Chapter-IV
The epigraphs of the Vijayanagara period are written in four languages viz. Sanskrit, Kannada, Telugu and Tamil. These epigraphs contain very valuable information on various aspects of the Vijayanagara coins and currency system. Unfortunately so far this data has not been pressed into service by the numismatists for understanding the coinage of Vijayanagara period. A detailed understanding of the sub-texts will throw light on the economic dimension of the Vijayanagara coinage as it is evident that fifty percent of the Vijayanagara inscriptions refer to the coins as medium of exchange in several transactions.

The epigraphs of the Vijayanagara period furnish most important and descriptive information about the varieties of coins. Coins are distinguished on the basis of the mints, symbols, metals, and their values. The names of the coins like Gadyana, Varaha gadyana, Dodda gadyana, Pratapa gadyana, Kati gadyana, Rekha gadyana, Rekha gatti varaha gadyana, Kathari ankusha gadyana, Kula gadyana, Hittuvali gadyana, Samudaya gadyana, Dodda varaha, Ghatti varaha, Sudda varaha, Chakra varaha, Hanumantharaya varaha, Venkatapatiraya varaha, Gandikota varaha, Sanna pratapa, Mada, Pana, Honnu, Hana, Kati honnu, Gajabentakara hon, Bele, Ruka, Tara, Panam and Kasu etc., are furnished by the inscriptions and literary works. The gadyana was the most popular coin of the Vijayanagara period.

Naming the coins after the mint place was also followed during the Vijayanagara period. Coins were named after the mints located at Barakuru, Mangaluru, Tirupati, Adoni, Tadipatri, Gutti, Nellore and Madurai. Barakuru and Mangaluru which were the provincial capitals of Tulunadu during Vijayanagara period. The gadyanas that were minted are referred to as Barakuru gadyana and Mangaluru gadyana respectively. Adoni (Adavani) and Tadipatri had mints where the gold honnu was minted and is known by a Kannada work Manaumiyachaupada. Honns minted at Gutti called Gutti honnu is known from the same work. Some coins bear the letters Ne and Ma on the obverse and they are presumed to represent Nellore and Madurai which were important places during the Vijayanagara period.
**Gadyana**

Gadyana was a most popular coin during Vijayanagara period. The epigraphs are mentioned variously as gadya, gadyana and gadyanaka, whereas, in Vijayanagara inscriptions the coin varaha, varaha-gadyana i.e. gadyana with varaha emblem on it was mentioned. Curiously it is not found mentioned in the inscriptions of the early period. The coins gadyana, varaha and mada were of the same value and were more popular during this period. Varaha gadyana was the most popular coin during the Vijayanagara period. Generally varaha and gadyana denoted the same coin of gold, but in the epigraphs of this period, the term varaha gadyana is used frequently to indicate equal in weight and value. It is generally accepted varaha and gadyana are synonymous. Varaha of the earlier period though made of gold, did not contain the emblem of varaha except in the case of the Chalukyas of Badami. Later, varaha became the name of a gold coin even though it did not contain a boar on it. However, the Vijayanagara rulers issued gadyana coins with boar on the obverse.

The term varaha-gadyana is found in many inscriptions of the period. For example, an inscription of 1386 A. D. of the time of Harihara II referred to a grant of 60 varaha-gadyanas to an individual.

Another inscription of 1514 A. D., belonging to the time of Krishnadevaraya from Kahalli near Mysore, mentions the total revenue of the village as 130 gadyanas and 2 varahas. Another inscription of 1532 A. D. of the time of Achyutaraya refers to 1350 varaha-gadyanas as the gift for the services rendered in the temple. Gadyana as a coin was used in revenue transactions, such as sale of land, payment of tax, gift in cash to temples etc., Varaha as a coin was used in transactions of social nature such as a gift in religious ceremonies like upanayana, and marriage etc but a detailed study of the inscriptions of the period does not support this view. Hence the above conjecture of the exclusive significance attached to gadyana and varaha cannot be accepted. It appeared that the gadyana slowly lost its importance as compared to varaha.
**DODDA GADYANA AND CHIKKA GADYANA**

Dodda gadyana and Chikka gadyana literally mean ‘big’ or large gadyana and ‘small’ gadyana. It is not known if the adjective ‘dodda’ refers to the size or the weight of the coin. The ordinary gadyana of the Vijayanagara period weighed 52 grains. However, Krishnadevaraya minted a special type of gadyana in honour of Lord Venkatesvara of Tirupati which weighed 117 grains, and it is generally referred to as ‘double gadyana’ or a ‘double varaha’. Hence, it may be surmised that double gadyana coin, became famous as dodda-gadyana. The normal gadyana coin measured about half an inch in diameter, whereas, the double gadyana measured three fourths of an inch. The word Chikka-gadyana refers to the ordinary gadyana which is smaller in size as well as lesser in weight.

**PRATAPA GADYANA**

Pratapa gadyana and Pongadyana referred to combination of varahagadyana. Pratapa as a coin was introduced by Harihara II. On the obverse of the coin, the legend pratapa was followed by the name of the king. It was half a gadyana in value and weighed 26 grains. These types of coins became famous as pratapa gadyanas in course of time. Similarly pon or hon was a coin and was equal to the gadyana or varaha in value and weighed 52 grains. Though, the significance of the combination pon gadyana cannot be understood without any further detail from the inscriptions.

An inscription from the Srikalahasti temple is traced to Krishnadevaraya dated 1511 A. D refers to 850 pon was gifted to the god Srikalahastisvara. Another inscription from the same place got carved out by Achyutaraya dated 1538 A. D. refers to 60 pons gifted to the temple.

**KATI GADYANA**

The word kati is used not only with gadyana but also with other terms like kati-hon, kati-hana and kati-varaha. The literal meaning of the word kati is ‘one fourth’ and hence, kati-gadyana should be taken to mean one fourth of a gadyana. In fact gold coins of the period weigh 52, 26 and 13 grains and obviously the kati-gadyana weighed 13 grains. As coins of this weight are found in plenty, it may be inferred that kati gadyana was quite a
popular coin during the Vijayanagara period. Some examples may be cited to illustrate this point.

An inscription dated 1406 A. D. which belonged to Bukkaraya II refers to *kati-gadyana* five times in different contexts.\(^{13}\) In first occurrence the word is written fully as *kati-gadyana* but in later references it is simply abbreviated as ‘*KaGa*’. This also reflects the popularity of the coin. But one thing that cannot be explained is the reference to huge number of *kati-gadyanas* instead of expressing the same in terms of *gadyanas*.

Another inscription of the time of Mallikarjuna refers to an annual income of 1697 *katigadyanas* to SankaraBharati.\(^{14}\) In the above case, 1697 *kati-gadyanas* are equal to 424 *gadyanas* and 1 *kati-gadyana*. But it is not mentioned so in the inscription and this is difficult to explain.

*Ardha kati-gadyana* also occurs in epigraphs of the period and obviously it is referred as half of a *kati-gadyana* or one eighth of a *gadyana*. This is mentioned in an inscription of the time of Achyutaraya dated 1542 A. D.\(^{15}\) This epigraph registers a payment totalling to 67 and half *katigadyana* was made to an individual.

**REKHA-GADYANA**

The exact significance of this coin is not clear. It is found mentioned in one of the inscriptions from Kalahasti belonging to the reign of Achyutaraya. It records the grant of annual total revenue amounting to 4500 *Rekha-gadyanas* for various specified offerings to the god Kalahatisvara.\(^{16}\)

**REKHA-GHATTI-VARAHAGADYANA**

This is used as a synonym of *gadyana* in one of the inscriptions from *Chinna-Ahobalam*. It belongs to the reign of Sadasiva and is dated 1552 A. D. It records the gift of a village, which was sold for 500 *Rekha-gatti-varaha-gadyanas* and paid into the temple treasury of the god Ahobalesvara. Since *Varaha* and *Gadyana* are synonyms, we may take this coin as *Rekha-gattii-varaha* or *Rekha-gatti-gadyana*. In Telugu *gatti* means ‘strong’ and hence this may denote a coin of sterling quality.\(^{17}\)
**CHAKRA GADYANA**

During the Vijayanagara period, reference to coins by the symbols they contained was resorted to. There is a reference to *Chakra-gadyana* in an inscription of the period. Literally it means a *gadyana* with a *chakra* on it. However, it has to be noted that no Vijayanagara coin contains exclusively a *chakra* on it. But ‘*chakra*’ is found along with other symbols like sankha. The gold coins of Harihara II showing Lakshmi-Narayana and Lakshmi-Narasimha contain sankha and chakra as attributes. A copper coin of Tirumalaraya contains on the obverse a *sankha* to the left and a *chakra* to the right.

This coin was found mentioned in the Vijayanagara inscriptions. Obviously it bore the *Sudarsana-chakra* emblem and hence came to be known as *chakra-gadyana*. *Chakra-varaha* is another name by which this coin is referred to in inscriptions. An inscription from Chinna-Ahobilam, belonging to the reign of Sadasivaraya is interesting in that it mentions *rekha-chakra-gadyana* and *chakra-varaha* as synonyms.

**KATHARI ANKUSA GADYANA**

The term *kathari* means a ‘dagger’ and *ankusa* is a ‘goad’. *Kathariankusagadyana* was mentioned in an inscription of Harihara II from Puttige and dated 1389 A.D. The inscription states that Mudiya, the watchman was to be paid *kathari ankusa gadyana* as his salary. *Kathari* and *ankusa* both are generally associated with elephants; it is quite likely that this coin refers to the *gadyanas* issued by Devaraya II. Though a *dagger* has been sighted on these coins, *ankusa* has not been seen on these coins.

**KULA GADYANA – HITTUVALI GADYANA - SAMUDAYA GADYANA**

The terms like *kulagadyana*, *hittuvali gadyana* and *samudayagadyana* are mentioned in inscriptions. These names of the coin with the taxes were also in practice during the Vijayanagara period. An inscription from Gubbi of the time of Harihara II mentions *kula gadyana* and *hittuvali gadyana* as taxes. Similarly, *samudayagadyana* was a tax to be paid by the *samudaya* or group of villages.
**DODDA VARAHA**

*Dodda varaha* literally meaning ‘double varaha’ and it contains 117 grains minted by Krishnadevaraya, as against the ordinary *varaha* of 52 grains. In both weight and size it was a big (*dodda*) *varaha* as it weighed 117 grains and measured 0.75 in diameter. In order to distinguish this coin from the ordinary *varahas* of 52 grains and of 0.45 in diameter, this term *dodda varaha* was used in the period. An epigraph of the time of Sadasivaraya refers to a gift of 35 *doddavarahas* as interest on 350 *varahas*.²⁴ It is of importance to note that the principle is mentioned in terms of *varahas*, whereas, interest is mentioned in terms of *doddavarahas*. As already observed in the case of *dodda gadyana*, *dodda varaha* is also a ‘big’ *varaha* perhaps referring to the double *varaha* coin minted by Krishnadevaraya.

**GHATTI VARAHA**

In Telugu *ghatti* means ‘strong’ and hence this may be denoting a coin of superior quality. *Ghatti varaha* can be literally translated as ‘solid varaha’ but this does not help us in understanding the real nature of the varaha referred to. There is also another expression *nijaghatti varaha* where *nija* is used to emphasise the point that it is *ghatti varaha*. An epigraph of Sadasivaraya dated 1552 A D refers to a gift of *ghatti varahas*²⁵. Another epigraph from Suttur near Mysore of the time of Tirumalaraya also refers to gift of 40 *ghattivarahas*.²⁶ The same epigraph was also referring to *ghatti gadyana* and from the context it appears that both refer to one and the same coin.

**SUDDHA VARAHA**

The term *suddha varaha* means ‘pure *varaha*’. Obviously, it refers to the percentage of gold content in it. In the absence of any analysis of gold content in Vijayanagara coins, it is difficult to understand the term. However, epigraphical evidence throws some light on it. An inscription of the period refers to three different gold contents of the coins as eight, eight and half and nine²⁷. It is also known from Barbosa that gold coins were rather ‘base’. The inspectors of coins always carried a touchstone to test the fineness of the coins. From these references, it can easily be surmised that, fineness of gold coins differed. Hence the term *suddha varaha* refers to those coins which had the highest percentage of gold content in them.
CHAKRA VARAHA

Chakra varaha is obviously the same as chakra gadyana which contained a chakra on the varaha coins. However, it has to be noted that chakra appears in the hands of the deities on the varaha coins and not as an independent symbol.

HANUMANTHARAYA VARAHA AND VENKATAPATIRAYI VARAHA

Hanumantharaya varaha and Venkatapatiraya varaha are those coins which contained the image of Venkatesvara and Hanuman on them. Coins with the image of Hanuman was minted the rulers like Harihara I, Bukkaraya I and Venkatapatiraya I. Krishnadevaraya introduced the practice of minting the portrait of Venkatesvara and this was continued by the later rulers Sri Rangaraya, Venkatapatiraya I and Venkatapatiraya II.

GANDIKOTA VARAHA

Gandikota varaha is the coin minted at Gandikota a famous fort, now in Cuddappah district of Andhra Pradesh. It is evident that there was a Vijayanagara mint in Gandikota.

SANNA PRATAPA

Sanna pratapa literally means a ‘small pratapa’. It is known that pratapa was half of a gadyana. This presupposes the existence of a big pratapa different from the sanna pratapa or small pratapa. It is mentioned in an inscription of 1477 A. D. and refers to the purchase of a house by paying 400 sanna pratapas.

MADA and MADAI

Mada was a popular gold coin throughout the Andhra County. During the medieval period, a number of inscriptions mention mada and gadyana as synonyms. Some inscriptions from Sikakulam district refer mada and nishka as synonyms. In the Sanskrit portion of epigraphs the coin is mentioned as nishka while the Telugu portion refers to the same coin as mada.
The kings of Vijayanagara minted coins called mada also. But their use was limited as compared to varaha and gadyana. An inscription of 1386 A. D. issued during the period of Harihara II records the sale of a land for a sum of 200 Singayamadas. Another epigraph of the time of Devaraya II describes the cost of construction of a dam as 300 singaya madas. As the word, singa literally means a lion, it may be surmised that these mada coins might have had lion on them. Achyutaraya mada is mentioned in an inscription of the time of Srirangaraya I, dated 1578 A. D. from Bellary District. This is a Telugu inscription. It mentions the sale of a land for 84 Achyutarayamadavarakagadyyanas. Obviously, this reference shows that it was a gadyana and as the people of the area were more familiar with the term mada (in Telugu), this term has been used.

It is suggested that dharana was another name of mada which was more popularly known as Purana. In a couple of inscriptions from Andhra, dharanamu is mentioned as a fraction of mada. But their relative value is not given in the inscription. One of the inscriptions of Vijayanagara Sadasivaraya, dated 1545 A. D. from Anantapur District, recorded the gift of one mada and one dharanamu per month for maintaining a perpetual lamp.

Madai was a gold coin current in olden days and was also known as Pon. An inscription from the Srikalahasti, belonging to the Devaraya, a pon was equal to a pagoda. In one instance, it is said to be equal to a varaham and in another instance, to 10 panam.

**PANA**

Pana coin seems to have been introduced by the Western Chalukyan kings. This coin became more popular during the Vijayanagara period. It is stated that Pana was a gold coin; ten Panas were equal to one Gadyana.

**HONNU AND HANA**

Honnu and Hana are referred to in many Vijayanagara inscriptions. An inscription from Chikkanapura in Gundlupet taluk dated 1412 A. D. refers to a transaction in which 270 hanas are said to be equal to 27 hons 27 honnus. From this it becomes clear that one
honnu was equal to ten hanas. It is generally believed that honnu is a gold coin. An inscription dated 1405 A.D., belonging to the reign of Devaraya records that on the representation of the temple priests, king Vira Devaraya I, confirmed the gift of the village Tammadivarahalli and the income of 25 Honus derived from the Kanika realized from the Sivaratri festivals formerly made Kamnnmodeya and Chikkodeya to god Mallikarjuna at Chandragiri and recorded that 20 Honus that were being paid to the place till then be remitted to the temple. The Vijayanagara inscription refers to bellihonnu meaning silver hon. This is really interesting. The inscription dated to Krishnadevaraya period, referred to a series of transactions in which silver honnu was referred. Perhaps in this context, honnu was simply used in the general sense of a coin, and not a particular coin itself.

The word hana in Kannada refers to money in general as well as a particular coin. It is not known in what way this coin was different from either a pratapa or a hana. Hana is also mentioned along with taxes like manehana and nogahana. An inscription from Ummattur dated to 1416 A. D. refers to honnu hana. Tirupati hana is either a coin minted in Tirupati or the coin with the god of Tirupati on it embossed portrayed.

KATI HONNU

The word kati occurs in Kannada literary works as a small coin. The word kati means ‘one fourth’ and honnu is equal to a gadyana or varaha, and kati honnu means one fourth of a varaha. Kati honnu is mentioned in an inscription of the time of Krishnadevaraya dated 1515 A. D. It refers to the visit of Sringeri Swamiji to Hampi and the gift of two villages Hayyuru and Honnagalli which yielded 362 and 150 kati honnu respectively. In that case it becomes difficult to understand the necessity of mentioning 362 kati honnu which could have been better expressed as 90 and half hons. Hence it may be surmised that kati should have had some other significance also which we are not able to understand at present.

GAJABENTEKARA HON

Gajabentekara hon literally means a hon of elephant hunting type. Gajabentekara is the title of Devaraya II of Vijayanagara and his coins contain similar title with an elephant on it. This coins containing the legend Gajabentekara and Gajagandabherunda.
Hence these coins were referred to as *gajabentekara* coins by the common people. Thus this is a good example for a coin being referred to by its legend on it\(^49\).

**BELE**

*Bele* coin is mentioned rarely in the inscriptions of the Vijayanagara period. An inscription of the time of Harihara II, dated 1382 A.D. refer to taxes to be paid to Dandanayaka Muddappa at the rate of one *bele* per *gadyana*\(^50\). As the income is described as *suvarnadaya*, it becomes clear that *bele* was a gold coin.

**RUKA**

*Ruka* coin was quite popular in the Andhra area right from the eight century A.D. It continued to be used in the Andhra during the Vijayanagara period. An epigraph from Nellore dated 1531 A.D., refers to a gift of 90 *rukas*. Another inscription from the same place of the time of Achyutaraya, dated 1535 A.D., refers to a fine of 12 *rukas*\(^51\). A solitary reference from Bangalore in a Telugu inscription of the time of Achyutaraya refers to a local levy of one *ruka* on the occasion of the *namakarana* ceremony\(^52\). In the absence of more data, it is not possible to identify this coin *ruka* and its relative value. Perhaps it was a gold coin.

**TARA**

Silver coins are rare in Vijayanagara period. *Tara* is the only silver coin. An inscription of the time of Devaraya II dated 1424 A.D. refers to a land transaction in which *Tara* is mentioned but it does not state that it was a silver coin\(^53\).

*Tara* coin is rarely found in inscriptions during the Vijayanagara period\(^54\). According to some Kannada inscriptions, it was 1/16 of *pana*\(^55\). An inscription from Anantapur district seems to suggest that *Tara* was a fraction of a *Ruka*\(^56\). It records the gift of four *Rukas* and four *Taras* for maintaining a perpetual lamp. This inscription probably belongs to the later Vijayanagara period\(^57\).
**PANAM**

*Panam* is referred to in some inscriptions and literary works as a copper coin. It is difficult to distinguish between the copper and gold *Panam* as found in the inscriptions. According to *ParasaraMadhaviya*, *Pana* was a copper coin.

A small number of records and epigraphs from Pudukottai region belonging to the Vijayanagara period mention different types of *panams*. In fact, there is a strong tradition of Viraraya *panams* throughout South India. But it has not been possible to identify this Viraraya of this tradition. However, it has been surmised that *panams* minted by Harihara II with Hanuman on the obverse and the legend *Vira Harihara* on the reverse. The records from Pudukottai also mention *gulikaipanam*, *rasi panam*, *chakra panam* and *adura panam*. It is difficult to understand the meaning of these terms.

An inscription from the Srikalahasti, belonging to the reign of Devaraya II dated 1435 A.D., it refers to the *panam*. Its average weight was 5.28 gms, and one *gadyana* was equal to 10 *panam*. Another inscription from the same place which belongs to Krishnadevaraya dated 1514 A.D., refers 1,000 *panams* donated to the temple. Another inscription from the same temple which belonged to Achyutaraya dated 1532 A.D., refers to 4000 *panams* gifted to the temple maintenance. An inscription from the same place which belonged to Achyutaraya dated 1537 A.D., refers to 440 *panam* gifted by the king to the temple. Besides, an inscription from the same place which belonged to Sadasivaraya dated 1554 A.D., refers to 100 *panams*.

**KASU**

*Kasu* which was widely current in Tamil country did not seem to be in much popularity in Andhra prior to the 14th century. A glossary given in the Nellore District inscriptions volume explains *kasu* as a coin of gold, silver, and copper. The copper *kasu* was about 1/20 of a penny. The term *kasu* as copper coin occurs in an inscription of the time of Achyutaraya dated 1531 A.D. It mentions the local levy as one *kasu* per load of paddy and grains. Another inscription from Cheruvu Belagallu in Kurnool District which belonged to the reign of Sadasivaraya 1568 A.D., gives a list of gifts made to the god Rajarajesvara in the context of which the coins Varaha and *kasu* are mentioned. However,
no details regarding to the value or metal of the coin are specified. Another inscription from the same district and belonging to the same date suggests that kasu is a fraction of hana\textsuperscript{66}.

FORIEGN TRAVELLERS

One of the important sources for the study of the coinage of the Vijayanagara period is the accounts of foreign travellers. A large number of foreign travellers visited and spent some time in various parts of the Vijayanagara kingdom and recorded impressions on a variety of aspects such as political, social, economic and religious. Some of the travellers wrote their accounts which have become valuable sources for the study of the history of Vijayanagara. As they were acquainted with the coinage and currency of the Vijayanagara period, they recorded some interesting information on them. Further, these travellers, who had handled different currencies of the world, were in a better position to evaluate about the coinage of the Vijayanagara period.

As most of the travellers were contemporaries to the Vijayanagara Empire, their testimony is all the more important and trustworthy. Most of the travellers allude in their own way to the existence of the department of mints and the techniques of minting coins during the period.

Numismatic data found in the writings of the foreign travellers, who visited Vijayanagara Empire, is highly useful for understanding the system of coinage of the period. Of the large number of travellers, Nicolo De Conti, Abdul Razzak, Duarte Barbosa, Fernao Nuniz, Ludovico di Varthema, Domingo Paes, Caeser Frederick are important. The earliest traveller to Vijayanagara was the Italian traveller Nicolo De Conti who came in 1420-1421, during the period of Devaraya I. He gave a description of the Vijayanagara court, festivities, currency and other aspects. Abdul Razzak visited Vijayanagara during the reign of Devaraya II between 1442-1443 A. D., and he was an eye witness at the Mahanavami festival at Hampi. His writings include the state of currency of Devaraya II and other matters of the Vijayanagara court and administration. Ludovico di Varthema of Bologna travelled in India between 1502-1508 A. D., and left behind a good and bright account of the court, city and society of Vijayanagara. Incidentally, he made many
references to Vijayanagara coins. Duarte Barbosa was a Portuguese government official and spent many years between 1500-1516 A. D., when Krishnadevaraya was the emperor. His description is very valuable for the history of Vijayanagara. Fernao Nuniz was a horse dealer and he spent three years in Vijayanagara between 1535-1537 A. D., and has left a valuable account of the empire including the coinage. Caesar Frederick visited Vijayanagara after the battle of RakkasaTangadi and recorded the pathetic state of affairs of that city. Most of the writings of these travellers are available in English translation. Robert Sewell edited the writings of Paes and Nuniz in his famous book ‘A Forgotten Empire’. Thus the writings of the various foreign travellers are useful in understanding the coinage of the period.

The literature available from contemporary travellers, who visited the city of Vijayanagara, informs that silver coins were also minted for circulation. It was generally believed by numismatists that Vijayanagara kings did not mint silver coins. But it has to be observed that many foreign travellers, who had travelled in Vijayanagara, had mentioned about the silver coins of this kingdom. They were being referred to as taur, tar, tara and tarh. Some inscriptions refer to them as tara. According to Varthema, silver tara was equal to one sixteenth of a gold pana. However, Abdul Razzak referred that silver coins named Tara were in circulation. Silver taur was equal to one fifth of a gold pana. This should be taken as to mean that each traveller was referring to a different silver coin of the period. The taur of Abdul Razzak was a bigger coin, whereas, the coin described by Varthema it was a smaller coin.

The term Tara has also been encountered in some inscriptions of an earlier date. The name is also mentioned in the travelogues of Ludovico di Varthema. Though all these travellers generally agree that Tara was a silver coin, there is a considerable discrepancy in their accounts, so far its value is concerned. Varthema reported it to be in equivalence of sixteenth of Fanam. Such variance has led to confusion as regards the exact worth of a Tara. Nevertheless, it can be safely surmised that it was a small coin. It is quite possible that the two writers were referring to two different silver coins, one of which was one sixth of pana and the other was one sixteenth of a pana. This coin is not mentioned
frequently in the inscriptions. Taking the weight of the present silver coin, it may be suggested that it belongs to the first category of one sixth of a *pana*.

**NICOLO DE CONTI**

Nicolo De Conti, (Italy) was a Venetian trading prospector and a noble who spent twenty-five years in different parts of India. He visited Cambay and from there went to Vijayanagara and gave a glowing descriptions of Vijayanagara coinage.

According to Nicolo Conti, “In the Vijayanagara kingdom, gold worked to a certain weight was used as money in the early part of the fifteenth century. In some parts, pieces of iron worked into needles and were used as currency, while in others stones called the cat’s eye were used as media of exchange”. Though he described gold coins, it is difficult to believe that Vijayanagara rulers used iron needles as coins. In fact, the needles of iron to which a reference has been made by Nicolo Conti are obviously the *Larins* minted and used by the Adilshahi rulers of Bijapur. As the Adil Shahis were the contemporaries of the Vijayanagara kings, obviously he referred to these Larins along with the Vijayanagara coins. However, they are made of base silver and not iron. *Larins* look like needles and on the border side is found the legend.

**ABDUL RAZZAK**

Abdul Razzak was a Timurid chronicle and Islamic scholar. He was the ambassador of Shah Rukh, the Timurid dynasty ruler of Persia. He visited Calicut in Western India in the early 1440’s. It appears as a chapter in his book *Matla-us-Sadain wa Muajma-Ul-Bahrain (The Rise of the two Oceans)*, a book of about 450 pages which contains a detailed chronicle of the history of his part of the World from 1304 to 1470 and which takes much of its contents from other writings.

Abdul Razzak, who visited Vijayanagara during the reign of Devaraya II, left a good account of the conditions of Vijayanagara including the currency system. He says “one might seek in vain throughout the whole of Hindustan to find a more absolute Rai (Devaraya II). The city of Vijayanagara is such has never seen a place like it in the whole world. The Jewellers sold pearls, rubies, emeralds and diamonds publicly in *bazaars*.
Abdul Razzak stated that mints were located in various parts of the empire. He states that the practice of the country was that at a stated period everyone, throughout the whole empire, carried to the mint the revenue which was due from him and whoever had money due to him from the exchequer received an order upon the mint.\(^{76}\)

Abdul Razzak gave a detailed account of the coins of the period of Devaraya II.\(^{77}\) He mentioned gold varahas, partarb or half varaha, quarter varahas, fanam, silver tara which was equal to one sixth of a fanam and copper jital equal to one third of a tara. The fanam was one tenth of a partarb. The partarb is the pratapa which is equal to half of a varaha. Further, the testimony of Abdul Razzak is also useful in identifying the coins of Devaraya II. Coins of Devaraya I and Devaraya II are so close to each other from the chronological point of view; they cannot be separated from each other with the help of palaeography. Devaraya II is known from his titles as well as from the testimony of Abdul Razzak that he had great fascination for elephant sports. Abdul Razzak states that the court of Devaraya II had more than one thousand elephant’s as lofty as hills and gigantic as demons. “This has helped the numismatists to ascribe such coins which contain a portrait of an elephant on the obverse with legend Devaraya II.”\(^{78}\) Abdul Razzak mentioned tara or taur as silver coin and jital as copper coin. No other traveller referred to any copper coin. Jital is valued as one third of a silver tara.

Devaraya’s coinage included gold varahas, partarb (pratapa) or half varahas, quarter varaha, fanam, silver tara and copper jitals. One fanam was equal to six silver taras and one silver tara was equal to three copper jitals”\(^{79}\) and twenty fanams were equal to one varaha.

According to Abdul Razzak, one partarb was equal to ten panams and hence one varaha was equal to twenty panams “\(^{80}\). The Italian traveller Varthema also agrees with this statement.

Abdul Razzak states that tara was a silver coin which was in use during the period of Devaraya II and it was equal to one sixth of a gold panam”. He mentioned jital as a copper coin and it was one third of a silver tara.\(^{81}\)
VARTEMHA

Ludivico de Varthema, the Italian traveller from the town of Bologna, left behind him, a valuable account of his experiences of Vijayanagara in the early 16th century. He is believed to have lived in between 1465-1517. He left from Venice in 1502 and travelled through Arabia, India, Central Asia, Burma and Malaysia. He made significant discoveries (especially in Arabia) and made many valuable observations of the peoples.

Varthema travelled in India during 1502-1503 A.D., and visited Goa, Calicut and Vijayanagara. His book was first published in 1510 A.D. in Rome, and was translated into Latin, German, Spanish, French etc.

Varthema added some more interesting information about the weight and fineness of the gold coins. He states that “the money changers and bankers have some weights and balance which are so small that the box in which they stand and the weights together do not weigh half an ounce; and they are so truthful and that they will turn by the weight of a hair of the head. The entire kit was so small that it could be kept in their pockets without any difficulty. And when they wish to test any piece of gold, they have carats of gold and touchstone. When the touchstone is full of gold, they have a ball of a certain composition, which resembles wax, and with this ball and when they wish to see if the gold is good or pure, they press on the touchstone and then they see in the ball the goodness of the gold and then they say; this is good and pure. And when that ball is full of gold, they melt it and take out all the gold which they have tested by the touchstone. The money changers are accurate in their business. The writing is self-explanatory and throws light on a rare aspect of the minting of the period. Head of the mint or treasury is referred to as ‘overseer’ by Vasco-da-gama.

Varthema stated that the pratapa coin was referred to as Pardai and he described it as having two figures stamped up on one side and certain letters on the other side. Varthema stated that tara was equal to one sixteenth of a panam. Another tara was one sixth of a gold panam.
DUARTE BARBOSA

Duarte Barbosa was an officer under Portuguese in Keralabetween 1500-1516 A. D. and knew Malayalam very well. His account of the Vijayanagara Empire is not only authentic but also contains minute details. He returned to Portugal in 1517 A. D., and completed his work in Portuguese which was translated into English under the title *The Book of Duarte Barbosa*. According to Barbosa, to regulate the weight and fineness, goldsmiths carried a touchstone to test the fineness and purity of the gold.

The money changers were very honest in the business of the Vijayanagara Empire. Barbosa did not give details but simply stated that the assistance of goldsmiths, who were specially appointed for the purpose, was taken to regulate the weight and fineness of the gold coins. He also praised their honesty and proficiency. Vasco-da-gama practically echoed the opinion of Barbosa, and added that overseers sent for money changers weighed all the coins and tested their fineness with touchstones, and they were very efficient in their work and declared the value of each coin. From all these references, it becomes clear that the officers of the mint were taking special care to test the value and fineness of the coins and tried to eliminate the counterfeit coins. It becomes clear from the statement of Barbosa that the coins of this place were perfectly genuine; not one of them had ever been found false nor is found false now.

Barbosa referred to the fineness of the gold coins. He stated that the gold used for the coins was base. But the Chinese travellers made it clear that the gold panam was pure up to nine tenths.

Barbosa gave some more details about the *pardao (pratapa)* coin. “The gold coin which they call *pardao* is minted in certain towns of the kingdom of the Vijayanagara. It was round and made in a mould which are current over the whole of the country. Though it is not known as to how many mints were operating in the Vijayanagara kingdom, it is known from epigraphic and literary references that Gandikota, Tirupati, Adoni, Penukonda, Mangalore, Barakuru, Gutti, Nellore, Madurai had mints. To regulate the weight and fineness of the gold coin the help of the goldsmiths, who were specially appointed for the purpose, was sought. The gold is rather base. The coin is round in form
and is made with a die. Some of them have on one side Indian letters and on the other two figures”. Barbosa considered *pardao* as equal to 320 *reis*\(^89\) (Old Portuguese money of account of very small value).

As Harihara II introduced administrative reforms it became necessary for the people to pay the taxes in cash and not in kind. This gave great impetus to the minting of the coins. With the increase of the number of mints, a great administrative control was imposed on mints which regulated the coinage of the period and a separate department of mints was established under the Vijayanagara rulers. There was a central mint under which operated smaller mints located at different parts of the empire. This practice became popular in the Vijayanagara period. Mangaluru *gadyana*, Barakuru *gadyana* were the coins minted at Mangaluru and Barakuru respectively. To meet the needs of the vast kingdom and also to give the impression of decentralisation of power, the Vijayanagara rulers had given some selected feudatories the privilege of minting their own coins. The coins of Lakkanna Dandanayaka, a feudatory under Devaraya II, are a good example of this practice. Local bodies also minted coins which were used in the areas under their control.

Barbosa referred to the fineness of the gold coins. He made it clear that the gold used for the coins was base. But the Chinese evidence makes it clear that the panam of the period was pure up to nine tenths. This is not base at all. In this connection, it is worth referring to certain coin terms which occur in the Vijayanagara inscriptions. They are *ghattivaraha*, *nijaghatti varaha* and *suddha varaha*. It is difficult to understand the precise meaning of these terms. The first term *ghatti* varaha literally means ‘*solidvaraha*’. Even today to describe the pure gold, presently we use the expression ‘solid gold’. On this analogy, it is stated that *ghatti varaha* was a *varaha* coin in which the gold content was rather of high percentage of quality of fineness. The word literally means ‘truely’ but, in Kannada usage it is intended to convey the meaning of ‘assertion of a fact’. As if it was not enough to describe a coin as of high quality gold, the expression truely has been added to dispel any doubt regarding the fineness of the gold. In other words the expression *nijaghatti varaha* may be taken to mean ‘positively pure gold varaha’. The third expression *suddha varaha* literally means ‘pure gold varahas’.\(^90\)
Barbosa’s description of the Vijayanagara coin can easily be compared to an actual specimen discovered. According to him, one side contained a man and woman and other side had Indian letters. Coins of Harihara II had Siva and Parvati on the obverse and the Nagari legend Sri Pratapa Harihara on the reverse. Another coin of the same ruler showed Brahma and Sarasvati on the obverse and the Nagari legend on the reverse. The same king’s another type had Lakshmi and Narayana on the obverse and Nagari legend on the reverse. The above first type was issued by Devaraya I, Devaraya II, Krishnadevaraya, Sadasivaraya and Tirumalaraya. The second type was issued by Harihara II alone. The third type was issued by Harihara II, Devaraya, Sadasivaraya and Tirumalaraya. The last named ruler issued coins with Sri Rama and Sita on the obverse and the Nagari legend on the reverse. Thus, all the above types contained a man (god) and a woman (goddess) on one side (obverse) and Indian letters (Nagari legend) on the other (reverse). Hence Barbosa could have referred to any of the four types of coins issued by any of the rulers listed above. Barbosa is known to have stayed in India from 1500 to 1516 A. D. and it was the period when Narasanayaka, Narasimha and Krishnadevaraya were ruling. Hence Barbosa could have seen either the old coins of Harihara II, Devaraya I, Devaraya II or the current coins of Krishnadevaraya. Hence the description of Barbosa tallies with the coins of these rulers and not those of later rulers of the Aravidu dynasty.

Barbosa gave the information about the monthly salary of soldier 4-5 pardaos. Barbosa says “coins of the Vijayanagara Empire neither are perfectly genuine; not one of them has been ever found false nor is now found so”.

DOMINGO PAES

Domingo Paes the Portuguese traveller visited Vijayanagara during 1520-1522 A. D. The chronicles of Domingo Paes have become famous because of the translation rendered by Robert Sewell who brought a titled A Forgotten Empire. He writes that if any one does not know what a pardao is, let him know that it is a round gold coin, which is not struck anywhere in India except in this kingdom’. He further adds that ‘it bears impressed on it on one side two images and on the other the name of the king who commanded it to be struck; those which this king ordered to be struck have only one image’. Commenting
on the circulation of coins and their value, he mentions that ‘This coin is current all over India. Each pardao is worth of 360 reis’.

Domingo Paes referred to gold pratapa coin and that too outside the Vijayanagara kingdom. Evidently, that, gold coins of Vijayanagara were honoured throughout the country. Within the territories of separate governors, as they were allowed to mint copper coins, there were localised coins and were not honoured outside the territory of a particular governor. However, the royal coins minted at the central mint, on the orders of the Vijayanagara kings, were accepted and honoured everywhere because of the correct weight and gold content. This explains the divergent views of the travellers in a satisfactory way.

The Vijayanagara was the only important and powerful Hindu kingdom which struck the round gold coins as different from the Sultans and Mughals who minted square and other types of coins. This must have been responsible for the statement of Domingo Paes that pardaos were minted only by Vijayanagara rulers. The Vijayanagara gold coins generally contain legends on one side and the figures on the other. Regarding the latter, travellers differentiate a coin with one figure and coins with two figures. The coins with one figure had impression of Hanuman, Garuda, Nandi, Balakrishna, Elephant, Boar, Lion etc. The coins with two figures had images of Siva-Parvati, Brahma-Saraswati, Lakshmi-Narasimha etc. Thus their description correctly tallies with the known specimens. The other gold coin to which a reference had been made by some of the travellers is panam or fanam. Pagoda is also mentioned by some writers. According to Domingo Paes a pardao was equal to 360 Reis. He says the annual salary of a military officer of the high rank ranged between 600 and 1000 pardaos. He states that “there are men of the guard who have a thousand pardao pay per year and others 800 and still others 600 and more”.

NUNIZ

Nuniz was in Vijayanagara in 1535 and also visited a second time later. The chronicles of Nuniz have become popular because of the translation of his work done by Sewell in his book A Forgotten Empire.

Fernao Nuniz states that ‘On the death of the king Bukkaraya, there came to the throne his son Pratapa Devaraya, which in Kannada means powerful Lord, and he coined a
money of *pardao Deorao* and from that time onwards it has become a custom to call coins by the name of the kings who made them; and it is because of this that there are so many names of the *pardaos* in the kingdom of Vijayanagara. This statement makes it clear that the practice of naming the coins by the name of the issuer started from the time of Devaraya II and this practice became popular among the successive kings of this dynasty.

This is confirmed by a Kannada work of a later date which refers to *Krishnarayi* and *Acchyutarayi* as the coins issued Krishnadevaraya and Acchyutaraya respectively. An epigraph also refers to *Acchyutaraya hana* meaning a coin minted by king Achyutaraya. Nuniz states that the price of 5 horses was a 1000 *pardaos*.

The word *pagoda* used by some of these travellers is of some interest. The word refers to a religious structure akin to a pyramid to idols worshiped in temples; even a single coin of Vijayanagara period has a *gopura* or a *sikhara* on it. By extended meaning, it also connotes an idol meant for worship and hence the travellers might have used this word to connote the idols that are found on these coins. In fact there is no Vijayanagara coin which has no religious symbol or significance attached to it. Almost all the coins have gods and goddesses and religious symbols embossed on them. Hence the travellers who saw these coins were justifiably using the expression *pagoda*.

**CAESER FREDERICK**

Caeser Frederick had a different experience with regard to the coinage of the Vijayanagara period. He states “a new governor’s territory, as every day did, although they were all the tributaries to the kings of Vijayanagara, yet every one of them stamped a small coin of copper so that the money took this day would not serve the next day”. In this description, Caeser Frederick is referring first to copper coins and secondly to territories of different governors within the Vijayanagara empire.

Abdul Razzak has made a reference to *varahas* or *gadyana*, the most popular gold coin of the Vijayanagara period. No other travellers were not referred these coin. On the contrary, most of the travellers refer to *pratapa* in various forms such as *partarb, pardao, pardai* etc. It is known that this was specially coined by Harihara II and it continued during the period of his successors also. Thus *pratapa* was a distinctive coin of the period. Even
when referring to the revenue of the villages and the salary of the officers, the coin *pratapa* is used by the travellers. From all these references it can be suggested that *pratapa* was, perhaps, the most popular coin used in various transactions and naturally attracted the attention of almost all the travellers\(^99\).

From the data of the travellers, the following table coins can be reconstructed

\[
\begin{align*}
1 \text{ varaha} &= 2 \text{ partarb or pardao (pratapa)} \\
1 \text{ pardao} &= \text{half varahas} \\
1 \text{ quarter varaha} &= 1 \text{ panam (fanam)} = 1/10 \text{ of pardao} \\
1 \text{ tar} &= 1/6 \text{ fanam} \\
1 \text{ tar} &= 1/16 \text{ fanam} \\
1 \text{ taurh} &= 1/15 \text{ fanam} \\
1 \text{ jital} &= 1/3 \text{ tar}.
\end{align*}
\]

Other coin and denominations are not referred to by travellers for which one has to depend upon epigraphs of the period.
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