

## Varahas of Sri Krishna Raya of Vijayanagara

BY

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The Rev. H. Heras, S. J., has described a golden varaha of Sri Pratapa Krishna Raya of Vijayanagara in Part I, Vol. VII of the *Journal of Indian History* (April 1928). Two incorrect statements have been made in it, one regarding the publication of the coin and another about the identity of the figure found on the reverse. This paper is intended to correct them and to describe clearly the gold coinage of Krishna Deva Raya.

(1) Prior to his description in the *Journal of Indian History* the Rev. H. Heras states that the coin in question was not published. This statement is not correct, for similar coins have been figured and described by several scholars. Their names and references to their works are noted below :—

Wilson	... Description of select coins in the possession of the Asiatic Society.	No. 88-89 in page 594 in the <i>Journal of Asiatic Researches</i> , Vol. XVII.
Marsden	... Oriental Coins, Ancient and Modern.	<i>Numismatic Circular</i> , Part II, No. 1070-1071.
Prinsep	... <i>Indian Antiquities</i> , Vol. II.	No. 13 in plate XLV.
Bidie	... Pagoda or varaha coins of South India.	No. 12 a, b in the <i>Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal</i> , Vol. LI, Part I, 1883.
Elliot	... Coins of South India	... Nos. 183 to 188.
Hultsch	... Coins of the Kingdom of Vijayanagara.	Page 305, <i>Indian Antiquary</i> of September-1891.
Jackson	... The Dominions, Emblems and Coins of the South Indian Dynasties.	Pages 352-353 in the <i>British Numismatic Journal</i> , 1912.

While seven scholars have taken the trouble to describe similar coins, it is somewhat misleading to state that the coin was unpublished hitherto.

(2) The Rev. H. Heras first of all thought that the figure on the obverse might be a representation of King Krishna Raya, and finally concludes that it could not be, as the figure does not agree with the description of Krishna Raya as found in other sources.

He then suggests that the figure might be a *sanyāsi*, and states that King Krishna Raya had him seated on his throne for a while, and concludes that this coin might have been issued to commemorate this event. He quotes some story to confirm his statement.

The Kings of Vijayanagara never had their figure on their coins. They always had the figure of a deity, except in the case of Achyuta Raya who had the bird *gandabhērunda* on the reverse. These deities were either Śaiva or Vaishnava, or both, according to the religious beliefs of the kings. This was the case throughout. The figure in the present coin therefore neither represents Krishna Raya nor any *sanyāsi*, as stated by the Rev. H. Heras.

This point has been a matter of contest from the year 1832. Wilson took it as the representation of the Varāhavatār of Vishnu; while Bidie, Marsden and Elliot have taken it to be the representation of the goddess Durga (the bull-headed consort of Siva).

But Dr. Hultzch and Jackson considered it as the figure of Vishnu himself, perhaps owing to the presence of the conch and the discus and as Sri Krishna Raya having been known throughout as an orthodox Vaishnava.

The gold coinage of Krishna Raya consists of double, single and half varahas.

I. The double varaha has on the

OBVERSE.

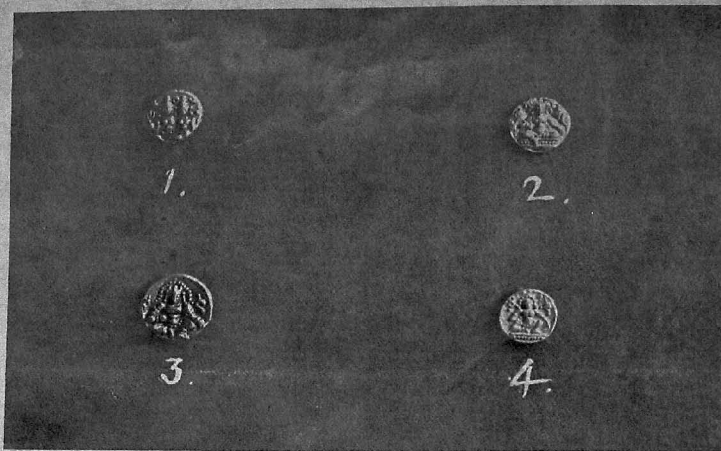
REVERSE.

Vishnu standing under an arch.

श्री  
कृष्णरा  
य.

This is figured in No. 112 of the Coins of South India.

Dr. Hultzch was doubtful of the issue of this coin by the absence of the word प्रताप, but this might have been issued early in the reign of the king and प्रताप might have been added when he began to conquer vast dominions to his kingdom,



HALF-VARĀHAS OF KRISHNADEVA RAYA OF VIJAYANAGAR

## II. Single varahas have got on the

OBVERSE.

REVERSE.

- (a) Śiva and Pārvati seated,  
 (b) Female figure with right leg hanging  
 down and left leg folded and placed  
 over the seat.  
 (c) Female figure with right leg folded and  
 placed over the seat and with the left  
 folded and kept erect over the seat.

श्रीप्र  
 तापकृष्ण  
 राय

## III. Half varahas same as II (c).

The Madras Government Museum has got in its collection eleven full varahas and thirteen half-varahas. Out of these eleven, one is like II (a), (Pl. 1), and one full and half varaha are like II (b), (Pl. 2). The rest including all other half varahas, have all the seated figures like II (c), (Pl. 3 and 4) which resembles the one figured by the Rev. H. Heras in his article.

The Rev. H. Heras has described : ' The obverse presents a nude figure of a man squatting on the ground. He wears no head dress. His face is absolutely worn out. He has one bangle round each arm over the elbow. His right hand seems to be slightly raised up before his chest as if making a gesture, while the left arm rests upon the knee, somewhat risen above the ground. Below the plank where this figure is squatting, there is a line of drop-like ornamentation, suggesting the decoration of a throne. Something like this is to be seen on the top behind the head of the figure. I could not make out the significance of these flourishes '.

The following is the description of the seated figure : A woman-like form is seated over a pedestal with the right leg folded and the left leg bent and kept erect. The right arm is bent and a ball-like thing is seen in the right hand. The left arm is stretched and is supported by the left knee. Bangles are worn on the two wrists and there are bracelets on both the upper arms. A zone with beads is worn round the waist. A trident-like thing appears over the head and above it there are a series of dots from shoulder to shoulder which may perhaps be to represent a rosary of *rudrāksha* beads. In some cases these dots extend from the discus on the right side to the conch on the left. In the case of some coins, there are no dots but a wavy line is put up over the head.

While such is the description of the figure, it seems inaccurate to say that the figure is 'nude'. Presumably the Rev. H. Heras has been tempted to draw this conclusion from the beads in the girdle worn round the waist. To all appearances the feminine figure is sitting on a pedestal and not on the ground as stated by the Rev. H. Heras. It has got a head-dress as may be seen from the trident-like thing over the head. The right hand is holding a ball-like object and not raised as if making a gesture, as stated by the writer. The pedestal over which the figure is seated is a *bhadrasana* and not a throne as stated by him. There is no *tridanda* on the coin to indicate that the figure is that of a *sanyāsi* or ascetic.

The form, as observed in these coins, may be divided into two classes. Firstly, those having a trident-like thing on the head and a series of dots over the head and from shoulder to shoulder. Secondly, those having a wavy line above the head. The form, dress and ornaments worn clearly indicate that the figure is feminine. The position of the left leg is peculiar to *Śākta* deities. The ball-like thing in the right hand may be taken to represent the head of a human being which is usually carried by Durga. The feminine features, the trident-like thing on the head, the conch and discus on either side, the series of dots which may represent *rudrāksha* beads, all go to prove that the figure is no other than the goddess Durga. It is obviously from this figure of Durga that these coins were known by the name of Durgi Pagoda.

It may be asked whether it would be compatible for Sri Krishna Raya, a staunch Vaishnava, to have a representation of Durga on his coins. According to a reliable<sup>1</sup> Telugu work, *Śringara Satya-bhāma Sāntvanamu*, by Kāmēśvarakavi, a golden image of Durga was worshipped as the guardian deity of the fort of Vijayanagara ever since its origin and all prosperity of the kingdom was believed to be due to this deity. The kingdom of Vijayanagara was at its zenith during Krishna Raya's time and it would be quite consistent to have the figure on the coin to respect the feeling that all prosperity was due to this Durga. This Durga was handed over to Visvanatha Nayaka of Madura by king Achyuta Raya, from which time the kingdom began to decline.

Therefore there seems to be no doubt whatever that the figure in question is Durga and not a *sanyāsi* as suggested by Rev. Heras.

<sup>1</sup> Verse 26, I am indebted for this information to Mr. Prabhākara Sastrī of the Oriental Manuscripts Library.