
CHAPTER THREE: YADAVA'S CENTRAL ADMINISTRATION

Hereditary monarchy was the form of government. The king occupied the most important position in the government, as its head. Generally the eldest son of the king used to succeed to the throne. The Yadavas ruled with the help of their ministers and feudatories. There was a time when the Yadavas were themselves the feudatories of other powers. Thus Bhillamaraja-II was general of feudatory of Ranarangabhima¹ and he was really no other than the western Chalukya Tailapa-II and Bhillamaraja-III had obtained a Mahasamanta or Great feudatory also Mahasabda the supreme lord of the city of Dvaravati from his contemporary Chalukya feudal lord Jaysimha Jagadekamalla.² Airamadeva was a Mahamandalesvara of Chalukya Vikramaditya-VI and Seunachandra-III has been described as the grandfather of Samantas (feudatory chiefs) and the Jamara of Samantas.

But after they rose to imperial status, they assumed all the royal titles and epithets. It seems the Yadava rulers had a fancy for grandiloquent birudas and did not conceal their enthusiasm in displaying them whenever an occasion arose. To give one example, an epigraphic record³ of Singhana contains the following titles and epithets for the king Sriprithvi Vallabha, Maharajadhiraja, Paramesvara, Paramabhattacharaka, Dvaravatipuravavadhivara, Rayanarayana and Praudhapratapa-Chakravartin.

A noticeable thing in the Yadava records is that the

heir-apparent was associated with the administration of the kingdom towards the end of the reign of a ruling king. This happened in the case of Bhillama-V and his son Jaitugi, Jaitugi and his son Singana-II, Singhana-II and his grandson Krishna and Krishna and his younger brother Mahadeva. There were, however, at least two occasions when the Yadava throne seems to have been contested. In the first instance Bhillama-V wrested power from the hands of the sons of Kaliya-Ballala, his nephew. Hemadri refers to this episode in a subtle way. The relevant verse in the Vratakhanda says that after Kaliya Ballala, the fortune of the Yadava family discarded the king's sons and courted the arms of Bhillama, his paternal uncle, enamoured by his excellence.⁴ In another instance Ramachandra usurped the power from Amandeva his cousin.* The Purushottampuri grant describes the manner in which Ramachandra successfully staged his coup d'etat of the Devagiri fort.

The king's accession to the throne was marked by a coronation. In all the Hindu kingdoms, the coronation was an important ceremony and had a great political and constitutional significance. Though a prince might succeed to the throne immediately after the death of the previous ruler, it was the coronation that gave him the legal title to govern. The day was also commemorated by issuing land-grants to the Brahmanas

* Lilacharitra (ed.) by H.N. Nene.

by the king. We learn of it from the Kalegaon plates of Yadava Mahadeva dated 29th August 1261 A.D. The grant clearly states that it was made on the occasion of Mahadeva's coronation and with the belief that it would lead to the prosperity and expansion of his kingdom.⁵ The charter records the grant of the village of Kalugamva in favour of fifty two Brahmanas on the occasion of the king's coronation. The name of the gifted village was changed to Pattavardhanapura⁶ apparently with reference to the occasion of the grant. The fiftytwo donees of the grant belonged to twentytwo different gotras.

The Yuvaraja or the heir-apparent usually stayed at the capital either to assist the reigning king in the administration of the empire or accompanied him in military expeditions. When Jaitugi attacked Kakatiya Rudra, Shinghana assisted his father and Mahadeva helped his brother Krishna in wars against Konkan and the South. The heir apparent was hardly ever deputed as a viceroy to an outlying province, for it was probably realised that if the heir-apparent was absent from the capital, it may give encouragement to machinations and court-intrigues which might affect the peaceful transfer of power. In this regard, the Yadava rulers seem to have improved upon the Rashtrakuta administration whose records are full of wars of succession.

Once the heir-apparent was appointed he exercised almost all the powers of the ruling king and enjoyed all the royal

prerogatives. It is interesting to note that the Yadava rulers did not adopt the practice of appointing queens or princesses as regent or governors.

The Yadava kings are said to have possessed a number of qualities. A Kanarese record extolling the virtues of Ramachandra states, there is none who slays his enemies, makes gifts, and is so beautiful as he. In beauty the famous Kama, in might of arm Bhima, in body of nector Soma, Kama, Bhima and Soma was the king Rama reckoned by his qualities. In Methi inscription Saka 1176 of Krishna is said to be brave diplomatic and handsome.⁷ This ruler made a free gift of the village Kurukavataka. An early Yadava record⁸ praises Bhillama-II as Arati-nishudana, the destroyer of enemies, Samgrama-Rama Kandukacharya, Sellavidega and Vijaya bharana. The Yadava records speak of their kings as supreme, the most venerable and the favourite of the world.

The king was expected not only to protect his subjects from the enemies, but also to ensure the traditional religion. In the Mamdapur record Krishna is referred to as intent on restoration of the Vedas⁹ is famed under the name of Kanhara in the world. In fulfilment of these objects, the kings may reign as long as the moon, the sun and the stars last.

The Yadavas had Garuda as their state emblem. It appeared

both on the royal standards and their seals. Some times it is shown a flying as in Dharwar plates¹⁰ of Singhana. Sometimes kneeling and facing full front and holding a bow in its left hand,¹¹ over its left shoulder is shown the moon and on its right the sun. Very small and indistinct is cut over his right hand which is raised above his shoulder. On certain records Garuda is shown along with Hanumana with the moon and the sun above them. In the Tasgaon plates of Krishna, appearing on the rectangular seal bearing in relief, from left to right, the figures of a couchant bull and a flying Garuda with folded hands¹² are seen. Garuda was the emblem of Yadava dynasty and the bull probably that of the feudatory family.

The Yadava court had the usual paraphernalia. Princes of the royal blood, the ministers, the generals, the chamberlain, the royal preceptor and other high dignitaries of the kingdom were among the prominent members of the court poets and astrologers also found a respectable place in the court. Among the non-official members of the court, there were merchants, heads of guilds and other notables of the capital.

The Yadava monarchy does not seem to have been absolute in nature. It maintained a large bureaucratic system which supported the administration. Besides there were spiritual sanctions which restrained the rulers considerably from

becoming despotic. An inscription of Bhillama-III¹³ states that the king granted a village bearing in mind the precepts of Parasara, Daksha, Kutsa, Angirasa, Gotama, Manu, Yajnavalkya and other great sages, having bathed in the river Devanadi which adorned the city of Sindinagara. In Bassein grant of Saka 991 there is an interesting reference to a village grant by Seunachandra-II to his royal preceptor with hands raised to the head in company with good men inciting to charitable purposes and in knowledge of the whole retinue.¹⁴ According to the Asvi plates of Airmadeva made a grant with the consent of the Panch-Pradhana¹⁵ while Tribhuvanamalla Parmadideva Vikramaditya-VI was the supreme king. It is evident thus that the king used to consult his ministers before issuing any land charter.

Ministry

Although the king is the most important member of the body politic, ministry or a council of advisers has been regarded by ancient political thinkers as a vital organ of the state. The Mahabharata observes in one place that the king is as vitally dependent upon ministers as animals upon clouds, Brahmanas on the Vedas and women upon their husbands. The Arthasastra reminds the king that one wheel alone cannot move and hence the king shall appoint ministers. Manu points out that even a simple thing appears difficult if one is to do it

single handed. Sukra observes that even an all round king cannot know everything. The king therefore, should enlist the help of competent ministers. Otherwise he will ensure the destruction of himself and his kingdom. It is thus clear that the Hindu political thinkers always regarded ministry as indispensable for the king.

Coming to the Yadava period we find that the Yadava rulers conformed fully to these traditional injunctions. How indispensable the Yadava rulers regarded their ministers will be seen from the fact that very often the ministers were regarded as the tongue and the right hand¹⁶ of their kings. Mallas prime minister son is the great minister Chaundisetti whose fame is great who is the tongue and right arm of the king Krishna. For their various traits of character ministers were compared to Indra, Brahma in the four measures policy, Kartikeya is possession of the six qualities, Visvamitra, Chanakya in polity,¹⁷ Narayana of monarchs, Kama,¹⁸ Hanumana in fulfilling commissions, Brahmarakshasa to feudatory princes, Trivikrama, the sun¹⁹ (like the sun his rise increasing every day) and even to a scorpion the welfare of the kingdom was regarded as intimately connected with the ministry as the following verse in a grant of Govana-II of the Nikumba feudatory family of Khandesh would show. The kingdom prospers, good men are pleased, spiritual merit grows, all aims are attained, the saints, rejoice, prosper^sity grows, while the

illustrious Changadeva is the good minister, speaking of the strict manner in which a Yadava minister ruled a Gadag record states that Bhillama-V had a minister named Jaitasimha, who was endowed with the three constituent elements of regal power, whose prowess was surpassing thought, and who was a very scorpion²⁰ to rulers of districts.

The strength of the ministry under the Yadavas does not appear to have been fixed and it varied from time to time. Even the writers on ancient polity are not unanimous in this regard. Manu for instance holds that the ministry should consist of 7 or 8 members. The Mahabharata prefers eight members. The Arthasastra quotes different views on the topic, from which we learn that the Manava, Barhaspatya and Ausanasa schools were in favour of a ministry of 12, 16 and 20 respectively. The Sukraniti recommends a ministry of 10. The Manasollasa of Somesvara prefers a smaller body of 7 or 8 persons. The Nitivakyamrita is in favour of a smaller ministry consisting 3, 5 or 7 members only.

The Yadavas seem to have a smaller ministry comprising some times 5 members or 7 members. The Silaharas had a ministry of 5 members. The later Chalukyas had 7 members on their council of ministers. The Kakaty's had 18 members of their ministry. The earliest record²¹ of Yadava king Seunchandra-II dated on Saka 991 mentions the following portfolios:

1) Sridhara was the great general, 2) the illustrious Vasudevaiya the great counsellor, 3) the illustrious Bhabhiyaka the chief of ministers, 4) Srinayakave, minister of peace and war, 5) the illustrious Haravaiyanayaka head of the Patala Department, 6) the illustrious Apaiyaka in charge of the foreign department, 7) the illustrious Amaditya head officer of the subdivision to the royal priest, 8) Sarvadevecharya greatly devoted to his preceptor knowing the principles of many treaties on saivism, 9) the illustrious Samadevacharya a great Saiva of the gotra order devoted to the control of the outer and the inner senses to the study of sacred books to meditation and worship as a maintenance and as a preceptorial donation after washing his hands and feet.

Mahapradhana: Mahapradhana was an important minister and generally in charge of a province or even a district. He has often been designated as the Mahapasyita²² the great favourite of the king which means that the king conferred this office upon a person who was worthiest of receiving the king's favour. Because of the trust the king reposed in him, he was entrusted with many departments of administration. Peyiya Sahari, the Mahapradhana of Bhillama-V was also the Pattasahanadhipati, Ghodeyaraya (Lord of the Royal horse) and Bahatharaniyogadhipati (Lord of Seventytwo offices). Vankuva-Ravuta the Mahapradhana of Singhana was also the Sarvadhikari, Bahattaraniyogadhipati, anekadesadhipati

(administrator of many territories) and Sakala-Lakhmipatni-yoga,²³ (Master of whole treasury). Another Prime Minister of Singhana Lakshmidewa dandanayaka was in addition to all the departments also the Samastasenadhipati.²⁴ Hemadri, the celebrated Prime Minister of Mahadeva and Ramachandra was superintendent of all the elephant riders, administrator of the whole kingdom, controller of the whole treasury.²⁵ Because of their exalted positions the Yadava prime ministers were often accorded the status of a Mahamandalesvara, Mahasamanta or Mahamandlika. They also received honour from the feudatory chiefs of the Yadava court. In the Chikka-Bagewadi grant Krishna's prime minister Malla - the elder brother of Bicha, and the son of Chikkadeva, who filling the post of chief minister of that most eminent of kings, has the lotuses, which are his feet, ever made radiant by the jewels which are inlaid in the Haras of other kings, and who is renowned in the world.²⁶

The Mahapradhanas under the Yadava administration do not necessarily mean a prime-minister of the king always. Some times a number of Mahapradhanas were appointed under the Yadava ruler. For instance, during Singhana's regime there were as many as ten mahapradhanas, including the most favoured ones, such as Lakshmidewa, Bichana, and Tikkamahadeva. It does not however mean that all these Mahapradhanas stayed in the Yadava capital at Devagiri. Most of them functioned as viceroys

of the king posted in distant provinces. Bichana was the viceroy of the southern kingdom. Mahapradhana Chaundisetti was the governor of Beluvola, Vanavasi, Hanumgal and Tardavadi. Mahapradhana Jogama-Ravuta was the governor of Sindavadinadu. As Altekar suggested the designation of a Mahapradhana indicated that the status of the provincial viceroys who were honoured with it was actually that of a prime minister though they were not prime ministers themselves.

The merits and qualifications of the ministers appointed by the Yadava rulers are worth considering. The ancient political writers lay down in great details the qualifications of ministers. Kautilya lays down high birth, wisdom, influence, foresight, enthusiasm and conduct among qualifications expected of a minister.²⁷ According to the Sukraniti work character and merit alone should be the main consideration for appointment of a minister. The picture of an ideal minister according to other writers also, is almost the same. When we look into Yadava records, we find that the Yadava rulers took many factors into consideration before appointing their ministers.

An early Yadava record eulogises²⁸ a minister of Seunachandra-III Panumaddauri possessed of valour, liberality, mercy, cleverness, virtue, good qualities, truthfulness, energy, policy and good conduct among various other qualities. Jaitrasimha, a minister of Bhillama-V was endowed with three

constituent elements of regal power viz., Prabhutva, Mantra, and Utsaha whose prowess was surpassing in thought, and who was a very scorpion to rulers of districts. Vakuva-Ravuta the prime minister of Singhana has been compared to a Yagandharayana in offices of his lord a Chanakya in polity. Bichana the prime minister of Krishna was fortunate, energetic, and prudent agreeable, famous, having a mind exalted by the triad of peerless powers for maintaining five membered policy approved of speech, a furious great elephant for destroying the hosts of rival kings, Hanuman in fulfilling commissions. His son Chamunda of the same king was a Hanuman in fulfilling commissions, a four faced Brahaman in the four measures of policy, a six-faced Kartikeya in possession of the six qualities and an Arjuna in valour.²⁹ Purushottama was the son of Samvaladeva who was the superintendent of the arrangement of flower. Being attracted by his intelligence, learning and courage Ramachandra made him his minister. Purushottama carried on the affairs of the state very ably. He ruthlessly put down all the traitors and made all people conform to the rules of conduct laid down for the varanas (castes) and asramas³⁰ (orders of life). Ramachandra was greatly pleased with him for the execution of all his commands and conferred on him the aforementioned villages to enable him to make an agrahara worthy of himself.

The Mahapradhana had powers to appoint governors under him. Bichana Singhana after his viceroy appointed his son-in-law Malli Sreshthi as the Adhipatya (governorship) of Beluvola rajya. It is interesting to note that he got the governorship not from the king but from his father-in-law³¹ who was apparently the governor of several districts including Beluvola-rajya. In a record dated 1248 A.D. the same Malli-Setti represented as making a grant at the instance of his father-in-law Bichana figures as the Sarvadhikari.

Singhana's prime minister Lakshmidewa-Dandanayaka is further stated to have raised a Matha called Lakshminilaya³² after his own name and made provision for perpetual free feeding (avari-satrava nadasuv-ant-agi). Lakshmidewa-dandanayaka appointed Yindapa Nayaka as a governor of Nalavadi Vishaya. Ramachandra's prime minister Kannaradeva who was governing all the desas had under him a subordinated adhikari (governor) of Pandya nadu.

The Mahapradhanas were also excellent generals. Lakshmidewa dandanayaka was military commander who is described in the epigraph as the right arm of the Yadava ruler Singhana and had a long and distinguished career as the generalissimo of the Yadava forces. Chamundasetti conquered the Pandya kingdom, the Konkan, the region around the Kaveri.³³ Finding that he is intent upon conquering the regions, all the enemies

of this Chaundisetti climb an ant-hill, chew grass, wear a petticoat, and put on a karnapatra.³⁴ Jaitrasimha, a minister of Bhillama-V fought against Hoysala vira-Ballala-II but was defeated.³⁵ Hemadri, the prime minister of Mahadeva and Ramchandra was the superintendent of all the elephant riders inspiring men to appreciate the fineness of his virtues conqueror of the province of Jhadi.³⁶

The Yadava Mahapradhanas were great men of arms and also equally well versed in art and literature. Nagarasa the prime minister of Krishna seems to have also been a patron of literature as indicated by the title Pandita-Parijata.³⁷ Chamundaraja was an ornament of learned people.³⁸ Hemadri's contribution to literature was par excellence. It is remarkable that in the midst of a strenuous routine of a prime minister Hemadri could find enough time to compose his Chaturvarga-Chintamani, a treatise on Dharmasastra. With an equal literary flair, he wrote commentaries on medical treatises. It was he, again, who is said to have introduced the Modi script to facilitate a fast writing. Because of his devotion to learning, the learned found in him a generous patron. His proteage Bopadeva wrote, at the request of Hemadri, the Muktapphala a work expounding Vaishnava doctrines, and another the Harilila, which contains an abstract of the Bhagavadgita. If therefore, the Thana plates of Ramachandra call this crest-jewel of

ministers a Rohana mountain of the gems of virtues,³⁹ it is least exaggerating.

Sainyadhipati: Sainyadhipati and Dandanayakas are very frequently mentioned in the inscriptions. Though these two terms literally refer to an officer connected with the army, generally in the inscriptions they are seen as civil administrators. Vankadeva was a senapati and was a governor of Banavasi 1200, Belavola 300 and Paligere 300. Likewise, Damodara was a senadhipati governing Karadikal. At times Mahapradhanas were senadhipatis too. Mahapradhana Bammeya Nayaka was a senadhipati. Dandanayaka Bicha and Dandanayaka Mayideva were governors of Banavasi. From these references it becomes clear that Dandanayakas and Senadhipatis were military generals during military campaigns and civil administrators during the times of peace. Mahalingam has made it very clear that there was no clear distinction between civil and military departments and particularly all officers of higher rank had to perform some military duties also. Dandanayakas were officers of the highest grade in the districts, in the Hoyasala administration. Probably the Dandanayakas in the Yadava administration also enjoyed the same status. In addition to the above there were mahaprachanda dandanayakas, Dandanatas and Rayadandadhisas. The exact significance of these terms is difficult to understand. But Altekar thinks that mahaprachanda dandanayak

was the war minister and Dinkar Desai translates it literally as the great mighty master of the staff. According to Derrett, Dandanathas were colonels.⁴⁰ Mallideva and his younger brother Sahadeva were Dandanathas under Jaitugi. Choundisetti was a Rayadandadhisha under Krishna. The real connotation of these terms and the differences among them, if any, are not known.

The most famous of the Yadava commander-in-chief was Kolesvara. Three of the four Ambe inscriptions speak vociferously of the achievements of this Brahmana General of Shingana. To recall one of them Kholesvara was responsible for the destruction of Paramara Bhoja of Chahanda-desa, Ramapala of Kasi, Lakshmiddeva of Bhambhagiri, Hemadideva of Khandesh, the Gurjara king Sihadi and Devapala of Dhara. As if this account falls short to describe the personality of the General, the Ambe records add that the queens of the Cholas, Malvas, Vangas, Gurjaras, Hammiras, Kosalas, Hoyasalas, and Jelengas were not confident of their bangles. Reading all these heroic deeds of Kholesvara, one begins to wonder whether Singhana would have been really great without this general. It is not surprising that the Ambe records contain the geneology of Kholesvara instead of his lord. An interesting aspect of this genealogy is that it mentions four generations of Kholesvaras parents.

Raja Guru: Rajaguru is another person that the inscriptions

mention very often. Probably he was the royal preceptor advising the king on matters of religion; he was associated with all the religious and social functions in the palace, including the coronation of the king. Because of his high intellectual and spiritual attainments, he commanded the respect and devotion of the king. The royal priest of Seunachandra-II Sarvadevcharya was greatly devoted knowing the contents of many treatises, Jainism, clever in grammar, able in giving initiations and in presenting gifts to the gods. Jaitugis' chief priest Lakshmidhara was the chief of all sagas, who knew the meaning of the Veda and who was the king of logicians and conversant with the essence of discussions on the subject of sacrificial rites. Judging him to be well acquainted with the contents of all the sastras, Jaitrapala (Jaitugi) took him away from this town and made him chief of the learned. Lakshmidhara's son Changadeva was the chief astrologer of Singhana. Though the Yadavas were devout Hindus, they did not hesitate to appoint members of other sects as their Rajagurus. A Kanarese record dated 1271 A.D. refers to Jaina Bhattarakadeva as the Rajaguru of Mahadeva.

Amatya: He was the revenue minister. The earliest reference to an amatya is found in a Yadava record dated Saka 991 which mentions one Sri Vasudeva as mahamatya of Seunachandra-II.⁴⁴ It seems that the amatya was also an administrative officer.

Chaundasetti, an amatya of Krishna was governing the southern Kingdom. As a revenue minister, his job must have been to ensure revenue for the royal treasury. In the later Yadava records we often come across an officer designated as Sunka-Vergade, Sulk-adhyaksa or Sunkaadhikari. The Nausari grant⁴⁵ of Ramachandra refers to one Karnadeva who enjoyed the titles Pradhana or Mahapradhana and Maharaja. Karanadeva Yadava, Ramachandra subordinate ruling over the Nausarika region seems to have enjoyed the royal titles Ranaka and Maharaja side by side with certain official designations.

Karanadeva was Sunkvergade or Sulkadhyaksha of Seunachandra. The Yadav rulers seem to have posted these revenue officers in different parts of the kingdom. We have thus a sunkadhikari of Tarddavadi 1000 and another of Banavasi 12000.

Sayyapala: The Guardian of the royal bed-chamber was another court dignitary. He seems to have enjoyed great confidence of the king and at times deputed for him when the latter was away from the court. A Ramtek inscription of Ramachandra refers to one Raghav who was the Sayyapala of the king. This inscription further refers that Ramachandra bestowed on him fortune which appeared lovely owing to the prosperity of his empire and himself enjoyed the company of ladies skilled in all arts. This meant that the king entrusted the government of the court to him and being free from care, gave himself up to the

enjoyment of pleasures. This Raghav is probably referred to again as Sayyapala (guardian of the royal bed-chamber).

Lakshmipati: The minister in charge of the treasury was known as Sakala Lakshmipati-niyoga (Master of whole treasury).

Occasionally this charge was held by the prime minister himself. The devagiri inscription⁴⁶ of Singhana refers to Venkuva-Ravuta as the general controller, great favourite administrator of seventytwo officers, administrator of many territories, holding the office of master the whole treasury, and also governor of Belvala 300, the Huligere 300, and the Banavasi 12000.

The Thana plates of Ramachandra refer to Hemadri⁴⁷ as the prime minister of the king and also superintendent of all the elephant riders, inspiring men to appreciate the fineness of his virtues, conqueror of the province of Jhadi, crest jewel of ministers, a Rohan mountain of the administration of the whole kingdom, which has been obtained by his favour and controlling the whole treasury.

A record dated Saka 1207 however, refers to one Prabhudevanayaka as the Sripati, treasurer of Ramachandra from which it appears that the post was also held by persons other than the prime minister.

Sakala Karanadhipa: The Yadava records occasionally refer to a Sakala Karanadhipa who was equivalent to a Chief Secretary.

Karna has been generally interpreted to mean an office of administration. Hence the Sakala Karanadhipa is the one who heads all the departments of administration.*

The Thana plates of Ramachandra describe Hemadri as Samasta Karanadhipatyam angikurvana means one who has assumed the control of all the departments.** As the post of chief secretary was held by the prime minister himself, it must have been of great importance. One of the functions of the chief secretary seems to be to maintain all the records of administration in a truthful manner. This was accomplished by the chief secretary with the assistance of a large number of Karanis or kayasthas (clerks). A record dated Saka 1201 actually refers to one Kayastha Somadeva Pandit as a subordinate of Hemadri. A large number of royal charters seems to have been drawn up by this class of officials.

Among other royal officers of the court, we have Mudraprabhu, officer in charge of seals, Kusumarachanadhyaksha superintendent of arrangement of flowers, the commander of hill forts and the royal hunter who enjoyed the status of a mahapradhana.

* Sircar - Indian Epigraphy, p. 84.

** EI XIII p. 202.

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- 3
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- 4
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