

Vikramaditya



'The creator of an era.'

In the history of the world only a few can be described in these words.

Vikramaditya the Sixth is one of them.

We must have some way of keeping count of the years, mustn't we? Otherwise, when we think of an incident, how can we explain when it happened?

Generally we follow the Christian era. 1947 means one thousand and nine hundred and forty seven years after the birth of Christ. (The Christian Era was followed only by the Christians of the West. It came to us with the dawn (British rule in India). This means Jesus Christ was the creator of an era.

The Government of India now follows the Shalivahana Shaka or Era. It started 78 years after the Christian Era. It takes its name from King Shalivahana. He was the creator of an era.

About 850 years ago the 'Chalukya- Vikrama Era' was in vogue in Karnataka. Vikramaditya the Sixth came to the throne on the 26th

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of February 1077A.D. The Chalukya-Vikrama Era commenced from that date.

The history of Karnataka extends to more than two thousand years. Many dynasties came to power during these centuries. The Chalukyas are one of the greatest of these. Twice in the history of Karnataka they were prominent. The first time they grew powerful Badami or Vatapi was their capital. After 250 years of powerful rule the Rashtrakutas of Manyakheta defeated them. A thousand years ago, in 973, Tailapa the Second of the Chalukya Dynasty became independent. Kalyana was his capital. He was very powerful. He had to face many enemies but he defeated all. Many battles were fought between him and Paramara Munja of Malwa. Munja was defeated and died. Their battles were so terrible that poets have sung their heroism and glory in their poems. The valiant Tailapa ruled for the welfare of the people. Ranna, one of the greatest poets of Kannada, was in his court.

Ranna is famous for the power of his language. He has narrated the story of the duel between Bheema and Duryodhana who fought with maces, and the victory of Bheema and the defeat of Duryodhana. Ranna has compared his patron king Satyashraya, the son of Tailapa, to Bheema. Satyashraya was as powerful as his father was. He subdued all his enemies. For about 225 years the Chalukyas ruled once again in Karnataka. Vikramaditya the Sixth who proved to be a genius as a warrior and as a king belonged to this dynasty.

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Vikramaditya's greatness came to light even when he was still young. He said 'no' when the high position of the Yuvaraja was offered to him. Someshwara the First was Vikramaditya's father. He had three sons Someshwara the Second, Vikramaditya the Sixth and Jayasimha the Fourth.

From the very beginning Vikramaditya was very bright and bold. His father was very proud of him. When Someshwara the First ascended the throne he was surrounded by many enemies in the neighboring states. There was utter enmity between him and the Chola king Rajadhiraja. They fought repeatedly. In the end Rajadhiraja died. The other states, too, attacked the Chalukya kingdom. So, Someshwara realized that it was not easy task for any one whom ascended the throne to defend and to retain it.

Someshwara always thought that only a hero of heroes could keep the throne. Someshwara was watching his sons to decide which of them was fit to be his successor. His eldest son Someshwara the Second was not a strong man. Vikramaditya was a veritable lion. So the king thought that he was fit to be his successor. 'This boy can defend the kingdom and protect the people' thought the king.

King Someshwara was growing old. He thought it would be better if one of his sons became the Yuvaraja or the Crown Prince. He, the king, himself would have assistance in defending the state and also in the government; the subjects also would begin to respect him as their future king and the boy himself would get the training needed to rule the kingdom.

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The boys completed their education. One day the king sent for Vikramaditya. He said, "My boy, you will be my successor. When I am alive I want you to be Yuvaraja. My burden will be less, and you too, will gain experience."

A lad just on the threshold of youth; the high place of the Yuvaraja had come to him, unsought.

How tempting! How overjoyed should he have been!

I do not want to be the Yuvaraja. Someshwara is elder to me. Give him the place," said the boy.

The king was astonished and overjoyed. He was all admiration for his son. He blessed his son.

The eldest son Someshwara Second became the Yuvaraja.

Though Vikramaditya was not the Yuvaraja he had to shoulder son responsibilities. The petty states in India were always fighting among themselves. The Paramara king, Bhoja of Malwa, died. Two persons, Udayaditya and Jayasimha, fought for the throne. The former sought the help of the Chola king. The latter requested Someshwara the First to help him. The Chalukya king sent an army led by Vikramaditya to assist Jayasimha. Vikramaditya entered Malwa, defeated Udayaditya and put Jayasimha on the throne. On his way back he camped on the banks of the river Krishna. There he received the sad news of his' father's death. His father had been drowned in the river Tungabhadra. Vikramaditya was overcome with grief. He returned to Kalyana after the religious rites connected with his father's death were completed.

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In 1068 AD, his brother Someshwara the Second ascended the throne and assumed the title of 'Bhuvanaika Malla' (The Matchless Wrestler of the World).

The new king was no much experienced in wars. The enemies thought it was the most favorable time for them to attack his kingdom. Veerarajendra, the Chola king, led an army against him. The Chalukya army pushed back the Chola army; Veerarajendra ran away. Someshwara the Second divided his kingdom into many zones. He appointed his brothers to look after these regions. The Yuvaraja, Vikramaditya, went to Gangavadi and Jayasimha the Fourth to Nolambasindavadi as the representatives of the king.

Do you remember that Vikramaditya had helped Jayasimha of Malwa? In the second battle Udayaditya defeated Jayasimha and became the king of Malwa. Jayasimha again sought the help of Someshwara the Second. This time he did not send his brother because he did not trust him. Someshwara was afraid that Vikramaditya would gain the help of the king of Malwa and would become more powerful; he feared Vikramaditya would be a danger to him. So Someshwara himself led an army to help 'Jayasimha, but in vain. Udayaditya defeated Someshwara who returned in shame.

The Chalukyas had already defeated Virarajendra, the Chola king. He thought he could capture the Chalukya kingdom in the absence of the king, who was in Malwa. So he marched at the head of an army and captured a town called Rattepedi. But he had completely overlooked the prowess of the Yuvaraja. Vikramaditya, with an army, challenged the Chola army. Instead of fighting, the

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Chola king entered into negotiations with Vikramaditya and gave him his daughter in marriage. He also gave him the Karnataka region, which was under his control. Vikramaditya knew that his brother did not trust him. Thinking his Chola alliance would be an asset against his brother, he gave consent to the marriage.

There is a saying 'Man proposes but God disposes.'

Vikramaditya found that his alliance was no longer an asset but a liability. Instead of the Chola king helping him, Vikramaditya himself had to help the Chola king. After the death of Virarajendra, the subjects revolted against Vikramaditya's brother-in-law Adhirajendra. He could not suppress the revolt. Vikramaditya helped him in securing the throne. (But Adhirajendra lost the throne soon, because the Eastern Chalukya king, Rajendra the Second, defeated him.)

The king, Someshwara the Second, continued to distrust his younger brother, Vikramaditya. Because of this distrust, he had not sent his brother to help the king of Malwa but, instead, himself led the army, but came back defeated. It was a period of incessant wars. So many kings were waiting to snap up the Chalukya kingdom. If the king was not powerful, there was every chance of his losing the kingdom. The people were not happy in such times. They had to live in the shadow of danger. They wanted a powerful ruler to protect them. Someshwara the Second was neither powerful nor interested in his duties. But Vikramaditya, unlike his brother, was interested in the welfare of the people. Things went from bad to worse 'in the kingdom. Vikramaditya thought' of taking charge of the kingdom.

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But this was not easy. After all Someshwara was a king. Even he had his supporters. Vikramaditya had to act thoughtfully and cautiously.

Some chieftains were loyal to the king, Someshwara. Vikramaditya thought winning over these persons to defeat brother. He married the daughter Kadamba Jayakeshi of Goa and won support. He made friends with some others. Then he assumed the title of 'Tribhuvana Malla'.

The title 'Tribhuvana Malla' (Meaning, 'The Wrestler of the Three Worlds) was used by emperors. The king, Someshwara, was upset when his brother assumed the title. The king thought that the friendship of his brother with his vassals was a sign of danger. He made friends with Kulottunga the First, the Chola king. Now if there was a conflict, Vikramaditya would find himself between two enemies- his brother Someshwara the Second at home and Kulottunga the First, the Chola king.

Kulottunga laid seige to Kolar, which belonged to Vikramaditya. So the war began. The Chola army was defeated. Vikramaditya wanted to make his position strong before Kulottunga could recover and come to the help of his brother. So he declared war against his brother and defeated and imprisoned him. What happened to Someshwara thereafter we do not know.

By this time Vikramaditya had gained good experience by taking part in many wars for about twenty years. He had fought for his father and his brother, and defended the kingdom. He had never known defeat.

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The unexcelled, valiant Vikramaditya was crowned king on the first day of the bright half of the month of Chaitra in the year Pingala, corresponding to the 26th of February 1077. On that day began the 'Chalukya--Vikrama Era'.

During Vikramaditya's reign there were constant wars between states. He, too, was not without enemies. Some kings were jealous of him. But the people enjoyed peace and prosperity during the greater part of his reign. Kulottunga tried his best to undermine his prosperity. And Vikramaditya, too, tried hard to weaken him. After some time they gave up such attempts. So they lived for forty years without meddling with each other's affairs, But in the last days of Vikramaditya's rule, peace was disturbed and he had to use force. A small kingdom called Vengi belonged to the Chola king- Kulottunga. After the death of Kulottunga, Vikramaditya sent his army and captured Vengi.

Jayasimha the Fourth was Vikramaditya's younger brother. Vikramaditya treated his brother with affection even after he became the king. Jayasimha, too, was a great support to his brother. The king installed Jayasimha as the Yuvaraja and sent him to Banavasi as his representative. He had full faith in his brother. Some of the territories conquered by the king were added to his province and the king made his brother the governor of this bigger province. The king Jayasimha behaved like a worst dictator; and he used his power absolutely in corruptness. He never used it for the welfare of the state or for the use of his own people. This proved true in the life of Jayasimha. He was at first good and loyal. But his ambition grew with the increase of

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power. He envied his brother and conspired against him. So he forgot his duty as the representative the king. He forgot that he was there to look after the welfare of the people. He began to harass the people and looted the rich. He strengthened his army. He entered into an alliance with the cruel tribal people living in the forests. He-trying to bring about quarrels among his brother's friends.

Those who loved Vikramaditya and were loyal to him reported to him what was happening.

Vikramaditya could not believe that his beloved brother was working against him. Though Vikramaditya had been faithful to his elder brother, he had been suspected. The brothers had fought. The king did not want to fight with his younger brother, too. Someshwara had misunderstood Vikramaditya and had suspected him without reason. Vikramaditya did not want to commit the mistake Someshwara had committed. He sent some officers to find out the truth.

The spies returned with the information that Jayasimha was working against the king.

The king was very unhappy. He did not like to use force against his brother. So he sent a message to Jayasimha. He reminded him that, though he did not have the title of a king he had all the power and the work of a king. He told him that it would be foolish for brothers to fight, and advised him to be affectionate and loyal to his brother.

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Jayasimha could not understand the love of his brother. He thought his brother was weak and, therefore, had sent such a friendly message. He thought he could defeat the king and set out with an army. He reached the banks of the river Krishna without any opposition. A few chieftains who were under Vikramaditya joined him and this gave him added hopes. He harassed the people of the territories that came under his control. He sent an insulting message to his brother.

Vikramaditya himself led his army and marched towards the Krishna. Even then he did not have the heart to fight with his brother. He tried to make peace with him, but in vein. The arrogant Jayasimha called his brother weak. The battle commenced. At first Jayasimha had the upper hand. The king's soldiers ran away from the battlefield. The king moved on an elephant. He collected his scattered soldiers and encouraged them to fight. Jayasimha's army was frightened. The defeated Jayasimha ran away from the battlefield and tried to escape into the forest. The king captured Jayasimha's horses and elephants. His wives were imprisoned and in the end the king's soldiers, too, captured him.

Jayasimha was brought in chains before the king. He was so ashamed that he could not look at his brother. He stood with his head bowed. He thought of the past. Vikramaditya had made him the Yuvaraja; he had added what he had won to his brother's territories and made him the governor. But Jayasimha, instead of fall being grateful, had conspired against him. He harassed people. In spite of this the king had sent a message of affectionate advice. But how had

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Jayasimha behaved? He had called his-brother weak, and sent an insulting message. Jayasimha felt I deserved any punishment the king gave him, because he had committed so many offences, not one or two. Would not the king naturally punish him?

Jayasimha bent down his head in shame, and trembled in fear.

Vikramaditya gazed upon his younger brother. He felt great pity for him. He got his chains removed. He spoke to him with affection. "Do not be afraid, you are not in danger," he assured him.

To some people power is like wine. Without power they are wise and behave sensibly. But once they get power they behave like mad men. Jayasimha was one such man. Before he got power he loved and was loyal to his brother. With the increase of power he behaved like a drunken man.

Vikramaditya pardoned his brother. But he did not give him again the wine of power. He appointed Mallikarjuna, the son of Jayasimha, in his place. This was in 1082.

It would be interesting to contrast the three brothers - Someshwara, Vikramaditya and Jayasimha, and to study how they behaved when they got power. Someshwara forgot that Vikramaditya could easily have become the Yuvaraja; he had refused, and had requested his father to make Someshwara the Yuvaraja. Someshwara was suspicious of Vikramaditya. As a result, he brought trouble upon himself. Jayasimha, too, had become foolish and overambitious once he got power. Vikramaditya remained sane and merciful even when he had power, and had been victorious.

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Vikramaditya had to fight many battles. The three sons of Udayaditya" Jagaddeva, Lakshmanadeva and Naravarma quarreled among themselves. Vikramaditya the Sixth helped Jagaddeva and made him king. But a little later Naravarma usurped the throne. Again the Chalukya king went to the help of Jagaddeva and gave him back the throne. He loved him as his own son.

Jagaddeva was moved by his affection. He gave up his throne and lived as courtier of Vikramaditya. Jagaddeva was entrusted with the task of looking after the territories, which the king had won from the Paramours. Jagaddeva fought many battles for the king.

Vikramaditya and his vassals had to fight against the Hoysalas. Vishnuvardhana was a king of the Hoysala dynasty. Within five or six years of coming to the throne he extended his kingdom and earned the title 'Tribhuvana Malla'. With his army he crossed the river Tungabhadra. By then Vikramaditya had ruled for over forty-five years and was quite old. But when the state was threatened, he grew young in spirit. He defeated Vishnuvardhana and his allies in 1122. He assumed the title 'Vishnuvardhana'. In addition to this he had to fight many battles.

All these happenings show how, in those days, every state was constantly in danger of attack and had to be always ready to fight for survival. Vikramaditya was a hero of heroes, and never tasted defeat.

He was not eager to fight or to shed blood. But, from youth to old age, he was forced to fight again and again. He extended the kingdom upto Hassan, Tumkur and Kadapa in the south, Khammammet in the south-east, and the Narmada in the north. He

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himself led his army. He was a model to his soldiers and his example inspired them. He led his army with great skill. On the whole he 'Vikramaditya' and justified his titles 'Tribhuvana Malla'.

A king may be very powerful, but is that enough? What is the use if he is rich and powerful without doing any good the people? The main interest of the rulers must be the welfare and the happiness of the people.

The man who, when he has wealth and power, does not think of his pleasures and pomp, and who tries to do good to the common man is truly great. As a man's power and money increase, as he rises higher and higher, his own pleasure and pomp may become important to him; if that does not happen, he deserves to be honoured. Those who rule should seek to become kings of their subjects' hearts

Even during his military campaign Vikramaditya did not forget the safety his subjects. Naturally, during wars people are worried and anxious. In those days the army marching from place to place used to trouble the people. The soldiers used to destroy the crops and carry away the belongings of the poor villagers. The victorious army, of course, would enter the houses of the defeated people and plunder them, set fire to houses and kill people mercilessly.

Vikramaditya maintained good discipline in his army and saw to it that the conquered were not troubled. Even during their march, the soldiers did not trouble the people. Usually those defeated would run away for fear of the victorious army and the city would be destroyed. But Vikramaditya took care to see that in the territories he captured

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there was not much trouble or confusion. The routine went on undisturbed. Agriculture, trade, travels and business went on as usual. People were not afraid of the victorious army. In fact, quite often it was only when the soldiers marched through their place that the people came to know that a war was going on. There was no cause for confusion or anxiety otherwise.

The welfare of the people was the cornerstone of Vikramaditya's rule. He visited different parts of his kingdom enquire the welfare of his subjects. He stayed in different towns for a few days so that he could find out for himself how the people fared and what their problems were. He gave them the opportunity explains their difficulties. Kalyana was capital. Yetageri, Vikramapura and Vijayapura were sub-capitals. He spent few days in each of these towns during his travels.

However capable a ruler may be, he cannot himself attend to all the work, can he? The ruler has to choose officers for different types of work and to be in charge of the different parts of the kingdom. They must be given some power; they cannot run to the king for every decision. But the officers must be loyal to the king; they should be made to feel that they will be punished if they do not use their powers justly and if they do not take proper care of the people. So any ruler should-1) choose the officers with great care, 2) give them as much power as their work requires and 3) watch with care how they conduct themselves. Vikramaditya had sincere, efficient and able ministers and generals.

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The most astonishing fact is that many of his officers were scholars; they were interested in literature, music and other fine arts; but they were also excellent soldiers. In times of war they went to the battlefield. In times of peace they helped the king in his administration and encouraged the development of education. They encouraged men of letters. The emperor himself governed certain provinces. The rest were under the control of chieftains obedient to him. The king appointed his brothers and his sons, governors of the provinces, which were under his direct control. He gave the enough powers. He punished those who did not use their powers justly and wisely. He rewarded those officers whom though of the good of the people. Ananthapa who was his representative in Vengi was, loyal to him and loved his subjects. In return for his good administration the king made him master of Puligere, Belwal Banavasi and other places.

Among Vikramaditya's subjects were followers of different faiths--Shaivism, Vaishnavism and Jainism. The king himself was a follower of Vaishnavism. But he respected at the three faiths equally. The subjects were at liberty to choose any of the faiths. The king was god-fearing and generous.

In Vikramaditya's, days women held high places and took part in the administration.

There is an impression that in India women did not have much freedom and were practically imprisoned in the kitchen. But this is not true. Even in ancient India there were women famous for their learning. It is clear from the pages of Indian history that many women were efficient rulers and even led armies on the battlefield and fought

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valiantly. The place accorded to women in the days for Vikramaditya is truly surprising. Women enjoyed all the necessary facilities education. They excelled in music, dancing and other fine arts. Besides, they helped the king in governing the state. His queen Ketaladevi ruled over Shiraguppe, Kolanoor and other cities. Dronapura was under the rule of Lakshmi, another queen. Yet another queen, Chandralekha, did much in the field of education. Mailala Mahadevi built a temple for the god Malleshwara.

The matchless warrior Vikramaditya was also a very generous patron of education and the fine arts. There were many scholars and poets in his court. The poet Bilhana came from Kashmir and stayed in his court. The king honoured this poet with the title 'Vidyapati'. Bilhana wrote 'Vikramankadeva Charita' in Sanskrit. The poem reflects his grandeur and the system of administration of Vikramaditya and the social life of the people. Vignaneswara was another great scholar of his court; he wrote the famous book 'Mitakshara'. Vikramaditya built a city called Vikramapura and constructed a magnificent temple there.

Vikramaditya means the Sun of Valor, that is, one who is powerful as the Sun. Vikramaditya was indeed powerful; and he brought the light of security and peace too.

The people enjoyed peace and prosperity under this valiant king, who loved his subjects. The capital Kalyana was rich and prosperous; splendid palaces and beautiful temples and grand trunk roads made it a magnificent city. Vikramaditya became a model for the rulers of all countries and ages. He showed how powerful a king

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should be and how the king should use his power for the welfare of the people. He showed that the hand that holds the sword should also offer justice and protect the good. He respected all faiths equally. He encouraged poets and artists. He gave all facilities for the education of women. So he ruled for about fifty years in power and wisdom, and won for himself a highly honored place in the history of India. Who if not so wise and great a ruler can inaugurate a new era?.

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