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FACTORS FOR THE RISE OF THE CAPITAL CITY HAMPI



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Short Profile

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ABSTRACT:

Vijayanagara was a celebrated name in the history of South India. In the medieval times glory of the Vijayanagara empire glow brilliantly. In medieval times trade and commerce, other economic activities like industries flourished and played an important role in the rise and growth of cities and towns. The city Vijayanagara emerged as capital city and became a centre of various religious sects, centre of trade and commerce and of artistic and cultural activities. As it was the capital city Vijayanagara became a champion of Hindu culture.

KEYWORDS

economic activities , industries flourished , geographical, administrative, economic.

INTRODUCTION

As the capital of a vast empire, covering a large part of South India, Vijayanagar was inhabited by diverse people from different provinces. A large population settled down in the capital to serve in the king's court, in military and in temples. The multi-ethnic composition of the Vijayanagar city manifested in the growth of a variety of languages, social customs and religious beliefs, which replicated in microcosmic form of those of the whole empire. This diversity to some extent was increased by the inclusion of Muslims, who were employed in the royal cavalry.

The location of the city on the right bank of the river Tungabhadra, surrounded by hillocks, facilitated the rulers to build beautiful and large temples of Saiva and Vaishnava faiths. The existence of monolithic big statues converted this place into a holy religious centre. Thus, patronage extended by the rulers of Vijayanagara empire enabled the gradual growth and development of the city. Festivals and religious rituals received more scope and they were celebrated as state festivals rather than merely public functions. In fact the rulers of Vijayanagara empire opened a new era of celebrating festivals in a grand manner in Karnataka.

Many factors, like geographical, administrative, economic, commercial, religious, military, intellectual, artistic, educational and others, played an important role in the growth and sustenance of the Vijayanagara city and also other towns. These factors influenced urbanization process in the Vijayanagara city in particular and towns and cities in the empire in general.

GEOGRAPHICAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE FACTORS:

In the historical times the big towns usually developed on the banks of rivers or on sea coast. The vicinity of a river was considered as a natural fortification besides serving as a means of transport and water resource. The site selected for the new capital on the southern bank of the Tungabhadra was remarkable. In one of the epigraphs it is described that its rampart was Hemakuta, its moat was the auspicious Thungabhadra, its guardian was the world protector Lord Virupaksha its ruler was the great king of king's, Harihara.

In ancient Karnataka the rulers of various dynasties maintained good administration and divided the kingdom into districts, taluks and villages for the better management of the kingdom. The founders of Vijayanagara who were earlier in the service of Hoysala empire, more or less continued the same traditions. They selected Vijayanagara (Hampi) as their capital for its geographical and strategic importance. The five hills like Hemakuta, Matanga Parvata, Kishkindha, Malyavanta and Rishyamukha provided protection and acted like a natural fort. Domingos Paes also noticed particularly the geographical location of the city which he admired in his accounts.

Economic Factor:

Vijayanagara city was a conglomeration of a huge population. To supply the day to day necessities of the people like clothes, oil, metals, leather goods and weapons for the royal military, agricultural implements to the surrounding villages, weavers and artisans like blacksmiths, carpenters and other skilled craftsmen settled and established industries in the city. People of this period were very fond of gold and silver ornaments. So, jewellery developed as an important industry in the city. Agriculture was the main occupation of the empire and the cities were the main centres of trade and commerce for agricultural produce. Agricultural requirements like bullock-carts, plough-shares, axes, iron tyres for wheels, iron bullock-shoes, sickle, crowbars etc., were manufactured by artisans and craftsmen in the city.

COMMERCIAL FACTOR:

Farmers brought their agricultural products for sale to the city. As such the growth of the city depended largely on the number of surrounding villages. As there was no other big city near Vijayanagara emerged as an important commercial centre. The other commercial centres like Goa, Annigeri, Belgaum, Aihole, Badami, Raichur, Mudugal, Bijapur, Bankapura, Dwarasamudra, Ikkeri, Adoni, Penugonda etc. were far away from the capital city of Vijayanagara. This encouraged the farmers to live around the Vijayanagara city to have trade and commercial contact with the Vijayanagara. Important crops like paddy, millet, cotton, jowar, oilseeds, pulses, wheat, vegetables were the main items of internal trade.

Trade and market played a crucial role in the development of Vijayanagara city. The prosperity of a country depends largely on its trade. The writings of the foreigners who visited South India, particularly Vijayanagara city give some glimpses of its vigorous trade in those days. According to Paes the city of Vijayanagara was the meeting place of traders of the world. In this city you could find men belonging to different nations because of its great trade.

The celebration of periodical fairs and festivals in the capital contributed to the growth of trade in the capital. The articles of inland trade were many and were generally sold in the different bazars of the city. A fair was held every Friday in a certain part of Vijayanagara city.⁵ An epigraph reveals that at Krishnapura a weekly market was held on every Monday and in the same manner at Achyutapura every Tuesday market was held.⁶ These fairs undoubtedly added to the material prosperity of the people and the capital. Thus, one notices the important role played by trade and commerce in transforming Vijayanagara as a great urban centre in medieval times.

Religious Factor:

As in ancient Karnataka during the Vijayanagara period also religion and religious ceremonies occupied an important place in the social life of the people. The very object of the foundation of the Vijayanagara was to preserve Hindu religion, traditions and culture from the onslaughts of Muslim invasions. This made the founders to give more attention to maintain and strengthen the social order and religious activities in the land and the capital city. Especially, the Brahmins performed a number of rituals and ceremonies. They assisted and advised the king and the public in all the religious matters. The practices of rites observed from womb to tomb, continued even after the departure of soul. All the festivals were celebrated under the direct supervision of priestly class.

Religions like Saivism, Vaishnavism and Jainism received royal patronage. Hence, the temples of these faiths were raised and came up in the Vijayanagara city. In the medieval period for the first time peace and prosperity prevailed in the empire. The Vijayanagara rulers started a new style of temple construction in their empire. Huge complexes, high walls, sub-shrines appeared in temple premises eg. Virupaksha, Vitthala, Balakrishna, Hazara Rama and Pattabhi Rama temples. To commemorate the coronation ceremony and their victories the rulers like Praudhadevaraya II, Krishnadevaraya and Achyutadevaraya built temples and added new enclosures to the already existing temples. Krishnadevaraya, to commemorate his victory over Udayagiri built Balakrishna temple and installed the idol of Balakrishna there which he had brought from Udayagiri. To construct big temples a large number of sculptors, masons and architects were engaged continuously. Transportation of big boulders and stones was the regular scene in the Vijayanagara city. The monolithic huge statues of Yugalakshmi Narasimha, Ganeshas, Sivalinga, reveal a new style of image worship in the open space.

Military Factor:

In the middle of the 14th century after the establishment of the Vijayanagara empire, the Bahmani kingdom was founded at Gulburga as a keen contender for the political supremacy in the

South. Particularly Raichur doab was the bone of contention between the two powers. This continuous conflict forced the Vijayanagara rulers to adopt more defensive measures. So, for the first time in Karnataka watch towers were built by the Hindu rulers. The existence of watch towers near Lotus Mahal and Noble's Quarter reveal that there was a continuous threat by the Bahmani rulers. Vijayanagara rulers also constructed huge storage buildings for protecting arms and ammunitions. As such a number of soldiers and military leaders settled at the city. Thus, the city attained its strategic importance and the rulers constructed the citadels, strong outer wall fortifications, guard rooms and elephant stables. Abdur Razzak observes that the city was built in such a manner that seven citadels and the same number of walls enclosed each other. And he also writes that in this city there were as many as ninety thousand men fit to bear arms. Even today remains of the defence measures can be seen in and around the Vijayanagara city from the engineering point of view. Watch towers, gateways and gate houses were built to maintain the security of the capital city. In South India Vijayanagara empire was the biggest, which extended in the present states of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Orissa. Naturally to meet the requirements of the time, rulers like Devaraya II, Krishnadevaraya, Ramaraya, employed and maintained huge armies, consisting of all communities. Thus, all these military factors played an important role in developing Vijayanagara as a metropolitan city.

INTELLECTUAL FACTOR:

By medieval times, education had attained its maturity. In ancient Karnataka temples and agraharas played an important role in imparting the education. The Vijayanagara empire included regions where Kannada, Telugu, Sanskrit and Tamil literature were produced in those languages. Kings like Devaraya II, Krishnadevaraya and princesses like Gangadevi, Varadambika, Mohanangi wrote scholarly works in Sanskrit and Telugu. This attitude of the members of the royal family attracted the scholars to the capital city and contributed to the enrichment of literature. Scholars from various parts flocked to the Vijayanagara city's royal court to win the recognition from the Rayas by giving challenges to the court pandits and scholars at philosophical and literary disputations. Krishnadevaraya himself was a scholar, musician and poet. He loved to gather around him poets, philosophers and religious teachers, whom he honoured with munificent gifts of land and money.¹² He was so much attached to the company of learned men that he spent most of his spare time, when he was at the capital in hearing their learned discourses and discussions. He reserved his noons for the philosophers.¹³ To encourage scholars, kings like Devaraya II, Krishnadevaraya, Achyutadevaraya and Ramaraya gave liberal donations and grants for their maintenance. This patronage attracted scholars of different regions to come and settle in the capital city. Thus, the intellectual factor was also responsible for the growth and development of Vijayanagara Urbanization.

FINE ARTS FACTOR:

Vijayanagara rulers extended wholehearted support to the development of fine arts, like music, art, and dance by patronising many versatile artistes. Singers, musicians, and dancers were the important members of the royal court. Perhaps never before in the history of South India, dancing was held in so high esteem as it was during the Vijayanagara times. Inscriptions of Vijayanagara highlight the social status of the temple girls and dancers appointed by the king himself. Temples of the Vijayanagara city were the training centres for dancers. Expert dancers trained in such centres were sent to the famous temples of South India to perform dance there. During the period of Achyutadevaraya dancing girls were sent to serve in Lord Venkateshwara temple at Tirupati. Attracted by

the liberal patronage of the Rayas many dancers, singers, musicians and others who were interested in fine arts came to Vijayanagara city seeking the support and royal encouragement. Thus, the city became an important centre of cultural activities.

EDUCATIONAL FACTOR:

Imparting education to the subjects was the main duty of the king. As it was in ancient Karnataka even in the medieval period temples were the centres of education. Encouragement was given by the kings of Vijayanagara through the construction of huge temples, and also Agraharas like Krishnapura, Nagaladevipura, Nelalahunise and Kumaragiri. Mohanatarangini of Kanakadasa reveals that they were imparting education in subjects like: Agamas, Vedas, Vedanta, Puranas, Itihasa, Ayurveda, Astrology, Vyakarana, Ganita, languages and polity, Kavya, Nataka and Music in these Agraharas.

Rayas like Devaraya II, Krishnadevaraya and Achyutadevaraya made liberal grants of lands to the Brahmins of these Agraharas for their services rendered to education. An epigraph found at Balakrishna temple dated AD 1515, reveals that Krishnadevaraya assigned a large area to the Brahmins for their various services rendered in the Balakrishna temple. To these Brahmins, lands including Krishnapura area were given to them. Krishnadevaraya was also responsible for the establishment of Nagaladevipura Agrahara, named after his mother Nagaladevi. According to an inscription dated A.D. 1516 Krishnadevaraya granted a manya village to the Brahmin priest Ranganatha Dikshita who in turn gave shares to other Brahmins. In turn for the merit of the king's mother the priest there constructed a tank called Nagasamudra and the temples of Nagesvara and Nagendrasayana. Another inscription dated A.D. 1540 of Achyutaraya mentions about Nelalahuniseya Agrahara, which was situated to the east of Vitthalapura. The priests serving in the Balakrishna temple were settled here. They had received grants even by the predecessor king Krishnadevaraya. An epigraph dated A.D. 1455 found at Kapilasrama states that king Devaraya II donated a village to God Saumya Somesvara of Somalapura situated near Kumaragiri Agrahara on the southern bank of the river Tungabhadra.¹⁹ In this way Vaishnava temples and Agraharas promoted Vedic education.

OTHER FACTORS:

The greatness of the Vijayanagara empire spread in different parts of the world. The splendid and magnificent monuments, the celebrations of festivals, and other cultural activities attracted foreign visitors from Persia, Portugal, Italy, Russia and the Arab world. They not only visited the Vijayanagara but also settled there for sometime in order to study the socio-cultural life of the people. They have given valuable travel accounts which throw flood of light on various aspects of the city and the empire. This shows that the name and fame of Vijayanagara city had spread not only in Asia but also in Europe.

From these travel accounts of merchants from Persia, Portugal, China the development of trade and commerce of the Vijayanagara empire can be understood. The Portuguese and Arab merchants supplied horses required for the army. Spices were exported to European markets from the Western Coast of India. Thus, the flourishing trade and commerce enriched the socio-economic conditions of the empire and helped the people to improve their life style.

Agriculture, small scale industries, handicrafts were the main occupations of the people. Hence, agriculturists, agricultural labourers, industrial labourers, artisans, merchants, traders and transporting labours made the capital city metropolitan in character. Other communities also settled in the town to serve the elite class of the society. Thus, the other factors also played an important role in the development of the city. The Vijayanagara city was not only a seat of political power, but also a great

centre of trade, commerce, industry, religion, education as well as social activities. All these factors contributed to make the Vijayanagara city a great Urban centre and facilitated further the urbanization process in the vast empire.

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