Ancient names of Vijayanagara:

The ancient names given to Vijayanagara in the inscriptions are these; Hampe, Anegondi, Hastinavati or Hastini, Kunjarakona or Kunjarakonapuri. Some of these forms at least, if not all, are in the inscriptions identified with the word Vijayanagara. Thus in an inscription of the time of Harihara-II, dated 1395 A.D, he is called “the supreme lord of the royal city Hastinapura – Vijayanagara”1. And another inscription of the year 1432 A.D states that Devaraya-II “was in the residence of Hampe-Hastinavati, which is Vijayanagara”1.

Nevertheless there are other inscriptions that seem to be a little more accurate and do not completely identify Vijayanagara with that ancient town. Thus an inscription of 1309 A.D says that Harihara-II “was in the residence of Vijayanagara in the Hastinavati fort”2. And in another inscription of the year 1420 A.D Devaraya is said to be “in the residence of Vijayanagara belonging to Anegondi-durga, which is Hampe-Hastinavati”. Hence Hampe and Hastinavati are different names of Anegondi, and Vijayanagara is said to be in Anegondi. This does not mean that Vijayanagara was a kind of a suburb of Anegondi. Rather Anegondi was a suburb of Vijayanagara. Robert Swell says “The granite piles of a bridge over the river”, or “stones marking the limit of the causeway, are to be seen opposite Hampi”. Yet Vijayanagara in the beginning of its existence was said to be in, or to belong to Anegondi out of respect for
the ancient town on the northern bank of the Tungabhadra. That Kunjarakona or Kunjarakonapuri is another name of the city of Anegondi is evident from the inscriptions themselves. There it is said that Harihara “ruled the whole earth at the city of Kunjarakona”, and then when going hunting, he “crossed the Tungabhadra” and met with the marvelous event of the hare in the site of the future Vijayanagara. Evidently therefore Anegondi and Kunjarakona are the same city.

Philology confirms this identification. Hastinavati seems to be the Sanskrit form of Anegondi, i.e., “Elephant Pit”. The same is to be said of the name Kunjarakona. Hampe or Hampi is nothing else but the Kanarese form of the ancient Sanskrit name Pampa spoken of in the Mahabharata. Hence it is probable that this word is the oldest name of the Vijayanagara.

Establishment of Vijayanagara Empire:

The Vijayanagara Empire was founded by a bond of five brothers in the second quarter of 14th century A.D to check the onrush of aggressive Islam into South India. The main object of the founders was to protect the Hindu culture and Dharma from being molested by the alien invaders. Thus Vijayanagara Empire came into existence for the purpose of saving South India from being completely conquered by the Muslims, to save Hindu religion and give it a chance for its natural development. The entire history of the establishment, but, the fact cannot be denied. For the sources attribute the foundation of Vijayanagara Empire to the two brothers, Harihara and Bukka, who were the
sons of Sangama a chieftain in the Hoysala dominions. These two brothers and thus the five Sangama brothers were the founders of the Vijayanagara Empire.\(^5\)

Vijayanagara Empire was established with Hampi as the capital in 1336 A.D. For more than two centuries, the Vijayanagara Empire was ruled by one dynasty or another. For instance, the Sangama dynasty consisting to nine rulers ruled from 1336 to 1485 A.D. Next the throne was usurped by Saluva dynasty which ruled from 1485 to 1496 A.D. the advent of Saluva dynasty was the second usurpation which took place in 1496 A.D and ruled till 1565 A.D by six rulers belonging to this dynasty. Due to the third usurpation the Aravidu dynasty came into power in 1565 A.D and ruled up to 1644 A.D.

Let us now try to trace in the history of each dynasty with its rulers.\(^6\)

**Sangama Dynasty (1336-1485 A.D):**

**Harihara-I (1336-1356 A.D):**

Harihara-I was the first ruler of the Sangama dynasty. He ascended the throne in the year 1336 A.D and ruled for nearly two decades with the co-operation of his four brothers. Harihara-I extended his kingdom from the Nellore in the south-east to Dharwad and Badami in north Karnataka. But unfortunately the kingdom and his position was insecure due to the powerful enemies around his kingdom such as Sultan of Madura, Reddis of Kondavidu, Ballala-III and the Bahmani kingdom in the north. Despite these enemies Harihara-I proved to be the most successful monarch of the Sangama dynasty.\(^7\)

Taking advantage of Ballala-III’s instability in the Hoyasala kingdom and his series of wars against the Sultan of Madura, Harihara-I, brought many
principalities and divisions of the Hoyasala territories like Penukonda, Hasan, Shimoga, Kolar, Mysore and Chitradurga under his control.

After this grand victory of Harihara-I Vijayanagara army marched against the Kadambas of Goa on the coast of the Konkan. The Kadambas offered shelter to Ballala-IV. Under this pretext Kadambas were defeated and vast Kadamba territory including Chandraguti was annexed in 1347 A.D. Next Harihara-I turned towards Madura to sue the Hindu subjects and to release Sambhuvavaraya the chieftain who had been taken prisoner by the Sultan of Madura under this pretext armies of Vijayanagara marched against Madura and succeeded in their task.

A great challenge was posed by the newly founded Bahmani kingdom in 1347 A.D. Alauddin Hasan Bahmani came into conflict with Vijayanagara. Harihara-I seems to have succeeded in retreating the Muslim forces. These initial hostilities between two kingdoms grew day by day and continued ceaselessly for the generations up to the collapse of both the kingdoms. Thus Harihara-I is credited not only with the foundation of new state but also for setting up good Government and ensuring peace security in his dominions. Hence he may called as a worthy successor of Ballala-III and had placed the nascent imperialism of Vijayanagara on a firm ground before his death in 1356 A.D.

Bukka-I (1356-1377 A.D):

In 1356 A.D Harihara-I passed away. He was succeeded by his brother Bukka-I as he did not have male issue to mount the throne of Vijayanagara.
The accession of Bukka-I opened a glorious chapter in the history of Vijayanagara Empire. The moment Bukka-I ascended the throne his first and foremost task was to consolidate his position and power by replacing his own sons in place of his nephew over the provinces secondly he had to wage war on two fronts viz., the Bahmani and the Sultan of Madura. Besides this another task was to destroy the Sambhuvaraya chief Rajanarayana who was restored by Harihara-I who had declared his independence. Bukka-I entrusted this work to his son Kumara Kampana. Kumara Kampana led a campaign against the Sambhuvaraya chieftain and defeated him. Then Kumara Kampana annexed Tondaimandalam Chinglepet north and south Arcots to the empire. These victories had brought Kumara Kampana directly in conflict with Sultan of Madura under Sultan’s rule Hindus symbols like temples Brahmanas and cows were on the verge of destruction to protect these from the clutches of Sultan. Kumara Kampana led a grand campaign against Madura. In a severe battle Sultan was defeated and killed Kumara Kampana annexed the whole kingdom of Madura comprising of Srirangam Kannanur Koppam and Trichanapally. Thus with this campaign the whole of South India came under the sway of Vijayanagara extending up to Rameshwaram. This victory is one of the greatest land marks in the history of Vijayanagara’s territorial expansion.

Bukka-I was soon involved in war with the Bahmani Sultans, once during the period of Muhammad Shah-I the son and successor of Alauddin Hasan Bahman Shah. After severe battle a treaty was concluded between two kingdoms and this peace treaty continued up to Mujahid Shah son and
successor of Muhammad Shah-I. During his reign he violated the treaty and invaded the Vijayanagara but failed to gain anything. In the meanwhile he was murdered in the camp. Hence during the reign of Bukka-I Vijayanagara was free from the danger of Bahmani Sultans. The last campaign of Bukka-I was against the Reddy kingdom. With the defeat of Vira Anapota Ahobalam and Vinukonda were permanently annexed to Vijayanagara. The most significant event in the reign of Bukka-I was the reconciliation of religious difference between the Vaishnavas and the Jains. He was a great patron of learning and literature. Therefore he assumed the title “Vedamarga Pratrishapaka” i.e., the establisher of the path of the Vedas. He retained and renovated the temples and patronized Hindu learning.

Bukka-I was great ruler. He carried on the traditions of the Vijayanagara Empire and infused a new life into stagnant Hindu society. For the first time in the history of foreign relations Bukka-I sent an embassy to China. Bukka-I remarked his country was well preserved and the subjects were submissive to his authority. The Rayas of Malabar Ceylon and other countries kept ambassadors at his court and sent annually rich presents.

Bukka-I died in 1377 A.D, he was one of the greatest rulers of the age. Though the empire was founded by Harihara-I he became the real architect of it. He prepared the ground for his successors to accomplish the cherished goals of the founders.
Harihara-II (1337-1404 A.D):

Bukka-I was succeeded by his son Harihara-II who ascended the throne in the year 1377 A.D. Harihara-II had a long and eventual reign of 27 years during which period he introduced many reforms in the administrative setup. His long rule of 27 years enriched the empire to greatest extent Harihara-II was the worthy son of a worthy father. Hence he was the first ruler of the Sangama dynasty who assumed the imperial titles of “Maharajadhiraja” and “Raja-Parameshwara” which indicated his political status.

Soon after his accession to the throne the Bahmani Sultan declared war on Vijayanagara in 1377 A.D on account of the rejection of his demand by Harihara-II. The outcome of this war is not known except Ferishtah’s account. But anyhow Vijayanagara army seems to have succeeded in following the Bahmani design.

Taking advantage of political anarchy in the Bahmani kingdom owing to the murder of Mujahid Shah, Vijayanagara army invaded southern Konkan and northern Konkan. These victories made Harihara-II master of the entire western coast of the Deccan in 1391 A.D. Internal dissensions in Reddy kingdom made Harihara-II to invade that country. Deveraya, the governor of Udayagiri attacked and annexed Reddy territories viz., Addanki and Srisailam districts. While doing so, the Velamas of Rachakonda having league with Bahmani Sultan declared war on Vijayanagara. But this was nipped in the bud by the prompt action of Devaraya. In the year 1398-99 A.D he witnessed another war waged by the usurper, Firoz Shah Bahmani after the death of Muhammad.
Shah-II of the Bahmani kingdom, owing to the severe famine, it is said that Harihara-II was defeated and that he agreed to pay heavy war indemnity to Firoz Shah Bahmani to secure the old boundaries of the kingdom. The closing year of his reign was peaceful and undisturbed. In the year 1404 A.D he passed away.

Harihara-II was a man of great ability and military genius. These qualities helped him to lead the empire on a path of further progress. He became supreme lord of the eastern, western and the southern ocean. An inscription says, “By the grace of Vidyaranya Muni, he acquired the empire of knowledge unattainable by other kings”. Harihara-II’s death led to internecine wars between his three sons, viz., Bukka-II, Virupaksha-I and Devaraya-I. Finally, Devaraya-I succeeded and crowned himself king on 1424 A.D.

**Devaraya-I (1404-1422 A.D):**

Devaraya-I assumed power in the midst of a foreign invasion and a civil war at home. His rule of 16 years was spent constantly fighting against the Bahmanis, the Velamas of Rachakonda and the Reddys of Kondavidu. Almost these difficult tasks proved him capable of retaining his control over the vast territories inherited by him. His rule of 16 years is unique in the history of Sangama dynasty because his rule inaugurated an era of continuous wars against the traditional enemies of the empire. He thus succeeded in increasing the extent of the kingdom by annexation of fresh territories. In 1406 A.D Firoz Shah the Bahmani Sultan invaded Vijayanagara to save a gold smith’s daughter (Parthal) of Mudgal from Devaraya-I. In course of the campaign he laid waste
of the country and reduced the fort of Bankapur, then attacked Adhoni, and then marched towards the capital. Taking advantage of his defeat of Rays, the Reddys of Kondavidu invaded the Vijayanagara territories of Puttapinadu and Pulugulanadu. Then Mysore chief rebelled against the empire. But Devaraya dislodged them from these places in 1413 A.D. Then peace was established.

To rescue and to restore the throne of Rajamundri to Kataya Vema brother-in-law of the late king, Vijayanagara army was lead against the usurper of Rajamundri throne of Pedakomativema and his ally Bahmani, Vema and Bahmani forces re-treated the army of Vijayanagara. In this battle Katayavema lost his life. To avenge his previous defeats, Devaraya invaded Nalgonda and Pangal. He seized the capital of Firoz Shah’s ally and cut-off communications. Firoz’s attempt to recover these territories was foiled by Devaraya, with which Devaraya could re-established his authority over the entire Krishna and Tungabhadra Doab in 1419 A.D. Devaraya’s intervention in the affairs of Rajamundri brought Orissa under Bhanudeva. But this conflict was averted by the ex-diplomacy of Allada, the Prime Minister of Rajamundri. It opened a new chapter in the history of foreign relations of Vijayanagara and marked the beginning of the rivalry between Rayas and Gajapatis for about a century and quarter.

Devaraya was the first monarch, recognized the whole army and realized the importance of the cavalry in protecting the empire with this end in view he purchased large number of horses from Arabia and Persia and to
manage them he recruited for the first time ‘Muslim’ soldiers in the army by providing them with liberal grants and facilities.

Devaraya held an important position among the kings of Vijayanagara. He was a great diplomat. During the reign of Devaraya, Vijayanagara became a ‘Vidhyanagara’ the city of learning, and the abode of Saraswati. Nicolo D’ Conti an Italian traveler visited the kingdom. In 1422 A.D Devaraya-I passed away. Then his sons Ramachandra and Viravijaya succeeded him. They ruled one after another. Viravijaya succeeded his son Vijaya-I. During his reign of five years traditional enemies, Ahmed Shah Bahmani and Gajapati invaded and disturbed the kingdom. Eventually the crown passed to Devaraya-II son of Vijaya-I in 1424 A.D.

Devaraya-II (1424-1447 A.D):

Devaraya-II was also known as Prauda Devaraya ascended the throne in the year 1424 A.D. He was the son of Vijayaraya. His accession to the throne marked an era of achievements in all sphere of empire. He had taken active part in the campaign as well as in the administration of the kingdom under his father. The prematured death pitched him head long into the politics of the Deccan in the south. Devaraya-II himself was a man of virtue and vision which made him to emerge as one of the greatest rulers of Sangama dynasty. Throughout his reign he dedicated his life in enhancing the glory and prosperity of the empire. ‘People believed that he was the very incarnation of Lord Indra’.

To take revenge of his predecessors defeat at the hands of Devaraya-II, Bahmani Sultan Ahmed Shah-I invaded the Vijayanagara territories. Devaraya
with his league, with the ruler of Warangal initially succeeded but later he was forced to accept peace treaty. But the fact that Ahmed Shah shifted his capital from Gulbarga to Bidar implies the defeat of the Muslim ruler at the hands of Devaraya-II. After this, Devarya-II hurried to the rescue of Rajamundri and Kondavidu and at lost in a severe battle the vanquished Banudeva and he required the two provinces in 1427 A.D.

On account of Raya’s failure to pay the tribute to Bahmani Sultan Alauddin-II invaded and laid waste the country. Raya had no alternative, but to sue for peace by offering huge wealth in 1435 A.D once again in 1443 A.D war broke-out between Bahmani Sultan and Devaraya-II. Ferishtah held that Devaraya-II succeeded in capturing Mudgal Doab and plundered the Sultan’s territories. At last Devaraya-II was defeated and forced to accept the peace treaty. Devaraya’s General Lakkanna succeeded in extracting tribute from Ceylonese king. Then Devaraya-II for the second time defeated and compelled Kapilendra Gajapati who had attacked the Reddy kingdom in 1443 A.D. Devaraya also carried his arms into Kerala, subjugating the rulers of Quilon and other chieftains. He died in the year 1446 A.D.

Devaraya-II was a great monarch, perhaps the greatest of all kings who sat on the throne of Vijayanagara Empire perhaps surpassed only by Krishnadevaraya. Despite many defeats and successes he succeeded in maintaining the integrity of the empire.¹⁰
Mallikarjuna (1446-1465 A.D):

Devaraya was succeeded by his son Mallikarjuna. In the history of Sangamas, the rule of Mallikarjuna was marked by a sudden decline of power and prestige of the Sangama on one hand and significant victories for the Bahmanis and Gajapati’s on the other. Between 1446 and 1485 A.D the kingdom suffered on account of internal rebellions and external aggressions. “He led an easy go lucky life”. He was weak ruler too the weakness resulted in inviting internal as well as external aggressions. As usual the traditional enemy Bahmani Sultan Alauddin-II invaded the country but was driven back in 1449 A.D. In latter period coastal fortress Choul and Dabhol in Konkan area passed into the hands of Bahmanis in 1453 A.D. Planned to finish in troubled water, Kapileshwara of Gajapati sieged Rajamundri and Kondavidu by driving away the Vijayanagara nobles in 1454 A.D. elated with this victory Gajapati conquered Udayagiri, Chandragiri, Kanchi and advanced up to the river Kaveri. The loss of these provinces weakened the empire. And failure on the part of the Rayas to offer successful opposition to the Gajapati ruler lowered the prestige of the former, after this Mallikarjuna died in 1465 A.D.

Virupaksha (1465-1485 A.D):

In 1465 A.D the death of Mallikarjuna gave an opportunity to Virupaksha to usurp the throne of Vijayanagara. Unfortunately Virupaksha proved to be the most ineffective and incompetent ruler in enforcing authority over the empire. He could not pay the least possible attention to the affairs of
the state when his greatest vigilance was needed. “He cared for nothing except wine and women”. Exploring the weakness of the king, his subordinates became so powerful in almost all parts of the empire as to assert the throne for the master. Among them was Saluva Narasimha. Saluva became too powerful that he usurped the throne. Greatest blow to the empire was the loss of Goa and Belgaum to the Bahmani Sultan during the reign of Virupaksha.

Virupaksha’s wickedness, cruelty brought the loss of power and prestige to Sangama dynasty. Ultimately he was murdered by his own son, and renounced the throne to his younger brother. This prince was different unlike his father paving the way for Saluva Narasimha to usurp the throne in 1485 A.D with this usurpation the sun of the Sangama dynasty shut for ever which had risen to zenith of its glory under the genius efforts of Harihara and his successors.

Most of the rulers of the Sangama dynasty if not all of them exhibited a lively interest in the affairs of the state and extended patronage to men who devoted their energies to the development of arts and sciences. Their armies occasionally suffered defeats but, they were generally victorious from small beginnings their kingdom expanded into a huge empire. It was the guardian and champion of Hindu Dharma and learning.

Signs of decay and decline became conspicuous by the increasing internecine strife for power in the royal family. Mallikarjuna’s weakness was fully exposed by the Uriya armies. The eastern and central districts of the empire were lost. In the wake of foreign invasion, local unrest, in Tamilnadu
burst into a revolt headed by Bhuvanika Vira Samar Kolahala. The authority of the Vijayanagara ruler was successfully challenged. The Bahmani Sultan Muhammad Shah-III seized portions of the west coast including the Island of Goa. He spread his tentacles far and wide to the east coast. His troops advanced into the very heart of the Vijayanagara Empire. In the midst of anarchy confusion and rebellion Narasimha the governor of Chandragiri remained steady fastly loyal to the throne. His men bore the brunt of the struggle against the invaders and the rebels. His courage leadership and service saved the empire from possible disintegration and destruction. But for Narasimha the empire might have become a thing of the past calamities were turned into opportunities, to renew the strength of the state.

Virupaksha-II and his sons were indeed lucky to have had a minister and general of rare and proved capacity in the person of Saluva Narasimha. But they had not the wisdom to regulate their personal conduct even to the extent of guarding their personal respect. They ceased to take interest in the affairs of the state. Such was their fall in the estimation of the people that none came forward to defend their rights in the hour of gloom and crisis. The visible failure of Virupaksha and his succession placed Narasimha on the high road to power at the centre. Mallikarjuna and Virupaksha were pleasure seekers. They were incapable to enforce their authority over the empire. Particularly Virupaksha was found to wine and women.

Mallikarjuna and Virupaksha were inefficient. During the reign of these kings, Vijayanagara Empire lost the territories like Chaul, Dabhol, Goa,
Belgaum, Udayagiri and Kondavidu. These were the territories endowed with natural resources and added lucrative income to the empire. With loss of these territories the Vijayanagara Empire lost the source of income. Due to the absence of a strong power the Governors or Military Generals usurped the throne under guise of protector of the empire and the king. Though generals like Saluva Narasimha occupied the throne the ranks of the empire had not recognized them whole heartedly but they showed superficial respect at least on that scare. In due course, they became kings who used to command army and enjoyed the legal and the constitutional privileges and position exactly those of the kings. So they became the de-facto rulers. For instance Saluva Narasimha falls in this line. Thus it is evident that during the reign of the weak rulers unlawful rule was placed on the legal throne of the empire.

In the period of weak successors the empire lost its vigour and vitality. Inevitably subordinates like Nayakas asserted their independence and in the name of taxation they extracted money as much as possible from the subjects. Hence they were left to exercise sovereign authority without any interference from the kings within their respective provinces.

All the above factors clearly explain that due to the weak successors governors or generals became the kings of the empire. In course of time unlawful ruler’s rule became suppressive and oppressive which ultimately reigned the empire. Because oppressive and ineffective administration of the empire chaos and confusion prevailed, further, the monarchy was converted into Saluva dynasty\textsuperscript{12}. 

29
Saluva Dynasty (1485-1505 A.D):

Saluva Narasimha (1485-1490 A.D):

With the usurpation of the Sangama throne by Saluva Narasimha a new phase began in the history of Vijayanagara Empire. Utilizing the long services and experience gained under the weak and incompetent successors of Devaraya-II, Saluva Narasimha emerged as the savior of the kingdom. If Narasimha had failed in exploiting the existing conditions of the empire he and the empire had to face a worst catastrophe which none could have avoided. He usurped the diamond throne to protect the Hindu empire and to save the Hindu to Hindu Dharma from the menace of neighbouring Muslim kingdom. Though Sangama fell, yet their noble aims and objectives were continued for a period of eight decades.

As a Mahamandaleshwar and a king, Saluva Narasimha guided the destinies of Hindu empire for about four decades. He captured the fort of Udayagiri from the Gajapatis suppressed the Chola invasion in the Tamil country extracted tribute from the Ceylonese king. Then he succeeded in capturing fort of Masulipatnam and Kondavidu. After these his general Narasa Nayak defeated and drove away the Bahmani invader Muhammad Shah-III in 1481 A.D as a king Narasimha to some extent succeeded in curbing the feudatories revolts, in Tulunadu and Mysore. During the last years of his reign he was defeated by the Purushotama Gajapati it resulted in the loss of Udayagiri to Orissa. Due to internal disturbances he was unable to recapture
Goa, Belgaum, Kondavidu, Udayagiri, Raichur and Mudgal, but the rescued Vijayanagara from the disintegration.

**Tuluva Dynasty (1505-1570 A.D):**

**Narasa Nayaka (1490-1503 A.D):**

Under the guise of regent to protect his late Master’s minor sons Narasa Nayaka became de-facto ruler. Owing to the ill-will, he confined the king at Penukonda in 1490 A.D. taking the opportunity of the quarrels among the Sultans of Bahmani; Narasa Nayaka invaded and captured Doab. While doing so he fulfilled the wish of the late king. But this victory was short lived, for Adil Shah the Bijapur Sultan succeeded in recapturing it.

Narasa Nayaka brought many chieftains such as Chola, Pandya, Cheera and Ummattur under the subjugation of the empire. He succeeded in driving back the Gajapati king Prataparudra who had invaded Pennur in 1500 A.D. Thus Narasa Nayaka completed his master’s work and practically restored the previous boundaries. He died in 1503 A.D bequeathing the kingdom to his elder son Vira Narasimha. During his reign, Vasco-da-Gama came into contact with the Vijayanagara Empire in 1498 A.D.

**Vira Narasimha (1503-1509 A.D):**

Vira Narasimha was son and successor of Narasa Nayaka. He became the real establisher of Tuluva dynasty by murdering Emmadi Narasimha in 1505 A.D with Vira Narasimha’s usurpation Saluva dynasty ended in a tragic
and deplorable drama. But it laid the foundation of a new line of kings under whom the empire rose to great magnificence and power.

His reign was a period of turmoil as most of the captions revolted against him. In 1502 A.D Bahmani Sultans succeeded in recapturing Mudgal and Raichur. Encouraged by this victory Adil Shah attacked Adhoni, but Aravidu chief Ramaraja-I expelled Muslim Sultan from the fort. Thereafter Narasimha’s complete subjugation of Ummattur chief ended in failure. During his last year Prataparudra of Orissa once again invaded the Vijayanagara but Krishnadevaraya succeeded in expelling the Orissa king. After five years rule Vira Narasimha died in 1509 A.D.

**Krishnadevaraya (1509-1529 A.D):**

Krishnadevaraya mounted the jewel throne of the empire by sheer chance of destiny. The shrewd policy of Saluva Timma played a determining role in his accession for the throne. With his accession a new era opened in the history of the Vijayanagara Empire. During the two decades of Krishnadevaraya’s reign which marked culmination of achievements in all walks of administration. Krishnadevaraya was a great warrior, a clever and judicious politician and a benevolent administrator like whom India had ever produced.

Krishnadevaraya defeated the combined forces of Bahmani Sultan in the battle of ‘Doni’ and ‘Kovilkonda’ in 1509 A.D. Then Krishnadevaraya taking advantage of the prevailing condition in Bijapur kingdom invaded and annexed the River Krishna and Tungabhadra Doab in 1512 A.D. After this victory he
captured Gulbarga and pursued to Bidar where he released captive king and assumed the title ‘Yavanaraja Sthapancharya’. After the grand victory over the traditional enemies of the Hindu empire, he suppressed Ummattur chief and annexed it to his kingdom.

Krishnadevaraya became free from the fear of the enemies then he led series of invasions against Prataparudra of Orissa, in course Raya captured Udayagiri in 1513 A.D, Kondavidu in 1515 A.D, Kondapalli. Rajamundri finally laid siege to Cuttack, where Prataparudra sued for peace by offering his daughter in marriage to Karnataka king in 1518 A.D. After this Raya once again marched ‘Doab’ and recaptured it by expelling Ismail Adil Shah of Bijapur in 1520 A.D. He interfered in the affairs of Ceylon and restored Bhuvanaikababu to power. His closing years were not so happy owing to the death of his beloved older son. After nominating his half brother Achutadevaraya, Krishnadevaraya fell ill towards the end of 1529 A.D he died shortly after that.

“Among the sovereign of India in the sixteenth century Krishnadevaraya occupies a conspicuous place in the niches of the temples of history. Krishnadevaraya was undoubtedly the greatest monarch of Vijayanagara”. His life was a series of efforts to restore to the state its lost power and prestige, and assure it a permanent peace. He proved more than a match for the contemporary powers of the Deccan and South India, and recovered most of the lost territories of the empire. As a warrior, a statesman and a scholar, he excelled all the rulers of his time in India”.

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Krishnadevaraya was a man of un-doubtable personality, in many respects he was a unique, versatile genius like a multifaceted bright gem. Under the Vijayanagara attained the zenith of unprecedented glory. The twenty years of his reign marked a memorable epoch in the history of South India and afford a shining example of a sovereign who set before himself the ideal of the king whose chief concern was the safety and welfare of his subjects and who unremitting strove to promote them. Though he waged many wars, their ultimate objective was peace and happiness of the people.

Thus Krishnadevaraya distinguished himself as a maker of an era by his many sided personality. He was genius military general he know no defeats a benevolent administrator and a statesmen; he provided peace, security to people and maintained integrity of the empire. Krishnadevaraya was an ardent lover of art and architecture hence his reign witnessed the climax of constructive activities. He was a man of letters and patron of poets and scholars. He was endowed with many virtues and qualities which contributed to his marvelous success and outstanding achievements in many fields.

Achyutadevaraya (1530-1542 A.D):

Achyutadevaraya half brother and successor of Krishnadevaraya ascended the throne in 1529-30 A.D. Achyutadevaraya was weak and incompetent monarch. He could not protect the integrity and boundaries of the kingdom, achieved by Krishnadevaraya. Therefore, realizing the weakness of the Hindu monarch Bijapur Sultan recaptured Raichur and Mudgal in 1530 A.D. Further he advanced as far as Nagalpur and destroyed it. Taking
advantage of this, Prataparudra of Orissa invaded Vijayanagara territory of Andhra area but fortunately he was defeated and driven back by Achyutadevaraya. He succeeded in crushing the rebellion in southern part of the empire which provided a fair chance to his minister Aliya Ramaraya to usurp the throne, eventually Ramaraya succeeded in his task. But owing to the non-cooperation of the nobles he was forced to leave the kingdom to his Jagir, Gutti with his defeats and failure at last in 1542 A.D Achyutadevaraya died.

With his death another darkest period opened in the political scene of empire, with the accession of Venkata-I son of Achyutadevaraya in 1542 A.D. Because of Venkata’s minority his regent Salakaraju Timma became sole administration. Later he has a regent massacred all the members of the royal family and proclaimed himself the king of Vijayanagara17. Salakaraju Timma created a reign of terror in the politics of the empire ultimately he was killed by Ramaraya and Sadashivaraya was placed on the throne of Vijayanagara in 1543 A.D.

Sadashivaraya (1543-1570 A.D):

Sadashivaraya was the son of Ranga who in turn was brother of Krishnadevaraya. Just to accomplish his long cherished goal, Ramaraya put Sadashivaraya on the throne of Vijayanagara 1543 A.D. due to the minority of Sadashivaraya in the guise of regent Ramaraya became de-facto ruler and unchallenged master of the Vijayanagara administration, hence Sadashivaraya’s minority provided on opportunity to materialize the plan of Aliya Ramaraya to seize power for which he was aspiring since long.
For eight years from 1543 to 1550 A.D administration of the empire was carried out by Ramaraya as the agent and regent of Sadashivaraya. But when the king attained the majority he tried to rule independently. Ramaraya’s attitude became so poisonous that he put the king in a tight guard in 1551 A.D with his policy of Ramaraya the practical life of the king was confined within the four walls until his tragic death in 1570 A.D.

In the name of Sadashivaraya, Ramaraya became uncrowned king of Vijayanagara. Assuming all powers of the sovereign he ruled the empire for the next fifteen years, as its unquestioned master. Ramaraya appointed his brothers Tirumala and Venkatadari as Prime Minister and Military Commanders respectively. He re-organized the military and civil service by appointing his kith and kins and Muslims.

After consolidation of this position and power, Ramaraya succeeded in suppressing Tamil revolts and thwarted Portuguese plan of plundering coastal area temples, then he entered into the politics of the prolonged enemies of the Hindu empire. Ramaraya was the first man, who entered into the internal affairs of disintegrated Muslim kingdoms of North, where the succeeded to a better extent setting one Sultan against the other. At the cost of the Sultans, power and prestige of the Vijayanagara once again reached its zenith in all aspects particularly in the extent of territories\(^{18}\). Ramaraya even surpassed Krishnadevaraya in conquering Muslim territories and establishing his supremacy over the Muslims. But lastly he was put to death by Nizam Shah of Ahmednagar in the battle of Talikota in 1565 A.D.
Aravidu Dynasty (1570-1646 A.D):

Tirumala (1570-1578 A.D):

Aravidu dynasty was the fourth and the dynasty that ruled over the Vijayanagara Empire. Early members of this family hailed from Aravidu, a village in Kurnool district of Andhra Pradesh. The family attained prominence when Krishnadevaraya gave his daughter in marriage to Ramaraya in admiration of his abilities. Ramaraya was the son of Sriranga-I.

Tirumala, the younger brother of Ramaraya became the de-facto ruler of what remained of the empire while Sadashivaraya was kept in confinement. Realizing the futility of reviving life in the capital city of Vijayanagara which stood totally destroyed in 1567 A.D the permanently transferred his capital to Penukonda and Vijayanagara was abandoned for ever only to present a sorry scene of desolation and ruin. The period of six years between the battle of Bannihatti and Tirumala’s accession to the throne witnessed much confusion and anarchy. There broke out many strifes and struggles between chieftains. Ramaraya's relatives who were put in charge of districts defied Tirumala’s authority. He did not lose heart although he could not hold up these forces of disintegration. He tired to manage it with whatever strength that he could muster. There was also an attack made by Ali Adil Shah-I who occupied Anegondi and sent his army to meet at Penukonda. Following the footsteps of his brother, Ramaraya, Tirumala sought the help of Murtuza Nizam Shah and forced Ali Adil Shah to vacate Anegondi. Tirumala introduced certain administrative changes. He divided the empire into three provinces
corresponding to the three linguistic areas. His eldest son Sriranga was entrusted with the administration of the Telugu area with Penukonda as his capital, the second son Ramaraya was placed in charge of the Kannada regions with Srirangapattana as the headquarters, while the third son Venkatapati was placed over the Tamil districts with Chandragiri as the provincial capital. In 1570 A.D Tirumala crowned himself emperor at Penukonda. Sadashivaraya passed into oblivion and with him ended the Tuluva dynasty.\[19\]

Later, Tirumala who had formally assumed the crown at an advanced age retired from public life and was followed by his eldest son Sriranga-II.

Sriranga-II (1578-1586 A.D):

Sriranga-II was faced with many problems. By and large villages remained almost deserted, fields uncultivated and temples unattended, while petty chieftains and Paleyagars indulged in looting and pillaging. Added to these the Sultans of Golconda and Bijapur invaded the northern parts of Vijayanagara. Sriranga’s sons who had been put in charge of the provinces made their positions independent of the central authority and never bothered to help the ruler in solving these problems nor did any help come from Sriranga’s brother. Sriranga-II died without an issue.\[20\]

Venkatapati-I (1586-1614 A.D):

Venkatapati-I ten youngest brother of Sriranga-II, succeeded to the throne in preference to other claimants to it as he was the fittest amongst all of them. His attempt to recover the lost territories of Udayagiri brought him in
conflict with Muhammad Quli Qutub Shah of Golconda who sent a large army and laid siege to Penukonda. Actively helped by chiefs like Jayadeva and Raghunatha of Tanjore, Venkatapati-I was able to defeat the enemy in the battle of Pennar and chased him away across the Krishna. Later in 1592 A.D Ibrahim Adil Shah-II of Bijapur also moved with a large force and attacked Penukonda but he was forced to retreat with heavy losses.

During the later part of his reign Venkatapati-I was confronted with the threatened invasions of the Mughal emperor, Akbar who began his southern campaign in 1593 A.D and captured Ahmednagar, sought diplomatic relations with Vijayanagara, once in 1600 A.D and again in 1604 A.D Venkatapati-I realized the real motive behind these overtures. He managed with caution and kept himself ready against any eventually. The death of Akbar removed his fears. At this time Venkatapati-I had to deal tactually with the threatened advent of the Dutch who were the rivals of the Portuguese with whom Vijayanagara was on friendly terms.

There broke out a widespread rebellion in the Tamil country when the chiefs of Jinji, Vellore, Madura and Tanjore attempted to throw off their allegiance to Venkatapati-I, but they were all brought back into the fold. Tirumala, the son of Ramaraya and elder brother of Venkatapati-I was serving as the viceroy at Srirangapattana. The relations between the uncle and nephew were not cordial. At this time Raja Wodeyar of Mysore was attempting to extend his power. In 1610 A.D the captured Srirangapattana, the Vijayanagara
ruler condoned this aggression and also rewarded the aggressor with the territories of Srirangapattana and Ummattur.

Venkatapati-I was the greatest of the Aravidu kings. He subdued rebellions and established peace within the empire, repulsed attack from outside and tactfully handled the Mughal and the Dutch threats. His devotion to Hinduism, gifts to temples and tolerance towards other religions evoked commendation. Himself a great scholar, Venkatapati-I patronized philosophers and scholars like Tatacharya, Appayadikshita and Tenali Rama Krishna. Venkatapati-I succeeded to some extent in reviving the glory of Vijayanagara. But it was only the glow of the sunset.

Venkatapati-I had six wives and none of them had a male issue. Before his death he nominated his brother, Ramaraya’s second son, Sriranga-III to the throne.

Sriranga-III (1614 A.D):

Sriranga-III who came to the Vijayanagara throne proved totally unworthy of the position. Jaggaraya, brother-in-law of Venkatapati seized the throne in favour of Chikkaraya, who pretended with his family. Velukoti Yachama Nayaka, loyal supporter of the royal house, took up the cause of Sriranga-III. This precipitated a civil war, Jaggaraya put to sword Sriranga-III and his entire family, except Ramadeva, a boy of twelve years who escaped. Many feudatories ranged themselves on either side and plunged the empire into confusion. In 1617 A.D a battle was fought at Toppur on the bank of the
Kaveri in which Jaggaraya lost his life. The battle of Toppur hastened the dissolution of the empire\textsuperscript{21}.

**Ramadeva-II (1617-1632 A.D):**

Ramadeva-II who was crowned by Yachama ahead to struggle throughout his reign. Yachama acted as regent till Ramadeva came of age. Rebellious tendencies were spreading widely in the empire as the civil war had greatly weakened the central authority. In 1630 A.D a terrible famine broke out in the empire and caused untold miseries to the people. Ramadeva nominated Peda Venkatapati, a grandson of Aliya Ramaraya as his successor\textsuperscript{22}.

**Venkatapati-II (1632-1642 A.D):**

The accession of Venkatapati-II was challenged by Timmaraya paternal uncle of Ramadeva. He seized the government and confined Venkatapati-II at Anegondi. Considering Timma as a usurper the Nayakas of Madura, Tanjore and Jinji defied his authority and helped Venkatapati-II. Finally in 1635 A.D Venkatapati-II assisted by his nephew, Sriranga-IV and other Nayaks succeeded in defeating Timma and also killing him. Venkatapati-II occupied Vellore and made it his capital. As a consequent of frequent conquests and annexations of the northern parts of the Vijayanagara empire by the Sultans of Bijapur and Golconda often at the instance of princes and chiefs of Vijayanagara the empire was fast fading away. In 1641 A.D only with the timely help of the Nayaks of Madura, Tanjore and Jinji that Venkatapati-II could protect Vellore against the attack of Ranadullah Khan, the general of
Bijapur army. Who had reached that place after conquering many places in Karnataka including Bangalore, where Kempegouda was ruling. In 1642 A.D Qutub Shahi forces conquered all the forts along with the coast. Earlier in 1639 A.D Venkatapati-II had given the site of Madraspatanam to the English to build a fort and a factory there. He died in 1642 A.D and was followed by his nephew Sriranga-IV who had joined hands with Bijapur against Venkatapati-II\textsuperscript{23}.

**Sriranga-IV (1642-1681 A.D):**

In 1642 A.D Sriranga-IV, son of Chinna Venkata, who was the younger brother of Venkatapati-II came to the throne. He spent practically all his life on the battlefield. The nobles of the kingdom, particularly the Nayaks of Madura, Tanjore and Jinji united and organized revolts against the ruler. Qutub Shahi forces laid seize to Udayagiri. Ranadullah Khan marched his forces into Karnataka districts where he was defeated by Shivappa Nayaka of Ikkeri. Sriranga managed to dislodge the Golconda forces from Udayagiri. There was a second invasion into the Vijayanagara territories by the Golconda army assisted by the Velukoti chief. Sriranga-IV managed to chase away the invading forces after killing its general.

In pursuance of a directive from the Mughal emperor to the Sultans of Golconda and Bijapur to conquer and partition Vijayanagara territories between themselves, Mustafah Khan of Bijapur occupied the south and took Vellore, while the Golconda forces under Mir Jumla captured Venukonda and Udaygiri. Consequently the whole kingdom was laid waste, all important forts
including Vellore were occupied by the Muslim forces. Thus, Sriranga-IV was left with no kingdom. Yet he had not given up hopes of re-establishing his authority. He went to Mysore and Ikkeri built up his resources and waited for an opportunity. An opportunity did come when Mir Jumla fell out of his master and joined the Mughals. But Sriranga was not able to take advantage of the situation. His last attempt to resuscitate the Vijayanagara authority was blasted by Tirumala Nayak of Madura who sought Bijapur’s help for this purpose. Betrayed by his feudatories Sriranga-IV lost hopes of re-establishing his authority. He died in 1681 A.D.

Thus ended the Aravidu dynasty and with it the Vijayanagara empire. The Aravidu kings endeavoured to maintain the traditions of Vijayanagara against overwhelming odds. With the disintegration of the empire a few feudatories and local chiefs like the Nayaks of Ikkeri, Wodeyars of Mysore continued the traditions of Vijayanagara.

Vijayanagara Empire, which was built by the efforts of devoted rulers and loyal subjects, was not merely a geographical expression but it symbolized more the cultural attainments of the rulers and their people. It was the natural culmination of the empire building abilities of the rulers of this land inaugurated by the mighty Chalukyas of Badami. Vijayanagara had active diplomatic and commercial relations with many countries in the East and West as well. The city of Vijayanagara was the nerve centre of all activities, both political and cultural. Besides it had vast commercial transactions. It was extraordinarily rich and prosperous as to evoke unqualified admiration of all who
visited the place. The city was well planned and its needs were administered property. The glowing accounts of the city left behind by the visitors bear eloquent testimony to its prosperity and urbanity. The ruins of Hampi today do enable the sympathetic visitor to understand the glory of Vijayanagara that stood for all that was noble and beautiful in life$. True, Vijayanagara as hearts of a political unit disappeared but as cultural entity it is very much in the hearts of the people of this part of the country. It is deathless.
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