An account of the social activities of the people will not be complete without mention being of the games and amusements which they enjoyed. In fact these constitute the brighter side of the life of a people, but for which their social activities cannot have much interest and attraction\(^1\).

During the Vijayanagara Empire there were several amusements were played, of the sports and pastimes of the different classes of people, the inscriptions do not give us many authentic accounts of a detailed nature. The Rashtrakuta Govinda-III took part in a boar-hunt on the banks of the Tungabhadra when he was camping there after his conquest of Kanchi in 804 A.D, and the Ganga Butuga-II’s hound “Kali” died after fighting with boar. A ball game on horseback, much like polo, is said to have been the favourite game of the Rashtrakuta prince Indra-IV. Paes states that, every morning before daylight, Krishnadevaraya drank gingelly oil and exercised himself with earthenware weights and a sword till he had sweated out all the oil. He then wrestled with one of his wrestlers and after that went riding before his morning bath. There were arenas inside the royal palace in Vijayanagara where, for the amusement of the monarch and his court, fights between animals and wrestling matches took place, the latter sometimes among women. Gambling, racing, cock and ram fights were the pastimes of common people, besides the festivals and fairs of which there was no lack. Then there were peripatetic entertainers like the snake-charmer and troupes of acrobatic performers whose visits
furnished much genuine amusement at very little cost, Picnics and folk dances offered other means of diversion\(^2\).

One of the games that was largely participated in by the people high and low was wrestling. The one peculiarity about such wrestling was that at them severe blows were given in such seriousness that teeth would be broken and eyes would be put out, faces would be disfigured and at times men had to be carried away speechless by their friends. They even gave fine falls too at times. They had their captains and judges who were there to put each one on an equal footing in the field and also to adjust the honours to him who won\(^3\). Nuniz confirms the above account of Paes when he says; “the king has a thousand wrestlers for these feasts who wrestle before the king but not in our manner for they strike and wound each other with two circlets with points, which they carry in their hands to strike with, and the one most wounded goes and takes his reward in the shape of a silk cloth such as the king gives to these wrestlers. They have a captain over them and they do not perform any other service in the kingdom”\(^4\).

Du Jarric gives the following description of the wrestling matches; “one who would wrestle strips himself. Then several strong and brawny youths called geitas who are ready beforehand, rub the noblemen; then they box, jump, fence and take other kinds of exercise with him, in order to strengthen him; and this they do until perspiration flows freely. Then the geitas cover the whole of the noblemen’s body with sand and massage him, and move his arms and legs in every direction, as if they would disjoint his bones. Finally the nobleman is
brushed, anointed and washed with warm water; and when dry, dresses himself.
Noblemen take this kind of exercise almost every day before dinner in order to be fit and healthy; thus men as seventy look only thirty”

Along with wrestling, dueling seems to have been in vogue. Great honour was done to those who fought in a duel, and estate of the dead man was given to the survivor. According to Nuniz who has left the above details, no one could fight a duel without first asking leave of the minister, which was however very formal, for it was forthwith granted. Barbosa also mentions duels which he witnessed and his accounts are of great value inasmuch as they contain interesting details about them.

He says; “they are accustomed to challenge one another to duels, and when a challenge has been accepted and the king gives the permission, the day for the duel is fixed by the persons challenged, and weapons to be used must be according to measure; that of the one of the same length as that of the other. The king appoints second and a filed for the fight, and when this has been done, they go thither naked, covered only with some cloth wrapped round their middles, with very cheerful faces. Then after saying their prayers they begin to fight, and as they are bare it is over in a few strokes in the presence of the king and his court. No man may speak to them while they are fighting, except the seconds, each of them stands by his own man; and this is such a common practice among them that some are slain daily”. Castanheda also describes this practice, and he adds that the king gave a gold chain to the person whom he considered to be very brave in dueling and he was expected to defend it against
anyone who challenged him. He also says that men engaged themselves in duels for the love of women, on account of which sometimes they lost their lives.

There appear to have been special gymnasium where these duels and wrestlings were conducted; and for their maintenance lands were granted tax-free. Thus a record at Candravalli dated 1677 A.D records the grant of a rent-free land for maintaining a gymnasium. The Raghunathabhyudayam also mentions the existence of such gymnasium at Tanjore.

Fr. Du Jarric describes the gymnasium at Chandragiri in the following terms; “the house fitted for this has a yard in the centre, the pavement of which is covered with a layer of lime so smooth that it looks like a mirror; there is a walk around it spread over with red sand, on which they rest as on a soft bed.”

Hunting afforded another pastime not only to the rulers but also to the people. The Vijayanagara sovereigns took great interest in elephant hunts; Devaraya-II was called a Gajabetekara (hunter of elephants). The king also took great delight in witnessing elephant hunts, which is indicated by the title Gajavettai kandu aruliy (who witnessed the elephant hunt). Abdur Razzak gives a vivid description of the method followed in hunting and catching elephants. Similarly boars and deer seem to have been hunted. The kings very often took the title Gajamargayvihara (sportful hunter of the elephant). Devaraya is said to have attempted a boar hunt. In all these hunts, hawks and falcons seem to have been used on a large scale as is indicated by such words.
and titles as saluva and raya paksi saluva. Ferishtah however says that the Hindus were strangers to the use of hawks. This is evidently wrong for we have evidence to show that the use of hawks was known to the Hindus as is indicated by the above titles.

Horse riding was also a pastime of the people. The carvings on the temple walls representing men riding on horses shows to what great extent horses were used in wars. A certain chief Allappa Nayaka was called in a horse with the help of a stool or stirrup. This title shows how popular horse-riding was.

Among the other pastimes of the people the game of chess was one; and Krishnadevaraya’s daughter appears to have been an expert in that game.

A part from these games which have pleasure to the people, the theatre, dance and music gave great entertainment and amusement to them.

We get some details about the Vijayanagara stage from the literature of the period. Poet Gangadhara, a contemporary of Mallikarjuna Raya, composed a high class drama in Sanskrit called Gangadasapratapavilasam at the request of prince Gangadasa the ruler of the Pavacala State. For this work, he was greatly honoured with a Kanakabhiseka (bathing in gold). But there was no one found in that court to enact the drama. Hence an actor of the court of Mallikarjuna proposed to go to the court of Gangadasa to stage the new drama there. Krishnadevaraya, himself a great scholar as we have seen, wrote a Sanskrit drama called Jambavatikalyanam. In the prologue to the work it is said that it was enacted before the people assembled to witness the Caitra (spring).
festival of Virupaksha at Vijayanagara. Inscriptional evidence also shows that theatres were known in the Vijayanagara days. An epigraph of 1514-15 A.D records a gift of land by Karnam Basaparasa, son of Somarasa of Tiruppatturu, to a certain Nattuva Nagayya, whose father Cegayya was connected with the drama Tayikundanataka, and to the daughter of Nattuva Timnmaya of Potavari who was a patri (actress). Thus farces seem to have not only been written in the Vijayanagara days, but also enacted before the public.

A miniature imitation of the drama was the puppet show, which seems to have been very popular in the Vijayanagara days. A record of 1521 A.D registers the grant of the village of Uppa Kuntipale belonging to Sadali free of all imposts to the puppet player (bommalata) Puruvati Puranar Virappa’s son Krishnappa by one Ganga Raya Deva Maharaja Aya. A record of an earlier date also mentions the puppet players. It begins as follows; “As the stage manner pulls the strings of the puppet and makes him dance, so control my actions…..”

Dance is a necessary feature of a theatre and this art was greatly encouraged in the Vijayanagara court. Gopa Tippa wrote a book on dancing. This art was so perfect under the Vijayanagara kings that when for instance Abdur Razzak saw it exhibited before the idol during the Mahanavami festival, he was so enraptured that he says; “the girls began to move their feet with such grace that wisdom lost its senses and the soul was intoxicated with delight.” The devadasis (servants of God) as the dancing girls were called were attached to temples, and when food was offered to god they danced before the idol and
themselves gave him food and all that was necessary. Nuniz speaking about the dancing girls attached to the palace says that every Saturday they were obliged to go to the palace to dance and posture before the king’s idol which was in the interior of his palace. Barbosa says that these dancing girls were given training in dancing. There was a dancing hall in the palace where the ladies and courtesans underwent the necessary training. Paes gives a vivid description of the hall. The hall was long and narrow supported by many half pillars on all sides and gilt. Between every two pillars there was a panel. There were also images between them and between the images and pillars ran a design of foliage like plates all gilt with the reserves of leaves in red and blue. The images were those of dancing women having little drums. The designs of the panels showed the positions at the ends of dances in such a way that on each panel there was a dancer in the proper position at the end of a dance. This was to teach the women, so that if they forgot the position in which they had to remain when the dance was done, they might look at the panels where was represented the position to be taken at the end of the dance. By this they were able to keep in mind what they had to do. There was also a painted recess where the women used to “cling on with their hands in order better to stretch and loosen their bodies and legs”. There they were taught to make the whole body supple so that their dance might be made more graceful. The king used to watch these dances. In the middle of the wall in the hall was a golden image of a girl of twelve years with her arms in the position which she occupied at end of a dance. Raghunatha Nayaka of Tanjore was so proficient in the art and
theory of dance that he was able to design a new type of dance which came to be called Raghunathavilasa, after himself.

Allied to the dance was the Kolattam or stick play. Young girls trimly clad used to go round the streets in small batches “all of them carrying in each hand a little round painted stick, about a span long or a little sound of drums and other instruments, and one of the skill-fullest of the company sung one verse of a song, at the end of which they all replied seven or eight times, in the number of their metre with the word cole, cole, cole. They thus went to the temple followed by other women, and used to dance in circles in the temples till late in the night. Pietro della Valle who noted this custom says that this was a festival which they celebrated for three days at the end of a certain feast in honour of Gauri wife of Mahadoka, and hence it was celebrated by girls.

Music received great encouragement at the Vijayanagara court. Inscriptions mention the names of certain instruments like bhari, dundubhi, mahamuraja and vina. The use of tambura was well known, and an inscription of 1533 A.D records a grant of land made by one Allapa Nayaka to the Tamburine players (tammatukarige) of the Hanumanta temple at Huruvali. According to the Ying Yai Sheng Lan the musical instrument of the people of Calicut was made of the bottle gourd with strings made of copper wire. It says that in singing the music the harmonious tinkling of pieces of metal could be heard in the accompaniment. It appears that in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries considerable change was brought about in the science of music in South India which led to the writing of books on the subject. Gopa
Tippa wrote a book on music determining the different ways of keeping time. Krishnadevaraya is said to have been unrivalled in music and rhetoric. Krishna, a great scholar and musician, who had specialized in the art of playing on the vina, and who was the great grandfather on the maternal side of Raghavendra, taught the emperor Krishnadevaraya how to play on the vina and got from him as gurudaksina a costly, pearl necklace and other jewels. Sripadarayanswami, said to have been a guru of Saluva Narasimha, is credited with the composition of hundreds of scientific musical compositions, like the Ugabhoga, Suladi, Gita and Prabandha, Sri Vadiraja Swami, Purandara Dasa and Kanaka Dasa who belonged to the Dasa kuta composed two classes of songs, Gitas and Prabandhas on the one hand and Ugabhogas on the other. It is said that Purandara Dasa illustrated each raga by a song and the total number of his compositions is estimated at 4,75,000.

Ramaraya took great pleasure in music on the vina and singing. Further according to the Svaramelakalanidhi of Ramayamatya, Ramaraya spent his time amidst scholars versed in music and other arts. This Ramayamatya exhibited his skill in the art of music. At the suggestion of Venkatadari he also wrote his Svaramelakalanidhi, a book on music, and in this work he has tried to settle several points of dispute among scholars about music.

Raghunatha Nayaka of Tanjore was a great authority on music. He was the author of new ragas like Jayantasena and new talas like Ramananda. He is also said to have taught the art of playing on the vina to many musicians.
was also the inventor of a new mela after his own name in which any recognized raga could be played.  

Venkata Makhi, the son of Govinda Dikshita of Tanjore, wrote an important work on music called Caturdandi-prakasika. He was a disciple of Tanappacarya who was a descendent in the scholastic line of Sarangadeva. His work analyses the basis of the present day southern system of music and treats of its raga classification, “the ragas are arranged under seventy-two primary ragas called melakartas with a large number of derivative ragas attached to each. This author makes use of the twelve semitones only in describing the ragas.”

The women were also able to understand the two sorts of music, karnata and desa. They were able to sing very sweetly and to play on the vina and such other musical instruments as the Ravanahasta. Raghjunatha examined the proficiency of all of them and honoured them with kanakabhiseka. Some of the songs sung before him were designed by himself. The chief ragas that were sung were Jayamangala, Simhalalita, Jayanissaru and Kacacarita. Some of the talas to which they were played were Ratilila, Turangalila, Anangaparikramana, Abhinandana, Nandanandana and Abhimala.

140
REFERENCES:

5. Quoted by Hears in his *Aravidu Dynasty*, p.313-14
11. S.K. Aiyangar, *Sources of Vijayanagara History*, p.265
12. Quoted by Hears in his *Aravidu Dynasty*, p.313-14
15. Elliot & Dowson, *History of India as told by its own Historians*, vol-IV, p.109-111
20. Elliot & Dowson, *op.cit.*, p.121
24. *Ibid*, p.142
27. *E.C.* Vol-XII, p.29
29. Elliot & Dowson, *op.cit.* Vol-IV, p.118
32. *Ibid*, p.288
34. This evidently is the refrain of the Song: Kolu kole kolanna kole! Kolu kole celi melu kove.
36. *Ibid*, p.259
41. S.K. Aiyangar, *op.cit.*, p.63
43. S.K. Aiyangar, *op.cit.*, p.252

44. *Vijayanagara Centenary Volume*, p.375

45. *Q.J.M.S. Vol-XXIX*, p.21

46. *E.C. Vol-XII*, p.39

47. Popley, *The Music of India*, p.18-19