
UNIT 27 THE VIJAYNAGAR EMPIRE

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27.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this Unit, you will know about:

- the emergence of the Vijaynagar kingdom,
- the expansion of Vijaynagar power during 14-16th century,
- Vijaynagar's relations with the Bahmani rulers and deep south,
- the process of consolidation and decline, and
- the administrative set-up, economy and society with special reference to **nayankara** and **ayagar** system.

27.1 INTRODUCTION

In the present Unit, we will discuss the process of the emergence, expansion and consolidation of the Vijaynagar power over the South Indian macro-region as well as its disintegration. In the previous Unit, you have read about the process of the emergence of four kingdoms in the South Indian macro-region on the ruins of the Chalukya and Chola empires. In the South the Pandya and the Hoysala whereas in the north the Kakatiya and the Yadava kingdoms rose to prominence. The invasion of the Deccan and South India by the Delhi Sultans weakened the power of these kingdoms and made them subservient to the Delhi Sultanate. This was followed by the emergence and expansion of the Bahmani and the Vijaynagar kingdoms in the second quarter of the fourteenth century. Harihara and Bukka, the sons of Sangama (the last Yadava king), had been in the service of the Kakatiyas of Warangal. After the fall of Warangal at the hands of the Delhi Sultans, they shifted to Kampili. After the conquest of Kampili, the two brothers were taken to Delhi where they embraced Islam and became favourites of the Sultan. Soon the Hoysalas attacked Kampili with the support of the local people and defeated the governor of Delhi. The Sultan at

this point sent Harihara and Bukka to govern that region. They started the restoration of Sultan's power but came in contact with Vidyaranya who converted them back to the Hindu fold. They declared their independence and founded the state of Vijaynagar with Harihara as its king in 1336. Soon this state developed into a powerful Vijaynagar empire.

27.2 ESTABLISHMENT AND CONSOLIDATION

You have already read in sub-section 8.2.4 of Unit 8 that geographical configurations played an important role in determining the course of political events in south India. The focus of struggle among the local powers was the Krishna Godavari delta, Kaveri basin, the Tungabhadra doab and the Konkan region, the latter known for its fertility and access to high seas. During the 8-13th century, the struggle was between the Rashtrakutas and the Pallavas while the following centuries saw Vijaynagar and Bahmani kingdoms locking horns. The Bahmanis compelled the Vijaynagar rulers to expand laterally westward and eastward across the peninsula from the main centre of their power on the Tungabhadra. The Vijaynagar rulers also found it difficult to crush the Bahmani power in Raichur and Tungabhadra doab because of latter's alliance with the Velamas of Rajakonda in Warangal. These circumstances prevented Vijaynagar from advancing towards the north and forced it to expand laterally eastward and westward across the peninsula and southwards into the Tamil country. Later however this alliance broke up which enabled Vijaynagar to expand at the cost of Bahmanis.

27.2.1 Early Phase, 1336-1509

Rivalries in this period ensued among Vijaynagar, Bahmanis, the Reddis of Kondavidu (in the reaches of upper Krishna-Godavari delta), the Velamas of Rajakonda (in the lower reaches of Krishna-Godavari delta), the Telugu-Chodas (between Krishna-Godavari region) and the Gajapatis of Orissa over the control of the Krishna-Godavari delta, Tungabhadra doab and Marathwada (specially Konkan).

On account of constant clashes, the Vijaynagar boundaries kept on changing. Between 1336-1422, major conflicts took place between Vijaynagar and the Bahmanis with Telugu-Choda chiefs siding with the latter while the Velamas of Rajakonda and the Reddis of Rajahmundry joined hands with Vijaynagar. This tilted the balance largely in favour of the latter.

During 1422-46, clash over the annexation of Raichur doab started between the Vijaynagar and the Bahmani rulers which resulted in Vijaynagar defeat. This greatly exposed the weaknesses of the Vijaynagar arms. It forced its rulers to reorganise the army by enlisting Muslim archers and engaging better quality horses. The muslim archers were given revenue assignments. During this period the entire Kondavidu region was annexed to the Vijaynagar empire.

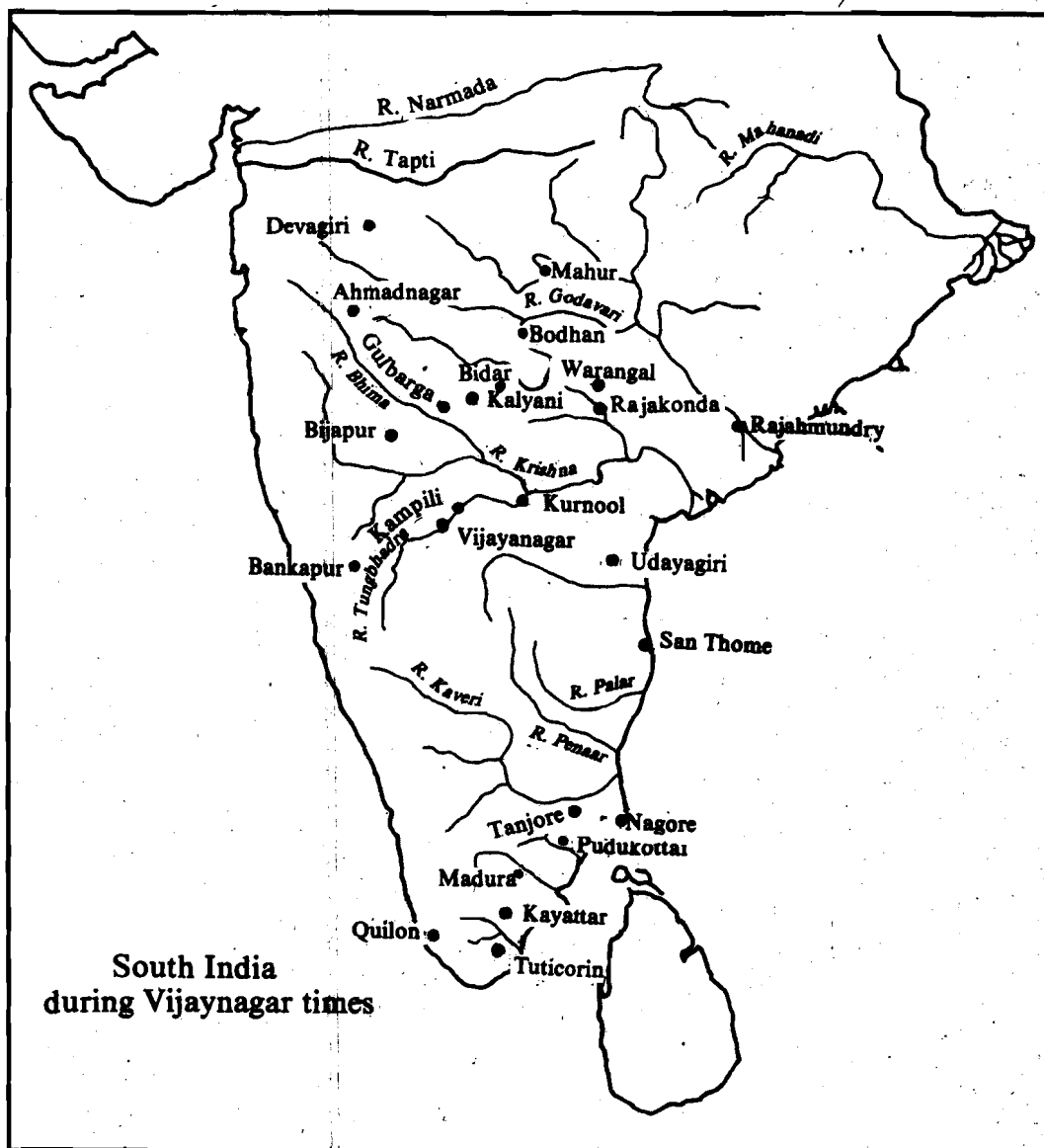
Between 1465-1509 again, the Raichur doab became the cockpit of clashes. In the beginning, Vijaynagar had to surrender the western ports, i.e. Goa, Chaul and Dabhol to the Bahmanis. But, around 1490, internal disintegration of the Bahmani kingdom began with the establishment of Bijapur under Yusuf Adil Khan. Taking advantage of the situation, Vijaynagar succeeded in occupying Tungabhadra region (Adoni and Kurnool). Earlier, the loss of western ports had completely dislocated horse trade with the Arabs on which Vijaynagar army depended for its cavalry. However, occupation of Honavar, Bhatkal, Bakanur and Mangalore ports led to the revival of horse trade. This ensured the regular supply which sustained the efficiency of the Vijaynagar army.

The Gajapatis of Orissa were an important power in the eastern region. They had in their possession areas like Kondavidu, Udayagiri and Masulipatam. The Vijaynagar rulers succeeded in expelling the Gajapatis as far as Godavari and occupied Kondavidu, Udayagiri and Masulipatam. But soon, in 1481, Masulipatam was lost to the Bahmanis. Vijaynagar had also to contend with the constant rebellions of the chieftains of Udayagiri, Ummatur (near Mysore) and Seringapatam.

27.2.2 Krishnadeva Raya, 1509-29

This phase is marked by the achievements of Vijaynagar's greatest ruler Krishnadeva Raya (1509-29). During this period, the power of the Bahmanis declined, leading to the emergence of five kingdoms: the Nizam Shahis of Ahmadnagar; the Adil Shahis of Bijapur; the Imad Shahis of Berar, the Qutb Shahis of Golconda and the Barid Shahis of Bidar on the ruins of the Bahmani empire. This helped Krishnadeva Raya greatly in capturing Kovilkonda and Raichur from the Adil Shahis of Bijapur and Gulbarga and Bidar from the Bahmanis. Krishnadeva Raya also recovered Udayagiri, Kondavidu (south of river Krishna), Nalgonda (in Andhra Pradesh) Telingana and Warangal were taken from the Gajapatis.

By 1510, the Portuguese also emerged as a strong power to reckon with in Indian waters. Occupation of Goa and sack of Danda Rajouri and Dabhol provided them monopoly in horse trade since Goa had been the entrepot of the Deccan states for horse trade. Krishnadeva Raya maintained friendly relations with the Portuguese. On Albuquerque's request, Krishnadeva Raya permitted the construction of a fort at Bhatkal. Similarly, the Portuguese soldiers played a reasonable role in Krishnadeva Raya's success against Ismail Adil Khan of Bijapur.



MAP 5

27.2.3 Period of Instability : 1529-42

Krishnadeva Raya's death generated internal strifes and attracted external invasions. Taking advantage of the internal situation, Ismail Adil Khan of Bijapur seized Raichur and Mudgal. The Gajapati and Golconda kings also, though unsuccessfully, attempted to occupy Kondavidu. During this turbulence, Krishnadeva Raya's brother Achyut Raya (1529-42) succeeded in usurping the Vijaynagar throne. But the latter's death once again led to the war of succession between Achyut Raya's son and Sadasiva, the nephew of Achyut Raya. Finally, Sadasiva ascended the throne (1542), but the real power remained in the hands of Rama Raya, the son-in-law of Krishnadeva Raya.

He followed the policy of admitting Muslims in the army and conferred important offices on them which greatly enhanced the efficiency of the army.

27.2.4 The Portuguese

Rama Raya's relations with the Portuguese were not very cordial. Martin Alfonso de Souza, who became the governor of Goa in 1542 plundered Bhatkal. Later, Rama Raya succeeded in concluding a treaty with Alfonso de Souza's successor, Joao de Castro, in 1547, by which Rama Raya secured a monopoly of the horse trade. Rama Raya tried to curb Portuguese influence in San Thome on the Coromandel.

27.2.5 Vijaynagar's Relations with the Deep South

By 1512, Vijaynagar rulers succeeded in bringing almost the whole southern peninsula under their control. The small Hindu chiefdom of Rajagambirarajyan (Tondai Mandala); the Zamorin of Calicut and the ruler of Quilon (Kerala) accepted suzerainty of Vijaynagar. By 1496, almost the whole deep south up to the Cape Camorin including local Chola and Chera rulers, Tanjore and Pudukottai and Manabhusa of Madura were subjugated. However, the Pandya ruler (chief of Tuticorin and Kayattar) was allowed to rule as a tributary.

An interesting feature of the occupation of the Tamil country was that after the conquests the Telugu soldiers settled down permanently in remote and sparsely populated areas. These migrants exploited the black soil which later led to the emergence of the Reddis as an important cultivating group. Besides, the emergence of the **nayakas** as intermediaries in the Tamil country was also the result of expansion into that region.

The Vijaynagar state was a massive political system which included within its domain diverse people, i.e. the Tamils, Kannadas and the Telugu-speaking community.

The Vijaynagar rulers exercised direct territorial sovereignty over the Tungabhadra region. In other parts, the Vijaynagar rulers exercised ritual sovereignty (overlordship) through the Telugu warriors (**nayakas**) and the local chiefs who had metamorphosed into **nayakas** and also through the sectarian groups, i.e. the Vaishnavas (You will read about their political role in the next section).

27.2.6 The Deccan Muslim States

You have already read that by 1538 the Bahmani kingdom split up into five states—Bijapur, Golconda, Ahmadnagar, Bidar and Berar. Bijapur and Ahmadnagar came to a mutual understanding in 1542-43 which gave Bijapur a free hand against Vijaynagar, whereas Ahmadnagar was to expand at the cost of Bidar. With this understanding, Ibrahim Adil Shah attacked Vijaynagar which was repulsed. But the understanding did not remain for long. Ahmadnagar received Rama Raya's help to capture the fort of Kalyani from Bidar. Rama Raya's relations with the Deccan states were quite complex: he helped Ahmadnagar against Bidar but, when Ahmadnagar attacked Gulbarga (Bijapuri territory), Rama Raya came to the help of the Bijapur ruler. Moreover, Rama Raya succeeded in bringing about a collective security plan between the Vijaynagar and the Deccani Muslim states. It was agreed that aggression by any one of them would bring forth armed intervention by the rest of the parties against the aggressor.

In utter violation of the agreement, Ahmadnagar invaded Bijapur in 1560. Rama Raya secured Golconda's help against Ahmadnagar but this alliance, too, proved

shortlived. Ahmadnagar was defeated and Kalyani had to be surrendered to Bijapur. Around this time, Rama Raya also violated the security agreement by attacking Bidar. The ruler of Golconda joined hands with Ahmadnagar and attacked Kalyani. Rama Raya sent his forces against Golconda for recapturing the fortress of Kalyani. On the other hand, Vijaynagar and Bijapur joined hands (which was again a transitory alliance) against the aggression of Ahmadnagar and Golconda. Finally, Ahmadnagar had to surrender the forts of Kovilkonda, Ganpura and Pangal. During this phase, Rama Raya's policy was of playing off one Muslim state against the other to secure a balance of power in favour of Vijaynagar. Later, Golconda, Ahmadnagar, Bidar and Bijapur rallied together against Vijaynagar. The final showdown was at Talikota (1565), a town located near Krishna river. It spelt utter doom for Vijaynagar which was sacked. Rama Raya was killed. Though the Vijaynagar kingdom continued to exist for almost hundred more years, its size decreased and the Rayas no longer remained important in the politics of South India.

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Discuss the conflict between the Vijaynagar and Bahmani kingdoms for the control over Krishna-Godavari delta, Tungabhadra doab and Konkan.

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- 2) Write in 50 words relations of the Portuguese with the Vijaynagar rulers.

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- 3) The struggle with the Deccan Muslim states finally sealed the fate of the Vijaynagar rule. Comment.

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27.3 RELIGION AND POLITICS

Religion and religious classes played an important role in the political, social and economic life of the Vijaynagar empire.

27.3.1 Ritual Kingship

It is generally emphasised that the principle of strict adherence to *dharma* was the chief constituent and distinguishing feature of the Vijaynagar state. But very often it were the Hindu rulers against whom the Vijaynagar rulers had to fight, e.g. the Gajapatis of Orissa. The most strategically placed contingents of the Vijaynagar army were under the charge of Muslim commanders. The Muslim archers were

employed by King Deva Raya II. These Muslim contingents played an important role in the victory of Vijaynagar against its Hindu rivals.

The successful military deeds of the Vijaynagar rulers led them to assume the title of **divijayans**. Vijaynagar kingship was symbolic in the sense that the Vijaynagar rulers exercised their control through their overlords over a region beyond the prime centre of their authority. This symbolism was manifested through the instrument of religion which was used to ensure loyalty from the people. For example, ritual kingship is best exemplified in the **mahanavami** festival. This was an annual royal ceremony lasting for nine days between 15 September and 15 October. It culminated in the **dussehra** festival on the tenth day. Important personages (e.g., military commanders) from the peripheral parts participated in the festival. Through this festival, recognition of the sovereignty of Vijaynagar rulers by peripheral parts of the empire was strengthened. Though the Brahmins participated in the festival, their role was not predominant. The ritual rites of the festival were largely performed by the king himself.

27.3.2 Political Role of the Brahmins

A distinct feature of the Vijaynagar state was the importance of the Brahmins as political and secular personnel rather than ritual leaders. Most of the **durga dannaiks** (incharge of forts) were Brahmins. Literary sources substantiate the theory that fortresses were significant during this period and were placed under the control of the Brahmins, especially of Telugu origins.

During this period, the majority of educated Brahmins desired to become government servants as administrators and accountants which offered them good career prospects. The Imperial Secretariat was totally manned by the Brahmins. These Brahmins were different from the other Brahmins: they belonged to a subcaste called the Telugu **niyogis**. They were not very orthodox in performing religious rites. They also worked as potential legitimizers. The Brahmin Vidyaranya and his kinsmen were the ministers of the Sangama brothers: they provided legitimacy to their rule by accepting them back into the Hindu fold.

The Brahmins also played an important role as military commanders in the Vijaynagar army. For example, under Krishnadeva Raya Brahmin Timma received economic support as he was an integral part of the political system. Thus Brahmins constructed and commanded fortresses in different parts of the empire for which they were assigned revenue of some crown villages, **bhandaravada**. Differentiation was made between crown villages and **amaram** villages (whose income was under the charge of the local military chiefs).

27.3.3 Relationship between Kings, Sects and Temples

To establish effective control over the distant Tamil region, the Vijaynagar ruler sought the help of the Vaishnava sectarian leaders who hailed from the Tamil Country. For legitimising their power in this region, it was necessary for the rulers, who were aliens in the Tamil region, to establish contacts with the basic Tamil religious organisation—the temples.

The relationship between kings, sects and temples can be explained in terms of four assertions:

- 1) Temples were basic for sustaining kingship.
- 2) Sectarian leaders were the connecting links between kings and temples.
- 3) Though the routine supervision of the temples was done by local sectarian groups, the task of solving disputes concerning temples was in the hands of the king.
- 4) The intervention of the king in the above matter was administrative, not legislative.

During 1350-1650, numerous temples sprang up in south India. Through grants or gifts to the temples in the form of material resources (a part of the agricultural produce of specified villages), a particular type of agrarian economy evolved under the Vijaynagar rule. (This will be discussed in the section on Economy.)

The rulers of the early Sangama dynasty were Saivas who made additions to the Sri Virupaksha (Pampapati) temple of Vijaynagar. The Saluvas were basically Vaishnavas who gave patronage to both the Siva and Vishnu temples. Krishnadeva Raya (the Tuluva ruler) constructed the Krishnaswami temple (Vaishnava shrine) and also gave grants to Siva temples. The Aravidu kings also gave gifts to Vaishnava temples.

27.4 LOCAL ADMINISTRATION

You have already read in Block 3 about the local institutions of the earlier period (e.g., **sabha**, **nadu** and **ur**). The powers of the territorial assembly (**nadu**) as well as the village assemblies (**sabha** and **ur**) were weakened during the time of the later Cholas. During the Vijaynagar period, these institutions did not completely disappear when the **nayaka** and **ayagar** systems came into prominence.

27.4.1 The Nayankara System

The **nayankara** system was an important characteristic of the Vijaynagar political organisation. The military chiefs or warriors held the title of **nayaka** or **amaranayaka**. It is difficult to classify these warriors on the basis of definite office, ethnic identity, set of duties or rights and privileges.

The institution of **nayaka** was studied in detail by two Portuguese—Fernaõ Nuniz and Domingo Paes, who visited India during the reigns of Krishnadeva Raya and Achyut Raya of Tuluva dynasty during the sixteenth century. They regard the **nayakas** simply as agents of Rayas (central government). The evidence of Nuniz for the payments made by the **nayakas** to the Rayas brings up the question of feudal obligations. The Vijaynagar inscriptions and the later Mackenzie manuscripts refer to the **nayakas** as territorial magnates with political aspirations which at times conflicted with the aims of the rulers. N.K. Sastri (in 1946) drew a distinction between the **nayakas** before 1565 and those after 1565. The former were totally dependent upon the rulers while the latter were semi-independent. However, later he modified his views by pointing out that the **nayakas** before 1565 were military leaders holding military fiefs. In a more recent work (*Sources of Indian History*), he views the Vijaynagar empire as a military confederacy of many chieftains co-operating under the leadership of the biggest among them. He emphasized that the growing threat from Islam led the Vijaynagar rulers to adopt a military and religious stance. Krishnaswami considers the **nayaka** system as feudal. But Venkataramanayya feels that important features of European feudalism such as fealty, homage and sub-infeudation were absent in the **nayaka** system. D.C. Sircar similarly refutes the feudal theory; instead he explains it as a kind of landlordism, a variant of feudalism in which land was allotted to the **amaranayakas** for military services rendered by them to the king.

Thus, D.C. Sircar, and T.V. Mahalingam consider the **nayakas** of Vijaynagar as warriors holding an office (**kara**) bestowed on them by the central government on condition of rendering military service. **Amaranayankara** was a designation conferred on a military officer or chief (**nayaka**) who had under his control a specified number of troops. These **nayakas** possessed revenue rights over land or territory called **amaram** (**amaramakara** or **amaramahali**). In the Tamil country and also in the Vijaynagar empire, the area of land thus alienated under this tenure was about 3/4th. The obligations and activities of the **nayakas** were among others, giving gifts to temples, repair and building of tanks, reclamation of wasteland and collection of dues from temples. The Tamil inscriptions, however, do not refer to dues given to the king or his officials by the **nayakas**.

Krishnaswami, on the basis of Mackenzie manuscripts, opines that the commanders of Vijaynagar army (formerly under Krishnadeva Raya) later established independent **nayaka** kingdoms. To guard against such dangers, the Vijaynagar kings tried to establish greater control over coastal markets dealing in horse trade. They attempted to monopolise the purchase of horses of good quality by paying a high price for them. They also built strong garrisons fortified with trustworthy soldiers. Thus, on

the one hand, the Telugu **nayaks** were a source of strength for the Vijaynagar empire and, on the other, they became its rivals.

27.4.2 The Ayagar System

It has already been pointed out that during the Vijaynagar period, autonomous local institutions, especially in the Tamil country, suffered a set-back. In pre-Vijaynagar days in Karnataka and Andhra local institutions possessed lesser autonomy as compared to Tamil country. During Vijaynagar period in Karnataka too local territorial divisions underwent a change but the **ayagar** system continued and became widely prevalent throughout the macro-region. It spread in the Tamil country during 15-16th century as a result of the declining power of **nadu** and **nattar**. The **ayagars** were village servants or functionaries and constituted of groups of families. These were headmen (**reddi** or **gauda**, **maniyam**), accountant (**karnam senabhova**) and watchmen (**talaiyari**). They were given a portion of or plot in a village. Sometimes they had to pay a fixed rent, but generally these plots were **manya** or tax-free as no regular customary tax was imposed on their agricultural income. In exceptional cases, direct payments in kind were made for services performed by village functionaries. Other village servants who performed essential services and skills for the village community were also paid by assigning plots of land (like washerman and priest). The village servants who provided ordinary goods and services were leather workers whose products included leather bag used in lift-irrigation devices (**kiapila** or **mohte**), potter, blacksmith, carpenter, waterman (**niranikkar**: who looked after the maintenance of irrigation channels and supervised bankers and money-lenders). The distinguishing feature of the **ayagar** system is that special allocation of income from land and specific cash payments were for the first time provided to village servants holding a particular office.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) Write in about ten lines the role and functions of Brahmins in the Vijaynagar empire.

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- 2) Define the following.

Amaram

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Bhandaravada

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Durga Dannaiks

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Ayagars

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- 3) Discuss the **nayankara** system in ten lines.

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27.5 ECONOMY

In this section, we will discuss the various land and income rights and the economic role of temples. We will also take into account aspects related to foreign and internal trade and urban life.

27.5.1 Land and Income Rights

Rice was the staple crop. Both black and white variety of rice was produced from Coromandel to Pulicat. Besides, cereals like gram and pulses were also cultivated. Spices (specially black pepper) coconut and betel-nuts were other important items of production. Land-revenue was the major source of state's income. Rate of revenue demand varied in different parts of the empire and in the same locality itself according to the fertility and regional location of the land. It was generally 1/6th of the produce, but in some cases it was even more ranging up to 1/4th. But on Brahmans and temples it was 1/20th to 1/30th respectively. It was payable both in cash and kind. We find references to three major categories of land tenure: **amara**, **bhandaravada** and **manya**. These indicate the way in which the village income was distributed. The **bhandaravada** was a crown village comprising the smallest category. A part of its income was utilised to maintain the Vijaynagar forts. Income from the **manya** (tax-free) villages was used to maintain the Brahmans, temples, and **mathas**. The largest category was of the **amara** villages given by the Vijaynagar rulers to the **amaranayakas**. Their holders did not possess proprietary rights in land but enjoyed privileges over its income only. The **amara** tenure was primarily residual in the sense that its income was distributed after deductions had been made for support of the Brahmans and forts. Three-quarters of all the villages came under this category. The term **amaramakni** is considered by most historians as referring to an 'estate' or a 'fief', but it literally means one-sixteenth share (**makani**). Thus, it points to the fact that the **amaranayakas** could claim only a limited share of village income. The **manya** rights underwent a transformation during this period. Land tenures continued to be given by the state to individual (**ekabhogan**) Brahmans and groups of Brahmans as well as to **mathas** including the non-Brahman Saiva Siddhanta and Vaishnava **gurus**. But there was a great increase in **devadana** grants (conferred on temples) made by the state as compared to other grants.

Besides land-tax, many professional taxes also were imposed. These were on shopkeepers, farm-servants, shepherds, washermen, potters, shoemakers, musicians etc. There was also tax on property. Grazing and house taxes were also imposed. Villagers were also supposed to pay for the maintenance of the village officers. Besides, **sthal dayam**, **margadayam** and **manula dayam** were three major transit dues.

Another category of land right through which income was derived was a result of investment in irrigation. It was called **dasavanda** in Tamil country; and **Kattu-Kodage** in Andhra and Karnataka. This kind of agrarian activity concerning irrigation was undertaken in semi-dry areas where hydrographic and topographic features were conducive for carrying out developmental projects. The **dasavanda** or **Kattu-Kodage** was a share in the increased productivity of the land earned by the person who undertook such developmental work (e.g. construction of a tank or channel). This right to income was personal and transferable. A portion of income

accruing from the increased productivity also went to the cultivators of the village where the developmental work was undertaken.

27.5.2 Economic Role of Temples

During the Vijaynagar period, temples emerged as important landholders. Hundreds of villages were granted to the deities which were worshipped in the large temples. Temple officers managed the *devadana* villages to ensure that the grant was utilised properly. The income from *devadana* villages provided sustenance to the ritual functionaries. It was also utilised to provide food offerings or to purchase goods (mostly aromatic substances and cloth) essential for carrying out the ritual rites. Cash endowments were also made by the state to the temples for providing ritual service.

Temples took up irrigational work also. Large temples holding *devadana* lands had under them irrigation department for properly channelising money grants made to the temples. Those who gave cash grants to temples also received a share of the food offering (*prasadam*) derived from the increased productivity.

In fact, temples in South India were important centres of economic activity. They were not only great landholders but they also carried on banking activities. They employed a number of persons. Mahalingam refers to an inscription which mentions a temple which employed 370 servants. Temples purchased local goods for performance of ritual services. They gave loans to individuals and village assemblies for economic purposes. The loans were given against lands whose income went to the temples. Cash endowments made by the state to the Tirupati temple were ploughed back in irrigation. The income thus attained was used to carry out and maintain ritual services. At Srirangam Temple, cash grants were used to advance commercial loans to business firms in Trichnopoly. Temples had their trusts which utilised its funds for various purposes. Thus, the temples functioned almost as an independent economic system encompassing persons and institutions that were bound together by economic links.

27.5.3 Foreign Trade

We get information about foreign trade from the *Amuktamalyada* of Krishnadeva Raya, Domingo Paes and Nuniz. They give vivid description of horse trade. The role of the Indians in the overseas carrying trade was minimal. Barbosa mentions that Indian overseas trade was completely controlled by Muslim merchants. They used to get special treatment from the rulers. He says that on returning from the Red Sea the king assigned them a *nayar* bodyguard, a *Chetti* accountant and a broker for help in local transactions. Such was their status that, at Kayal, even royal monopoly of pearl-fisheries was given to a Muslim merchant. The Arabs and later the Portuguese controlled horse trade. Horses were brought from Arabia, Syria and Turkey to the west-coast ports. Goa supplied horses to Vijaynagar as well as the Deccan Sultanates. Importation of horses was of great military importance for the southern states as good horses were not bred in India. Besides, Vijaynagar's conflict with the northern Deccan Muslim states restricted the supply of horses from north India that were imported from Central Asia. Besides horses, ivory, pearls, spices, precious stones, coconuts, palm-sugar, salt, etc. were also imported. Pearls were brought from the Persian Gulf and Ceylon and precious stones from Pegu. Velvet was imported from Mecca and satin, silk, damask and brocade from China. White rice, sugarcane (other than palm-sugarcane) and iron were the major exports. Diamonds were exported from Vijaynagar. Nuniz states that its diamond mines were the richest in the world. The principal mines were on the banks of the Krishna river and in Kurnool and Anantapur. This led to the development of a great industry for cutting and polishing precious stones like diamonds, sapphires and rubies in Vijaynagar and Malabar.

27.5.4 Internal Trade and Urban Life

The contemporary foreign accounts show that local and long distance trade increased under the Vijaynagar rulers. Roads and roadside facilities for travellers between towns were excellent. Carts were used for the transport of grains over short distances. Riverine shipping especially the backwater-system on the west-coast has also been referred to. Pack-animals were used for long distance transport. In some

places armed guards for long distance transport were employed. Local magnates realised the importance of trade and gave encouragement to town based trade and auxiliary trade in regular and periodic fairs. Regular and periodic fairs took place along the main roads leading to big temples during festival times. These fairs were conducted by trade associations of a nearby town and under the supervision of the leader of trade association called **pattanaswami**. Fairs which gave impetus to urban trade were also held at the orders of the local magnates, e.g. **gauda** or chief of a **nadu**. The literary and inscriptional evidences of the 14th to 16th centuries reveal the existence of 80 major trade centres. Some towns were religious; others were commercial and administrative centres. Inside these towns were many bazars where business was carried on by merchants. They paid rents to the towns. There were separate markets for particular commodities. Markets for agricultural and non-agricultural products were separate in accordance with the left and right hand caste affiliations. Trade in consecrated food for pilgrims and the sale of the right of ritual functions and offices were important aspects of temple-related urban commerce.

The merchants and artisan organisations in Andhra got identified with certain cities, e.g. the Telugu oil-pressers and merchants were associated with the city of **Berwada** (in Krishna district). In these towns, the transit duties, shop and house-rents provided income to the towns. The temple-records refer to the prosperity and prestige of merchants and artisans. The Vijaynagar state possessed an urban quality which is not witnessed in any other South Indian state of the time. The capital city integrated within its precincts markets, palaces, temples, mosques, etc. This urban quality was, however, completely destroyed by the middle-16th century.

27.6 SOCIETY

The social structure of the South Indian macro-region (Vijaynagar empire) is a unique variant of the Indian society. The uniqueness of the social structure was three-fold:

- secular functions of the South Indian Brahmins
- dual division of lower social groups
- territorial segmentation of the society.

The Brahmins lived in localities where they controlled land, and their prestige and power was also derived from their control over those dependent on land. They also enjoyed prestige due to their sacral functions as a priestly class. The emergence of a large number of Vedic temples endowed with villages (**devadanas**) gave the Brahmins as temple functionaries the power to exercise ritual control over all other castes and religious institutions. As managers of these religious centres, the Brahmins enjoyed great secular authority.

Territorial segmentation of society implies that social groups in the Tamil country were divided on the basis of natural sub-region and occupational patterns associated with them. Social groups in South India had less interaction with groups at some distance from their locality. They gave preference to cross-cousin and maternal uncle-niece marriages.

Another characteristic of the social structure was the dual division of lower castes referred to by the right and left-hand designations (Vaishnavas corresponding to the right hand division and the Saivites corresponding to the left hand castes). In most cases, the right-hand castes were involved primarily in agricultural production and local trade in agricultural commodities whereas left-hand castes were engaged in mobile artisan production and extensive trade in non-agricultural products.

During the Vijaynagar period, the peasant was the basis of the social order on whom all other sections of the society depended. The **satkams**, the Tamil poetic genre, regard the leading peasantry as pure **sat-sudras**. They claimed ritual purity and respectable secular rank for them.

Temples played an important role in delineating or determining social space of groupings who were the participants in the worship of a particular deity. An

important characteristic of lineage in the South Indian kingship is marked by the common devotion to the lineage tutelary. The non-Brahman priests of the peasants' tutelary shrines (e.g. **amman**) also participated in the management of great shrines of Siva and Vishnu where the Brahman priests predominated. The **matha** the seat of sectarian organisation located at great shrines, consisted of persons of both the Brahman and non-Brahman orders. Thus, the social organisation of this period comprised of the Brahmans, the left and right-hand castes which included respectable agricultural castes, namely **vellals** and lower castes like the **weavers**.

Check Your Progress 3

- 1) Write a note on the nature of land tenures in Vijaynagar empire.

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- 2) Describe the development of trade and commerce under the Vijaynagar rulers with special reference to foreign trade.

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- 3) Define the left-hand and the right-hand castes.

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27.7 LET US SUM UP

The present study of Vijaynagar state shows:

- the major conflict was between the Vijaynagar and the Bahmanis,
- in the ensuing struggle cockpit being the Krishna-Godavari delta, Kaveri basin, the Tungabhadra doab and the Konkan regions,
- Vijaynagar kingship in peripheral parts was a symbolic one; the rulers exercised control through their overlords,
- Brahmans were more of a political and secular personnel rather than ritual leaders,
- the two major political institutions the **nayankara** and **ayagar** system were the backbone of the Vijaynagar power,
- temples were not only the religious centres but also important centres of economic activity: they performed banking activities and used to undertake irrigational works etc.,
- trade and commerce was in a flourishing state. But, the role of the Indian merchants in the overseas trade was minimal instead Muslim merchants enjoyed the monopoly.

27.8 KEY WORDS

Amaram: villages assigned to the local military chiefs

Bhandaravada: crown village

Devadanas: villages assigned to the temples

Dasavanda and Kuttu-Kodage: income from irrigational investments

Manya: tax-free land given to the village functionaries, Brahmans, temples and mathas

Nadu: see Block 3

Sabha : see Block 3

Ur: see Block 3

27.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) See Sub-sec. 27.2.1
- 2) See Sub-sec. 27.2.2, 27.2.4
- 3) See Sub-sec. 27.2.6

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) See Sub-sec. 27.3.2
- 2) See Sub-sec. 27.3.2, 27.4.2
- 3) See Sub-sec. 27.4.1

Check Your Progress 3

- 1) See Sub-sec. 27.5.1
- 2) See Sub-sec. 27.5.3, 27.5.4
- 3) See sec. 27.6