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THE STATE OF THE VIJAYANGARA EMPIRE'S ECONOMY

Dr.Basawaraj
Assistant Professor Department of History SPRDP.Government First Grade College Mudgal Dist.Raichur Karnataka

ABSTRACT : The Vijayanagara empire was extremely wealthy. The richness and magnificence of the Vijayanagara empire have been attributed by foreign visitors. For more than two centuries and fifty years, the Vijayangara empire was prosperous. It was Hindu culture's rescuer. The expansion of trade, industry, agriculture, and commerce was the main driver of the Vijayanagara empire's wealth. The state adopted a sensible irrigation strategy. Additionally, the state promoted industries. Inland, coastal, and international trade existed. The most significant port on the Malabar coast was Calicut. The Vijayanagara empire had up to 300 seaports, if Abdul Razak is to be believed. Portugal, China, Arabia, Persia, South Africa, Burma, the Malaya archipelago, the Indian Ocean islands, and Abyssinia all have trading ties. Cloth, rice, iron, salt, pepper, sugar, and spices were among the goods exported by the Vijayanagara empire. Horses, elephants, pearls, copper, coral, mercury, silk, and velvet from China were among the imports. The empire's currency consisted of gold, copper, and silver. They featured symbols of various animals and deities. Because the kingdom was independent during the Vijayanagara era, imports were far lower than exports.

INTRODUCTION:

The Vijayanagara Empire, which the Portuguese called the Kingdom of Bisnaga, was a South Indian empire founded on the Deccan Plateau. Harihara I founded it in 1336, and Bukka was one of five brothers. The Vijayanagara empire's economy was virtually unaltered

from the Chola era's. Merchant guilds had significant economic clout and started to exert political sway as well. The guild leaders, who served as somewhat public opinion representatives, would need to approve any taxing scheme first. Archaeological digs at Vijayanagara have uncovered the richness and might of the empire.

ECONOMY HISTORY:

The empire's economy was primarily based on agriculture; the main cash crops were coconut, rice, and wheat (for chewing), while sugarcane, cotton, and pulse legumes flourished in semi-arid areas. Large-scale cotton production also supplied the weaving hubs of the thriving textile industry in the empire. The distant Malnad hill region produced spices like ginger, cardamom, pepper, and turmeric, which were brought to the city for sale. The capital of the empire was a bustling commercial hub with a growing market for gold and valuable stones in significant amounts. The construction of several temples employed thousands of talented workers, including masons and sculptors. They were city dwellers.

The Vijayanagara empire prospered economically. The availability of gold coinage and the words of foreign travellers make this evident. The common man's life, however, may have gone unnoticed by the foreigners. Land taxes, professional taxes, fines from wartime loot, governor tributes, house taxes on manufacturers, commercial taxes, and import and export taxes were the sources of funding. A portion of the funds were allocated to public welfare, military, and religious causes. Cash or in-kind payments could be made for the land tax. During the reign of Harihara I, money payments became commonplace. The tax was set based on the land's fertility. The landowners possessed to pay grass field tax and marriage tax to the government. Nearly 15% to 52% of the yield was collected as the and tax.

ECONOMIC LIFE:

Economically the Vijayanagara empire was prosperous. It clears from the writings of foreign travellers and the availability of the gold coins. The economy of the Vijayanagara empire was essentially unchanged from that of the Chola period. Blacksmiths and carpenters were now in great demand and hence occupied a higher social scale. Meanwhile the guilds continued to have a considerable influence on the economy. The guilds themselves were hierarchical with artists guilds working under merchant guilds, who were now powerful

distributors who could influence the of the artists guilds considerably. The temple was often the single largest land owner and consumer of a village, the hub of village economic activity, providing various employment opportunities. Their economic influence forged a closer link between them and the monarchy. Trade continued to remain an important part of the economy, with both foreign and domestics trade doing extremely well. In fact, so important was trade to the economic, and consequently to the stability of the empire, that one of the major concerns, of all kings was to control as much of the trade as possible. The constant competition amongst the kingdom led to many incentives given to early Europeans traders who began establishing themselves in the country. They charged lower duties and provided various facilities. The general prevailing customs duties at that time were subjected to higher duties to discourage their import so to boost the local industries in these sectors. The main imports were gold, silver, elephants, horses', spices and certain types of textiles. The main exports were rice, sugar, coconut, millet, dyes, sandalwood, teak, pepper, cloves and cotton

textiles. However, the South was no longer the facilitator of Asian-European trader, with the Portuguese and Arabs controlling most of this trade. Sea trade was active with ships visiting Indian ports regularly. The Indian shipping industry did not command as much of a influence in trade as it once did, with countries like China now leading with some of the finest and reliable vessels.

ARGICULTURE:

The people's primary occupation was agriculture. Every ruler in Vijayanagara had enacted laws to promote agriculture in various regions. The agricultural industry was also further helped by prudent and effective irrigation plans. A Portuguese traveler named Nuniz once made reference to the existence of dams and canals as well as their continuous building. As a result, the area became self-sufficient and experienced agricultural prosperity. The nation's economic development was attributed to it. The King's main responsibility was to oversee agriculture. Wells and tanks were dug by the kings, governors, wealthy merchants, peasants, and temple caretakers. Irrigation received particular attention from the Vijayanagara Kings. This issue has been covered by Krishnadevaraya in his book "Amukta-Malyada." farming. Cotton, ragi, jowar, and sajje were the main agricultural crops pearl millet, sugarcane,wheat, paddy and dhals.

TRADE:

Portugal, Persia, and Ceylon were the principal trading destinations. Vijayanagar was exporting rice, spices, sugar confectionery, gold sandalwood, and iron. Copper, pearls, velvets, corals, mercury, silk and makmal from Pegu and Ormuj, horses from Portugal, elephants from Ceylon, and coral and pearls from China were all being brought. The principal trading hubs were Vijayanagar, Anegondi, Penugonda, Chandragiri, Udayagiri, Kalahasti, Madurai, Tanjore, Mangalore, Bhatkal, and Ankola. Mangalore and Bhatkal. The principal harbours were Karwar, Baindur, Basrur, and Barakur. Clothing, spices, iron, iron ores, sugar, and other items were the principal exports during the reign. The most popular means of transportation for coastal and international trades were ships. According to legend, the Vijayanagara people were skilled in shipbuilding, which enabled them to trade. Barbosa evidenced the art of shipbuilding by quoting those ships of Vijayanagara that were initially built from the Maldives Islands.

In Vijayanagar, grain, pearls, emerald were being sold openly without any fear. The Golconda mines were noted for their diamonds and emeralds. Foreign travellers, like Niketin, Abdul Razak, Nuniz, Nicolo Conti, Barbosa have often expressed their administration for Vijayanagara market. In the markets, fruits like Lime, Orange, Grape, Pomegranate and Roses were beings sold in heaps. Abdul Razak while speaking of Roses says that “people perhaps could not live without roses. It had become as necessary to them as food itself.”

Gold coins (Varaha, Honna, Gadyana and Pagoda), silver coins (Tara) and copper coins (Pana, Duddu, Jital, Kasu) were legal tenders. The coins bore the names of Vijaynagara Kings in Kannada and Devanagari and the images of Shiva, Parvathi and Vishnu on the obvers. The merchant guilds, rich temples and mathas did the money lending business.

The same commerce shops are mentioned by Abdul Razzak, another Persian traveler. Due to the construction of stores selling identical goods nearby, there was fierce rivalry between the participants. Trade growth ascribed to inland, coastal, and international trade One could think of exports as well-known drivers of growth and wealth. Additionally, more than 300 seaports supported the exports, facilitating trade and transportation.

THE IRRIGATION SYSTEM :

The irrigation system had been given priority. The Thungabhadra water was passed through canals to Raichur and Bellary districts and the agriculture was rendered easier. Embankments were built here and there. When the new Thungabhadra reservoir was built was built, old dams and old embankments at Hospet Vallabhapura and Koregal were

submerged in it. The canals of Vijayanagara times – Koregala canal, Bellanaale, Raya canal, Basavanna canal, Shivapura canal, Anegondi canal Kalagatta canal, Siraguppa canal, Ramasagara canal, Kampli canal, Belgodu, Halenaale, Siraguppa canal, Ramasagara canal, Ganagavati upper canal, Gangavathi lower canal and bijal canal. These seventeen canals are in Karnataka. The rest are in Andhra state. Nearly 20,000 acres, of Hospet and Siraguppa in Bellary district in total about 30,000 acres are brought under cultivation through the Vijayanagara canals.

Drinking water was supplied to Hampi through stone and eathern canals and pipes. In royal palace complex, nearly 20 water troughs have been discovered and the excavation work is still being continued. There was much land needed for the tillers. They often earned their living by tilling the lands belonging to the wealthy. Their life was similar to that of serfs of Europe in the Middle Ages. There were five types of contracts for cultivating the land (1) Geni (2) Guttige (3) Siddaya (4) Vaara (5) Gadi. The contract made between the owner and the tiller was called Geni. The land contractor was often called Genidara. In Guttige, the tiller had to give a fixed share to the land lord, irrespective of the yield. If the yield was deficient, he has to make good the deficiency. According to Siddaya, the rent for the land could be paid either in cash or kind. In Vaara system, both the landlord and the tenant had equal share of the produce. In Gadi system, the rent was depended upon the fertility of the land. These five systems varied from place to place. The Brahmins the Mathas received lands as gifts or donations. But they were cultivated by the tillers. Those who did military, religious and social service were given jagirs.

INDUSTRY (Work Shops) :

Because the Kingdom was independent throughout the Vijayanagara era, imports were far lower than exports. Appropriate steps were made to produce the items that were required. The rulers' sponsorship has led to the emergence of numerous varieties. Sugar, jaggery oil, coir, alcohol, charcoal, cotton, firearms manufacturing, aromatics, tanning and ceramics, fishing, and mining were the main ones. There were also a lot of little handicrafts being practiced. Guilds were responsible for overseeing trades and industries. It was typical for people in the same trade to reside in the same city or neighbourhood. Barboza, Abdul Razak, Petro, and Deltaville discuss how adept the jewellers are at creating decorations. Koimuttur, or Kan-p-mai, was well-known for its silk and cotton. Goa and Budihal (Chitradurga District)produced the finest type of cotton clothes. Emeralds were found in the mines at Vajrakarur near Gutti (Ananthapura Dist.) in Bhatkal irons ores were found in plenty.

MINING OF COINS :

Another significant governmental organisation was Mint. In the past, private individuals would mint with the King's approval. The Barakur and Mangalore centres produced Gadyana gold coins. Coins were issued by Devaraya II under his own name. Privately struck coins were only accepted as legal money in a few designated locations. This frequently made it more difficult for traders, businesses, and craftspeople to relocate. The governor of Devaraya II, Lakkanna Dandanayaka, had released his own coinage. When travelling from one area to another, money frequently proved to be a source of difficulties and problems, according to traveler Fredrik Caesar. Despite the fact that the Vijayanagara empire ruled over all of these provinces' rulers and that money in one region had no value in another at the time of his coronation, images of Balakrishna and Venkateshwara were etched on gold coins together with shaka, chakra, makaratorana, abhayahasta, and other symbols. Krishnadevaraya also produced gold coins known as Varahas, Gadyanas, and Panas. Names such as Sri Pratapa Krishnaraya and Sri Krishnaraya appear on Sanskrit coins written in Devanagari, a Sanskrit script. The largest coin weighs almost 7 grammes. A 0.3-gram gold coin is the smallest. Durga and Krishnadevaraya are shown in it. Following the conquest of

Orissa, he presented Lord Venkateshwara with 30,000 gold coins in exchange for his Kanakaabhisheka. Gold and silver coins were also issued by Achutharaya and succeeding monarchs.

CONCLUSION :

Due to social and economic changes, the Vijayanagara empire enjoyed a robust economy. Men and women's equal participation aided in the expansion of the economy across all sectors, including trade, industry, agriculture, and commerce. However, the severe caste and cultural divisions brought up by the reign exacerbated the unequal distribution of resources and riches. We can learn a lot about our history and culture from the empire's age. The empire's economic circumstances were dire. Numerous foreign visitors are reported to have seen the city's wealth, development, and success.

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