



VIJAYANAGAR EMPIRE DURING- 1336 -1672-A BRIEF STUDY



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ABSTRACT

Harihara became the first ruler, and by 1346 the whole of Hoysala kingdom passed into the hands of the Vijayanagara rulers.

Bukka succeeded his brother on the throne of Vijayanagara in 1336 and ruled till 1337. By 1337, the Sultanate of Madurai had been annexed. The beginning of the Vijayanagar-Bahmani conflict started on a large scale during the reign of *Bukka I* in 1367. He also sent an embassy to the Emperor of China. Under *Harihara II (1377-1406)*. He successfully invaded Gulbarga and Bidar and restored the puppet Sultan Mahmud to the throne. To commemorate this act of restoration he assumed the title of Yavanarajya Sthapanacharya. *Krishna Deva Raya* maintained friendly relations with Albuquerque, the Portuguese governor whose ambassador Friar Luis resided at Vijayanagar. His relations with Portuguese were governed by two factors: The copper plate inscriptions such as the Srirangam copper plates of Devaraya II provide the genealogy and achievements of Vijayanagar rulers. The two brothers took possession of Kampili from Hoyasala ruler of Karnataka, Ballala III. They later established a new city on the southern. The Tuluva dynasty was founded by Vira Narasimha. The greatest of the Vijayanagar rulers, Krishna Deva Raya belonged to the Tuluva dynasty. He possessed great military ability. His imposing personality was accompany. The battle of Talikot marks the final downfall of Vijayanagar as a centralized Hindu kingdom. But its local Hindu Chiefs or Nayaks kept hold of their respective fiefs, and the Muhammadan kings of the south were only able to annex a part of its dominions.

KEYWORDS: *Harihara, Bukka, Sangama, Tuluva, Devaraya, Venkatappa, Bijapura, Muslims, Talikote, British, Madras*

INTRODICTION

Foundation:

The Vijayanagara kingdom was founded by Harihara and Bukka of the Sangama dynasty in 1336. At the instance of their guru Vidyanaya, they established their kingdom with its capital at Vijayanagar.

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Bukka succeeded his brother on the throne of Vijayanagara in 1336 and ruled till 1337. By 1337, the Sultanate of Madurai had been annexed.

The interests of the Vijayanagara rulers and the Bahamani kingdom which had come into existence in 1347, clashed in three separate and distinct areas: in the Tungabhadra doab, in the Krishna- Godavari delta and in the Marathwada country.



The beginning of the Vijayanagar-Bahmani conflict started on a large scale during the reign of Bukka I in 1367. He also sent an embassy to the Emperor of China. Under **Harihara II (1377-1406)** Vijayanagara Empire embarked upon a policy of eastern expansion. He was able to maintain his position in the face of the Bahmani-Warangal combination. He invaded Ceylon.

Deva Raya I (1406-22) was defeated by the Bahmani ruler Firoz Shah in 1407. He had to give his daughter in marriage to Firoz Shah. He defeated the Reddis of Kondavidu and recovered Udayagiri. In 1419, he defeated Firoz Shah.

Deva Raya II (1422-1446) was the greatest ruler of the Sangama dynasty. He began the practice of employing Muslims in the army. He was called Immadi Deva Raya. In his inscriptions he has the title of Gajabetekara (the elephant hunter). Dindima was his court poet. Abdur Razzak of Persia visited his kingdom. Deva Raya II is the author of two Sanskrit works Mahanataka Sudhanidhi and a commentary on the Brahmasutras of Badrayana.

There was confusion in the Vijayanagara Empire after the death of Deva Raya II. Since the rule of primogeniture was not established, there was a series

of civil wars among the contenders. After some time, the throne was usurped by the king's minister Saluva Narsimha and the Saluva dynasty was established. Saluva dynasty (1486-1505): Vira Narsimha (1503-04) the regent of Immadi Narasimha, usurped the throne after his assassination and laid the foundation of the Tuluva dynasty in 1505.

Tuluva dynasty (1505-1570): Vira Narasimha had the title of Bhujabala (1505-09).

After his brief reign, he was succeeded by his younger brother Krishna Deva Raya (1509-30 A.D.) who was the greatest ruler of the Vijayanagar Empire. Under him, Vijayanagara

emerged as the strongest military power in the south. He defeated the rebellious chiefs of Ummattur, the Gajapatis of Orissa and Sultan Adil Shah of Bijapur.

He successfully invaded Gulbarga and Bidar and restored the puppet Sultan Mahmud to the throne. To commemorate this act of restoration he assumed the title of 'Yavanarajya Sthapanacharya' (The restorer of the Yavana kingdom). He conquered almost the whole of Telangana from the Gajapati king Pratapraudra and the Sultan of Golconda.



Krishna Deva Raya maintained friendly relations with Albuquerque, the Portuguese governor whose ambassador Friar Luis resided at Vijayanagar. His relations with Portuguese were governed by two factors:

- Common enmity with Bijapur.

- The supply of imported horses by the Portuguese to Vijayanagar.

Krishna Deva Raya was also a great patron of art and literature, and was known as Andhra Bhoja. He was the author of the Telugu work Amuktamalyada and one Sanskrit work Jambavati



Kalyanam. His court was adorned by the Ashtadiggajas (the eight celebrated poets), of whom, Allasani Peddana was the greatest.

His important works include Manucharitam and Harikatha Saramsamu. Krishna Deva Raya also built the famous temples of Krishnaswamy, Hazara Ramaswamy and Vitthalaswamy at his capital. Foreign travellers like Nuniz, Barbosa and Paes speak of his efficient administration and the prosperity of his empire.

After the death of Krishna Deva Raya, the struggle for succession followed among his relations. After the uneventful reigns of Achyuta Raya and

Venkata, Sadasiva Raya ascended the throne in 1543. But the real power was in the hands of Rama Raja, the son-in law of Krishna Deva. The Bahmani rulers except Berar combined to inflict a crushing defeat on Vijayanagar in the Battle of Talikota or Rakshasa-Tangadi in 1565.

This battle is generally considered to mark the end of the great age of Vijayanagara. Although the kingdom lingered on for almost one hundred years under the Aravidu dynasty founded by Tirumala Raya with its capital at Penugonda, it came to an end in 1672.



The three ancient kingdoms, Chera, Chola, and Pandya, occupied the Dravidian country, peopled by Tamil-speaking peoples. Pandya, the largest of them, had its capital at Madura, and traced its foundation to the 4th century B.C. The Chola kingdom had its headquarters at Combaconum and Tanjore. Talkad, in Mysore, now buried by the sands of the Kiveri, was the capital of the Chera kingdom 288 to 900 AD. The 116th king of the Pandya dynasty was overthrown by the Muhammadan general Malik Katur in 1304. But the Musalmans failed to establish their power in the extreme south, and a series of Hindu dynasties ruled from Madura over the old Pandya kingdom until the 18th century. No European kingdom can boast a continuous

succession such as that of Madura, traced back by the piety of genealogists for more than two thousand years. The Chera kingdom enumerates fifty kings, and the Chola sixty-six, besides minor dynasties.

The authentic history in Southern India begins with the Hindu kingdom of Vijayanagar or Narsinha, from 1336 to 1672 AD. The capital can still be traced within the Madras District of Bellary, on the right bank of the Tungabhadra river, vast ruins of temples, fortifications, tanks, and bridges, haunted by hyaenas and snakes. For at least three centuries, Vijayanagar ruled over the southern part of the Indian triangle. Its Rajas waged war and made peace on equal terms with the Muhammadan Sultans of the Deccan.



The latter part of Muhammad bin Tughlaqs reign witnessed a spate of rebellions by the nobles

and provincial governors. The rebellion of Hasan Shah resulted in the establishment of the Madurai

Sultanate. In 1336 the Vijayanagar kingdom was founded. In 1347 Bhamini kingdom was established. The history of Vijayanagar Empire constitutes an important chapter in the history of India.

Four dynasties

1. Sangama,

2. Saluva,

3. Tuluva and

4. Aravidu ruled Vijayanagar from

AD 1336 to 1672.

The sources for the study of Vijayanagar are varied such as literary, archaeological and numismatics. Krishnadevarayas Amukthamalyada, Gangadevis Maduravijayam and Allasani Peddanna's Manucharitam are some of the indigenous literature of this period. Many foreign travelers visited the Vijayanagar Empire and their accounts are also valuable. The Moroccan traveler, Ibn Battuta, Venetian traveler Nicolo de Conti, Persian traveler Abdur Razzak and the Portuguese traveler Domingo Paes were among them who left valuable accounts on the socio-economic conditions of the Vijayanagar Empire.

The copper plate inscriptions such as the Srirangam copper plates of Devaraya II provide the genealogy and achievements of Vijayanagar rulers. The Hampi ruins and other monuments of Vijayanagar provide information on the cultural contributions of the Vijayanagar rulers. The numerous coins issued by the Vijayanagar rulers contain figures and legends explaining their titles and achievements.

The year AD 1336 saw the emergence of a new power, the kingdom of Vijayanagar in the south-western part of Andhra on the banks of the Tungabhadra. It was founded by two Sangama brothers, Harihara and Bukka, with the blessings of a great saint patriot of medieval India, Vidyaranya, and Harihara became its first ruler. It was that great kingdom which, by resisting the onslaughts of Muslims, championed the cause of Hindu civilisation and culture in its polity, its learning and arts.

Harihara and Bukka of the Sangama dynasty were originally served under the Kakatiya rulers of Warangal. Then they went to Kampili where they were imprisoned and converted to Islam. Later, they returned to the Hindu fold at the initiative of the saint



Vidyaranya. They also proclaimed their independence and founded a new city on the south bank of the Tungabhadra river. It was called Vijayanagar meaning city of victory.

The decline of the Hoysala kingdom enabled Harihara and Bukka to expand their newly founded kingdom. By 1346, they brought the whole of the Hoysala kingdom under their control. The struggle between Vijayanagar and Sultanate of Madurai lasted for about four decades. Kumarakampanas expedition to Madurai was described in the Maduravijayam. He destroyed the Madurai Sultans and as a result, the Vijayanagar Empire comprised the whole of South India up to Rameswaram.

The two brothers took possession of Kampili from Hoyasala ruler of Karnataka, Ballala III. They later established a new city on the southern bank of

Tungabhadra, opposite Anegondi, and gave a name to it as Vijayanagar or Vidyanagar. They expanded their territory by occupying the Udayagiri fort in the Nellore region and Penukonda fort from Hoyasalas. Meanwhile the Bahmani Kingdom came into existence in the Deccan. In the conflicts between the Bahmanis and Vijayanagar, Harihara-I lost some territory. After his death in AD 1355, his brother Bukkaraya succeeded him. On account of frequent wars with Bahmanis, Bukka could not do anything in the initial period, however, he conquered Madhura and extended his territory to the south up to Rameswaram.

Harihara II (AD 1377-1404), who ascended the throne after Bukkaraya, consolidated and its frontiers further extended. During this time coastal Andhra lying between Nellore and Kalinga was



under the Reddis of Kondavidu. Harihara II carried on campaign, for gaining control over the territory, against the Reddis and wrested Addanki and Srisailam areas from the Reddis. This led to clashes with the Velamas of Rachakonda in Telangana. To counter attack, Rachakonda sought help from Bahmanis and this checkmated Harihara II from proceeding further into Telangana. The extension of Vijayanagar territory towards northwest gave it control over the ports of Goa, Chaul, and Dabhol and led to an expansion of commerce and ensuing prosperity.



The next ruler, **Devaraya II (AD 1426-1446)**, son of Vijayaraya, was a great monarch. He effected the conquest of Kondavidu and carried his arms into Kerala, subjugating the ruler of Quilon and other chieftains. The writings of Abdul Razzak, the Persian ambassador, who visited south India during the reign of **Devaraya II**, bear testimony to the supremacy of the king over many ports of south India. According to him, the dominions of Devaraya II extended from Ceylon to Gulbarga and from Orissa to Malbar. The relations between the Vijayanagar and Bahmani kingdoms continued to be hostile during the reign of Devaraya II also. Devaraya was a great builder and a patron of poets. Extensive commerce and revenues from various sources contributed to the prosperity of the Vijayanagar kingdom under him.

In the dispute between sons, after the death of Harihara II, Devaraya I (AD 1406-422) emerged victorious and ascended the throne only to wage wars against the Bahmanis, the Velamas of Telangana and the Reddis of Kondavidu. His reign also saw the commencement of hostilities between the Gajapatis of Kalinga and the Rayas of Vijayanagar. Devaraya I died in AD 1422. His sons, Ramachandraraya and Vijayaraya I, who ruled one after the other, did not do anything significant.

But the kings who succeeded Devaraya II were quite incompetent and allowed the empire to disintegrate. To add to this, there was pressure from Bahmani Sultans. The Portuguese were also rapidly trying to establish themselves on the west coast and in the ports along it.

The conflict between Vijayanagar Empire and the Bahmani kingdom lasted for many years. The dispute over Raichur Doab, the region between the rivers Krishna and Tungabhadra and also over the fertile areas of Krishna-Godavari delta led to this long- drawn conflict. The greatest ruler of the Sangama dynasty was Deva Raya II. But he could not win any clear victory over the Bahmani Sultans. After his death, Sangama dynasty became weak. The next dynasty, Saluva dynasty founded by Saluva Narasimha, reigned only for a brief period (**1486-1509**).



The Vijayanagar minister, Saluva Narasimha, who usurped the throne in AD 1485 could successfully counter these forces. Thus the Saluva line of kings came to rule Vijayanagar. However, he had to spend a good deal of his time and energy putting down many rebel chieftains. He died in AD 1490 leaving his two sons to the care of Narasanayaka of the Tuluva family, a trusted general. Narasanayaka assumed himself the power as a regent in AD 1492 keeping the real rule under tutelage. **Narasanayaka** died in AD 1503 and by that time he had established his authority effectively over the whole of his extensive dominion. His son, Vira Narasimha, succeeded him as the regent and proclaimed himself as a ruler in AD 1506, thus inaugurating the third dynasty. He died in AD 1509 and his brother, Krishnadevaraya, succeeded him.

The period of **Krishnadevaraya** was considered as the golden age of the Vijayanagar history. He was a great warrior, statesman, administrator and a patron of arts. His first task was to repulse the Bahmanis. He occupied Raichur doab, carried the war up to Gulbarga and returned successfully. He extended his dominion in the east

and north-east by defeating the Gajapatis of Orissa in AD 1518.

The Tuluva dynasty was founded by Vira Narasimha. The greatest of the Vijayanagar rulers, Krishna Deva Raya belonged to the Tuluva dynasty. He possessed great military ability. His imposing personality was accompanied by high intellectual quality. His first task was to check the invading Bahmani forces. By that time the Bahmani kingdom was replaced by Deccan Sultanates. The Muslim armies were decisively defeated in the battle of Diwani by Krishna Deva Raya. Then he invaded Raichur Doab which had resulted in the confrontation with the Sultan of Bijapur, Ismail Adil Shah. But, Krishna Deva Raya defeated him and captured the city of Raichur in 1520. From there he marched on Bidar and captured it.

Krishna Deva Rayas Orissa campaign was also successful. He defeated the Gajapathi ruler Prataparudra and conquered the whole of Telungana. He maintained friendly relations with the Portuguese. Albuquerque sent his ambassadors to Krishna Deva Raya.



Though a Vaishnavite, he respected all religions. He was a great patron of literature and art and he was known as Andhra Bhoja. Eight eminent scholars known as Ashtadiggajas were at his royal court. Allasani Peddanna was the greatest and he was called Andhrakavita Pitamaga. His important works include Manucharitam and Harikathasaram. Pingali Suranna and Tenali Ramakrishna were other important scholars. Krishna Deva Raya himself authored a Telugu work, Amukthamalyadha and Sanskrit works, Jambavati Kalyanam and Ushaparinayam. He repaired most of the temples of south India. He also built the famous Vittalawamy and Hazara Ramaswamy temples at Vijayanagar. He also built a new city called Nagalapuram in memory of his queen Nagaladevi. Besides, he built a large number of Rayagopurams.

Krishna Devaraya died in AD 1529. After his death, Vijayanagar kingdom started declining gradually. There was a tussle for power and the rulers spent their time in struggle against internal revolts. The five Muslim rulers in Deccan kingdom, took this opportunity, united and formed a league and marched towards Vijayanagar with combined forces. Achutadeva and Venkata succeeded the throne. During the reign of Rama Raya, the combined forces of Bijapur, Ahmadnagar, Golkonda and Bidar defeated him at the Battle of Talaikotta in 1565. This battle is also known as Raksasa Thangadi. Rama Raya was imprisoned and executed. The city of Vijayanagar was destroyed. This battle was generally considered to mark the end of the Vijayanagar Empire. However, the Vijayanagar kingdom existed under the Aravidu dynasty for about another century. Thirumala, Sri



Ranga and Venkata II were the important rulers of this dynasty.

The administration under the Vijayanagar Empire was well organized. The king enjoyed absolute authority in executive, judicial and legislative matters. He was the highest court of appeal. The succession to the throne was on the principle of hereditary. Sometimes usurpation to the throne took place as Saluva Narasimha came to power by ending the Sangama dynasty. The king was assisted by a council of ministers in his day to day administration. The Empire was divided into different administrative units called Mandalams, Nadus, sthalas and finally into gramas. The governor

of Mandalam was called Mandaleswara or Nayak. Vijayanagar rulers gave full powers to the local authorities in the administration.

Besides land revenue, tributes and gifts from vassals and feudal chiefs, customs collected at the ports, taxes on various professions were other sources of income to the government. Land revenue was fixed generally one sixth of the produce. The expenditure of the government includes personal expenses of king and the charities given by him and military expenditure. In the matter of justice, harsh punishments such as mutilation and throwing to elephants were followed.



The Vijayanagar army was well-organized and efficient. It consisted of the cavalry, infantry, artillery and elephants. High-breed horses were procured from foreign traders. The top-grade officers of the army were known as Nayaks or Poligars. They were granted land in lieu of their services. These lands were called amaram. Soldiers were usually paid in cash.

The last ruler of Vijayanagar kingdom was Sri Ranga III. These local Muhammadan dynasties of Southern India preserved their independence until the firm establishment of the Mughal Empire in the north, under Attar's successors. For a time they had to struggle against the great Hindu kingdom of Vijayanagar. But in 1565 they combined against that power, and, aided by a rebellion within its own borders, they overthrew it at Talikot in 1565.

In a decisive battle fought on the 23rd January, 1565 on the south bank of the Krishna near the village of Rakkasi Tangadi, Vijayanagar was defeated and Ramaraya, who led the Vijayanagar armies, was killed. Tirumalaraya, the younger brother of Ramaraya, along with his puppet ruler,

Sadasivaraya fled to Penukonda in Anantapur district with all the treasure. The victorious armies of Muslims then marched towards Vijayanagar. Uninhibited looting of the city by the Muslim rulers as well as the ruthless robbers went on for days together. Never perhaps in the history of the world has such havoc been brought and wrought on such a splendid city teeming with a wealthy and industrious population in prosperity one day and on the next seized, pillaged and reduced to ruins amid scenes of savage measures and horrors begging description.



The battle of Talikot marks the final downfall of Vijayanagar as a centralized Hindu kingdom. But its local Hindu Chiefs or Nayaks kept hold of their respective fiefs, and the Muhammadan kings of the south were only able to annex a part of its dominions. From the Nayaks are descended the well - known Palegars of the Madras Presidency, and the Maharaja of Mysore. One of the blood-royal of Vijayanagar fled to Chandragiri, and founded a line which exercised a prerogative of its former sovereignty, by granting the site of Madras to the English in 1639.

Tirumalaraya after reaching Penukonda ruled for some time and tried his best to rebuild the empire but failed. The last ruler of Vijayanagar dynasty was Sriranga (AD 1642-1681). The Rayas of Vijayanagar regarded all sects of Hindus alike, built temples to Siva and Vishnu and patronised them by lavish grants. They patronised even Jains and Muslims. The Vijayanagar architecture fused various elements of the Chalukya and Chola art, and produced extremely beautiful gopuras and mantapas. The most typical of them can be found at Tirupati, Tadpatri, Srikalahasti

and Penukonda. The Tadpatri and Lepakshi temples are the notable examples of Vijayanagar architecture and sculpture.

Telugu language and literature was given a preferential treatment and Telugu was treated as official language of the empire. Simultaneously, Sanskrit and other languages were encouraged by the Vijayanagar rulers. The renowned Telugu poet Srinatha was honoured with Kanakabhisheka by **Proudhadevaraya** of the first dynasty of the rulers. Particularly, the reign of Krishnadevaraya marked a new era in the literary history of south India.

He was himself a scholar and authored **Amuktamalyada**, a celebrated Telugu work. His court known as Bhuvanavijayam, was adorned by such eminent poets like Allasani Peddana, Nandi Timmana, Dhurjati, Tenali Ramakrishna, Mallana, Ramarajabhushana, Pingali Surana and Rudra, known as Ashtadiggajas. The greatest of them was Allasani Peddana whose famous work Manucharitra heralded the eminence of the native genius of Telugus.



Another scion, claiming the same high descent, lingered near the ruins of Vijayanagar, and was known as the Rajd of Anagundi, a feudatory of the Nizam of Haidarabad. The independence of the local Hindu Rajas in Southern India throughout the Muhammadan period is illustrated by the Manjardbad family, a line of petty Chiefs, which maintained its authority from 1397 to 1799.

CONCLUSION

Decline of Vijayanagar

It is likely that the sultans of Golconda and Ahmadnagar, who had lost much at the hands of Rama Raya, were primarily responsible for the formation of an alliance that destroyed Vijayanagar's power forever. By 1564 at least four of the five sultans (Berar is questionable) had begun their march on Vijayanagar, which resulted early in 1565 in the disastrous defeat of the Vijayanagar forces in the Battle of Talikota and in the subsequent sack and

destruction of much of the city of Vijayanagar. Rama Raya was captured and killed, but his brother Tirumala escaped to the south with the king and much of the royal treasure.

Venkata's nephew and successor, **Shriranga II**, ruled for only four months. He was murdered, along with all but one of the members of his family, by one of the two contending parties of nobles. A long civil war resulted and finally degenerated into a series of smaller wars among a number of contending parties. The surviving member of the dynasty, Rama Deva Raya, finally ascended the throne in 1617. His reign was marked by factional warfare and the constant struggle to maintain a much-truncated kingdom along the eastern coast. Although some chieftains continued to recognize his nominal suzerainty and that of his successor, **Venkata III (1630-42)**, real political power resided at the level of chieftains and provincial governors, who were carving out their own principalities. The fourth Vijayanagar dynasty had



become little more than another competing provincial power.

Bijapur and Golconda took advantage of the decline in Vijayanagar's strength to make further inroads into the south, while Venkata III's own nephew Shriranga allied himself with Bijapur. Interestingly, it was Venkata who granted the Madraspatna fort to the English as the site for a factory (trading post). In 1642 an expedition from Golconda drove the king from his capital at Vellore. Hearing that his uncle was dying, Shriranga deserted Bijapur and had he crowned. Although he was able to play Bijapur and Golconda against each other for a time, he could not gain control over the provincial Nayakas, who were by then virtually independent; and, when Bijapur and Golconda finally struck at the same time, Shriranga and the handful of chieftains who came to his aid were powerless to stop them. A last appeal to his Nayakas to come to the defense of Hinduism resulted instead in his defeat by their combined forces in 1645. Meanwhile, Bijapur and Golconda advanced, with the blessings of the Mughal emperor at Delhi, who had suggested that they should partition Karnataka between themselves. The Nayakas realized the danger too late, and by 1652 the Muslim sultans had completed their conquest of Karnataka. Shriranga retired to Mysore, where he kept an exile court until his death in 1672.

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