

## Elite Groups, as a factor of Social Change in Fourteenth and Fifteenth Century in Sri Lanka

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### **Abstract**

*The collapse of the dry zone hydraulic civilization is one of the major turning points in Sri Lanka's history. The subsequent period witnessed a paradigm shift in Sri Lankan history which resulted in drastic social changes. The political, social and cultural changes that took place during this period were unique and unprecedented. The existing historical and archaeological records reveal that the basic form and shape of the structure had reached a substantial development during this period. The collapse of the social and political hegemony of the old order created a vacuum in Sri Lankan polity giving rise to new social groups. The newly emerging social and political elite consisted of trading groups, craftsmen, guilds and even forest chieftains known as Vanniyars. These groups which achieved substantial economic power, the former agrarian economy based on irrigation, paddy cultivation as well as chena cultivation also witnessed changes with the increasing importance attached to cash crops such as coconut and cinnamon. Internal trade as well as foreign trade became more important during this period. In this topic, it is attempted to study on Senadhilankara, Alakēsvara or Alagakkōnāra family and some other groups that as a political elite character during this period. The research is mainly based on primary archaeological and literary sources. Wherever necessary material will also be gathered from other limited secondary sources on the ancient social history.*

**Key words:** Senadhilankara, Alakēsvara, Alagakkōnāra, Social change, hydraulic civilization, chena cultivation, elite family

## 1.1 Introduction

The collapse of the dry zone hydraulic civilization is one of the major turning points in Sri Lanka's history that witnessed a paradigm shift resulted in conspicuous socio-cultural and political changes. The available historical and archaeological records reveal that the basic form and shape of the social structure had reached substantial development during this period. The collapse of the social and political hegemony of the old order created a vacuum in Sri Lankan society giving rise to new social values. The former agrarian economy based on irrigation, paddy cultivation as well as swidden cultivation witnessed changes with the increasing importance attached to cash crops such as coconut and cinnamon. Internal as well as foreign trade became more important. At the same time, the newly emerged social and political elite consisted of trading groups, craftsmen, guilds and even forest chieftains known as Vanniya secured substantial political and economic power. This created an upper stratum of society hitherto unseen.

## 1.2 Sēnālamkādhikāra Family

Sometime the members of elite groups were more powerful than the kings. One of the great personages of the time, and the most important as far as the early Gampola rulers were concerned, was Sēnālamkādhikāra. (Kulasuriya, 1976: 142) It was this minister whose name in association with the building and renovation of many important architectural monuments. He built the great Lankatilaka Vihara which forms with Gadaladeniya, three miles away, the two principal monuments of the period. Two lengthy inscriptions of Lankatilaka, (Gunasekara, 1887: 83-95; De Silva, 1912: 360-362) one in Sinhalese and the other in Tamil, and the rock inscription at Alavala Amuna in the Kurunegala District give an account of the building of that shrine and the land dedicated to it by the minister as well as by others. (Hocart and Paranavitana, 1933: 188). He is one of the signatories in the Vigulavatta inscription, (De Silva, 1912: 363) and is mentioned in the *Nikāya Saṃgrahaya* and *Saddharmaratnākara*, (Sugunasara, 1912: 292) and other Sinhalese writings.

Sēnālamkādhikāra is a member descended from the South India. In the *Saddharmaratnākara*, cited before, he is described further as Senevirat Mantriyaṇa, that is a minister who is also the commander of the armed forces. It states also that he is descended from the *Mēṇavara* clan and that he sent much wealth, including pearls and precious stones to the city of Kāñci for the construction of a stone image house. He also caused to build a three storied mansion at Devinuvara to house a standing image of Viṣṇu, another three storied mansion at Akbō Vihāra to enshrine an image of 18 cubits high, and on the hill top named Panhalagala in Sinduruvāna, Udunuwara, land that he inherited as his birthright, he constructed a new, like another mount Kailasa, the lofty royal shrine of Lankatilaka and dedicated for maintenance villages and lands, cultivated fields, wealth, gardens, male and female servants, cattle, and buffaloes, together with many other resources. He also performed many acts of merit, identifying himself with the welfare of the religion, honoured the community of monks, led by the learned elders and prelates and thus promoted the Buddhist religion. The minister, it is said belonged to the *Mēṇavara* family. The name, which first occurs in the records of this period, is equated by Sinhalese writers with *Meheṇavara*, which again is connected with the bringing of the Bo-tree from India. The family or clan is descended from prince Bodhigupta. This prince married Sunanda, a former nun, and the two of them gave rise to the *Meheṇavara* family. Bodhigupta and Sumitra were two princes who along with eight princes, younger brothers of Vēthisādēvi, a queen of Asoka, arrived in the Island in the retinue of Sanghamitta Theri. (Sugunasara, 1912: 294). The family was also known by the general name of *Gaṇavāsi* in the same source (*Ibid.*) where in it is further stated that they received kingship for himself, presumably after being admitted into the royal family. Referring these *Meheṇavara* and *Gaṇavāsi*, Ananda Kulasuriya says as follows:

What strikes one here is, first, the writers' attempts to connect the family name of Menavara with Mehenavara and thus lend it the stamp of authority. It may also be noted that these writers separated by about 16 or 17 centuries from the events they purported to narrate. To urge that the explanation offered to account for the origin of the family is a folk etymology is not to deny or affirm the historicity of the events reported in the traditional accounts. Secondly their claims might have been doubted and therefore needed an explanation and a justification. And the explanation, whatever is validity, must have contributed to their popular esteem and general acceptance. (Kulasuriya, 1976: 143).

Our record states that Sēnālamkādihikāra sent much wealth including pearls and precious stones for the construction of a stone image house at Kāñci. The last name was evidently the place where he or his ancestors in the not too distant past had hailed. He also expended his wealth on the construction of a three storied image house at Devinuvara and other shrines of religious importance. (Jayathilake, 1938: v. 46) The same source mentions the fact that Sēnālamkādihikāra, who was then chief minister, was engaged in the employment of "the four stratagems for the protection of Sri Lanka". It is true that at both these places which enjoyed the ministers' munificence were celebrated shrines. But they were also situated on the Southern coast and one, at least, was an important port. In his own home, where he constructed the Lankatilaka shrine, "like a second mount Kailasa", he also dedicated for its maintenance villages and lands, cultivated fields and wealth and male and female servants, cattle and buffaloes, together with many other resources. The explicit reference to the great wealth expended in these acts of society is unmistakable. More information on the wealth expended on this gigantic construction work is given in a royal charter granted to the temple. The document is dated to the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. The remuneration paid to the artists in rice, gold, silver and cloth was estimated at 3,600,000 metal pieces (*masuran*). For the up keep of the vihara, in all seven *yalas* and twelve *amuna* with all the plantations, with gold, silver, copper, cloth, 200 slaves of both sexes, 400 heads of cattle were given. The extent and layout of the land, the different structures erected and their dimensions, the paintings and sculptures executed in them, and other architectural details would suggest a very large establishment. All this did not prevent the minister from having a life size metal image of constructed in the yard outside the vihara.

Alavala Amuna inscription describes an expression as *tun rajaye sēnāven pihiṭa lat Sēnālamkādihikārayan*. (Paranavitana, 1960: 38-45) Therefore, he was the army commander of the whole of Sri Lanka. But, in addition to the Sēnālamkādihikāra, there is a post called seneviradun in the Gadaladeniya inscription. (Paranavitana, Vol. IV. 1934: 90-110). *Seneviradun* means as the chief of the army. It can be justified that this Seneviradun may have served under the Sēnālamkādihikāra.

We should draw our attention to the title Adhikāra which was used by Sēnālamkādihikāra. This is a title of a profession than a personal name. An inscription of king Kassapa IV mentions an officer Demel Adhikāra. (Paranavitana, Vol. III. 1933: 271). The *Mahāvamsa* describes many adhikāras in Polonnaruva period. After fleeing of prince Parākramabāhu I, Sena and Mahinda, the two adhikāras were assigned to arrest him by king Kitsirimegha. (Geiger, 1992: LXVI, 66). The name Bhāndāgāra Adhikāri was used to the highest officers of the treasury of King Parākramabāhu I. (*Ibid.*, LXIX, 27). King Parākramabāhu I assigned the post adhikāri to Māyāgēha and the post Lankādihikāri to Kirti Dandanāyaka who supported him in his war time. (*Ibid.*, LXX, 278-279). Minister Dēvādihikāri who was in the army of king Gajabāhu II was defeated by the army of king Parākramabāhu I. (*Ibid.*, LXX, 325-326). Kirti Adhikāri was another officer who bore a military post and was the protector of yak ūrātoṭa of king Parākramabāhu I. (*Ibid.*, LXXII, 53)

Rasha Adhikāri similarly protected *nikavālitota*. (*Ibid.*, LXXII, 69-70). Another called Rakkhādhikārin of king Parākramabāhu died in a war like a hero by Mānābharana. (*Ibid.*, LXXII, 154-160). Kirti Adhikāri defeated Nātha Adhikāri of the enemies group. Bhūta Adhikāra who was an expert on war activities was also called *maha āmati* and *senevi adhikārin*. (*Ibid.*, LXXIV, 71-72; *Ibid.*, LXXII, 80-84). In addition to that, Sēnānāyaka Adhikāri, (*Ibid.*, LXXIV, 111) Mañju Adhikāri, (*Ibid.*, LXXIV, 129) Rakkha Demēḷa Adhikāri, (*Ibid.*, LXXV, 20-21) Ādicca Damiḷādhikāri (*Ibid.*, LXXVI, 39) have served king Parākramabāhu I as leaders of the army. Other than that two treasury adhikāris, all other titles may have been included as official names.

The sources describe the officers of Panca pradhānayan. Some of the sources mention the adhikāra as one of Panca Pradhānayan. *Kandavuru siritā* does not mention the adhikāra among the panca pradhāna. Thus Panca Pradhānas are Adhikāra, Senevirat, Āpā, Māpā and Mahā Māndalika. (Sorata, 1931: 85). Some sources say the Mahalenā for the word Mahā Māndalika. (*Ibid.*, 361). *Anāgatavaṃsa* also points out the panca pradhanas as mentioned earlier. (*Anāgatavaṃsa*, 1934: 68). *Nikāya Saṃgrahaya* and *Saddharmaratnākara* mention that king Parākramabāhu I appointed royal officers after the war with foreign countries. The first officer of them was the adhikāra. (Gunarathna, 1987: 17; Sugunasara, 1912: 312). However, it may be well said that the post adhikāra had a very prominent place, because the post adhikāra is mentioned in the first place and officers such as āpā māpā are mentioned after the post adhikāra.

According to the Doratīyava sannasa of King Niśśankamalla, it can be seen that three Adhikāras participated, when king donated a very important Sannasa carrying royal descisions of everyday. (Codrington, 1909: 320-332). Other officers among the participants were the king, ministers, two queens, Māpā and Sēnāpati. Sometimes, it can be believed that adhikāra may have engaged in duties of administrative activities. Agamāti is mentioned as adhikāra in the *Haṃsa Sandēśa*. (Senanayake, 1960: v. 51).

According to the above mentioned facts, the official name adhikāra included the officers of war and administrative activities. Sēnālaṃkādhikāra was the highest elite in the period of king Bhuvanekabāhu IV and king Parākramabāhu V. However, Gadaladeniya inscription records his name after Seneviradun and Virasingha Pratirāja. Then it is a problem that those two were higher than Sēnālaṃkādhikāra. But it is not mentioned the name of Seneviradun. Therefore, it can be decided that Sēnālaṃkādhikāra had an importance place. Sēnālaṃkādhikāra had dedicated many donations than Seneviradun and Virasingha Pratirāja. When Sēnālaṃkādhikāra donated *ek yala dasamunak* of paddy fields, Seneviradun and Wirasingha Pratirāja donated only *sāmunek* or six *amunas*. Therefore, although the name of Sēnālaṃkādhikāra is mentioned as the third person in the inscription, the most prominent place is born by Sēnālaṃkādhikāra.

As mentioned earlier, Lankatilaka vihāraya was built by Sēnālaṃkādhikāra. According to the Lankatilaka inscription, a large amount of wealth was used for the construction of Lankatilaka Vihara. (Paranavitana, 1960: 4-14). The main devotee of the vihara was Sēnālaṃkādhikāra in addition to the king. Sēnālaṃkādhikāra was the main officer of king Bhuvanekabāhu IV and he was the person who acted over and above the king according to the sources. (Paranavitana, 1960: 38-45; Gunaratna, 1987: 21). *Tisara Sandēśa* describes that Sēnālaṃkādhikāra was the agamāti of the king Dedigama Parākramabāhu. (Suraweera, 1991: v. 48). As mentioned above, *Nikāya Saṃgrahaya* and *Rājaratnākara* reveal many facts about this elite. One of his very important roles was the reformation of the Buddhasāsana presided over by the Amaragirivāsi Vanaratana Thera under the patronage of the king. He may have attempted to emulate from this deed the earlier kings who had made reformations of Buddhasāsana. It can be well said that Sēnālaṃkādhikāra was the main personality of the king Bhuvanekabāhu IV due to the reformation of Buddhasāsana. He was also the Agamāti of king Parākramabāhu V in Dedigama. *Tisara Sandēśa* records

that he had to implement four strategies for the protection due to the emergence of enemies. (Suraweera, 1991: v. 48.) But it cannot be seen that he could not destroy the ruling power of enemies.

However, Sēnālaṃkādhikāra who held highest post in the elite group in the Gampola period lost in its importance at the end of king Parākramabāhu V. An officer called Sivalkolu Lakdhivu Adhikāra has signed the Hapugastāna inscription of king Parākramabāhu V. (De Silva, 1912: 362). This may suggest that the position of Sēnālaṃkādhikāra was moved to Sivalkolu Lakdhivu Adhikāra. The name of Sivalkolu Lakdhivu adhikāra denotes first and the name of Sēnālaṃkādhikāra is in the second place in the Vigulavatta inscription (Bell, 79) which can be attributed to 1282 Śaka era (1360). But it is a problem that a royal officer like Sēnālaṃkādhikāra takes the second place to Sivalkolu Lakdhivu adhikāra. Harischandra Abayarathne opines that this Sēnālaṃkādhikāra may have been another one and not the real one. He may have not lived at the time of Hapugastenna inscription. The name Sēnālaṃkādhikāra mentioned in the Vigulawatta inscription may have been a son of Sēnālaṃkādhikāra or another one. But there is no evidence to clear that doubt.

As mentioned above, Sēnālaṃkādhikāra was a descendent of the Mehenavara family and it is derived from the Kṣatriya clan. The post of Sēnāpati was to continue among the members of royal family in earlier time. (Geiger, 1953: XI, 25; XXXV, 59-69; XXXVI, 21-23). Therefore, Sēnālaṃkādhikāra may have been a relative of the royal family. Senarat Paranavitana points out that he was the brother-in-law of king Bhuvanekabāhu IV. He married a sister of both king Bhuvanekabāhu IV and King Parākramabāhu V. (Attigalle, Vol. I, pt. II, 1960: 609) Even though there was no such a relationship with the kings, his power was so extent in the country that it can be seen in the terms used in him such as “Lanka senevirat maharaja” (Paranavitana, 1960: 24-38) and “Lanka Senevirat Bandāra Raja”.

### 1.3 Other elite groups

In addition to Sēnālaṃkādhikāra, other adhikāras were among the elite in the period under survey. Lankatilaka inscription describes Vasalaṃkādhikāra who dedicated lands to the Vihara. (Paranavitana, 1960: 4-14). That name is mentioned in the Lankatilaka copper plate as *vāsala karavū adhikāra*. (*Ibid.*, 24-38). Vigulavatta inscription records a name Parākrama Adhikāra in addition to the Sivalkolu Lakdhivu Adhikāra and Sēnālaṃkādhikāra. It can be seen that these elite emerged as a new powerful group in the society.

Another group of the society in our period was known as Patirājas. It is very justifiable that the term of Patirāja depicts an official title rather than a personal name. Deva Patirāja was the chief minister of king Parākramabāhu II of Dambadeniya. (Geiger, 1992: LXXXVI) Patirājas may have acted as local rulers in this period. However, these polities of relevant period may have been very small ones. Sometimes, these officers acted only nominally. Gadaladeniya inscription records several Patirājas such as Vīrasingha Patirāja, Dēvagiri Patirāja, Bisovala de Patirāja, Niśśanka Patirāja, Vijaya Patirāja and Suva Patirāja. They were royal officers, because they were mentioned in the inscription.

Lankatilaka inscription points out two Satruwan Patirāja and Jayasingha Patirāja. All Patirājas mentioned in the two inscriptions were in the period of king Bhuvanekabāhu IV. Jayasinghe Patirāja mentioned in the Vigulavatta inscription and Lankatilaka inscription may be identical though it is yet to be ascertained. (Bell, 79).

Next, there was a group called Sēnānāyaka among the elites in our period. For example, Gadaladeniya inscription records both Digili Sēnānāyaka and Peragama Sēnānāyaka. The term Sēnānāyaka aṭadenā (eight Sēnānāyakas) is mentioned in the Niyamgampaya inscription. Therefore, it could be concluded that there were several Sēnānāyakas in the same time who can be considered chiefs. These Sēnānāyakas may have had army regiments separately. A Sēnānāyaka who was called Śatruvingha Kuñjara



was invited to compose *Eḷu Attanagalu Vaṃsa* according to the *Hatthavanagalla Vihāra Vaṃsa* in the period of King Bhuvanekabāhu V. (Kumaranatunga, 1933: 1). *Haṃsa Sandēśa* shows that Sēnānāyakas had a prominent place in the Kotte kingdom. (Senanayaka, 1953) Prince Sapumala who won Jaffna is mentioned as Sēnānāyaka in the *Sālahiṇi Sandēśa*. (Senanayaka, 1972). But it cannot be seen that Sēnānāyakas of Gampola period got such a status. However, when Ārya Cakravarti fled to Gampola to wage war, King Bhuvanekabāhu V went to Raigama and the army of the hill country defeated the Tamil army. (Suraweera, 1965: 20-21; Suraweera, 1997: 207-208). Sēnānāyakas may have supported this battle. However, there is no more detail about the Sēnānāyakas from the contemporary sources.

Another elite group is Amātya. According to the *Tisara Sandēśa*, there were some mantris in Dedigama kingdom. (Suraweera, 1991: v. 153). It is not clear whether Vaiśravaṇa was meant by Aḷakēśvaras. But K. Jayatilake says in his *Tisara Sandēśa* edition above mentioned idea as follows;

Sirin veses vesavunu sirigata no	hāra
Mevan namāti mātigaṇa vājambet e	pura

If it is so, it can be said that Alagakkōnāra was in the Counsel of Dedigama King Parākramabāhu. But there is no evidence to prove that idea. After the praising of king, queen and Alagakkōnāra, *Mayūra Sandēśa* requests from the God Vibhisana the protection of the ministers and others. (Gunawardhana, 1928: v. 38). According to that, māti āmati were also among the prabhus or elite in the contemporary society.

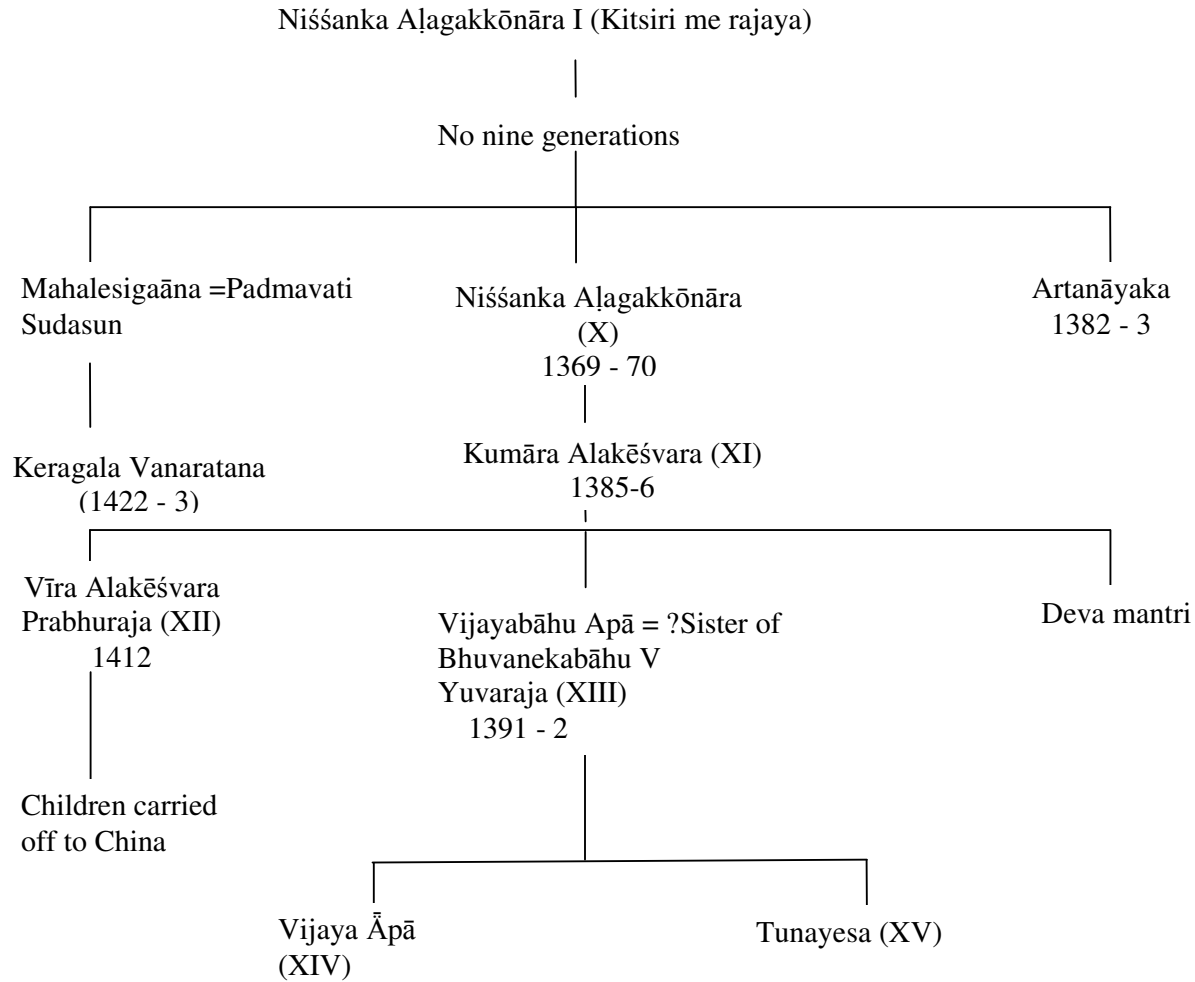
Gadaladeniya inscription says about another officer called Daham Pasaknā. Paranavitana opines that Daham Pasaknā means the officer who had nominated religious activities and he is similar to the Dharma mahāmātra of Emperor Asoka. (Attigalle, Vol. I, pt. I, 516). W. W. Abhayagunawardhana points out that the Daham pasaknā was the minister of judiciary or dharma. (Abhayagunawardhana, 1987).

Lankatilaka and Vigulawatta inscriptions mention a royal officer as Mudali. According to Paranavitana, this is a title newly emerged in the Gampola period. (Attigalle, Vol. I, pt. II, 1960: 694). He says that this is similar to Amātya. This post was very important in the period of Kotte according to *Haṃsa Sandēśa*. (Senanayaka, 1953: vv. 53-54). In addition to that, Gadaladeniya inscription records about an officer called Kēsava Vaṇṇakkan. Vaṇṇaku means as an assessor. Commercial activities were very highly developed in this time and his main duty may have been assessing the commercial goods.

#### 1.4 Alakēśvara family

Another elite family of this period can be named as Alakēśvara family. Some scholars have dealt on the pedigree of the Alakēśvaras. (Perera, 1904: 281-295; Codrington, 1922: 106-107; Codrington, 1932: 260-309; Rasanayagam, 1932: 9-17; 65-68; 114-117; 161-166; De Silva, 1951: 42-45; Paranavitana, 1960: 653-659; Somaratna, 1975: 41-76). They have tried to show activities of Alakēśvaras as naming first Alagakkōnāra was the Niśśanka Alagakkōnāra or Alakēśvara in the time of king Vikramabāhu III. It was during the reign of this king Vikramabāhu III that the great minister Alagakkōnāra rose into power. Political conditions of the period of King Vikramabāhu III are very important. Minister Alagakkōnāra who was a very powerful person in the Sinhalese divisions helped King Vikramabāhu III. Was he the first actual Alagakkōnāra of the pedigrees of Alakēśvaras. ? Kitsirimevan Vihara inscription states that the minister Alagakkōnāra in whose time the inscription was indited (1344 AC) was the tenth in line of descent from the minister Niśśanka Alagakkōnāra of Vañci parapura. Therefore, I suggest first Niśśanka Alagakkōnāra is not the time of Vikramabāhu III, but he can be considered as the tenth one of that generation. The first Niśśanka Alagakkōnāra, person is the first who mentioned in the inscription. Therefore, when we display the Alakēśvara family, there are two Niśśanka Alagakkōnāras, the first and tenth ones. And Niśśanka

Alagakkōnāra who have been considering first one should be the tenth one. When we display the generation of Alakēśvara family, it should be re -edited. (See the chart).



Kitsirimevan Kelani Vihara inscription firstly gives information about the Alagakkōnāras. (Codrington, 1931: 296). The inscription describes that Alagakkōnāra mentioned in the inscription is descended from the generation of *viśiṣṭa vañci* and he is the tenth person of the leaneage of that generation. (*Ibid.*, 296-297). It is accepted that this generation of *viśiṣṭa vañci* came from Kerala in South India. He had political power, because the inscription records a word *Amātyōttamayā* (the greatest minister). Sometimes, he may have served as a minister under a king. It can be thought that this king is Parākramabāhu IV of Kurunegala. After the rebellion of Bōda Māpānan, Wilgammula thero and Alagakkōnāra who stayed with king Parākramabāhu IV may have shifted their center to the present Western province. It cannot be ascertained that there is a connection between Alkonar mentioned by Ibn Battutā (*Ibid.*, No. 86, 262) and this Alagakkōnāra. According to this inscription, this Alagakkōnāra attempted to restore the Buddhasāsana at a time when it was on the decline. The Alakēśvara family played a very important role in the period under survey. Ananda Kulasuriya writes thus;

The rise of this family as typified in the careers of its members would illustrate the dominant and crucial role played by ministers in the politics of the day. The record states that this minister was the tenth in succession, which means that the family was already well established and therefore presumably Sinhalese. The minister's forebears came from Vanci in modern Kerala, which link points to his Malayali extraction. Up to this time Raigama, his ancestral home, had existed as a petty principality and by the end of this tenure of his office, was already staking its claims for independence. The sphere of influence of the Alagakkonaras extended from Raigama of the west coast to Samanalakanda in the central hills and from Kelaniya to Matara on the south-western coast." (Kulasuriya, 1976: 144).

After this Alagakkōnāra, Another Alagakkōnāra can be heard of during the reign of king Vikramabāhu III. According to the Niyagampaya inscription, a minister called Alagakkōnāra served King Vikramabāhu III. (Mudiyanse, 1965: 170-180). The titles such as *Vañci puravarādhiśo*, *vaṇik vaṃśa sikhāmaṇi* and *alaṃkāpati* had been used for this minister. (*Ibid.*, 175). Therefore, this person might be the minister mentioned in the Kitsirimevan Kelani Vihara inscription or his son. The inscription says that this person had destroyed the Ārya soldiers (Ārya Bhaṭṭayan vināśa kaḷa). Therefore this statement may be a hint of defeating the army of Āryacakravarti in Jaffna. The building of Jayamahalenā pirivena with Jayamahale Siṭāna and title of bhāskara, restoration of Kelaniya Lankatilaka Viharaya including other religious activities were done by this Alagakkōnāra. Therefore, the his connection with Kelani viharaya is proved.

It is a question that *Girivaṃśābhijāta Alagakkōnāra mantrīśvarayan* mentioned in the *Nikāya Saṃgrahaya* and Alagakkōnāras mentioned in the above inscriptions are identical. *Nikāya Saṃgrahaya* has given a very long description about the activities of *Girivaṃśābhijāta Alagakkōnāra*. (Gunarathna, 1987: 21-23). According to that description, he caused to build Jayawardhanapura Kotte by the Māṇḍalikas. (*lōka śāsana vināśa karana para saturan mardanaya kirīma piṇisa dakśa vicakśana sēvaka māṇḍalikayan lavā ita śaktimat lesa jayawardhana kōṭṭaya idikaravīya*). Then he fortified the fortress and defeated the army of Āryacakravarti in Jaffna. If the statement of Niyagampaya inscription about *āryabhaṭṭa prhrti* meant the above idea, it can be acknowledged that the person who is mentioned in both inscription is the same person. By this time, *Nikāya Saṃgrahaya* says that the army regiments of Āryacakravarti in Jaffna had been located in Colombo, Vattala, Negambo and they had been defeated by Alagakkōnāra. Paranavitana says that king Vikramabāhu III and Alagakkōnāra received assistance of Āryacakravarti to defeat king Parākramabāhu V. (Attigalle, Vol. I, pt. II, 1960: 610). Even though it is not clear, *Aḷakēśvara Yuddhaya* (Suraweera, 1965: 19-21) and *Rājāvali* describe the same incident. (Suraweera, 1997: 207).

The author of *Nikāya Saṃgrahaya* has no any hesitation to mention that Alakēśvara as king for his great achievement. The author of this book divided kings into five groups and Alagakkōnāra was also included. They are *dīpādirāja* (ruler of the Island), Māṇḍalika rāja (ruler of a district), pradēśa rāja (ruler of a province), antarabhōgika rāja (feudatory noble) and anusāsaka rāja (counselor). Similarly he did many religious activities including the Higher Ordination of the Maha Sangha. *Nikāya Saṃgrahaya* also mentions that he built many pirivenas under his titles of Kāncipura purandara, Girivaṃśa sēkhara, Niśśanka Alakēśvara and he also built separate temples for grāmvāsīn and vanavāsīn.

His important religious activity was the purification of Sanghasāsana under the guidance of Sīlavaṃsa Dharmakīrti Thera. *Nikāya Saṃgrahaya* is silent about king Vikramabāhu III who was the contemporary ruler. Therefore, it can be decided that the main political authority was Niśśanka Alagakkōnāra or Girivaṃśābhijāta Alagakkōnāra and king Vikramabāhu III was only the king nominal at the time.



Sagama inscription also points out an Alakēśvara and his brother Dēvamantrīśvara. (Paranavitana, 1934: Vol. IV, No. 38, 296-311). This Alakēśvara cannot be Niśnka Alakēśvara. Sagama inscription does not mention titles used in the *Nikāya Saṃgrahaya* and Kitsirimevan Kelani Vihara inscription such as *viśiṣṭa vañci parapura* or *vañci puravarādhiśo vañik vaṃśa śikhāmaṇi* for Alakēśvara. Sagama inscription says that Alagakkōnāra belongs to the gaṇavāsivaṃsa from the matrimonial side and meheṇavara vaṃsa from the patriachal side. This status occurred due to the matrimonial alliance Sēnālaṃkādhikāra and Alakēśvara family. It can be thought that Sēnālaṃkādhikāra or his brother may have married a woman from Alakēśvara family. As mentioned earlier, Sēnālaṃkādhikāra may have married a sister of king Bhuvanekabāhu IV and king Parākramabāhu V and king Vickramabāhu III and king Bhuvanekabāhu V were the sons of Sēnālaṃkādhikāra. Therefore, it can be well said that there was a close marital relationship between the Gampola kings and Sēnālaṃkādhikāra family as well as Sēnālaṃkādhikāra and Alakēśvaras. Therefore, it is not clear that there was a contradiction among these two families according to the Paranavitana's opinion. (Attigalle, Vol. I, Pt. II, 1960: 606-607).

According to the Sagama inscription, Alakēśvara Dēvamantrīśvara defeated the enemies and unified the country under the patronage of Senakadagala Nātha swāmi and the God of Nā tree. Although it was depicted from the term used here *ēkāta patra kirīma* was an exaggeration, we can think that there was a very severe attack against the enemies. If this war was similar to the war of *Nikāya Saṃgrahaya* against the Āryacakravarti, both these Alakēśvaras are identical as mentioned in the two sources. But it is not possible to come to a conclusion due to the fact that there are some different terms of two sources. Therefore, these incidents should be taken separately. The reason for that is the inability of defeating the Āryacakravarti as a whole and that Āryacakravarti fought several times with the Sinhala kingdom. The Sinhala leaders may have fought gradually with the army of Āryacakravarti and defeated.

*Eḷu Attanagalu Vaṃsa* was written in about 1304 Śaka era (1382/1383) under the invitation of Alakēśvara and his brother Arthanayāka. (Kumaranatunaga, 1933: 1).

*Tri Sinhalādhiśvara navaratnādhipati bhuvanekabāhu narēndrayāṭa  
agamāti vū Alakēśhvara nam mantrīvarayā hā ohugē sahōdara  
arthanāyaka mantrīge arādhanāyen*

The king mentioned here is King Bhuvanekabāhu V. Alakēśvara was introduced here as

*śraddhā buddhi sampanna ratnatraya śarana parāyaṇa aśaraṇa  
śaraṇa śaranāgata vajra pañjara anavarata dānahētu pupancikrta  
vividha vibhava sañcayīkrta vañci pura pravara pavitra pūrva  
gōtraikakāla prabhūta candra sūrya maṇḍala yugalāyamāna vū Sri  
laṃkādhīśvara Alakēśvara nam Mantrīśvarayānan.*

They again mentioned their Vañcipura origin which is relevant to the Gaṇavāsivaṃsa and Meheṇavaravaṃsa. The title *Lankādhiśvara* shows the power of him over the whole of Sri Lanka. Paranavitana opines that this Alakēśvara is the Alakēśvara who lived in the period of king Vikramabahu III. (Attigalle, Vol. I, pt. II, 1960: 620).

It is problematic that both Alakēśvara - Arthanāyaka are identical with Alakēśvara - Dēvamantrīśvara mentioned in the Sagama inscription. *Mayūra Sandēśa* describes Alagakkōnāra and a brother of his Dev. (Gunawardhana, 1928: v. 155). It is clear that this Dev is Dēvamantrīśvara as mentioned above. Therefore, statements of Sagama inscription and *Mayūra Sandēśa* are correspondency.

Contemporary sources mention that Sēnālaṃkādhikāra came from Mēṇavaravaṃsa, a wealthy upper class family from Kāñcipura in South India. Likewise the Alagakkōnāras were originally traders. Members

of both these families later secured positions as court officials, ministers, army commanders, and so forth. De Queroz mentions that Alaguecara, who founded Cota, was originally a trader. (Kulasuriya, 1976: 149). Codrington has taken this as evidence to prove their Vaiśya origin. (Codrington, 1933: 297; Paranavitana, Vol. IV, 1933: 300). The fact that they took up residence at Raigama may also provide evidence of their mercantile connections. Even after some donations is made for poetical exaggerations in the lines of contemporary *Mayūra Sandēśa*. (Gunawardhana, 1928: 45, 52). The conclusion is inescapable that in both these cities there were flourishing mercantile communities; one was Jayawardhanapura or Kotte, the other was Raigama. Kulasuriya mentions that there was a close link between the trading classes, members of the monastic order and the centers of religious worship. (Kulasuriya, 1976: 149). We have observed earlier how Sēnālamkādhikāra lavished his wealth upon restoration works carried out at important shrines. Other such instances could also be quoted. The connection between religion and the mercantile class is one that goes back to early Buddhist times. The early literature bears witness to the fact that members of that community played an important role in the growth and spread of Buddhism from the time of the Buddha.

The Setṭhis or financiers mentioned in Buddhist literature were great supporters of monks. Tapassu and Bhalluka, the Buddha's first two lay disciples, were merchants. The sites of monasteries and the information contained in many inscriptions show that monasteries were generally established in the vicinity of trading centers or along the trade routes. There is little doubt that many of them were constructed, maintained, and their residents supported by merchants and local inhabitants of the trading centers. After the rulers and members of the royal family, merchants and traders were the most important patrons of religion. A link between the local mercantile community and the centers of religious worship seems to have existed in the medieval period. Vattala, Kotte, Raigama and Vāligama may be cited as examples. There is no direct evidence to show that the new families were immediately connected with this trade, but the fact that two of them which figured prominently in the history of the Island during the century, were wealthy merchant families is significant.

Some other notables who established links with the ruling families were known to Sinhalese writers by the title Siṭāna, the honorific Sinhalese equivalent of Pali setṭhi which means financier. It is doubtful if wealth alone would have taken the new elite to the highest reaches of political power. However, wealthy they might have been, their Vaiśya origins and foreign antecedents were factors to be reckoned with when it came to a matter of political leadership. As mentioned above five categories of kings the māṇḍalika raja would have corresponded to Patirāja or Prabhurāja. The prabhurāja was not a joint king who shared power with the reigning king. The term denoted an influential and coveted title, more prestigious than Yuvaraja, for we have instances of Vīrabāhu Āpā, brother of Vīra Alakēśvara, who used to win the title of Prabhurāja. Although the bearers of these titles never actually became king, they sometimes assumed certain insignia of royalty. Only much later, when reigning kings had become weaker, did they make a bid for sovereign power. This can be observed on the eve of the succession at Kotte, when there was a struggle for power between the brothers Vīrabāhu Āpā and Vīra Alakēśvara, which culminated in the accession of Parākramabāhu VI as king of whole Sri Lanka.

Even though the elite category cannot be applied to the Buddhist monks, there were some monks who were considered in high esteem can be considered as elite. Among them, Totagamuve Sri Rahula who was honoured by the title Shaḍbāśāparamēśvara (Dharmarama himi, 1896: 168) is prominent and he was a relative of king from the matrilineal side. (Tennakon, 1984: iv). He says that the king loved him very much. (Sugatapala, 1920: v. 232). He is a great grandson of Uturumūla Maha thera and he descends from Kandavuru kula. (Sugatapala, 1920: vv. 232-248; Säbihela, 1967: v. 208; Senanayaka, 1972: 110). And he was Parivenadhipati of Totagamuve Vijayaba Pirivena. He was the author of *Parevi Sandēśaya*,

*Kāvyaśhēkharaya, Śāḷalihiṇi Sandēśaya, Pañcīkāpradīpaya* and *Buddhippasādini*, the commentary of Padasādāna.

Although it was named Vidagama himi who became chief incumbent of Vidagama Viharaya, there were mainly two theras in the Kotte period. One of them is Vidagama thera who has adopted the infant Parākramabāhu as mentioned in the *Rājāvaliya*. The other Vidagama thera is the person who had participated in the Higher Ordination of 44 Miyanmar Buddhist monks. That Vidagama thera lived in the Ghanananda pirivena from the later period of king Parākramabāhu VI to the end of the early period of king Parākramabāhu VIII. The thera came from the Mahanetpamula and he wrote *Lōvāḍa Sangarāva* and *Kāvya Lakṣana miṇi mālāva* in the period of king Parākramabāhu VI and *Budugunālamkāra, Haṃsa Sandēśa, Eḷu Attanagalu Vaṃsa* and *Dahamgātamālāva* in the period of king Bhuvanekabāhu VI. (Tennakon, 1980: xxii). Siddhartha Vimalakirti Dhammadinna thera who wrote the *Saddharmaratnākara*, Vāttāve thera who wrote the *Guttīla Kāvya*, Śaḍbhāśāparamēśvara Devīnuwara Tilaka Parivēnādhipati thera, Vanaratana Sangharaja Thera who lived in Kotte Rajamaha Viharaya mentioned in the *Parevi Sandēśa*, Keragala Parivenadhipati Vanaratana thera mentioned in the *Haṃsa Sandēśa* who have participated Miyanmar Convention with 44 theras, Śaḍbhāśāparamēśvara Galaturumula Medhankara Thera who was Parivēnādhipati of Ussapitiya, Bhuvanekabā thera who was the chief incumbent of Kelani Maha viharaya mentioned in the *Haṃsa Sandēśa*, Vikramabāhu Thera who had come to Sri Lanka for the Higher Ordination mentioned in the *Jinakālāmali*, Gatārā Parivenadhipati thera, Saptaratna Parivenadhipati thera, Rammutugoda Dipankara Thera, Niyandavane Phussadeva thera who was Erabattota Dharmaraja Parivenadhipati mentioned in the Keragala Sannasa and Pancamula Parivenadhipati Mangala thera were among the elite Buddhist monks in Sri Lanka in the period under survey.

Sēnālamkādhikāra, Alakēśvaras, Minister Nannūrutunayā who is the author of *Purāna Nāmāvaliya* and the husband of Ulakuḍayadēvi as well as the father of Jayabāhu, Gauḍadeśīya Brāhmaṇa Sri Rāmacandra Kavibhāratī who wrote the *Bauddha Sataka or Bhakti Sataka* and *Vrtaratnākara Pañcīkā*, Minister Paṇikki, the father of Prince Sapumal, Minister Salāvata Jayapala who invited to write *Guttīla Kāvya* and went to see the Chinese Emperor representing king Parākramabāhu VI in 1445, (Batuvantudava, 1885: vv. 5-7). Sitavaka Alagiyavanna Mukaveṭṭi, Kākulandola Sri Vardhana Patirāja who had contributed to the leadership for the *Sihalasange* in Pasyodun Korale was other elite in this period. (Suraweera, 1997: 219).

### 1.5 Conclusion

In the light of foregoing discussion that It was shown that there were two elite families during this time what are called the Sēnālamkādhikāra family and the Alakēśvara family. Both had the origin in South India. We do not hear of Sēnālamkādhikāra family before Gampola period, whereas, according to the Kitsirimevan Kalani Inscription, i.e., Niśśanka Alakēśvara whom we come across in our period as the first Alakēśvara really represents the tenth generation of the Alakēśvara family. The name of the first Alakēśvara of this family is also Niśśanka Alakēśvara. The second to ninth generations are, however, not known as they have not been recorded in the existing documents. The previous writers who have dealt with the family tree of this family have taken the first Alakēśvara lived in our period as the founder of this family and his successive members have been reckoned in order as second, third and so on. We corrected this error. It is surprising that why we do not hear of Alakēśvara family after Parākramabāhu VI. The causes prevented them from earning their survival after this time are yet to be ascertained.

They were very wealthy in economy and they contributed to the Sri Lankan culture in many ways. There were some major factors for emerging of new elite groups. Not belonging to the traditional ruling class, and having their origins in the mercantile Vaiśya community found that wealth was a major

contributory factor in their rise. The second reason was the matrimonial ties with the ruling families that strengthened and stabilized their position. The sea-borne trade was an important external cause which is the third reason for their emerging, for, their involvement and participation in it put them on a sound economic footing. Succession of weaker rules to the throne paved the way for them to capture political power and to enter the other fields of importance. Except those groups, some other groups have been emphasized in this research.

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