The rise and fall of any civilization is quite often dependent upon the environment - the flora and fauna of the region. Rivers are the most essential requisites for the birth and growth of a civilization. As centuries prolong, the rivers either change their course or get dried up. This normally results in the decay of civilization that had grown up through such environmental phases and the decay of civilization is very much dependent upon the natural, geographical conditions. The movements of people are also dependent upon the natural surroundings which make or mar the civilization. Of late, historians have started considering this feature in examining the growth and development of societies and cultures. It is now found worth while to study the geographical and environmental background to understand the regional cultures, their growth and decay.
This is true also of the region called Rayalaseema with which the present thesis is concerned. As already stated above, this area came to be designated as Rayalaseema or the region of the Rāyas - kings, the kings being specially those of Vijayanagara. The history of this region is practically too well known to be repeated through the ancient and partly medieval periods. The Anantapur district had a direct contact with the northeastern districts of Karnataka like Kolar and Tumkur districts and to some extent the Chitradurga district also. Historically speaking, this region was being ruled by the dynasties of Karnataka, excepting some parts adjacent to Kolar district where the Tamil dynasties had their hold.

Rayalaseema originally comprised five districts namely Anantapur, Cuddapah, Chittor and Kurnool and Bellary. With the formation of linguistic states Bellary became a part of Karnataka, excepting the taluk of Rāyadurg which came to be merged into the Anantapur district although it had its moorings in the Bellary district of Karnataka. Ādōni and Ālūru were appended to Kurnool district. Anantapur was practically an appendage to Karnataka due to its contiguity. The Muslim invasion resulted in the development of certain Muslim-dominated areas in the Cuddapah and Kurnool districts where there was a concentration of the Muslims. That is one reason why after the decline of Vijayanagara the Nawabs of Cuddapah and Kurnool became ruling powers in those districts although they were subservient to the local chieftains and also to the British powers later. Chittoor was more an appendix to the Tamil kingdom, than to the dynasties of other regions. For all practical purposes, it was, no doubt, a part of Rayalaseema; but the culture and life style of the people of this district was more akin to the Tamil country. An examination of the inscriptions of this district shows
their greater affiliation to Tamil language and culture, although it was the ruling dynasty of Vijayanagara that had its firm hold on this district.

Even as it is, these four districts formed a vast area and came to be under the direct control of the Vijayanagara kings through their officials. What is of interest in the above details is the fact that Anantapur and Cuddapah districts are almost barren but it was not so in the case of Bellary, Kurnool and Chittoor districts where the river systems and the forest regions made the climate much different from what it is in Anantapur and Cuddapah districts. Because of the rocky area, it is no doubt true that these districts were subject to heat waves during the summer months specially from February to June. As is seen above, the rain fall is scanty with degrees of variation in the district Kurnool, Chittoor districts have greater rainfall than the other three districts. Commercial crops have a preponderence over crops like paddy, sugarcane and the like, in the districts of Anantapur, Cuddapah and to some extent Bellary. But the Tuṅgabhadra in Bellary and Kurnool districts is more life saving than in the other districts. It is the major river system which has made the people depend upon the crops like paddy. But this is a modern development although water was taken through irrigational channel in the period under review.

Such a geographical and environmental condition has had its impact upon the economic systems of the region. A comparative study would show that the taxes varied from district to district. The burden of taxation was felt more in the districts like Anantapur, Cuddapah and to some extent Bellary. But, the people in Kurnool and Chittoor districts were economically in a better condition to bear the burden of taxation. This environment is another reason for the group
migrations from one place to another and for the establishment of new villages, conversion of settlements, systems of irrigation and the like in their districts.

**Anantapur District**

We can now examine the natural environment of these districts commencing with Anantapur. This district of Anantapur derives its name from Anantapur which has been the headquarters town. It is generally held that Anantapur came to be named so after the big tank Anantasāgaram near the western and eastern sluices below which the villages Anantasāgaram and Bukkarāyasamudram came to be constructed by Chikka-voḍeya, the minister of the Bukka I. However, we know that even from the early Chālukyana period the region was a part of the earlier ruling dynasties of Karnataka. Anantapur had been a popular town much earlier. How and under what circumstances Anantapur became a chief town is not very clear. Much earlier, we find some of the ruling dynasties of Karnataka like the Bānas, the Noḷambas and the Chālukyas of Kalyāṇa ruling over this region. We know that Kaṃbadūru in Kalyāṇadurg taluk to the west of Anantapur and bordering the Chitradurga district was the stronghold of the Noḷambas who held power even in 10th 11th centuries. We are not sure whether Anantapur existed at that time. If, according to the traditional accounts, Anantapur was the creation of Bukka I, the Vijayanagara ruler, apparently this was a town that came into existence much later than other townships in the district itself.

The district lies between $13^\circ 41'$ and $15^\circ 14'$ north and $76^\circ 47'$ and $78^\circ 26'$ east. It forms a part of the northern extremity of the Mysore plateau and
slopes from south to north. The total area of the district is 7388.00 square miles according to the census of Anantapur Gazetteer of 1970. There are in all 11 Taluka and 953 inhabited and uninhabited villages. Kadiri is the biggest taluk spread over 1151 square miles while Uruvakonda is the smallest. In fact, it is a sub-taluk spread over 413.1 square miles.

This district elevates southward to a height of about 2,200 feet while it gradually declines to about 1,000 feet at Gutti in the north and to 900 feet at Tadapatri in the north-east. The eastern side of the district towards Cuddapah is particularly hilly. The Erramalai or Errakonda flank its northern frontiers.

Its taluks can be grouped into three natural divisions - Gutti, Tadapatri and Uruvakonda in the north with large areas of black cotton soils forming the first, Anantapur, kalyanadurg, Rayadurg, Dharmavaram, Kadiri and Penukonda in the centre with their arid treeless expanses of poor soils constituting the second and Hindupur and Madakasira in the south, with their comparatively less inhospitable soils, forming the third.

The soil in the Gutti taluk is generally red and gravely and more so to its north and east while to its south and west lie fertile black cotton soils. The country is flat in Tadapatri except in the east where the low ranged Errakondas, separate it from Cuddapah and Kurnool and on the west where another range divides it from the rest of the districts. In between, on either side of the river Pennar, there are wide sheets of fertile black cotton soils. The terrain of Anantapur is undulating and the soil, for the most part, red and gravelly. Consequently the taluk is poor in vegetation and is mostly desolate and barren.
There are however, some small tracts of fertile black soil to its north. Kalyāṇadurg taluk is throughout rocky and barren except in certain stretches where there are a few small patches of black cotton soil. The soil of Rayadurg is not very fertile although the taluk is drained by the Pedda Hagari and the Chinna Hagari rivulets. Dharmavaram is particularly hilly towards the south and west while Kadiri is stony and barren. Much of the soil is saline and vegetation extremely scanty. Penukoṇḍa and Maḍakasira, however, are the most hilly taluks of the district.

Its hills are not comparable in size, or in height, or even in thickness of vegetation with those in the neighbouring Cuddapah district. Even the forest reserves are not as extensive and dense as in Cuddapah. But the wonderful colouring of the hills compensates for the bleak nature of the terrain around.

The Muchchukōṭa range of hills runs in the north between Tāḍapatri taluk on the one side and Gutti and Anantapur on the other. Topographically, it seems to be an extension of the Pālakonḍas in Cuddapah district and also appears to leave them with the Erramalas in Anantapur and Kurnool districts. Throughout the stretch it gains in height and attains an altitude of 1,750' near Pārnapalli in Pulivendala taluk. Pālakonda which rises to over 2100' is the first noticeable hill in the stretch.

The Nāgasamudram range of hills is 50 miles long and is often interrupted by several breaks. Another range which covers the eastern half of Penukoṇḍa is the Nallapakoṇḍa. It is named after the highest point 3038' in the stretch and looks rather confused and disarranged.
The range of Penukonda hills (3091') the fourth in the series, takes off from the south of Dharmavaram and runs for 40 miles through the taluks of Penukonda and Hindupur finally entering Karnataka. The range is nowhere well clad with vegetation.

Another line of hills divides the Madakasira taluk into two. This range has better vegetation than any other in the district. Along the eastern side of the Tadapatri taluk runs the Erramalas of Kurnool. This range is curiously shaped and has a perfectly flat summit.

Besides these well marked ranges, there are numerous isolated peaks and rocky clusters. The best known among them are the huge Gutti rocky (2105'), the precipitous Kundurpidurg (2992'), the clustering Dēvadalabēṭṭa (2430'), the short hills to the north of Malyavantam and the fine range north of the Siṅganamala tank in Anantapur taluk.

The Pennēru (Pennār) rises in the Chennakēkāva hills or Channarāyabeṭṭa, north west of Nandidurga in Kolar district of Karnataka. The river is often referred to as Uttar Pinākini to distinguish it from Dakshiṇa Pinākini (the Ponnaiyār) which also has its source nearby and runs southwards into Tamil Nadu. An inscription at Kallūḍi of 1389 A.D. also reveals that the river was known in Kannada as Henne. Pennēru in Telugu means big river and this is the Telugu form of Henne. It flows through Hindūpur, Penukonda, Dharmavaram, Kalyāṇadurga, Rāyadurga, Anantapur, Gutti and Tadapatri among the eleven taluks. But Pāmidī and Tadapatri are the only important towns on its banks.
Chitrāvati is the second important river in the district. Rising in the Hariharēśvara hills, north of Nandidurga, in Kolar district of Karnataka it enters the Hindūpur taluk of Anantapur district about a mile to the south of Koḍikonoḍa. It collects its first significant tributary, the Kushāvati and penetrates through the hilly uplands of Penukoṇḍa taluk over a particularly strong bed. Lower down it is dammed to feed the large tanks of Bukkapaṭṭam and Dharmavaram. In its upper stretches it is mostly a channel in this district flowing between the steep high banks until it reaches the rocky uplands near Pedapalli. Like the Pennērū, this river also quickly dries up.

The Hagari or Vēdavati rises in the Bellary district of Karnataka and runs through the heart or Rayadurga taluk where Chinna Hagari joins it between the villages of Benakanapalle and Siṅganapalle. It feeds the big tanks of Kottapalle, Kanēkal and Bhūpasamudram and ensures supplies to the river channels dug from its banks.

Pāpāghni is another river which flows through Kadiri Taluk. It rises in the Nandi hills of Kolar district near Chikkaballapur of Karnataka and joins the Pennērū river Adivimāyapalle in Cuddapah district after flowing for 135 miles.

Of the other rivers mention may be made of the Kushāvati, a tributary of Chitrāvati, the Svarṇamukhi, a tributary of Hagari and the Taḍakalēru which rises in the southernmost recesses of the Nāgasamudram hills. The Svarṇamukhi enters Maḍakaśira, and flows past Maḍhudi and re-enters Karnataka wherin it joins the Hagari. The Pandamēru is another hill stream which rises alongside the Taḍakalēru, and feeds the Anantapur tank and then runsover the wasteweer into
the Siñganamala valley.

The district is fairly well known for some of its mineral deposits such as gold, diamond, barytes, etc. Outcrops of granite, quartzite, dolerite, dolomite and limestone are useful for building stone and road metals.

Occurrences of cross-fibre chrysotile asbestos have been reported from Vañganapalle, Singanagutta pall, Chalavēmula, Mallagundla and Sīvapuram in Dharmavaram Taluk.

Although barytes, many of them of commercial importance, occur in a number of localities, mostly in the south-west area of Muchchukōta and north-east and east of Veṅkaṭāmpalle and Nērijāmpalle, Chintalacheruvu in Gutti taluk, Boppēpalle, Madugupalle, Goḍḍumaṛi and Dāditōta in Tāḍapatri Taluk and Mudigubba in Kadiri taluk.4

Diamonds are known to have been found at Badasānipalle, Gañjikunţa, Koṅganapalle, Lattavaram, Peddahōtūru and Vajrakarūr in Gutti taluk. Even in recent years we hear of occasional finds of these precious stones around Vajrakarūr, particularly after rains.5

A good quality steatite occurs near Tabjula in Tāḍapatri taluk. It is whitish to greenish in colour and up to 45 cms. thick.6 They are also found at Krishṭipādu in Gutti taluk, Jaṅgamareḍḍipalle, Maḍugupalle and Nēriyāmpalle in Tāḍapatri taluk. Small quantities are sighted at Koṅḍampalle, Kārampūḍi and Siñganagutta pall.
However, white clay deposits occur at Uravakonda, a mile away from the taluk office at Pālavāy (Kalyāṇadurg) and at Guṭṭūru (Penukoṇḍa taluk). China clay deposits have been reported to occur in Dāḍitōta and Jūlakāluva in the taluks of Tāḍapatri and Anantapur respectively.

There are a few gold deposits in Chinnabāvi, Rāmagiri mines in Anantapur block. In Rāmāpuram the veins in chlorite schist, yield some gold.

The climate and geographical conditions of the district have a direct bearing on its flora. Most of the vertebrate fauna among wild life is present in the district although in small numbers.

Cuddapah District

The district of Cuddapah, named after its headquarters is bounded on the north by Kurnool district, on the east by Nellore, on the south by Chittoor and on the west by Anantapur. The more popular belief is that it is a corruption of Kaḍapa, meaning in Telugu 'threshold'. The old village of Cuddapah with its large tank and temple was a convenient camping ground for the pilgrims trekking from the north to the holy shrine of Tirupati. It was, therefore, regarded as the 'threshold' to that hill on the ancient highway.

With a gross area of 5,935 square miles, the district of Cuddapah ranks 7th in size among the 24 districts of the State. Cuddapah is the most hilly district in Andhra Pradesh. Wedged between the expansive Pālakoṇḍas to the west and the extensive Velikoṇḍas to the east, there is, in between, the Bhānukōṭa-Mallela hills, the Gaṇḍikōṭa extensions of the Erramalas, the southern extremeties of the
Nallamalas and below them the Lankamalas. The minor chains of hills are the Kalasapādu extensions, Kokalētikanuma hills, the Chitvēl hills, the Ānimala hills and a large number of broken hills and hillocks in the Rāyachōti taluk.

The Pālakonḍas or Sēshāchalam hills are the most extensive of the ranges lying in Cuddapah. They start diagonally across the taluks of Pulivendala, Rāyachōti, Cuddapah, Siddavatam and Rājampēta stretching many miles deep into the central and southern parts of the district. The Pālakonḍas spread out both to the north in Cuddapah taluk and to the south in Rāyachōti taluk east of the Gaṇḍikōṭa gorge. The northern ridges or the range disappear totally to the west of the Guvallacheruvu pass. This stretch contains the Sānipāyaghāt, the most aesthetic to behold.

The Bhānukōṭamala and Mallela hills rise to the immediate south of the Chitrāvati near Koṇḍāpuram in Jammalamāḍuṭūga taluk, a few miles to the west of the Gaṇḍikōṭa gorge. These hills are situated in an area of scanty rain fall and are mostly devoid of vegetation. The Gaṇḍikōṭa hills are actually an extension of the Erāmala's spread over the adjoining tracts of Kurnool. The most conspicuous feature about this formation is that it is consistently flat topped. The wide spread Nallamala section of eastern ghats, end within the confines of Cuddapah district along the border of Badvel and Proddatūr. The Nallamalas are spread out in Proddatūr taluk between the Kuṇḍēru and its border with Badvel. The range is fairly wooded especially on Badvel side.

Velikondas are the Chitvēl extensions situated in Rājampet taluk between the Pullaṇgi and Guṇḍana. They are narrow and broken and run broadly from
Cuddapah district is drained by Pennēru and its numerous affluents. The important tributaries of the Pennēru in this district are: the Chitrāvati, the Kuñdēru of Kamudvati, the Pāpāghni, the Sagilēru and the Cheyyēru. Among the others may be mentioned the Bāhudha, the Piṅchchha, the Māṇḍavi, the Pullaṅgi and the Guṇḍana, all affluents of the Cheyyēru, and the Tummalavaṅka flowing directly into the Pennēru.

Cuddapah district is the sole producer of high grade asbestos of chrysotile variety in India. It accounts for a major part of the Indian production of barytes. There are vast reserves of lime-stone suitable for the manufacture of cement in the district. In addition, the district possesses important deposits of white clay, small deposits of iron ore, ochre and steatite and abounds in construction material. Asbestos deposits are available near Brāmhaṇapalli and Chinnakǔḍalā.

Deposits of barytes occur in the Vēmpalle, doromites and associated basic igneous rocks in Pulivendala, Kamalāpuram and Cuddapah taluks. The most important deposits are situated between Vēlpula and Vēmpalle, in the Pulivendala taluk. Lime stones eminently suitable for cement manufacture occur in the Nārsī stage in Jamalamadugu and Kamalāpuram taluks.

The climate of Cuddapah district is rather oppressive in summer months. The soils are such that owing to dry conditions, they support poor forests. The plants which are found in most places, along streets, Kuntaśas, tanks etc. are Agnivēṇdram, Guṇṭagalisisēru, Nīrugobbhi, Kōkilākshi, tīga-Jēluga and
Podisaramu. The climate herbs of Jungles include Nelevāmpalu, Errapallēru, Āṭṭikamāmiḍi, Ratnapurusha and Vīshnukāṇṭam.

The principal forests of the district are on important hill ranges, the Vellukoṇḍas, the Saṅkamalas, the Nallamalas and the Pālakoṇḍa-Śēshāchalas. The principal species met within the terai forests are as follows:

Buruzala, Sundra, Rudragaṇapa, Mārēdu, Ūḍuga, Vēpa, Mōḍuga, Nallagellēdu, Thangudu, Dēvadāri, Māṇḍi and Mūṣṭi.11

The species of fauna found in the district are the tiger (peddapuli), panther (chirutapuli), jackals, wolves, wild dogs, bears, the mongoose, Malabar-squirrel, Indian antelope, percupine (mullapaṇḍi) and wild pigs.12

Kurnool District

This district derives the name from Kurnool, its headquarters town. Etymologically Kurnool is a corruption of Kandanavōlu, the Telugu name by which it is referred to in inscriptions and literature of the past. Kurnool district is bounded on the north by the Tuṅgabhadrā and the Krishṇa rivers as well as Mahabubnagar district, on the east by Guntur and Nellore districts, on the west by the Bellary district of Karnataka and on the south by Anantapur and Cuddapah districts.13 The district is situated between the northern latitude of 14° 54' and 16° 18' and the eastern longitude of 76° 58' and 79° 34'. The district ranks 10th in the State with a total of 19,08,740 population accounting for 5.3 per cent of the total population14, while in terms of area it occupies first place with 24,008 sq. kms (9210 sq. miles) which accounts for 8.68 per cent of the total area of the
State. There are 13 taluks with four revenue divisions of 1170 villages 1096 are inhabited.

The Nallamalas and the Erramalas constitute the principle hill ranges of the district. The width of the Nallamalas from the west to the east is nearly 25 miles. They lie about 85 miles in this district, extending southwards into Cuddapah district as far as the Pennar and northwards into Mahabubnagar district beyond the Krishna. The average height of the range is not more than 606 metres above the sea-level.

The Erramala (Red hills) range begins at Yānavaram in Jamalamaṇugu taluk of Cuddapah district and runs northwards terminating at about 8 miles from Kurnool. The eastern extensions of this range are referred to as the Pānyam, the Bātarcherla and the Uppalapādu hills. The hills vary in width from a few miles near Kurnool to nearly 25 miles in the south. However, they throw out several spurs into the central section of the district. Another important range which runs parallel to the Nallamalas is called the Velikonda which form the boundary between Kurnool and Nellūr districts. There are many isolated hills. The hills in the eastern division are generally spurs of the Nallamalai or the Velikonda range. Though they look apparently connected with the Erramala in the western taluk of Paṭṭikonḍa, they are, in reality, separate.

The Tuṅgabhadrā, the Handri, the Krishna, Kundēru and Gundaḷakamma are the main rivers which flow in the district. There are some other important streams flowing in the forest areas of the district like the Sagilēru, the Rāḷavāgu, Munimaḍugulēru, Bandrapavāgu, Pargidivagu, Sudumvagu, Pālēru, Gaṇḍalēru
and Bhāvanāsī.

Kurnool district possesses enormous deposits of limestone suitable for cement manufacture. In the area around Bētamcherla in Drōṇāchalam (Dhōne) taluk, there are several deposits of barytes (barium sulphate) of various grades. Deposits of white clay suitable for the manufacture of stoneware occur near Paraema and Paibagala in Nandyāl taluk and Bētamcherla in Dhōne taluk. Small deposits of stealite occur in and around Muddavaram in Dhōne taluk.15

The floristic composition stands in direct relation to the climatic conditions and the biotic influence. The most important species in that type are chiriman, ippa, tēku, nallamaḍḍi etc. The forests can be classified as (1) submountain, (2) forests on the slope, (3) plateau forests and hill forests.17 Tiger, panther, jackal, hyena, civet cat (peangur pili), chinkara (burrajinka), blue bull (mānu bōtu), sambar (kaniti) and spotted deer (duppi) are noteworthy fauna.18

The climate of the district is characterised by a hot summer. Winds are generally light to moderate with some strengthening in the south-west monsoons saison. Humidity increases in the south-west monsoon and post-monsoon seasons.19

Chittoor District

Chittoor district has undergone several changes from the point of its being shifted from one district to the other and its taluks and villages also likewise changing their affiliation. Bounded on the east by the Nellore district of Andhra
Pradesh and Chingleput district of Tamil Nadu, on the south by North Arcot and Dharmapuri districts of Tamil Nadu, on the west by Kolar district of Karnataka and on the north to a great extent by the Cuddapah district of Andhra Pradesh. It extents over 15189 square Kms. and stands 8th in the State with regard to the area. It has had no homogeneity. Originally a part of North Arcot district of Tamil Nadu, it was formed into a separate district in 1911 with headquarters at Chittoor. Several changes took place consequent to the reorganisation of the States in 1928, and 1953. Some old taluks were lost and new taluks formed. Today there are 11 taluks with 1429 inhabited 129 uninhabited villages.

Eastern ghats are the most extensive range of hills in the district. Entering Kuppam taluk, it passes through Palamanēru and Puṉganūru taluks, turning eastward as far as Tirupati hills. After a long valley thereat the ghats rise once more, east of Māmanḍūr valley and via Śrīkāḷahasti taluk enters Nellore district. The general elevation is about 2500 feet. The fertile valley of Puttūr taluk is closed on the east by a range - the Nagari hills which extends upto Śrīkāḷahasti taluk. The hills overlook the valley with precipitous cliffs, one of which, designated as the Nagari Nose, being continuous for miles around. The Horseley hills in Madanapalle taluk has been developed into a hill resort; but it forms part of the plateau of Palamanēru, Puṉganūru, Madanapalle and Vāyalpāḍ taluks. This plateau also stretches into Karnataka.

As in other districts here also there are no perennial rivers as such. The minor rivers are Pāpāghni, Piṅchcha, Kaundinya, Pālar, Ponne, Āraṇi, Svar-ṇamukhi, Bāhudā, Kalyāṇi and Kusāvati. Of them, the Āraṇi takes off near Taḍuku, near Puttūr and through that and the Satyavēdu taluks enters Chingleput.
district. The Ponne is a tributary of the Pālar, originating in the rocky hills to the west of Chandragiri and flowing southward in Chittoor taluk enters the North Arcot district. Svarṇamukhi rises in Chandragiri hills and passing through the valley (and town of Chandragiri and Tirupati) reaches Śrīkāḷahasti which is situated in its bank. From there it flows into Nellore district. Kalyāṇi originates in Adaram forest and through Chandragiri taluk, it joins Svarṇamukhi in Śrīkāḷahasti taluk.

The mineral importance of the district is very little, the district being a plateau ranging from 305 to 427 metres above seal level. Highly magnatised precanbrain granite occurs in most of the areas of the district. Low grade soapstone, noticed around Chittoor, occurs as a pocket deposit and is utilised for fertilisers as a filler. Near Bisanattam in Kuppam taluk gold deposits are reported as a southern extension of Kolar Gold Field’s deposit. Iron ore as a bedded deposit is found near Sirasanambēdu of Śrīkāḷahasti taluk, near Nāyudupēla. The same type of ore with manganese occurs near Vedullacheruvu near Rēniguṇṭa.

Climatically the district is dry and aggreable. The average annual rainfall is 927.5 mm. Temperature varies from 23.3 c, which is the maximum in December, to 34.8 c. in April-May.

We finally take into consideration the Bellary district which is now outside Rāyalaseema, but was once a part of it, unlike Chittoor which was originally not a part, but became one consequent upon States’ Reorganisation.
Bellary District

This district, now one of the districts of Karnataka, was originally a part of the Madras Presidency, being one of the 'Ceded' districts. The district takes the name from its chief town Bellary, which, in the inscriptions of the 12th century is referred to as Bāllare.21 Bounded in the north by the Rāichur south by the Chitradurga and west by Dhārwar districts of Karnataka, has the Anantapur and Kurnool districts of Andhra Pradesh on the east. This was reorganised and came to be attached to the Karnataka State, but bereft of Ādoni, Ālur and Rāyadurga taluks which were added to Kurnool (the first taluk) and Anantapur (the last taluk) districts. According to the 1971 Census Report, the population of the district was 11,22,686. In 1800 A.D. as per the Treaties of 1772 and 1793, the Nizam ceded the four districts - Anantapur, Cuddapah, Kurnool and Bellary - to the British. In 1808 these districts were formed into two collectorates - Bellary and Cuddapah. In 1882, it was further reorganised, Anantapur forming itself into a separate district. Since then several changes took place from time to time. Rayadurga taluk became a part of Anantapur district while Adoni and Alur were attached to Kurnool district.

The Tuṇḍabhadrā divides the district on the west from Dhārwar and on the east from Rāichur districts. The Sāṇḍūr hills cut across the district from the northwest to the southeast. The highest point of these hills has the Kumaraśaṁī temple, about 3400 feet above sea level. Six miles to the east of Sāṇḍūr hills is the copper mountain range, running across the Daroji tank to about 4 miles west of the Hagari. Mallappanabēṭṭa, a chief peak of Mallappanagūḍḍa range in 3177 feet high and is broken by the Chikka Hagari valley. These ranges are formed of
Dharwar schists, the other ranges being made of granite.

Tuṅgabhadrā and its tributaries, Hagari and Chikka Hagari are the only river systems. The Tuṅgabhadrā flowing through the western and northern sides of the district, joins the Kṛishṇa a few miles below Kurnool town. The ancient name of this was Pampā, but came to be called Tuṅgabhadrā since it is formed by the joining of two rivulets the Tunga and the Bhadra near Śivamogga, both of them originating from Varāhaparvata in Chikkamagalur district of Karnataka. The river flows between high banks of red loam and the bed being deep and the land falling sharply down makes the river perennial. But in the past it had been little used for irrigation. Hagari is formed by the joining of Vēda and Āvati rising near Mullayyanagiri in Chikkamagalur district and unite at Taṅgali of the same district with the name Vēdavati.

Geologically, Dharwar schists occur in four prominent bands. This is the home of economic minerals like haemetic iron ore, managanese ore, white clay, etc. Deposits of gold and copper also occur. The banded haemetic iron ore is referred to as Sāndur synclives. Total production of managanese ore is 2.5 lakh tones with the ore contain 32 to 40 per cent of manganese. Cooper ore occurs near Sugālamma temple in the copper mountain range and along the brecciated quartzite near Harapanahalli.

Climate is dry in the major part of the year and hot summer is witnessed. Average annual rainfall is 514.99 mm, rainfall being mostly confined to a period from May to November.
Political Background

Before we study the socio-economic conditions of Rayalaseema it is necessary to know of the political frame work, in short, as a background. The historical antiquity of Rayalaseema goes back up to the Mauryan period. As evidenced from the Erragudi edicts of Asoka which are quite well known. After the Mauryas, in the Deccan, the Sātavāhanas were their political successors. Since we know of the Sātavāhana hold over regions even of North Karnataka in the Bellary and North Kanara districts, we can assume that the Sātavāhanas succeeded the Mauryan territories in this region as well. We can see the impact of Buddhism in the region as a consequence of the patronage of the Mauryan rulers. But we have little direct evidence, although the assumption made stands well justified through circumstantial evidence. After the Sātavāhanas this region had closer contacts with the ruling dynasties of Tamil Nadu and Karnataka. The Hirēhadagali inscription\(^2\) of Šivaskaṅḍavarma suggests, without doubt, that around this region the Pallavas succeeded the Sātavāhanas. Thereafter this came under the hegemony of the Chālukya Mangalēśa who started his royal career only as a regent of Pulakēśin II turned out to be an usurper himself, he found great opposition from the young prince. It is in this region at, Peddavaduguru that there was a scuffle between the uncle and the nephew (Mangalēśa and Pulakēśin II) when Pulakēśin II finally came out successful and vanquished Maṅgalēśa.\(^23\) We have inscriptions of other Chālukyana rulers also in this region. As for example the Tumbeyanūr grant of Pulakēśin II,\(^24\) the Kaḍamarakālava, miniature shrine inscription of Satyāśrayabhaṭāra,\(^25\) Turimella stone inscription of Vikramāditya I,\(^26\) Alampur bисcriptal inscription of
Vijayāditya,27 Dānavulapāḍu28 and Bētapalli29 inscription of the same king, Peddapēṭa inscription of Kirtivarma II,30 etc. Clearly showing that the Chālukyas of Bāḍāmi were the political successors of the Pallavas in this region. Thereafter, the area came under the rule of some minor dynasties like those of Bāṇas, the Vaiḍumbas and the Nojambas. These chieftains were used as pawns in the political chess when there were conflicts between the Gaṅgas of Talakāḍu and the Rāṣṭrakūṭas of Mālkhēd. It finally ended with rapprochement when the Gaṅga king Śivamara II finally accepted the suzerainty of the Rāṣṭrakūṭas. We have, however, very few records of both the Gaṅgas and Rāṣṭrakūṭas in this region, although from circumstantial evidences we can clearly state that this region, directly under the control of Gaṅgas was, yet a principality of the Rāṣṭrakūṭa kingdom.

With the rise of the Chālukyas of Kalyāṇa this region once again came under the control of those later Chālukyas. We have a fairly good number of inscriptions of these rulers in this region and they show that the kings appointed their own officials, like the mahāpradhāṇas and daṇḍanāyakas as the governors of the region. Under the Chālukyas of Kalyāṇa this region witnessed the period of peace and tranquility. Though comparatively far off from the capital city of Kalyāṇa in the Bīdar district of Karnataka, this region had a direct dealing with the officials and rulers of the kingdom. After the Chālukyas of Kalyāṇa there was a political confusion in the area, because there was a triangular fight among the Kālachūris, Hoysalas and the Yādavas, for control over this region. Hands often changed and so far as the people were concerned, it would appear that they knew not who their rulers were, since they were changing quite often. It was only
with the foundation of the Vijayanagara kingdom that political stability came to be established over the region.

An analysis of the inscriptions of the Vijayanagara rulers which run to more than thousand five hundred in this region would show certain characteristics features. The early founders of the Saṅgama dynasty are represented through a handful of inscriptions. With the declining power of Hoysalas, the vijayanagara rulers, soon after founding the kingdom, had to establish their mastery over the region. This was a period when Islam and the Mohammadans made inroads into strong Hindu kingdoms, like that of the Kākatīyas, Hoysalas and Pāṇḍyas which were the major ruling powers. These alien people brought with them a new religion namely Islam which they wanted to impose upon the people with a firm hand. It is true that the Christians who came centuries later also brought with them the concept of conversion of the local people from Hinduism to Christianity. But they took advantage of the economic poverty of the people and it is through the feeding and maintaining of such people that they slowly converted them into their religion. There was no coercion, no bloodshed. But, it was the seemingly affectionate attitude of the missionaries towards the people that made the people embrace Christianity. It is through conquest of hunger, sumptuous feeding, that they captured the intellect of the Hindus specially the downtrodden who could easily be coalesced into conversion.

It was not the case with the Mohammadans who used coercion for conversion. It was this that made the Hindus feel that there was danger to their dharma. This concept of dharma was rather complicated. Dharma is an untranslatable word. It may be righteousness, it may be called righteousness, a
living in the by then developed society, amicable with others and by following certain principles which were value-based. For this purpose they wanted some religious institutions that could impart to them knowledge about Hindu dharma, make them live a peaceful life following their own avocations, but without endangering the neighbours' concepts and their life styles. It was to be a happy and peaceful co-existence. The onslaught of Islam sent chills of fear among the Hindu population who thought that their religion was now in danger. They not only had lost their kingdoms, but they feared that they would be loosing their own moorings as well. Dharma would lose its bearings and would give room to chaos.

It was for the protection of such an age old dharma, which could also be taken as a concept of peaceful co-existence, that the new kingdom came into existence. It had to have the support of the teeming population, but it was also to receive the blessings of the holy preceptors of the mathas, so that there could be a religious tinge to it. The only matha that was quite popular and powerful in Karnataka was the matha at Śrīṅgārī whose pontiffs were very learned men, who by their learning and by their example through good living and right thinking had attracted thousands and thousands of Hindu devotees, irrespective of caste or creed, of economic affluence or poverty.³¹ If such, teachers could, through their teachings, divert the attention of their disciples towards their new political entity and ask them to give the new kingdom all moral, physical, financial and other supports, such a kingdom would naturally flourish and act as a block for the inroads of Islam. Therefore, the founder kings of Vijayanagara looked to the pontiffs for their support. They succeeded greatly also in this respect, as is clear from the records which show that these pontiffs visited the capital city of
Vijayanagara occasionally and the rulers themselves quite frequently went to Śringēri to pay their obeisance.³² Naturally, this new kingdom not only received the support of the religious chiefs but also got help through the people in the region, who had developed a great deal of respect towards the new kingdom. That is why we see a good number of records of these early rulers and of the several religious heads in their period and in the region around Chikkamagalur and South Kanara districts, which area, because of flourishing commerce, was in a position to give the kingdom much needed physical, economic and moral support.

There are a few inscriptions of the early rulers right from Bukkarāya in the Rāyalaseema area also, but numerically they are far less. However, the inscriptions of the rulers of the later Saṅgama and Tuluva rulers are more in number. By this time the empire had been consolidated and had expanded its northern boundary. By then the Bahamani kingdom had been born in the northern region and these Bhamani Sultans and their successors, the Sultans of Bīdar, Bijapūr, Gōlkonda, Berar and Ahmadnagar, were always a menace to the Vijayanagara rulers. Surprisingly, even among the Hindu kings beyond the vijayanagara empire there were the Gajapatis of Orissa who dabbled in politics and tried to play cunning roles with the Sultans on the one hand and the Vijayanagara rulers on the other. This made the Saṅgama and Tuluva rulers proceed towards Nellore and beyond, in an effort to put down the invading Qutub Shahis and drive away the Gajapatis. The Tuluva rulers, specially Kṛishnadevarāya led victorious campaigns and being a devotee of Lord Veṅkatēśvara at Tirumala on his march, either ways, invariably visited Tirupati (Tirumala) and
offered innumerable grants to the God and also to the deities below the hill of Tirumala, at Tirupati. Thus Rāyalaseema became a route for the royal armies, they moved from and to the capital Hampi. Rāyalaseema had to be kept under their direct control. It is quite likely that this region came to be called Rāyalaseema right from the period of Krishṇadēvarāya who was now popularly referred to as Rāyuḷavāru. Thus the Rāyalaseema region stood on a different footing from the other regions. It was in this region that there were royal camps at Penukonda and Gutti which, specially after the battle of Tāḷikōta, assumed greater importance. In the history of Andhra Pradesh, therefore, the Rāyalaseema region attains a special place and reckoning in its contact with the Vijayanagara rulers and the politics of Vijayanagara. The Āravīḍu family members also had close ties with this region. The region of Rāyalaseema later on fell to the Nawabs of the different districts like Cuddapah and Kurnool. Bellary had developed greater contacts with Karnataka.

This political background, in short, of the history of Rāyalaseema shows that this region was more in contact with the regions of Karnataka than those of Andhra towards the north. A majority of the inscriptions in this region are in Kannada language and script. There are a good number of copper-plates found in this area which are in Sanskrit. But, by nature, they have more of a Kannada bias. Even today, the contact of the people of Rāyalaseema is more with Karnataka, the boundaries of which are quite long and common. Socio-economically therefore this region came to be influenced more by Karnataka than Andhra. For several reasons there was less contact with Andhra and few dealings with the ruling dynasties of Andhra Pradesh. For example, the rulers of
the eastern Chalukya dynasty of Vengi or the Kakatiyas of Warangal had very little to do with this region which was part and parcel of kingdoms of Karnataka. As already stated above, Chittoor district was on a different footing. For long it was a part of the Tamil kingdom, right from the Pallava period. Because of this, the Tamil influence on its society was more impressive than other linguistic regions like Kannada and Telugu. Its long association with the Tamil country was one of the reasons for such a development. But, this district being the border of Anantapur district also when the Vijayanagara rulers occupied Chittoor, it became more an integral part of Rayalaseema. Thus, it was mostly through conquests, specially the subduing of the ruling chieftains who held sway over this region that Chittoor became a part and parcel of Vijayanagara. Because of its geography which is much different from that of Anantapur it had a special footing. Hence we could see a cultural difference between the two regions although this also comes under Rayalaseema. This aspect has been noticed in the sequel.
REFERENCES

2. *ibid.*, p. 3.
27. *ibid.*, XXXV, pp. 121 ff.
29. *ibid.*, No. 47.
32. *ibid.*