

VIJAYANAGARA AND BAHMANI KINGDOM (PART-1)

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INTRODUCTION

The foundation of the empire of Vijayanagara in 1336 A.D. constitutes a great event in South India in particular and the history of India in general. The decline of the Sultanate of Delhi as an all-India power which started during the later part of the reign of Muhammad bin Tughlaq gave birth to two mighty states in South India – the Bahmani kingdom of Gulbarga and the empire of Vijayanagara. They came into existence almost simultaneously. The empire of Vijayanagara was founded by *Harihara and Bukka*, two of the five sons of *Sangama*. The Vijayanagara empire was aimed at protecting and promoting the Hindu dharma. It also indirectly prevented the extension of the influence of the Bahmani Kingdom and its offshoots in the north, where the power of the Delhi Sultanate had been already considerably weakened, by keeping them constantly engaged in the

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south. From the 14th to the 17th centuries the Vijayanagara Empire spanned a vast area and incorporated diverse ethnic, linguistic, socio-economic, and political groups. The history of Vijayanagara has always been a fascinating subject to the historians since 1900.

Historians have analyzed Vijayanagara history using various approaches such as the Orientalist approach, the Regionalist approach, the Nationalist approach, the Segmentary Statehood approach and the most recent being the Material Culture approach. The recent approach towards the study of Vijayanagara is the one using an interdisciplinary method of correlating the

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archaeological remains or data with the reconstruction of the material culture of the period. The ruins of the city of *Hampi* afford a wealth of data to the historians who look at Vijayanagara from an interdisciplinary perspective comprising of the multifaceted aspects of the empire such as art, history, religion, society, economy, archaeology, anthropology and so .

Anila Verghese in her article on the historiography of Vijayanagara discusses on various approaches towards the study of Vijayanagara history starting from Robert Sewell in 1900 till the recent researches undertaken by scholars like John M Fritz, George Mitchell, Pirre Filliozat, Vasundhara Filliozat, Kathleen Morrison and others. She emphasizes on the interdisciplinary nature of the study of Vijayanagara.

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The background of the Sangamas is shrouded in obscurity. According to the description contained in the works of Rajakalanirnaya and Vidhyaranyakalagnana, the Vijayanagara empire was founded by *Harihara I and Bukka I*. There are two traditions connecting them with Andhra as well as Karnataka. The scholars even now differ to which area the Sangama brothers, Harihara 1 and Bukka 1 belonged.

They were at first in the service of the Kakatiya ruler Prataparudra II. But after the Muslim conquest of the Kakatiya kingdom in 1323, they went to the kingdom of Kampili in modern Karnataka and became ministers there. When Bahauddin Gurshashp, a cousin of Muhammad bin Tughlaq revolted and took refuge with the Raya of Kampili, the Sultan attacked Kampili and

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annexed it to the Sultanate. During the course of this war, Harihara and Bukka were made prisoners of war, converted to Islam and taken to Delhi. In 1335, when Tughlaq possessions in the south were in a state of general turmoil, the Sultan released them and sent as commanders of the Tughlaq troops to restore order in the south. This information is known from Nuniz.

After establishing their sway over Kampili first for the Sultan, the two Sangama brothers returned to the Hindu fold at the initiative of Saint Vidyananya and his brother Sayana, the famous commentator on the Vedas. They proclaimed their independence and laid foundation of the city and kingdom of Vijayanagara on the southern bank of the river Tughbhadra facing the fortress of Anegondi on the Northern bank.

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Against the Telugu origin some scholars argue that they were of Karnataka origin. *Father Heras* is of the opinion that the foundation of the city of Anegondi, which formed the cradle of the Vijayanagara empire, was laid by Viraballala III, the Hoyasala king and Harihara who was near relative of the family of Hoyasalas, who was a frontier officer with head quarters there. Therefore, in view of him, Harihara founded the kingdom of Vijayanagara on 18th April 1336, probably enjoying the position of Mahamandleswara under king Hoyasala Ballala III. Thus the Hoyasala theory was attributed to the origin and foundation of the Vijayanagara empire.

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Whatever may have been their origins, they could establish themselves as masters in Kampila and its vicinity in 1336 and extended their authority over the parts of South Karnataka and Southern Andhra. Four dynasties ruled over Vijayanagara empire in succession. They were –

- **Sangama dynasty (1336 – 1485)**
- **Saluva dynasty (1485 – 1505)**
- **Tuluva dynasty (1503 – 1570)**
- **Aravidu dynasty (1570 – 1675)**

(To be continued)