
Accomplishments and Contributions of An Illustrious King of Medieval India: A Comprehensive Study of Basavaraj Naikar's Novel *A Noble King of Bidanuru*.

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ABSTRACT

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Karnataka the land of the patriots and the martyrs has given birth to an illustrious king who is enshrined as a luminary for his selfless dedication and prodigious contributions to the kingdom of Keladi, the second capital of which was Bidanuru. He was an epitome of kindness, mercifulness, generosity, compassion, forgiveness, and magnanimity by virtue of which he ascended to the throne of celebrity and popularity. He liberally patronised agriculture, religion, education, plantation, afforestation and maintenance of law and order. His regime is reckoned as a golden period in the socio-political history of Karnataka. He dedicated his entire life to the services of his subjects who sang the glory of his nobleness and munificence. His reputation as an ideal ruler is not only confined to the capital city, Bidanuru but also it proliferates far and near in India. He is ever remembered and commemorated as a noble king of Keladi by the denizens of Karnataka.

Historical fiction unfortunately happens to be the poorest in the vast realm of Indian English Fiction. The number of historical novelists does not exceed even a dozen. Historical Fiction is said to be second only to the primary genre of epic literature in its seriousness, sublimity and grandeur. Manohar Malgonkar, Chaman Nahal and Achala Moulik are a few names well known for their historical novels. For this conspicuous poverty of historical fiction (as well as drama) the reasons are many. Although India is a land of vast and rich history, it has not produced its Walter Scott so far. That is because writing of historical fiction requires a lot of strenuous preparation like collection of data, field work, research aptitude and above all, historical imagination to convert hard facts of history into readable and enjoyable fiction in a realistic style, according to the law of probability and by avoiding the miraculous element. Viewed against this background Basavaraj Naikar's *A Noble King of Bidanuru* happens to be a welcome addition to the realm of rare genre.

India is a country of the Kings and the Emperors who have successively and chronologically reigned over this golden land through centuries of years till independence after which the kingship and the emperors lost their grounds and went out of existence from this land. The ideal kings in the Vedic period were Dasaratha, Ramachandra, Janaka and Harischandra who are enshrined in Indian mythology for their virtues of munificence and magnanimity. After lapses of many centuries of years India ushered in the historical period during which some Hindu kings ruled over this land till the advent of the Muslim regime. They were Kaniska, Chandragupta, Harshvardhana and Ashok who are immortal in history for their significant contributions to the welfare of their kingdoms. Their regimes are delineated as golden period in

ancient Indian history.

In the constellation of the popular kings of India, one who has left behind him a glorious history of administration is Sivappa Nayaka, the King of Bidanuru of the Medieval period. The history of his life is impregnated with the significant contributions to his kingdom. His accomplishments are highlighted in the following lines of this article.

Sivappa Nayaka the son of Siddappa was brought up by his nephew Vankatappa after the death of his father Siddappa. He built himself as an extra-ordinary militant warrior and a hero in fighting. He was expert in the military strategic operation. He exhibited his gallantry, heroism, and valour in many battles. He was unsurpassably an invincible fighter. Apart from mastering the skill and the technique of fighting, he acquired the knowledge of literature, religion, philosophy, and Patanjali yoga which contributed to his development as a personality of ascetic bent of mind. He followed the advice of his guru his Holiness Prabhuswami in cultivating his character and building himself as an ideal ruler. As an able administrator he achieved sound rapprochement with the Kings of the territories around his kingdoms.

After the death of Chikka Sankanna Nayaka, Venkatappa Nayaka became the king of Keladi and took the responsibility of upbringing and education of Sivappa. He continued to rule over Keladi kingdom for some years with commendable governance. After a lapse of some years, he anticipated his imminent death and hence he decided to abdicate his throne in favour of his son Virabhadra. With this decision in mind, he entrusted Sivappa Nayaka to take charge of his son and enthrone him as the king in his place. In compliance with the insistence of Venkatappa, Sivappa Nayaka promised to take care of Virabhadra Nayaka and make him the future king of Keladi. As a broadminded person, he fulfilled his commitment and enthroned Virabhadra as the king of Keladi forsaking his own claim. Had he had a selfish motive and a narrow mind he would have usurped and enthroned himself as its king, but he was extremely liberal minded without avarice for power and position. He did not conceive of such treacherous conspiracy because of his nobleness and magnanimity.

As Virabhadra Nayaka ruled over the kingdom of Keladi he had to encounter many impediments in his administration. His position was jeopardized by a conspiratorial onslaught on Keladi by the Sultan of Bijapur who was belligerently and surpass-ably stronger in military operation. In order to overcome the danger of attack Sivappa Nayaka entrusted his trusted envoy Ramkrishna to meet the Sultan and dissuade him from launching his military expedition against the kingdom of Kelda by his remarkable art of convincing by way of repartee. His intercession served to prevail upon the Sultan to refrain from continuing his war and impel him to make friends with Virabhadra and Sivappa. This is how Sivappa succeeded in securing Keladi from the danger of war and rescued Virabhadra from imminent attack by enemies.

Subsequently the king's administration was further destabilized by rivalry and hostility of the neighbouring kingdoms. He invariably anticipated onslaught by the enemies. The instability of the situation together with the sudden death of his wife aggravated his depression. In order to mitigate the burden of his mental agony experienced by Virabhadra, Sivappa Nayaka as a sympathetic ruler advised him to go on a pilgrimage and assured him to take the responsibility of the governance of his kingdom in his absence. In response to his advice Virabhadra set out on a pilgrimage entrusting the administration of his kingdom to Sivappa, who was not only trustworthy and loyal but also credulous and reliable.

After returning from pilgrimage Virabhadra betrayed his reluctance for kingship and pleaded

his inability to continue any more the administration of Keladi and resolved to abdicate his throne in favour of Sivappa Nayaka with confidence in his administrative efficiency. He voluntarily dethroned himself and devolved the kingship on Sivappa Nayaka in order to relieve himself of this encumbrance. Sivappa Nayaka was also reluctant to embrace kingship and he, therefore, wanted to forgo this covetous position and insisted on Virabhadra's continuance as the King of Keladi. As the latter declined to sustain kingship and abdicated his throne, Sivappa Nayaka had to shoulder the kingship of the kingdom. As a nobleman Sivappa Nayaka admired Virabhadra for his liberal abdication of kingship in his favour. He praised him in the following words "My dear Virabhadra, your generosity is really great. Such persons are very rare in the history of the world" (P.77). Before dethronement Virabhadra professed his generosity by planning out the solemnization of marriage of Sivappa Nayaka and he proclaimed free dispersal of food for seven days on this occasion of the celebration of nuptial. He further stated "Nobody should go hungry none should cook food at home. They should rather get dinner free of cost for seven days during the days of celebration" (P.76). This proclamation of Virabhadra evinces his generosity.

It is relevant to cite the instance of Sivappa Nayaka's patriotic love for the kingdom of Keladi. His deterrent measures to preclude clandestine sale of trees to the Portuguese in Basaruru is worth mentioning. He was apprised that his clerks and *syanybhogas* were indulged in robbing trees and supplying women to the foreigners and getting huge money from them. Sivappa along with Venkatappa attacked them in disguise and exposed their illegal sale of trees. They detected them red-handed while robbing trees. As regards the trade of trees, the clerk showed a forged copy of the document in support of his action to justify it Sivappa commented on this forged order "I never knew that our Keladi kingdom would degenerate to this extent due to these treacherous fellows"(P-64). The king had also employed Border Security forces to guard this illegal trade and protect the trees from clandestine transportation to foreign countries. This prohibitory action of illegal trade of trees and supply of women signifies king's patriotic fervour for his kingdom.

After the seizure of trees as the king was returning from the spot, he was shot with arrows by unidentified and unknown criminals. Having been grievously injured he rushed towards the proximity of the temple of Mahalingeswara where he was received and treated with due honour by Annappa the priest of the temple in association with the Devadasi Sundari and her daughter Chandrika.

As a patron of agriculture, he patronised various projects and enterprises for promotion of agricultural prosperity. He stated that the farmers are the agencies of production of food which they supply to the common people for their sustenance. He spoke in favour of farmers "the gods Indra and Varuna are not greater than the farmers (P.132). They cultivate lands strenuously and grow food grains for the subsistence of mankind. He further emphasized "no culture is higher than agriculture" (P.132). He contended that the farmers play an important role in augmenting the wealth of the kingdom. They are great because they supply food grain to common people. Hence it is a crime to exploit them. "Farmers are the people who have laid the foundation of human civilization all over the world and increased the wealth of life" (P.136). They grow pepper, areca, spices, cardamom, betel leaves, rice, sugarcane, and pulses. They were further advised to grow sandal trees which cause rainfall and minimise earthly temperature. Besides, he constructed dams, bridges, reservoirs and excavated tanks and canals to provide irrigational facilities and facilitate intensive cultivation. Some servants had also been employed to release water from the canals to the cultivable lands of the farmers.

In the territory of Keladi, every tiny piece of land was utilized, and land revenue was enhanced. The Raja ordered the utilization of every piece of land and stated, "We should see that not even a foot of land should fall fallow in our kingdom" (P.136). This kind of harness of land contributed to the amelioration of the financial condition of the kingdom. Sivappa Nayaka told that "it is the duty of the ruler and administrator like us to protect the interest of the farmers and to help them out of their problems whenever they suffer from famine and flood" (P.136). He praised a farmer named Rudrappa for his wholehearted devotion to cultivation. The Raja renders financial help to the needy farmers with a view to mitigating their financial hardship.

The Raja further instituted a Central Revenue Department to deal with revenue matters in the interest of the farmers. He enforced restriction and prohibition on unlawful encroachment of lands. Corruption about plantation and mortgage of land was proclaimed as a punishable offence. Mobile courts were held to punish the defaulters who violated the land laws. In order to obviate disputes regarding boundary, he deputed agents to different villages for demarcation of lands allotted to the beneficiaries. In the context of Raja's contributions to agriculture the foreigners like Charles Eliot and Buchanon commended him lavishly and extolled his kingship.

In view of king's sympathetic attitude to the villagers, the inhabitants complained to the king about the oppression on the innocent farmers for their default in paying tax. They further added that they were subjected to torture in the similar way as observed by them earlier. Their grievances evoked the sympathy of the king and impelled him to make a commitment to them to eliminate all unjust extortion of tax.

One day, Sivappa and Venkatappa began to visit the capital city of Bidanuru. On their way they came across an outrageous sight which enraged them and grieved them. A farmer couple was yoked to a plough and driven across the land. They were whipped by some soldiers at the direction of a *Syanubhoga*. At the sight of unjust persecution of the farmer couple, Sivappa was exasperated and he ordered the soldiers to desist from this act of cruelty forthwith and release the couple from their servitude. He further punished the soldiers by subjecting them to the same kind of atrocious torture. He ordered them to carry the yoke on their shoulders and drive across the land and he himself whipped them as a retributive punishment. Thus, Sivappa as an ideal king punished the soldier befittingly and rescued the farmer couple from their inhuman torture.

Sivappa Nayaka as a patron of religion, has bounteously patronized monasteries and religious institutions and perpetuated this traditional patronage to Sringeri Matha. The king reconstructed its monastery into a big one with wooden work. It was wonderfully built so as to attract the onlookers who praised the king for his generous contribution.

Sivappa was spiritually inclined to yoga, and he, therefore, invariably absorbed himself in meditation and encouraged people to practise Vajapaya yoga. As he was indulgent in yoga, he continued his practice ever and anon. His devotion to yoga evinced his susceptibility to religion. He conducted the demonstration and practice of Rajasurya yaga for the improvement of his kingdom. Sivappa Nayaka professed his interest in the study of the religious scriptures as well. His striking attributes such as the nobleness, gentility and integrity were eulogized by the subjects.

The Kings and the Emperors usually indulge in luxurious enjoyment and crave for

aggrandizement. They seldom think of leading a religious life of detachment, but Sivappa was exceptionally a devout religious man with yogic aptitude who forsook all earthly enjoyment. At times he remained absorbed in transcendental meditation for the progress of his country. He donated 1000 cows to the Tirtharajpuri Ksetra. He financed Saiva and Virasaiva temples right from Banaras to Rameswaram and facilitated regular worship in them. He established Jangamawadi monastery at Kashi and installed 108 icons of Iswarlingas there at. He donated vast area of land to this monastery. He encouraged the study of Virasaiva scripture and initiation of *Istalinga* worship. He patronized celebration of various festivals and delivery of discourses for spiritual awakening among the subjects. He built many temples in the kingdom of Keladi. Although he belonged to Virasaiva religion, yet he encouraged other religions like Monisim, Dualism, Jainism, Buddhism and Islam.

Sivappa Nayaka contemplated to protect the forest and hence he banned the felling of trees. He expressed his love for trees in the following words “We have got to protect our trees as if they are human beings” (P.118). It was brought to his notice that the traders exploited the farmers by cutting 100 of trees on payment of cost of one tree. This kind of exploitation provoked the king to restrict this trade. Hence, it is stated that it is a crime to exploit them. Sivappa Nayaka realized the importance of trees as well as the service of the farmers. He gave an inspiring lecture to the accused about the utilitarian value of forestation and agriculture. People, who listened to his lecture, realized their guilt for their ignorance of these facts. Sivappa Nayaka imposed ban on exportation of trees and women in order to maintain the dignity of this country. The king initiated and maintained the tradition of growing trees round the cities and towns. He deliberately ordered the building of temple inside the forest for the purpose of preventing people from robbing trees on religious grounds. Forests were looked upon as Divine Forest. “A tree is more useful than fire. It is better to plant a tree than to worship fire” (P.132). He recommended plantation of trees and afforestation in graveyards and directed people to transform it into a penance grove. People who took initiative to protect the trees were exempted from payment of land revenue. Those, who indulged in the act of deforestation, were punished in the form of fine or excommunication. Cases of robbery of trees were filed in the court with a view to prosecuting the robber.

Besides, the king undertook the task of promotion of education. He facilitated the teaching of Sanskrit and scriptures, grammar of spoken language, poetry and philosophy. The king was liberal minded to promote the studies of Saivism, Virasaivism, Vaisnavism, Jainism, Islam and Christianity. He upheld the Vedic tradition and culture. He exhilarated the Brahmins with abundant gifts and encouraged them to promote the Vedic culture and facilitate it to flourish. Foreign visitors were impressed by the sound policy of his educational system, and they admired the king for his promotional activities in the interest of education.

As the Raja was a champion of law and order, he himself formulated rules and regulations conducive to the interest of the subjects and maintained it strictly. He was determined to enforce social and legal discipline in his kingdom. He had a tendency to punish the anti-social elements, hooligans, and protect the helpless who became victims to vandalism. He espoused the virtuous and punished the criminals with death sentence. He drastically subjugated vandalism and punished the wicked merchants and intermediaries for extorting exorbitant money from the common people in the form of tax. He, further, took punitive measures against all the criminals who took to robbery, deception, theft, abduction of women and womanization. His administration was free from corruption and anti-social activities and hence it was credited by the foreign visitors who were pleased by the prevailing discipline and

order in the kingdom. The subjects of Keladi were law abiding and they paid taxes regularly without default.

Sivappa Nayaka undertook many welfares works for the betterment and enlivenment of the mode of living of the common people in the religious perspective. He himself encamped every week a court in the *Chavadi* Offices of different towns in order to enable people to air their grievances and seek justice. He scrupulously responded to public grievances and solved their problems at a short notice.

Besides, he had a tendency to invite common people to his Darbar hall and enable them to ventilate their complaints which he listened to with attention. The Raja himself was moving among the people in disguise in order to familiarize himself with their problems. He executed the charter of demands put forth by people in order of their priority and urgency.

He often convened meetings of the ministers and the courtiers in order to arbitrate the disputed matters and took decision on the basis of consensus. He further, established new towns for the settlement of merchants, artisans and workers of different professions. These were the laudable services rendered by the king for the benefit of the common people.

Another task of king's interest was the installation of a statue of Nandi a bull in every temple of the kingdom to facilitate its worship. In this context the king accepted the suggestions given by the public that bullocks should not be employed on Monday in order to give them rest. They must be bathed, fed sumptuously and worshipped by the farmers. Further Sivappa Nayaka himself suggested that farmers should also take rest on Monday. These suggestions were welcomed and entertained by the King from a religious point of view.

Afterwards Sivappa and Venkatappa came to the Darbar hall in disguise and observed the nefarious turpitude in which Diwan Puttanna and Mrityunjaya were involved. The observation of their revelry with liquor and womanization enraged them and excited them to taunt them scurrilously. These nefarious activities profaned the Darbar hall and consequent upon its defilement committed by such profligate persons, the king ordered its purification and sanctification. Besides, it came to their notice that Diwan Puttanna and Mrityunjaya were implicated in the illegal trade of supplying native girls, spices, cardamom, pepper and other food materials to the Portuguese merchants without the knowledge of the king. They carried on supply of these things furtively in defiance of prohibitory imposition and defalcated the money themselves. The sudden and surprise inspection of the iniquitous activities carried on surreptitiously by these two miscreants served to discourage them and undermined their clandestine enterprises.

One day the Raja launched an expedition of conquest and he first of all attacked the *palegar* of Aiguru and defeated him. Then he proceeded to Swadi Kingdom and defeated Madhulinga Nayaka the king and annexed his territory to Bidanuru. Consequent upon his discomfiture Madhu appealed to the Raja to return his kingdom to him. In compliance with his request Sivappa obliged him returned his kingdom out of sympathy and made friends with him. This incident shows how the Raja was merciful and considerate and therefore he pardoned his enemy with a liberal heart. Madhulinga Nayaka acknowledged the generosity of the Raja who generously returned his kingdom without hesitation. Such an incident of magnanimity of a King is rarely illustrated in the history of India.

His most significant contribution was the protection of the king of Vijayanagara. He offered him the kingdom of Belur and treated him with exuberance of hospitality on account of which the King Vijaynagara expressed his gratitude to him in the following words "Dear Sivappa Nayaka, I had never thought, I would wear the crown of happiness" (P.146). Further the emperor Srirangaraya gratefully acknowledged the hospitality accorded to his family by the Raja who offered him kingdom of Belur with a generous and liberal mind.

Towards the later part of 1658 the relation between the Portugeuse and the Sivappa improved to a great extent as a result of which the former took the advantage of this pleasant relationship to demand land for construction of a few churches and also the authority to convert the willing Indian to Christianity. In response to their request the king offered them some pieces of land for the purpose and imposed restriction on their programme of Christianization and prohibited them from forcing any one to embrace their religion. He, however, authorized them to carry on their missionary propaganda with constraint. The gift of land and the authority for preaching of Christianity exhilarated the Portuguese and motivated them to owe their allegiance to the king. This affair evidences the high mindedness of the king. Any other king would have denied them the privilege which they secured and enjoyed.

The preceding three paragraphs focus on Sivappa Nayaka's effort to revive conciliatory rapprochement and alliance with the kings of the neighbouring kingdoms and the Portuguese who were exhilarated by his generosity. It is now relevant to highlight the king's personal attributes which manifest in his benevolent services to the citizen of Bidanuru.

An incident that glorifies the activities of the king is his magnanimity which is attributed to his payment of homage and respect to the statues of the late servants of the palace. One day, while visiting the temple of Lord Rameswara with his wife Rani Lingamma, Sivappa bowed down to the images of Yadava and Murari who were the most dedicated servants of the palace of Bidanuru. He asked his wife also to pay respect to them. Their statues had been sculptured in the temple to commemorate them. The King's respect to the statues of the servants signifies his greatness and loyalty.

Another incident that evinces Sivappa Nayaka's kindness and mercifulness is the pity he betrayed towards the harlots who were entrapped in the fort of Honnavara. They were miserably afflicted by hunger and thirst without mitigation. The king extricated them from suffering by releasing them from captivity. They were provided with medical treatment on humanitarian ground. Afterwards they were all employed as sweepers, artists and dishwashers in various temples for which these women gratefully expressed their indebtedness to the king for having benevolently provided them with livelihood and ameliorated their condition.

Further, the slaughter of his enemies in the battle with the commander Ranadulla Khan melted his heart. He was dismayed and saddened by the pitiable sight of the decapitated heads of the soldiers of Ranadulla Khan. Dalavayi Guligowda who was a royal servant of the kingdom was appointed by the former king Virabhadra Nayaka. He was a veteran fighter. He was in the good books of the king for his heroism and loyalty. He defeated the soldiers of Khan and decollated their heads out of anger. As he rolled their decapitated heads before the King, he grieved this tragic scene and directed Guligowda to bury the heads of the soldiers ceremoniously and reverentially ignoring the enmity with Ranadulla Khan. This incident also proves his nobleness for his feeling of pity and respect towards the enemies.

Another instance of king's broad mindedness is evidenced by his respect to Huvamma a florist

and a spy. As she was handed over to Sivappa Nayaka by Virabhadra Nayaka for the protection of the former he treated her as his mother and addressed her, "Dear mother Huvamma" (P.87). As she prostrated before him, he spoke to her "What are you doing Huvamma you are reverend to me like my own mother" (P.87). This kind of attitude to women speaks highly of his respect to the community of women.

Sivappa Nayaka was so much sociable and high minded that he conducted the emperor Srirangaraya and his wife to the temple of lord Nilakantheswara of Bidanuru and thereby professed his nobleness.

Sivappa Nayaka was such a king who did not forget to stick to his commitment. He had earlier consented and assured Chandrika the daughter of *Devadasi* Sundari to marry her, but he was away from her due to his awful engagement in administrative affairs. Afterwards he recollected how Chandrika had treated him during his suffering from wound caused by the shooting of arrows. He regretted his forgetfulness and felt guilty of his noncompliance with his commitment to marry her. He repented for his unintentional indifference to keep contact with her. With this feeling of repentance, the Raja directed Appanna, the priest of the temple to trace out Chandrika and present her before him. As Chandrika was found out with her defaced appearance, he revived his love for her and wedded her without inhibition and compunction. Any other king would have rejected her on the ground of her loss of beauty, but the king Sivappa was so broadminded and an agreeable man that he married her without regretting her defacement. After his marriage with Chandrika, the Raja gradually developed a sense of detachment from worldly enjoyment. As Chandrika had requested the Raja to excavate a lake at Anandapura, he consented to it and materialized it.

The Raja conquered most of the human vices and took to a virtuous life of abstinence, benevolence, charity and detachment from worldly pleasure which elevated his personality as a noble ruler. The citizen of Bidanuru by and large admired him enormously for his virtue of humility, approachability and magnanimity. When the Raja met the Holiness Prabhuswamy at his monastery the latter extolled him and said, "Rulers like you are very rare in human history" (P.79). The Raja deservedly ascended to the great height of celebrity by the ladder of his distinguishing qualities and parts. No king of India was so noble and magnanimous as Sivappa who was eulogized profusely by foreign dignitaries.

After a lapse of some months, Sivappa Nayaka became ill and remained confined to bed. In spite of his indisposition, he exhorted his attendants to do what is desirable. He advised his wife to devote herself to her domestic performances and worship of God. After inculcating moral and spiritual precepts to his wife and the attendants standing around his bed, he breathed his last and left the mortal world. No king has ever exhorted any one along the religious line to ennoble himself and lead a virtuous life. Thus ended the life of a noble king of Keladi.

A noble king like Sivappa Nayaka has never been born in this land who glorified his kingdom by his laudable and magnanimous services to the subjects. He was unparalleled and unsurpassed in the matter of contributions to the society. He is memorable for his significant achievements for the sake of the kingdom of Bidanuru.

It is contextually relevant to highlight the dedication and contributions of some of the kings of the Vedic period. The first ideal king was Ramachandra the king of Ayodhya. He was an embodiment of divine attributes. He was kind-hearted, sympathetic, compassionate, liberal-hearted, tolerant, magnanimous, painstaking and sociable. His administration was designed

to promote peace and understanding in his kingdom. All his activities were intended for the well-being of the common people. He is enshrined as a God in Indian epic for his nobleness and magnanimity.

The next King adorable was Harishchandra who has been iconized as a charismatic ruler for his selfless dedication and charitableness on account of which his life has been mythologised as an ideal king to perpetuate his memory. He was kind-hearted generous, munificent and magnanimous. He sacrificed all his wealth and even his kingdom to Viswamitra the sage, who wanted to test his generosity by demanding his kingdom which Harishchandra readily offered to him and underwent a long period of tragic and catastrophic circumstances for his sacrifice and relinquishment of terrestrial enjoyment. Such Kings like Harishchandra were rarely born in India. He is ever reverent and memorable for his noblest sacrifice.

There is a rare illustration of a Buddhist king named Shibi Jataka who surpassed all his successors and predecessors in sacrificing his own corporeal figure to rescue a dove from the attack of the hawks. As the generosity of Shibi proliferated and attained the pinnacle of popularity, two gods Agni and Indra descended from heaven in the incarnation of hawks to test his munificence. The hawks chased a dove to devour it. The dove flew towards the throne of the king out of fear and sought his protection from them. In view of the predicament of the bird the king rescued it and negotiated with the hawks and offered to sacrifice the flesh of the body in requital of the dove. In accordance with the negotiation the king slashed the flesh of his body and continued slashing it and weighing it in proportion to the weight of the dove, but the bird outweighed his body where upon the king offered his entire body for the consumption of the hawks. This incident was merely an ordeal imposed upon the king by the gods Agni and Indra to test his bountifulness. Such an example of the sacrifice made by a king for the protection of a bird is rarely depicted in Indian mythology. The sacrifice of Shibi is a legendary story of unprecedented generosity of a king.

Indian history heralded the dawn of a new edge of Kushan dynasty with Kaniska as its first king. (78-144 BC) He occupies a significant position as a patron of Buddhism. He was tolerant and impartial towards the non-Hindu religions and adopted a path of religious activities for promotion of welfare of the subjects.

The next ideal ruler among the Hindu kings was Chandragupta Maurya. He ascended the throne in the 2nd century 375 B.C. His administration was remarkable for his sound methods and systematic governance. The capital city of the empire was Pataliputra. It was being administered by six municipal boards which looked after the foreigners and supervised the manufacture of different commodities. It also regulated the weights and measures; market prices excise duties and registration of birth and death. Besides, inter-caste marriage was also strictly prohibited during his regime. These were some of the beneficial works planned out and executed by Chandragupta for the benefit of the subjects.

Another noble king was Ashoka (272-231) who was in the beginning a Chandashoka and later on became a Dharmashoka. He was cruel and war monger in the inception of his princely life and subsequently he underwent an attitudinal change and became pious and compassionate. He adopted a policy of religious tolerance and ensured freedom to people to lead life according to their own principles and choices. He established hospitals for men and animals. Banyan trees were planted on both sides of highways in order to provide shade to the pedestrians. Mango groves were laid to provide fruits, wells were dug, rest houses were built, and irrigational facilities were also provided to the people to facilitate agricultural works. He is

reported to have built about 8000 temples and 1000 tombs. A class of officials was engaged for propagation of Buddhist doctrines. Such were the noblest services provided to his subjects by Ashoka for which he is known prominently as a benevolent ruler in Indian history.

At the advent of the Muslim rule in India many Muslim kings appeared in the political scene of India who adopted the policy of conquest and consolidation with an imperialistic objective and embarked upon their expedition of war one after another but exceptionally there appeared a popular emperor who was never belligerent and war monger. He was Akbar whose regime is known as a golden period in Indian history of the Mogul period. His administration is notable for reformation. He looked upon the Muslims and the Hindus as equal and treated them impartially and indiscriminately. He was unbiased in his dispensation of justice to the subjects. He ungrudgingly patronized the religious activities of the Hindus. There was considerable assimilation of the culture of the Hindus and the Muslims. He forbade the killing of animals. He appointed the Hindus in the services of his empire and won the title "Guardian of Mankind". He tried to achieve integration among the people of all religions, castes and creed. He encouraged study of Mathematics, astronomy, philosophy, and medicine. He abstained from consumption of beef, garlic, onion and liquor. He became a pure vegetarian in his later life. He led a saintly life and ennobled his personality as an emperor. Akbar was an embodiment of all admirable attributes for which he is known as a noble king of India.

Akbar's predecessors were Muhammad of Ghazni, Sher Khan and Aurangzeb who were known as tyrants. They conquered the kingdoms of the Hindu empire and devastated the Hindu temples and monuments. Besides, they depredated the treasure conglomerated in different temples. One of them was Aurangzeb who was dreadfully a tyrant. He ruthlessly slaughtered the Hindus to assert his supremacy in his kingdom. He ordered his courtiers to convert the Hindus forcibly to Muslim and persecute those who declined for conversion. He plundered the wealth of this country and utilized it for his aggrandizement and for the welfare of the Muslim community. He is therefore ill-famed as a cruel tyrant and recorded in history for his ignoble and infamous tyrannical rules.

The other Muslim rulers were also tyrants but not so inhuman and brutal like Aurangzeb. The only Muslim ruler who was popular as an emperor was Akbar.

Thus, one may notice some of the best qualities of the earlier kings of India like Ramachandra, Harischandra, Shibi-Jataka, Chandragupta Maurya, Ashoka and Akbar ideally combined in Raja Sivappa Nayaka of Keladi Kingdom. The ideals preached and practised by him are relevant to the present day India and provide a role model to our political rulers. Many of the policies and strategies followed by Raja Sivappa Nayaka are to be seen in those of our beloved Prime Minister Sri Narendra Modi. Thus the historical novel written by Dr. Basavaraj Naikar on Raja Sivappa Nayaka becomes contemporary due to its relevance and present-ness of the past.

In the light of the life and achievements of the ideal kings of India it is concluded that the name of Sivappa Nayaka, the king of Keladi is inscribed in Indian history as an exceptionally noble ruler for his prodigious contributions to the welfare of the kingdom of Keladi.

A comparative study of the life and achievements of Sivappa Nayaka and those of other Hindu kings who ruled over this land till the advent of the Muslim rule focuses on the nobleness and magnanimity of the former who stands prominently as an illustrious king of Keladi and excels all his contemporary rulers as a luminary in kingship. He is enshrined as a legendary figure and

commemorated from time to time as a source of inspiration and imitation. Despite the lapse of many centuries of years since his regime the citizens mostly of South India have been singing the glory of his selfless dedication to the kingdom of Keladi. The denizens of Karnataka often celebrate reverentially and pompously the patriotic contributions and achievements of the king Sivappa Nayaka with songs and slogans that reverberate in the socio-political atmosphere of the towns and cities of the state.

Dr. Basavaraj Naikar's historical novel, *A Noble King of Bidanuru* is a product of his strenuous research in the medieval history of middle Karnataka, wide reading on the subject and artistic talent to reconstruct the history in a highly readable and enjoyable form of fiction. All the major characters come alive as the ethos of the seventeenth century has been recreated successfully. The novel succeeds to a great extent in giving us a rich and unforgettable experience of history.

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