

History of Vijayanagar Empire

Ashok Saha

M.A, NTA UGC NET, WBSET Qualified

Abstract-- This essay's objective is to analyze the Vijayanagara Empire. Before the Vijayanagara Empire was established in the early 14th century, Muslims from the north regularly besieged and attacked the Hindu republics of the Deccan, such as the Pandyan Empire of Madurai, the Kakatiya dynasty of Warangal, and the Yadava Empire of Devagiri. The upper Deccan region (modern-day Maharashtra and Telangana) had been subjugated by the forces of Sultan Alauddin Khalji and Muhammad bin Tughluq of the Delhi Sultanate by 1336. After Muslim forces of the Delhi Sultanate defeated and conquered the Yadava Empire in 1294 CE, Hoysala commander Singeya Nayaka-III declared independence further south in the Deccan region. Near Gulbarga and the Tungabhadra River in the northeastern part of what is now Karnataka state, he founded the Kampili kingdom. In roughly 1327–1328, the people performed a ritual mass suicide known as a jauhar following the kingdom's destruction by the warriors of the Delhi Sultanate. In 1336 CE, the Vijayanagara Kingdom replaced the formerly prosperous Hindu kingdoms of the Hoysalas, Kakatiyas, and Yadavas. The division of the Kampili Kingdom increased opposition to the Muslim invasion in South India. In 1336, two brothers who were part of Muhammad-bin-Tughlaq's army, Harihara and Bukka, established the empire of Vijayanagar. With the capital city of Vijayanagar located on the banks of the Tungabhadra River, they separated from the Delhi Sultanate in 1336 to establish an independent state in Karnataka. The saint and contemporary scholar Vidyanarya supported and helped Harihara and Bukka establish their dominion. During the Middle Ages, regional kingdoms started to form as the Delhi Sultanate fell. The last two dynasties of the sultanate, Sayyid and Lodi, were so feeble that they were unable to maintain the nation. During this period, the Deccan and other regions of southern India became the center of the Vijayanagara Kingdom. In an effort to stave off Turkic Islamic invasions, southern nations expanded the empire toward the end of the thirteenth century. At its height, it pushed the Deccan sultans out of the Tungabhadra-Krishna River doab region, conquered modern-day Odisha (formerly known as Kalinga) from the Gajapati Kingdom, enslaved nearly every notable family in South India, and became a powerful force. The Sangama, Saluva, Tuluva, and Aravidu dynasties were the four separate dynasties that controlled the empire. The Sangama dynasty was Shaivite, whilst the other dynasties were Vaishnavites. The Vijayanagara kingdom is a symbol of the southern region's golden age in every aspect.

Keywords- Hampi, Tungabhadra doab, Talikota, Amuktamalyada

I. INTRODUCTION

According to the inscriptions, Vijayanagara was known by the old name **Hampe**. Anegondi, Hastinavati or Hastini, Kunjarakona or Kunjarakonapuri. At least some, if not all, of these forms may be found in the inscriptions connected to the word Vijayanagara. Thus, an inscription from Harihara-11, which dates to 1395 A.D., refers to him as "the supreme lord of the royal city Hastinapura Vijayanagara". Furthermore, according to A.D., Devaraya-II "was in the residence of Hampe Hastinavati, which is Vijayanagara" in another inscription from 1432. Other inscriptions, on the other hand, seem to be a little more accurate and do not totally link Vijayanagara with that ancient town. Harihara-II "was in the residence of Vijayanagara in the Hastinavati fort," a 1309 A.D. inscription states. Furthermore, another inscription from 1420 A.D. states that Devaraya is "in the residence of Vijayanagara belonging to Anegondi-durga, which is Hampe-Hastinavati".

Consequently, Anegondi is referred to as Hampe and Hastinavati, and Vijayanagara is seen as part of Anegondi. This suggests that Vijayanagara was a suburb of Anegondi rather than that Anegondi was a suburb of Vijayanagara. Robert Swell claims that "the granite piles of a bridge over the river" or "stones marking the limit of the causeway, are to be seen opposite Hampi." Philology confirms this identity; Hastinavati, "Elephant Pit," seems to be Anegondi's Sanskrit equivalent. This also holds true for the Kunjarakona name. The old Sanskrit word Pampa, which is referenced in the Mahabharata, is translated as Hampe or Hampi in Kanarese.

Consequently, this word is perhaps the oldest name for the Vijayanagara.

The early history of Vijaynagar is unknown. Sewell, the well-known author of "A Forgotten Empire," has referenced many folktales about the origins of Vijaynagar. The Portuguese Kingdom of Bisnagar and the Vijayanagara Empire, sometimes known as the Karnataka Empire, had its capital on the Deccan Plateau region of South India. The Vijaynagar empire was founded in 1336 by Harihar and Bukka of the Sangam dynasty, who first served Partapurudra II, the Kakatiya monarch of Warangal.

But after the Muslims destroyed the Kakatiya empire in 1323, they relocated to the kingdom of Kampili in modern-day Karnataka and worked there as ministers.



International Journal of Recent Development in Engineering and Technology
Website: www.ijrdet.com (ISSN 2347-6435 (Online) Volume 15, Issue 03, March 2026)

After Muhammad Tughlaq also overran Kampili for supporting a Muslim rebel, the two brothers were imprisoned, converted to Islam, and tasked with putting a stop to the disturbances in the province. After originally founding their own owner Kamipili for the sultan, the two Sangama brothers converted back to Hinduism, declared their independence, and founded a new city on the south bank of Tungabhadra named as Vijaynagar (city of triumph) at Saint Vaidyaranya's request. or Visyanagar, the City of Learning.

II. TELUGU ORIGIN

The founders, Harihara and Bukka, were Kuruba/Golla and Kakatiya guards, according to Robert Sewell.

Telugu Nayaks for revenue collection across the empire further strengthened the Telugu affinity.

III. MUSLIM-ORGIN

According to accounts written by Muslim historians and scholars of the time such Ziauddin Barani, Isarni, and Ferishta as well as foreign visitors like Ibn Batuta and Nuniz, the brothers were serving King Prataparudra and were captured after Warangal fell. An additional historian who utilized data from inscriptions such as Gozalavidu writes that "the founders of Vijayanagara were initially in the service of the last Kakatiya king Prataparudra of Warangal, and when that monarch was defeated and captured by Muhammad bin Tughluq, they fled to Kampili and took refuge in the court of Kampilideva."Tughlaq sent the brothers and an army to reclaim the region and act as his representatives when an uprising occurred in Kampili. They successfully finished the task, but under Vidyaranya's influence, they left Islam and joined the Musunuri Nayaks, who, under Kaapaya's leadership, had just succeeded in expelling the Muslims and reestablishing the nation's independence. Harihara and Bukka led the Hindus of Kampili in their struggle against the Muslims after declaring their independence and reverting to their former faith.

IV. THE RISE OF THE VIJAYANAGARA EMPIRE

The establishment of the Vijayanagara Empire, which went on to become one of the most powerful and well-known countries in South India, was a significant moment in Indian history. Harihara I and Bukka Raya I, two Sangama brothers, plotted the empire's founding in 1336. They deliberately chose to establish Vijayanagara, which is currently located in Hampi, Karnataka, as the capital. Due to its fertility and location along significant trade routes, the region was an ideal place to begin pursuing their objectives.

At first, Harihara I and Bukka Raya I belonged to a tiny chieftaincy, and the Hoysala Empire was in decline.

The brothers sensed a chance to build their own domain as the Hoysalas declined. They were skilled commanders who combined political savvy with military strength. They gained authority by strategic alliances, military conquest, and power consolidation. Harihara I and Bukka Raya I put forth a lot of effort to uphold their supremacy in the early years of the Vijayanagara Empire. Through a number of military expeditions against competing chieftains and adjacent states, they increased their sphere of influence. After building contacts with the local authorities, the brothers gradually subdued them using both force and diplomacy. In order to facilitate consolidation and control over recently acquired territories, their governance strategy called for combining local administrative procedures with their own systems. The administrative framework established by the Sangama monarchs was a major factor in the empire's early prosperity. In addition to being conquerors, the early Vijayanagara kings were also visionary administrators. In order to effectively manage their vast territories, they formed a central bureaucracy to supervise state matters and granted authority to provincial governors. This tactic supported economic expansion and development in addition to helping to maintain law and order. They aimed to boost agricultural productivity because they understood the importance of economic stability. By implementing irrigation projects and promoting agricultural growth, they ensured a steady flow of resources and revenue, which in turn supported their military operations and administrative needs.

V. SANGAMA DYNASTY (1336-1485)

Known as the "master of the eastern and western seas" (Purvapaschima Samudradhishavara), Harihara I reigned over most of the area south of the Tungabhadra River from 1336 until 1356. His brother, Bukka Raya I, succeeded him in 1356 and held power until 1377. In 1367, Bukka I launched an assault on the Mudkal fortress. The monarch was overthrown and banished into the jungle when the Bahmani sultan marched into Vijayanagar over the Tungabhadra in retribution. The long battle was won by the Bahmani sultan thanks to the use of artillery. A treaty ultimately divided the disputed **Tungabhadra doab** between the kingdoms. The dominion was expanded to the eastern shore under Harihara II (1377–1404). He sent an expedition to northern Sri Lanka after overthrowing the Warangal rulers in the lower Krishna Godavari delta, the Reddis in the upper Krishna Godavari delta, the Ganga kings of Orissa, the Bahmani sultans, and the Bahmanis in Goa and Belgaum.



International Journal of Recent Development in Engineering and Technology
Website: www.ijrdet.com (ISSN 2347-6435 (Online) Volume 15, Issue 03, March 2026)

Their eastward push ended when the Warangal ruler struck a deal and captured Golconda and Kaulas from the Bahmani sultanate. A pact between Warangal and Bahmanis created an alliance that persisted for almost 50 years. This alliance stopped Vijayanagar from taking over the Tungabhadra doab.

VI. DEVA RAYA I (1406-1422)

He was defeated by Bahmani Sultan Firuz Shah in the fight for Tungabhadra doab. He had to pay 10 lakh huns, jewels, and elephants as compensation. donated Bankapur in the Tungabhadra doab as a dowry to the Sultan, along with his daughter. After Deva Raya sided with Warangal to split the Reddi kingdom, they switched allegiance to Vijayanagara. Consequently, Deva Raya was able to depose Sultan Firuz Shan Bahmani and take control of the entire Reddi realm up to the mouth of the Krishna River. Deva Raya also constructed a dam on Tungabhadra and used its canals to irrigate cities and towns. He also built a dam on the Haridra River. He also built the Mallikarjuna Temple in Mallapangudi. Italian adventurer Nicolo Conti described Vijayanagara as a magnificent capital city after visiting in 1420. A Kannada inscription of Deva Raya I may be found in the Hazara Rama temple in modern-day Hampi.

VII. DEVA RAYA II (1425-1446)

He is considered the best ruler of the Sangam dynasty. He effectively strengthened his army by recruiting Muslims and giving them jagirs. He then made all Hindu soldiers and officials learn mounted archery from them. In order to reclaim territory south of the Krishna (Bankapura, Mudkal), he crossed the Tungabhadra in 1443. But after three tough battles, both sides agreed to maintain the existing borders. According to Portuguese traveler Nuniz, Quilon, Sri Lanka, Pulicat, Pegu, and Tenasserim (Malaya and Burma) celebrated Deva Raya II during this time. Persian traveler Abdur Razzaq also described in detail the army of Deva Raya II. Following Deva Raya II's reign, the nation was temporarily weakened by an internal struggle for the crown. The Vijayanagara were weakened and the Rayas' influence was reduced to Karnataka when the Gajapati rulers of Orissa started conquering south India up to Madurai in 1450. At this time, the minister Saluva ascended to the throne, establishing the Saluva dynasty.

VIII. SALUVA DYNASTY (1485-1505)

The dynasty had only three rulers:

- Saluva Narasimha Deva Raya (1485–1491 CE)
- Thimma Bhupala (1491 CE)

- Narasimha Raya II (1491–1505 CE)

For the majority of his reign, Saluva Narasimha Deva Raya engaged in campaigns to govern his vassals around the realm and ineffectively attempted to halt the Suryavamsa ruler of Orissa's development. In order to restart the horse trade, which Bahman had taken over, Narasimha also constructed more ports on the west coast. After Thimma Bhupa, Narasimha's first son, was killed in 1492 by an army officer who was Narasa's adversary, Narasimha's youngest son, Narasimha Raya II, succeeded his brother as king. His name was Immadi Narasimha. Vira Narasimha, Narasa's eldest son and projected heir, held authority despite being bestowed with the title. He ordered Immadi Narasimha's murder in 1505. After taking the throne, he founded the third Vijayanagar dynasty, the Tuluva dynasty, which lasted from 1503 to 1509.

IX. TULUVA DYNASTY (1491-1570)

Krishna Deva Raya (1509–1529)

He was the greatest ruler of the Vijayanagara empire and founded the greatest state in South India during the Middle Ages. After the Bahamani sultanate fell, he had to cope with the successor states, such the Bijapur sultanate. He defeated Bijapur in 1520. He fought the continuous attacks of the Gajapati kings of Odisha. In the west, he seized power in Gulbarga and Belgaum. His lack of emphasis on developing the navy caused the Portuguese to outpace them in marine trade. The Timurid monarch Babur recognized Krishnadevaraya and the Chittor king Rana Sanga as the two greatest Hindu kings of India when he invaded northern India. The travelogues of Portuguese explorers Domingo Paes and Duarte Barbosa, who visited the Vijayanagara Empire during his reign, demonstrate that the emperor was a superb general who led from the front in combat and even attended to the injured. He was driven to improve the kingdom's art, culture, and architecture. He was also known as Andhra Bhoja. He wrote a book on politics, backed eight eminent scholars known as Astadiggaja, among them the renowned Tenali Raman. Peddannah, also called Andhra Kavita Pitamah, was another exceptional scholar among them.

Manucharitam and Harikatha Saram were written by Pedanna; **Amuktamalyada** and Jambavati Kalyanam (Sanskrit) by Krishnadevaraya, Parijathapaharanam by Nandi Thimmana Rajasekhara Charitramu by Madayyagari Mallana, Kalahasti Mahatyamu by Dhurjati, Sakalakatha Sangraha and Ramaabhyudayamu by Ayyalaraju Ramabhadrudu, and Prabhavate Pradyamana by Pingali Surana.



International Journal of Recent Development in Engineering and Technology
Website: www.ijrdet.com (ISSN 2347-6435 (Online) Volume 15, Issue 03, March 2026)

Aravidu Dynasty (1542-1646)

Tirumala Deva Raya, Aliya Rama Raja's brother, took the kingdom after Aliya Rama Raja was killed in battle. All of the dynasty's kings continued their efforts to reconstruct Vijayanagara in spite of the Muslim neighbors' repeated invasions. The kingdom was still being threatened by this. Around 1592, Venkatapati relocated his capital from Penukonda to Chandragiri, which was nearer the southern Tirupathi hills. After 1604, he relocated the capital from Chandragiri to Vellore Fort, which was an important base. In 1608, the Dutch asked for permission to build a factory in Pulicat during his rule. His nephew Sriranga II took over after his death in 1614.

However, he and his family were killed by several factions during a struggle for the throne. His son Rama deva Raya (1617–1632), who had been smuggled out by a loyal commander during murders, took over after the long battle. Persistent hostilities with the rival factions marred his rule. The last ruler of the dynasty and the Vijayanagara empire was Sriranga III (1642–1652). He continued to lose territory to the Nayaks and Deccan sultans, so by the time of his death, he was a monarch without a kingdom. As a result, Vijayanagara rule in South India ended after three centuries. The Vijayanagara kingdom had a significant impact on the period's literature, architecture, language, and culture.

Numerous languages had a boom in literature, including Sanskrit, Telugu, Kannada, and Tamil. Important aspects of the temple architecture included tall gopurams and Kalyana mandapams (Vithala, Virupaksha temple, Hampi; Varadharaja, Ekamparantha temples, Kanchipuram).

The Battle of Talikota

The Battle of Talikota in 1565 marked the beginning of the decline of the Vijayanagara Empire. This crucial battle was fought between a coalition of the Deccan Sultanates and the warriors of the Vijayanagara Empire. The battle marked the beginning of the decline of the empire and resulted in a crushing defeat for the Vijayanagara army.

The defeat at Talikota had dire consequences for the empire. The coalition armies captured the capital, Vijayanagara, after winning the battle. The loss of the capital seriously hindered the empire's ability to rebuild and restructure, and the city suffered significant damage.

X. ARCHITECTURAL ACHIEVEMENTS

The architectural legacy of the Vijayanagara Empire is arguably the most enduring aspect of its legacy. The ruins of the former capital, **Hampi**, are now listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site as a testament to the empire's grandeur and artistic achievements.

Hampi's spectacular temples, palaces, and public buildings are architectural marvels that showcase the empire's wealth and cultural refinement. These structures, which highlight the creative and architectural achievements of the Vijayanagara era, continue to attract tourists and scholars from all over the world.

XI. CULTURAL CONTRIBUTIONS

The Vijayanagara Empire's artistic and literary achievements are equally remarkable. The empire's support of poets, academics, and artists led to the flourishing of regional literary and artistic traditions. The literary and artistic works of the era, which have been preserved as important aspects of South India's legacy, encapsulate the empire's cultural life. The cultivation of literature in languages like Telugu, Kannada, and Sanskrit led to the emergence of several literary traditions.

During this period, numerous artistic fields saw advancements, including music, painting, and sculpture.

XII. CONCLUSION

The history of the once-dominant Vijayanagara Empire in South India is one of rise, prosperity, and decline. Founded in 1336, the empire quickly grew into a powerful political and economic powerhouse under the visionary leadership of Harihara I, Bukka Raya I, and eventually Krishna Deva Raya. Its strategic location, military power, and economic dominance allowed for a golden age characterized by outstanding architectural accomplishments, cultural blossoming, and flourishing trade. However, internal conflict and external factors ultimately brought about the fall of the empire. The empire began to swiftly crumble after the pivotal Battle of Talikota in 1565, and it ultimately broke up into smaller states. Despite its collapse, the Vijayanagara Empire's remarkable contributions to South Indian architecture and culture have left a lasting legacy. The magnificence and artistic accomplishments of the empire are displayed in the remnants of Hampi, which are today recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The Vijayanagara Empire's history provides important insights into the intricacies of medieval statecraft and cultural evolution, as well as evidence of its lasting impact on the historical and cultural landscape of the area.

REFERENCES

- [1] Krishna Reddy : Indian History
- [2] V.D Mahajan : History of Medieval India