CONCLUSION

In the five chapters above we have delineated the economic and social conditions of the people of Rayalaseema during Vijayanagara period. It should be noted that we have taken into consideration only one area which has its own peculiar geographical environment. In the first chapter we have made a detailed study of the sources on which our study is based. We have examined the utility or otherwise of these sources. Special mention is made of the work Āṭṭhavana-tantram which is, of course, of a much later period, of the period of rule of the British East India Company. The administrative conditions continued to be, with some changes, what they had been in the Vijayanagara period. But, the socio-economic conditions had certainly undergone changes.

The second chapter deals with a background study of the physical-environmental and also the political background. The physical features greatly influenced its economy as also its society. The conditions of climate made it
imperative for the people to depend more upon tank and lift irrigation. The kings themselves, to improve their finances, offered impetus to agriculture by way of bringing more forest land under cultivation, improve the irrigational systems and offer several incentives to the inhabitants of the villages more so when the people, pinned down by heavy taxation, thought in terms of migration to other regions.

We have briefly outlined the political history and emphasised the need for a Hindu kingdom to protect Hindu dharma. In the early phase of the empire sought and got the help from the Śringārī māṭha. But later the Saṅgama and the Tuluva rulers turned to Śrīvaishnāvism for support. We have also looked into the geographical location of Rāyalaseema which is peculiar and placed between the Bahamanies, the Gajapathis and Vijayanagara rulers. But for a great part the influence of Vijayanagara was lasting and the language Kannada was the official inscriptional language in many places of Rāyalaseema.

The third chapter deals with the economic conditions. Here, as already stated, we have confined ourselves to the conditions that existed in Rāyalaseema. Since we are not dealing with the whole kingdom, we have refrained from speaking about the market rates, the routine economic life of the people as a whole and so on. Good trade routes had been developed, no doubt. The routes were originally meant for the movement of the army - the dāṇghudōva mentioned in the epigraphs which have been noticed by us in the sequel. But with the growth of inland trade these roads had to be maintained properly since the movements were not limited to armies, but extended to caravans of trade. They move not in single, but in clusters. We have given an account of robbers
who were pirates on land and who attacked these caravans for looting. Hence, just for the sake of defence the members were armed with weapons. Literary works of the period give a graphic account of the agonies of travel. A record of Krishṇadēvarāya\(^1\) refers to kāvaḍis, head - loads, pack-horses, pack-bullocks and asses. This list does not include wheeled vehicles. But, such robberies and piracies appear to have numerically quite small in Rāyalaseema since the very geography of the region was unfavourable for such activities. There was no easy routes of escape for the robbers like forests.

Fairs (santa) were held in almost every big town and of course, cities, weekly to which place the villagers came in large numbers with their articles of merchandise. For big merchants such markets were collection centres. Venkataramanayya\(^2\) refers to a late work of the 18th century - the Hamsavimsati - that gives a list of such market places. It includes, in Rāyalaseema, places like Rāyadurgam, Gutti, Ādavāni, Penukōṇḍa, Kundurpi, Munimaḍugu, Dūpādu, Banagānipetta, Porumāmillā, Tāḍapatri, Nandyāla, Nandavaram, Siddhavātaṁ, Cuddapah, Gaṇḍikōta, Kadiri, Kālahasti and Pākāla. There was no uniformity in rates of taxes and customs duties collected. Atṭhavanatantram emphasises this aspect when it says :\(^3\)

No uniformity is possible in the scale of excise duty collected. The tax framers who were eager to obtain wherever profit they can secure from their districts, secretly repair to the merchants and enter into an agreement with them by offering to levy only an addaga, when they have to pay a ruka in a neighbouring district. Consequently, it is not possible to make any general statement about the excise duties.

Hence, it would be difficult to estimate exactly the cost of living which varied from place to place. Agriculture which was the back bone of the economy
of Rayalaseema was promoted both by private and state initiatives. The Rayas promoted agriculture through the construction of irrigational works like tanks and canals which even today irrigates the fields in the region. Private enterprise was not lacking in this direction. Temples, village assemblies and private individuals, officials, nāyakas, Daṇḍanāyakas took up irrigation work of various dimensions depending upon the resources at their command. As in other parts of the empire the custom of giving land grants for the maintenance of irrigation works existed in Rayalaseema also. The reḍḍies the kammas, karaṇams and talvāris formulated appropriate rules for the distribution of water, provision for the removal of silt and for settling quarrels over the rights of irrigation. Reclamation of waste lands through state’s encouragement was another means of the expansion of agriculture.

The peasant proprietorship in soil was not only recognised by the kings, but also factors like scarcity of peasants, and abundance of lands, which are absent in modern times, were operating in favour of its growth. Complete ownership in Rayalaseema, consisted of eight kinds of rights namely nidhi, nikshēpa, jala pāshāna, askshini, āgami, sidda, and sādhya. In addition to these, the rights like kraya (sale), Dāna (gift), Bhōgya (mortgage) were also recognised. These land rights and the land under cultivation and the kinds of crops grown on uttama, madhyama, and kanishṭa lands were recorded in Gudikattu Kavile.

There was either total exemption or a taken collection of taxes from the persons who held lands under these tenures. As a result, the state not only incurred losse of revenue but also created a class of intermediaries who came to
control the means of production but actually did not till the lands themselves. They were mostly absentee land lords and as such leased lands to tenant farmers. The political and military contingencies of the time contributed to the emergence of the nāyaṅkara system under which Amaranāyakas of various grades held lands under the king, for rendering military and administrative services.

We have epigraphical references to peasants leaving villages on account of oppressive taxation. Some foreign travellers point out that taxes and imposts were large in number and hence burdensome to the people living in village. Instances of protests against the oppression are recorded in the inscription. On such occasions, the officials paid attention to the legitimate problems of the people. Since the problem of the period was not one of shortage of arable land, as land was available in plenty, the main aim of the rulers was to encourage the extension of arable lands and thereby tried to increase the production from land. Hence they knew that over assessment would drive away peasants from land.

The fourth chapter deals with the Vijayanagara society, as applicable to Rāyalaseema. In this connection we have referred to a number of aspects of social conditions. Some points, however, need to be emphasised here specially with regard to some customs associated with women as such. One such is the dowry system of which we have detailed discussion in the relevant chapters. Yet, a few more points may be considered. According to Manu's Dharmaśāstra⁴ there were eight distinct forms of marriage, of which only in the Brahma and Daiva forms the father gives away his daughter decked with ornaments and jewels. In the third, Arsha form the father received from the bridegroom - a cow
and a bull or two pairs. Megasthenes,\textsuperscript{5} in the Maurya period of Indian history states that the Indian's marriage is marked by the gift of 'a yoke of oxen'. But, as the kingdoms grew in extent, matrimony became a part of diplomacy. To keep the subordinates in check or to control the enemy by pleasing him, matrimonial alliance became a policy usually the son-in-law was selected from a family of higher status than one's own which naturally meant as a corollary, that daughters-in-law came from families of lower status. By such a policy the more powerful was kept in contentment while the less powerful was kept in check. The women acted as binding forces in such situation. The dowry taken or given was only a token of gratitude and affection. But slowly this dowry system assumed greater proportion as centuries rolled by.

In Rāyalaseema region the agriculture and economic activity got a boost. New lands were brought into cultivation. This brought momentous changes in the fabric of the society. The caste distinctions of four varnas got slowly eroded. If would clearly show that the traditional caste system was not strictly adhered to. The arrival of alien people like Muslims and Christians impressed the people of the Vijayanagara empire, through their trade. In spite of the entry of these two new religions, we do not come across any example of rift between these communities. The āyagāras and the artisan class played an important role in contributing to the state exchequer.

Agrahāras and the village assemblies were administrative bodies as well centre of cultural activity, gained utmost importance. Another prominent feature was that the acceptance of bribery by the administrative authorities at various level, throw light on the shortcomings of the administration.
Then comes the system of Sati. This is an age-old system current even in the epic period. But in some recension of *Mahābhārata* for example such system is not referred. R.C. Majumdar opines that the system was possibly confined to the warrior class. The account of self immolations by the then Greek writers like Diodorus is in no way different from the accounts left behind by travellers during the Vijayanagara period. With quite a good number of wives each of the Vijayanagara ruler had married, there is no wonder that they thought of self immolation to avoid the later treatment meted out to them by the successor ruler. We have shown also that such a system was mostly confined to the higher, economically more affluent, strata of society. In the centuries just prior to the foundation of Vijayanagara, there were a class of soldiers who were the security staff of the king and other high officials. In the Hoysala period they were called *garudas* and they were bodyguards. They had vowed to protect the king and when the king died they too, probably along with the wives committed *sati*. In these cases it was simply an act of dedication. We have discussed this aspect above.

A third aspect with regard to woman was the *dēvadāsi* system. As a part of worship, God was to be pleased with music and dance, besides other services. It was in this connection that necessity was felt to employ dancers in the temples, obviously females. *Dēvadāsi* meant servant- maids of God. These were to offer services in the temple and obviously were paid. But, wherever royal patronage was given to temples, these *dēvadāsis* were practically royal concubines also. In such cases they themselves were in a position to make munificent grants to temples. Otherwise, they were treated as public women. It
would appear that the term *patrabhōga* would apply to public women who also indulged in the trade of flesh. The women of all the castes were subjected to the same kind of brutality by the society. Those who do not practice sati were subjected to harassment and dishonour. Though many a women occupied important positions during this period it has not altered the status of women. In the V chapter we have tried to took into the philosophy.

Religion and art which have influenced the socio-economic activities of Rāyalaseema. We have referred to the poet Nāchana Sōma. Allāsāni Peddana also figures in two records at Kōkata in the Kamalapuram taluk of Cuddapah district. Both of them are dated 1518 A.D. (April 25 and October 15 respectively). In the first it is stated that Peddyyamgaru, son of Alasāni Chokkarājungāru received the village Kōkaṭam as *urpbafi* from the king Kṛishṇadēvarāya. That was situated in Gaṇḍikōṭa sima. The donee, in turn, donated some lands therein to the temple of Sakalanātha-liṅga at Kōkatam. The gift was made on the occasion of a lunar eclipse and in the presence of God Mallikarjuna at Bejavāda on the bank of river Krishṇa. A post script adds that the *sthalakarnam* (local accountant) of the village, Mummadarāju, son of Kaṭṭa Mumaḍrāju Tippana, had the temple of Sakalēśvaradēva reconstructed in the year (?). Bahudhānīya Bairōju in Summetūru, son of Mallōju, the goldsmith also granted two tumus of lands. The second epigraph is damaged and the name of the poet is lost but it mentions the father Alasāni Chokkayaṅgāra. It registers a *gōcharma* i.e., 4-1/2 *puṭṭi* of land in Kōkaṭam, obviously by the poet to Gods Chennakēśava and Hanumān. Bairōju, son of Mallōju, the goldsmith, also made a grant of 2 *tūmus* of land to the east of the short road from Anumanaṅgūru to Tippalūru. The third epigraph is found at
Anniyur in Villupuram taluk of South Arcot district in Tamil Nadu. This is dated 1519 A.D., November 6. It refers to Peddana (peddiraju son of Allasani Chokkarkaru) as Āndhrakavitāpitāmaha who is stated to have built a temple and installed the deities Varadarāja and Nāchchiyār therein and to have donated the village Varadarājapuram besides some lands in Annūru within Karivīdu-sīma which he had received from the king as nāyaṅkara. These would show that although this poet, a Nandavarika Brähmana and a converted Vaishṇava, had no moorings either in Rayalaseema or Tamil Nadu, the king bestowed upon him gifts in these regions also. This shows the regard the king had towards this poet, Āndhrakavitāpitāmaha.

The holy place of Tirupati had offered shelter to a good number of poets, musicians and philosophers. The members of Tallapākam family, the greatest of them being Annamāchārya, were great musicians who composed songs as in the case of the last mentioned. The Tirumala Tātāchārya’s family had a good number of exponents of Śrīvaishṇava philosophy. Bayankāra Rāmapayya, daughter’s son of Tōḍaramalla kaḷinātha,9 was the author of ‘Svaramālakalāṇidhi’ a work on music. He is stated to have also constructed a palace called Ratna-kūṭa of Rāmarāya. Vān Śathakōpa-jiya, the earliest bearing that name, was the preceptor of Allasāni Peddana. Nārāyana-jiyar and Parāṅkuśa-jiyar were his successors.10 Kandācāi Rāmanujayyanagar and his disciple Mādhavayyaṅgār had been the karta (guardians) of the gold treasury (porpaṇḍaram) of the Tirumala temple.11 Kōṭikanyādānam Tātāchārya had the vimāna of the Śrīnivāsa temple at Tirumala renovated.

These Śrīvaishṇavas received royal patronage and were bestowed upon
with munificent grants. They had become rich and some of them had not only been naughty, but also loose in character.

The other significant feature was the renovation of temples. The temple, noted in the earlier chapter, was a centre of activity. The inscriptions of Cuddapah district make it clear that there was no dearth of donors for the construction of any temple. The temples were places of worship and social activity and they also became the places for the artists to exhibit their talents. The Lāpākshi temple is an outstanding example. There are a number of temples of this period which are spectator's feast as far as the sculpture is concerned.

These are some aspects pertaining to culture. We feel that we have given a fairly good analytical account of the socio-economic conditions in Rāyalaseema during the Vijayanagara period.
NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. MER., 1915, No. 18.
2. op. cit., p. 301, note.
4. II, 27-34.
5. Machindle: Ancient India as described by Megasthenes and Arrian, p. 222.
7. ibid., p. 568.
8. SII., XVI, Nos. 65 and 66.
11. ibid., p. 216.