



## A Study on Vijayanagara Dynasty: A Golden Era in Karnataka History

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### ABSTRACT

Vijayanagar Empire is also known as Karnataka Empire. It was founded in 1336 by two brothers Harihar I and Bukka Raya of Sangama dynasty. By 1346, the whole of the Hoysala kingdom had passed into the hands of Vijayanagar rulers. The brothers continued their career of conquest and consequently within the lifetime of Harihar I, the kingdom of Vijayanagar extended from Krishna in the north to the neighbourhood of the Kaveri in the south and comprised the whole country situated between the eastern and western oceans. Bukka II was succeeded by his son Harihar II who ruled from 1379 to 1406. He earned the titles Vaidikamarga Sthapanacharya and Vedamarga Pravartaka. The earliest known Saluva from inscriptional evidence in the Vijayanagara era was Mangaldeva, the great grandfather of Saluva Narasimha Deva Raya. Saluva Narasimha restored internal law and order in the empire. The Saluva dynasty also soon came to an end, and a new dynasty called the Tulva dynasty was founded by Vira Narasimha. He ruled from 1505 to 1509. Krishna Deva Raya was the greatest ruler of Tulva dynasty and one of the most famous kings in the history of India. He ruled from 1509 to 1530. The rule of Krishnadeva Raya was a glorious chapter in the history of Vijayanagara Empire. Aliya Rama Raya, also known as Rama Raya was the founder of the Aravidu Dynasty. Moreover, the chiefs of Seringapatam and Bidnur and Naiks of Madura and Tanjore were able to set up independent kingdoms of their own. It was under these circumstances that the Vijayanagar Empire disappeared.

**Keywords:** *Vijayanagar Empire, Sangama, Saluva, Tulva, Aravidu*

### INTRODUCTION

The early history of Vijayanagar is obscure. Sewell, the famous author of "A Forgotten Empire", has referred to many traditional accounts about the origin of the city of Vijayanagar. The Vijayanagara Empire is also known as Karnataka Empire and the Kingdom of Bisnagar by the Portuguese was based in the Deccan Plateau region in South India. The Vijayanagar Empire was founded in 1336 by Harihar and Bukka of Sangama dynasty that were at the first in the service of the Kakatiya ruler of Warangal, Partapurudra II. But after the Muslim conquests of the Kakatiya kingdom in 1323, they went over to the kingdom of Kampili in modern Karnataka and became ministers there. When Kampili was also overrun by Muhammad Tughlaq for giving refuge to a Muslim rebel, the two brothers were imprisoned, converted to Islam, and appointed to deal with the rebellions in the province of Kampili. After establishing their away owner Kamipili at the first for the sultan, the two Sangama brothers returned to the Hindu fold at the initiative of saint Vaidyanarya, proclaimed their independence and founded a new city on the south bank of Tungabhadra which was called Vijayanagar (city of victory) or Visyanagar (City of Learning).

### Telugu Origin

- Robert Sewell said the founders Harihar and Bukka were Kakatiya guards and of Kuruba/Golla origin
- Saletore surmised that Hampi was lying outside the Hoysala territory and supported the Telugu origin of Vijayanagara kings
- Telugu Nayaks for revenue collection throughout the empire also supported the Telugu affinity

### Muslim-Origin

Muslim historians and scholars of the time such as Ziauddin Barani, Isarni and Ferishta and foreign visitors like Ibn Batuta and Nuniz also recorded that the brothers were serving the King Prataparudra and were made captive after the fall of Warangal. According to another historian who based his research on evidence culled from inscriptions such as Gozalavidu record, "the founders of Vijayanagara were at first in the service of the last Kakatiya king Prataparudra of Warangal, and when that monarch was defeated by Muhammad bin Tughluq and taken prisoner, they fled to Kampili and took refuge in the court of Kampilideva". On the outbreak of a rebellion in Kampili the brothers were sent by Tughlaq with an army to Kampili to reconquer it from the rebels and rule the province as his deputies. They successfully accomplished the task but under the influence of Vidyanarya they renounced Islam, and threw in their lot with the Musunuri Nayaks who had just then succeeded, under the leadership of Kaapaya, in expelling the Muslims and re-establish the national independence. Harihara and Bukka then reverted to their ancient faith and having declared independence, assumed the leadership of the Hindus of Kampili in their fight against the Muslims.

### Kannada Origin

- Inscriptions prove that Harihara I and Bukka Raya I were in the Hoysala service a decade before their arrival at Kampili (in modern Bellary district).
- Not only did the widow of Hoysala Veera Ballala III participate in the coronation of Harihara I in 1346, her name appears before that of the Vijayanagara King Harihara I in a 1349 inscription indicating he gained legitimacy for being a devoted heir of the Hoysalas.
- Original founding of Vijayanagara was in 1320 by Veera Ballala III, then known as Vijayavirupaksha Hosapattana. By 1344, the transfer of power from the Hoysala Empire to the emerging Vijayanagara empire seems to have been gradual and without bloodshed, as ex-Hoysala officers melted away from a crumbling Hoysala power now to support the Sangama cause.
- In 1346, Harihara I made a grant to Bharati Tirtha in the presence of Krishnayitayi, queen of Hoysala Veera Ballala III, who herself made a grant on the same day. Harihara I was a commander in the Hoysala Kingdom and had

been appointed by Veera Ballala III with autonomous powers after the fall of the Seuna and Kampili kingdoms, to administer the northern territories.

- It has been pointed out that even famous Telugu scholars Vallabharaya and Srinatha, in their works called the Sangama brothers Karnataka Kshitinatha, indicating they were a Kannada family.
- An early inscription of Harihara II called him, Lion to the scent elephant of the Andhra king, demonstrating their anti-Telugu propensity. Persian author Ferishta of Vijayanagara days wrote the emperors as "Roies of Karnataka".
- The Karnataka Empire or Vijayanagar Empire was originally of the Karnataka region and it drew its inspirations from the Hoysala Empire and the Western Ganga Dynasty of the Karnataka. Inscriptional evidence shows that Ballappa Dandanayaka, a nephew of Hoysala Veera Ballala III was married to a daughter of Harihara I, the founder of the empire. This is claimed proof enough of the association Sangama brothers had with the Hoysala family.
- It is also asserted that the theory of capture of Harihara I and Bukka Raya I by the Sultan of Delhi and conversion to Islam is false and that the testimony of epigraphs proves that the area around Hampi constituted their homeland. The empire never had a Telugu origin. The patron saint of the early kings was saint Vidyanarya, the 12th Shankaracharya of Sringeri in Karnataka and this is proof enough of their unquestionable identity with the Kannada country.
- Great devotion the founders of the empire had in Lord Chennakeshava of Belur and Lord Virupaksha of Hampi testifying to their origin from Kannada country
- Sangama brothers even signed their Sanskrit records in Kannada as Srivirupaksha and used their Kannada titles even in Telugu, Tamil and Sanskrit records. No such Telugu titles were used by them.

### Vidyanarya

Though controversies over the role of Vidyanarya in the founding of the empire exist, Vidyanarya was an important Sanyasi at the Sringeri order, though not the head of the monastic order until 1380. Vidyanarya Kalajnana (in Sanskrit), Vidyanarya Vrittanta, Rajakalanirnay written by Vidyanarya terms the two as working in gaurds in Kakatiya Tresaury, but it

also says they are Kuruba lineage. Kurubas are kannadigas and Kaktiya is Telugu kingdom. And he also say they worked for Chalukyas, Now is the Saint trying to get support of both kannadigas and telugu?

## The Sangama Dynasty

### Harihara I

The Dynasty founded by Harihar I and Bukka I is known as Sangama dynasty after the name of their father Sangama. Harihara I (1336–1356 CE), also called Hakka and *Vira Harihara I*, was the founder of the Vijayanagara Empire. He was Bhavana Sangama's eldest son and the first among the four dynasties that ruled Vijayanagara. Kannada inscriptions of his time call him *Karnataka Vidya Vilas* (master of great knowledge and skills), *Bhashegetappuvarayaraganda* (punisher of those feudatories who don't keep their promise), *Arirayavibhada* (fire to enemy kings). His initial military exploits established his control over the Valley of Tungabhadra River, and gradually he expanded his control to certain regions of Konkan and Malabar Coast. By that time Hoysalas had lost its last ruler Veera Ballala III who died fighting the Sultan of Madurai in 1346, Harihar and Bukka brought under their control the dominions of the Hoysalas. The brothers continued their career of conquest and consequently within the lifetime of Harihar I, the kingdom of Vijayanagar extended from Krishna in the north to the neighbourhood of the Kaveri in the south and comprised the whole country situated between the eastern and western oceans. In 1352, Ala-ud-Din Hasan Bahman shah attacked Vijayanagar. Harihara I had to surrender a portion of his territory to the Bahmani ruler. He divided his empire into provinces which were placed under the charge of the members of the royal family and "trustworthy viceroys". Harihara died in about 1353 and was succeeded by his brother Bukka I.

### Bukka I

The early life of Bukka as well as his brother Hakka (also known as Harihara I) are relatively unknown and most accounts of their early life are based on various theories. After the King of Warangal was defeated by Muhammad bin Tughlaq, Bukka and his brother were taken prisoners and sent to Delhi. Both were forced to convert to Islam. Bukka and his brother eventually escaped and retained their Hindu traditions and founded the Vijayanagara Empire under the influence of the Brahmin sage Vidyananya. He

completed the building of the city of Vijayanagar and also added to his empire. He is described in inscriptions as the master of the Eastern, Western and Southern Oceans. Bukka defeated the Sultanate of Madurai in 1371 and extended his territory into the south all the way to Rameswaram. By 1374 he had gained an upper hand over the Bahmanis for control of the Tungabhadra- Krishna doab and also took control of Goa, the kingdom of Odisha (Orya) were also captured and Bukka forced the Jaffna kingdom of Ceylon and the Zamorins of Malabar to pay tributes to him. He sent a mission to emperor of China. He fought against Muhammad Shah and Mujahid Shah of the Bahmani Kingdom. As he was defeated a large number of Hindus were killed by the Muslims. Bukka I was a liberal- minded ruler. On one occasion, he brought about reconciliation between the Jains and the Vaishnavas by asking them to worship in their own manner with equal freedom.

### Harihar II

Bukka II was succeeded by his son Harihar II who ruled from 1379 to 1406. He earned the titles Vaidikamarga Sthapanacharya and Vedamarga Pravartaka. Muslim historians' Sewell had stated that the reign of Harihar II was a period of "Unbroken peace". In 1398 Harihar II attacked the Bahmani kingdom in order to capture the Raichur Doab. Harihar II conquered the Addanki and Srisailam areas as well as most of the territory between the peninsulas to the south of the river Krishna, which would eventually lead to fights in Telangana with the Velamas of Rachakonda. Harihara II took advantage of the death of Mujahid Bahmani in 1378 and extended his control into the northwest, controlling such ports as Goa, Chaul, and Dabhol. It is true that Harihar II was a worshipper of Shiva but he was tolerant towards other religions.

### Deva Raya I

Harihara II was succeeded by his son Deva Raya I Who ruled from 1406 to 1422. He improving the Vijayanagar army. Deva Raya I was a patron of Kannada literature and architecture. At his time Hazara temple was an excellent example of architecture. In his war with the Bahmani Kingdom, Deva Raya I was defeated. The next ruler was Vijaya-Bukka or Vira Vijays. He ruled for a few months and was succeeded by Deva Raya II. Conflict was started on a large scale in 1367 during the reign of Bukka I, when he assaulted the fortress of Mudkal in the disputed Tungabhadra doab and



slaughtered in the entire garrison except one man. When this news reached the Bahmani sultan, he was enraged and launched a successful campaign to recapture Mudkal despite the opposite of the vijayanagar forces. He then crossed the Tungabhadra and defeated the Vijayanagar ruler in a battle. The war dragged on for several months, but the Bahmani Sultan could neither capture the Raja nor his capital. Finally both sides were exhausted, and concluded a treaty which restored the old positions.

### **Dev Raya II**

Deva Raya II also known as Proudha Deva Raya. He was an Emperor of Vijayanagara Empire from 1422 to 1446 According to the historian Sastri, Deva raya II had the title Gajabetevara, which literally means "Hunter of Elephants", an honorific that explained his addiction to hunting elephants or a metaphor referring to his victories against enemies who were "as strong as elephants". He defeated kalinga army. He annexed Knodavidu and established his authority upto Rajahmundry. War with the Bahmani kingdom continued and Ahmad Shah massacred women and children of vijayanagara mercilessly. He celebrated a carnival for three days when the number of Hindus who had been killed reached 20,000. Deva Raya was so much impressed by the efficiency of the Muslim Cavalry that he decided to recruit Muslim horsemen in his own army. While doing so, he did not care for his personal religious prejudices. War with the Bahmani Kingdom started once again in 1443 and the Muslims inflicted heavy losses upon him. Ultimately, he has forced to pay tribute to the Bahmani rulers.

### **Mallikarjuna**

Deva Raya II was succeeded by his son Mallikarjuna who ruled from 1446 to 1465. He was successful in beating back a combined attack by the Bahmani Sultan and Raja of Orissa. He was able to keep his Kingdom intact. Narasimha, the Saluva chief of Chandragiri, came into prominence during this reign and he played an important part in checking foreign aggression.

### **Virupaksha II**

Mallikarjuna was succeeded by his brother Virupaksha II. He ruled from 1465 to 1486. As he was an incompetent ruler, there was confusion and disorder in country. Throughout his reign, Virupaksha was faced with rebellious nobles and officers as well as multiple enemies who began to invade the

weakened kingdom. The rulers of Bahmani kingdom also tried to advance into the Doab between the Krishna and the Tungabhadra. Virupaksha became increasingly unpopular and ignited many of the empire's provinces to rebel, eventually leading up to Virupaksha's death. In order to save the Vijayanagara Empire, Narasimha deposed Virupaksha II in 1486 and himself captured the throne. This is known as the First Usurpation. The Sangama dynasty was ended and the Saluva dynasty came into.

### **The Saluva Dynasty**

#### **Narasimha**

The earliest known Saluva from inscriptional evidence in the Vijayanagara era was Mangaldeva, the great grandfather of Saluva Narasimha Deva Raya. His father Saluva Gunda was the governor of Chandragiri. Narasimha ruled the Vijayanagara Empire from 1486 to 1492. As king, Saluva Narasimha tried to expand the empire, though he continually faced difficulties caused from rebelling chieftains. He enjoyed the confidence of the people and was able to subdue most of the revolted provinces. Saluva Narasimha restored internal law and order in the empire. The contention of the Muhammadan historians is that Narasa Nayaka murdered the two sons of his master Narasimha Saluva and annexed the throne for himself. However, the inscriptions tell us that Narasa Nayaka placed on the throne Immadi Narasimha, the son of Narasimha Saluva and kept all power in his own hands. His son deposed the last Saluva ruler and seated himself on the throne. This is known as the second Usurpation which ended the rule of the Saluva dynasty and brought in the Taluva dynasty.

### **The Tuluva Dynasty**

#### **Vir Narashima**

The Saluva dynasty also soon came to an end, and a new dynasty called the Tulva dynasty was founded by Vira Narasimha. He ruled from 1505 to 1509. he was a pious king who distributed gifts at sacred places. In 1509 when he was on his death bed, legend has it that Vira Narasimha Raya requested his minister Saluva Thimma (Thimmarasa) to blind his younger brother Krishna Deva Raya so that his own eight-year-old son could become king of Vijayanagar. Thimmarasa however brought a pair of goat eyes to the king and informed him that he had Krishna Deva Raya killed. However there is no record to prove anything but a friendly relationship between the two half-

brothers and that the coronation of Krishna Deva Raya was a smooth one.

### **Krishna Deva Raya**

Krishna Deva Raya was the greatest ruler of Vijayanagar and one of the most famous kings in the history of India. He ruled from 1509 to 1530. Domingos Paes and Fernao Nuniz the Portuguese travelers also visited the Vijayanagara Empire during his reign. The king was of medium height, had a cheerful disposition, and was reputed to be respectful to foreign visitors, ruthless in maintaining the law, and prone to fits of anger. He maintained himself to a high level of physical fitness through daily exercises. Krishna deva was also a great patron of art and literature and was known as 'Andhra Bhoja'. Eight eminent luminaries in literature known as ashtadiggajas were at his court. Allasani peddana was the greatest and he was often described as 'Andhrakavita- Pitamaha'. His important works include Manucharitam and Harikatha-saramsamu

The reign of Krishnadevaraya was also remarkable for the encouragement and development of arts and letters. He constructed the famous Vittalawami and Hazara Ramaswamy temples. A gopuram was added to the Virupaksha temple on the occasion of his coronation. He restored many shrines throughout South India. He also built a new city, called Nagalapura, in memory of his mother, Nagamba. Besides, he built a large number of raya gopurams and other structures of lesser significance.

Krishna Deva Raya's first task was to repulse the Bahmani Forces which invaded his territory on their annual raid into Raya kingdom. But they soon discovered that they were no longer free to plunder and ravage. The Muslim armies were decisively defeated in the battle of Diwani. Krishna Deva pursued the retreating armies, particularly those of Yusuf Adil Shah, who turned around to oppose him near Kovilkonda and lost his life in the battle that followed.

After this preliminary success Krishna Deva Raya invaded the Raichur doab and took Raichur fort. Finding his opportunity in the differences that had arisen between Bijapur and the Bahmani Sultan. Yusuf Adil Shah in Bijapur. After the capture of Raichur, Barid, the minister of Sultan Mahmud and took hold tured it after a short siege, released

Mahmud and assumed the title of 'Yavanarajyasthapanacharya'.

Krishna Deva Raya had ver friendly relations with the Portuguese. He gave them many concessions because he gained by the import of horses and other things. In 1510 Albuquerque, the Portuguese Governor, asked for permission to build a fort at Bhatkal and the same was granted.

Krishnadevaraya toured the remote corners of his empire and heard the grievances of the people and redressed them then and there. He set up an excellent administrative system. The empire was divided into Mandalas, Nadus and Seeme. For the purpose of assessment and fixation of revenue, Krishnadevaraya had the whole of his empire surveyed. The unit of land for assessment was known as Rayarekhe or the royal line and which measured roughly about seven feet and nine inches. Twenty of these units made a bigha and 36bigha's, a mar or plot of 16 to 18 acres. Land revenue was fixed based on the yield, normally 1/3rd of the produce. Krishnadevaraya provided irrigation facilities by building reservoirs and channels across the kingdom. He helped the Portuguese to conquer Goa from the Bijapur rulers in 1510 maintained friendly relations with them. This relationship also helped him obtain high bred Arabian horses and expansion of overseas trade of the empire.

It is said that Krishnadevaraya in his own lifetime had made his six year old son prince Tirumalaraya as the king and himself took up the post of minister. But Tirumalaraya fell ill and died possibly poisoned by the son of Saluva Thimma (chief minister). When Krishnadevaraya came to know of it, he sent for the chief minister, accused him in open court and cast him and his whole family into prison. Meanwhile Krishnadevaraya was preparing for an attack on Belgaum, then in the Adil Shah's possession when he took seriously ill and died soon after in 1529. Before his death, he nominated his brother, Achyutaraya to be his successor. The rule of Krishnadevaraya was a glorious chapter in the history of Vijayanagara Empire.

### **Achyuta Raya**

Krishna Deva Raya was succeeded by Achyuta Raya who ruled from 1530 to 1542. It appears that he was not altogether the craven that he is represented by Nuniz to have been. He took to task the rebellious

viceroys of Madura. A similar action was taken against the Raja of Travancore for his having given shelter to the viceroy of Madura. However, he made a mistake in leaving things into the hands of two brothers-in-law known as Tirmala. He also annoyed never viceroys. The result was that was a lot of trouble in the Vijayanagara Empire. Achyuta Raya was succeeded by his son Venkatadri or Venkata I. However, he ruled only for about 6 months. He was succeeded by Sadasiva Raya, a nephew of Achyuta.

### **Sadasiva Raya**

Sadasiva Raya ruled from 1542 to 1570. He was merely a puppet in the hands of his Raja and his two brothers Tirumala and Venkatadri. He owed to them his life and crown. He had neither the training nor the actual experience to assume the leadership. The three brothers-The Triumvirate-had acquired a long experience of administration and were also highly connected. They traced their descent to the great Aravidu warrior.

### **Aravidu dynasty**

#### **Aliya Rama Raya**

Aliya Rama Raya, also known as Rama Raya was the founder of the Aravidu Dynasty who ruled the Vijayanagar Empire from 1543 till 1565 CE. Rama Amatya, who was a reputed Sanskrit scholar was patronised by Rama Raya. Aliya Rama Raya was said to be an intelligent army general and a shrewd diplomat who had pioneered several successful campaigns while Krishna Deva Raya was the king of Vijayanagar empire. In 1565, Aliya Rama Raya headed the battle which was being fought against the Deccan Sultanates which comprised the Ibrahim Adil Shah, Ali Adil Shah and Husain Nizam Shah. This was the famous Battle of Talikota. The army of Vijayanagar was about to emerge victorious in this battle, but the abrupt capture and demise of Aliya Rama Raya spelt doom for Vijayanagar. Vijayanagar was severely conquered and a majority of the regional inhabitants were murdered by the Muslim invaders. The royal family of Vijayanagara was captured and destroyed completely. Thereafter, Vijayanagar was reduced to ruins, which came to be referred to by the name of Hampi.

It is true that the battle of Talikota did a great damage to the Vijayanagar Empire but it is not correct to say that the Hindu empire disappeared completely after 1565. It has rightly been contended that Talikota was the climactic, but not the grand

climactic of the Vijayanagar empire. The empire continued to exist till it got weakened and dismembered- weakened by the constant invasions from north and dismembered by the dissatisfaction and rebellions of the viceroys within.

It is to be observed that the Muslim confederacy which had won the battle of Talikota did not last long. The old imperial jealousies reappeared among the Muslim Sultans. The result was that the Vijayanagar Empire was able to recover once again under the guidance of Tirumala, brother of Rama Raya. After the departure of the Muslims, he went back to Vijayanagar. After some time he went to Renugonda and restored to prestige of Vijayanagar empire to such an extent that he was able to interfere once again in the affairs of the Muslim States in the Deccan, upto 1570, Sadasiva was the nominal ruler but in that year he was sat a side by Tirumala who captured the throne for himself. With Tirumala started the rule of Aravidu Dynasty in the Vijayanagara. Tirumala was succeeded by his son, Ranga II. He was a successful ruler. He was succeeded by Venkata II who ruled from 1586 to 1614. He was the last great ruler of Vijayanagar who kept the empire intact. The only exception was that in 1612 Raja Oediyar founded the state of Mysore. After the death of Venkata II, the dismemberment of the empire started. There was a war of succession. Ranga III could not check the disintegrating forces on account of the selfishness of the rebellious vassals of the empire. The feudatories of the Vijayanagar empire proved to be the worst enemies of the empire. Their insane pride, blind selfishness, disloyalty and mutual dissensions helped the Muslim State in their fight against Vijayanagar. Moreover, the chiefs of Seringapatam and Bidnur and Naiks of Madura and Tanjore were able to set up independent kingdoms of their own. It was under these circumstances that the Vijayanagar empire disappeared.

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