INTRODUCTORY

The family of the Vishnukundis first came to be known to the historians in 1896, when the text of the Chikkulla plates of Vikramendravarman II of the dynasty was published. Since then the history of this royal house has been attracting the attention of the eminent scholars like Prof. Kielhorn, Sri H. Krishna Sastri, G. Jouveau-Dubreuil, Dr. Hultzsch, K.V. Lakshman Rao, Dr. D.C. Sircar, Sri R.S. Panchamukhi, B.V. Krishna Rao, Prof. K.A. Nilakanta Sastri and others. Of these scholars some have dealt with the history of the family briefly and others a bit elaborately. There have also been long controversies and uncompromising views among these writers on different problems connected with the history of this family. In the meanwhile new discoveries have also come up. Therefore an attempt is made here in this thesis to reconstruct the Vishnukundis history as far as possible in a detailed and connected manner. In the course of the first part of this study many important and new conclusions have been arrived at. Of them the following are worth mentioning.

1) For the first time the present study shows that the name of the dynasty is Vishnukundis (not Vishnukundin) called after its founder; and that it consisted of at least eight kings ruling from C. 375 A.D. down to C. 612 A.D. It also concludes logically that among those kings there were two Madhavavarmans - i.e. the second and fourth of that name - claiming eleven Asvamedhas; and that the fourth was the great grandson of the second.
2) Here the epigraphs, coins and puranic passages are discussed in great detail to reveal the hitherto unknown facts that the Vishnukundis hailed from the Śrīnarvata, otherwise called Śrīśailam; that they were ethnically connected with the Chuṭas of the earlier period; and that they claimed to be Brahmakātras, a term of technical import as the Purāṇas indicate.

3) The available sources—both epigraphical and numismatic—are exploited to the maximum to give for the first time a slightly connected brief history of the Rishika country (viz. the region of the Nalgonda and Mahbubnagar districts) from the days of the Mauryan empire down to the rise of the Vishnukundis under Gōvindavarman I.

3) Our study also reveals how Gōvindavarman’s son Madhavarman II conquered the Pallavas of the South, reduced to vassalage the royal houses of the Piṭribhaktas Māṭharas etc. in the east; helped the Gaṅgas and the Rāmakāśyas in organising their own principalities; had his own capital at Trīvanagara i.e. Tiruvūru; maintained a cordial and marital relationship with the Vākaṭakas of the Central India and with the Rāṣṭrakūṭas of Māṇapura and the Kadambas of Banavāsi in the West; extended help to the Vākaṭakas of the main line against their enemies; performed many great royal sacrifices like the Āsvamedha to heighten his prestige; and assumed various epithets of highly technical import to be
understood with the help of the ritualistic literature of ancient India.

5) The present study enables us to understand that during the time of Mādhavavarman's son Vikramendravarman I, the Vishṇukūḍī power suffered a set-back due to the rebellion of the king's feudatories, to the hostility of his nephew Mādhavavarman III; and to the intervention of the Vākaṭaka king Harishena in the Andhra politics. Yet, Vikramendravarman's son Indrabhaṭṭārakavarman restored and enhanced the prestige of the Vishṇukūḍī family by his successful military career. However, by the end of his reign he came into collision with the Maukhari king Isānavarman of the north and was defeated by the latter.

6) In the course of our study we come to know that Indrabhaṭṭārakavarman's son Vikramendravarman II, though succeeded his father as a mere boy, managed to save the kingdom from the Pallava onslaught in 566 A.D., but soon lost the acquisitions of his father and was finally overthrown by his cousin Mādhavavarman IV. The latter put the kingdom in order and celebrated Aśvamēdhas etc. He was friendly with the Chālukyas and perhaps with the Pallavas also. However, his military expedition against Kaliṅga in 612 A.D. ended in a great disaster resulting in a sudden collapse of the Vishṇukūḍī dynasty.

7) Here in our study an attempt is made for the first
time to show that the Vishnukundis were served by the three feudal families viz. the Prithivimalas, the Gangas and the Ramakasyapas. Some of them had matrimonial connections with their suzerains. A short account of these feudatory families - their rise, achievements, vicissitudes and fall - till 616 A.D. is given on the basis of the available materials.

8) After a thorough examination of the evidences the present investigation reveals how taking advantage of the confusion that ensued on the sudden disappearance of the Vishnukundis power, the Chalukya Pulakesi II invaded the east coast; pounded and captured Prishtapura from Prithivimalaraja of the Ramakasyapa family in 616 A.D.; came into conflict, on the banks of the Kolera lake, with a certain Prithiviyuvaraja, an Ananda on the distaff side and a feudatory of the Pallava Mahendravarman I; and after an initial set-back subjugated finally the whole of the Eastern Deccan by 631 A.D.

The second part of the thesis contains the text, translation and critical notes of all the known inscriptions - ten in number - of the Vishnukundis arranged in chronological order. The text and critical notes of the epigraphs - altogether eight - of the feudatories and the Chalukyas and the Pallavas are also added here so that the collection of the source materials of the history dealt with in our study may be full. The relevant passages of other records, like the Nihole Praśasti, Kopparam plates, Haraha inscription etc. (whose
knowledge is very essential for our study but whose full
texts are not of much relevance to us) have been discussed
fully in proper places in the first part itself.

The third part of the present work contains seven
appendices which are mainly devoted to explain the import
of the different biradas of the Vishnukundhi monarchs with
a view to dispel the misconceptions of various nature.
Here a detailed examination of the generally accepted
chronology of the Pāṇḍava kings of South Kosala becomes
necessary. The present study takes maximum advantage of
the help that comes from the Great Epics, Purāṇas, Dharma-
śāstras, Arthasastra, Purvamimamsā-vārttika, Kavya-mimamsā,
Kavya literature/ etc., in finding out the satisfactory
meanings of the unique epithets like Trivaranagara-bhevana,
etc., avasita-vividha-dīyva etc., Yathāvidhi-vinirṛita-
ghaṭik-āvānta-cūṇya-saṁchaya, Trikūṭa-Malav-ādhipati,
Daśāṣṭa-sakala-dharapī-tala-narapati and so on.

Inspite of all these, it must be accepted that the
greatest of the handicaps a student experiences in his task
of the study and reconstruction of the Vishnukundhi history
is the paucity of the source materials, viz., the inscriptions.
But this is common with the study of almost all dynasties
of ancient India. Therefore it is inevitable that at times
the gaps, both wide and narrow, have to be filled logically
by taking recourse to the circumstantial evidences.
But every logic, however good it may be, has its own disadvantage of being superceded by another, better logic, which also, in its turn, will be superceded by a still superior one, and so on (Cf. Tarkāpratishṭhānāt etc., the Brahmaśūtra (II, 1, 11) of Bādarāyaṇa). Therefore, I may have to confess that some of the views presented in this work may not look altogether infallible. Yet, I may humbly say that those views are worthy of consideration of scholars. For they are the results of a critical and logical analysis of all the available source-materials of the Viśṇukundī history, studied simultaneously in one place, in the light of the ancient Indian literary tradition and in the context of the contemporary history.

\[ \text{Praṇī-āparāchād-ina \ Yad=āturukta\,p-ekta\,cha} \\
\text{\ Yat\,tad=vibudhāh \ svā-mātyā \!} \\
\text{\ samya=viśmīya\,aiṣa \ sup-aiśa-dṛṣṭya, marṣabha\,tā} \\
\text{\ saṁsantu \ cha \ maṭ-prabandham \!} \]

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