NINE

The Age of Vijayanagara and the Bahmanids, and the Coming of the Portuguese (*Circa 1350–1565*)

The Vijayanagara and Bahmani kingdoms dominated India south of the Vindhyas, for more than 200 years. They not only built magnificent capitals and cities, and beautified them with many splendid buildings and promoted arts and letters, but also provided for law and order and the development of commerce and handicrafts. Thus, while the forces of disintegration gradually triumphed in north India, south India and the Deccan had a long spell of stable governments. This ended with the disintegration of the Bahmani empire towards the end of the fifteenth century, and of the Vijayanagara empire more than fifty years later, after its defeat in 1565 in the battle of Bannihatti. Meanwhile, the Indian scene was transformed, first with the arrival of the Portuguese in southern India and their attempt to dominate the Indian seas, and second, with the advent of the Mughals in north India. The coming of the Mughals paved the way for another spell of integration in north India. The coming of the Portuguese marked the long era of confrontation between the land-based Asian powers and the European powers which dominated the seas.

THE VIJAYANAGARA EMPIRE—ITS FOUNDATION AND CONFLICT WITH THE BAHMANI KINGDOM

The Vijayanagara kingdom was founded by Harihara and Bukka who belonged to a family of five brothers. According to a legend, they had been the feudatories of the Kakatiyas of Warangal and later became ministers in the kingdom of Kampili in modern Karnataka.

When Kampili was 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 there. The Muslim governor of Madurai had already declared himself independent, and the Hoysala ruler of Mysore and the ruler of Warangal were also trying to assert their independence. After a short time, Harihara and Bukka forsook their new master and their new faith. At the instance of their guru, Vidyaranya, they were re-admitted to Hinduism and established their capital at Vijayanagar. Some modern scholars do not accept the tradition of their conversion to Islam, but consider them to be among the nayaks of Karnataka who had rebelled against Turkish rule.

The date of Harihara's coronation is placed at 1336. At first, the young king had to contend both with the Hoysala ruler of Mysore and the sultan of Madurai. The sultan of Madurai was ambitious. He had defeated the Hoysala ruler, and executed him in a barbarous manner. The dissolution of the Hoysala kingdom enabled Harihara and Bukka to expand their tiny principality. By 1346, the whole of the Hoysala kingdom had passed into the hands of the Vijayanagara rulers. In this struggle, Harihara and Bukka were aided by their brothers and by their relations who took up the administration of the areas conquered by their efforts. The Vijayanagara kingdom was, thus, a kind of a cooperative commonwealth at first. Bukka succeeded his brother to the throne of Vijayanagara in 1356, and ruled till 1377.

The rising power of the Vijayanagara empire brought it into clash with many powers both in the south and to the north. In the south, its main rivals were the sultans of Madurai. The struggle between Vijayanagara and the sultans of Madurai lasted for about four decades. By 1377, the Sultanat of Madurai had been wiped out. The Vijayanagara empire then comprised the whole of south India upto Rameshwaram, including the Tamil country as well as that of the Cheras (Kerala). To the north, however, Vijayanagara faced a powerful enemy in the shape of the Bahmani kingdom. The Bahmani kingdom had come into existence in 1347. Its founder was Alauddin Hasan, an Afghan adventurer. He had risen in the service of a Brahman, named Gangu, and is, therefore, known as Hasan Gangu. After his coronation, he assumed the title of Alauddin Hasan Bahman

Shah. He is said to have traced his descent from a half-mythical hero of Iran, Bahman Shah. But according to a popular legend mentioned by Ferishta, the word Bahman Shah was meant to be a tribute to his Brahman patron. In any case, it is from this title that the kingdom was called the Bahmani kingdom.

The interests of the Vijayanagara rulers and the Bahmani sultans clashed in three separate and distinct areas: in the Tungabhadra doab, in the Krishna–Godavari delta, and in the Marathwada country. The Tungabhadra doab was the region between the rivers Krishna and Tungabhadra and consisted of 30,000 square miles. On account of its wealth and economic resources, it had been the bone of contention between the western Chalukyas and the Cholas in the earlier period, and between the Yadavas and the Hoysalas later on. The struggle for the mastery of the Krishna–Godavari basin which was very fertile and which, with its numerous ports, controlled the foreign trade of the region was often linked up with the struggle for the Tungabhadra doab. In the Maratha country, the main contention was for the control of the Konkan and the areas which gave access to it. The Konkan was a narrow strip of land between the Western Ghats and the sea. It was extremely fertile, and included within it the port of Goa which was an important outlet for the products of the region, as well as for the import of horses from Iran and Iraq. As has been noted earlier, good quality horses were not bred in India. The import of horses from Goa was, thus, of great importance to the southern states.

Military conflicts between the Vijayanagara and the Bahmani kingdom were almost a regular feature and lasted as long as these kingdoms continued. These military conflicts resulted in widespread devastation of the contested areas and the neighbouring territories, and a considerable loss of life and property. Both sides sacked and burnt towns and villages, imprisoned and sold into slavery men, women and children, and committed various other barbarities. Thus in 1367, when Bukka I assaulted the fortress of Mudkal in the disputed Tungabhadra doab, he slaughtered the entire garrison, except one man. When this news reached the Bahmani sultan, he was enraged and, on the march, vowed that he would not sheath his sword till he had slaughtered one hundred thousand Hindus in revenge. In spite of the rainy season and the opposition of the

Vijayanagara forces, he crossed the Tungabhadra, the first time a Bahmani sultan had in person entered the Vijayanagara territories. The Vijayanagara king was defeated in the battle and retreated into the jungle. We hear, for the first time, of the use of artillery by both sides during this battle. The victory of the Bahmani sultan was due to his superior artillery and more efficient cavalry. The war dragged on for several months, but the Bahmani sultan could neither capture the raja nor his capital. In the meanwhile, wholesale slaughter of men, women and children went on. Finally, both the side were exhausted, and decided to conclude a treaty. This treaty restored the old position whereby the doab was shared between the two. Even more important, it was agreed that since the two kingdoms would remain neighbours for a long time, it was advisable to avoid cruelty in war. It was, therefore, stipulated that in future wars, helpless and unarmed inhabitants should not be slaughtered. Although this accord was not fully implemented, it helped to make warfare in south India more humane.

Having strengthened its position in south India by eliminating the Sultanat of Madurai, the Vijayanagara empire embarked upon a policy of expansion towards the eastern sea coast under Harihara II (1377–1404). There were a series of Hindu principalities in the region, the most notable being the Reddis on the upper reaches of the delta, and the rulers of Warangal in the lower reaches of the Krishna–Godavari delta. The rulers of Orissa to the north, as well as the Bahmani sultans were also interested in this area. Although the ruler of Warangal had helped Hasan Gangu in his struggle against Delhi, his successor had invaded Warangal and seized the stronghold of Kaulas and the hill fort of Golconda. Vijayanagara had been too busy in the south to intervene. The Bahmani sultan fixed Golconda as the boundary of his kingdom and promised that neither he nor his successors would encroach against Warangal any further. To seal this agreement, the ruler of Warangal presented to the Bahmani sultan a throne set with valuable jewels. It is said that it had been originally prepared as a present to Muhammad Tughlaq. The alliance of the Bahmani kingdom and Warangal lasted for over 50 years, and was a major factor in the inability of Vijayanagara to overrun the Tungabhadra doab, or to stem the Bahmani offensive in the area.

The battles between Vijayanagara and the Bahmanis are described in great detail by medieval writers. However, they are not of much historical importance to us, the position of the two sides remaining more or less the same, with the fortune of war swinging sometimes to one side, and sometimes to the other. Harihara II was able to maintain his position in the face of the Bahmani–Warangal combine. His greatest success was in wresting Belgaum and Goa in the west from the Bahmani kingdom. He also sent an expedition to north Sri Lanka.

After a period of confusion, Harihara II was succeeded by Deva Raya I (1404–1422). Early in his reign, there was a renewed fight for the Tungabhadra doab. He was defeated by the Bahmani ruler Firuz Shah, and he had to pay ten lakhs of *huns* and pearls and elephants as an indemnity. He also agreed to marry his daughter to the sultan, ceding to him in dowry Bankapur in the doab in order to obviate all future dispute. The marriage was celebrated with great pomp and show. When Firuz Shah Bahmani arrived near Vijayanagara for the marriage, Deva Raya came out of the city and met him with a show of great splendour. From the gate of the city to the palace, which was a distance of ten km, the road was spread with cloths of gold, velvet, satin and other rich stuffs. The two monarchs rode on horseback together from the centre of the city square. The relations of Deva Raya joined the cavalcade, marching on foot before the two kings. The festivities lasted three days.

This was not the first political marriage of its type in south India. Earlier, the ruler of Kherla in Gondwana had married his daughter to Firuz Shah Bahmani in order to effect peace. It is said that this princess was the favourite queen of Firuz. However, these marriages could not by themselves bring about peace. The question of the Krishna–Godavari basin led to a renewed conflict between Vijayanagara, the Bahmani kingdom and Orissa. Following a confusion in the Reddi kingdom, Deva Raya entered into an alliance with Warangal for partitioning the kingdom between them. Warangal's defection from the side of the Bahmani kingdom changed the balance of power in the Deccan. Deva Raya was able to inflict a shattering defeat on Firuz Shah Bahmani and annexed the entire Reddi territory up to the mouth of the Krishna river.

Deva Raya I did not neglect the arts of peace. He constructed a dam across the Tungabhadra so that he could bring the canals into the city to relieve the shortage of water. It irrigated the neighbouring fields also, for we are told that the canals increased his revenues by 350,000 *pardaos*. He also built a dam on the river Haridra for irrigation purposes.

After some confusion, Deva Raya II (1425–1446), who is considered the greatest ruler of the dynasty, ascended the throne at Vijayanagara. In order to strengthen his army, he reorganized his army, incorporating in it many features of the armies of the Delhi Sultanat. According to Ferishta, Deva Raya II felt that the superiority of the Bahmani army was due to their sturdier horses and their large body of mounted archers. He, therefore, enlisted 2000 Muslim cavalrymen, gave them *jagirs*, and commended all his Hindu soldiers and officers to learn the art of archery from them. The employment of Muslims in the Vijayanagara army was not new, for Deva Raya I is said to have kept 10,000 Muslims in his army. Ferishta tells us that Deva Raya II assembled 60,000 Hindus well skilled in archery, besides 80,000 cavalry, and 2,00,000 infantry. These figures may be exaggerated. However, the collection of a large cavalry force and standing army made the Vijayanagara empire a more centralized polity than any of the earlier Hindu kingdoms in the south, even though it must have put a strain on the resources of the state since most of the good mounts had to be imported, and the Arabs, who controlled the trade, charged high prices for them.

With his new army, Deva Raya II crossed the Tungabhadra river in 1443 and tried to recover Mudkal, Bankapur, etc., which were south of the Krishna river and had been lost to the Bahmani sultans earlier. Three hard battles were fought, but in the end the two sides had to agree to the existing frontiers.

Nuniz, a Portuguese writer of the sixteenth century, tells us that the kings of Quilon, Sri Lanka, Pulicat, Pegu and Tenasserim (in Burma and Malaya) paid tribute to Deva Raya II. It is doubtful whether the Vijayanagara rulers were powerful enough on the sea to extract regular tribute from Pegu and Tenasserim. Perhaps, what was meant was that the rulers of these countries were in contact with Vijayanagara, and had sent presents and embassies to secure its

goodwill. Sri Lanka, however, had been invaded a number of times. This could not have been attained without a strong navy.

Under a series of capable rulers, Vijayanagara emerged as the most powerful and wealthy state in the south during the first half of the fifteenth century. The Italian traveller Nicolo Conti who visited Vijayanagara in 1420 had left us a graphic account of it. He says: 'The circumference of the city is sixty miles, its walls carried up to the mountains, and enclose the valleys at their foot.... In this city there are estimated to be ninety thousand men fit to bear arms. Their king is more powerful than all the other kings in India.' Ferishta also says: 'The princes of the house of Bahmani maintained their superiority by valour only; for in power, wealth and the extent of the country, the rayas of Beejanagar (Vijayanagara) greatly exceeded them.'

The Persian traveller Abdur Razzaq, who had travelled widely in and outside India, visited Vijayanagara in the reign of Deva Raya II. He gives a glowing account of the country, saying: 'This latter prince has in his dominions three hundred ports, each of which is equal to Calicut, and on *terra firma* his territories comprise a space of three months journey'. All travellers agree that the country was thickly populated, with numerous towns and villages. Abdur Razzaq says: 'The country is for the most part well cultivated, very fertile. The troops amount in number to eleven lakhs.'

Abdur Razzaq considers Vijayanagara to be one of the most splendid cities anywhere in the world which he had seen or heard of. Describing the city, he says: 'It is built in such a manner that seven citadels and the same number of walls enclose each other. The seventh fortress, which is placed in the centre of the others, occupies an area ten times larger than the market place of the city of Herat.' Starting from the palace, there were four bazars 'which were extremely long and broad.' As was the Indian custom, people belonging to one caste or profession lived in one quarter of the town. The Muslims appear to have lived in separate quarters provided for them. In the bazars as well as in the king's palace, 'one sees numerous running streams and canals formed of chiselled stone, polished and smooth.' Another later traveller says that the city was larger than Rome, one of the biggest towns in the western world at that time.

The kings of Vijayanagara were reputed to be very wealthy. Abdur Razzaq mentions the tradition that 'in the king's palace are several cell-like basins filled with bullion, forming one mass.' The hoarding of wealth by a ruler was an ancient tradition. However, such hoarded wealth remained out of circulation, and sometimes invited foreign attack.

The Bahmani Kingdom—Its Expansion and Disintegration

The history of the rise of the Bahmani kingdom and its conflict with the Vijayanagara empire till the death of Deva Raya II (1446) has already been traced. The most remarkable figure in the Bahmani kingdom during the period was Firuz Shah Bahmani (1397–1422). He was well-acquainted with the religious sciences, that is, commentaries on the *Quran*, jurisprudence, etc., and was particularly fond of the natural sciences such as botany, geometry, logic, etc. He was a good calligraphist and a poet and often composed extempore verses. According to Ferishta, he was well versed not only in Persian, Arabic and Turkish, but also in Telugu, Kannada and Marathi. He had a large number of wives in his *haram* from various countries and regions, including many Hindu wives, and we are told that he used to converse with each of them in their own language.

Firuz Shah Bahmani was determined to make the Deccan the cultural centre of India. The decline of the Delhi Sultanat helped him, for many learned people migrated from Delhi to the Deccan. The king also encouraged learned men from Iran and Iraq. He used to say that kings should draw around them the learned and meritorious persons of all nations, so that from their society they might obtain information and thus acquire some of the advantages acquired by travelling into different regions of the globe. He generally spent his time till midnight in the company of divines, poets, reciters of history, and the most learned and witty among his courtiers. He had read the Old and New Testaments and respected the tenets of all religions. Ferishta calls him an orthodox Muslim, his only weakness being his fondness for drinking wine and listening to music.

The most remarkable step taken by Firuz Shah Bahmani was the induction of Hindus in the administration on a large scale. It is said

that from his time the Deccani Brahmans became dominant in the administration, particularly in the revenue administration. The Deccani Hindus also provided a balance against the influx of foreigners. Firuz Shah Bahmani encouraged the pursuit of astronomy and built an observatory near Daulatabad. He paid much attention to the principal ports of his kingdom, Chaul and Dabhol, which attracted trading ships from the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea, and brought in luxury goods from all parts of the world.

Firuz Bahmani started the Bahmani expansion towards Berar by defeating the Gond raja, Narsing Rai of Kherla. The rai made a present of 40 elephants, 5 maunds of gold and 50 maunds of silver. A daughter of the rai was also married to Firuz. Kherla was restored to Narsing who was made an *amir* of the kingdom and given robes of state, including an embroidered cap.

Firuz Shah Bahmani's marriage with a daughter of Deva Raya I and his subsequent battles against Vijayanagara have been mentioned already. The struggle for the domination of the Krishna–Godavari basin, however, continued. In 1419, the Bahmani kingdom received a setback when Firuz Shah Bahmani was defeated by Deva Raya I. This defeat weakened the position of Firuz. He was compelled to abdicate in favour of his brother, Ahmad Shah I, who is called a saint (*wali*) on account of his association with the famous sufi saint, Gesu Daraz. Ahmad Shah continued the struggle for the domination of the eastern seaboard in south India. He could not forget that in the last two battles in which the Bahmani sultan had been defeated, the ruler of Warangal had sided with Vijayanagara. In order to wreak vengeance, he invaded Warangal, defeated and killed the ruler in a battle, and annexed most of its territories. In order to consolidate his rule over the newly acquired territories, he shifted the capital from Gulbarga to Bidar. After this, he turned his attention towards Malwa, Gondwana and the Konkan.

Mahmud Gawan

The loss of Warangal to the Bahmani kingdom changed the balance of power in south India. The Bahmani kingdom gradually expanded, and reached its height of power and territorial limits during the prime

ministership of Mahmud Gawan. The early life of Mahmud Gawan is obscure. He was an Iranian by birth and was at first a trader. He was introduced to the sultan and soon became a favourite, and was granted the title of *Malik-ut-Tujjar*. Soon, he became prime minister or Peshwa. For almost 20 years, Mahmud Gawan dominated the affairs of the state. He extended the Bahmani kingdom by making further annexations in the east. A deep raid in the Vijayanagara territories up to Kanchi demonstrated the strength of the Bahmani army. Mahmud Gawan's major military contribution, however, was the over-running of the western coastal areas, including Dabhol and Goa. The loss of these ports was a heavy blow to Vijayanagara. Control of Goa and Dabhol led to further expansion of the Bahmani overseas trade with Iran, Iraq, etc. Internal trade and manufacture also grew.

Mahmud Gawan also tried to settle the northern frontiers of the kingdom. Since the time of Ahmad Shah I, the kingdom of Malwa ruled by the Khalji rulers had been contending for the mastery of Gondwana, Berar and the Konkan. In this struggle, the Bahmani sultans had sought and secured the help of the rulers of Gujarat. After a good deal of conflict, it had been agreed that Kherla in Gondwana would go to Malwa, and Berar to the Bahmani sultan. However, the rulers of Malwa were always on the lookout for seizing Berar. Mahmud Gawan had to wage a series of bitter battles against Mahmud Khalji of Malwa over Berar. He was able to prevail due to the active help given to him by the ruler of Gujarat.

It would, thus, be seen that the pattern of struggle in the south did not allow divisions along religious lines: political and strategic considerations and control over trade and commerce being more important causes of the conflict. Secondly, the struggle between the various states in north India and in south India did not proceed completely in isolation from each other. In the west, Malwa and Gujarat were drawn into the affairs of the Deccan; in the east, Orissa was involved in a struggle with Bengal and also cast covetous eyes on the commercially rich Coromandel coast. The Orissa rulers made deep raids into south India after 1450, their armies reaching as far south as Madurai and the territories of Orissa extended upto the river Krishna. Their activities further weakened the Vijayanagara empire

which was passing through a phase of internal discord following the death of Deva Raya II.

Mahmud Gawan carried out many internal reforms also. He divided the kingdom into eight provinces or *tarafs*. Each *taraf* was governed by a *tarafdar*. The salaries and obligations of each noble were fixed. For maintaining a contingent of 500 horses, a noble received a salary of 1,00,000 *huns* per year. The salary could be paid in cash or by assigning a *jagir*. Those who were paid by means of a *jagir* were allowed expenses for the collection of land revenue. In every province, a tract of land (*khalisa*) was set apart for the expenses of the sultan. Efforts were made to measure the land and to fix the amount to be paid by the cultivator to the state.

Mahmud Gawan was a great patron of arts. He built a magnificent *madarasa* or college in the capital, Bidar. This fine building, which was decorated with coloured tiles, was three storeys high, and had accommodation for one thousand teachers and students who were given clothes and food free. Some of the most famous scholars of the time belonging to Iran and Iraq came to the *madarasa* at the instance of Mahmud Gawan.

One of the most difficult problem which faced the Bahmani kingdom was strife among the nobles. The nobles were divided into the long-established Deccanis and the new-comers who were foreigners (*afaqis,* also called *gharibs*). As a newcomer, Mahmud Gawan was hard put to win the confidence of the Deccanis. Though he adopted a broad policy of conciliation, the party strife could not be stopped. His opponents managed to poison the ears of the young sultan who had him executed in 1482. Mahmud Gawan was over 70 years old at the time. The party strife now became even more intense. The various governors became independent. Soon, the Bahmani kingdom was divided into five principalities: Golconda, Bijapur, Ahmadnagar, Berar and Bidar. Of these, the kingdoms of Ahmadnagar, Bijapur and Golconda played a leading role in the Deccan politics till their absorption in the Mughal empire during the seventeenth century.

The Bahmani kingdom acted as a cultural bridge between the north and the south. The culture which developed as a result had its own specific features which were distinct from north India. These

cultural traditions were continued by the successor states and also influenced the development of Mughal culture during the period.

Climax of the Vijayanagara Empire and its Disintegration

As mentioned earlier, there was confusion in the Vijayanagara empire after the death of Deva Raya II (1446). Since the rule of primogeniture was not established in Vijayanagara, there were a series of civil wars among the various contenders to the throne. Many feudatories assumed independence in the process. The ministers became very powerful, and began to exact presents and heavy taxes from the people, causing considerable distress to them. The authority of the Raya shrunk to Karnataka and to some portions of the western Andhra region. The rulers were sunk in pleasures and neglected the affairs of the state. After some time, the throne was usurped by the king's minister, Saluva. The earlier dynasty, thus, came to an end. Saluva restored internal law and order, and founded a new dynasty. This dynasty too soon came to an end. Ultimately, a new dynasty (called the Tuluva dynasty) was founded by Krishna Deva. Krishna Deva Raya (1509–30) was the greatest figure of this dynasty. Some historians consider him to be the greatest of all the Vijayanagara rulers. Krishna Deva had not only to re-establish internal law and order, he had also to deal with the old rivals of Vijayanagara, viz., the successor states of the Bahmani kingdom and the state of Orissa which had usurped many Vijayanagara territories. In addition, he had to contend with the Portuguese whose power was slowly growing. They were using their control over the seas to browbeat the smaller vassal states of Vijayanagara in the coastal areas in order to gain economic and political concessions. They had even offered to buy the neutrality of the Raya by promising him assistance in recovering Goa from Bijapur and giving him a monopoly in the supply of horses.

In a series of battles lasting seven years, Krishna Deva first compelled the ruler of Orissa to restore to Vijayanagara all the territories up to the river Krishna. Having thus strengthened himself, Krishna Deva renewed the old struggle for the control of the Tungabhadra doab. This led to a hostile alliance between his two main opponents, Bijapur and Orissa. Krishna Deva made grand

preparations for the conflict. He opened the hostilities by overrunning Raichur and Mudkal. In the battle which followed, the Bijapur ruler was completely defeated (1520). He was pushed across the river Krishna, barely escaping with his life. In the west, the Vijayanagara armies reached Belgaum, occupied and sacked Bijapur for a number of days and destroyed Gulbarga before a truce was made.

Thus, under Krishna Deva, Vijayanagara emerged as the strongest military power in the south. However, in their eagerness to renew the old feuds, the southern powers largely ignored the danger posed to them and to their commerce by the rise of the Portuguese. Unlike the Cholas and some of the early Vijayanagara rulers, Krishna Deva seems to have paid scant attention to the development of a navy.

The conditions in Vijayanagara during this period are described by a number of foreign travellers. Paes, an Italian who spent a number of years at Krishna Deva's court, has given a glowing account of his personality. But he remarks: 'He is a great ruler and a man of much justice, but subject to sudden fits of rage.' He cherished his subjects, and his solicitude for their welfare became proverbial. He also tried to create a more centralized administration by ousting all the *nayaks* from the Tungbhadra doab, and bringing it under direct administration.

Krishna Deva was also a great builder. He built a new town near Vijayanagara and dug an enormous tank which was also used for irrigation purposes. He was a gifted scholar of Telugu and Sanskrit. Of his many works, only one in Telugu on polity and a drama in Sanskrit are available today. His reign marked a new era in Telugu literature when imitation of Sanskrit works gave place to independent works. He extended his patronage to Telugu, Kannada and Tamil poets alike. Foreign travellers like Barbosa, Paes and Nuniz speak of his efficient administration and the prosperity of the empire under his sway.

The Vijayanagara rulers are considered great protectors of Hinduism. Under their patronage a large number of temples, schools and *maths* were built. In this period, temples became very elaborate in structure and organization; even old temples were amplified by the addition of pillared halls, pavilions and other subordinate structures. However, speaking of the broad toleration that prevailed

in the empire of Krishna Deva, Barbosa says: 'The king allows such freedom that every man may come and go and live according to his own creed, without suffering any annoyance, and without enquiry whether he is a Christian, Jew, Moor or heathen.' Barbosa also pays tribute to Krishna Deva for the justice and equity prevailing in his empire.

After the death of Krishna Deva (1530), there was a struggle for succession among his relations since his sons were all minors. Ultimately, in 1543, Sadashiva Raya ascended the throne and reigned till 1567. But the real power lay in the hands of a triumvirate in which the leading person was Rama Raja. Rama Raja was able to play off the various Muslim powers against one another. He entered into a commercial treaty with the Portuguese whereby the supply of horses to the Bijapur ruler was stopped. In a series of wars he completely defeated the Bijapur ruler, and also inflicted humiliating defeats on Golconda and Ahmadnagar. It seems that Rama Raja had no larger purpose than to maintain a balance of power favourable to Vijayanagara between these three powers. At length, they combined to inflict a crushing defeat on Vijayanagara at Bannihatti, near Talikota, in 1565. This is also called the battle of Talikota or the battle of Rakshasa-Tangadi. Rama Raja was surrounded, taken prisoner and immediately executed. It is said that 1,00,000 Hindus were slain during the battle. Vijayanagara was thoroughly looted and left in ruins.

The battle of Bannihatti is generally considered to mark the end of the great age of Vijayanagara. Although the kingdom lingered on for almost one hundred more years, its territories decreased continually and the raya no longer counted in the political affairs of south India.

State and Economy under Vijayanagara

The concept of kingship among the Vijayanagara rulers was high. In his book on polity, Krishna Deva Raya advises the king that 'with great care and according to your power you should attend to the work of protecting (the good) and punishing (the wicked) without neglecting anything that you see or hear.' He also enjoined upon the king to 'levy taxes from his people moderately.'

In the Vijayanagara kingdom the king was advised by a council of ministers which consisted of the great nobles of the kingdom. The kingdom was divided into *rajyas* or *mandalam* (provinces) below which were *nadu* (district), *sthala* (sub-district) and *grama* (village).

The Chola traditions of village self-government were considerably weakened under Vijayanagara rule. The growth of hereditary nayakships tended to curb their freedom and initiative. The governors of the provinces were royal princes at first. Later, persons belonging to vassal ruling families and nobles were also appointed as governors. The provincial governors had a large measure of autonomy. They held their own courts, appointed their own officers, and maintained their own armies. They were allowed to issue their own coins, though of small denominations only. There was no regular term for a provincial governor, his term depending on his ability and his strength. The governor had the right to impose new taxes or remit old ones. Each governor paid a fixed contribution in men and money to the central government. It had been estimated that while the income of the kingdom was 12,000,000 *parados*, the central government got only half the amount.

There were many areas in the empire which were under the control of subordinate rulers, i.e., those who had been defeated in war, but whose kingdoms had been restored to them. In the large centrally controlled area, the king granted *amaram* or territory with a fixed revenue to military chiefs. These chiefs, who were called *palaiyagar* (*palegar*) or *nayaks*, had to maintain a fixed number of foot, soldiers, horses and elephants for the service of the state. The *nayaks* or *palegars* also had to pay a sum of money to the central exchequer. They formed a very powerful section and sometimes it was difficult for the government to control them. These internal weaknesses of the Vijayanagara empire contributed to its defeat in the battle of Bannihatti and its subsequent disintegration. Many of the *nayaks*, such as those of Tanjore and Madurai, became independent from that time.

Historians are not agreed about the economic condition of the peasantry under the Vijayanagara rule, because most of the travellers had little knowledge about village life and, thus, spoke of it in very general terms. In general, it may be presumed that the economic life

of the people remained more or less the same; their houses were mostly thatched with a small door; they generally went about barefooted and wore little above the waist. People of the upper classes sometimes wore costly shoes and a silk turban on their heads, but did not cover themselves above the waist. All classes of people were fond of ornaments, and wore them 'in their ears, on their necks, on their arms, etc.'

We have very little idea about the share of the produce the peasants were required to pay. According to an inscription, the rates of taxes were as follows:

One-third of the produce of *kuruvai* (a type of rice) during winter
One-fourth of sesame, ragi, horsegram, etc
One-sixth of millet and other crops cultivated on dry land

Thus, the rate varied according to the type of crops, soil, method of irrigation, etc.

In addition to the land tax, there were various other taxes, such as property tax, tax on sale of produce, profession taxes, military contribution (in times of distress), tax on marriage, etc. The sixteenth-century traveller, Nikitin, says: 'The land is overstocked with people, but those in the country are very miserable while the nobles are extremely affluent and delight in luxury.'

Urban life grew under the Vijayanagara empire and trade flourished. Towns grew, many of them around temples. The temples were very large and needed supply of food stuffs and commodities for distribution of *prasadam* to the pilgrims, service of the god, the priests, etc. The temples were rich and also took active part in trade, both internal and overseas. There was considerable growth of towns and urbanization under Vijayanagara rule. It is in this sense that many historians consider the period of Vijayanagara rule to be a period of transition from the old to the new economy.

The Advent of the Portuguese

The landing of Vasco da Gama at Calicut in 1498 with two ships, with Gujarati pilots aboard who had guided the ships from the African

coast to Calicut, has often been considered the beginning of a new phase during which the control of the Ocean passed into the hands of the Europeans. Indian trade and traders received a setback and ultimately the Europeans were able to establish their colonial rule and domination over India and most of the neighbouring countries. This picture has been called into question by both western and Indian historians, especially after World War II and the end of European political rule over the countries of the region.

Before we assess the impact of the Portuguese on Indian society, economy and politics, let us first examine the factors which brought the Portuguese to India. Very broadly, the Portuguese came to India at a time when European economy was growing rapidly, thanks to the expansion of land under cultivation on account of the drainage of marshes and cutting of forests, the introduction of a improved plough, and a more scientific rotation of crops which also led to an increase in the growth of cattle, and supply of meat. The growth was reflected in the rise of towns, and increase of trade, both internal and external. Since Roman times, there had been a steady demand for oriental goods. These included silk from China, and spices and drugs from India and Southeast Asia. With economic revival, this demand increased, especially the demand for pepper and spices which were needed to make meat palatable since due to shortage of fodder many cattle were slaughtered during winter and the meat salted up.

Pepper was brought to the Levant, Egypt and the Black Sea ports overland and partly by sea from India and Southeast Asia. With the rise of the power of the Ottoman Turks from the early part of the 15th century, all these areas came under the control of the Turks. Thus, they captured Constantinople in 1453, and Syria and Egypt later. The Turks were not opposed to trade, but the virtual monopoly over pepper established by them was bound to work against the Europeans. The expansion of Turkish power towards eastern Europe and the growth of the Turkish navy which made the eastern Mediterranean a Turkish lake also alarmed the Europeans. Venice and Genoa which had been the most active in the trade of oriental goods were too small to stand up to the Turks. Venice, in particular quickly came to terms with the Turks. The banner of struggle against the Turkish danger was, therefore, taken up by the powers in the

western part of the Mediterranean, Spain and Portugal. They were aided with money and men by the North Europeans and by ships and technical knowledge by the Genoese, who were the rivals of Venice. It was not the Portuguese alone, but all these elements which started the search for a direct sea route to India, and hence started the era of naval discoveries, including the 'discovery' of America by the Genoese, Christopher Columbus (or rediscovery, because Norsemen from the North had reached America earlier as also the Red Indians across the Bering Straits). The work of the Portuguese ruler Dom Henrique, generally called Henry the Navigator, should be seen in this context.

From 1418, Prince Henry sent two or three ships every year to explore the western coast of Africa, and to search out a sea-route to India. His objects were two fold: first, to oust the Arabs as well as his European rivals, the Venetians, from the rich eastern trade, and second, to counterpoise the growing power of the Turks and Arabs by converting the 'heathens' of Africa and Asia to Christianity. Both objectives were steadily pursued. In fact, they justified and supported each other. The Pope lent his support by issuing a Bull in 1453 by which he granted to Portugal 'in perpetuity' whatever lands it 'discovered' beyond Cape Nor in Africa up to India on the condition of converting to Christianity the peoples of those lands.

In 1488, Bartholomew Diaz rounded the Cape of Good Hope and laid the basis of direct trade links between Europe and India. Such long sea-voyages were made possible by a number of remarkable inventions, notably the mariner's compass and the astrolabe for fixing the height of heavenly bodies for purposes of navigation. The former was known to the Chinese several centuries earlier, but was not widely used. The astrolabe was, however, widely used by the Arabs, Indians and others. Nor were the European ships superior in construction to the ships, such as the Chinese junks, used in Asian waters at the time. The spirit of daring and enterprise displayed by the Europeans was certainly new. This spirit has been traced back to the revival and growth of trade and commerce from the 13th century onwards, leading to intense rivalry among the European states. As important was the new intellectual stirring called the Renaissance. The Renaissance signified, above all, a spirit of independent investigation

rather than basing oneself either on the revealed word, or on wisdom enshrined in the Church. These developments led to the rapid assimilation, dispersal and improvement of other foreign (Arab and Chinese) inventions such as the gun-powder, printing, telescope, etc. Developments in metallurgy led to the production of better quality guns.

Vasco da Gama landed at Calicut in 1498, with Gujarati pilots on board. The strong colony of the Arab merchants settled there was hostile, but the Zamorin welcomed the Portuguese and allowed them to take pepper, drugs, etc., on board. In Portugal, the goods brought by Gama were computed at sixty times the cost of the entire expedition. Despite this, direct trade between India and Europe grew slowly. One reason for this was the monopoly exercised by the Portuguese government. From the beginning, the Portuguese rulers were determined to treat the eastern trade as a royal monopoly, excluding not only rival nations in Europe and Asia, but also private Portuguese traders.

Alarmed at the growing power of the Portuguese, the sultan of Egypt fitted a fleet and sent it towards India. The fleet was joined by a contingent of ships belonging to the ruler of Gujarat. After an initial victory in which the son of the Portuguese governor, Don Almaida, was killed, this combined fleet was routed by the Portuguese in 1509. This made the Portuguese navy supreme in the Indian Ocean, and enabled the Portuguese to extend their operations towards the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea.

Shortly afterwards, Albuquerque succeeded as the governor of the Portuguese possession in the east. He advocated and embarked upon a policy of dominating the entire oriental commerce by setting up forts at various strategic places in Asia and Africa. This was to be supplemented by a strong navy. Defending his philosophy, he wrote: 'A dominion founded on a navy alone cannot last.' Lacking forts, he argued, 'neither will they (the rulers) trade or be on friendly terms with you.'

Albuquerque initiated his new policy by capturing Goa from Bijapur in 1510. The island of Goa was an excellent natural harbour and fort. It was strategically located, and from it the Portuguese could command the Malabar trade and watch the policies of the rulers in

the Deccan. It was also near enough to the Gujarat sea-ports for the Portuguese to make their presence felt there. Goa was, thus, suited to be the principal centre of Portuguese commercial and political activity in the east. The Portuguese were also able to extend their possession on the mainland opposite Goa, and to blockade and sack the Bijapuri ports of Danda-Rajouri and Dabhol, thus paralysing Bijapur's sea-trade.

From their base at Goa, the Portuguese further strengthened their position by establishing forts at Colombo in Sri Lanka, at Achin in Sumatra, and at the Malacca port which controlled the exit and entry to the narrow gulf between the Malay peninsula and Sumatra. The Portuguese also established a station at the island of Socotra at the mouth of the Red Sea. They failed to capture Aden, and the Red Sea remained outside their control. But they forced the ruler of Ormuz which controlled entry into the Persian Gulf to permit them to establish a fort there.

The success of the Portuguese was, however, more apparent than real. From the beginning they had to face a number of challenges, both external and internal. The external challenge was the one posed by the Turks who were sometimes joined by the Arabs and some Indian powers. After conquering Syria, Egypt and Arabia, the Turks had gone on to conquer Eastern Europe, and in 1529 threatening Vienna, the capital of Central Europe and the key to its defence. The growth of Turkish power on the coast of the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf seemed to presage a conflict between the Turks and the Portuguese for dominating the western part of the Indian Ocean. The Ottoman grand *wazir*, Lutfi Pasha, writing after 1541, told the Turkish sultan, Sulaiman the Magnificent, 'Under the previous sultans there were many who ruled the land, but few who ruled the sea. In the conduct of naval warfare, the infidels are ahead of us. We must overcome them'.

In view of the growing Portuguese threat to the Gujarat trade and coastal areas, the sultan of Gujarat sent an embassy to the Ottoman ruler, congratulating him on his victories, and seeking his support. In return, the Ottoman ruler expressed a desire to combat the infidels, that is, the Portuguese, who had disturbed the shores of Arabia. From this time onwards, the there was a continuous exchange of embassies

and letters between the two countries. The Turks ousted the Portuguese from the Red Sea, and in 1529 a strong fleet under Sulaiman Rais was despatched to aid Bahadur Shah, the ruler of Gujarat. Bahadur Shah received it well, and two of the Turkish officials, who were given Indian names, were appointed governors of Surat and Diu, respectively. Of these two, Rumi Khan was later to earn a great name for himself as a master-gunner.

In 1531, after intriguing with local officials, the Portuguese attacked Daman and Diu but the Ottoman commander, Rumi Khan, repulsed the attack. However, the Portuguese built a fort at Chaul lower down the coast.

Before the Gujarat–Turkish alliance could be consolidated, a bigger threat to Gujarat appeared from the side of the Mughals. Humayun attacked Gujarat. In order to meet this threat, Bahadur Shah granted the island of Bassein to the Portuguese. A defensive-offensive alliance against the Mughals was also concluded, and the Portuguese were allowed to build a fort at Diu. Thus were the Portuguese able to establish their foothold in Gujarat.

Bahadur Shah soon repented his concessions to the Portuguese. Following the expulsion of the Mughals from Gujarat, he once again appealed to the Ottoman sultan for help, and tried to limit the Portuguese encroachments at Diu. During the negotiations, Bahadur Shah who was abroad one of the ships of the governor of the fort suspected treachery. In the scuffle which ensued, the Portuguese governor was killed and Bahadur Shah drowned while swimming ashore. This was in 1536.

Although the Ottoman sultans claimed to be champions of Islam and hence opponents of the Portuguese, they did not, in practice, seriously contest the position of the Portuguese in the Persian Gulf or beyond. This despite the fact that the Turks had broadly kept pace with the growth of artillery and, to a lesser extent, with the naval sciences in the west. The Turkish navy dominated the eastern Mediterranean and even made raids beyond Gibraltar.

The Turks made their biggest naval demonstration against the Portuguese in Indian waters in 1536. Their fleet consisted of 45 galleons carrying 20,000 men, including 7000 land soldiers or *janissaries*. Many of the sailors had been pressed into service from the

Venetian galleys at Alexandria. The fleet commanded by Sulaiman Pasha, an old man of 82, who was the most trusted man of the sultan and had been appointed the governor of Cairo, appeared before Diu in 1538 and besieged it. Unfortunately, the Turkish admiral behaved in an arrogant manner and the sultan of Gujarat withdrew his support. After a siege of two months, the Turkish fleet retired, following news of the arrival of a formidable Portuguese armada to relieve Diu.

The Turkish threat to the Portuguese persisted for another two decades. In 1551, Peri Rais, who was assisted by the Zamorin of Calicut, attacked the Portuguese forts at Muscat and Ormuz. Meanwhile, the Portuguese strengthened their position by securing Daman from its ruler. A final Ottoman expedition was sent under Ali Rais in 1554. The failure of these expeditions resulted in a final change in the Turkish attitude. In 1566, the Portuguese and the Ottomans came to an agreement to share the spice and the Indian trade and not to clash in the Arab seas. The Ottomans shifted their interest once again to Europe, and came to an agreement with the Portuguese for dividing the oriental trade between them. This precluded their alliance with the rising Mughal power against the Portuguese. But it also had economic consequences, as we shall see.

Portuguese Impact on the Indian Trade, Society and Politics

From the beginning, the Portuguese could neither adequately police the vast expanse of the Indian Ocean, nor control the trade or the traders there. All that they could try to do was to monopolize certain goods, and tax the others. Thus, trade in pepper, arms and ammunition, and war horses was declared a royal monopoly. No nation, not even Portuguese private traders, were allowed to engage in the trade of these goods. Ships engaged in the trade of other commodities had to take a permit from the Portuguese officials. The Portuguese also attempted to force all ships going to the east or to Africa to pass by Goa, and pay customs duty there.

To enforce these rules, the Portuguese arrogated to themselves the right to search any ship suspected of engaging in 'contraband' trade. Ships which refused to be searched could be treated as prizes of war and sunk or captured, and the men and women aboard treated

as slaves. This led to continuous friction. The Portuguese soon found that they stood more to lose on land than they gained on sea by such practices which were quite contrary to the practice and tradition of open trade in Asian waters. True, many Arab and Indian ships began to carry cannons and soldiers, but it was more a safeguard against sea pirates which infested the Malabar and Arab coast.

The Portuguese were hardly able to change the established pattern of Asian trade networks. The Gujarati and Arab traders continued to dominate some of the most lucrative Asian trade, i.e., the trade in Indian textiles, supplemented by rice and sugar, against which they obtained spices from the Southeast, gold and horses from West Asia, and silk and porcelain from China. The Portuguese were not even able to monopolize the pepper and spice trade to Europe, except for a couple of decades at the outset. By the end of the sixteenth century, the supply of pepper to the Levant and Egyptian markets, both overland and by the Red Sea, was as large as it had been earlier. This was because the great Asian empires, the Mughal and the Safavid, were able to promote and safeguard overland trade, and also because the Gujaratis were able to arrange a new supply route from Achin in Sumatra to Egypt via Lakshadweep and the Red Sea where the Portuguese navy could not operate.

Nor were the Portuguese able to develop Goa as the dominant centre of the Asian trade, eclipsing Cambay and later Surat in Gujarat. However, they adversely affected the Malabar trade, and the sea trade from Bengal which they preyed upon from Chittagong.

The Portuguese, however, opened up India's trade with Japan from which copper and silver were obtained. They also opened up India's trade with the Philipplines. From the Philippines, the Portuguese carried Indian textiles to South America and brought back silver in exchange. They demonstrated how naval power could be used to harass and hamper the trade even of such a well developed country as India, as also to open new lines of trade.

The Portuguese could not act as a bridge for transmitting to India the science and technology which had grown in Europe since the Renaissance. This was partly because the Portuguese were themselves not as deeply affected by the Renaissance as Italy and North Europe. Later, with the growth of a Catholic religious reaction led by the

Jesuits, they even set their face against the new science. They did, however, help to transmit a number of agricultural products from Central America, such as potato, tobacco, maize, peanut, etc. These became widespread only gradually.

The defeat of Vijayanagara at Banihatti in 1565 emboldened the Deccani states to make a concerted effort to dislodge the Portuguese from the Deccan coast. So long as Vijayanagara had threatened Bijapur in the south, peace with the Portuguese was essential since they controlled the horse-trade and hostilities with them would have meant a diversion of the trade in favour of Vijayanagara. In 1570, Ali Adil Shah, the sultan of Bijapur, entered into an agreement with the sultan of Ahmadnagar. The Zamorin of Calicut was also drawn into the alliance. The allies decided to attack the Portuguese positions in their own dominions. Adil Shah personally led the attack against Goa, while Nizam Shah besieged Chaul. But, once again, the Portuguese defence, backed up by their navy, proved to be too strong. Thus, the Portuguese remained masters of the Indian seas and of the Deccan coast.