



Karnataka History - Seunas Part 1

Special class

THE SEUNAS (YADAVAS)

The Sevunas or Seunas (this is how they are called in records), also known as the Yadavas, ruled from Devagiri, modern Daulatabad. Initially they were the feudatories of the Rashtrakutas and the Chalukyas of Kalyana, but finally they became a sovereign power and ruled till the beginning of the 14th century. The Sanskrit encyclopaedia, Chaturvarga Chintamani by Hemadri is the most important source for their history. Lilacharita (in Marathi), the biography of Saint Chakradhara, Suktimukthavali of Jalhana, and Hammiramadana, a play by Jayasimha Suri, both Sanskrit works, are other literary sources. Barani's Tarikh-i-Firozshahi, and Ismai's Futuh-us-Salatin in Persian give us some details about the last days of the empire. But, inscriptions, no doubt, are the most important source material for the study of the history of the dynasty. There are more than 500 records of the dynasty, mostly in Kannada, beginning with the Sangamner Record of Bhillama II. But, till the accession of Bhillama V, there are hardly a dozen records, though after this time there are numerous.

The Muslim writers call the dynasty as the Yadavas and Dr. Fleet and Dr. Bhandarkar also call them by the same name. But, Hemadri and the contemporary records of rulers like the Chalukyas of Kalyana, the Hoysalas and the Kakatiyas, refer to them only as the Seunas. The word 'Seuna' is derived from the name Seunachandra, the second ruler of the dynasty. Dr. Srinivas Ritti feels that it is the Prakrit form of the Sanskrit word 'Sadguna'.

According to Hemadri, they were originally from Mathura, and later migrated to Dwaraka, from where they moved southwards. Their records call them as Dvaravatipuravaradhishvaras, masters of the town Dvaravati or Dwaraka. There is reason to believe that the Yadavas are of indigenous Though described as coming from Mathura (in modern U.P.), (Kannada) origin. Seuna Desha or the Nasik-Ahmednagar region was a Kannada territory at the time of the origin of the dynasty. Secondly, a majority of their inscriptions are only in Kannada, and some of them are in the Kannada language and the Devanagari script. Only during their last days, Marathi invocation is found in some records. Some of their earlier coins had Kannada letters engraved on them, as pointed out by Dr. O.P. Varma. This indicates that Kannada was their court language also.

The names of the Seuna rulers such as Dhadiyappa, Bhillama, Rajugi, Vadugi and Vesugi are purely Kannada names. Names like Bhillama, Singhana and Mallugi are found in the Kalachuri dynasty too. Dr. Ritti has pointed out that Seunachandra II had a Kannada title 'Sellavidega'. They had matrimonial relations with Kannada royal families in a number of cases. Bhillama II had married Lachchiyavve from the Rashtrakuta family. Vaddiga had married Vaddiyavve, daughter of Rashtrakuta Dhorappa. Wives of Vesugi and Bhillama III were Chalukyan princesses. This indicates their affinity with the Kannada country. Some minor chieftains belonging to the same family were ruling in the South, deep in the Kannada country, like the Seunas of Masavadi-140 (ruling in the Dambal- Mundargi region of the Dharwad district), as pointed out by Dr. A.V. Narasimha Murthy. Thus, "the evidence at hand, far from providing their northern origin and migration southwards, indicates that they originally belonged to Kannada areas and due to political exigencies moved to the north", says Dr. Ritti. He adds that, in the days of the Rashtrakutas, the Seunas were appointed as governors of the Nasik region, where they went and settled.

Hemadri's work speaks of (1) Dridaprahara (c.825-50), (2) Seunachandra (c.850-75), (3) Bhillama I (c.875-900), (4) Dhadiyappa I (c.900-925), (5) Rajugi (c.925-950), (6) Vadugil or Vaddiga (c.950-975), (7) Bhillama II as the early rulers. (The dates given in the brackets are not furnished by Hemadri). The last named has left the first record of the family, the Sangamner Inscription dated 1000 A.D. He was a contemporary of Taila II of the Kalyana Chalukya family and he had helped Taila in his war against Faramara Munja. Bhillama II had the title Mahasamanta. He was followed by his son Vesugi I and later by one Arjuna whose relationship with Vesugi is not known. Dr. Ritti states that he is mentioned only by Hemadri and not by records, and he might not be a Seuna prince, but only an administrator or regent. Bhillama III (c. 1020-52), son of Vesugi, had his capital at Sindinagar, modern Sinnar in Nasik district, and in a war between Paramara Bhoja and Chalukya

Someshvara, he helped the latter to be victorious. After Bhillama III ruled Vadugi II, followed by Vesugi II and Bhillama IV (c.1068). There was a period of civil war of succession. Seunachandra II (c.1069-85) is considered to be the grandson of Bhillama III, being the son of Vadugi II. Vesugi II was Vadugi's younger brother, and Seunachandra II came to the throne in c.1069 after defeating Bhillama IV, son of Vesugi, according to Dr. Ritti. He helped Chalukya Vikramaditya VI in his fight against Someshvara II, his elder brother. He was succeeded by his two sons, Airammadeva (c.1089-1115) and Singhana I (c.1115-1145). The period between 1145

and 1173 was one of internal feuds in the Seuna family. With the help of inscriptions and literary sources the following rulers can be identified: Mallugi (c.1145-1150), son of Singhana, succeeded his father. He was followed by his son Amaragangeya (c.1150-60), and grandson Govindaraja (c.1160-?). After Govindaraja came his uncle Aparā or Amara Mallugi, who was the son of Mallugi. He was also known as Karna and Krishna (vide Methi Inscription). After him came Kaliya Ballala (c.1170-73), his first son. Kaliya Ballala's son (whose name is not known) succeeded him, but soon he was overthrown by his uncle (Amara Mallugi's second son Bhillama V).

BHILLAMA V

With Bhillama V, the Seunas embarked on an imperialistic career. He was in fact "the real founder of the Seuna dynasty". His Gadag Record clearly states that he was Karna's son. His first record of 1173 describes him as a subordinate of Kalachuri Sankama of Kalyana. Hemadri has said that Seuna Bhillama defeated the ruler of Mangalavada. Scholars have identified this prince as Virabijjala, the son of Kalachuri Sovideva. Bhillama V issued his own coins after he defeated the Kalachuris.

When the Chalukyas of Kalyana became powerful once again after defeating the Kalachuris, the Seunas were subdued again. Barma, the general of Someshvara IV, defeated Bhillama (1183), but this victory of the Chalukyas was shortlived, and Kalyana, the Chalukyan capital, came under the control of Bhillama V (c. 1186). Soon after this, the Seunas clashed with the Hoysalas for their share in the Chalukyan dominions. In the north, Bhillama V had to also fight against the Paramaras and the Chalukyas of Gujarat. He defeated Paramara

Vindhyavarman and Chalukya Bhima II, and marched towards the Chahamanas kingdom at Nadol. But, Chahamanas foiled Bhillama's attempts to overrun their territory. He appears to have won victories in his wars against Chola Kulottunga III. In the south, he captured major parts of Belvola, and marched deep into the Hoysala territory. In one of his records, he even claims to have reached so far as the Srirangapattana region, where Ballala II claims to have defeated him at Ingalaguppa.

The final trial of strength took place at Soratur near Gadag in 1190 when Ballala II completely defeated Bhillama V. Bhillama died two years later. Bhillama founded a new capital, Devagiri. He was a great ruler to whom goes the credit of making the Seunas a sovereign power. His empire extended as far as the Narmada in the north, and Krishna in the south. He was succeeded by his son Jaitugi, also known as Jaitrapala and Jaitrasimha, in 1192. He defeated Paramara Subhatavarman, and killed Kakatiya Rudra and Mahadeva. He enthroned Kakatiya Ganapati at Warangal. Lakshmidhara, son of the noted mathematician Bhaskaracharya, was his minister.

SINGHANA II

The greatest among the Seuna rulers, Singhana II succeeded his father Jaitugi in 1200 and enjoyed a long rule till 1247. He continued his war against the Paramaras and killed Subhatavarman and later, in a second war, his son Arjunavarman, the next ruler. He also warred against Chahamanas Simha and finally he killed him Singhana's commander, Kholeshvara, installed a pillar of victory at Broach on the Gujarat coast.

He humiliated the Kadambas of Goa and of Hanagal, and also defeated the Shilaharas of Kolhapur. In his war against the Hoysalas, he wrested Lakkundi, their second capital, in 1213. He extended his dominions to the Tungabhadra in the south (1215). The Sindas of Belagulti also became their feudatories. As Hoysala Narasimha was busy with the affairs in Tamilnadu, he could not pay proper attention towards this northern adversary.

In his war with the Telugu Chodas, Singhana was defeated by Choda Tikkana. The friendly relationship between the Kakatiyas and the Seunas was broken and Kakatiya Ganapati claims a victory over Singhana in 1231. By the close of Singhana's rule the Kakatiyas became strong once again. In 1240 Rama, son of Kholeshwara, crossed the Narmada and clashed with Vaghela Visaladeva. But, Rama died in the battle. Yet Singhana's position in south Gujarat remained undisturbed.

During his time, the Seuna empire grew to its maximum size with the Narmada in the north and the Tungabhadra in the south as its boundaries. In the west the Konkana and south Gujarat coasts were also under their control. He had complete control over Belgaum and Dharwad districts. Singhana was a great patron of scholars. Changadeva and Kannada poet Kamalabhava were in his court. Sarangadeva, the great authority on music, was patronised by him. Singhana was succeeded by his grandson Krishna or Kannara, the son of Jaitugi, who predeceased his father Singhana II.

Krishna defeated the ruler of Malava soon after his coming to the throne, and later Visaladeva of Gujarat. The territory of the Sindas of Belagutti was merged in his kingdom (1247) and his records are found as far as Chitradurga district in the south and Chanda and Amaravati districts in the north. Amalananda and Jalhana were scholars in his court. Mahadeva, his brother, succeeded him in 1261. He merged the territory of the Shilaharas of Konkana in his kingdom, after defeating Someshvara of that line and Mahadeva assumed the title Konkana Chakravarti. The Hoysalas defeated him in 1271, but his position in the Chitradurga region remained undisturbed. Amana, his son, succeeded him, and he was soon overthrown by Ramachandra, son of Krishna. Ramachandra defeated the rulers of Malava and Vaghela Arjunadeva of Gujarat. He also subdued Singeya of Kummata in Raichur district. His commander Tikkana raided Dorasamudra in 1276, and the Santhara prince of Hosagunda became a tributary of the Seunas

Alla-ud-din Khilji invaded Devagiri and collected a large booty in 1296. But, Ramachandra warred twice against Hoysala Ballala III (in 1301 and 1304) and only got himself emaciated. Malik Kafur invaded Devagiri in 1307 and took Ramachandra captive to Delhi. Later he agreed to be a feudatory of the Sultan and got himself released. He helped Malik Kafur during his raids over Warangal and Dorasamudra. Ramachandra died in 1312. Sant Jnaneshvar composed his Marathi work Jnaneshvari during his rule (1290).

Ramachandra's son, Singhana III, ruled for some time, and later when he tried to free himself from his servitude to Delhi, Malik Kafur had him killed in 1313. Harapaladeva, the son-in-law of Ramachandra, tried to revive the Seuna rule, but was killed in his war against the Delhi Sultan in 1318. We find a record of Mallugi III, son of Singhana III, ruling as a feudatory of the Delhi Sultan in 1334. This is the last mention of a Seuna ruler in the Deccan.