



## A BRIEF NOTE ON ALIA RAMA RAYA (A.D. 1484 - 1505) – A TELUGU ORIGIN RULER

### Literature

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### KEYWORDS

Medieval South Indian History witnessed a few greatest personalities of political field. Among them Rama Raya was a prominent warrior and statesman and De-Facto ruler. Rama Raya, son of Sri Ranga Raya was born in A.D. 1484 in modern Kurnool district in South western Andhra desa. To brief up his parentage, Chalukya Bijjala was his fore father and he served the Araviti clan. During the period of Saluva Narasimha Raya, one of his commanders Araviti Bukka Raya won the various battles in favor of Vijayanagara king. He had two wives, Balla Devi and Abbala Devi. Rama Raya, was the son of Abbala Devi. He won the area of Kandanavolu (modern Kurnool) and made it his political seat. He had three sons Timma Raju, Konda Raju and Sri Ranga Raju by his wife Lakkamamba. Sri Ranga Raju settled at Kandanavolu fort. He had five sons in them Rama Raya was third one.

Rama Raya was only a year old when Saluva Narasimha seized the throne from the last Sangama king. By A.D. 1505 when he was at 21 years of age, he had already lived in two dynastic changes from Sangama to Saluva and from Saluva to Tuluva and had witnessed a good deal of raw power politics. Seven years later he enlisted in the service of the Sultan of Golconda, the eastern most of the five new successor States to the erstwhile Bahmani Kingdom. It is evidently seems that in A.D. 1512 the Sultan Quli had invaded and seized several districts of Vijayanagara territory-very possibly Rachakonda, some twenty five miles south-east of modern Hyderabad. But because the Sultan was unwilling to leave one of his Muslim Officers in charge of the fort there hence he recruited Rama Raya to administer the districts while he himself returned to Golconda. Mr. Richard M. Eaton puts that "Rama Raya first appears in recorded history in A.D. 1512, when Sultan Quli Qutb-ul-Mulk enrolled this Telugu warrior as a military commander and holder of a land assignment in the newly emerged Sultanate of Golconda. It is useful to frame this moment in a larger, international contest. About the same time that Rama Raya took up service in Golconda<sup>2</sup>."

That the son of a prominent Vijayanagara general could so readily take up service in the army of the Sultan of Golconda suggests that for elite soldiers, at least, the entire Deccan constituted a seamless arena of opportunity, and hot, as many historians have imagined, a land divided into a 'Muslim' north and 'Hindi' south, with the Krishna river running between them.

By taking up service for the Sultan of Golconda, then, Rama Raya was adhering to a widespread and longstanding practice. But his services in the neighbouring Sultanate was brief. In A.D. 1515, armies of Bijapur, one of Sultan Quli's rivals to the west and another Bahmani successor state, invaded the districts under Raya's charge. Instead of defending his fort, Rama Raya fled to the court of his royal patron in Golconda. But we don't know what were the exact facts and reasons that contributed for his flee, ofcourse, his insufficient military power and ammunition were less than his enemy. Perhaps these causes forced him to go to his capital Golconda and to reveal the situation prevailed at Kandanavolu to his master Sultan Quli. Viewing this as an act of cowardice, the Sultan dismissed the Telugu/Hindu warrior, who then returned to Vijayanagara and entered in the services of Srikrishnadeva Raya the emperor<sup>3</sup>. This incident brought him to well-known warrior, ruler and great statesman in the History of South India.

Then he joined as a security personnel to Krishnadeva Raya and getting the favors / admirations of his master. One day night Gajapati forces of Orissa attacked on the palace of Krishna Raya, by sensing the danger to his master, he competed and driven away the Orissa forces and saved the vitality of his master Krishnaraya, so, Rama Raya was promoted as one of the commanders of Vijayanagara military forces

after this incident. He accompanied Krishna Raya in a number of invasions took up against Deccan Sultans and a number of victories went to his credit.

Riding the coat tails of Krishna Raya's military success, Rama Raya so distinguished himself on his patron's campaigns that the king, as a sign of royal favor, gave him one of his daughters in marriage<sup>4</sup>. His younger brother Tirumala, also accomplished commander, was given another of the king's daughters, indicating the close alliance between Rama Raya's kin, the Aravidu family and the ruling Tuluva dynasty.

The term 'Alia' means, son-in-law as well as nephew in Kannada and that became his appendage too. Alia Rama Raya proved to be a capable general, administrator, often leading many of the victorious military campaigns under his father-in-law's reign.

In course time, when (A.D. 1529) Sri Krishnadeva Raya passed away, Alia Rama Raya, assumed defacto powers and began to controlled the affairs. When Achuta Raya died (in A.D. 1543), there was a power struggle within the empire, Alia Rama Raya, assuming all powers, as the successor was a minor, and on the other side, there were the nobles, and the queen, who wished to see the right ful heir on the throne. Rama Raya's over bearing attitude, put off many nobles, who now began to break away from the empire. The queen, on the other hand, asked the Sultan of Bijapur, Adil Shah, to come to the aid of her son, which the Sultan promptly took advantage of. The nobles however fought back, and soon Adil Shah, was driven back, the incident, however, created deep fault lines within the empire, that would sooner or later, explode to disastrous effect.

Gradually, the royal efforts were ultimately subverted, however, ambitious Alia Rama Raya who quietly but systematically gathered power around himself and his family, the Aravidu clan. Gradually he emerged as Vijayangara's supreme generalissimo, if not quite king but it happened in stages wise.

#### Rama Raya – Qutb Shahis

Sultan Quli was killed by his son Jamshid's agent Mahmud Hamdani in A.D. 1543. And he ascended the throne of Golconda by betrayal. His (Jamshid) seven years rule was the ugliest and terrible chapter of Golconda history and bears no semblance to the glorious reigns of the later Qutb Shahis.

In the words of A.M.Siddiqui, "Jamshid waded to the throne through bloodshed. His heinous act of patricide never ceased to rouse general resentment and degrade him in the public eye<sup>5</sup>."

During the rule of Jamshid no notable event was taken place with Vijayanagara except an event that the De Facto Rama Raya took involvement in Deccan Sultan's feuds and scored a victory over the Bijapur forces on the river Bhima. Ibrahim Adil Shah, finding that he was backing that wrong horse, broke up the coalition by making concessions to Ahmednagar and Rama Raya. This resulted in an attack on the Golconda kingdom by the Bijapur forces. Soon Jamshid asserted his superiority over all his rivals by his bravery, strategy and diplomacy.

After the murder of Sultan Quli in A.D. 1543, the prince Ibrahim fled to Bidar to protect himself from his cruel brother Yar Quli Jamshid where the Sultan Khasim Barid Shah welcomed him in A.D. 1543. But after some time the Prince Ibrahim did not like the political atmosphere prevailed there. Hence, he left Bidar State. The Prince Ibrahim of Golconda accompanied by Saiyid Hayy, Hamid Khan (an Ethiopian)

and Kanaji, a Brahmin, besides a few personal attendants proceeded to Vijayanagara. On his arrival, the prince Ibrahim was received according to his rank and treated with the utmost respect and attention<sup>6</sup>. Alia Rama Raya had allocated a jagir to prince Ibrahim for his financial needs along with a Masjid constructed for his prayers. It reveals that Rama Raya had religious harmony towards Muslim brothers. Rama Raya also promised prince Ibrahim to make him the king of Golconda. Ibrahim dreams came true in AD 1550 by the death of his brother Jamshid and he sent uncountable and invaluable gifts / presentations to Alia Rama Raya as a token of friendship and help.

In the foreign policy, there was a sudden shift. In the beginning, he had friendly relations with Rama Raya who allowed him to take shelter to escape the wrath of his brother Jamshid. However, in course of time the two became inveterate enemies as their interests clashed on a number of issues. Soon after ascending the throne Ibrahim found that there as a conspiracy replaces him by his brother Dault Quli. A number of conspirators were put to death but their leader Jegadeva Rao, the Naikwari, fled to Vijayanagara where he was well received by Rama Raya which incident angered Ibrahim and he decided to review his relations with Vijayanagara. The developments in Bijapur hastened the shift in Golconda's policy towards Vijayanagara. Ali Adil Shah ascended the throne of Bijapur in A.D. 1558. In the beginning, he was on friendly relations with Rama Raya with whose help he wanted to take back Sholapur and Kalyani from Husain Shah the ruler of Ahmednagar. In this contest, Ibrahim supported Husain Shah. Meanwhile Jegadeva Rao able to induce the Qiladars of Kovilkonda, Panagal and Ghanpur to have over their forts to Vijayanagara army, which invaded Golconda. The Vijayanagara forces occupied a number of other forts of Golconda. Ibrahim sued for peace and sent Mustafa Khan as his envoy to Rama Raya. Ibrahim agreed to cede to Vijayanagara the forts of Panagal, Kovilkonda and Ghanapuram. In return, Rama Raya agreed to return to Golconda the other forts occupied by his troops and feudatories. These all concluded in the treaty of A.D. 1563, marked the zenith of the power of Rama Raya. He took possessions of three important forts of Golconda, eliminated the power of Hussain Nizam Shah of Adhmednagar and dominated over his ally Ali Adil Shah of Bijapur.

This state of affairs foreboded ruin to the Deccan Sultanates. They understood the policy of Rama Raya that he started the practice of playing off one Muslim Sultan against another. They came to realize the disastrous consequences of disunity and began to take steps to being about unity among themselves. Four of the five Sultanates Bijapur, Ahmednagar, Golconda and Bidar joined hands to come together and liquidate Vijayanagara. The first three were in the forefront. A brief account of the battle that was fought in A.D. 1565 between Vijayanagara on one side and the allied forces on the other, as well as the reasons for the fall of Vijayanagara has been given in following lines.

#### The League of Deccan Sultans

The "Four Daccan Sultans" were joined the great confederacy. The rulers of the three States, Ahmednagar, Bijapur and Golconda were in the forefront. Tufal Khan, Prime Minister and dictator of Berar had recently been humbled by Ibrahim Qutb Shah and were not in a mood to join him in any venture. The only fourth Sultan left is the intrepid Ali Barid Shah of Bidar who is reported fighting in the great battle as a participant. It may thus call the united organization the League of the Four Sultans. Berar was not a party.

According to H.K. Shervani "A complete understanding was arrived at and the union was cemented by a triple marriage, Ali marrying Husain Niam Shah's daughter Chand Bibi, Hussain's son Murtaza marrying Ali's sister Hadia Sultana and Ibrahim married the daughter of Husain Nizam Shah-I of Ahmednagar who had also suffered humiliations at the hands of Rama Raya. The three kings of Ahmednagar, Bijapur and Golconda met near Sholapur and swore that they would have a complete unity of purpose against Rama Raya. In order to put an old feud Husain ceded the fort of Sholapur to Ali<sup>7</sup>."

Soon after the marriages, preparations were made for Jihad against the Hindu empire. In the Battle of Talikota (23rd January 1565) Vijayanagara was defeated and Rama Raya lost his life. With this his dream of becoming the Hindu Shah of all Hindustan was in vein.

Speaking about the cause of battle, Sri Mallampally Somashekara Sharma, the famous medieval historian of Andhra history writes, "the

kingdom of Deccan, used to quarrel always for domination over each other. In this, kingdom of Golconda, Bijapur and Ahmednagar were big and Berar and Bidar were small. Among them, if any one of the kingdoms was being developed, another one tries to prevent it. If small states like Bidar and Berar support to the big kingdoms, there was no benefit. When two big kingdoms were used to fight with each other with the support of small one, there was no balance in power among them. So the week one used to seek the support of Hindu Vijayanagara Empire. Rama Raya the 'De Facto' of Sadashiva Raya, used to interfere in the politics of Deccan Muslim Kingdoms and enjoy the political and economical benefits and strategically and diplomatically dominated on one after one, the victorious one was always in the hands of Alia Rama Raya. So the Muslim Sultans were obliged the terms and conditions of Rama Raya. As such, Vijayanagara Empire's De Facto Rama Raya became the dictator for the Muslim kingdoms of Deccan in the 16<sup>th</sup> century<sup>8\*</sup>.

Sri Khandavalli Laxmiranjanam and Sri Balendu Shekaram also expressed their opinions most probably the same<sup>9</sup>.

Soon after the death of Alia Rama Raya, Sadashiva Raya fled to Penugonda, and established an independent state there.

Considering the rhetoric of Vijayanagaras court poets and genealogists, between A.D. 1543 and A.D. 1547, during his early years as regent, the poet Konerunatha Kavi praised members of Rama Raya's family with the extraordinary titles Calikya Cakravarti, Kalyana Rajya-Stapana Caryuudu, calukya-anvaya-Bhava<sup>10</sup>.

A stone inscription in Sanskrit at the great temple of Tirupati, dated A.D. 1561, publicly records a genealogy of Aravidu family that describes Rama Raya's father as 'lord of the excellent city of Kayana' and Rama Raya himself as 'A Narayana of the Calukyays'<sup>11</sup>. Yet, these boasts had no basis in fact since Kalyana is located far to the north of Vijayanagara and had for several centuries been controlled by Muslim rulers first by the Tughluqs, then by the Brahmanis.

However, he controlled and ruled entire South-India directly or indirectly as a back seat driver and he himself found his name with golden letters in the annals of medieval South Indian History.

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