



THE VIJAYANAGARA EMPIRE

A Flourishing Era in South Indian History

Rise of the Vijayanagara Empire

- During the mid-14th century, northern India faced political instability due to the decline of the Delhi Sultanate.
- Two prominent kingdoms emerged in South India: Vijayanagara and the Bahmani Sultanate.
- The weak central administration of **Mohammad Bin Tughlaq (1325-1351 AD)** allowed regional rulers to assert independence.
- Founders: Harihara I and Bukka Raya I**, former feudatories of the Kakatiyas and ministers in the Kampili kingdom.



- ◆ **Legend:** Captured and converted by Mohammad Bin Tughlaq, later re-converted to Hinduism under **Vidyaranya's** guidance.
- ◆ **Establishment:** Founded Vijayanagara in 1336 AD on the banks of the **Tungabhadra River** (present-day Hampi, Karnataka).
- ◆ The rulers of the **Vijayanagara Empire** ruled in the name of **Virupaksha**, a form of Lord Shiva.
- ◆ **Expansion:** Extended southward to Rameshwaram, incorporating parts of the Chera kingdom.

Dynasties of Vijayanagara

The Vijayanagara Empire was ruled by four major dynasties:

1. Sangama Dynasty (1336-1486 AD)
2. Saluva Dynasty (1486-1505 AD)
3. Tuluva Dynasty (1505-1570 AD)
4. Aravidu Dynasty (1570-1646 AD)



Important Rulers of the Vijayanagara Empire

Harihara I (1336-1356 AD) - Founder of the Empire

- ◆ Established the Vijayanagara Empire along with his brother **Bukka Raya I**.
- ◆ Annexed **Hoysala territories** after their decline.
- ◆ Divided administration among his brothers:



- **Kampana** - Governed Nellur region.
- **Muddappa** - Managed Mulabagalu.
- **Marappa** - Oversaw Chandragutti.
- **Bukka Raya** - Acted as second-in-command.

Bukka Raya I (1356-1377 AD) - Expansionist Ruler

- ◆ Conquered **Madurai, Arcot, and Kondavidu**, expanding the empire.
- ◆ His son, **Kumara Kampana**, played a key role in defeating the **Sultan of Madurai**.
- ◆ Established **diplomatic ties with China** to expand trade.
- ◆ His military campaigns were recorded in **Madhuravijayam**, authored by his daughter-in-law **Gangambika**.



Deva Raya II (1424-1446 AD) - "Gajabetekara" (Elephant Hunter)

- ◆ Defeated the **Bahmani Sultans** and the **Reddi Kingdom of Kondavidu**.
- ◆ Encouraged **Persian and Kannada scholars**.
- ◆ Fostered cultural exchanges with foreign travelers like **Abdul Razzaq**.
- ◆ Strengthened **irrigation systems** and improved agriculture.



Krishna Deva Raya (1509–1530 AD) – – Golden Age of Vijayanagara

- ◆ Greatest ruler of the **Tuluva Dynasty** and a contemporary of **Babur** (founder of the Mughal Empire).
- ◆ **Military achievements:**
 - Defeated **Bijapur, Golconda, and Orissa**.
 - Conquered **Raichur Doab**, a fertile and strategically important region between the **Krishna and Tungabhadra rivers**.
 - Secured Vijayanagara's dominance over **South India**.
- ◆ **Administrative and economic contributions:**
 - Established friendly relations with the **Portuguese**, allowing them to settle at **Bhatkal** and establish trade centers.
 - Strengthened the **navy** for maritime trade.
- ◆ **Patronage of literature and arts:**
 - Encouraged **Telugu, Sanskrit, Kannada, and Tamil** literature.
 - His court was adorned by **Ashtadiggajas** (eight great poets), including **Allasani Peddana** (author of *Manucharitam*).
 - Authored the **Telugu classic Amuktamalyada**, a treatise on polity, and the **Sanskrit drama Jambavati Kalyanam**.
- ◆ **Architectural achievements:**
 - Built **Vijaya Mahal (House of Victory)**, **Hazara Rama Temple**, and **Vithal Swami Temple**.
 - **Nagalapuram**, a town in Andhra Pradesh, was built by Krishna Deva Raya in **memory of his mother, Nagala Devi**.



Sadashiva Raya (1542–1565 AD) – The Last Tuluva Ruler

- ◆ Real power was held by his regent, **Aliya Rama Raya**.
- ◆ **Battle of Talikota (1565)** – A disastrous defeat against the combined **forces of Bijapur, Golconda, and Ahmednagar**, leading to the **sacking of Hampi**.



Tirumala Deva Raya (1570–1572 AD) – Founder of the Aravidu Dynasty

- ◆ Shifted the **capital from Vijayanagara to Penukonda** after Hampi's destruction.



Venkata III (1600–1646 AD) – The Last Significant Ruler

- ◆ Empire weakened due to **internal feuds and Mughal influence**.
- ◆ **Vijayanagara finally disintegrated in 1646 AD**.



Administration and Polity

- ◆ **Monarchical System:** King held absolute power, assisted by a Council of Ministers.
- ◆ **Administrative Divisions:**
 - Mandalam (Provinces) → Nadus (Districts) → Sthala (Sub-districts) → Grama (Villages)
- ◆ **Nayankara System:**
 - **Nayaks (Governors)** had autonomy, maintained armies, and paid tributes to the central authority.
 - **Amaram System:** Military chiefs (Palaiyagars/Nayaks) were granted land in return for providing soldiers.
- ◆ **Revenue System:**
 - **Land tax:** 1/3rd to 1/6th of produce.
 - Taxes on **trade, grazing, and imports/exports** funded public welfare and military expenses.



Economy and Trade

- ◆ **Agriculture & Industries:** Thrived in textiles, mining, metallurgy, and agriculture.
- ◆ **Major Trade Partners:** Persia, Arabia, China, Sri Lanka, and Burma.
- ◆ **Exports:** Rice, iron, sandalwood, sugar, spices.
- ◆ **Imports:** Horses, ivory, silk.
- ◆ **Coinage:** Extensive use of **gold and silver coins**, reflecting economic prosperity.



Society and Culture

- ◆ **Three main classes:** Nobles, Middle class (traders & artisans), Commoners (farmers & laborers).
- ◆ **Women's Status:**
 - Participated in **politics and literature**; Skilled in **wrestling, astrology, accounting, and soothsaying** (as noted by Portuguese traveler Nuniz).
 - Evils like **child marriage** and **Sati** existed.
- ◆ **Religious Tolerance:**
 - Rulers patronized **Shaivism and Vaishnavism**; Srivaishnavism (**Ramanuja's philosophy**) was widely followed.
 - **Muslims held administrative positions** and enjoyed religious freedom.



Art and Architecture of Vijayanagara Empire

Architecture

- ◆ **Blend of Dravidian and Indo-Islamic styles.**
Raya Gopurams (ornate temple gateways), Kalyana Mandapams (marriage halls), and pillared halls were common.



Notable Structures

- ♦ **Vittalaswami Temple, Hampi** – Known for its **musical pillars** and iconic **stone chariot**.
- ♦ **Hazara Ramaswamy Temple, Hampi** – Features **Ramayana-themed bas-reliefs**, a private temple of Vijayanagara rulers.



- ♦ **Virupaksha Temple, Hampi** – One of the **oldest functioning Shiva temples**.

- ♦ **Varadharaja & Ekambaranatha Temples, Kanchipuram** – Major **Vaishnavite and Shaivite pilgrimage centers** with towering **gopurams**.
- ♦ **Raya Gopurams (Thiruvannamalai & Chidambaram)** – Built by **Krishna Deva Raya** to enhance temple grandeur.

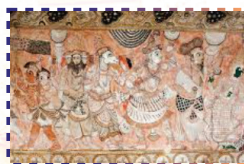


- ♦ **Mahanavami Dibba (Hampi)** A grand, elevated platform used for royal ceremonies, military parades, and Navaratri celebrations.

- ♦ **Vijayanagara Fortifications** – **Seven concentric walls** with **cyclopean masonry**, **watchtowers**, and **bastions** for defense.

Painting & Sculpture

- ♦ **Lepakshi Murals (Veerabhadra Temple, Andhra Pradesh)** – **Vibrant frescoes** depicting **Hindu deities and mythological tales**.



- ♦ **Sculptures & Iconography** – Intricate carvings of **deities, dancers, and animals**; **Yali (mythical lion-like creature)** as a signature motif.

Decline of the Vijayanagara Empire

- ♦ **Continuous Wars** – Constant conflicts with the **Bahmani Sultanate, Golconda, and Bijapur** weakened the empire.
- ♦ **Provincial Autonomy** – **Nayaks** gained power and declared independence.
- ♦ **Weak Succession Policy** – Internal conflicts over succession led to instability.
- ♦ **Ineffective Rulers** – Later kings failed to manage the vast empire.
- ♦ **Battle of Talikota (1565 AD)** – Also called **Rakshasa-Tangadi**, a decisive defeat against the Deccan Sultanates, leading to the sacking of Hampi.
- ♦ **Final Collapse (1646 AD)** – The **Aravidu Dynasty** ruled from Penukonda but failed to revive the empire, leading to its disintegration.



Foreign Travelers and Their Observations on Vijayanagara Empire



Traveler	Country	Reigning Ruler	Observations
Ibn Battuta	Morocco	Harihara I (1340s)	Described the capital as a well-fortified and wealthy city . Noted the presence of powerful rulers and detailed trade activities.
Niccolò de Conti	Italy	Deva Raya I (1420s)	Described Vijayanagara's wealth , extensive trade, and grand architecture.
Abdul Razzaq	Persia	Deva Raya II (1440s)	Noted the city's prosperity, strong fortifications , and thriving markets. Also observed Hindu-Muslim harmony, with Muslims in administration.
Duarte Barbosa	Portugal	Krishna Deva Raya (1510s)	Detailed efficient administration, trade policies, and naval strength..
Domingo Paes	Portugal	Krishna Deva Raya (1510s)	Admired military strength, economic prosperity, courtly culture, and described the grand Mahanavami Festival (Navaratri) with military parades and performances. Also noted advanced irrigation and thriving trade.
Fernao Nuniz	Portugal	Achyuta Deva Raya (1530s)	Wrote about the empire's decline, taxation, and women's status-mentioning their engagement in trade, wrestling, and astrology, but also social restrictions. Described Sati (widow immolation) , where noble widows voluntarily performed the act as an honorable tradition.



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