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## SACRED HINDU RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS OF VIJAYANAGAR EMPIRE

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**Abstract:-**This research article will focus on the sacred Hindu religious Institutions of Vijayanagar Empire during (1336-1565) those existed in and around the Hampi, Lepakshi and Sringeri. The mathas and temples are the main pillars of the medieval times. They tried to spread the education and maintained peace in the society. They ment for maintaining the socio-religious and cultural harmony between the all castes of the Hindu religion. Therefore still the mathas and temples are worshipping by the people as religious centers.

**Keywords:**Matha, Temple, Art and Architecture, Excavation and Empire.

### 1.INTRODUCTION

The establishment of the Vijayanagar Empire was a history in South India. The Vijayanagara Empire was founded by Harihara and Bukka in 1336 A.D., they also called as the Sangama brothers. The empire consolidated under Harihara I and began to expand and prosper under Bukka Raya. Sometime after its original establishment the capital was established at the more defensible and secures location of Vijayanagara on the south side of the river. The city flourished between the 14th century and 16th century, during the height of the power of the Vijayanagar Empire. During this time, the empire was often in conflict with the Muslim kingdoms which had become established in the northern Deccan, and which are often collectively termed the Deccan Sultanates. In 1565, the empire's armies suffered a massive and catastrophic defeat at the hands of an alliance of the sultanates, and the capital was taken. The victorious Muslim armies then proceeded to raze, depopulate, and destroy the city and its Hindu temples and icons over a period of several months. Despite the empire continuing to exist thereafter during a slow decline, the original capital was not reoccupied or rebuilt. It has not been occupied since. The buildings in the city are mostly built in the original native traditions of southern India, associated with the Hindu religion. 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 of which is 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 Dravidianidioms using the local granite. Some of them show a certain amount of Islamic influence due the interaction with the Islamic kingdoms. After the Talikote War some of the temples have destroyed by the Muslim rulers.

### 2.REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

Greenlaw and Alexander John (Colonel) (1856)(1910)1, tried to show the eastern gopura

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and a monolithic lamp column of Vitthala temple complex, at Hampi (Vijayanagara). Vijayanagara, meaning 'city of victory' was the imperial capital of the last great Hindu empire to rule south India. Established in 1336 and named after its capital, the Vijayanagara empire expanded and prospered throughout the next century. In 1565, this impressive city was sacked by armies from the Deccan sultanates and never rebuilt. Now known as the 'Group of Monuments at Hampi', the site represents the empire's finest and highest concentration of architecture. Classified into religious, courtly and military buildings, its pillared audience halls and towering gateways are its stylistic hallmarks. Many secular buildings bear Islamic features, displaying the city's cosmopolitan inception. Some of its religious complexes remain in use today. Amateur British colonial photographer, Alexander Greenlaw was the first to extensively photograph the site in 1855-56. The resulting series of waxed paper negatives were made available to the V&A and printed in 1910.

Anila Verghese<sup>2</sup>, tried to examine, the aspects of Hindu worship at Vijayanagara, which formed the capital of an empire from the mid-fourteenth century to AD 1565. While the earliest cult was that of a local goddess known as Pampa, this deity was absorbed in the pre-empire period into the pantheon of the great gods of Hinduism, through her marriage to Virupaksha (a form of Shiva) who soon superseded her in importance. Virupaksha was chosen as the tutelary deity of the Vijayanagara kings and state but, even after the collapse of the empire, the temple dedicated to him survived as the main cult centre at the site. There were other Shaiva deities as well such as Bhairava, Virabhadra and Ganesha, though Vaishnava cults were not prevalent at the site till the early-empire period. The earliest Vaishnava deity to be incorporated at Vijayanagara was Narasimha. The cult of Rama and the development of the Ramayana myths associated with the site was an early fifteenth-century phenomenon. In the sixteenth century, other Vaishnava deities, such as Vitthala, Krishna, Tiruvengalanatha and Ranganatha, gained in popularity. The paper also touches upon the cults of lesser divinities, folk deities such as Hanuman and Yellamma, and on the archaeological evidence of other religions such as Jainism and Islam at Vijayanagara.

### **3.OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:**

The objectives of the study as follows:

- 1.To study the religious institutions of the Vijayanagar Empire
- 2.To discuss brief history of the mathas and temples of Vijayanagar Empire

### **4.SCOPE OF THE STUDY:**

The scope of the study is extended to mathas and temples of Vijayanagar Empire which are existed in Hampi, Sringeri, Lepakshi etc and the brief historical background of the religious institutions of Vijayanagar Empire.

### **5.SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY:**

The Vijayanagar Empire was a great kingdom in South India which was the last hindu dynasty of Karnataka. The kings of Vijayanagar Empire given more concentration to establish the mathas and temples in and around the empire. They have their own history in Karnataka history. The mathas and temples are the religious institutions of the society. In mathas and temples were taught subjects like, Vedas, Puranas, Shadangas, Dharmashastra, Moral ethics, etc.. They stood as a religious and cultural institutions in Vijayanagar Empire. The mathas and temples of the dynasty worshiped and sacred by the people. That's why the mathas and temples are still worshipping by the devotees.

### **6.SACRED HINDU RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS OF VIJAYANAGAR EMPIRE:**

Mathas and Temples are played an important role in Vijayanatar Empire. The administration of the temple is a part of the local self government in the Empire. Even it is a religious centre but also a social institution. The temples also worked as a educational and cultural centre in the empire and taught the subjects like, literature, vedas, puranas, etc.. The mathas also a part of the temples. The mathas started to preach the religious teaching and thoughts. These are the main objects

of the mathas. In the mathas there was given more concentration towards the free study, boarding and lodging for the students. In these mathas there were more children from the Brahman community with this community there were separate teachers were appointed for kings and nobles children in the mathas. There was dancing, music, taught for the above said community. But there lower community children were very low in numbers. In the mathas those children were admitted and studying were taught Sastra with this they also learnt vedas, vyakarana, shaddarshanas, pantanjali yoga, purana, drama, poetry etc.

The mathas administration was included with chief and he was known as 'Jagadguru'. Under the leadership of the Jagadguru there were number of the masters lived in mathas they wanted to teach the moral lesson to the students at the mathas of the Vijayanagar Empire. Jagadguru also maintained the administration of the mathas, jahaguru, and bhudatti, gifts given by the Samantas. For example, the Sringeri matha one of it. In this way the mathas and temples are played vital role in Vijayanagar Empire.

The sacred religious Institutions of Vijayanagar Empire is divided into two categories those are mentioned as below:

### 1. Temples:

'Temple' the word derived from 'Latin' word 'templum'. It is a structure reserved for religious or spiritual activities, such as prayer and sacrifice, or analogous rites. A templum constituted a sacred precinct as defined by a priest, or augur.<sup>3</sup> It has the same root as the word "template," a plan in preparation of the building that was marked out on the ground by the augur. Temple also became associated with the dwelling places of a god or gods. Despite the specific set of meanings associated with the religion of ancient Rome, the word has now become quite widely used to describe a house of worship for any number of religions and is even used for time periods prior to the Romans. Vijayanagar Empire has various notable Hindu temples in Hampi, Sringeri, Tirupati, Kanchi, Lepakshi, Srishail, Karkal, Moodabidre, Bhatkal, and Kolar, etc. , some of which are still active places of worship. Among the most notable are:

#### 1.1. Virupaksha Temple:



**Virupaksha Temple at Hampi**

Virupaksha Temple is located in Hampi 350 km from Bangalore, in the state of Karnataka in Southern India. It is part of the Group of Monuments at Hampi, designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Virupaksha is a form of Shiva and has other temples dedicated to him, notably at the Group of Monuments at Pattadakal, another World Heritage Site. Hampi sits on the banks of the Tungabhadra River in the ruins of the ancient city of Vijayanagar, capital of the Vijayanagar Empire. Virupaksha Temple is the main center of pilgrimage at Hampi and has been considered the most sacred sanctuary over the centuries. It is fully intact among the surrounding ruins and is still used in

worship. The temple is dedicated to Lord Shiva, known here as Virupaksha, as the consort of the local goddess Pampa who is associated with the Tungabhadra River. There is also a powerful Virupakshini amma temple (mother goddess) in a village called Nalagamapalle, Chittoor district, Andhra Pradesh, approximately 100 km from Tirupati. The temple also known as the Pampapati temple, it predated the empire, and was extended between the 13th and 17th centuries. It has two courts with entrance gopurams. The main entrance with a 50 meter gopuram faces east into a ceremonial and colonnaded street, that extends for about 1 km to a monolithic statue of Nandi. The temple is still in use now. It is dedicated to Virupaksha, an aspect of Shiva and his consort Pampa, a local deity.<sup>4</sup>

The Virupaksha temple's history is uninterrupted from about the 7th century. The Virupaksha-Pampa sanctuary existed well before the Vijayanagara capital was located here. Inscriptions referring to Shiva date back to the 9th and 10th centuries.<sup>5</sup> What started as a small shrine grew into a large complex under the Vijayanagar rulers.<sup>6</sup> Evidence indicates there were additions made to the temple in the late Chalukya and Hoysala periods, though most of the temple buildings are attributed to the Vijayanagar period.<sup>7</sup> Under the Vijayanagar rulers, in the middle of the 14th century, there began a flowering of native art and culture. When the rulers were defeated by invaders in the 16th century, most of the wonderful decorative structures and creations were systematically destroyed. The cult of Virupaksha-Pampa did not end with the destruction of the city in 1565. Worship there has persisted throughout the years. At the beginning of the 19th century there were major renovations and additions, which included ceiling paintings and the towers of the north and east gopura.

### 1.2. Krishna Temple at Hemakuta:



**Krishna Temple at Hemakuta**

The Krishna Temple is a ruined temple, and situated at the south of Hampi and at Hemakuta hill. It was built by the emperor Krishnadevaraya after military campaigns in Odisha. The temple is contained in twin enclosures. Parts of the temple and its compound have collapsed, and while some restoration has been carried out, it is generally in poor condition. There is now no image in the inner sanctuary. The hill is situated to the south of Hampi village. It bears several small temples that predate the construction of Vijayanagara as the capital of the empire, some being as early as the 10th century. The hill was fortified when the main city was constructed, and a number of more recent temples, tanks, entrances, and gopurams exist on the hill, some of which were never completed.<sup>8</sup>

### 1.3. Kodandarama Temple at Hampi:

The Kodandarama Temple has its own history. This river facing shrine looks humble but religiously significant. According to the local myths, this is the place where Rama killed Vali and crowned Sugreeva. The name Kodandarama means crowned Rama, in local dialect. The sacred bathing spot in front is one of the holiest spots for the pilgrims to Hampi. You can see long ancient pavilions next to this temple that have been used by the pilgrims as a rest place for many centuries. Like mentioned earlier this is more known for its religious importance than for the architectural

peculiarity. Three very tall statues of Rama, Sita and Lakshmana are enclosed in the sanctum. The idols are sort of deep bas-relief carved on a huge boulder at the hillside. The sanctum and the pillared pavilion are added around it at a later stage. During peak monsoon season the river-water rises and sometimes reaches up to the temple courtyard.<sup>9</sup>

#### 1.4. Vijaya Vittala Temple:



**Vijaya Vithala Temple at Hampi**

The Vijaya Vithala Temple building construction started during Devaraya II period and completed during Achutyaraya and Sadashivaraya's period. The temple has 500 ft long and 310 ft wide space hall and it has surrounded by 3 pillars line. The Vijaya Vittala Temple is the most extravagant architectural showpiece of Hampi. No amount of words can explain this spectacle. The temple is built in the form of a sprawling campus with compound wall and gateway towers. There are many halls, pavilions and temples located inside this campus. Vittala, after whom the temple is known, is a form of lord Vishnu. This aspect of Vishnu was worshiped in this part of the country as their cult deity by the cattle herds. The temple was originally built in the 15th century A.D. Many successive kings have enhanced the temple campus during their regimes to the present form. You can even see the remains of a township called Vittalapura that existed around this temple complex. The highlight of Vittala temple is its impressive pillared halls and the stone chariot. The halls are carved with an overwhelming array of sculptures on the giant granite pillars. The stone chariot located inside the campus is almost an iconic structure of Hampi.<sup>10</sup>

#### 1.5. Ramachandra Temple:



**Ramachandra/Hajara Ramaswami Temple at Hampi**

The Ramachandra temple stands in a rectangular courtyard, with entrances facing to the east. Reliefs showing daily life and festival scenes occur on the outer walls of the courtyard. Scenes from the Ramayana occur on the inner courtyard walls, and on the temple itself. There is a well-relief of baby Krishna on the walls.<sup>11</sup> The temple may have been exclusively for royal use. It is believed to

be constructed at the site of Vaali's killing in the hands of Rama. It may have been a private shrine for royalty. It is unusual in that it has four black basalt columns in the mantapa (columned hall). The inner sanctuary of the temple is now empty.<sup>12</sup>This is also known as the Hazara Rama temple (temple of a thousand Ramas), due to the recurrence of images of Rama on the walls. Sometimes it is called the Hajara Rama temple.<sup>13</sup>

#### **1.6. Shiva Temple:**

The Shiva temple has a garbha griha with an antharala and Aradhamantapa and a Mahamantapa. The mahamantapa has pillared corridors that fuse with the pillared Mukhamantapa, making a larger pillared frontal Mantapa which also encloses a Dwajasthamba. The pillars of this temple are plain. An inscription referring to this temple states that Krishnadevaraya donated Nagalapura and other villages for worship and offerings to the Gods for the merit of his parents Narsa Nayaka and Nagaji Devi. At times the base of the temple is flooded and may be inaccessible. When it is accessible, masses of small bats may be found in the temple.<sup>14</sup>

Others Temples: Apart from the above temples also mentioned the Vidyashankar temple Sringeri, Krishnaswami and Achutyaraya temples at Hampi, Veereshwara temple at Lepakshi.

#### **2. Mathas:**

A matha is a monastic or similar religious establishment in Hinduism<sup>15</sup>. A 'matha' is usually more formal and hierarchical than an ashram. I also mentioned the brief information of the mathas which are existed in and around the Vijayanagar Empire. The types of mathas are mentioned as under:

##### **2.1. Advaita Mathas:**



**Sharada Peetham at Sringeri**

Vidyashankara temple at Sringeri Sharada Peetham, Sringeri, Karnataka. The oldest 'matha' follows the Advaita Vedanta tradition and they are headed by Shankaracharyas, a title derived from the name of Adi Shankara, a prominent religious teacher of the eighth century.<sup>16</sup> Adi Shankara established the following mathas, with each of his four main disciples in charge: Sureshwaracharya, Hastamalakacharya, Padmapadacharya, and Totakacharya respectively. The four Amnaya mathas founded by Adi Shankara, all of which are Smartist, are:

- Sringeri Sarada Petham, at Shringeri, Karnataka
- Dvaraka Pitha, at Dwarka, Gujarat
- Govardhana matha, at Puri, Odisha
- Jyotirmath, in Uttarakhand

**In addition, these Advaita mathas also claim they were founded by Adi Shankara:**

- Svarnavalli Matha at Swarnavalli near Sodhe, Sirsi, Karnataka

- Ramachandrapura Math at Haniya, Hosanagara, Karnataka
- Kanchi matha, at Kanchipuram, Tamil Nadu

### 2.2.Vaishnava Mathas:

#### In the Sri Sampradaya tradition of Ramanuja:

- Sriranga Narayana Jeeyar Mutt
- Thirumalai Periya Jeeyar Mutt
- Ahobila Mutt
- Parakala Mutt
- Srirangam Srimad Andavan Ashramam

#### Other Vaishnava Mathas:

- Gaudiya Matha
- Narasingha Chaitanya Matha

### 2.3.Dvaita Mathas (Vaishnava):



**Krishnapura Matha at Udupi**

Dvaita philosophy was founded by Madhvacharya. He established 8 mathas directly and several others were also established by him and also by his disciples.

- Pejavara
- Adamaru
- Puthige
- Palimar
- Kaniyooru
- Shiroor
- Sodhe
- Krishnapura matha

Only the pontiffs of these mathas have the right to perform puja to Lord Udupi Shri Krishna. They assume the right to perform puja to Krishna at Udupi one after the other. Each pontiff's right to perform puja to Krishna expires every 2 years; this is called Paryaya.

There are many other mathas. These mathas were all formed by the disciples of Śri Madhvacharya. Sri Padmanabha Tirtha was the first disciple of Madhvacharya who formed most of the mathas except the matha which have the right to perform Puja to Krishna in Udupi.

**Other Dvaita Mathas:**

- Uttaradi Maṭha
- Raghvendra Svami Matha
- Vyasaraja Matha (Sosale)

**2.4.Kongu Nadu Mathas:**

In Kongu Nadu, there are mathas run by the kulagurus or caste-clan gurus. There are around sixty such mathas, both Smartist and Shaiva, who guide people from the various native castes of this region. 17 Their acharya is Sringeri Sharada Peetham.

**7.RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:**

The study purely based on the historical method. It included the primary and secondary data. Like, primary sources papers, magazines, gazetteers, inscriptions, archeological documents and secondary data covers published and unpublished books, Xerox, internet material, etc.

**8.CONCLUSION:**

To sum up, the mathas and temples are both have played an important role in creating the religious harmony in the society. Therefore the mathas and temples of the Vijayanagar Empire are the pillars of the same time. The kings had given more care to maintain the mathas and temples in the dynasty. They have built in different style like, dravida and veshara style. They stood for the welfare of the people of Vijayanagar Empire.

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