler of the Keladi kingdom.

2.3.5 Cennammāji (1672-1697):

Cennammāji, the wife of Somaśekhara Nayaka I, was enthroned in the Saka year 1594, i.e. 1672 at Bhuwanagiri durga. After her coronation ceremony at
Bhuvanagiri durga, Cennammājī returned to Bidanūr and controlled the administration of the Keḷadi kingdom.

With her ability and skill, Cennammājī suppressed a civil war which broke out soon after her husband's death. She offered a fierce resistance to the Mysore troops and skillfully sent back the Bijāpur force. She also defeated several petty chieftains and took away their forts.

Along the Malabār coast, on the southern frontier of the Keḷadi kingdom, she made arrangements for vigilence guarding against the encroachment of the Nairs. It seems that there were clashes with the Portuguese, as a result of supplying pepper and rice to the Arab traders. Dr. B.S. Shastri says that it ended in a treaty.

Cennammājī is remembered in the history of South India for her undaunted fight against the Mughal forces of Aurangzēb. She gave shelter to Raḷāram, son of Śivāji, who had escaped from the clutches of Aurangzēb and helped him to reach his territory in the south. As a result, she had to face the forces of Aurangzēb. This incident had a profound impact on the destiny of India. She was praised by the Marāṭhā historian T.S. Shejwalkar as 'a noble service
rendered on a most critical occasion in the life of the Marāṭhā State'.

Cennammāji also gave shelter to Peddūr Liṅgappa when the Nawāb of Gōlkonda was angry with him. She re-conquered Tavanidhi, Honnāli, Mirājān, Kalyāṇapur, Kārkala, Mallikārjunagiri and Vasudhāra forts, with the help of the Commander in-chief, Kasaragōdu Thimmaṇa Nayaka. She conquered the forts of Sirsi and Sōde. She also conquered Kaṇḍūr, Bāṇavara, Hassan and Bēlur forts, which belonged to the Woḍeyars of Mysore.

Cennammāji built an agrahāra, 'Sōmaśekharapura' in memory of her husband. She occupied a fort near Basavāpaṭṭana and strengthened it, gave a new name, 'Cennagiri fort'. She went on a pilgrimage to Subrahmaṇya. She sent an army under 'Sabbanisu Kōlivāḍada Bommarasayya', to defeat the commander of Mysore forces which ended in a grand victory to Keḻadi forces. She completed the śikhara of Vīrabhadra temple at Keḻadi and erected a 'Dvajastambha' in front of its Bhōgamantapa.

Cennammāji endowed liberally to the temples at Bidanūr, Keḻadi and Kollūr. She extended her patronage to Srīṅgeri maṭha and greatly honoured its pontiff,
Narasimha Bharati. She also built mathas for the Jangamas.

Cennammāji is, thus, one of the great personalities of South India, who had valour and tactfulness in facing the critical situations and at the same time, was pious and generous towards her subjects.

As Cennammāji had no issues, she adopted a boy, named Basappa, with the consent of the council of ministers and other officials. She renamed him as 'Basava Bhūpala' in 1673 and gave him proper education.

Cennammāji died in 1698, according to the K.N.V.

2.3.6 Basavappa Nayaka I (1697-1714): Basavappa Nayaka, the adopted son and successor of Cennammāji, ascended the throne at Bidanūr in 1697. He captured a fort called Navilegada in the Arabian sea and renamed it as 'Basavarāja durga' (near Honnāvar). He also captured Hoḷehonnūr fort from the Muslims. Basavappa Nayaka captured Candragiri fort from the Malayalis. He recaptured the fort of Vasudhāre and strengthened it. Basavappa Nayaka regained Ānavaṭṭi,
Mahādevapura, Jaḍehonnāḷī and Midije forts. He defeated the Nawāb of Savaṇūr. During Basavappa Nayaka's period, the extent of the Keḻadi kingdom was upto the Arabian Sea in the West, Marāṭhā's territory in the north, Cikkanāyakanahāḷī in the east and upto the Candragiri fort in the south.

During Basavappa Nayaka's period also the commercial contacts with the Portuguese were strained. They wanted to capture the Mangalore fort. Forts of Kundāpur, Honnavar, Kalyāṇapur and Kumṭa were under Basavappa Nayaka. Dr. B.S. Shastri says that these Portuguese sources mention that Kalyāṇapura fort had 7 bastions which was besieged and destroyed by the Portuguese along with Kumṭa and Mirjān forts.

Basavappa Nayaka continued the traditional patronage to the Śrīṅgeri matha and greatly honoured Saccidananda Bhārati. He also granted lands liberally to the temples and mathas.

Basavappa Nayaka, himself a great scholar, composed Śivatattvavatnākara, a Sanskrit encyclopaedia. This work deals with almost all the branches of knowledge. Its greatness lies in the fact that it deals with the political history of the Keḻadi kingdom from
the time of Cauḍappa Nayaka upto his own times. Basavappa Nayaka had also written Subhāṣita Suradrūma and Sūkta Sudhakara.

Basavappa Nayaka completed the stone work of Vīrabhadra temple at Keḷadi. He also built a stone bridge across the river in Bidanūr. (This bridge is now submerged in the back waters of river Śarāvati).

2.3.7 Somasekhara Nayaka II (1515-1740):

Somasekhara Nayaka II, elder son and successor of Basavappa Nayaka ascended the throne at Bidanūr in the year 1715.

Somasekhara Nayaka II was always engaged in wars against the rulers of Malabār, the Dutch and the English. The Portuguese tried to be friendly with him for commercial purposes.

The Nawāb of Savaṇūr became a friend of Somasekhara Nayaka, when he defeated an enemy of Savaṇūr Nawāb. In 1735 there was an invasion by the Marāṭhā chief Raṇōji Ghōrpaḍe, but he was defeated and driven back by the Keḷadi rulers. Somasekhara Nayaka protected the pāḷeyagār of Tarikere, Paṭṭābhirāmappa, from a commander, Deragakulikhan. He also defeated the Nāyimārs of Kāsaragōḍ. As per the request of the
Mughal emperor at Delhi, he captured Siriya (Tumkur District) and appointed Shayirkhan.

Sōmaśekhara Nayaka went on a pilgrimage to Kollūr, Keḷadi, Tīrtharājapura, Śṛṅgēri, Subrahmaṇya, Basrūr, Śaṅkaranārāyaṇa, Kōṭēśvara, Gōkaṛṇa and other places, and endowed grants for the worship of these deities.113

Sōmaśekhara Nayaka built an agrahāra in the western parts of Bidanūr and named it as Candraśekharapur. He built a palace along with gardens and tanks. He added new buildings to the Bidanūr palace. He renovated the rāngamanṭapā of Nīlakanṭēśvara Śwāmi temple at Bidanūr and decorated its sikhara with gold leaves. Sōmaśekhara Nayaka also renovated the palace at Bhuvanagiri durga with stone pillars.114

Sōmaśekhara Nayaka is the last notable king of the Keḷadi dynasty. He could hold the Keḷadi kingdom together against the foreign powers and subdue successfully the revolts of petty chieftains in his kingdom.115

2.3.8 Basavappa Nayaka II (1739-1754):

Basavappa Nayaka II, the nephew of Sōmaśekhara Nayaka, succeeded him in 1739.
During his period, there were attacks from the Marāṭhās, particularly from Tulaji Áŋgre. Basavaṃpa Nāyaka could not withstand these attacks.

By this time, a new commercial power, the French, also entered the trade field. The Portuguese were eager to get more profit than others. So, they maintained friendly relations with Basavappa Nāyaka.

Basavappa Nāyaka won a great victory over the Nāyaka of Citradurga, at Māyakoḍa, in 1748. Madakari Nāyaka, the pāḷēyagār of Citradurga was defeated in the battle field. He recaptured the Candragiri fort from the Nāyimārs. He had to pay 12 lakhs varahās (to avoid the loot) to Madhōji Purandhara of Pune, when the Marāṭhā chief beseiged the kingdom.

Basavappa Nāyaka constructed several jaṅgama mathas and honoured the Jaṅgamas. He contributed an agrahāra, Bhadrājapura to Tōṅṭadārya Siddhapuruṣa. Basavappa Nāyaka visited the religious centres such as Kollūr, Kōṭēśvara, Basrūr, Śankarānārāyaṇa, Kamalaśile and Keḻadi.

Basavappa Nāyaka II is said to have constructed many forts along the coast - Dariyābad fort near Malpe, Manōhargad near Kāpu, Tōṅse fort near
Kalyāṇapur, Beṇnegere fort near Kundāpur and Śiva-
rājendragiri fort at Mangalore.118

Basavappa Nayaka had no issue. He adopted a
boy named Cennappa and renamed him as 'Cennabasava
Nayaka'.

2.3.9 Cenna Basavappa Nayaka (1754-1757) :

Cenna Basavappa Nayaka, the adopted son and
successor of Basavappa Nayaka II ascended the throne
in 1754.

During the short tenure of this ruler, the
Portuguese maintained friendship. Eventhough they
did not help him much,119 with great difficulty he
drove back Madhōji Purandhara of the Maṭrāṭhas. He
helped Kṛṣṇappa Nayaka of Bēlūr in getting his terri-
itories back, from the king of Coorg, Virarāja.120
Cenna Basavappa Nayaka died a premature death.

2.3.10 Sōmaśekhara Nayaka III and Virammāji
(1758-1763) :

Sōmaśekhara Nayaka III was the second adopted
son of Virammāji, the wife of Basavappa Nayaka II.
As Cenna Basavappa Nayaka died a premature death,
Virammāji decided to adopt another boy from among the relatives. The nobles and the ministers consented upon this issue.

He ascended the throne in 1758. Virammāji became the regent.

Virammāji continued the religious policy of respecting the Śrīnerī matha. She invited the Pontiff Abhinava Saccidananda Bharatiśwāmi to Bidanūr, and performed the 'Bhikṣa' (giving alms) to the yatindra. Virammāji also liberally granted lands and cleared the loans of the Matha. She gave a Sphatikalinga and Gopālakṛṣṇamūrti with ornaments.121

The K.N.V., says that Virammāji drove back the Marāṭhas and re-captured the fort of Mirjān.122

Bidanūr was 'the richest city of the East' according to Wilks. Jacobus Canter Witcher says that 'Bidanūr was the grannery of the whole of South India'.

Haider Ali, the upcoming Commander of Mysore, wanted to conquer it. The pāleyagar of Citradurga, Madakari Nayaka had his own interest in the Keḷādi kingdom. He announced that Cenna Basavappa Nayaka had
not died yet and was with him and he should be continued
as the king of Keładi.

In 1765, Haider Ali took the help of one
'Linggaṇṇa' who was in prison at Kumṣi, and learnt the
secret routes to the Bidanūr fort. Haider Ali came
directly upto Bidanūr and besieged it. Vīrāmmājī
could get help from the Nawāb of Savapūr, Abdul Halim
Khan. But she was defeated and imprisoned. Vīrāmmājī
and Sōmaśekhara Nāyaka III were imprisoned at Madhu-
grī fort.¹²³

The Marāṭhā sources speak of the fact that
these royal prisoners were freed in 1767 when they
conquered the Madhugirī fort under the leadership of
Mādhavarāya. On their way to Pune, Vīrāmmājī died.
Sōmaśekhara Nāyaka settled at Naragunda of Dharwad
District.

Kirmani, who was a chronicler at Tippu Sultan's
Court, has praised Vīrāmmājī for her valour and
patriotism.

Haider Ali renamed Bidanūr as 'Haider nagara'
and continued the mint at Nagara. The coins known as
'Haidari Varahas' came into vogue.

Thus ended a significant chapter in the history
of Karnataka. The Keladi rulers contributed considerably to the development of art and architecture, literature and religion, amidst their continuous wars with the pāleyagars, the Bijāpur rulers, the Marāthās, the Naymārs, the Wođeyars and the Portuguese. The role of this feudatory family in the absence of a strong Hindu empire during the disturbed political conditions of South India is noteworthy. Apart from the increasing influence of Sultāns of Bijāpur, they had to withstand and check the growing power of the European traders and missionaries. Thus, the Keladi kings played their part successfully in safeguarding native Hindu Dharma.

Notes and References

1 M.A.R., Mysore, 1930, No. 65, p. 218.
5 Aigal, Ganapathi Rao, M., Daksīna Kannada Jilleya Pracīna Ithiḥāsa, Mangalore, 1922, p. 188.
7 Ibid., loc. cit.
8 M.A.R., Mysore, 1930, No. 65, p. 66.
9 M.A.R., Mysore, 1928,
11 Ibid., loc. cit.
12 Ibid., loc. cit.
13 Ibid., p. 27.
19 Ibid., p. 37.
21 Shastri, Shama, R., op. cit., p. 38.
24 Ibid., op. cit., p. 38.
| 28 | S.I.I., IX, part II, Madras, 1941, Nos. 555, 578. |
| 29 | A.R.S.I.E., Madras, 1928-29, No. 487. |
| 32 | E.C., VIII, part II, Bangalore, 1904, Sa. 44. |
| 33 | Q.J.M.S., XLV, Bangalore, 1904, pp. 92-98. |
| 35 | M.A.R., Mysore, 1923, No. 108. |
| 45 | E.C., VIII, part II, Bangalore, 1904, p. 59. |
47  Ibid., p. 60.
48  Ibid., p. 60.
49  E.C., VIII, part II, Bangalore, 1904, Sb. 55.
50  Ibid., Sb. 475.
51  Ibid., Tl. 204.
52  Ibid., Tl. 5.
54  E.C., VIII, part II, Bangalore, 1904, Sa. 123.
57  Shastri, Shama, R. (Ed.), *op. cit.*, pp. 63-76.
58  Ibid., p. 13.
59  Ibid., p. 10.
62  E.C., VI, Bangalore, 1901, Sg. 5.
Sundara, A., *op. cit.*, p. 16.


Shastri, Shama, R. (Ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 82.

E.C., VIII, part II, Bangalore, 1904, Tl. 51; Tl. 58; Sb. 451; Sa. 151.


*Q.J.M.S.*, XXII, Bangalore, p. 79.


E.C., VII, Bangalore, 1902, Sh. 2.


E.C., VI, Bangalore, 1901, Sg. 11.

*Q.J.M.S.*, XII, Bangalore, p. 48.


86 Ibid., p. 106.
87 Ibid., p. 107.
88 Ibid., p. 109.
89 I am thankful to Dr. K.G. Vasantha Madhava, who drew my attention to the unpublished stone inscription at Gangolli.
91 Ibid., pp. 110-111.
96 Ibid., p. 115.
98 Shastri, B.S., op. cit., pp. 128-137.
99 Q.J.M.S., XXII, Bangalore, p. 83.
100 Saletore, Kannada Nadine Charitre, I, Bangalore, 1953, p. 72.
101 Y.S.G.V., Dharwad, 1936, p. 133.
103 Ibid., pp. 116-118.
104 Ibid., p. 145.
105 Ibid., p. 147.
108 Ibid., p. 148.
109 Ibid., p. 151-152.
112 E.C., VIII, part II, Bangalore, 1904, Tl. 196, Tl. 136, etc.
114 Ibid., p. 168.
115 Chitnis, K.N., op. cit., p. 22.
121 Ibid., pp. 191-192.
122 Ibid., p. 192.
123 M.A.R., Mysore, 1930, p. 87.