
CHAPTER ONE: BRIEF SURVEY OF YADAVA'S POLITICAL HISTORY

The early history of the Yadavas is shrouded in some obscurity. It seems that the Yadavas were first known as Seunas¹ and their dominion was called Seunadesa. The Sangamner copper plate of Yadava Billama II,² and Hemadri also testifies that the Seunadesa was known after the name of Seunachandra³ who was the son of Dridhapahara.

Seunadesa was the name given to the region extending from Nasik to Devagiri. In the introduction to Hemadri's Vratakhanda Devagiri was situated in Seunadesa and that the latter was located on the borders of Dandakaranya.⁴

The Kalegaon inscription of Yadava Mahadeva,⁵ shows that the country founded by Dridhapahara was extended by Seunachandra on both the banks of Godavari so as to include the modern districts of Aurangabad and east and west Khandesh together with portions of Ahmednagar and Nasik.

As the records of dynasty traced its descent from the Puranic hero Yadu its rulers were better known as Yadavas although the word Seuna was not totally forgotten. The Muslim historians knew them as Yadavas and Prataparudriya of Vidyanatha refers to them as Yadava kings of Seuna country.⁶

Origin of the Yadava Family

The early history of the Yadava dynasty is found in the epigraphic records of its rulers as well as in the introduction

to the Hemadris Vratakhanda. Most of the inscriptions of the Yadava rulers refer that the family called Yadava originated from the holy Vishnu's lineage.⁷

The Paithan grant of Ramachandra tracing the descent of the family states the following:

From the lotus that grew from the navel of Vishnu, there was produced Viruchi. From him was born Atri, and from him, Chandra or moon. In the lineage of the moon, there was Pururava, who married Uravasi. From him was born Yayati, and from him Yadu, through whom the race attained pre-eminence in the world.⁸

In the introduction to Hemadri's Vratakhanda,⁹ many predecessors of Dridhaprahara have been introduced most of whom are undoubtedly mythical. However, despite such an overcrowding of legendary ancestors of Subahu, it is not difficult to determine, as R.G. Bhandarkar has remarked, where the legend ends there history begins.

Dnyaneshwara at the end of his Marathi commentary on the Bhagavatgita also describes Yadava Ramachandra as king of the lunar race.¹⁰

In order to justify their descent from Vishnu, the Yadavas carved Garuda image in gold on their imperial banner.¹¹ Garuda also appears on the seals of their land grants, some times alone,¹² and sometimes in association with the figure of

Hanuman.¹³ Another Biruda which the Yadavas took with pride was Dvaravati-Puravar Adhisvara,¹⁴ since Dvaravati was the legendary capital of Krishna who was an incarnation of god Vishnu born in the same lineage, the Yadava rulers might have prided themselves upon such a hereditary titles.

V.K. Rajvade in his preface to the Radha-Madhava-Vilaschampu has remarked that the Yadava rulers like other Kshatriya rulers, came from the north and subjugated the Marathas of the Deccan.¹⁵ But this view was controverted by C.V. Vaidya,¹⁶ and suggested that Yadavas were not northern Kshatriyas but one of the oldest Maratha Kshatriya families of Maharashtra and the modern representatives of these Maratha families such as Jadhavs, Chalkes, Solankis, Kadams and Bhaleraos still maintain the tradition of their lunar or solar origin.

According to ancient traditional account, the Yadavas during the ancient times were a powerful dynasty of the north. Later they migrated to south-western region as far as Dvarka on the sea. After the death of Krishna some of the Yadava families migrated to the Deccan.¹⁷ Hemadri's Vratakhanda alludes to the Yadavas' association with Mathura and Dvaraka before their immigration to the Deccan. It is stated therein that Subahu who belonged to the Yadava race was universal sovereign. He had four sons among whom he divided the whole Kingdom. The second son Dridhaprahara became King in the South.¹⁸

The Bassein copper plate of 1069 A.D. records that Dridhaprahara arrived from the town of Dvaravati, and established himself at Chandradityapura,¹⁹ which has been identified with Chandor in Nasik District.

Political History

Dridhaprahara was the first historical person of the Yadava family.²⁰ He came from Dvaravati to south and established at Chandradityapura.²¹ Chandradityapura of the epigraphic records has been identified with the modern Chandor forty miles north-east of Nasik.²² When Dridhaprahara came to the Deccan the political condition of Deccan was worse. The contemporary Rashtrakuta monarch Amoghavarsha-I was a weak ruler. Soon after his accession he was confronted with a serious rebellion led by the Eastern Chalukya Vijayaditya-II of Vengi. Had it not been for the support of his Gujarat cousin Karka, the Rashtrakuta dominion would have been seriously undermined by its enemies. Besides, there were enough troubles in Gangawadi, Gujarat and Malwa for the young Amoghavarsha-I to have an easy time. Suffice it to say that throughout his reign, his hands were fully tied down in quelling internal revolts. This might have resulted in loosening of the Rashtrakuta hold on the outlying areas.

Further, it might have encouraged the predatory tendencies of the Vindhyan tribes from whose raids the people of Nasik and

Khandesh may have suffered. Dridhaprahara, being young and valourous, might have combated successfully against these raiders as a result of which the people of the region recognised him as their leader. Thus, the founder of the Yadava family secured a foothold in Nasik district. The Bassein grant describes Dridhaprahara as powerful in breaking the heads of foot-soldiers and elephants of his enemies.²³

Seunachandra-I: Dridhaprahara was succeeded by his son Seunachandra-I. The territory which he ruled was given his own name as Seunadesa. The region of Seunadesa extended from Nasik to Devagiri as Hemadri tells that Devagiri was situated in Seunadesa and that the latter bordered on the confines of Dandakaranya.²⁵ During his time he helped the Rashtrakutas in their wars with the Gurjara-Pratiharas of Kanauj and thus secured a feudatory status for his family. About his personal qualities the Bassein grant tells us that "the best among men" and obtained a good name in his country and among his infantry.²⁶

Seunachandra-I was succeeded by his son Dhadiyappa. Dhadiyappa's political career is not much known. He was succeeded by his son Bhillama-I mentioned in records as a feudatory of the Rashtrakutas. Bhillama was succeeded by Shriraja. In respect of this King also much is not known.

Vaddiga: Shriraja was succeeded by Vaddiga. The Sangamner grant refers to two things of Vaddiga, firstly he was a follower or

feudatory,²⁷ of the illustrious king Krishna-III of the Rashtrakuta and secondly he married the lady Vaddiyava, a daughter of the great prince (Mahanripa) the illustrious Dhorappa.²⁸ This Dhorappa was a younger brother of the Rashtrakuta king Khottiga.

Vaddiga helped Krishna-III in his wars against the Paramaras of Malawa. It is quite possible that after this war Krishna-III increased the jagir of Vaddiga, who now was not merely his feudatory but was also his nephew-in-law. This matrimonial alliance must have helped the early Yadavas to raise status as well as their ambition.

Dhadiyasa: According to Hemardi, Vaddiga was succeeded by his son Dhadiyama.²⁹ Dhadiyasa continued to render allegiance to the Rashtrakuta overlords. He was assisted by Rashtrakuta Khottiga in the latter's fight against Paramara Siyaka at the battle of Kalighatta,³⁰ on the banks of Narmada. Dhadiyasa seems to have ruled for a short time.

Bhillama-III: Dhadiyasa was succeeded by Bhillama-II. During the reign of Bhillama-II the Rashtrakutas were too weak. The Rashtrakuta king Karkka-II faced many disturbances in his dominion. The result was that within eighteen months of Karkka's accession, the great Rashtrakuta empire fell like a house of cards. The hero of this occasion was the later Chalukya King Taila-II. Bhillama transferred his loyalty to the later Chalukyas of Kalyana. All the previous ties, matrimonial or political, with

the Rashtrakutas were set aside and new pattern of political behaviour was evolved.

The Sangamner grant,³¹ which was issued by Bhillama-II refers that Taila-II had conferred the administration of Ahmednagar district upon Bhillama who was an enthusiastic feudatory, as a reward for his services.

Bhillama-II was the first Yadava ruler who describes himself as Dvaravatipuravaradhisvara, supreme lord of Dvaravati, the best of cities. The capital where Bhillama was ruling, was, however, Sindinagara which is the same as Sinner in Nasik district. Bhillama-II succeeded by Vesugi. He continued to be loyal to the Chalukya overlordship and we do not know much about his political career.

Bhillama-III: Vesugi was followed by Bhillama-III. Bhillama's marriage with Jayasimha's daughter, however, must have raised the status of the Yadava family. The Bassein grant of the Seunachandra-II tends to suggest that Bhillama-III fought several battles.³² It is fair to assume that he participated in his father-in-law's campaigns against Paramara Bhoja and played a prominent role in those wars. It is probably for this reason that the Bassein grant calls him a Sangrama-Rama. He was the second prince of his family who assumed this title, the first being Bhillama-II. As Saka 948 is the only known date of Bhillama-III and as he was contemporary of Chalukya Jayasimha-II,

his reign may be fixed between 1020 A.D. and 1045 A.D.

Seunachandra-II: Seunachandra was a successor of Bhillama-III.

During the reign of Seunachandra-II the Chalukya hegemony over the Deccan was under heavy stress and strain. The long drawn war between the Chalukyas and Cholas was the reason for this loosening of Chalukyan hold over the Deccan. The battle of Koppan³³ fought in 1054 A.D. was a great military defeat and a political disaster for the Chalukyas. This must have resulted in the loss of their prestige among their feudatories.

The fratricidal war between Somesvara-II and Vikramaditya-VI, divided their vassals. Vikramaditya-VI won over quite a few vassals to his side prominent among whom were the Kadambas, the Pandyas, the Hoysalas and the Yadavas. Although Someshvara-II continued to maintain his position as emperor until 1075 A.D. this overt alliance with Vikramaditya-VI must not have gone unrewarded; for Seunachandra-II seems to have added some territory to his principality.

The Gadaga inscription³⁴ refers that in Seunachandra's time Yadava principality well entrenched in the Nasik region, extended its boundary towards Khandesh in the north and Ahmednagar in the South. It is also probable that Vikramaditya-VI entrusted to his faithful feudatory the administration of the territory extending upto the Narmada. Thus, Seunachandra-II was laying down the solid foundation for Bhillama-V to build up his

imperial edifice. Seunachandra's reign may be placed between 1050 and 1080 A.D.

Seunachandra-II was succeeded by his son Airmadeva.³⁵ He co-operated with his father in his campaigns against Somesvara-II of Cholas. He also continued to be a Mahamandalesvara under Chalukya Vikramaditya-VI, like his father. His rule may be placed between 1080 and 1105 A.D.

Airmadeva was succeeded by his younger brother Simharaja,³⁶ whose full name was Simhana.³⁷ Simhana fought on behalf of his feudal lord against Kadamba of Goa, Pandya ruler of Uchchangi and Gurjara King. His period may be fixed from 1105 A.D. to 1120 A.D. He was succeeded by Seunachandra-III. The Seunachandra's records do not contain any account of military campaigns. He was feudatory of Chalukya Jagadekamalla-II and his reign may be fixed between 1120 A.D. and 1145 A.D.

Seunachandra-III was followed by Mallugi. He helped his feudal lord Tailla-III against whom many feudatories were eager to work. But their rebellions were put down firmly by Tilla-III with the assistance of Yadava Mallugi. Mallugi ruled from 1145 A.D. to 1165 A.D. and the next 20 years witnessed the rise and fall of Mallugi's successors.

Bhillama-V as an Independent Ruler

Bhillama assumed power in 1185 A.D. He was first Yadava

independent ruler, who overthrew his Chalukya overlordship and established Yadava empire. Bhillama-V was first imperial ruler of the Yadava dynasty to launch upon a campaign of military conquest.

The first few years of his career helped him in securing a fairly large territory in northern Konkan and central Maharashtra. Altekar³⁸ has suggested that it was only after his initial conquests in Konkana and Maharashtra that Bhillama-V decided to intervene in the affairs of Sinnar and forcibly assumed control of the Yadava Kingdom.

In northern expedition Bhillama-V invaded Gujarat and Malawa and advanced as far as Rajaputana. He met the Chahamana ruler of Naddula, the modern Nadol in the former Jodhpur state and claimed that he defeated the southern king Bhillama-V.³⁹ Perhaps it was due to the strong opposition from the Chahamana forces of Naddula, he was obliged to return home.

The crowning success of Bhillama-V was his victory over Chalukya Somesvara-IV and his occupation of the Chalukya capital at Kalyana. Bhillama entered into the Hoyasala Kingdom, and Ballala-II fought against Bhillama in the battle of Soratur. This battle must have been fought after 23rd June 1191 A.D. on which date Bhillama issued his Gadag record and 21st November 1192 A.D. is the date of Ballala's Gadag record.⁴⁰ Soratur is twelve miles south of Gadag in Dharwad district.

Harihara inscription⁴¹ claims that the army of the Yadavas consisted of 2,00,000 men with 12,000 cavalry, was pursued by Balala from Soratur to the bank of Krishnaveni and was destroyed there. After the pursuit of the Yadava army Balala halted, reformed his forces and reduced all the forts between Soratur, Eramparge, Kurugod, Gutti, Bellittage, Rattapalli and Hangal. From this itinerary of the Hoyasala king, it will appear that these strongholds must have made the power of the Hoyasala King secure over the entire southern part of the Chalukya Kingdom. In this battle Bhillama was badly defeated. The Yadavas were compelled to retreat to the northern banks of the Malaprabha and the Krishna rivers which formed the boundaries between the two contending powers for nearly twenty years.

After the occupation of Kalyana in 1187 he shifted his capital from Devagiri to Tenevalage,⁴² though Devagiri was the capital of later Yadavas.

Bhillama-V did not rule long, but the Kingdom which he handed down to his successors was fairly large. This was made possible by his able and trusted generals, his skillful expeditions abroad and because of his personal ability. He has been rightly called the founder of the Yadava empire.

Jaitugi: Bhillama-V was succeeded by his son Jaitugi-I, also known as Jaitrapala.⁴³ Altekar suggested that Jaitugi launched a sudden hurricane attack against the Kakatiyas. Whoever may have been the

aggressor, it is certain that the Kakatiya Rudra suffered a severe defeat at the hands of Jaitugi, and ultimately lost his life in the encounter. The earliest epigraphic reference to this fight between the Kakatiyas and the Yadava is found in the Patan inscription of Yadava Simhana-II, which states rather vaguely that the illustrious Jaitrapaladeva put an end to the pleasures of the beloved ones of the distressed ladies of Andhra.⁴⁴ The Kalegaon plates of Yadava Mahadeva state a little more clearly that Jaitugi killed the king of Tri-Kalinga.⁴⁵ It is, however, in Hemadri's Vratakhanda where we find a graphic description of how the Kakatiya king met his unfortunate doom in the dreadful encounter. Jaitugi, we are told, assumed the sacrificial vow on the holy ground of the battlefield and, throwing a great many kings into the fire of his prowess by means of the ladles of his weapons, performed a human sacrifice by immolating a victim in the shape of fierce Rudra, the lord of Tailangas, and vanquished the three worlds.⁴⁶ By performing metamorphically such a human sacrifice, Jaitugi considered himself a master of all the territories. This may be a hyperbolic fantasy⁴⁷ of the court poet. Nevertheless, even if Jaitugi did not become the master of the three worlds, he was certainly the master of Kakatiya affairs.

Jaitugi's Managoli inscription states that he conquered the Gurjaras, the Pandyas, the Cholas and the countries of Lata and

Gauda. In the same record one of his officers, Dandanatha Sahadeva, is credited with victory over the forces of Malawa, Kalinga, Panchala, Turushka and Nepala. There is no doubt that most of these claims are an empty boast. However, Jaitugi's warfare in Gujarat and Malawa was far from happy. The Muslim invasion of Gujarat in 1197 A.D. and temporary occupation of Anhilwad by Muslim invaders seriously undermined the Chalukya power. Paramara Subhatavarman of Malwa chose this moment of Chalukya weakness for his invasion over Lata and Gujarat. The joint testimony of the Gujarat chronicles points out that Subhatavarman sacked Lata and incorporated it into his dominion. The Lata chief Simha, who was a feudatory of the Chalukyas of Gujarat, seems to have transferred his allegiance to the Paramaras.⁴⁸ Thereafter Subhatavarman directed his attention towards Anhilwad, the capital city of the Chalukyas. According to the Prabandha-chintamani, while Bhima-II was reigning, the King of Malawa, named Sohada, advanced to the border of Gujarat with the intention of devastating that country, but the ministers of Bhimadeva went to meet him and by uttering a couplet, succeeded in turning him back.⁴⁹ The invasion of Paramara Subhatavarman over Lata and Gujarat might have prompted Yadava Jaitugi too, to jump into the fray. Consequently, he invaded Malwa when Subhatavarman was busy in his south-western campaign. The raid over Malwa was carried on by his general, Sahadeva, who seems to have scored a victory over the Paramara forces. It is likely that in the course of his expedition against Malwa, he

might have also transgressed the frontiers of Lata.

Singhana-II

Jaitugi was succeeded by his son Singhana-II. He was a veritable Simha of the Yadava dynasty and, like it, had the inexhaustible strength which never tired his zeal in taking out military expeditions time and again. To quote the instance, he invaded Gujarat not less than four times, as if Gujarat was his favourite military sport. The tottering kingdom of Bhima-II was no match to his powerful thrusts and the entire Chalukya kingdom was held to ransom by this powerful ruler of Devagiri. If Gujarat could not be annexed by Singhana, despite his repeated attempts, it was because its ministers resorted to diplomacy and skill rather than relying on their military strength. In the annals of the Yadava dynasty, the period of Singhana would go down as the most eventful one during which the dynasty reached the zenith of its power. At last the dream of Bhillama-V was released and Singhana the great was the master of all he surveyed.

Singhana owed much of his greatness to his father Jaitugi-I. Of the two powerful adversaries of the Yadavas of Devagiri, viz., the Kakatiyas of Warangal and Hoysalas of Dorasamudra, the former were beaten hollow and Ganapatideva of Kakatiyas was made feudatory and he offered his allegiance to the Yadava ruler. The Hoyasala continued to give some anxious

movements to the Yadavas. But Jaitugi carefully avoided any conflict with his southern adversary, whom he held at bay. Jaitugi, it is true, did not make any extension of the territory which he had inherited from Bhillama-V, but these achievements were enough to enable the Yadava power take deep root in the Deccan soil. With the Yadava power firm at Devagiri Singhana did what other sovereigns in similar circumstances are tempted to do.

Singhana with the help of his trusted and efficient generals, was able to build up a huge empire. If the find-spots of his inscriptions convey any idea of the extent of his empire, it will be seen that Konkan, Lata, Maharashtra, Vidarbha, Mysore and Andhra Pradesh formed integral parts of his empire. Eventually, he established his sway over the whole of the territory ruled over by the later Chalukyas of Kalyani and thus established himself as a supreme overlord of the entire Deccan. Describing the imperial authority of Singhana, a record claims that he enforced obedience to his commands upon the kings of Malava, Chera, Chola and Magadha, the Gurjaras and the Pandeyas the people of Lata and Nepala, the Turushkas, the Barbarigas, the Keralas and the Pallavas, the rulers of Anga, Vengi, Panchala, Kalinga and Sindh and thus reigned over entire India.⁵⁰ Although the scribe here has given full vent to his poetic imagination and hyperbolism, judged by the achievements of Singhana, the Yadava record cannot be lightly dismissed as a mere myth. In another record Singhana has been described as the full moon in nourishing the ocean of

the nectar of joy; who acts like the sun in dispelling the thick darkness of niggardliness; and who rivals the ocean of milk in having Hari established in his heart.

The Yadava empire reached the zenith of its power during Singhana's reign. The Hoyasalas and the Kakatiyas, the Chalukyas and the Paramaras had all been subdued. So long as Singhana was at the helm of the affairs at Devagiri, they dared not challenge his supremacy in the Deccan. The Chalukyas had to relinquish Lata and the Hoyasalas surrendered northern districts of their kingdom as far as Shimoga. In the north, the Narmada marked the boundary of his empire. We shall not be very much wide of the mark if we conclude that all the territories to the south of the line connecting Baroach and Nagpur and to the north of the line connecting Girsappa with Karnool were included in the Yadava empire. It is true that a large part of this extensive territory was actually governed by the feudatories of Singhana, but they were all loyal to him. Those who tried to show signs of breaking away, were promptly dealt with and their territories as in the case of Silaharas of Kolhapur and Rattas of Saundatti were incorporated in the Yadava empire.*

Krishna: Krishna's reign can be described as uneventful, when compared with that of his predecessor Singhana, though he appears

* O.P. Verma - The Yadavas and their times, p. 110.

to have fought many battles with the neighbouring kings. The results of such battles were not of much advantage to him, so far as territorial gains were concerned.

Inscriptions ascribe to Krishna, apparently in a conventional way, victory over the permaras and the Gurjaras. Hemadri tells us that he defeated Visaladeva.⁵¹ But there is no other evidence to corroborate this statement.

Some inscriptions credit Krishna with minor conquests such as those over the abhiras and the kings of Konkana and Kosala. The Uddhava inscription of 1255 A.D. calls him Abhira-Kula-dahana-davanala⁵² (the fierce fire to the forest of the Abhira family). The Abhira chief who came in conflict with Krishna seems to be Kampala mentioned in the Purushottampuri plates.⁵³

Krishna is also credited with the conquest over Gopakalaka,⁵⁴ who according to Mirashi, was also an Abhira king.⁵⁵ Khare, on the other hand, suggests that Gopaka is modern Goa, and that Gopakapalaka was the Goa Kadamba king Jaykesi-III.⁵⁶ But Kadamba Jayakesi who ruled between 1187-88 and 1261 A.D.⁵⁷ was too early to be a contemporary of Krishna. Jayakesi mentioned in this verse is probably Kesiraja-II, belonging to the family of the Silaharas of northern Konkana. His last known date is 1238 A.D.,⁵⁸ but he might have lived even later. Reference in inscriptions Krishna's conquest of Konkana, probably refer

to the conquest of this Silahara chief only.

The Purushottampuri plates mention the king of Kosala as one of the adversaries of Krishna. This king probably belonged to the Kalachuri branch of Ratnapuri as suggested by Mirashi.⁵⁹ Some inscriptions state that Krishna defeated the Chola king also. But this is improbable. The Chola King Rajendra-III was busy fighting at this time with the Pandyas and he could not have directly come into conflict with the Yadava king.

Mahadeva: Hemadri, who was a minister of Mahadeva states that through fear of Mahadeva, the Malava king placed a child on the throne, himself abdicating it, since he knew that Mahadeva would not harm a child, a woman or one who surrendered to him.⁶⁰ This statement which purports to say that the Paramara contemporary of Mahadeva was an infant, cannot be verified by any other source. But that there was a clash between the two rulers, is indicated by the Mandhata plates of Jaysimha. Jayavarma defeated a Dakshinatya or the southern king to the south of Vindhya. This king could be none else than Yadava Mahadeva.

Mahadeva's Kalegaon plates and the Paithan plates of Ramachandra,⁶¹ state that he defeated a Visala. This Visala can be identified with the Vaghela chief Visaladeva who was then on the Gurjara throne. Hemadri observes that Mahadeva was like a fierce wind expelling the multitude of cotton in the form of the Tilinga king,⁶² and adds that he snatched away from the battle

field, elephants and the honour of Panchamahasabda, but spared the king Rudrama since he refrained from killing women.⁶³ From this statement and another that the Andhras placed a woman on the throne since Mahadeva would not kill women,⁶⁴ it becomes clear that he invaded the Kakatiya country, apparently with a design to extend his own territory. The Yadava records in the Chitradurga district, indicates that their influence, during the reign of Mahadeva, had spread deep into the Hoyasala territory. Along with the Silahara territories of south Konkan and Kolhapur, the northern Konkan also became a part of the Yadava kingdom.

Successors of Mahadeva did not extend the empire and also failed to defend their empire. Harapaladeva the last of the Yadava line fell a martyr in defence of his kingdom. Thus the dynasty which was born in the last quarter of the ninth century A.D. was completely wiped out in the first quarter of the fourteenth century A.D. after nearly five hundred years of political existence.

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