

Chapter 7

An Imperial Capital: Vijayanagara

- The Vijayanagara Empire was the most dignified and glorious empire of South India. Its Capital was Hampi.
- Hampi was discovered by Colin Mackenzie, the first Surveyor General of India in 1815.
- His (Colin Mackenzie's) arduous work, gave a new direction to all the future researcher.
- Alexander Greenlaw took the first detailed photography of Hampi in 1856, which proved quite useful for the scholar.
- J.F. Fleet in 1876, began compilation and documentation of the inscription from the walls of the walls of temples in Hampi.
- John Marshall began the conservation of Hampi in 1902.
- In 1976, Hampi was declared as a site of national importance and in 1986 it was declared as world Heritage centre.
- Vijayanagara Empire was founded by the two brothers, Harihara and Bukka in 14th century.
- The ruler of Vijayanagara empire were called Rayas.
- The most powerful ruler of Vijayanagara empire was Krishnadeva Raya. During his tenure, the empire touched its glory.
- Administration of the Vijayanagara Empire was very good and its people were very happy.
- The Vijayanagara Empire began to decline by 16th century and this might empire ended in 17th century.
- Four dynasties ruled over Vijayanagara:
 - The Sangama Dynasty
 - The Saluvas Dynasty
 - The Tuluva Dynasty
 - The Aravidu Dynasty
- The Sangama Dynasty founded the empire, Saluva expanded it, Saluva took it to the pinnacle of its glory, but it begun declined under Aravidu.
- Various causes such as weak central government, weak successors of Krishnadeva Raya, different dynasties struggles against the Bahamani Empire, weak empire, etc. contributed in the downfall of the empire.
- The most striking feature of the empire was its water requirement were met from natural barn formed by the Tungabhadra river.
- The ruler of Vijayanagara also had made vast fortification. The archaeologist made an elaborated study of roads within the city and the roads which led one out of the city.
- The Royal centres were located in the south-western part of the settlement, which included over sixty times.
- The sacred centre was situated on the rocky northern end on the bank of the river Tungabhadra. According to tradition rocky hill served as a shelter to the monkey Kingdom of Bali and Sugriva which were mentioned in the Ramayana.

Vijayanagara or 'City of Victory' was the home of both a city and an empire. It stretched from the river Krishna in the North to the extreme South of the Peninsula. People remembered it as Hampi, a name derived from that of the local mother Goddess, 'Pampadevi'.

Rise of Vijayanagara:

- Two brothers Harihara and Bukka founded the Vijayanagara empire in 1336. The rulers of Vijayanagara called themselves as 'Rayas'.
- Vijayanagara was famous for its markets dealing in spices, textiles and precious stones. The trade of import of horses from Arabia and Central Asia was controlled by Arab and Portuguese traders and also by local merchants (Kudirai Chettis).
- Trade was often regarded as a status symbol for this city. The revenue derived from trade in turn contributed significantly to the prosperity of the state.

Dynasties and Rulers of Vijayanagara:

- Vijayanagara was ruled by different dynasties like Sangama, Salavas and Tuluvas. Krishnadeva Raya belonged to Tuluva dynasty, whose rule was characterised by expansion and consolidation of Vijayanagara.
- During the rule of Krishnadeva Raya, Vijayanagara flourished under the conditions of unparalleled peace and prosperity. Krishnadeva Raya established some fine temples and gopurams and sub-urban township named Nagalapuram. After his death in 1529, his successors were troubled by rebellious 'Nayakas' or military chiefs.
- By 1542, control at the centre had shifted to another ruling-lineage, that of the Aravidu, which remained in power till the end of the 17th century. Military chiefs or Nayakas often moved from one area to another accompanied by peasants broking for fertile land on which to settle. The Amara-nayaka system, similar to Iqta system of the Delhi sultanate, was a major political innovation of the Vijayanagara empire.
- These were military commanders who were given territories to govern the 'raya'. The Amara-nayakas sent tribute to the king annually and personally appeared in the royal court with gifts to express their loyalty.

Geographical Structure and Architecture of Vijayanagara:

- Vijayanagara was characterised by a distinctive physical layout and building style.
- Vijayanagara was located on the natural basin of the river Tungabhadra which flows in a North-Easterly direction.
- As this is one of the most arid zones of the Peninsula, many arrangements were made to store rain water for the city. For e.g. water from Kamalapuram tank and Hiriya canal was used for irrigation and communication.
- Abdur Razzaq, an ambassador of Persia, was greatly impressed by the fortification of the city and mentioned seven lines of forts. These encircled city as well as its agricultural hinterland and forests.

- The arch on the gateway leading into the fortified settlement and the dome over the gate were the architectures introduced by the Turkish Sultans and this was known as Indo-Islamic style.
- There was little archaeological evidence of the houses of ordinary people. We find description of the houses of ordinary people from the writings of Portuguese traveller Barbosa.

Hampi: The Historical City:

- The ruins at Hampi were brought to light in 1800 by Colonel Colin Mackenzie. To reconstruct the history of the city, sources like the memories of priests of the Virupaksha temple and the shrine of Pampadevi, several inscriptions and temples, accounts of foreign travellers and other literature written in Telugu, Kannada, Tamil and Sanskrit played a very important role in discovering of Hampi.

The Royal Centre of Hampi:

- The royal centre was located in the South-Western part of the settlement which had more than 60 temples. Thirty building complexes were identified as palaces. The king's palace was the largest of the enclosures and had two platforms viz. the 'audience hall' and the 'Mahanavami dibba'.
- Located on one of the highest points in the city, the 'Mahanavami dibba' is a massive platform rising from a base of about 11,000 sq ft to a height of 40 ft. Different ceremonies like worship of the image, worship of the state horse and the sacrifice of buffaloes and other animals were performed in Vijayanagara. Some beautiful buildings in the royal centre are Lotus Mahal, Hazara Rama temple, etc.

Temples of Hampi:

- Temple building in this region had a long history. Pallavas, Chalukyas, Hoysalas, Cholas, all the rulers encouraged temple building. Temples were developed as religious, social, cultural, economic and learning centres. Shrines of Virupaksha and Pampadevi were very significant sacred centre.
- The Vijayanagara kings claimed to rule on behalf of the God Virupaksha. They also indicated their close links by using the title 'Hindu Suratrana' (Sanskritisation of the Arabic term Sultan) meaning 'Hindu Sultan'. In terms of temple architecture, 'Rayas' gopurams or royal gateways and mandapas or pavilions were developed by the rulers of Vijayanagara.
- Krishnadeva Raya built the hall in front of the main shrine in Virupaksha temple and he also constructed the Eastern gopuram. The halls in the temple were used for special programmes of music, dance, drama and marriages of deities.
- The rulers of Vijayanagara established Vitthala temple. Vitthala, a form of Vishnu, was generally worshipped in Maharashtra. Some of the most spectacular gopurams were built by the local Nayakas.

Hampi: As a site of National Importance:

- In 1976, Hampi was recognised as a site of national importance. Over nearly twenty years, dozens of scholars from all over the world worked to reconstruct the history of Vijayanagara.
- In the early 1980s detailed survey, using a variety of recording techniques was done by the Archaeological Survey of India which led to the recovery of traces of roads, paths, bazaars, etc.
- John M Fritz, George Nichell and MS Nagaraja Rao worked for years and gave important observation of the site.
- The descriptions left by travellers allow us to reconstruct some aspects of the vibrant life of that times.

Continuing Research About Vijayanagara:

- Buildings that survive convey ideas about the materials and techniques, the builders or patrons and cultural context of Vijayanagara empire. Thus, we can understand by combining information from literature, inscriptions and popular traditions.
- But the investigation of architectural features do not tell us about the places where ordinary' people live, what kind of wages did the masons, stonecutters, sculptors get, how was the building material transported and so many other questions.
- Continuing research using other sources that available architectural examples might provide some further clues about Vijayanagara.

Important Terms:

- Karnataka Samrajyamu: Historians used the term Vijayanagara Empire, contemporaries described it as the
- Karnataka Samrajyamu.
- Gajapati: Literally means the lord of elephants. This was the name of a ruling lineage that was very powerful in Odisha in the fifteenth century.
- Ashvapati: In the popular traditions of Vijayanagara the Deccan Sultans are termed as ashavapati of the lord of horses.
- Narapati: In Vijayanagara Empire, the Rayas are called narapati or the lord of men.
- Yavana: It is a Sanskrit word for the Greeks and other peoples entered the subcontinent from the north-west.
- Shikara: The top or very high roof of the temples is called Shikhar. Generally, it can be seen from a reasonable distance by the visitors of the temples. Under Shikhar we find the idol of main God or Goddess.
- Garbhgrah: This is a central point of the main room located at a central position of the temple. Generally, every devotee goes near the gate of this room to pay respect and feelings of devotion to his main duty.

Time line:

- 1336 -Foundation of Vijayanagara Empire by Harihara Raya and Bukka Raya.
- 1483 – Emergence of Saluva Dynasty.
- 1509-1529 Tenure of Krishnadeva Raya.
- 1512 – Krishnadev Raya occupied Raicher Doals.
- 1565 – Battle of Talikata.
- 1570 – Foundation of Aravidu Dynasty.
- 1815 – Col Mackenzie appointed as 1st Surveyor General of India.
- 1856 – Alexander Greenlaw takes the first detailed photographs of archaeological remains at Hampi.
- 1876 – J.F. Fleet begins documenting the inscription on the temple walls at the site.
- 1902 – Conservation begins under John Marshall.
- 1986 – Hampi declared a World Heritage site by UNESCO.

