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Archaeological and literature proof on Hunting profession, during Vijayanagara Period - a Review

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Abstract: the Vijayanagara Empire established in 1336 by the Harihara 1st and Bukkaraya 1st of the Sangama dynasty. And it lasted until 1646, although its power declined after a major military defeat in the battle of Talikota in 1565 by the combined armies of the Deccan Sultanates. The empire is named after its capital city of Vijayanagara, whose ruins surround present-day Hampi, now a World Heritage site in Karnataka. The empire's legacy includes monuments spread over South India, and different temple building traditions in South and Central India were merged into the Vijayanagara architecture style. The empire's patronage enabled fine arts and literature to reach new heights in Kannada, Telugu, Tamil, and Sanskrit languages. As a common feature, peasants, animal rears, Hunters, Agriculturists, Hunters, Priests, Craftsmen's, Merchants, Musicians, Dancers, Handicrafts, Guards, or Watchman were the backbone of society. These papers light up the hunting profession during Vijayanagar Empire.

KEY NOTES : Vijayanagara, Tungabhadra, Hampi, Kishkindha, Proudha Devaraya, Harihara, Bukka.

Vijayanagara Empire happens to be one of the important periods of medieval Deccan. It was founded by Harihara and Bukka in 1336 AD with its capital at Hampi or Hosapattana on the banks of the river Tungabhadra. Holliman's archaeological and literary sources are available to study its political, economic, social, and religious aspects.

As a common feature, peasants, animal rears, Hunters, Agriculturists, Hunters, Priests, Craftsmen's, Merchants, Musicians, Dancers, Handicrafts, Guards, or Watchman were the backbone of society. They were popularly called 'Halavu Hadinentu' their occupation based on castes. They contributed in many ways to bloom a powerful and prosperous society of Vijayanagar Empire.

Vijayanagar Empire was based on Varnashrama Dharma, which was traditionally practiced. Basically, Varnashrama Dharma system was a division of castes & labor. The code of Hindu law as enunciated by Manu, that divides Dharma into four classes. First one is Brahmin, second as Kshatriyas, the rulers, third is Vaishyas, the merchants and the fourth class is Shudras who worked

for above three classes or farmers, Craftsmen. As mentioned above 'Halavu Hadinentu' or eighteen professional groups which later came to be known as castes constituted a focal feature of vijayanagara. Hunters or kirathaka was prominent of them. Their contribution to vijayanagara state and society is substantial. Tragically it has failed to gather the attention of scholars. An attempt being made by this article to highlight their role and rendering.

The Hunters were recognized as professional group were also an integral part of administration in Vijayanagara Empire. This union made them more powerful than other groups in the society. The study of these classes or group is the important topic here.

As everyone knows that hunting was the first and basic profession of the mankind in food media. After tasting root vegetables and fruits later he grown a tendency to kill and eat. So for that he started hunting animals and hunting becomes profession. In mediaeval time hunting got a cultural turn in Indian History. According to local legend of **Hampi** the capital *Vijayanagara* Empire, there was a town called Pampa. **Pampa** was the *Manasaputri* of Brahma. She penances here to get **Shiva** as her husband it seems. And at last Shiva pleased from her determination and he married *Pampa*. After marrying Pampa, Shiva called as **Pampapathi**. In another story during the period of Ramayana **Sri Rama** visited this place. And the **Anegundhee** one of the regions in Vijayanagara Empire used to be '**Kishkindhe**' the capital of the famous brothers **Vali** and **Sugriva** it seems. To prove this there are many places named after them. Such as **Pampa Sarovara, Valiya Dibba, Sugriva Gavi**. even today we can see those places.

Hampi is situated in the midst of the mountain ranges. The surrounded Mountains are **Hemakuta, Mathanga Parvatha, Rushymaku, Malyavantha**. the geography of this place is also one of the reason for its reputation of hunting. One more local legend is vogue here. That is once the founder of Vijayanagara Empire the **Harihara** and **Bukkha** gone to forest for hunting, There they seen a rabbit confronted their dog it seems. Vijayanagara Empire and his rules are famous for hunting and it shows not only in their sculpture and even their coins shows as emblem of hunting.

Archaeology has many testimonies or proof regarding hunting. Such as Hero-Stone, Hero-Sati-Stone, Coins, Sculptures, Paintings on Temple Walls and also palaces of **Hampi**, rampart or fort, public buildings, tower of temples, *kalyana Mantapa* and *vasantha mantapa* can be seen. In **Maharanga mantapa** we can also seen swan, horse and also hunters and fighters paintings. The sculptures on **Mahanavami Dhibba** has shown, elephant, camel, horse raiders, servants, scenario of hunting, they decorated these art in engraved with bulge projection. The extraordinary sculpture of a hunter and a huntress who's hunting a deer with bow and arrow can be seen in the same **Dhibba**. And also sculptures of Hunted animal lifted by two people with the help of a stick which is inserted inside the animal and carrying on their shoulders, in front of them a hunter is holding on arrow and

walking with the pride. The other side, Duo hunting, hunting the confronted animals a hero alone fighting with a tiger and inserting a weapon to the tiger's mouth, these scenarios is really remarkable. The other side of the *Dhibba* there are three hunters who holding an arrow and following the wild animals with their hunting dogs, sculptors can be seen.

There is a monument called "*Betegarara Hebbhagilu*", is one of the important monument of Vijayanagara. There are more sculptures which includes hunting scenarios near the door at *Rajarama* temple. There are pig and deer hunters in sculptures. The *Someshwara* temple at *Kamplee* has many hunting engraved sculptures. The *Anjaneya* temple in *Gude Kote* has a hunter sculptor. Tiger hunter Hero-Stone can be seen in *Mariyammana* village temple. There are many incredible coloured paintings are there in *Virupaksha* temple in Hampi. *Lepakshi Virabhadra*, a temple belongs to Vijayanagara period has a scenario of *Shabara Shankara* is in coloured paintings. Engraved bulge projected paintings of Arjuna and Shiva wrestling for the varaha (pig) is outstanding. The Shiva Parvathi honoring Arjuna by giving him the *Paashupathstra* and *Anjanastra* the mystic arrows and leaving in their Nandi vehicle, is engraved in sculptures are there. And also there is a spiritual sculptor of a cowherd who standing in front of Shiva and bowing.

When we analysis the both foreign and Kannada literature, there is a traveler called 'Vaardhema' is referred this place as second heaven and good for hunting and bird catching. Another traveler Barbose says that people from Vijayanagara are good hunters of wild animals and catching bird. Another traveler Abdul Razak mentioned about wild elephants trapping.

When we glance at our national or regional literature, hunting is not only basic need for food but it also considers as a hobby. The hunting consider as a type of fun or pleasure. They called this art as wild account (*mrugaya varnane*). The hunting deemed as warrior religion too. There is a book called "*Rajashekhara Villasa*" is a poetry which spread the importance of the '*Shiva Panchakshari*'. In that book there is significant depiction on wild account is mentioned. This is really a best example for experimental depiction of hunting. The situation in the book is a character called *Pulindha Nayak* goes for hunting. In this book described Hunter features like his strength, appearance, teeth, fat body, red eyes, big mustache, frontal lobe on the forehead of elephant, with his equipment bow, arrow, tranquilizer for animals, pestle, catapult, big net, sharp hook, sword, shield, stone lamp. all this preparations gives the hunting details. Hunting begins with identify the animals through its footsteps next capturing and killing the animal. Targeted animals are rabbit, deer, elephant, tiger, birds, hippos, lions, wolf etc... to know about the animal activities there are many signs and signals to be used before Hunting and after killing the animal there is also a sign called '*Sanna Bete*'.

There is a Sanskrit book called "*Samrajya Lakshmi Pitika*" spill the light on Vijayanagara period culture. When Mr. Radha Krishna Murthy mention about this book he reveal some information regarding the book. There is a reference which speaks about king's knowledge. Means

there are some fields' king should have knowledge about those fields. And also mentions some information on forests and hunting too.

Vijayanagara rulers had many honorary titles regarding Hunting, which proves that their ability towards hunting was remarkable. They excelled in Hunting; Some of them had too many honorary titles. Such as *2nd Proudha Devaraya* had "*Gajaventekara, Gajaventegara, Devendra*" as his honorary titles. Inscription says in A.D.1434 when *2nd Devaraya* came to *Macchenahalli*, a village in *Mollakalmuru* taluk, which is in *Chitradurga* district for the hunting purpose. There he visited *Jattangi Rameshwara* temple, and to mark his hunting trip, he donated a land to that temple as a gift, which has 70 varahas as revenue.

In A.D.1504 *Maha Mandaleshwara* the *Nanjaraja Wodeyar* of *Ummathur*, a dependent province of Vijayanagara has an honorary title called '*Gajaventekara*'. King of Mysore province *Immadi Raja Wodeyar* has "*Gaja Marga Vihara*" as his honorary title and is the one who organized the sports festival. There shows how king's title is related to their hunting's.

Some of the kings are really generous a cooperative. When increased trouble or annoyance from wild animal, the hunters used to inform king and explains the necessity of Hunting and ask his permission for Hunting, to protect their territory. King used to agree and go along with them for Hunting. This poetry gives an example of their act or testament. "*Ekke Hannege Rayage Bheethi mikku Bhinnavisida nintu lekkavillada mrugathita bandha talliyilu pokkadu chittaisenda leeleyemdudu gorate gottavanige Bhopala poyyalu bheriyanu*" And also says in earlier time kings or Empires used to preserve and separate some of the forests for Hunting purpose only.

Conclusion:-

This way can see how hunting profession in Vijayanagara period army includes Hunter Squad and Personal Hunter Squad along with usual army which has Soldiers, Chiefs, Leaders, Reserve Force and Commander In Chief. The Hunter squad and personal Hunter squad always accompanied king both in his Hunting and war expedition with readiness and resolute status. It seems that later they were promoted to higher ranks as Guards, Soldiers and also commander in chief too. That's the reason the Hunters did not restrict themselves for only Hunting, and they participated even in administration. Helped the kings in their wars and contributed substantially to the state is evident.

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