CHAPTER TEN

CONCLUSION

Much has been written on the lessons and warnings which the sudden and tragic collapse of the great power of Vijayana-gara at the dawn of A.D. 1565 holds out for mankind. Yet, those who lived in that year to witness and to suffer by that cataclysm viewed the tragedy as just another fall of an empire in just another trial of strength. The empire that rolled into dust before their fleeing eyes was not of greater avail to them than the meagre remnants of the imperial riches which they still had the time to lay their hands upon. Neither the princes and the nobility, who had suddenly lost the security and luxuries of a well-built empire, nor the inhabitants of the great city of Victory and its surrounding areas, who had lost even more, grasped the immediate significance of this defeat and proved it by plunging head long into countless intrigues even before the dust had settled back on the battle-field. The throne which had been, for more than two eventful centuries, the nucleus and source of strength and inspiration for a vast and flourishing empire became the symbol of dissensions and sanguinary deeds. The epidemic of recalcitrance spread fast and wide and erstwhile feudatories lost no time in practicing independence. Surprisingly, as though, available inscriptions belonging to the post-Rakkasa-Taṅgaḍi period show that the border province of South

1 Vide A History of South India (II edn.), p. 285.
Kanara continued to form a part of as much of the empire as had survived that inglorious battle. Really speaking, however, there was no element of surprise in the continued provincial status of Tuluvā even beyond A.D. 1565. It was the direct and logical result of certain far-reaching developments in the political history of the region early in the second half of the 16th century. But before studying these developments it may be well to examine the factors which allowed them to take place without a murmur of protest either from the people or from the chieftains of the many local principalities.

It has been made clear in Chapters III and IV above, dealing with the history of the region from the middle of the 7th century to the end of the 14th, that, for centuries at a stretch, the inhabitants of Tuluvā were allowed to enjoy political independence and isolation to a degree unknown to any other region of similar size and situation in the peninsula. During this protracted period, they were under the sway of the Āḷūpas, their own native ruling house, had developed their own political and administrative set up and even economic life and had had ample time and opportunities to develop a distinct social and linguistic identity for themselves. Even after the invasion of the kingdom by Hoysalā Ballāla III and during the reign of his queen Chikkāyī Taī (A.D. 1333-1348) over the region, the Tuluvās continued to owe allegiance to the old ruling house of the Āḷūpas.

If the suggestion that Chikkāyī Taī was an Āḷupa princess is to be accepted, it becomes clear that the Hoysalā invasion re-

suited In the sway over Tujuva by two rulers of the same native dynasty and not in the introduction of an alien rule. The Ajupas continued as a ruling power, even after the annexation of their kingdom by the Vijayanagar empire, until about A.D. 1400 and never once did they acknowledge the Hoysala and Vijayanagara rulers as their masters.

The long life of the Ajupa dynasty appears to have met with a natural end. There is nothing on record to even suggest that the Ajupas were put down by force and eliminated from power. In the light of the complete absence of any mention of Ajupa subordination to the Vijayanagar emperors, it is reasonable to surmise that the presence of imperial authority in their kingdom, which the military strength of the Ajupas was incapable of preventing, must have set in motion a steady decline in the power potential of the Ajupas and must have resulted in their silent departure from the political arena. For a student of Tujuva history, who is bound to miss, with a sense of sadness, a vital link in the long history of the region with the tacit exit of this ancient ruling house, the fact that they survived as local rulers for over half a century the extension of Vijayanagara authority into South Kanara strikingly brings home not only the long standing of the Ajupas in the region but also the Tujuvas' sustained loyalty to their old institutions and their love for the values of political independence. For, the Ajupas could not have run their own line of administration, side by side with that of a far more resourceful imperial power, in the...
absence of allegiance and support from its subjects. But the final result of this unequal competition between the Ālupas and Vijayanagara, in which neither rival bothered about the other, was dictated by the vast difference in resources of the contenders, one a minor dynasty strictly confined to a tiny stretch of land and the other well-set on its journey towards greater glories. The political independence of South Kanara, which has been repeatedly noticed in the pages above and which the region, its rulers and their subjects had come to enjoy largely owing to the attitude of indifference inherited in the earlier centuries from one imperial power of the Deccan by its successor, was no longer compatible with the policy of unifying the whole of South India as a bastion against the onslaughts of the standard-bearers of Islam.

Though Tuluva lost its political independence, its people retained their distinct identity and they were helped in achieving this by the administrative set up introduced into the region by the emperors. Had the imperial governors been so instructed, they could have, at their will, replaced every indigenous set up in the administration with the method prevalent elsewhere in the empire. On the other hand, South Kanara inscriptions of this period clearly demonstrate the fact that the governors fostered every local institution and that these organisations, with a local stamp, grew in number and importance as the decades rolled by. It is also seen from available records that the administrative grip of the imperial authorities tightened only gradually, becoming more and more comprehensive and assertive as time
wore out. This, coupled with the fact that numerous chunks of the district came under the sway of local rulers, who enjoyed considerable autonomy within their own territorial spheres, must have left the Tuḷuvas with much of their legacy as an independent people.

In this, the many local chieftains played, by necessity, a peculiar role. There were many fairly powerful chieftains, like the Kāḷaśa-Kārakāḷa rulers, and there were others like the Ajilars who controlled only a few villages. Most of them professed the Jaina faith and the imperial administration provided no affront to their religious freedom. At the same time, these chieftains were mutually ill-disposed towards one another and hence were at no time of any threat to the running of the imperial administration. In spite of the complete absence of any epigraphical evidence to this effect, it may be safely concluded that these chieftains paid regular tributes to the imperial treasury as a price for their respective regional autonomy. Each local ruler had his own army but these were for most of the time engaged in mutual warfares. The inscriptions of these local rulers suggest that they had learnt to ignore, for most of the period, the imperial governments of Bārakūrā and Mangalore. This feeling extended itself to their subjects who had other reasons too for inculcating a feeling of indifference towards the fate of the empire though not towards the imperial authorities who were present in their midst.

The storm in the form of a militant religious crusade, which had frightened the rest of the Hindu rulers of South
India to unite behind one throne and fight for the survival of their ageless religious values, had never once blown across South Kanara. We have pointed out above that the annexation of the coastal kingdom was carried out by the empire to facilitate the import of war horses from foreign lands. The Tuluvas must have felt lukewarm towards this new power because its arrival led to the decline and final disappearance of their ancient royal house. Only the utter impossibility of contesting the extension of imperial sway into their region forced the Tuluvas to accept their provincial status. But the steady increase in trade and in money circulation which brought forth numerous benefits to the people of South Kanara appears to have resulted in increased familiarity between the people and their new masters. The large number of inscriptions, which become more copious reign after reign, attest to the increased participation, side by side, of the imperial officers and the people of South Kanara. In addition to this, we also notice in the inscriptions, a greater degree of contacts between the governors and the local rulers.

This steady improvement in relationship between the governors on the one hand and the people and local chieftains on the other received a serious set-back early in the second half of the 16th century. Sometime in or before A.D. 1554, the region of South Kanara fell into the hands of the Keladi ruler Sadasivanayaka when it was gifted to him as amara-mazani by the puppet emperor Sadasiva (A.D. 1542-76). Sadāsiva-nāyaka is said to have over-run the entire district and after putting...
down the local rulers, is said to have commemorated his trium-
phal march by erecting a pillar of victory at Kasargode.

Neither the developments which called for this invasion nor whether it preceded or followed the acquisition of the terri-
tory by Sadāśiva-nāyaka is stated anywhere. It will be
reasonable, however, to presume that the invasion followed the
acquisition. It is well known that the Keladi rulers were de-
vout followers of Viśaśaivism. It is not unlikely that when
South Kanara was brought under their control, the Jaina chieftains, fearing for their religious freedom, rose in revolt.
The Keladi house was too powerful to be deterred and Sadāśiva-
nāyaka established his mastery over the region by a show of his
military strength. This military success ensured the conti-
uance of South Kanara, by virtue of its subjection to Keladi
authority, as a province of the decimated empire of Vijayanagara
even beyond A.D. 1565. But it must be remembered that Keladi
subordination to Vijayanagara after A.D. 1565 was only oppor-
tunistic and was no more than a stroke of political diplomacy.
The Keladi house had built its own formidable power and no
longer depended on the strength and stability of the empire for
its own survival.

Keladi authority over South Kanara put an end to the
direct relationship between the region and the empire. Till

3 śivatattvārvānākara, Y. 1. 5; Keladi-prin-
vijaya, T. adv., 61.
A.D. 1564, the emperor himself or his immediate officer appointed tested servants to the posts of governors at Barakuru and Mangaluru. But the Kadadi rulers appointed their own men to rule over South Kanara and whenever they sought imperial consent for their nominees, it was more as a matter of courtesy to the tottering throne.

These developments had a marked impact in the life of the Tuluva populace. They once again lapsed into a feeling of indifference towards the fate of the empire. They appear to have lost once again the interest in participating in the day to day political administration of the region. This lack of interest may be one of the reasons why, when the entire South was shocked into disunity immediately after the empire's defeat at Rakkasa-Taṅgadhi, South Kanara displayed no such initiative in earning back its political independence. This lack of interest is illustrated by the decrease in the number of inscriptions in Tuluva after A.D. 1565. Even of the small number of available records of the post-1565 era, the majority do not refer to any political authority but merely record grants made by private individuals. This tendency to ignore political developments at home persisted for long and until the first of November 1956 when South Kanara was allowed to re-enter the fold of its parent state of Karnāṭak and strive in unity for the glory of Mother India.