

City of Hampi and Note of Travellers

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Manifest Pedagogy

UPSC has shown a lot of interest in the History of Empire of Vijaynagara. The recent question on Krishna Deva Raya is the best example. UPSC also has shown a lot of interest in travellers accounts of Ancient and Medieval India and the recent prelims question on Traviner is the best example. So knowing the descriptions of travellers in detail is a must.

In news

Hampi Utsav

Placing it in the syllabus

History of Medieval India, Indian culture; the salient aspects of Art Forms

Static dimensions

- Travellers description of Hampi
- The architecture of the city of Hampi
- The outlay of the city of Vijaynagara.

Content

The outlay of the city

Hampi is one of the finest historical sites of medieval age in India. It was the initial capital city of famous historical Vijayanagara Empire located on the bank of Tungabhadra River about 11 km away from Hospet City. Hampi is a small location

covered an area of 25 sq. km. and it is totally bounded by mountains (Anjaneya, Malyavanta and Matanga Hills) by the three sites and rest one site is bordered by Tungabhadra River.

The fortifications

- It's estimated by the archaeologists that the city had as many as **7 concentric layers of walls around it**. The outermost being about 15 kilometers from the centre of the city. Now, much of all these only exist in the archaeologist's conceptual plans. However, portions of the innermost ones are relatively intact.
- This 32-kilometre inner fortification practically envelops the Royal area and the Islamic quarter of Hampi. On the ground, the scattered portions of these walls may appear disconnected.
- A few meters wide at the base the wall runs as high as 11 meters at strategic places. The basic method of construction is the same throughout the wall. But it looks like they have given more attention to the finish of the surface at portions of the wall close to the Royal area. Granite blocks of various sizes were used in the wall construction.
- No cementing materials were used in the wall construction.
- The trace of the walls often run along the valley of a hill, sometimes climbs over the hill and at places terminates at the river shore. The walls are dotted with a number of gateways to the inner core of the city.
- The city is divided into three parts of Sacred centre, Royal Centre and Urban Core.

Travellers description of Hampi

Chronicles left by Persian and European travellers, particularly the Portuguese, state Hampi was a prosperous, wealthy and grand city near the Tungabhadra River, with

numerous temples, farms and trading markets. Following are the travellers who have mentioned about the city of Hampi in their writings;

Domingo Paes

- He visited the Vijayanagara Empire, around 1520 during the rule of King Krishna Deva Raya.
- Paes recorded his impressions of Vijayanagara state in his *Chronica dos Reis de Bisnaga* ("Chronicle of the Vijayanagar kings").
- Paes reports, "The kingdom has many places on the coast of India, which are seaports with whom we are at peace, and some of them have factories, in particular in Amcola, Mirgeo, Honor, Batecalla, Mangalor, Bracalor and Bacanor."
- He also mentioned that, advanced irrigation technology that allowed the kingdom to produce high yields of crops at very reasonable prices, and a wide variety of cultures.
- He describes a busy market of precious stones. The city was prospering and its size, in the eyes of the narrator, was comparable to Rome, with abundant vegetation, aqueducts and artificial lakes.

Abdur Razzaq

- Abdur Razzak, visited the city during the reign of Deva Raya II., but about twenty years later than Conti. He was entrusted with an embassy from Persia and set out on his mission on January 13, A.D. 1442.
- Razzaq mentioned that "The city of Bidjanagar is such that the pupil of the eye has never seen a place like it, and the ear of intelligence has never been informed that there existed anything to equal it in the world. It is built in such a manner that seven citadels and the same number of walls enclose each other. Around the first citadel are stones of the height of a man, one

half of which is sunk in the ground while the other half rises above it. These are fixed one beside the other in such a manner that no horse or foot soldier could boldly or with ease approach the citadel.”

Nikitin

- Athanasius Nikitin was a native of Twer, Russia and set out on his wanderings by permission of the Duke Michael Borisovich who reigned as Grand Duke of Russia from 1462 to 1505, and his own bishop, Gennadius. He visited India during the period 1468 and 1474.
- And about his narrative of Vijayanagara, it goes thus:

“The Hindu Sultan (the title he thought of the king after travelling the Mohammaden states first) Kadam is a very powerful prince. He possesses an enormous army and resides on a mountain at BICHENEGHER (Vijayanagara). This vast city is surrounded by three forts and intersected by a river, bordering on one side on a dreadful jungle, and on the other on a dale; a wonderful place and to any purpose convenient. On one side it is quite inaccessible; a road gives right through the town, and as the mountain rises high with a ravine below, the town is impregnable.”

Ludovico di Varthema

Also known as Ludivico de Varthema, the Italian traveller from the town of Bologna has left behind him, a valuable account of his experiences of Vijayanagara in the early 16th century.

He describes Vijayanagar as a great city, “very large and strongly walled. It is situated on the side of a mountain, and is seven miles in circumference. It has a triple circlet of walls.” It was very wealthy and well supplied, situated on a beautiful site, and enjoying an excellent climate. The king “keeps up constantly 40,000 horsemen” and 400 elephants. The elephants each carry six men, and have long swords fastened to their trunks in battle .”The common people go quite naked,

with the exception of a piece of cloth about their middle. The king wears a cap of gold brocade two spans long... His horse is worth more than some of our cities on account of the ornaments which it wears." Calicut, he says, was ruined in consequence of its wars with the Portuguese

Prominent temples and architecture of Hampi

- **Vittala Temple** is one of the prime attractions of Hampi dedicated to Hindu God Vittala who is a form of Lord Vishnu. A stone made chariot in front of the entry of the temple gives extra beauty of the temple.
- **Virupaksha Temple** is dedicated to the Hindu Lord Shiva. It is believed to be one of the oldest temples in India where people have been doing continuous worship to god for the last 7th century to till today.
- **Hemakuta** is a rocky hill especially famous for several temples situated on the top of it. Among these, the **Virupaksha Temple** of this hill is most famous. This hilltop offers a lovely scenic view of Hampi.
- **Kadalekalu Ganesha** is an enormous statue about 14 ft high of Lord Ganesha. Some big slender stone pillars with many **mythological themes** carved decorated the front hall of this Statue. Sasivekalu Ganesha is another big statue of Lord Ganesha located inside an open pavilion.
- **Krishna Temple** was constructed **by the Krishnadevaraya in 1513** honour to Lord Krishna. This temple is one of the best attractions in Hampi. The temple ground is decorated with several stunning Yalis designed pillars and impressive carvings of elephant balustrades.
- **Lakshmi Narasimha** is a fantastic big statue of Lord Narasimha (Nara – man and Simha – lion, a lord combined with a man and lion's figure) who was the 10th avatars of Lord Vishnu. This statue is the biggest in Hampi.
- **Queen's bath** is an indoor aquatic complex especially used for royal family bathing. It is the first ruined structures in the Royal Palace.

- **Lotus Mahal** is an **example of complex ancient Vijaynagara architecture**. The original reason for the use of this historical palace is still unknown. Most probably it was a cultural place where some regional forms of dances were performed.
- **Hazara Rama** Temple is an inner temple located inside the royal house. It is dedicated to Hindu Lord Rama and still today one can find here some comic scripts on the stone of temple walls which depicted the story of Ramayana.