

The **Vijayanagara Empire** (**Kannada**: ವಿಜಯನಗರ ಸಾಮ್ರಾಜ್ಯ, **Telugu**: విజయనగర సామ్రాజ్యము, **Tamil**: விஜயநகர சாம்ராஜ்யம்) referred as the **Kingdom of Bisnaga** by the Portuguese, was a **South Indian** empire based in the **Deccan Plateau**. Established in 1336 by **Harihara I** and his brother **Bukka Raya I**, it lasted until 1646 although its power declined after a major military defeat in 1565 by the **Deccan sultanates**. The empire is named after its capital city of **Vijayanagara**, whose impressive ruins surround modern **Hampi**, now a **World Heritage Site** in modern **Karnataka, India**. The writings of medieval European travelers such as **Domingo Paes**, **Fernao Nuniz**^[1] and **Niccolò Da Conti** and the literature in local vernaculars provide crucial information about its history. Archaeological excavations at Vijayanagara have revealed the empire's power and wealth.

The empire's legacy includes many monuments spread over South India, the best known being the group at **Hampi**. The previous temple building traditions in South India came together in the **Vijayanagara Architecture** style. The mingling of all faiths and vernaculars inspired architectural innovation of **Hindu** temple construction, first in the Deccan and later in the **Dravidian** idioms using the local **granite**. Secular royal structures show the influence of the **Northern Deccan Sultanate** architecture. Efficient administration and vigorous overseas trade brought new technologies like water management systems for irrigation. The empire's patronage enabled fine arts and literature to reach new heights in the languages of **Kannada**, **Telugu**, **Tamil** and **Sanskrit**, while **Carnatic music** evolved into its current form. The Vijayanagara Empire created an epoch in South Indian history that transcended regionalism by promoting **Hinduism** as a unifying factor.

History

Main articles: [Origin of Vijayanagara Empire](#), [Ancient City of Vijayanagara](#), [Battle of Raichur](#), and [Battle of Talikota](#)

Differing theories have been proposed regarding the Vijayanagara empire's origins. Some claim that **Harihara I** and **Bukka Raya I**, the founders of the empire, were relatives of Kakatiya ruling family or **Kuruba** people first associated with the **Kakatiya** kingdom who took control of the northern parts of the **Hoysala Empire** during its decline.^[2] Other historians propose they were **Kannadigas** and commanders in the army of the **Hoysala Empire** stationed in the **Tungabhadra** region to ward off Muslim invasions from the Northern India.^{[3][4][5][6]} Irrespective of their origin, historians agree the founders were supported and inspired by **Vidyanaraya**, a saint at the **Sringeri** monastery to fight the Muslim invasion of South India. Vidyanagaram the capital of empire was named after Vidyanaraya Maharshi. Vidyanaraya is a Telugu Niyogi Brahmin formerly from Orugallu (Warangal).^{[7][8]} Writings by foreign travelers during the late medieval era combined with recent excavations in the Vijayanagara principality have uncovered much-needed information about the empire's history, fortifications, scientific developments and architectural innovations.^{[9][10]}

Before the early 14th century rise of the Vijayanagara empire, the Hindu kingdoms of the Deccan, the **Seuna Yadavas of Devagiri**, the **Kakatiya dynasty of Warangal**, the **Pandya Kingdom of Madurai**, and the tiny kingdom of **Kampili** had been repeatedly invaded by **Muslims** from the north, and by 1336 they had all been defeated by **Alla-ud-din Khilji** and **Muhammad bin Tughluq**, the **Sultans of Delhi**. The Hoysala Empire was the sole remaining Hindu kingdom in the path of the Muslim invasion.^[11] After the death of Hoysala **Veera Ballala III** during a battle against the Sultan of Madurai in 1343, the Hoysala empire merged with the growing Vijayanagara empire.

In the first two decades after the founding of the empire, Harihara I gained control over most of the area south of the Tungabhadra river and earned the title of *Purvapaschima Samudradhishavara* ("master of the eastern and western seas"). By 1374 Bukka Raya I, successor to Harihara I, had defeated the chiefdom of [Arcot](#), the [Reddy dynasty](#) of Kondavidu, the [Sultan of Madurai](#) and gained control over [Goa](#) in the west and the Tungabhadra-[Krishna River doab](#) in the north.^{[12][13]} The island of [Lanka](#) paid tributes and ambassadors were exchanged with the [Ming Dynasty](#) of [China](#).^{[14][15]} The original capital was in the [principality](#) of [Anegondi](#) on the northern banks of the Tungabhadra River in today's [Karnataka](#). It was later moved to nearby Vijayanagara on the river's southern banks during the reign of Bukka Raya I.

With the Vijayanagara Kingdom now imperial in stature, [Harihara II](#), the second son of Bukka Raya I, further consolidated the kingdom beyond the [Krishna River](#) and brought the whole of South India under the Vijayanagara umbrella.^[16] The next ruler, [Deva Raya I](#), emerged successful against the [Gajapatis](#) of [Orissa](#) and undertook important works of fortification and irrigation.^[17] [Deva Raya II](#) (called *Gajabetekara*)^[18] succeeded to the throne in 1424 and was possibly the most capable of the [Sangama dynasty](#) rulers.^[19] He quelled rebelling feudal lords as well as the [Zamorin](#) of [Calicut](#) and [Quilon](#) in the south. He invaded the island of [Lanka](#) and became overlord of the kings of [Burma](#) at [Pegu](#) and [Tanasserim](#).^{[20][21][22]} The empire declined in the late 15th century until the serious attempts by commander [Saluva Narasimha Deva Raya](#) in 1485 and by general [Tuluva Narasa Nayaka](#) in 1491 to reconsolidate the empire. After nearly two decades of conflict with rebellious chieftains, the empire eventually came under the rule of Krishnadevaraya, the son of Tuluva Narasa Nayaka.^[23]

In the following decades the Vijayanagara empire dominated all of Southern India and fought off invasions from the five established [Deccan Sultanates](#).^{[24][25]} The empire reached its peak during the rule of [Krishnadevaraya](#) when Vijayanagara armies were consistently victorious.^[26] The empire annexed areas formerly under the Sultanates in the northern Deccan and the territories in the eastern Deccan, including [Kalinga](#), while simultaneously maintaining control over all its subordinates in the south.^[27] Many important monuments were either completed or commissioned during the time of Krishnadevaraya.^[28]

Krishnadevaraya was followed by [Achyuta Raya](#) in 1530 and in 1542 by [Sadashiva Raya](#) while the real power lay with [Aliya Rama Raya](#), the son-in-law of Krishnadevaraya, whose relationship with the Deccan Sultans who allied against him has been debated.^[29]



Virupaksha temple, [Hampi](#)

The sudden capture and killing of Aliya Rama Raya in 1565 at the [Battle of Talikota](#), against an alliance of the Deccan sultanates, after a seemingly easy victory for the Vijayanagara armies, created havoc and confusion in the Vijayanagara ranks, which were then completely routed. The Sultanates' army later plundered Hampi and reduced it to the ruinous state in which it remains; it was never re-occupied. Tirumala Raya, the sole surviving commander, left Vijayanagara for Penukonda with vast amounts of treasure on the back of 550 elephants.^[30]

The empire went into a slow decline regionally, although trade with the Portuguese continued, and the British were given a land grant for the establishment of [Madras](#).^{[31][32]} [Tirumala Deva Raya](#) was succeeded by his son [Sriranga I](#) later followed by [Venkata II](#) who made [Chandragiri](#) his capital, repulsed the invasion of the [Bahmani Sultanate](#) and saved [Penukonda](#) from being captured.^[33] His successor, [Ramadeva](#), took power and ruled till 1632 after whose death, [Venkata III](#) became king and ruled for about ten years after which [Vellore](#) was made the capital. The empire was finally conquered by the [Sultanates](#) of [Bijapur](#) and [Golkonda](#).^[33] The largest feudatories of the Vijayanagar empire — the [Mysore Kingdom](#), [Keladi Nayaka](#), [Nayaks of Madurai](#), [Nayaks of Tanjore](#), [Nayakas of Chitradurga](#) and [Nayak Kingdom of Gingee](#) — declared independence and went on to have a significant impact on the history of South India in the coming centuries. These Nayaka kingdoms lasted into the 18th century while the Mysore Kingdom remained a princely state until [Indian Independence](#) in 1947 although they came under the [British Raj](#) in 1799 after the death of [Tipu Sultan](#).^[34]

[edit] Governance



Natural fortress at [Vijayanagara](#)



Royal Insignia: The Boar, Sun, Moon and the Dagger

Developed by their predecessors, the Hoysala, Kakatiya and Pandya kingdoms, to govern their territories and made changes only where necessary.^[35] The King was the ultimate authority, assisted by a cabinet of ministers (*Pradhana*) headed by the prime minister (*Mahapradhana*). Other important titles recorded in inscriptions were the chief secretary (*Karyakartha* or *Rayaswami*) and the imperial officers (*Adhikari*). All high ranking ministers and officers were required to have military training.^[36] A secretariat near the king's palace employed [scribes](#) and officers to maintain records made official by using a [wax seal](#) imprinted with the ring of the king.^[37] At the lower administrative levels, wealthy feudal landlords (*Goudas*) supervised accountants (*Karanikas* or *Karnam*) and guards (*Kavalu*). The palace administration was divided into 72 departments (*Niyogas*), each having several female attendants chosen for their youth and beauty (some imported or captured in victorious battles) who were trained to handle minor administrative matters and to serve men of nobility as courtesans or concubines.^[38]

The empire was divided into five main provinces (*Rajya*), each under a commander (*Dandanayaka* or *Dandanatha*) and headed by a governor, often from the royal family, who used the native language for administrative purposes.^[39] A *Rajya* was divided into regions (*Vishaya Vente* or *Kottam*), and further


divided into counties (*Sime* or *Nadu*) themselves subdivided into municipalities (*Kampana* or *Sthala*). Hereditary families ruled their respective territories and paid tribute to the empire while some areas, such as [Keladi](#) and [Madurai](#), came under the direct supervision of a commander.

On the battlefields, the king's commanders led the troops. The empire's war strategy rarely involved massive invasions; more often it employed small scale methods such as attacking and destroying individual forts. The empire was among the first in India to use long range [artillery](#) commonly manned by foreign gunners. (Gunners from present day [Turkmenistan](#) were considered the best).^[40] Army troops were of two types: The king's personal army directly recruited by the empire and the feudal army under each feudatory. King Krishnadevaraya's personal army consisted of 100,000 infantry, 20,000 cavalymen and over 900 elephants. This number was only a part of the army numbering over 1.1 million soldiers, a figure that varied as an army of two million has also been recorded along with the existence of a navy as evidenced by the use of the term *Navigadaprabhu* (commander of the navy).^[41] The army recruited from all classes of society (supported by the collection of additional feudal tributes from feudatory rulers), and consisted of [archers](#) and [musketeers](#) wearing quilted [tunics](#), shieldmen with swords and [poignards](#) in their girdles, and soldiers carrying shields so larges that no armour was necessary. The horses and elephants were fully armoured and the elephants had knives fastened to their tusks to do maximum damage in battle.^[42]

The capital city was completely dependent on the water supply systems constructed to channel and store water, and ensure a consistent supply throughout the year. The remains of these hydraulic systems have given historians a picture of the prevailing [surface water](#) distribution methods in use at that time in South India's semiarid regions.^[43] Contemporary inscriptions and notes of foreign travelers describe how huge tanks were constructed by labourers.^[44] Excavations have uncovered the remains of a well-connected water distribution system existing solely within the royal enclosure and the large temple complexes (suggesting it was for the exclusive use of royalty, and for special ceremonies) with sophisticated channels using gravity and [siphons](#) to [transport water](#) through [pipelines](#).^[45] The only structures resembling public waterworks are the remains of large water tanks that collected the seasonal monsoon water and then dried up in summer except for the few fed by springs. In the fertile agricultural areas near the [Tungabhadra River](#), canals were dug to guide the river water into [irrigation tanks](#). These canals had [sluices](#) that were opened and closed to control the water flow. In other areas the administration encouraged the digging of wells monitored by administrative authorities. Large tanks in the capital city were constructed with royal patronage while smaller tanks were funded by wealthy individuals to gain social and religious merit.

[\[edit\]](#) Economy



 Ancient Market place and plantation at [Hampi](#)

The empire's economy was largely dependent on agriculture. Corn (*jowar*), cotton and [pulse legumes](#) grew in semi arid regions, while sugarcane, rice and wheat thrived in rainy areas. [Betel](#)



[leaves](#), [areca](#) (for chewing), and coconut were the principal cash crops, and large scale cotton production supplied the weaving centers of the empire's vibrant textile industry. Spices such as [turmeric](#), pepper, [cardamom](#) and ginger grew in the remote [Malnad](#) hill region and were transported to the city for trade. The empire's capital city was a thriving business centre that included a burgeoning market in large quantities of precious gems and gold.^[46] Prolific temple-building provided employment to thousands of [masons](#), [sculptors](#), and other skilled artisans.

Land ownership was important. Most of the growers were [tenant farmers](#) and were given the right of part ownership of the land over time. Tax policies encouraging needed produce made distinctions between land use to determine tax levies. For example, the daily market availability of rose petals was important for perfumers, so cultivation of roses received a lower tax assessment.^[47] Salt production and the manufacture of [salt pans](#) were controlled by similar means. The making of [ghee](#) (clarified butter), which was sold as an oil for human consumption and as a fuel for lighting lamps, was profitable.^[48] Exports to China intensified and included cotton, spices, jewels, semi-precious stones, ivory, rhino horn, ebony, amber, coral, and aromatic products such as perfumes. Large vessels from China made frequent visits, some captained by the Chinese Admiral [Cheng Ho](#), and brought Chinese products to the empire's 300 ports, large and small, on the [Arabian Sea](#) and the [Bay of Bengal](#). The ports of [Mangalore](#), [Honavar](#), [Bhatkal](#), [Barkur](#), [Cochin](#), [Cannanore](#), [Machilipatnam](#) and [Dharmadam](#) were the most important.^[49]

When merchant ships docked, the merchandise was taken into official custody and taxes levied on all items sold. The security of the merchandise was guaranteed by the administration officials. Traders of many nationalities ([Arabs](#), [Persians](#), [Guzerates](#), [Khorassanians](#)) settled in [Calicut](#), drawn by the thriving trade business.^[49] Ship building prospered and [keeled](#) ships of 1000–1200 *bahares* ([burden](#)) were built without decks by sewing the entire [hull](#) with ropes rather than fastening them with nails. Ships sailed to the [Red Sea](#) ports of [Aden](#) and [Mecca](#) with Vijayanagara goods sold as far away as [Venice](#). 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.^[49] Cotton yarn was shipped to [Burma](#) and indigo to Persia. Chief imports from [Palestine](#) were copper, quicksilver (mercury), vermilion, coral, saffron, coloured velvets, rose water, knives, coloured [camlets](#), gold and silver. [Persian](#) horses were imported to Cannanore before a two week land trip to the capital. Silk arrived from China and sugar from [Bengal](#).

East coast trade hummed, with goods arriving from [Golkonda](#) where rice, millet, pulse and tobacco were grown on a large scale. Dye crops of indigo and [chay root](#) were produced for the weaving industry. A mineral rich region, [Machilipatnam](#) was the gateway for high quality iron and steel exports. Diamond mining was active in the Kollur region.^[50] The cotton weaving industry produced two types of cottons, plain [calico](#) and muslin (brown, bleached or dyed). Cloth printed with coloured patterns crafted by native techniques were exported to [Java](#) and the [Far East](#). Golkonda specialised in plain cotton and [Pulicat](#) in printed. The main imports on the east coast were non-ferrous metals, camphor, porcelain, silk and luxury goods.^[51]

[\[edit\]](#) Culture

[\[edit\]](#) Social life



[Nāga](#) (snake) stone worship at Hampi

Most information on the social life in Vijayanagara empire comes from the writings of foreign visitors and evidence that research teams in the Vijayanagara area have uncovered. The [Hindu caste system](#) was prevalent and rigidly followed, with each caste represented by a local body of elders who represented the community. These elders set the rules and regulations that were implemented with the help of royal decrees. [Untouchability](#) was part of the caste system and these communities were represented by leaders (*Kaivadavararu*). The Muslim communities were represented by their own group in coastal Karnataka.^[52] The caste system did not, however, prevent distinguished persons from all castes from being promoted to high ranking cadre in the army and administration. In civil life, by virtue of the caste system, [Brahmins](#) enjoyed a high level of respect. With the exception of a few who took to military careers, most Brahmins concentrated on religious and literary matters. Their separation from material wealth and power made them ideal arbiters in local judicial matters, and their presence in every town and village was a calculated investment made by the nobility and aristocracy to maintain order.^[53] However, the popularity of low-caste scholars (such as [Molla](#) and [Kanakadasa](#)) and their works (including those of [Vemana](#) and [Sarvajna](#)) is an indication of the degree of social fluidity in the society.

The practice of [Sati](#) was common, though voluntary, and mostly practiced among the upper classes. Over fifty inscriptions attesting to this have been discovered in the Vijayanagara principality alone. These inscriptions are called *Satikal* (Sati stone) or *Sati-virakal* (Sati [hero stone](#)). *Satikals* commemorated the death of a woman by entering into fire after the death of her husband while *Sati-virakals* were made for a woman who performed *Sati* after her husband's heroic death. Either way, the woman was raised to the level of a demi-goddess and proclaimed by the sculpture of a Sun and crescent moon on the stone.^[54]

The socio-religious movements of the previous centuries, such as [Lingayatism](#), provided momentum for flexible social norms to which women were expected to abide. By this time [South Indian](#) women had crossed most barriers and were actively involved in matters hitherto considered the monopoly of men, such as administration, business and trade, and involvement in the fine arts.^[55] [Tirumalamba Devi](#) who wrote *Varadambika Parinayam* and [Gangadevi](#) who wrote *Madhuravijayam* were among the notable women poets of the era.^[56] Early Telugu women poets like [Tallapaka Timmakka](#) and Atukuri Molla became popular during this period. The court of the [Nayaks of Tanjore](#) is known to have patronised several women poets. The [Devadasi system](#) existed, as well as legalised prostitution relegated to a few streets in each city.^[57] The popularity of harems amongst men of the royalty is well known from records.

Well-to-do men wore the *Pethaor Kulavi*, a tall [turban](#) made of silk and decorated with gold. As in most Indian societies, jewellery was used by men and women and records describe the use of anklets, bracelets, finger-rings, necklaces and ear rings of various types. During celebrations, men and women adorned themselves with flower garlands and used perfumes made of [rose water](#), [civet](#), [musk](#) or [sandalwood](#).^[58] In stark contrast to the commoners whose lives were modest, the lives of the empire's kings and queens were full of ceremonial pomp in the court. Queens and princesses had numerous attendants who were lavishly dressed and adorned with fine jewellery, their daily duties being light.^[59]

Physical exercises were popular with men and wrestling was an important male preoccupation for sport and entertainment. Even women wrestlers are mentioned in records.^[60] Gymnasiums have been discovered inside royal quarters and records speak of regular physical training for commanders and their armies during peace time.^[61] Royal palaces and market places had special arenas where royalty and common people alike amused themselves by watching matches such as cock fights, ram fights and wrestling between women.^[61] Excavations within the Vijayanagara city limits have revealed the existence of various types of community-based activities in the form of engravings on boulders, rock platforms and temple floors, implying these were places of casual social interaction. Some of these games are in use today and others are yet to be identified.^[62]

[edit] Religion

Main article: [Haridasas of Vijayanagar Empire](#)



[Ugra Narasimha](#) (avatar of [Vishnu](#)) at [Hampi](#)



[Balakrishna](#) Temple at [Hampi](#)



Lord [Rama](#) breaking Shiva's bow in Hazare Rama Temple at [Hampi](#)

Although the empire was built to shield [Hindu Dharma](#) from the onslaughts of the [Mughal Empire](#) and the Deccan sultanates, the Vijayanagara kings were tolerant of all religions and sects as writings by foreign visitors show.^[63] The kings used titles such as *Gobrahamana Pratipalanacharya* ("protector of cows") and

Hindurayasuratrana ("upholder of Hindu faith") that testified to their intention of protecting Hinduism. The Empire's founders Harihara I and Bukka Raya I were devout [Shaivas](#) (worshippers of [Shiva](#)), but made grants to the [Vaishnava](#) order of [Sringeri](#) with [Vidyaranya](#) as their patron saint, and designated [Varaha](#) (the boar, an [avatar](#) of [Vishnu](#)) as their [emblem](#).^[64] The later [Saluva](#) and [Tuluva](#) kings were Vaishnava by faith, but worshipped at the feet of Lord Virupaksha (Shiva) at Hampi as well as Lord [Venkateshwara](#) (Vishnu) at [Tirupati](#). A Sanskrit work, *Jambavati Kalyanam* by King Krishnadevaraya, called Lord Virupaksha *Karnata Rajya Raksha Mani* ("protective jewel of [Karnata Empire](#)").^[65] The kings patronised the saints of the [dvaita](#) order (philosophy of dualism) of [Madhvacharya](#) at [Udupi](#).^[66]

The [Bhakti](#) (devotional) movement was active during this time, and involved well known [Haridasas](#) (devotee saints) of that time. Like the [Virashaiva](#) movement of the 12th century, this movement presented another strong current of devotion, pervading the lives of millions. The haridasas represented two groups, the [Vyasakuta](#) and [Dasakuta](#), the former being required to be proficient in the [Vedas](#), [Upanishads](#) and other [Darshanas](#), while the *Dasakuta* merely conveyed the message of Madhvacharya through the Kannada language to the people in the form of devotional songs (*Devaranamas* and *Kirthanas*). The philosophy of Madhvacharya was spread by eminent disciples such as [Naraharitirtha](#), [Jayatirtha](#), [Vyasatirtha](#), [Sripadaraya](#), [Vadirajatirtha](#) and others.^[67] Vyasatirtha, the *guru* (teacher) of Vadirajatirtha, [Purandaradasa](#) (Father of Carnatic music^{[68][69]}) and [Kanakadasa](#)^[70] earned the devotion of King Krishnadevaraya.^{[71][72][73]} The king considered the saint his *Kuladevata* (family deity) and honoured him in his writings.^[74] During this time, another great composer of early carnatic music, [Annamacharya](#) composed hundreds of *Kirthanas* in [Telugu](#) at [Tirupati](#) in present day [Andhra Pradesh](#).^[75]

The defeat of the [Jain Western Ganga Dynasty](#) by the Cholas in early 11th century and the rising numbers of followers of Vaishnava Hinduism and Virashaivism in the 12th century was mirrored by a decreased interest in Jainism.^[76] Two notable locations of Jain worship in the Vijayanagara territory were [Shravanabelagola](#) and [Kambadahalli](#).

[Islamic](#) contact with South India began as early as the 7th century, a result of trade between the Southern kingdoms and [Arab](#) lands. [Jumma Masjids](#) existed in the Rashtrakuta empire by the 10th century^[77] and many mosques flourished on the [Malabar coast](#) by the early 14th century.^[78] Muslim settlers married local women; their children were known as Mappillas (*Moplahs*) and were actively involved in [horse trading](#) and manning shipping fleets. The interactions between the Vijayanagara empire and the Bahamani Sultanates to the north increased the presence of Muslims in the south. The introduction of [Christianity](#) began as early as the 8th century as shown by the finding of [copper plates](#) inscribed with land grants to Malabar Christians. Christian travelers wrote of the scarcity of Christians in South India in the Middle Ages, promoting its attractiveness to missionaries.^[79] The arrival of the [Portuguese](#) in the 15th century and their connections through trade with the empire, the propagation of the faith by [Saint Xavier](#) (1545) and later the presence of [Dutch](#) settlements fostered the growth of Christianity in the south.

[\[edit\]](#) Literature

Main article: [Vijayanagara Empire Literature](#)

During the rule of the Vijayanagar Empire, poets, scholars and philosophers wrote in Sanskrit and the regional languages, Kannada, Telugu and Tamil and covered such subjects as religion, biography, *Prabhanda* (fiction), music, grammar, poetry and medicine. The Telugu language became a popular literary medium, reaching its peak under the patronage of [Krishnadevaraya](#).

Most Sanskrit works were commentaries either on the [Vedas](#) or on the [Ramayana](#) and [Mahabharata](#) epics, written by well known figures such as [Sayana](#) and Vidyaranya that extolled the superiority of the [Advaita](#) philosophy over other rival Hindu philosophies.^[80] Other writers were famous [Dvaita](#) saints of the [Udupi](#) order such as Jayatirtha (earning the title *Tikacharya* for his polemical writings), Vyasatirtha who wrote rebuttals to the Advaita philosophy and of the conclusions of earlier logicians, and Vadirajatirtha and Sripadaraya both of whom criticised the beliefs of [Adi Sankara](#).^[81] Apart from these saints, noted Sanskrit scholars adorned the courts of the Vijayanagara kings and their feudatory chiefdoms. Many kings of the dynasty were themselves litterateurs and authored classics such as King Krishnadevaraya's *Jambavati Kalyana*, a poetic and dramatically skillful work.^[82]

The [Kannada poets and scholars of the empire](#) produced important writings supporting the Vaishnava [Bhakti](#) movement heralded by the [Haridasas](#) (devotees of Vishnu), [Brahminical](#) and Virashaiva ([Lingayatism](#)) literature. The [Haridasa](#) poets celebrated their devotion through songs called *Devaranama* (lyrical poems) in the *ragale* metre. Their inspirations were the teachings of Madhvacharya and Vyasatirtha. Purandaradasa and Kanakadasa are considered the foremost among many *Dasas* (devotees) by virtue of their immense contribution.^[83] [Kumara Vyasa](#), the most notable of Brahmin scholars wrote *Gadugina Bharata*, a translation of the epic *Mahabharata*. This work marks a transition of Kannada literature from old Kannada to modern Kannada.^[84] [Chamarasa](#) was a famous Virashaiva scholar and poet who had many debates with Vaishnava scholars in the court of Devaraya II. His *Prabhulinga Lile*, later translated into Telugu and Tamil, was a eulogy of Saint [Allama Prabhu](#) (the saint was considered an incarnation of Lord [Ganapathi](#) while [Parvati](#) took the form of a princess of Banavasi).^[85]

At this peak of [Telugu](#) literature, the most famous writing in the *Prabhanda* style was *Manucharitamu*. King Krishnadevaraya was an accomplished Telugu scholar and wrote the celebrated *Amuktamalyada*.^[86] In his court were the eight famous scholars regarded as the pillars ([Ashtadiggajas](#)) of the literary assembly, the most famous being [Allasani Peddana](#) honoured with the title *Andhrakavitapitamaha* (father of Telugu poetry) and [Tenali Ramakrishna](#), Krishnadevaraya's court jester who authored several acclaimed works.^[87] This was the age of [Srinatha](#), the greatest of all Telugu poets in legend, who wrote books like *Marutracharitam* and *Salivahana-sapta-sati*. He was patronised by King Devaraya II and his stature was equal to the most important ministers in the court.^[88]

Though much of the [Tamil](#) literature from this period came from Tamil speaking regions ruled by the feudatory Pandya who gave particular attention on the cultivation of Tamil literature, some poets were patronised by the Vijayanagara kings. [Svarupananda Desikar](#) wrote an anthology of 2824 verses, *Sivaprakasap-perundirattu*, on the Advaita philosophy. His pupil the ascetic, [Tattuvarayar](#), wrote a shorter anthology, *Kurundirattu*, that contained about half the number of verses. Krishnadevaraya patronised the Tamil Vaishnava poet Haridasa whose *Irusamaya Vilakkam* was an exposition of the two Hindu systems, Vaishnava and Shaiva, with a preference for the former.^[89]

Notable among secular writings on music and medicine were [Vidyaranya](#)'s *Sangitsara*, [Praudha Raya](#)'s *Ratiratnapradipika*, [Sayana](#)'s *Ayurveda Sudhanidhi* and [Lakshmana Pandita](#)'s *Vaidyarajavallabham*.^[90]

[edit] Architecture

Main articles: [Vijayanagara Architecture](#), [Vijayanagara](#), and [Hampi](#)



Yali pillars in Aghoreshwara Temple at Ikkeri in [Shimoga District](#)



Stone Chariot in Vitthala Temple at [Hampi](#)



Inside the Hazara Rama temple at [Hampi](#)

Vijayanagara architecture is a vibrant combination of the [Chalukya](#), [Hoysala](#), [Pandya](#) and [Chola](#) styles, idioms that prospered in previous centuries.^{[91][92]} Its legacy of sculpture, architecture and painting influenced the development of the arts long after the empire came to an end. Its stylistic hallmark is the ornate [pillared Kalyanamantapa](#) (marriage hall), *Vasanthamantapa* (open pillared halls) and the *Rayagopura* (tower). Artisans used the locally available hard granite because of its durability since the kingdom was under constant threat of invasion. While the empire's monuments are spread over the whole of Southern India, nothing surpasses the vast open air theatre of monuments at its capital at [Vijayanagara](#), a [UNESCO World Heritage Site](#).^[93]

In the 14th century the kings continued to build [Vesara](#) or Deccan style monuments but later incorporated dravida-style [gopurams](#) to meet their ritualistic needs. The Prasanna Virupaksha temple (underground temple) of [Bukka Raya I](#) and the Hazare Rama temple of Deva Raya I are examples of Deccan architecture.^[94] The varied and intricate ornamentation of the pillars is a mark of their work.^[95] At Hampi, though the *Vitthala* temple is the best example of their pillared *Kalyanamantapa* style, the *Hazara Ramaswamy* temple is a modest but perfectly finished example.^[96] A visible aspect of their style is their return to the simplistic and serene art developed by the Chalukya dynasty.^[97] A grand specimen of Vijayanagara art, the *Vitthala* temple, took several decades to complete during the reign of the Tuluva kings.^[98]

Another element of the Vijayanagara style is the carving of large [monoliths](#) such as the *Sasivekalu* (mustard) [Ganesha](#) and *Kadalekalu* (Ground nut) Ganesha at Hampi, the [Gomateshwara](#) statues in [Karkala](#) and [Venur](#), and the [Nandi](#) bull in [Lepakshi](#). The Vijayanagara temples of [Bhatkal](#), [Kanakagiri](#), [Sringeri](#) and other towns of coastal Karnataka, as well as [Tadpatri](#), [Lepakshi](#), [Ahobilam](#), [Tirupati](#) and [Srikalahasti](#) in [Andhra Pradesh](#), and [Vellore](#), [Kumbakonam](#), [Kanchi](#) and [Srirangam](#) in [Tamil Nadu](#) are examples of this style. Vijayanagara art includes wall-paintings such as *Dasavathara* (ten [avatars](#) of Vishnu) and *Girijakalyana* (marriage of Goddess [Parvati](#)) in the [Virupaksha](#) temple at Hampi, the *Shivapurana* paintings (tales of Shiva) at the [Virabhadra](#) temple at [Lepakshi](#), and those at the Jain *basadi* (temple) and the Kamaskshi and Varadaraja temple at Kanchi.^[99] This mingling of the South Indian styles resulted in a richness not seen in earlier centuries, a focus on [reliefs](#) in addition to sculpture that surpasses that previously in India.^[100]

An aspect of Vijayanagara architecture that shows the cosmopolitanism of the great city is the presence of many secular structures bearing Islamic features. While political history concentrates on the ongoing conflict between the Vijayanagara empire and the Deccan Sultanates, the architectural record reflects a more creative interaction. There are many [arches](#), [domes](#) and [vaults](#) that show these influences. The concentration of structures like [pavilions](#), [stables](#) and [towers](#) suggests they were for use by royalty.^[101] The decorative details of these structures may have been absorbed into Vijayanagara architecture during the early 15th century, coinciding with the rule of Deva Raya I and Deva Raya II. These kings are known to have employed many Muslims in their army and court, some of whom may have been [Muslim architects](#). This harmonious exchange of architectural ideas must have happened during rare periods of peace between the Hindu and Muslim kingdoms.^[102] The "Great Platform" (*Mahanavami dibba*) has relief carvings in which the figures seem to have the facial features of central Asian Turks who were known to have been employed as royal attendants.^[103]

[[edit](#)] Language



Poetic inscription in Kannada by Vijayanagara poet Manjaraja (1398 CE)

Kannada, Telugu and Tamil were used in their respective regions of the empire. Over 7000 inscriptions (*Shasana*) including 300 copper plate inscriptions (*Tamarashasana*) have been recovered, almost half of which are in Kannada, the remaining in Telugu, Tamil and Sanskrit.^{[104][105]} Bilingual inscriptions had lost favour by the 14th century.^[106] The empire minted coins at Hampi, Penugonda and Tirupati with [Nagari](#), Kannada and Telugu legends usually carrying the name of the ruler.^{[107][108]} Gold, silver and copper were used to issue coins called *Gadyana*, *Varaha*, *Pon*, *Pagoda*, *Pratapa*, *Pana*, *Kasu* and *Jital*.^[109] The coins contained the images of various Gods including Balakrishna (infant Krishna), [Venkateshwara](#) (the presiding deity of the temple at Tirupati), Goddesses such as [Bhudevi](#) and Sridevi, divine couples, animals such as bulls and elephants and birds. The earliest coins feature [Hanuman](#) and the [Garuda](#) (divine eagle), the vehicle of Lord Vishnu. Kannada and Telugu inscriptions have been deciphered and recorded by historians of the [Archaeological Survey of India](#).^{[110][111]}



