CHAPTER V

VIJAYANAGARA IMPERIAL IDEOLOGY AND THE SONGS OF PURANDARADĀŚĀ

All empires in history need a justification for exercising power. In the case of Vijayanagara it made certain claims to justify its imperial status. One is that they have freed South India from the invasion of Turks whom they call as Turushka. Secondly, they have restored the Pūrvamaryādai or the ancient order of things i.e a language of restoration not of revolution. Thirdly on the political front they claim that they are Sthāpanāchāryas who restored many of the ancient cultures and re established ancient kingdoms like Chēra, Chōla and Pândya. Thus they make a bundle of claims that justify their imperial power. If we look at the inscriptions of Vijayanagara the idea of restoration of an ancient culture is what manifested itself in their public acts. To do with this they invented a variety of rituals many of which did not have Vedic or Purānic sanction an example of which is Mahānāvami festival. Burton Stein’s idea is that whole Mahānāvami ritual is a way of invoking the blessings of Goddess Durga on the Vijayanagara Empire. To claim its imperial status, the rulers link the political geography of Vijayanagara with the mythical landscape of Kishkinda in mentioned in Vālmīki Rāmāyana. It was about this landscape that Purandaradāśā sang in his songs. He refers to Hampi as Purapampa, where the myth of Pampākṣhētra is associated with. Another important realm in which the Vijayanagara imperial ideology reflected is its architecture. It borrowed scenes from Ramayana and were depicted on the temple walls that certified its claim for its imperial power. Incorporative attitude of the rulers was yet another means of the legitimization of power by the Vijayanagara rulers which is also reflected in its architecture. Vijayanagara existed in a complex network of competing empires and states that vied for territorial and political power across
Peninsular India. These included the Islamic Bahmani Sultanates in the Deccan and the Gajapati rulers of Orissa in the East. Though there were conflicts between Vijayanagara and these polities, it did not preclude other forms of interactions with both ideological and economic consequences.

Recent studies on Vijayanagara empire have reassessed the role of ideology in the establishment of the last medieval polity in Peninsular India. Robert Sewell argued that Vijayanagara stood as a bulwark against the expansion of Islam. By connecting the rise of Vijayanagara with the advent of Islam Robert Sewell unwittingly lay the foundation for a whole school of medieval historiography which frames Vijayanagara Historiography in terms of an antagonistic relationship with Islam. The geo-political rivalry between the two Deccan based states/polities were transformed into an ideological and cultural struggle, a sort of late medieval ‘clash of civilization’ in the writings of several Vijayanagara historians. Burton Stein has pointed out that Vijayanagara was engaged in far greater struggles with the Gajapati kingdom of Orissa than with the Bahmani Sultanates. However the imperial ideology of Vijayanagara is generally seen in religious terms.

If the term ‘ideology’ is defined in terms of pragmatic statements relating to worship and the claims for legitimacy, Vijayanagara experience of statecraft depicts a large variety of ideological statements and presuppositions. The term Pūrvamaryādai or restoration of ancient order of things has figured in early Vijayanagara inscriptions especially with reference to temples in which worship was disrupted due to the invasions of the Turushka. In the case of the famous Śrīrangam temple the inscriptions of Kumāra Kampana describe the restoration of worship and the appointment of priests and ritual specialists. The bonds established in the
fourteenth century were further strengthened in the sixteenth when the Śrī Vaishnava Tatāchārya became influential in the empire particularly during the reign of Krishnadēvarāya.¹

The references to Turushka or turk in the inscriptions of Vijayanagara has made some historians think of the process of state formation essentially in terms of religious identity. Cynthia Tolbott has suggested that the category of Turushka represented the civilizational ‘other’, the mārccha of Sāṃskrit sources. This interpretation overlooks the specific historical events, and particularly inscriptions which speaks of 40 years of anarchy in the context of Vijayanagara intervention in temple affairs such as the instance of the Śrīṅgām temple. The reconstruction of Vijayanagara imperial ideology in post colonial intellectual strategy of mere rhetorical creation as suggested by Cynthia Tolbott ignores the concrete and specific historical situation which was encountered by the Vijayanagara state. As suggested by one historian the interpretation did not take into consideration the specific trope of civilizational disorder engendered by the politico military conflicts with the Sultanates.² The Prōlēya Nāyaka’s grant of 1336 is one of the earliest inscriptions which refers to the civilizational disjunction caused by the raids of the Khalji Sultanate. As the inscription says:

When the sun viz. Prataparudra set, the world was enveloped in the Turushka darkness. The evil Adharma which he had upto that time kept under check, flourished under them, as the conditions were very favourable for its growth.³

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¹ TTD Report, p.259
³ EI, Vol XXXII, pp.239-68
The historical Mahākāvya, Pratāparudra Charitramu, based on the life of the Kākātiya king Pratāparudrādaṇḍa too places the historical situation relating to the end of the Kākātiya dynasty in the same format.

The reference in the inscriptions to Turushka or Turks suggests that the identity was based on ethnicity rather than religion. The term Turushka and the claim of the defeat of the Turushka as an imperial claim is found in several Vijayanagara inscriptions. A Vijayanagara copper plate record states:

“Having conquered Chēra, Chōla and Pāṇḍya together with the lord of Madhura, whose honour was his ornament, the fierce Turushka, the King Gajapati and others -- he imposed his commands on the heads of all the famous kings from the banks of the Ganges to Lanka and from the rising (East) to the setting (West). The same imperial ideology linking conquest, restoration of the ancient kingdoms with the struggle against the Turushka is found in another inscription.”

Vijayanagara’s interaction with the Islam is evident in the realm of architecture, courtly style, royal dress etc. Phillip Wagoner has argued that the title Hindurāya Suratrāṇa or Sultan among Hindu kings which make appearance in several Vijayanagara royal inscriptions is yet another metaphor in which the royal imperial ideology is embedded. Rather than viewing the politics of Vijayanagara in exclusively religious terms, the title Hindurāya Suratrāṇa suggests a harmonious blending of Islamic and Hindu ideas. The influence of Islam is also reflected in the construction of Kadirampur mosque.

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4 Epiraphia Carnatica, Vol X, no.240, p.717
5 Ibid, no.18, p.777

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A song of Purandaradāsā also testifies to the fact that Vijayanagara adopted many aspects of Islam towards their culture. In a song, he sings that God Purandara Viṭhala and Allah are the same.\textsuperscript{6}

The temples like Tirupati, Kānchīpuram, Śrīrangam, Udipi received great royal patronage and it was in these temples that Purandaradāsā visited and sang about. We can not find in his songs any trace of the imperial might of Vijayanagara. But we have more spiritualized version of Vijayanagara there by linking those sacred centres in a very elaborate landscape of sacrality. This would not have been possible but for the concept that this area was a political landscape governed by Vijayanagara that was rendered sacred by the act of ritual presentation and a powerful projection of temples as centres of royal power. Travelling saints and composers drew upon that resource in order to spread the message of Vijayanagara. The temples which he chose are all the temples which Vijayanagara also extended their patronage. It is the poets like Purandaradāsā singing about the temples, giving the message of common spirituality that enabled the divide between the political and the non-political elements to be transcended. It is through the songs of Purandaradāsā that the common people were able to participate in the spiritual life of Vijayanagara. He did not sing about any territory that Vijayanagara lost or any territory that was outside of the Vijayanagara Empire. His songs by creating a web by linking diverse cults, deities together in a way contributed to sacralizing the whole territory of Vijayanagara.

\textsuperscript{6} S K Ramachandra Rao, \textit{Śrī Purandaradāsā}, Bangalore: Directorate of Kannada and Culture, 1964, p.21
The bhakti poets perceived their personal deities as belonging to a place; in their songs can be seen the description of the physical features, their praise of the rivers, the banks of which temples were located, the fertility of land and their context of pilgrimage all point to the significance of land in poet’s vision. Temples formed an important aspect of Vijayanagara political ideology and it also became a source of integration, as seen in the hymns of the bhakti poets. Scholars like Burton Stein have suggested that bhakti – a religious path was primarily directed towards or embraced by the peasant peoples. In a bhakti song of an early medieval poet, we can see that an agricultural scene is transformed into a message of Bhakti.

“Using the plough of truth
Sowing the seeds of love
Plucking the weeds of falsehood
Pouring the water of patience
They look directly into themselves
And build fences of virtue
If they remain rooted in their good ways
The bliss of Siva will grow”

Scholars of Vijayanagara history have undertaken important research on the allocation and production of land to acquire the wealth of data on the economic social and political development of the medieval times. When we look at history of bhakti in the tamil country in the 8th and 9th centuries, bhakti arose among peasant people on the Tamil plains when the region was in political tumult. Similarly in the Vijayanagara empire the ruling class and the peasant alliance was formed, one that had a durable stabilizing force. At a time of socio-political turmoil, the rulers found that victory was possible only through a network of power relations which included

the elements such as the influential members of the imperial dynasties, the Brahmin communities and the local chieftains who were the spokesmen of the peasant class and represented the concerns of the peasants to the imperial and Brahmin communities. The world view of these peasants has been characterized by Stein as bhakti. He writes in his *Peasant state and Society in medieval South India*, “theirs was a religious tradition rooted in the devotional faith of peaceful people of the plain”. In the Medieval South Indian society, bhakti was an aspect of peasant’s life, both peaceful and popular, reflecting the gentle peasant society. The peasant non peasant alliance in the medieval period helped the ruling elites as well as the Brahmin community to bring under control a large number of people who could provide a base of support in times of emergency as well as means of economic maintenance. A song composed by the contemporary poet Kanakadāsā, a Kuruba or the one hailing from the pastoral community display the virtuoso with which the Bhakti composers wove the theme of love, devotion and song in order to provide an integrative framework for marginal groups. The Dhangars whose deity Viṭhoba became the ishtadēvatha of Purandaradāsā had a parallel in the Kurubas who were also a pastoral nomadic group. In a song he wrote:

We are shepherds, gentlemen,

Lord Birayya is our grandfather

Who tends the herd of human sheep

Our grandfather binds and guards

The rams of eight prides and envy,

The goat of individual soul and the he goats of creation.

When the dogs called veda and puran

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Wander about in the herd hungry and thirsty
And find not their path
And bow down to his feet,
Our grandfather offers jowar-porridge
To them affectionately.
When the lambs of awareness frisk about,
The wolf of death sneaks into the herd
And begins to slaughter them from behind,
Our grandfather keeps quite pretending ignorance
There is no beginning to birth or end to death,
Our grandfather knows the secret of birth and death
He prepares jowar-porridge for all the living beings
And feeds them bellyfull. That is our grandfather.
He is the chieftain, companion and minister
For the Kaliyuga and worshipped
By the beings of three worlds.
He who meditates not whole-heartedly
Upon lord Adikeshava of Kaginele
Is indeed a foolish shepherd.9

This song reflects the manner in which Bhakti poets reached to pastoral and nomadic groups. They utilized the language and vocabulary of the community in order to highlight the theme of bhakti and to educate them about the subtle nuances of Vaishnava faith. Adikeshava the

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ishtadēvatha of Kanakadāsā was the major deity of the place Kaginele located in Haveri district of Karnataka. Kanakadāsā has brought in all the themes of devotion to Krishna in this song, similar to what Purandaradāsā did.

Temples which provided an institutional base (it was these temples that Purandaradāsā visited and sang about) became a common platform for the integration of the diverse segments of the society. Though the peasants belonged to the social divide of lower castes they were recognized as moral people who could keep social order among the lower castes – an advantage that Bhakti provided them. At times we can see Purandaradāsā taking sides with these agricultural groups who formed a part of the diverse elements incorporated into the Vijayanagara polity.

In the Vijayanagara empire imperial temple culture brought both brahminic and bhakti modes of religiosity into the pattern of dēvadāna – gift to god which demanded they shared the same ritually defined space – the temple – where dēvadāna was performed. There was a triangular relationship between the king - god – Brahmins. The presence of bhakti in the temple precipitated important and controversial issues of participation. Especially through the songs of Purandaradāsā the common folk of Vijayanagara were able to participate in the religious and spiritual life of the Vijayanagara Empire. Purandaradāsā was singing in and about the temples which were purely within the territorial limits of Vijayanagara Empire. He did not sing about the territories outside Vijayanagara or the territories which the Vijayanagara lost. The bhakti poems of Purandaradāsā tied to the traditional homeland of Vijayanagara proved significant in the empire’s real and imagined maps of influence and affluence. Like any other imperial dynasties the Vijayanagara’s claims to universal ordership as attested in their inscriptions were based on
images of victory over their rivals and prosperity in their lands. The kings of Vijayanagara were able to augment these claims of victory and prosperity considerably as they rose to perhaps the greatest imperial power in the late medieval south Indian history.

The construction and renovations of temples marked the symbol of imperial power of the Vijayanagara. The temple architecture at Hampi especially the royal shrines constructed under the patronage of the rāyas reflect the imperial vision and ideology of the state in several ways. The title adopted by the rāyas, i.e. Chēra Chōla Pāṇḍya Sthāpanāchārya itself suggests that Vijayanagara imperial self image was predicated upon the implied continuity with the earlier historical dynasties of the region. Secondly at the level of monumental architecture, the rāyās deliberately adopted the Chōla and Pāṇḍyan paradigm of architecture. We may quote Sister Anila Verghese here:

“The Vijayanagara polity, by adopting the Chōla-Pāṇḍya paradigm as the imperial idiom of temple architecture, revived the gopura structure after a hundred year gap in its construction and made it a pan-South Indian feature of temple architecture, spreading across the whole of Tamilnadu and much of Andhra Pradesh and Karnātaka”.10

The construction of the gōpura in major temple cities replicating the pattern inherited from the Chōḷa tradition became an aspect of the imperial ideology of Vijayanagara particularly during the early Ṭuḷuvā period. Three storey gōpuras were frequently experimented with at Hampi. These structures include the Rāmachandra temple, the Prasanna Virūpāksha temple and the celebrated Viṭṭhaḷā temple. Further multi tala gōpura structures were constructed at Śrīrangam, Kālahasti, Chidambaram, Ahōbilam, Kāṇchīpuram, Mēlukōte and Tirupati.

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Purandaradāsā visited the following temples which received considerable attention at the hands of the rāyās of Vijayanagara.

1. Tirupati
2. Srīrangam
3. Melukote
4. Kārchipuram
5. Udipi
6. Bēlūr
7. Hampi
8. Nāgamangala
9. Sōmēswara Temple at Kolar
10. Anjanēya temple at Mudbagal

The construction of gōpuras along with the elaborate Hundred pillar mandapas were architectural expression of royal power.

The songs of Purandaradāsā suggest that the temple activities of the Vijayanagara rulers especially at the imperial capital at Hampi was informed not only by king’s desire to own the Thungabadra region, but also by his desire to tie the established sacrality of sites to his rule. The poems of the dasa saints like Purandaradāsā provided an outline of sacred places for the Vijayanagara imperial building programme. The art and architecture of Vijayanagara too reflected the imperial ideology and élan of the empire. The work of George Michell and John Fritz and their team has led to the detailed investigation of the Royal city of Vijayanagara in which imperial ideology was wedded to architectural exuberance. They divided the city into two parts a) Royal centre and b) Sacred centre with a wall running on a North South axis including the two spaces. George Michell writes “Courtly architecture in the Vijayanagara period is also a statement of imperial ambition”. Large palaces whose ruins have been excavated embellished
with ornate tanks fed with water from an elaborate water distributive system from the river Tungabhadra, spectacular platform where the king sat in royal display to his praja, all bespeak of an imperial architecture."}^{11}

The rulers of Vijayanagara controlled the land where the singer saints like Purandaradāsā pilgrimaged and perceived God Vishnu’s greatest presence. In the inscriptions of Vijayanagara one can find reference to the place named i.e. phrases like “God on the banks of Thungabadra” the region sacralized through the songs of Purandaradāsā in praise of God Viṭhala in Hampi. By extending patronage to Vishnu temples on sites sung by Purandaradāsā, the rules like Krishnadevaraya were not just acknowledging Purandaradāsā’s insistence that “Vishnu lies here”, they were also providing Vishnu with an appropriately glorious home. Purandaradāsā through his songs spoke of Vishnu’s constant presence; the Vijayanagara kings enshrined him in permanently endowed temples across its vast territory of the empire. The Vijayanagara rulers drew upon the map of sacrality created by the songs of Purandaradāsā in representing their own sacred power.

In the Vijayanagara empire unlike the early medieval period, no direct references are found, providing any grant for the bhakti saints and poets. In the early Chola period we have numerous inscriptions providing grants to the hymnists or tirupatiyam singers. The inscriptions of those days articulate relationship between the various elements and groups them together and separates them on the basis of performance and place. In the three major spheres representing the three major distinctions in the grant; the centre, middle and periphery of the temple space, the singers of tirupatiyam are located in the middle which distinguishes them from ritual experts and in the process distances them from temple images. This clear evidence of patronage extended to

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the hymnists of the early medieval period cannot be applied to the late medieval South Indian history. One can find that the rulers used the bhakti poets to sell their political message to a wider public and extended patronage to the temples sung by them. There are no direct inscriptive references to Purandaradāṣā other than the Kamalāpura inscription of Krishnadevaraya dated 1526 A.D. ¹² Vyāsarāya is found in an inscription of king Krishnadēvarāya which records the grant of seven villages and lands on different dates between 1513 and 1526 A.D for the worship and offering to god Viṭhala for the worship and offering to god Viṭhalēśvara on festive occasions like worship, daily and occasional, and lamp festival. This inscription shows the direct patronage of the Vijayanagara rulers to cult of Viṭhala and Purandaradāṣā was instrumental in promoting this cult throughout the empire.

The map of sacrality drawn by the songs of Purandaradāṣā may thus be seen as adding a facet of sacred meaning to a dynasty they initially possessed the legitimacy from conquest. The Vijayanagara kings extended patronage to the specific temples sung by Purandaradāṣā. Yet they understood the hymnist’s map to apply more generally to their lands. The devotion to Vishnu continued to be primarily represented in the Vijayanagara temples through the songs of Purandaradāṣā, now homogenized by the Vijayanagara rulers. This language of bhakti allowed the Vijayanagara royal family to express the religiosity through a path of participation and engagement beyond the protocol of donations. This identification with bhakti attained great momentum during the late medieval period.

¹² Epigraphia Indica, Vol 21
According to John M Fritz the meaning of the imperial capital can be understood as a necessary component of the system that constitutes the authority of its rulers. The institution of Vijayanagara kingship was both complex and beset with problems of interpretation. Burton Stein using the evidence from the account of Paes suggested that the Mahanavami festival spread over nine days in the capital - - Vijayanagara - - was a display of ‘incorporative kingship’. Using the concept derived from Hocart’s study of kingship in different cultures, Burton Stein suggested that the logic animating the Mahānāvami ritual was the transfer of divinity to the person of the Vijayanagara king at least for the temporary……of the nine day Navarathri festival. As Stein put it, “gods of the realm are also incorporated in his city”. Stein’s analysis of the incorporative kingship while stressing the spatial relationship between the king and the gods residing in the temples located at Vijayanagara, does not necessarily represent the person of the Vijayanagara king as divine. He sees ‘ritual’ element at play in the construction of Vijayanagara kingship. Further we have pointed that the inscriptions of the rulers of Vijayanagara invariably depicts the king exceeding his authority in the explicit presence of a deity and therefore the idea of the king being divine does not find support from the inscriptions.

John Fritz and George Michell in their study of the royal centre have made two important points relating to the Vijayanagara kinship. First they argue that the “Vijayanagara ruler was ritually identified with Rāmachandra, the divine hero-king”. Secondly, they state there was a vague analogy between the empire of Vijayanagara and the kingdom of Ayodhya “the overall equivalences is the assertion that the king manifests the same heroic and regal qualities as that of the god”. The evidence for this interpretation stems from the spatial distribution of temples and

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14 John M Fritz and George Michell, ‘Space and meaning at Vijayanagara’, p.206
their alignment in the royal centre at Hampi. Specifically the presence of the Ramachandra temple and the alignment of its walls with the royal centre are taken as evidence of the homology between the king or rāya and the divine i.e. Rama. This interesting argument deduced from architectural elements at Hampi is not supported by inscriptive evidence, therefore it may not be possible to state as categorically as John Fritz and George Michell have done that the rāya was a stand in for Rāma. The association of the site of Hampi with Kishkinda of the Ramāyana was predicated as the cult of Ānjanēya which was prevalent in the region. Vyāsaṭīrtha the contemporary of Purandaradāśā did encourage the worship of Ānjaneya and he himself is credited with the consecration of several hundred images of Ānjanēya.

The Rāmachandra temple which has been highlighted as the centre for the articulation of Vijayanagara kingship contains only few inscriptions and none of them testify to the centrality attributed to this temple by John Fritz and George Michell. There is only one inscription of Krishnadēvarāya in this temple dated 1521A.D and it records a gift of a reservoir to the temple along with a mandapa.15

The Hazara Rama temple at hampi is an important monumental representation of the imperial ideology of the Vijayanagara Empire. This temple was a forum for encompassing the ordering ways of worshipping Rama in the interest not only of worship but also of constituting the king’s material and symbolic claim to rulership.16 Through the songs of Purandaradāśā, was mitigated the need to articulate a solicitation of patronage from kings, who were engaged in promoting themselves as representatives of religion, and this sort of appeal is eschewed in the songs of Purandaradāśā.

15 SII, Vol IV, p.250
16John Paul Rubeis, Travel and Ethnology in Renaissance, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, p.132
Purandaradāsa who spent a considerable part of his life at Hampi, weaves some of the images and motifs found in temples located in the royal center in his songs. For instance in his song Dayamādo Ranga, Purandaradāsa invokes the image of Karivarada or Varadarāja when he sang:

“Lord who gave boon to the elephant, Father of Cupid

Lord Purandara Vithala, virtous Lord of all”\(^{17}\)

In yet another song, Purandaradāsa again referred to the same mythological theme:

“He protected the king of elephant, said

Don’t worry, be fearless

Who said this to the lord of elephants

The lord riding on the back of Garuda”\(^{18}\)

The sculptured panels in the Hazara Rama temple represent this theme.

**Vijayanagara imperial ideology as reflected in its architecture.**

The material culture of Vijayanagara may have been largely produced by activities in which kings, members of the royal household and court and governors from elsewhere in the empire displayed symbols of authority if the segmentary nature of the Vijayanagara is accepted it was only within the capital and its surroundings that the king held sufficient authority to display his power on a grand scale. Nowhere is the record of royal display more evident than in the remains of the urban core of the city, particularly in the royal centre. Here sacred and secular buildings take on a monumental expression in stone, accompanied by a richly carved iconography, architecture and sculpture seem to have no purpose other than the display of the

\(^{17}\) William Jackson(1998) , p.88

\(^{18}\) PSD, Vol. II, no.74, p.199
royal power. In Vijayanagara, power and faith meet to create an architecture of power in which religion found expression in a royal architectural style represented in the royal centre. The material culture of the royal centre was created largely by the activities of kings, their nobles and the court. The presence of Chinese porcelain in the royal centre which was revealed in excavations suggests that the material culture of the royal enclosure was marked by a different ceramic culture than the surrounding hinterland. The architectural elements such as palaces, royal residences, large ceremonial platforms, ornate tanks all bespeak of a culture of royal display of wealth and magnificence. This was also the site of the spectacular festivities associated with the Mahānavami festival and hence we may say that royal power, kingly ideology and architecture blended in Vijayanagara to create the spectacle of power, with the city as the stage. Specific features of the site credibly suggest the enactment of these various roles. While the Vijayanagara rulers were always continuously at war with the Bahmani sultans to the North, war was not entirely sectarian. The expansion and maintenance of the empire required military expeditions against lesser Hindu rulers to effect their subordinations. According to Portuguese observers the king maintained an army in the city that partly consisted of Muslim mercenaries. These mercenaries were probably housed in separate quarters of the city. As well as, horses and animals used in war and barracks for troops, there were stores for weapons, food and loot. Particularly imposing is a monumental elephants stable consisting of ten domed chambers symmetrically arranged in a row with a central tower. The architects of the stables have combined Islamic and Hindu forms to create a unique Vijayanagara courtly style. Several carved panels in the royal centre depict foreign supplicants in front of seated royal figures, troops bearing arms sometimes parade behind. Particularly informative are panels carved on the outer walls of the Ramachandra temple compound in the middle of the royal centre. Here elephants,
cavalry, foot soldiers, dancing women and musicians process towards royal figures seated in temple like pavilions. On the basement of other civic and religious monuments, panels of elephants and horses – both symbols of royal power – are carved.

The kings capacities as a warrior is also expressed through his hunting expeditions displayed on the sides of a platform associated with the Mahanavami festival. It often involved martial elements. These expeditions displayed the organizational capabilities of royal leadership. Panels showing military and hunting episodes occur in successive registers. It is probable that athletic displays also conveyed royal power. Figures of wrestlers are carved on the most important gates of the city, the Mahanavami platform and the compound walls of the Ramachandra temple. One large building near the elephant stables may have served as an arena for athletic contests. Such contests communicated the strength, skill and combativeness of those who served the king. 19

Vijayanagara was frequently attacked by the armies of the Deccan Sultanate and was besieged several times, although never successfully. Vast fortification protecting the city particularly its urban core, convey the military strength of the ruler. Here is found an extensive series of defensive features – bastions elaborate gateways and lookouts. One of the songs of Purandaradāsā suggests the fact that the poet was aware of this urban nature of the city in which he mentions Hampi as Purapampa. 20

Another way in which regal wealth was displayed was making donations to a temple deity. In a recent paper published in South India under Vijayanagara, Dr Alexandra Mack has argued that during the Tułuva period there was a substantial increase in the flow of endowments

19 John M Fritz, op.cit, pp.44-45
20 William Jackson(1998)
to important shrines such as Tirupati temple. She has also pointed out that sectarian leaders such as the Jīyars of śrīrangam and Vyāsatīrtha became important links in the chain of endowments that tied the royalty to temple authorities.\textsuperscript{21} The importance of pilgrim centres and the circulation of pilgrims between temple towns which had received patronage of the rāyās of Vijayanagara in many ways were enhanced by the widespread popularity of the songs sung about these temple towns by poet-composers such as Purandaradāsā. While they eschew any direct reference to king and his achievements, the fact that all important temples which were patronized by the rāyās of Vijayanagara also figure in the songs/kārtans of Purandaradāsā is not a mere accident. The medium of oral compositions and their circulation amongst the people at large certainly contributed to enhancing the prestige and élan of the Vijayanagara ruling house. Gifts of money, land or income from land were invested by the temple to provide a continuous source of income. Probably the most enduring evidence of such gift giving is seen in the construction of temple throughout the empire, these monuments often recorded their donors in stone inscriptions. Particularly impressive were the towered gateways and associated high enclosure walls erected by the Vijayanagara kings throughout the empire. The temples like Kānchipuram, Śrīrangam, Tirupati which appear in the songs of Purandaradāsā are examples. By constructing such features kings in essence reconstituted entire temple complexes as their gifts. Equally important were the royal donations to temples to support various religious rituals and festivals, some of which involved thousands of Brahmins who have to be fed and sheltered. For example donations were made to Viṭhala temple at Hampi by Krishnadēvarāya and epigraphs record that various religious rituals and festival in the temple were sponsored by him. The temple contains twenty four

inscriptions out of which two belong to the reign of Krishnadévaráya.\textsuperscript{22} The importance attached to these donations made by the king is attested to by the fact that multiple versions of these inscriptions were engraved. The text of all the inscriptions are identical. While there are some discrepancy with regard to the date, there is virtually no confusion with regard to the fact that they record transactions that took place in the reign of Krishnadévaráya in 1513. The inscription records the grant of three villages-- Hariharapura, Virupūpura and Gopisettiyahalli-- along with specified lands together with the income accruing from various taxes for offerings to the deity of Viṭṭhaladēva.\textsuperscript{23} In another inscription dated 1516-17 the king is said to have had a hundred pillared mandapa constructed. The mandapa is referred to as nūṟukkal mandapa.\textsuperscript{24} The Viṭṭhalā temple bears on its South wall an important epigraph which offers epigraphical testimony to the presence of Vyāsatīrtha, a contemporary of Purandaradāsā, and an important sectarian leader of the Mādhvās in Hampi. This inscription records the gift of six hamlets, a village with its canals and the taxes paid by the ferrymen who carried their trade across Tungabhadra to the god Viṭṭhalā. The taxes which were payable in cash, kind and paddy were made over to the temple. Out of the food offerings made to the temple, three shares were assigned to Vyāsatīrtha who is referred to as ‘our guru’- in the inscription. This is the earliest inscription which refers to Vyāsatīrtha and the one in which the king establishes his personal rapport with him.\textsuperscript{25} This inscription confirms the poetic tradition contained in Vyāsayōgi-charitra of Sōmanātha which details the life of Vyāsa. According to this tradition Vyāsa reached Hampi during the reign of

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\textsuperscript{22} SII, Vol IV, No.273 & 278 \\
\textsuperscript{23} SII, Vol IV, No.273 \\
\textsuperscript{24} SII, Vol IX, Pt II, No.502 \\
\textsuperscript{25} ARE 480 of 1889
\end{flushleft}
Saluva Narasimha.\textsuperscript{26} However all inscriptions which refer to him came from the period of Krishnadēvarāya. These inscriptions show the primacy accorded to the worship of Viṭṭhalā and the close linkages between the Vijayanagara loyalty and the cult of Viṭṭhalā. Purandaradāsā, the saint who sang about the māhātmya of Viṭṭhōba was obviously advancing the royal ideology when he composed songs about Viṭṭhalā and had them circulated widely in the empire. The emergence of the royal cult centered on the worship of Viṭṭhalā at Hampi made Vijayanagara a sacred site and it is that sacrality which the songs addressed.

The Vijayanagara kings were also adjudicators of disputes and upholders of dharma. The king and his officials conciliated disputes in one of the columned halls in the palace. Within the royal centre the remains of a large structure with hundred columns known as kings audience hall was the centre of this royal activity. Significantly this monument faces onto a large public entry court; behind are platforms and courts associated with more guarded courtly activities.\textsuperscript{27}

Imperial cities everywhere pride themselves as centers of the universe. \emph{Roma Etherna} or Eternal Rome was the myth on which the imperial history of the Roman empire was founded. In the case of Vijayanagara, the American Archaeologist, John Fritz has advanced the claim that the city was a “cosmic city” in that it was aligned with the cosmos with the city itself as the axis mundi, with a sacredness that inhered on to the king himself. In the case of Vijayanagara with its clear delineation of space which was divided into a royal centre and a sacred centre with the Rāmachandra temple as a focal point makes Fritz state that “capital was not merely a setting for ritual or a precipitate of social action; rather urban form at Vijayanagara embodied the principles and relationships that constituted the authority of the king. King and god were focus of the city:

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\textsuperscript{26} Pierre Filliozat and Vasundhara Filliozat, \textit{Hampi-Vijayanagara: The Temple of Vithala}, New Delhi: Sitaram Bhartia Institute of Scientific Research, 1988, p.52
\textsuperscript{27} John M Fritz, op.cit, pp 44-45

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they paid homage to each other and by radiating their energies outward they gave form, harmony and purity to the empire”. The most important of these rituals preserving cosmic order was, without doubt, the annual mahānavami festival. This event occurred between the summer rains and winter drought. At Vijayanagara, the mahānavami rites reconstituted the centralized and hierarchic phase of the state during which the territorial chiefs, subordinate kings, revenue officials and companies assembled at the royal city. Stein observes that these diverse social and political elements were incorporated into the king’s realm and even more significantly into the partnership of king and god. The mahānavami rites were performed by Brahmins and also by the king himself in the royal palace before the image of a deity.

Through the songs of Purandaradāsā Vishnu bhakti provided a mode of participating in the worship of Vishnu. This was especially important in the imperial temple context. In imperial temple culture, mode of kingly participation in religious activities was primarily gift giving. The king provided the foundational act of gifting a temple both in its creation and in providing for its continuous function, for which Vithala swamy temple is an example. It was a system of honor and the king both displayed honor to the god and received honor from his subjects in the temple context. Yet it was bhakti not the system of gift giving that provided the language of emotional commitment to god, knowledge that one’s heart and mind were actively engaged. Dana and honor provide the context; bhakti specified the correct attitude.

The history of Vishnu bhakti in Vijayanagara or devotion to Vishnu is interwoven in the development of Vishnu temples – imperial temples dedicated to god Vishnu. All the temples sung by Purandaradāsā such as Pandharpur, Mēlukōte, Bēlūr, Nāmakkal, Udipi, Srīrangam,

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28 Ibid, p.49
29 Burton Stein, All the Kings Mana: Papers on Medieval South Indian History, Madras: New Era Publications, 1984, p.102
Kānchīpuram and Tirupati became centers of culture, they legitimized and actualized the dynamics of kingship, they represented the evolution of a religious tradition and they served as a better means of economic maintenance. Of course the songs sung by Purandaradāsā were personal and at the same time had public meaning in a religious institution and in this context it is important to look at how it would relate to the centralizing forces of the imperial temple culture. The temples of Vijayanagara embodied the coalescence of sacred power, political authority and material wealth. An example to illustrate the imperial ideology of Vijayanagara using the composition of Purandaradāsā can be seen in the composition “İndu Nānēnu”.

As an expression of bhakti, the song opens with the idea that Venkatēsvara has given him darśan, and the poet describes the ornaments worn by the deity. “Wearing a bracelet and golden ring” would suggest royal gift to the temples atleast from the time of the Saluvas. King Krishnādēvarāya is said to have visited Tirupati seven times and on each occasion presented valuable treasures. Purandaradāsā goes on to describe the ‘seven pendants on the chain round his neck’- again a reference to the ornaments worn by Venkatēsvara. The inscriptions found in Tirupati temple record in great detail the wealth lavished on the deity by Krishnādēvarāya and his queens. An inscription records the gift of a necklace made of 122 pearls, 193 rubies, 104 diamonds with a pendant of 33 pearls made by Krishnādēvarāya in 1514A.D. The same inscription goes on to make an inventory of nearly 900 gems which were gifted to the deity. It is possible that the “large lustrous pearls” mentioned by Purandaradāsā was the same as the ones presented by Krishnādēvarāya. The song itself communicated the royal activity of gift giving or dāna. The same song goes on to say that Venkatēsvara was crowned with a crown of nine

30 William Jackson(1998)
auspicious gems. An inscription of Krishnadēvarāya dated A.D 1512 states that the king presented a Kirīṭam(crown) set with nine kinds of precious stones to god Tiruvengalanatha. Here again we find Purandaradāsā echoing a royal gift in his song.

The songs of Purandaradāsā did not represent the world view of such mighty connections of the empire. In addition he believed that God Vishnu constituted the centre, but did not localize him in one type of religious place, such as a temple. There were many other geographical regions mentioned more frequently by Purandaradāsā as the abode of Vishnu and all of them were united by his songs on the physical map of Vijayanagara. Indeed the medieval poets of Vijayanagara believed that the most profound locus of Vishnu was also the most transient - the human heart.31

Another important aspect of the songs of Purandaradāsā can be defined in terms of Vijayanagara integration. The integration of the diverse segments of the society taking shape during the times of Purandaradāsā is reflected in his songs when he sings about different social groups such as nāyakas, agricultural laborers, merchants and their integration into the Vijayanagara polity, with temple as the locus point of integration. The milieu in which Purandaradāsā lived witnessed a change in the political and military structure of South India. Scholars have referred to this period as the one dominated by warriors and was a warfare oriented state. Flight of numerous warrior groups into South India took place as a result of the Muslim expansion to the central Peninsula- towards the North of River Krishna. These warriors re-established themselves and formed the basis for the military defense of the South. They were essentially Telugu speaking community who formed the nucleus of a new local and regional elite

31Karen Pechilis Prentiss(1999), p.94
in South India during the 14th and 15th centuries. These warriors established the power by seizing the position of local overlords they were not necessarily Kshatriyas but also emerged from the tribal people in a newly settled agricultural region or from a dominant agricultural caste. They were also pastoral groups who were integrated into the polity of Vijayanagara and this phenomenon is mentioned in the Amuktamalyada of Krishnadevaraya. A prose passage within the Niti section thus says:

“Allay the fears of the hillfolk, and bring them into your army. Since they are a small people, their loyalty or faithlessness, their enemity or friendship, their favour or disfavor- can all easily be managed”. Trying to clean up forest folk is like trying to wash a mud wall. There is no end to it. No point in getting angry. Make promises that you can keep and win them over. They will be useful for invasions, or plundering an enemy land. It is irrational for a ruler to punish a thousand when a hundred are at fault”.

An important socio economic process at work during the Vijayanagara period was the expansion of agriculture into the forested and pastoral areas. The volume of investment in irrigation works has drawn the attention of scholars. Alongside, the period witnessed the integration of nomadic and pastoral groups into the Vijayanagara state. The mention of pastoral communities like the Bōyas, the Dhangars and the Bēdagas in Vijayanagara inscriptions suggests that these pastoral groups were drawn into the warrior polity of Vijayanagara through the office of the Nāyaka. Krishnadēvarāya in his Āmuktamālyada states that the forest dwellers who remain turbulent should be drawn into a stable relationship with the political order through the establishment of peaceful ties. “The king should make such people(forest dwellers) his own by

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32 Burton Stein(1980), pp 197-98
33 Partha Chaterjee, History in the Vernacular, p.48
34 Ibid, p.48
destroying their fears. The conversion of forest deities or tribal cults into Puranic deities was one manifestation of this complex process. While the expansion into forest areas may have started as early as the Yādava period in the Deccan, it was however only during the Vijayanagara period that major changes took place. The warrior elites of the empire used forest dwellers and other marginal groups in the military. Burton Stein has also demonstrated that regular peasant agriculture expanded into forest areas thereby integrating forest population into the empire. Krishnadēvarāya explicitly mentions Abhiras and Bhillas residing in the forests. Recognizing the importance of such population on the periphery of his empire, Krishnadēvarāya says that the “wild tribes in forests can be controlled by being truthful in handling their matters”. Participation in the ritual activities connected with the Viṭhala Swāmi temple provided the context for the integration of marginal groups.

The nāyaka system was an important change in the new agrarian integration that took place in the Vijayanagara empire. A nāyaka was entrusted with the management of agrarian resources, he performed the duty of collecting revenue from his territory and the maintenance of law and order in his regions. The nāyaka on his part was obliged to share a portion of his tribute with the rulers of Vijayanagara. There are instances of bloody and brutal force and ceaseless competition for power between the warrior groups called the nāyakās which is referred with contempt by Purandaradāsā in his songs. The term Nāyaka which denoted a warrior chieftain is invoked by Purandaradāsā to subvert the very dominance of the Nāyakas over the socio-political space. Subversive imagery is used in his song “donku balada nayakare”.37

35 Āmuktamālyada, Canto IV, Stanza 206
36 Ibid, Canto IV, Stanza 225
37 PSD
“So what have you eaten today
O leader (Nāyaka) with a curled up tail”

Comparing a Nāyaka to a dog reveals the contempt that Purandaradāsā had for the military elite of Vijayanagara. There is also a hint of the exploitative nature of Nāyaka oppression when he refers in the same song to the Nāyaka/dog stealing food which may be interpreted as resources off the peasants. He ends by asking:

“So what else did you steal to eat today
King snoopy with a curly tail”.

William Jackson remarks that the “irreverent cartooning of the Nāyaka-dog which is attributed to Purandaradāsā connected two levels – the lowly and the high class leader of the feudal state. He goes on to remark that Purandaradāsā lampooned ‘upstart Nāyakas’ who bolstered their egos and appeased their base hunger.38

All the major temples that Purandaradāsā visited such as Tirupati, Kānchīpuram and Śrīrangam in those days were focus of a new process of a religious and economic significances i.e. temple urbanization. This urbanization process with temple as its base was a result of the economic policies followed by the warrior elites. To attain self sufficiency in the artisan products they took an important step by attracting artisans from other places. P Shanmugham in his study based on Vijayanagara epigraphs has shown clearly that artisans like weavers, blacksmiths,
carpenters, and potters were settled in villages so that the manufactured output could be taxed.\textsuperscript{39} Further merchants particularly Balija and Komati merchants were encouraged to settle in Nayaka territories. In the seventeenth century participation in international trade gave such groups opportunities to carry on their activities in concert with the European companies.\textsuperscript{40}

The Kōmati merchants of Andhra region who rose to the status of powerful regional merchants who followed to all parts of South India. These Kōmatis appear in the inscriptions of Vijayanagara especially from the Viṭhala shrine in the Govindaraja temple in Tirupati – constructed during the reign of Krishnadēvarāya about which Purandaradāsā sang. The temples which Purandaradāsā visited and patronized by the kings, not only promoted sectarian rituals, but allowed many people to participate in the devotional religion of bhakti, the people who previously participated in the margins of organized rituals. This growth of religious centres based on temple worship and pilgrimage was an important feature of urbanization process to which Bhakti poets like Purandaradāsā were witnesses. The Vaishnava temples at Tirupati, Kanchipuram, Ahōbilam and Śrīrangam during the 16\textsuperscript{th} century not only encouraged the growth of pilgrimage, but became market centres of great importance. The temple inscriptions of Vijayangara trace the emergence of new influential social groups such as the warrior nayakas, merchant class and Sudra agriculturists of the region serviced by the temple and its functionaries, who were mentioned by Purandaradāsā in his songs.\textsuperscript{41}

\textsuperscript{40} Sanjay Subrahmanya, op.cit, p.315
\textsuperscript{41} In his songs Purandaradasa mentions the Nayakas with contempt, talks about the merchant classes especially the pearl merchants. These merchants are probably the komatis who appear in the inscriptions of Govindaraja Temple at Tirupati who gave pearls to the Viṭhala Swamy. Purandaradasa also mentions the Sudra agriculturists- the Holeyas of Kannada region.
It is difficult to separate the material and spiritual aspects of the songs of Purandaradāśā. He was part and parcel of the Vijayanagara society, so was witness to all socio-political happenings of his times. It is clear from his songs that he viewed the rivals of Vijayanagara to be encroaching on resources – exactly what resources are left unstated- but can be assumed from his songs that the resources are temples – that more properly belong to Vaishnavas. During the Bahmani invasion of Vijayanagara, it was the Viṭhala Swāmy temple that bore the brunt. Purandaradāśā thus developed in his songs an ingenious argument by connecting Vishnu Bhakti to Vijayanagara identity. The song ‘Yakenani’ was composed in the context of an external aggression in Vijayanagara.42

**Islam and its influence in Vijayanagara**

When we look at the aspects of integration of diverse social elements into Vijayanagara polity as a part of its imperial ideology, it is important to discuss the Islamic influence upon Vijayanagara culture. Vijayanagara and the Bahmani kingdoms were set up in the first half of the 14th century within the gap of a decade. Purandaradāśā in the 16th century was a witness to the political happenings of his times when Bahmanis unleashed their attacks against Vijayanagara. Historians have begun assessing the impact of Islam upon Vijayangara with reference to a template of cultural interchange and mutual influence. The earlier strident interpretation of seeing Vijayanagara as a Hindu war state with an ideology of revivalism and faith has given place to a more balanced and nuanced interpretation. In architecture the influence of Islamic tradition of architecture is visible in the extant remains at Hampi. The title ‘Hindurāya Suratrāna’ a Sultan among Hindu kings is another indication of the influence of the Sultanate conception of military and political leader in Vijayanagara statecraft. Apart from these Phillip Wagoner has

42 William Jackson(1998)
drawn attention to the adoption by Vijayanagara of several Islamic practices especially the court
dress with the tall cap or Kabāyi.\textsuperscript{43} The use of stitched dresses with ornate sashes is another
element of Islamic cultures. It is well known that soldiers adhering to Islam served in
Vijayanagara armies.

As can be expected, Purandaradāsa shows awareness of Islamic religion when he
compared Viṭhala with Allah. Though his songs are replete with praise of god Hari, he gave a
broad connotation to that word. He included all the influence and strength of planets, he was
omnipresent, he was indeed everything in this universe. Purandaradāsa brought in into this all-
inclusive fold even the faith of the Mussalmāns. In a song, he describes the lord who blessed
Dhruva and gave him an external abode, who hearkened to the cry of gajēndra; the rider on the
garuda as Hussain! And ends the song with a Quranic touch. “I came deliberately there!
Purandarada Viṭhala’s Alla – Dil – Lalla”! In another song he says – “without knowing Alla
Khuda and not recognizing the basis of the teaching of the mulla”.\textsuperscript{44} It was probably a song sung
in a Muslim location. It was because of this catholicity of his outlook and broad and open
minded tolerance, the orthodox section who meticulously observed the rituals of their faith and
the learned men of the VyasaKuta disliked his activities. They looked upon him as no true
VaiShnava at all. But Purandaradāsa was not disappointed and launched counter-attacks. There is
a song beginning “Intha Thuduga” where he has used tribal slang expressions.\textsuperscript{45} The
circumstances which provoked the dasā to let himself to go in this racy style is left unstated, but
it must have been something interesting.

\textbf{The concept of Pampākṣehtra}

\textsuperscript{43} Phillip Wagoner
\textsuperscript{44} S.K Ramachandra Rao, op.cit, p.77
\textsuperscript{45} Ibid
The imperial ideology centered around the city of Vijayanagara utilized a variety of local myths and legends. The overwhelming purpose of animating the creation and elaboration of mythic elements in a complex ideological ……….involving the myth of Pampa. Phillip Wagoner has shown that the myth of Pampa was fairly well developed even during pre-Vijayanagara times, perhaps as early as the Western Chalukyan king, Vijayaditya I (689-90) whose copper plate inscription refers to Pampā- tīrtham adhivasati) or the sacred pilgrimage centre (tīrtha) of the river goddess Pampa.\textsuperscript{46} Identified with the city of Hampi, the myth of Pampākṣṭra created during the Sangama period, certainly helped to fashion a mystique for the royal city. There is an early Vijayanagara inscription dated 1385 A.D belonging to the reign of Harihara II which states that a grant was made in the presence of “Tunga, Pampa and Virūpāksha”\textsuperscript{47}. One of the gates in the fortification of the city named after Hampa-devi, another indication of the importance of the myth in the royal city. Pampākṣṭra as the domain of god Virūpāksha is mentioned in another inscription belonging to the reign of Dēvarāya I dated 1406 A.D.\textsuperscript{48} There is a copper plate record which bears the date A.D 1386 which states that Harihara, the ruling maharāya of Vijayanagara established an agrahāra and named it Vidyāranyapura, evidently after the sage Vidyāranya. This gift is said to have been made in the presence of Virūpāksha at Pampākṣṭra.\textsuperscript{49} These inscriptions demonstrate the existence of the Pampākṣṭra myth, which was invoked to bolster the legitimacy of the early Sangama dynasty. The Saluvas who came to power in 1485 shifted to the patronage of Tirupati temple, though Vijayanagara inscriptions continued to use Sri Virūpāksha as the sign manual.

\textsuperscript{48} EC (rev) Vol VIII, no.133, p.240
\textsuperscript{49} EC (rev) Vol XI, no.32, p.265
Anila Verghese has argued that the Pampa myth probably represented a local cult patronized by the local pastoral communities which was Sanskritized through the creation of a matrimonial alliance between Virūpāksha, form of Śiva worshipped at Hampi and the river Goddess Pampa. The fact that only one shrine is found in Hampi dedicated to Pampa reveals that the cult was completely subsumed under Vijayanagara imperial ideology. Purandaradāsā preserves the memory of the pastoral association of Pampa when he calls Vijayanagara the Kāshi of the South and the presiding deity as Purapampa. Thus the myth of Pampa was powerful enough to be reiterated in the songs of Purandaradāsā.

The mythic/legendary landscape of the imperial capital -- Vijayanagara -- the city of victory, incorporated a number of distinct strands. The land around the city is referred to in the Ramayana, a text though unhistorical and timeless in the narrative frame had crystalised into a text by the early medieval period. Pampāsarasu is referred to in the Ramayana and this place name is identified with the Hampi region of the Tungabhadra River. Pampākshētra, the place or region of Pampādevī is another toponym for the landscape around Vijayanagara. The local cult centering around the worship of Pampādevī found expression in a syncretic form in the cult of Pampa-Virūpāksha in which there was a homology between Pampa, the local deity, and Pārvati, the consort of Śiva. Another mythical configuration involving the sacred landscape of Vijayanagara involves Kishkinda, a sacred place associated once again with the Ramayana. The vast number of Ānjanēya temples scattered over the ruined city underscores the incorporation of this Kishkinda myth into the imperial ideology of the Vijayanagara Empire. Kishkinda

50 Anila Verghese(1995), p.16
associated with the killing of Vāli by Sugriva also referred to in the Padmapurāṇa a composition which certainly goes back to the early Vijayanagara period.

A number of important local cults and sectarian practices crystalised to create an imperial ideological carapace for the Vijayanagara empire. The capital city, especially the Royal Centre and the Sacred Centre are replete with evidence for the worship of local deities like Bhairava, Ānjanēya, Narasimha, Mailāra and a host of female deities. The existence of Sati stones in large number attests to the presence of the practice of Sati in the territory of the royal capital. It may be surmised that the diversity of cults that existed in Hampi helped to integrate the population and their integration was further enhanced by the circulation of songs pertaining to the deities found in the city itself.

The most ancient religious tradition within the city is that of Pampā-Dēvi, the local Goddess of Hampe-Tirtha who in course of time came to be absorbed into the Saivite pantheon by marriage to Virūpāksha, a form of Siva.52 Virūpāksha was indubitably the most important deity of the city in pre- Vijayanagara, Vijayanagara and the post-Vijayanagara times. He refers to Hampe in his songs as ‘Purapampa’. Pura means a fortified city. Hampe was a city fortified by circuit of defensive walls. According to Abdur Razaak, there were seven circles of fortification. The names of some of the strongly defended gateways that controlled movement in and out of the city are proved by epigraphs such as Aresankara Bāgilu, Udayagiri Bāgilu, Kotisankaradeva Bāgilu and Penugonda Bāgilu.53 It is assumed that these features of the city have made Purandaradāsā call it as Purapampa.

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52 Anila Vergese(1995), p.16
53 Ibid, p.16
The Vijayanagara rulers exercised their authority over their territories not necessarily with the help of an elaborate bureaucracy. In order to secure desired human and economic resources for political purposes they used various methods of propaganda and persuasion depending on the non-political institutions which included village assemblies, merchant and craft guilds and above all temples and their ritual communities – precisely those groups which commanded independent resources and channels of social communications. The royal patronage extended to temples and their ritual communities was in fact a method adopted by an ambitious ruler to enhance his very uncertain power. The main and simplest reason behind the extent of patronage to local temples by an ambitious ruler is that any ruler can enhance his public image through conspicuous patronage to the religion of the bulk of his subjects. During the 16th century Vijayanagara was under the hold of Vaishnavism; Vaishnava temples were largely endowed and renovated by Krishnadēvaraṇya and Achutharāya. It was these temples that Purandaradāsa sang about and visited. A temple was dedicated to Viṇḍala, the ishtādēvatha of Purandaradāsa on the banks of Tungabhadra. Though the exact date of construction of the temple remains unstated in the inscriptions, it is evident in the epigraphical records that the temple was generously endowed and renovated during the reign of Krishnadēvarāya. Royal utilization of and patronage to temple construction for political purposes by Krishnadēvarāya was so very appropriate to that particular time and place i.e heart of the Vijayanagara city – Hampi in the 16th century.

Bhakti devotionalism with the ideal of salvation through intense devotion to a personal deity was the most important characteristic of the religious scenario of Vijayanagara. Singer

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saints like Purandaradāsā were agencies which carried and spread the bhakti ideal to the nook and corner of the Empire. The popular aspect of the saints’ devotion is reflected in their practice of travelling about the countryside spreading their message by means of devotional poetry set to music and rhythm. Their hymns celebrate the god’s connection with some particular place. Their poems served as a most useful kind of religious propaganda. In medieval period a particular saint was associated with a particular temple. The poems of medieval saints helped to endow various temples with rich sacred traditions. This helped to promote the growth of pilgrimage networks and the development of regional consciousness. Like any medieval kingdom Vijayanagara kings also sought to tap such useful channels of communication for political purposes and temple patronage became a significant means for achieving that end. Royal patronage brought political returns and it served as an important instrument by which existing institutions could be adapted for imperial purposes. This religious and royal propaganda was disseminated through various channels. All who visited the temples were of course potential vehicles for its dissemination. Among them were included merchants, artisans, poets, bards peasants and craftsmen. In this sense the saint poet Purandaradāsā also acted as an agency of social communication during the Vijayanagara days. Most of the pilgrimage centres of medieval period gained its prestige and popularity from association with the bhakti saints. For example, in Vijayanagara period, the dasa saints like Purandaradāsā sang on Viṭṭhala of Pandharpur, Kanakadāsa worshipped Krishna of Udi, Annamāchārya praised Venkatēswara of Tirupati. Hampi the regal capital of the empire was the nucleus of sacred centres and it served as both political and religious centres. Religious patronage helped to increase both the cultural and political visibility of Vijayanagara, as Tanjore was in the days of Chōḷā hegemony.
Purandaradāsā as a bhakti musician is situated in the context of Vijayanagara imperial ideology of Bhakti. The songs of the bhakti singers of the 16th century were used as a medium for spreading the political message to a wider public by the rulers of Vijayanagara. Purandaradāsā as a wandering singer travelled through the towns and villages of the Vijayanagara territories singing his songs in praise of Vishnu whom he identified as God Vithala of Pandharpur, his ishtadevatha. The songs of Purandaradāsā who is hailed as the Pitāmaha of Kanataka Music had a fresh appeal to the rural folk and to the court musicians and theorists. As it was a time of Islamic penetration to the South, scholars are of the opinion that Muslims were also fond of such musical ragas chosen by Purandaradāsā. A peculiar feature of Purandaradāsā’s compositions is the synthesis of folk and classical styles which inspired the villagers. It can be understood from his use of ragas which were considered regional and folk melodies- that gave Purandaradāsā the image of a popularizer and a synthesizer.

Purandaradāsā lived in the heyday of Vijayanagara when arts flourished and was influenced by the Islamic culture- a process referred to by William Jackson as cross-fertilization.55 There took place a mingling and mix up of the Northern and Southern systems of music. The Southern musicians were patronized by the Sultans and vice versa. In the 16th century musical contests were popular in the Vijayanagara court and the wandering musicians vied for royal patronage. Purandaradāsā propogated and popularized the new ideas and forms of music that developed at Vijayanagara, which were moulded into the new system of Karnatic music. In his peregrinations Purandaradāsā gained new experiences, meeting people from different backgrounds and levels of the society. He used music as a vehicle to mobilize his teachings. As

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he had a previous background of Vedic expertise, he was able to put essential vedic (Mārga) ideals in flexible regional (dēsi) style. Thus Purandaradāsā is represented as the synthesizer of the regional and classical styles of Vijayanagara music. We can see that Purandaradāsā, through his catchy folk tunes made bhakti very popular. His songs had mystic depths, his lyrics resonated the common man’s voice, his music made bhakti a movement that spoke the language of the streets. He was aware of the happenings of his times and he sang about the daily incidents of his life which had social, political and cultural implications.

The bhakti poets of Vijayanagara did not sing to make a living. They were moved by the soulful passion of Bhakti imagination – which for them invented new life, new spirit and opened eyes to new types of vision. Purandaradāsā sang in the imagination of God Vishnu delighted in his stories, poems and dreams. He was a poet of the people, wandering from place to place, finding new people, new melodies which could catch among the villagers – renewing, recollecting and connecting the ancient times with contemporary lives through the medium of music and songs. In some of his songs Purandaradāsā, learned from the common folk. He appreciated their sounds and explored them. In many songs of Purandaradāsā one feels a don home quality. Purandaradāsā sang about the territories which Vijayanagara possessed and to him it was a spiritual territory of memories, hopes, visions, and an uplifting ideal place of belonging. According to William Jackson Purandaradāsā composing new songs found and filled a niche in Vijayanagara culture. In Vijayanagara’s days of socio-political chaos, Purandara’s songs were like the waters of Tungabhadra flowing through many South Indian lives.

56 Ibid, p.238
In this chapter, we have explored complex strands that constituted the imperial ideology of Vijayanagara. We began by arguing that all political formations, particularly, those whose self image was that of an empire, fashioned ideologies that provided a framework of legitimacy for their claims of rule, hegemony and dominance. Historical claims founded on the much advertised theme of restoration of dynasties articulated one strand of this complex ideological structure. There were other strands in the ideological fabric of the Vijayanagara with its well demarcated ‘sacred zone’ and ‘royal center’ in certain crucial ways replicated the notion of a cosmic city acting as an axis mundi linking the realm of man with that of the gods. The incorporative kingship represented by the Mahānavami festival had its own choreography in that the Throne Platform located in the loyal centre was the scene for the unfolding of the spectacular display of kingly might. Public display of royal power was sanctified by an implied association with divinity. The theme of hero-king as represented in the Ramāyana found sculptured life in the Rāmchandra temple.

The imperial ideology utilized diverse material including local tradition. Two powerful local traditions coalesced in the Vijayanagara imperial ideology: the myth of Pampākśetra and the myth of Kishkinda. We have shown that the rulers of Vijayanagara deployed these myths skillfully in order to underpin their legitimacy. Vijayanagara came under the political and military influence of Islam from the Bahmani Sultanates. The titles adopted to express their conception of legitimate rule and the adoption of court dress and etiquette was predicated as Islamic influence. Further we have evidence of the settlement of Muslims in Hampi which goes to prove the plural and cosmopolitan nature of Vijayanagara political authority.

The Vijayanagara period saw widespread extension of agricultural settlements and the establishment of new villages especially in forested areas. The Telugu text Āmuktamālyada
mentions this aspect. The hierarchical and stratified nature of Vijayanagara provided a fertile soil for counter ideologies that sought to undermine social and political inequalities. We have shown that the bhakti of Purandaradāsā which was expressed in the compositions was subversive of social and political hierarchies. In another sense, bhakti provided the basic for creating the consciousness of Vijayanagara as the territory inhabited by deities whose songs circulated within the region. William Jackson has drawn attention to the loosening effect of bhakti, on caste rigidities. Pleas for tolerance and signs of universalism are found in the songs of Purandaradāsā which are remembered as expression of hope and aspiration of the common folk.57

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