AIMS AND SCOPE

For the first time in the history of South India, by the middle of the 14th century, in 1336 A.D. to be exact, there arose a kingdom on the banks of the Tungabhadrā, around the place called Hampi, which later extended over the whole of South India. The extent being vast, it could be designated a chakravartikshētra- an empire, with an emperor at the helm of affairs of this vast region.\(^1\) Around the capital of such an empire there were political divisions near about and around the capital which were directly ruled by the emperor himself through his officials. But, in the regions somewhat far off from the centre, there were subordinate chieftains, and kings of minor dynasties who accepted the suzerainty of the Vijayanagara emperor, paid him all the taxes, tributes etc. due to him and supplied him with contingency (or contingencies) of armies in times of wars that the overlord had to fight quite often.

The political conditions of this new kingdom were such that they had to be constantly at war with their neighbours in the north and subdue rebellions and revolts internally in the southern and western coastal regions. The nature of the kingdom was quite different from the previous centuries when, in the south, in the
revolts internally in the southern and western coastal regions. The nature of the kingdom was quite different from the previous centuries when, in the south, in the three linguistic regions of Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh there were different ruling dynasties which were among themselves at war for the occupation of each other's territories, each of them claiming superiority over the other. But, with the advent of Islam in South India, the political map underwent a distinct change. Malik Kafur's invasions in the south at the behest of Allauddin Khilji sent shivers among the Hindu rulers of the south, whose existence itself was now very much at stake. The Muslim army with the help of a strong cavalry dashed into these regions and one after the other, the ruling dynasties fell like nine pins. The first to disappear was the Kākaṭiya dynasty of Warangal which could not withstand the onslaught of the Mohammadan army. Kafur looted the wealth of the kingdom and proceeded further against the Hoysalas and through the Hoysala country against the Pāṇḍyas. In these encounters the only kingdom that could withstand the Mohammadan onslaught was that of the Hoysalas. The contemporary king in the Hoysala kingdom was Ballāla III, who was, by then, already aged and physically found it difficult to face the army. He did not want to lose the kingdom and did not want the Hindu religion to be eroded by a very different religion viz., Islam. It was not only the fear of losing the kingdom and thereby losing power, but also a fear of losing one's own religious moorings that made the Hoysala make an all out effort to save the kingdom. He knew that his own son was incapable of shouldering such a responsibility and he found in the Harihara brothers competent persons who could rise to the occasion and save the country and save Hinduism. Thus came into existence a new kingdom called Vijayanagara, or the City of Victory, a name with which the capital city of Hampi
itself came to be associated.

Malik Kafur and his master Allauddin Khilji were interested only in the loot with which they enriched themselves. For usurping power, Allauddin Khilji wanted finances through which he could purchase the loyalty of the officials and the governors thereby enabling himself occupy the Delhi throne as the Sultan. He was interested only in the assets and was not willing to take over the liabilities. Hence, he was not interested in annexing Vijayanagara to his own empire. His centre of activity was quite far away for him to have a direct control and he had himself fooled his own uncle through intrigues leading to the dramatic death of the old Sultan and immediate coronation of Allauddin Khilji. The Delhi Sultanate's experience, therefore, had taught him a lesson of not overburdening himself with unnecessary responsibilities, but get himself satisfied with the riches that those distant territories offered him.

The Vijayanagara kingdom had born under such turmoils of fear and its early rulers busied themselves in consolidating their possessions and power. But, there was always the danger from the enemy and the new kingdom had to be always on the alert, militarily, to save itself from destruction. In this regard it needed not only sympathetic moral support from the people; but more so the financial strength to administer and to fight.

Some scholars have described Vijayanagara as if it were a military state. But, it must be understood that most of the wars fought by the rulers of Vijayanagara were more defensive in nature than offensive. Offensive they had to be, under certain circumstances like the subduing of internal revolts, equipping
themselves with a strong army to face the external attack and slowly but steadily also to expand the newly found kingdom. The Vijayanagara rulers very much succeeded in their policy. They not only expanded their kingdom which slowly grew so extensive as to be called an empire. The emperors' responsibilities were greater now. Naturally, there was an overhauling of the system of administration which was in vogue till then. The main aim was not only to bring peace within but also to fill the exchequer with enough, to keep the people happy, peaceful, contented and co-operative. It was, therefore, not a military state that they established but a welfare state that they dreamt of. Peace within was essential for peace without. Naturally, the first concern was the welfare of the people who would, as a consequence, stand by the empire and the emperor to keep the State strong and unified. Hence, under the exigencies, the rulers of Vijayanagara had to reshuffle their administrative system.

As seen above, a strong economy was the backbone of a peaceful welfare state. Without the former, the latter had no meaning. Hence, there was a change also in the economic policy of the kings who brought in innovations in filling the exchequer which, in turn, could be of use to the people and their welfare. That is why we see now a change in the economic and administrative policy of the empire. The results fulfilled their dreams; but it was felt that the exchequer was filled under duress. The people were overburdened with taxation and they found it back-breaking. The sources at our disposal no doubt clearly show that the burden of taxation was heavy. The people here and there expressed their anguish; but this was a justifiable burden, since the kingdom needed funds which only its citizens could collect and contribute. The change in
the economic policy also slowly brought out a change in the social system. With
the changing phase of economy, the society has to adjust itself. The time-old
pattern of social classification was now shaken to its roots. More encourage­
ment was given to the artisans, the village industries, development of trade - both
internal and external - all of which could not be achieved in a rigid structural
society. Naturally, there came about a social change with the merchants, the
artisans and handicrafts industrialists, the trade guilds and the like now dominat­
ing since they were the ones with whose help the coffers of the State could be
filled for retaining political power and establishing a welfare society.

In the present thesis an effort is made to highlight these aspects of socio­
economic history. In scope, this is limited to the Rāyalaseema region - a region
which was under the direct control of the rulers. Today, this is a drought prone
area; but, in those centuries although we do not find rivers like the Tuṅgabhadrā,
rivulets like the Pālar and the Pennār had not dried up, since we have epigraphi­
cal evidences to show that dams were constructed on them and irrigational
channels were drawn from them. To keep the sunburnt soil of these regions
retain sufficient water resources enabling to raise atleast commercial crops
though not crops like paddy and sugarcane, were the aims of irrigational system.
This region was near the capital. In fact, at a later stage in Vijayanagara history,
the forts like Guttī and Penugōṇḍa became subordinate capitals. They were
defensive forts but vast enough to keep the people alive with much stored grains.
In fact, in Rāya Vāchakamu it is stated that Sadāśiva who came to this region was
surprised to find the fort well equipped with granaries of grains and was
wondering why the people had abandoned this area.
Further, being nearer the capital it could be easily administered by the Vijayanagara kings who were more popularly called Rāyas and therefore this region is called Rāyalaseema. In other regions which spread over the south of Karnataka, the whole of Tamil Nadu and west coastal regions, the local chieftains had their hold, and therefore they were the agents through whom those regions came to be administered, indirectly. Although, contemporaneously due to the change in the political map Rāyalaseema connotes the four districts - Anantapur, Cuddapah, Chittoor and Kurnool, in the Vijayanagara period the district of Bellary in the present Karnataka State also was a part of Rāyalaseema. In the present thesis, for purposes of definitions, Bellary has been included in Rāyalaseema. Instances are drawn to substantiate our concepts and theories.

So far as the time span is concerned, this thesis is a study of the region for a period of nearly 230 years from 1336-1565 A.D., from the date of the establishment of the kingdom to the date of dissolution of the empire, making politically the empire shrink back into a chieftaincy.

Sources

The sources at our disposal in developing the thesis could be classified into epigraphical, literary and travelogue.

Of these, the epigraphical source materials which form the major bulk, have been made use of profusely. More than a thousand inscriptions from these districts of Andhra Pradesh have not yet been published with their texts. The sole exemption is the Cuddapah District Inscriptions published by Dr. Parabrahma Sastry, as a part of epigraphical series of the Department of Archaeology and
Museums of the Government of Andhra Pradesh. However, all the Vijayanagara inscriptions of Andhra Pradesh, published or unpublished have been listed, with their summaries. They are edited by Prof. B.R. Gopal and are published by the Department of Archaeology and Museums of the Government of Karnataka in a series of volumes entitled *Vijayanagara Inscriptions*. They have been listed under headings like District, Taluk, Village, findspot, dynasty, king and date and a detailed summary of those inscriptions are given. These have been arranged topographically and within each village chronologically if there are more than one inscription in every village. Three such volumes containing inscriptions from Karnataka have been till now published. They contain introductions wherein important and interesting inscriptions are highlighted. There are also references to the economy and the society. Volumes IV and V of this series deal with inscriptions of Andhra Pradesh, following the same method adopted herein also. Volume IV deals with inscriptions from Anantapur and Chittoor districts and are now in print, while the inscriptions from other districts are finalised and found in typescript. The texts of some of them have been published in the volumes of *South Indian Inscriptions*. All of them have been taken into consideration. It may be mentioned here that almost all the texts from Chittoor district, specially texts of all the inscriptions of the temples in Tirumala and Tirupati Dēvasthānams have been published in the volumes of Tirumala Tirupati Dēvasthānams. But, more than 90 per cent of them are in Tamil and the records register gifts of villages, money grants and grants in materials to the temples of lord Vēṅkatēśha at Tirumala and to the God and Godesses at Tirupati, namely Gōvindarāja, Padmāvati, Lakshmidēvi, etc. They form a category by themselves because they do not deal with the society as such, but they are all grants given to gods and
Godesses at Tirumala and Tirupati. They have no direct bearing upon the society, but they throw light upon the flourishing economic conditions, specially during the reign of the kings of the Sāluva and Taḷuva dynasties.

It would appear that the riches brought by the kings from their conquests were in part made over to these deities, which were the family deities of the kings. They reflect the military of these rulers, Śrī Kṛishṇadēvarāya and Achyutarāya in particular. Most of the material grants were in the form of gold ornaments, vessels and such other gifts for services and offerings in the temples of gods and goddesses of Tirumala and Tirupati. They reflect the grandeur of the life style of the kings and queens who were donors and donatrix. Much less can we know about the common people and the society. Of course, we also come across several officials and generals of the army who also figure as donors. Hence, although numerically the Vijayanagara inscriptions of Chittoor District are high, from the point of view of the society, and more so of the economy, we learn less. Hence, of greater importance are the records of the other districts. We have examined all of them, thanks to the editor of the Vijayanagara Inscriptions who placed at our disposal all these records in their printed and typed forms. They reveal to us very interesting details about what we discuss in the chapters that follow.

Much of the information from these materials stand confirmed or unconfirmed, in the writings of the several travellers that came to Vijayanagara as mere travellers and sometimes as ambassadors and envoys. They have left behind a bulk of material in the form of travellers accounts. R. Sewell has done a yeoman service not only in bringing to light the Forgotten Empire, but also giving us
faithful translations, either in part or full, of some of the travellers’ accounts which are a veritable mine of information. Often, they confirm what the inscriptions say. There are points of differences also which we have noted and examined. The veracity of these statements have been subjected to criticism and analysis before they are taken as helpful guides in our dissertation. One thing here may be noted. Many of those that wrote were not conversant with the life and culture of the country they visited, and more so of South India. The several religious systems that were found in the country baffled them quite often. They were not even conversant with the geo-physical characters of the country which had their impact upon the society, like the habits of food and drink, the fairs and festivals in which they participated, the customs and traditions which they followed, things which could not be understood and digested by them. Hence, they have been smeared with stories and imaginations. Naturally, much of such materials has to be reviewed before they are accepted as genuine evidence.

In this connection we may refer to the volumes of the Kannada book Pravāśi Kaṇḍa India by H.L. Nagagowda. In these volumes the editor has given translation of the writings of quite a good number of travellers that came to India and left behind accounts of what they saw and understood. These accounts are not restricted to Vijayanagara alone, but the whole of India, Sewell has given us full accounts of Paes and Nuniz and partly of Abdul Razaak. But in the volumes we find translations of almost all travellers, be they connected with Vijayanagara or to earlier/later periods. Some details about some of these travellers may be noted below.4

Nicolo de Conti was a merchant at Damascus in Syria. Having learnt the
Arabic language he travelled eastwards with his wife along with 600 (six hundred) other merchants. He travelled through Bhāgdad and the Persian gulf after crossing which he reached the Island of Ormuz from where he reached India along with some Persian merchants. We do not know when he started his travel but, after visiting a number of places in India, Ceylon, Jāwa, Sumātra and South China, finally reached back Venice in 1444 A.D. after a period of 25 years. In course of his travels he lost his wife and two of the four children. When he came to Vijayanagara, Dēvarāya II was ruling. From Conte’s accounts we find descriptions of Vijayanagara under Dēvarāya II. At the instance of the Pope he narrated these accounts to Powdgio, Bracciolini. This was originally in Latin and was translated into Portuguese first and to Italian later on by Rumacio. The English translation of this was by Major.

The next important traveller was Abdur Razaak. Born in 1413 A.D. in Herat in Persia, he joined the services of Rukh Shah in 1437 A.D. and was sent by the latter as his ambassador to Vijayanagara. He first disembarked at Calicut where he met the Zamorin and then reached Vijayanagara through Mangalore. He witnessed the Mahānavami festival at Vijayanagara in which kingdom he lived for two years and returned to Ormuz through Honnavar in the west coast. He has left behind not only his account of Vijayanagara but also the history of the successors of Shah Rukh and Taimur. Two copies of this history are found in the National Library at Paris.

Athenatius Nikitin belongs to Twair in Russia and came to India in 1470 A.D. for purposes of trade. He reached India in 1470 A.D. and returned after four years. He came to Bidar where he lived for almost four years. He has given
an account of Calicut, Ceylon and Pegu, although it is doubtful if he actually visited those places. Nikitin was uneducated and hence the style of writing is not pleasing; but it is interesting due to its account of the events that he witnessed and the realistic account that he gave. His account was first translated by Count Horski. Another copy of this account was found in the Cathedral at St. Sophia. This was translated later on into English.

Durate Barbosa was born in the later half of the 15th century. He appears to have come to Cochin along his junior uncle in the navy of Alvaris, Cabral. He learnt the Malayalam language while at Cochin and accompanied Albuquerque, the Portuguese to Cannanore as an interpreter of the Portuguese. He did not get the official position due to him and therefore returned throughOrmuz, to his own place. His account is interesting from the geographical and Anthropological point of view. He refers to the Hindus as Gentiles while the Mohammadans are called Moors. His work in Portuguese was translated into English by Longworth Dames under the title *The book of 'Durate Barbosa'* in 1918 A.D. Earlier in 1865 A.D. Henry Stanely had translated it into English. Both of these are the publications of the Hakluyiat Society. The translation of Stanely appears to be more reliable.5

Sewell has already given an account of the works of Doming Paes and Fernao Nuniz.

Literary works form the third category of the source material. Here we get little information about the socio-economic structure. But we get a lot of information about the life style of women, their jewels, their dress, the customs
and traditions followed by the men and women folk and so on. So far as the political history is concerned much of what the posts have written is an exaggerated material and sometimes they are figments of imagination. Sometimes they are biased. Here too, the researcher has to wade through cautiously before he comes to conclusions. There are not many works also which are of help for us although for the reconstruction of political history some of them may be of great value. For us works like Āmuktamālya, Rāyavāchakam, Sālvābhyudayam chatu verses about Śrīnātha’s visit to Vijayanagara, Rāmarājoyam by Veṇkaiah, Achyutarāḥyuyadayam etc. are of importance. These have been examined from the point of view of socio-economic history which is the subject of our study.

The most prominent of the literary works is Āmuktamālya of Kṛṣhnādēvarāya. As a source material this has a great value. It is said that Kṛṣhnādēvarāya while at Bezwada, in course of his expedition against Kaliṅga, on the night of the ākādaśi day, saw in a dream the alwar saint Gōdādēvi (Āṇḍāj) who bade him compose her story. This work gives us valuable information about the campaigns of Kṛṣhnādēvarāya. It is said that the fire of his valour which was kindled by his sword coming into contact with the rocks of Udayagiri, advanced to Koṇḍavīdu where he defeated Kasavāpātra, crossed Jammilōya and reduced successively the district of Vēgi, Kōna and Koṭṭāmu, Kanakagiri, Poṭnūru, Māḍemulu, Oḍḍādi and burnt Cuttack, so that the Gajapathi fled from there. This is an account of the political affairs. We also find in this work details of polity. This work written by the king with the help of his court poets is an important, contemporary literary evidence.

Śrīnātha visited the court of Dēvarāya II, an indication of the poet’s influence over the kannada language. Vinukoṇḍa Vallabhāmātya the author of
Krīḍābhirāmam was the son of Tippa who was the officer of the Ratnabhaṅgaṅara of Harihara II. This work gives an account of the social life of Telugu people. Sāluva Narasimha is the author of Rāmābhuyadayam in Sanskrit while Aruṇāgirinātha composed Sāluvābhuyadayam which he dedicated to the emperor. In the Tuluva period there was a rich reap of literary works. Peddana’s Manucharitra is an important literary work of the Tuluva period. Naṇḍi Timmana as the author of Pārijāṭapaharaṇam describes the love of Krishṇa towards Satyābhama. Naḍeṇḍla Gōpa who was the governor of Kondavīdu during the period of Krishṇadēvarāya composed Krishṇārjunasamvādam wherein he gives an account of his family. Vasucharīta of Rāmarājabhūshaṇa is a Telugu Kāvya of the Āravīdu period. The author was a non-brahmin poet hailing from a middle class family. Piṅgali Sūranna’s Kalāpūrṇīdayam is a sheet anchor of Telugu poetical compositions in Prabhandha form. Yet another work of the same poet is Rāghavapāṅḍavīyam. Tenāli Rāmakrishṇa’s Pānduraṅgamahātmyam is regarded as one of the five mahākāvyas in Telugu. Vasucharītra was composed in 1574 A.D. These above are important literary source materials for understanding the socio-economic life of the people of Vijayanagara in the respective periods. But, as already stated above these have to be greatly sieved before we cull out relevant information.

At this juncture we have to consider an important document - Aṭṭhavana Tantra, a document preserved in the Mackenzie’s collection. This is a late work of the 18th century written by an unnamed author at the request of an officer of the East India Company. A perusal of the document shows that there is nothing personally included by the author, or based upon any other earlier material. The
administrative system that existed in the Vijayanagara period had not changed much and the author of this work simply gave an account of such a system which was in vogue. This work cannot be taken as a primary source material but it is of importance since it throws welcome light on the system of taxation, more so with reference to tax terms the exact connotation of which has not been possible to interpret properly. Since the same system continued also under the East India Company, many of the administrative terms as also the very system of administration could be dragged back to the Vijayanagara period. It is in this respect that *Atthavana-Tantram* gains importance. For example, terms like the *reddi, karanam* and *talāri* in use in 18 century are terms used in the Vijayanagara period also and have the same meaning. The *Atthavana Tantram* also gives an account of *āyagār* system, a system of administration perhaps least affected by the passage of time.⁶

We have now good secondary source materials which deal with the history of Vijayanagara. For the present thesis, the foremost of the publications are T.V. Mahalingam’s *Administration and Social Life Under Vijayanagara*, first published in 1940 in a single volume and later revised and published in two parts - *Administration and Social Life*. These deal with the Tamil side of the social and administrative studies which began with N. Venkataramanayya’s *Studies in the History of the Third Dynasty of Vijayanagara*. S.K. Aiyangar, as early as 1924, published his work *Sources of Vijayanagara History*, which was later on continued by K.A. Nīlakaṇṭa Śāstri and N. Venkataramanayya under the title 'Further sources of Vijayanagara History'. A. Appadorai's *Economic Conditions of...*
Southern India, 1000-15000 A.D. (1936), is an important publication worthy of note. Saletore's Social and Political Life in the Vijayanagara Empire deals mostly with the then conditions in Karnataka. Recently, we have Local Self Government in the Vijayanagara Empire by A.V. Venkataratnam which is almost a supplement to G.S. Dikshit's Local Self Government in Medieval Karnataka, another book of interest from the point of administration. We could also cite A. Krishnaswami's The Tamil Country under Vijayanagara. We have also examined the latest works on the subject - Burton Stein's 'Peasant State and Society in South India' as also 'Essays on South India' and Noboru Karashima's 'South Indian History and Society - Studies from Inscriptions A.D. 850-1800' Besides these we have gone through a good number of other published works like Cambridge History of India (Vols. I to II) edited by Dharmakumar as also a few unpublished thesis preserved in the libraries of the respective Universities.

Some of the aspects that are dealt in detail in the following chapters may now be referred to in general terms. The first is the criterion of the administration prior to the advent of Vijayanagara kingdom. The several ruling dynasties of Tamil Nadu, Karnataka as also Andhra Pradesh had a system of administration which was congenial to them under the conditions in which they found themselves. Those states were comparatively smaller in extent. They indulged in warfare among themselves either for claiming superiority of more often in a race for economic prosperity of their own kingdoms. Each of them had an eye upon the fertile doab regions of the Gōdāvari and the Krishṇa, the Krishṇa and Tuṅgabhadra and the Cauvery delta-regions which, because of their natural fertility, yielded plenty and resulted in the economic prosperity of those regions.
Naturally, the fights between the dynasties of Andhra and Karnataka or, Andhra and Tamil Nadu were for the occupation of such doabs. So far as Andhra and Karnataka are concerned they had an eye on the Tuṅgabhadrā-Krishṇa doab which is normally referred to as the Raichur-doab. With Tamil Nadu the Andhras had to fight to keep their Gōḍāvari delta region and the coastal region safe from the hands of the kings of Tamil Nadu. Whatever may be the immediate political cause for the wars between the dynasties of Karnataka and Tamil Nadu the most obvious but the less talked about was economic - the occupation of the Raichur doab as also the regions below the Tuṅgabhadrā and a round Cauvery. They, therefore, fought both offensive and defensive battles. Naturally, they had to have officers most of whom were also militarily trained, irrespective of the fact whether they were Brāhmaṇas or Kshatriyas. We do not find so many so called feudatory families in this period. Those that were there had risen to such positions by sheer military power and thereafter they settled in those regions and held power hereditarily. They accepted the overlordship of the ruling dynasties in so far as they paid the taxes which was the share of the king. The king left them alone in matters of administration of their own region. The overlord's only concern was their loyalty and faithfulness. We find that there are a number of cases, where the king had sent his own officials mostly for purposes of supervision and spying. They were, in fact, the royal representatives. In times of need, he drafted the services of the armies of the local chieftains.

This may be compared with the system of administration that came into vogue under the Vijayanagara rule. As already stated, the extent of the kingdom could be equated with a Chakravarti Kshētra. The king could not naturally have
direct control of administration over distant regions. They had to depend upon these chieftains, sometimes, as in the case of the Nāyakas of Tanjore. Officials and military commanders were sent to those distant regions either to administer or to quell the revolts. But those that went there found their moorings there itself, declared their independent rule over the region with affiliation to the imperial rulers. Although disliked, the emperor had to accept the situation since he needed their help under the circumstances. What we call feudalism slowly raised its head. But it was not the feudalism of the European model.

We have already spoken about the changes brought about in the economic system in the empire. This will be dealt upon in detail at a later stage. But, suffice it to say now that economic prosperity led to social changes, social mobility being one such. It was no more the family into which one was born, but the status which he derived raising his economic prosperity. Naturally, inspite of restrictions, the economically affluent were accepted without emphasis being laid upon caste hierarchy. Yet, it must be noted that the vast majority of those that could not rise above, continued to be considered inferior and were subjected to all discrepancies.

Some of these factors have also been examined in the present thesis which not only speaks of socio-economic conditions but also of socio-economic changes, the need for such changes, social mobility, loosening of caste-structure and the like.

So far as their religious life was concerned, we see now greater importance given to festivals, fairs and socio-religious gatherings of the rural areas.
Some customs like the *dēvadāsi* system and the *sati* system continued some times with greater vigour. An effort is made to delineate the causes and circumstances for such social customs. Finally we have hazarded to present a fresh theory about the causes for the final downfall after the battle of Tālikōṭa.
REFERENCES


4. H.L. Nage gowda has given these details in his volumes of *Pravasi kamda India*.

5. ibid.,