

Vijayanagara-the Victory city

February 9, 2023

In news-Salman Rushdie is back with his latest novel, Victory City. The book is a fictionalised telling of the story of the Vijayanagara Kingdom, narrated by a sorceress and poet named Pampa Kampana.

A brief history of Vijayanagara Kingdom-

- The Vijayanagara kingdom has long been a subject of historical and political interest.
- From their **capital, now known as Hampi, on the banks of the Tungabhadra river**, the kings of Vijayanagara at the peak of their power ruled over a territory of more than 360,000 sq. km.
- **Founded in 1336, the kingdom of Vijayanagara lasted for more than three centuries**, a period in which it withstood multiple political stresses, and saw significant advances in art and economy.
- Over the course of its existence from 1336 to 1646, the kingdom saw various ups and downs.
- **Founded by Harihara I of the Sangama dynasty**, Vijayanagara expanded from a strategic position on the banks of the Tungabhadra river. By the 15th century, it had become a force to reckon with.
- **The kingdom reached its peak under Krishna Deva Raya (reign 1509-1529)**, a period in which it enjoyed military superiority to its rival kingdoms such as the Bahmani Sultanate, the Golconda Sultanate and the Gajapatis of Odisha.
- **At its peak, the kingdom stretched from Goa in the Konkan coast to parts of southern Odisha in the east** and all the way to the very tip of the subcontinent in the south.
- While the economy of the kingdom was largely dependent on agriculture, trade thrived in its many ports on

either coast.

- **Traveller Abd al-Razzaq Samarqandi** chronicled how “the ports of Mangalore, Honavar, Bhatkal, Barkur, Cochin, Cannanore, Machilipatnam, and Dharmadam saw traders from Africa, Arabia, Aden, the Red sea, China and Bengal and also served as ship building centres”.
- **The empire’s principal exports** were pepper, ginger, cinnamon, cardamom, myrobalan, tamarind timber, anafistula, precious and semi-precious stones, pearls, musk, ambergris, rhubarb, aloe, cotton cloth and porcelain.
- **Razzaq also chronicled the high degree of monetisation in the Vijayanagara kingdom.**
- In his classic History of South India, K A Nilakanta Sastri wrote that **coins were minted by the state as well as by merchant guilds using gold, silver, copper and brass**, and their value depended on material weight.

Contributions to culture and architecture-

- This was a period when poetry and scholarship flourished, both in sacral and secular contexts.
- **Literature in Tamil, Telugu, Kannada** as well as Sanskrit was produced in the kingdom, with new writing styles and methods emerging.
- In architecture, Vijayanagara saw various enduring constructions.
- According to art historian Percy Brown, **Vijayanagara architecture is “a vibrant combination and blossoming of the Chalukya, Hoysala, Pandya and Chola styles, idioms that prospered in previous centuries.”**
- The **Prasanna Virupaksha temple of Bukka I and the Hazara Rama** temple of Krishna Deva Raya are striking examples of Vijayanagara’s characteristic style and intricate artistry.
- **Vijayanagara’s capital Hampi is a UNESCO World Heritage Site today**, known for its sophisticated fortifications

as well as innumerable temples and other architectural marvels.

- From **accounts of foreign travellers, by the beginning of the 16th century, Hampi-Vijayanagara was probably the second largest urban settlement on the planet** (after Beijing) and among the most prosperous.
- Historian Phillip B. Wagoner wrote that a lasting theme in Vijayanagara's historiography has been its characterisation as "a Hindu bulwark against Muhammadan conquests".
- From Robert Sewell's classic A Forgotten Empire (1900) to Nilakanta Sastri's 1955 magnum opus, this characterisation has persisted over the years and has been influential in the writing of the story of Vijayanagara.
- Vijayanagara has been remembered as an era of "cultural conservatism", when classical forms of Hinduism were preserved amidst growing Islamization of the rest of the subcontinent, especially the North.

Dynasties and Rulers of Vijayanagara kingdom-

Following are some of the the rulers of the kingdom:

Sangama Dynasty-

- Harihara I (Deva Raya) 1336-1343.
- Bukka I 1343-1379.
- Harihara II 1379-1399.
- Bukka II 1399-1406.
- Deva Raya I 1406-1412.
- Vira Vijaya 1412-1419.
- Deva Raya II 1419-1444.

Saluva Dynasty-

- Narasimha 1490.
- Narasa (Vira Narasimha) 1509.
- Krishna Deva 1509-1530.

- Achyuta 1530-1542.
- Sadasiva (in name only) 1542-1567.

Tuluva dynasty-

- Rama (ruled in practice) 1542-1565.
- Tirumala (ruled in practice) 1565-1567.
- Tirumala (crowned ruler) 1567-1575.
- Ranga II 1575-1586.
- Venkata I 1586-1614.