

# History Of The Vijayanagar Empire – An Historical Analysis

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## Abstract

1509 Krishnadevaraya's armies clashed with the Sultan of Bijapur at Diwani and the Sultan Mahmud was severely injured and defeated. Yusuf Adil Khan was killed and the Raichur Doab was annexed. Taking advantage of the victory and the disunity of the Bahamani Sultans, the Raya invaded Bidar, Gulbarga, and Bijapur and earned the title "establisher of the Yavana kingdom" when he released Sultan Mahmud and made him de facto ruler. The Sultan of Golconda Sultan QuliQutb Shah ( SultanQuliQutb Shah was a descendant of Qara Yusuf via his paternal grandfather (PirQuli Beg who was grandson of Qaralskander) and paternal grandmother (Khadija Begum who was granddaughter of Jahanshah). His father was UwaysQuli Beg and mother was Maryam Khanum (daughter of Malik Saleh of Hamadan). He migrated to Delhi with some of his relatives and friends, including his uncle Allah Quli Beg in the beginning of the 16th century. Later he migrated south to Deccan and served Bahmani sultan)was defeated by Timmarusu who was the prime minister of Sri Krishnadevaraya The Bahamani Sultans, though divided into five small kingdoms, still posed a constant threat. The Portuguese rose as a maritime power and, hence, controlled much of the sea trade. The feudatory chiefs of Ummatur, Reddys of Kondavidu and Velamas of Bhuvanagiri had time and again rebelled against the Vijayanagar rule. Krishnadevaraya's rule brought unprecedented success to the Vijayanagara armies – with the forces inflicting heavy defeats on the five Deccan sultanates, the Reddys of Kondavidu, the Velamas of Bhuvanagiri and the Gajapati dynasty of Kalinga (modern Odisha). His victories helped establish him as the most powerful Indian ruler of the time, with his administrative capabilities and his military prowess acquiring legendary status. His repeated victories over the Deccan sultanates led to the poet MukuTimmana admiring him as "the destroyer of the Turks". The rule of Krishna Deva Raya marks a period of much military success in Vijayanagara history. On occasion, the king was known to change battle plans abruptly and turn a losing battle into victory.

*Key words: SriKrishnadevaraya, military, Vijayanagaram, Bahamani, administration, Deccan sultanates, Raichur Doab*

## Introduction

The first decade of his rule was one of the long sieges, bloody conquests, and victories. His main enemies were the Bahamani Sultans (who, though divided into five small kingdoms, remained a constant threat), the Gajapatis of Odisha, who had been involved in constant conflict since the rule of Saluva Narasimha Deva Raya and the Portuguese, a rising maritime power which controlled much of the sea trade. The feudal chiefs of Ummattur, Adapa dynasty Kammas of Kondapalli who rebelled against Vijayanagar rule were conquered and subdued.

## Objective

Intentions of this paper is to elucidate Raya's military acumen especially Battle of Raichur and chalk out the historical context of those wars

## Success in Deccan

The annual affair of the raid and plunder of Vijayanagar towns and villages by the Deccan sultans came to an end during the Raya's rule. In.

## War with feudatories

He subdued local rulers of Musunuri Karmas of Khammam and Velamas of Bhuvanagiri who were the feudatory of Gajapati kings of Odisha and seized lands up to the Krishna river. Ganga Raja, the Ummatur chief, fought Krishna Deva Raya on the banks of the Kaveri and was defeated. The chief later drowned in the Kaveri in 1512. The region was made a part of the Srirangapatna province. In 1516-1517, he pushed beyond the Godavari river.

## War with Kalinga

The Surya Vamsi Gajapatis of Odisha ruled a vast land comprising Andhra region, Odisha. Krishna Deva Raya's success at Ummatur provided the necessary impetus to carry his campaign into Coastal Andhra region which was in control of Gajapati Prataparudra Deva. The Vijayanagar army laid siege to the Udayagiri fort in 1512. The campaign lasted for a year before the Gajapati army disintegrated due to starvation. Krishna Deva Raya offered prayers at Tirupati thereafter along with his wives Tirumala Devi and Chinnama Devi. The Gajapati army was then met at Kondaviduraju where the armies of Vijayanagara, after establishing a siege for a few months and heavy with initial defeats began to retreat, until Timmarasu upon discovering a secret entrance to the unguarded eastern gate of the fort launched a night attack culminating with the capture of the fort and the imprisonment of the greatest swordsman of his time, Prince Virabhadra, the son of Gajapati Emperor of Kalinga-Utkal, Gajapati Prataparudra Deva. Saluva Timmarasa took over as governor of Kondavidu thereafter.

The Vijayanagar army then accosted the AdapaKamma dynasty army allies to Gajapatis at Kondapalli area and laid another siege. Krishnadevaraya then planned for an invasion of mainland Kalinga-Utkal but the Gajapati Emperor, Prataparudra, privy of this plan had built up a strategy to rout the Vijayanagara army and along with it its king, Krishnadevaraya. The confrontation was to happen at the fort of Kalinganagar. But the wily Timmarusu secured the information by bribing a Telugu deserter, formerly under the service of the mighty Prataprudra deva. Prataprudra was driven to Cuttack, the capital of the Gajapati empire and eventually surrendered to Vijaynagar, giving his daughter Princess Annapurna Devi in marriage to Sri Krishna Deva Raya. As per treaty Krishna river became boundary of Vijaynagar and Odisha Kingdom. Thereafter peace between the two strongest Hindu empires in India ensured a period of harmony and the safety of Sanatana Dharma in India.

Krishna Deva Raya established friendly relations with the Portuguese, who set up the Portuguese Dominion of India in Goa in 1510. The Emperor obtained guns and Arabian horses from the Portuguese merchants. He also utilized Portuguese expertise in improving water supply to Vijayanagara City.

***The Strategy of 'Bheda'***: The subjugation of Gajapathi whose war elephants surpassed those of Vijayanagar's in numbers and efficiency was brought about by the chief minister SaluvaThimma who advised Krishnadevaraya to employ the strategy of 'bheda' (causing difference between the Gajapathi and his generals). AccordinglyThimma ordered 16 jewel boxes and placed some valuable jewels in them and also a letter seeming to be from Krishnadevaraya written to Gajapathi's generals. These boxes were dispatched in such a manner so that it could be seized by Gajapathi's men. When these boxes were placed before the Gajapathi, he had them opened and the letters read aloud. The letters had these words- "The battle is to begin tomorrow. You should while pretending to fight, deliver 'him' into our hands. You may also rely on our rewarding you in a fitting and handsome manner". After hearing the contents of the letter, Gajapathi suspected secret correspondence between his own generals and Krishnadevaraya and believing that he could not rely on the loyalty of his generals, left the city secretly in the night and took shelter in a forest. GajapathiPrataparudra was forced to sue for peace in 1518 and gave his daughter, Tukkadevi or Jaganmohini in marriage to Krishnadevaraya. In turn Krishnadevaraya returned all the territory north of Krishna to Prataparudra. Taking advantage of the Krishnadevaraya's preoccupation in his Orian war, the sultan of Golkonda marched against Kondavidu and besieged it. Krishnadevaraya immediately dispatched a huge army of 200000 men under SaluvaThimma, who defeated the Golkonda army and captured its commander MadarulMulk and several officers.

## The Battle of Raichur

Raichur, in Karnataka, is located between the two converging rivers of Krishna and Tungabhadra (doab) – causing its land to be extremely fertile and amenable to growing a variety of crops like cotton, chillies and sesame. This made it a significant asset for whichever kingdom that controlled it. Key to taking the Raichur doab and the revenues that came with it was control over the Raichur fort – a city over which there had been much conflict between the Deccan sultanates and Vijayanagara in the past. Krishnadevaraya had taken control over it during his early campaigns but, as mentioned earlier, Ismail Adil Shah managed to wrest it away when Krishnadevaraya was engaged in his battles with Kalinga. The war with Kalinga concluded in 1516, with the Kalinga king Prataparudra surrendering before the might of the Vijayanagara armies. With the threat from Kalinga having been subdued, Krishnadevaraya turned his focus back to his primary enemies – the Deccan sultanates. The major trigger for the war to begin is also said to have been the dishonesty of a merchant named Syed Maraikar, whom Raya had entrusted with 40,000 gold coins to procure horses from the Portuguese at Goa. Maraikar fled with the coins to Bijapur and sought protection from Adil Shah, who gave it, spurning requests from Vijayanagara to hand the culprit back.

The refusal of Adil Shah to cooperate is said to have forced Raya's resolve and catalysed his decision to launch the Raichur campaign. In early 1520, the Vijayanagara armies – led by Krishnadevaraya – set course for Raichur. Much of what is known about the battle is from the accounts of Fernao Nunes, a Portuguese traveller and chronicler, who accompanied the army to Raichur and was an eyewitness to what followed. According to Nunes, the Vijayanagara army assembled by Raya was of a massive scale – a 760,000 strong force including 32,600 horses, 550 elephants and 14 contingents of fully armed soldiers. Krishnadevaraya's legendary commander Pemmasani Ramalinga Nayaka was also part of the forces. The party was also said to include water carriers, courtesans and cooks numbering into the thousands. In addition, Raya had also deployed 50,000 scouts who would ride ahead of the army and send back reports about the enemy to the base camp. The engagement began with the forces of Vijayanagara surrounding the Raichur fort and commencing their siege from the eastern side – where the fort was said to have been its weakest. The siege continued for three months, with the Raichur fort's garrison – armed with 200 heavy cannons and several smaller ones – giving a tough fight to the Vijayanagara forces under Ramalinga Nayaka.

The battle took a different turn in May 1520 CE, when Ismail Adil Shah's army arrived at Raichur and set up camp on the farther side of the Krishna River (around 25km from the Vijayanagara army). The Bijapur army was of a lesser number than Vijayanagara, but Adil Shah had put his faith in his 900-strong artillery, which he felt would be decisive in the battle ahead. Adil Shah's initial plan was to entice Raya to try to cross the Krishna River and engage – allowing his artillery to destroy the Vijayanagara forces while they were busy crossing the waters. But Raya – perhaps warned by his scouts – chose not to take the bait and waited patiently for Adil Shah's next move.

Finally, recognising that the Vijayanagara siege would be successful at some point if he didn't engage, Adil Shah crossed the Krishna River but still set up camp close to the waters in order to assure good water supply to his camp. The armies collided on 20 May 1520 CE, with Krishnadevaraya announcing his intent with the beating of war drums at the crack of dawn. The scale of the sound – including military orders and the cry of the beasts accompanying the army – emanating from the camp was described by Nunes as "It seemed as if the sky should fall to the earth (because of the noise)" and "if you asked anything you could not hear yourself speak and you had to ask by signs".

Raya's onslaught was so fierce that the fleeing Bijapur soldiers abandoned their camp completely and ran into the river to save their lives, as the Vijayanagara army chased them and wreaked havoc. A desperate but brave attempt by the Bijapur commander Salabat Khan to attack Raya directly was also subdued and Khan was taken prisoner. With the army of the sultanate destroyed, Raya turned his attention back to the fort and continued the siege. The second assault was further aided by the arrival of the Portuguese captain, Christovao de Figueiredo, along with a troop of 20 musketeers, to deliver horses to Raya. The bloody battle of Raichur saw over 703,000 foot soldiers, 32,600 cavalry and 551 elephants fighting Ismail Adil Shah of Bijapur for the capture of its fortress leading to his defeat, amidst the death of 16,000 Vijayanagar soldiers.

Personality traits: According to Domingo Paes, the Portuguese traveler who visited Vijayanagara in 1520, Krishnadevaraya was of medium height and of fair complexion and with a good figure, rather fat than thin and had the signs of smallpox on his face. Paes records that Krishnadevaraya used to do exercises daily in the morning by applying oil on his body and used to work out till all the oil came out in the form of sweat. This was followed by a long ride over his horse. Then he used to take his bath, offer worship to gods and began his official work. "He is the most feared king, but very cheerful and merciful" - he adds. Krishnadevaraya was known for his compassion and humane treatment of a fallen foe. According to Nuniz after Vijayanagara's victory in the battle of Raichur, Krishnadevaraya asked his soldiers who were chasing and killing the retreating Muslim soldiers to retire from the battle field. Though his captains advised him to complete the work of destruction of all his enemies, Krishnadevaraya would not accede to their proposal. Krishnadevaraya was also known for his generosity. At the time of Vasantotsava every year, he bestowed presents to the poets. A

number of times he performed the Tulapurushapradhana and weighed himself against gold and pearls, which were later donated. On several occasions he rewarded his ministers and officers with presents. After the Kalinga war, it is said Krishnadevaraya made Thimmarasa (his mentor) sit on a carpet and bathed him in gold and precious stones.

### **As a warrior and leader**

Krishnadevaraya used to personally lead his army against adversaries in the battlefield and showed amazing resourcefulness in overcoming obstacles in his path. During the siege of the Udayagiri fort, he got boulders and rocks smashed to make passage wider and smoother for the movement of his troops. He showed extraordinary courage even in the face of gravest danger. For instance during the siege of the fort of Raichur, when the first line of defense was broken by the artillery fire from the enemy, Krishnadevaraya who was in charge of the second line stood firm and exhorted his men to fight without caring for their lives. Motivated by his call his men fought heroically and won the battle. Krishnadevaraya loved and cared his men and on the conclusion of a battle used to go to the battlefield looking for the wounded, making arrangement to pick them and treat.

Apart from being a skilled warrior, Krishnadevaraya was also an astute diplomat. During his reign, the Portuguese had arrived on the west coast of India. The emperor established good relations with the foreigners and encouraged trade between them and his subjects when Goa became the headquarters of the Portuguese State of India in 1510.

### **Conclusion**

Krishnadevaraya became the dominant ruler of the peninsula of India by defeating the Sultans of Bijapur, Golconda, the Bahmani Sultanate and the Gajapatis of Odisha. He was one of the most powerful of all the Hindu rulers of India. Indeed, when the Mughal Akbar was taking stock of the potentates of north India, Krishnadevaraya was rated the most powerful and had the most extensive empire in the subcontinent. Portuguese travelers Domingo Paes and Durate Barbosa visited his court and have left accounts of their experience there. According to the former Vijayanagar was very prosperous with abundance of foodstuffs, vegetables, fruits and animals being sold in profusion in the markets of the city at cheap rates. Barbosa speaks of the trade in jewels, diamonds, pearls and silk brocades, which were in plenty on its streets.

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