

*Venkatappa Nayak: King of Keladi (1586–1629)***Jayanna B. R.**Associate Professor, Dept of History, Government First Grade College for Women,
Chamarajanagara.**Received: 10-06-2024 ; Accepted: 10-07-2024 ; Published: 11-08-2024****DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.13284097>****ABSTRACT:**

Nayakas of Keladi were a dynasty based out of Keladi which is locating in present day Shivamogga district of Karnataka. The dynasty was formed in 1499 CE by Chaudappa Nayaka. The Nayakas started off as feudatories to the mighty and glorious Vijayanagara Empire. Hiriya Venkatappa Nayaka (1586–1629) is considering by scholars as ablest monarch of the clan. He completely with freed himself from the overlordship of the relocated Vijayanagar rulers of Penugonda. Italian traveller Pietro Della Valle, who visited his kingdom in 1623, called him an able soldier and administrator. Venkatappa was the most successful Nayaka who extended his kingdom on all sides and drove back the Bijapur forces. He defeated Bhairadevi of Gerusoppa and restricted the Portuguese expansion. To mark the victory against Bhairadevi, he erected a pillar at Hangal. The Keladi state became a power to be reckoning with and the rice and pepper trade of the west passed into the hands of the Nayaks from the Portuguese. Venkatappa is crediting with the construction of a number of forts, temples and the founding of many agraharas (villages granted to learn Brahmanas.

KEYWORDS:

Rameshvara temple, Bhairasa Nayak, Kasargod, Palegaras, Portuguese.

After the Battle of Talikota (1565) in which the Vijayanagar King was defeating by the Sultans of Deccan protection by the former ceased to exist. The Sultans were eager to injure those who were protecting by Vijaynagar. In such inchoate times, a handful of men showed indomitable spirit against the sultan ruled states and became worthy successors

of Vijayanagar. Venkatappa Nayak from Keladi Nayaka dynasty emerged as a worthy successor of Vijaynagar and then later Raghunath Nayak who predominated in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. "From humble beginnings as rich farmers, they became the vassals of the Vijayanagara empire, earning the title of Nayakas, and ruled the region till Hyder Ali, the ruler of Mysore, conquered the region in 1763, dethroning Virammaji, the last queen of Keladi."

Keladi Nayak dynasty was a feudatory small kingdom of Vijayanagar empire. Founded by Chaudappa Nayaka in 1499, it soon emerged as major power in Vijaynagar. Chaudappa's successors were equally worthy who assisted the kings in major campaigns. The son of Chaudappa Nayak defeated Barid Shah and imprisoned him while his successors defeated the Portuguese in Goa. After the Battle of Talikota in 1565, the central Vijayanagar power became weak. The Keladi Nayaks started expanding their dominions whilst accepting nominal superiority of Vijayanagar. Very little information is available about the early life of Venkatappa Nayak. He was born to Dodda Sankanna Nayak and ascended the throne in 1582, after his brother Ramraja Nayak.

The political condition at the time of accession of Venkatappa, were chaotic. Adil Shah and Outb Shah constantly attacked the Vijayanagar dominion while the Portuguese had started their incursions too. Small chiefs in the area started revolting. The newly coroneted Venkata was busy in preparation for war against both the sultanates. Venkatappa remained loyal to Vijayanagar emperor Venkata.

After accession to the throne, Venkatappa turned his attention towards rebellious Palegaras. He marched against them and humbled them. He then turned his attention towards Bhairasa Nayak of Karkala. Karkala (Near Mangalore) was a kingdom like Keladi First he defeated Bhairasa Nayaka in a pitched battle. After this, Bhairasa (a Jain) attacked Sringeri temple and troubled the Shakaracharya. On hearing this Venkatappa Nayak defeated Bhairasa Nayak again and renovated Sringeri.

Venkatappa Nayak was aware of Portuguese bigotry and their malicious intentions. He conquered Honawar, Basrur and Bhatkal ports.

This way he foiled the plan of Portuguese to dominate India's sea trade. Frustrated by this, the Portuguese allied with Chennabhairadevi and Adil Shah against Venkatappa but this alliance was no match for Venkatappa. In a series of battles, Venkatappa Nayak defeated these allies and established his monopoly over sea routes (1606). He defeated invading Adil Shahi forces under Ranadullah Khan, and also the allied forces of Hanuma Nayak and Manjula Khan. After conquering Bangawadi Arasa in 1612, his victorious march went till Kasargod and he planted a victory pillar there. Thus, by the end his reign, the kingdom of Keladi spanned the area from Mirjan to Chandragiri river (Kasargod in Kerala). Under his reign, the kingdom not only expanded its border but also reached its cultural and economical glory. He constructed several new forts and renovated many others. His policy towards Portuguese remains an unparalleled example of diplomacy which stopped foreign influence on Indian ports. He established a town named Sadashiva Sagara, known as today's Sagara.

Read Places to visit in Sagara:

He was great patron of Dharma, art and literature. He built and renovated numerous temples across the kingdom including Kollur Mookambika temple, near Sringeri. He liberally gave grants for temples, agraharas and natyasalas. Both Sanskrit and Kannada literature received his patronage. Italian traveller, "Fietro Della Valle", who visited Keladi during his reign, left glorious notes about him and his kingdom. Venkatappa Nayak was also known as DOKHANDERAYA (Can fight with swords in both hands) and master of western ocean.

After a long reign of more than forty years he died in 1629. The kingdom reached its zenith under him. He emerged and thrived by defeating Sultanates and Portuguese. His successors carried forward his legacy successfully for 140 years after his death. "The greatest examples of religious architecture from the period are the two Shaivite temple complexes: the Rameshvara temple complex at Keladi and the Ag-horeshvara temple complex at Ikkeri. There are three shrines, dedicated to Parvati, Rameshvara and Virbhadra, in the complex at Keladi, about

80km from Shivamogga town. Of the two remaining examples of Nayaka royal architecture, the Devaganga pleasure resort near Nagara, about 80km from Shivamogga, is a unique structure.”

“The Nayakas won many admirers across the world—Alexander Hamilton famously wrote of his visit in the late 17th century: “The subjects of this country observe the law so well, that robbery or murder are hardly heard of among them.” Apart from temples, palaces and forts, they built public infrastructure such as water reservoirs, parks, stepped wells, tanks, and roads; Hirekere, in Keladi, is a striking example of a reservoir from the period. The medieval sluice gates still stand tall alongside more recent ones. This reservoir, which fills up during the monsoon, is the primary source of water for the surrounding region.”

“A magnificent stone carving of the creature Gandabherunda adorns a ceiling in the Rameshvara temple complex at Keladi.”



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