



# **GS FOUNDATION BATCH FOR CSE 2024**

**Ancient, Medieval & Culture - 9  
(Vijayanagar + Bahmani)**

## VIJAYANAGAR EMPIRE (1336-1565)

### SANGAM DYNASTY (1336-1485)

- **Harihara and Bukka** were feudatories of the Hoysalas at Kampili (Karnataka).
  - In 1326, the armies of Muhammad bin Tughlaq overran the Deccan.
  - Harihara and Bukka were defeated, arrested and brought to Delhi, where they were converted to Islam.
  - They were restored to Kampili to rule in the name of Delhi's Sultan.
- According to legend, they were re-converted by their guru, **Vidyaranya**, and in 1336, they declared independence from the Sultanate.
  - They built a **new capital at Vijayanagar** (present day Hampi) on the banks of **Tungbhadra**.
  - They ruled jointly and assumed titles such as 'Hindu Suratan'.

The most famous Sangam kings were-

- **Devaraya I**
  - During his reign, **NICCOLO CONTI (Italian traveller)** visited Vijayanagara.
    - He has given a detailed account of the city of Vijayanagar, which according to him, was "**as large and as beautiful as Rome**".
    - He has also commented on the prevalence of **Sati**.
- **Devaraya II**
  - During his reign, the **Persian traveller ABDUR RAZZAQ** visited India. He first visited the Zamorin of Calicut and then went to the Vijayanagara empire.
    - He was a historian and scholar from Herat, sent to Vijayanagar as an **ambassador** of the ruler of **Khurasan, Shah Rukh Mirza**, to the court of Deva Raya II.
    - He has described the time period of Deva Raya II in his travelogue, '**Matla-us-Sadain wa Majma-ul-Bahrain**'.
    - He specially describes the **wealth and splendour** of the capital. He vouches that Vijayanagar's market was ten times the size of Herat's market.
      - He says Vijayanagar was the **largest and the most well provisioned city** in the world.
      - According to him, **traders of precious metals and jewels** flocked its streets and bazaars, and the market sold every commodity imaginable.
      - He mentions that the Vijayanagara **treasury was filled with molten gold nuggets**.

- According to him, Vijayanagara had **seven fortification walls** within which there were provisions of all year water supply and agriculture fields.
- He mentions that the **Sati** system prevailed in Vijayanagara.
- According to him, state derived taxation income from **prostitution and brothels**.
- He pegs the strength of Vijayanagara **army** at 11 lakh and counts the number of **ports** at 300.

### SULUVA DYNASTY (1485-1506)

Founder - **Suluva Narsimha**

### TULUVA DYNASTY (1506-1565)

Founder - **Vir Narsimha**

### Krishna Deva Raya (1509-1529)

- He is the most famous king of Vijayanagar. He was also mentioned by Babur in 'Tuzuk-i-Baburi'. Babur has referred to him as the most capable ruler in India.
- He was a **great warrior** who made territorial gains at the cost of Bijapur and the Gajpatis of Odisha.
- He was also a **great patron of the arts**.
  - He himself was an accomplished writer, and wrote:
    - '**Amukta Malyada**' - a Telugu work on statecraft.
    - '**Jambavati Kalyanam**' - a Sanskrit play.
  - His court was adorned with 8 accomplished scholars and poets called the **Ashtadiggajas**, the most famous being Tenali Raman.
  - During his period, Telugu literature emerged out of the shadow of Sanskrit literature.
  - He also patronised Tamil and Kannada literature.
- During his reign, **2 Portuguese travellers** visited the empire-
  - **DURATE BARBOSA** -
    - He describes the **ship building and sati** system.
    - He mentions that diamond and precious stones were imported from Pegu and silk was imported from China, whereas, black pepper came from Malabar coast.

- **DOMINGO PAES**
  - He was received by Krishnadeva Raya at his court.
  - He has described the beauty of Vijayanagar and the king's personal attributes.
  - According to him, Krishna deva raya was a warrior king, whose body was covered in battlescars.
- During Krishnadeva Raya's reign the Vijaynara empire **gained strategic edge over the Adil Shahis of Bijapur.**
  - He **helped the Portuguese in capturing Goa**, and secured a **monopoly on war horses.**

### Achyuta Raya

During his reign, the Portuguese horse trader, **FERNANDO NUNIZ**, visited the empire.

- He has mainly described the social and cultural aspects of Vijayanagara in his travelogue.
  - He says that there were **women scribes, wrestlers, astronomers, musicians and fortune tellers** in Vijayanagara.
  - He also mentions the **social evils like dowry, Sati and child marriage** which prevailed in the Vijayanagara society.
  - He praises the **Brahmins** of Vijayanagara as **honest** people who were **good scribes** also.
  - According to Nuniz, the **rulers of Quilon, Sri Lanka, Pulicat, Pegu, Tennasserim and Malaya paid tribute** to the Vijayanagara King.
  - He also describes the **Nayankara system** and says that the **rate of land revenue was 1/10th.**

### Administration

#### Kingship

- The Vijayanagara empire was ruled by the **absolute monarch**, who assumed high sounding titles such as 'Maharajadhiraja', 'Andrabhoja', 'Hindu Suratana', etc.
- The element of **divine origin** of kingship was also a peasant.
  - The kings ruled in the name of Lord Virupaksha.
- Despite being an absolute monarchy, there were some **customary checks** on the kings which made their rule **benevolent** in nature.
- The empire had a **fixed rule of succession.**

- The king would nominate his heir and successor during his own lifetime. It was usually his brother or eldest son.
  - The empire would be ruled by the **King and the Yuvraj simultaneously**, as such, the transition of power was usually smooth and peaceful.
  - Thus, unlike north India, it was able to escape the disastrous effects of frequent wars of succession.
- However, **powerful feudal elements** were also present, complicating both the internal and external politics of the state.

### Central Administration

- The central government was organised in the form of a **Mantri Parishad** (cabinet). The King was the chief executive and was advised by his top mantris (ministers).
- The mantri parishad was assisted by **Sachivalaya** (Secretariat).
  - It looked after the day to day administration and implementation of policy directives from the king and mantri parishad.
  - It consisted of representatives from the
    - central government,
    - provincial governments and
    - feudal lords, called Amarnyakas.

### Taxation

- **Land revenue** was the most important source of state income. It was collected at the variable rate, from **1/6th to 1/4th**, of the produce, based on the quality of land.
- There were **no exemptions or exceptions** in the collection.
  - It was collected even from priests and temples, albeit at the concessional rate.
    - **'Brahmadeya'** land (granted to priests) - 1/20th of the produce.
    - **'Devadana'** land (granted to temples) - 1/30th of produce.
- Various economic activities such as **trade, commerce, mining, forestry, gambling and even marriages** were also taxed.
  - However, **widow remarriages were exempted** from marriage tax.
- **Prostitution** was legal and the state collected **taxes from brothels**.

### Provincial Administration

The empire was divided into Several '**Rajyas/ Mandalams**' (provinces), headed by a Rajayapala, who usually belonged to the royal family. Rajyapals enjoyed the following rights:

- Could collect taxes
- Could autonomously levy or abolish taxes
- Could issue their own currency in their own name.
- Could maintain their own armies

## Nayankara System

It was a system of **military feudalism**.

- The **Nayakas/Amarnayakas (top military officials)** were paid in the form of Land grants known as '**Amarams**'.
- Gradually these grants became hereditary and Amarnayakas became participants in sharing state power.
- They enjoyed the following powers:
  - Could maintain their own armies.
  - Could collect taxes.
  - However, they had no rights to abolish/ levy taxes or to issue their own currency.
- Thus the Vijayanagar administration was a synthesis of centralised monarchy and feudalism.

## Ayagar System

It was a system of **local government in villages**.

- Each village had **12 officials nominated by the state**, called **Ayagars**.
- They were chosen primarily from among **local Brahmins** and were paid in the form of **land grants**.
- Each Ayagar was responsible for a **different function** such as irrigation, maintenance of public spaces, organising fairs and festivals, setting prices of local goods, etc.
- The position of Ayagars was **hereditary and saleable** i.e. they could sell it to someone else.
- This system closely resembled Chola village administration except that the element of election, which was missing.

## Society

The society was caste based and hierarchical, however, unlike north India, there was not a four-fold Varna division, rather the society had Brahmins and Non-Brahmins.

- **Brahmins** held the supreme position and enjoyed both political power and social prestige.
  - The kings, top officials, ministers, army commanders, etc. were Brahmin.
  - Brahmin priests received lightly taxed land grants.

- Educational institutions were completely under their control
- Religious life was characterised by regimented ritualism due to which their importance increased.
- The Non-Brahmins were divided into the **Valangai (right handed) and Idangai (left handed) castes**.
  - The Valangai group consisted of castes with an agricultural basis, whereas,
  - The Idangai group consisted of castes which were involved in manufacturing, craft and trading etc.
- The **society was not divided along blood relations but on the basis of geography**.
  - So, it was common that blood relatives living in separate geographical areas establish marital relations.
- Due to Brahmanical orthodoxy prevalent in the Vijayanagara society, the **condition of women** in the Vijayanagara society was no better than north India.
  - **Child Marriage and Polygamy** were common.
  - **Widow remarriages** were considered **taboo**.
    - However, the **rulers encouraged it** through tax exemptions.
  - **Tippadiyal (Sati)** was also popular.
    - At the same time, we also find evidence of male Royal bodyguards jumping onto the funeral pyres of deceased kings.
  - In temples, **Devadasis** were heavily exploited but the condition of **Ganikas** was far better.
- Although the Varnashrama Dharma system was rigidly observed, the **Vijayanagara kings were remarkably liberal and practical in their outlook**.
  - They readily **patronised** skilled artisans, workmen, scholars and **promoted** able administrators and military commanders **from all backgrounds, including Muslims**.
  - They **welcomed Christian missionaries** from Portugal.
  - They even **joined hands with the Golconda Sultanate against the Gajpati rulers**.

## BAHMANI SULTANATE (1347-1687)

### Unified Bahmani (1347-1482)

In 1347, **Alauddin Hassan/ Hassan Gangu/ Bahman Shah** established a new kingdom with its capital at **Gulbarga** (Karnataka) by rebelling against the Delhi Sultanate and breaking away from it.

### Firoz Shah Bahmani

- He was a **learned ruler** with vast knowledge of history, logic, religion, grammar, astronomy, mathematics and medicine.
  - He was conversant in several languages such as Arabic, Persian, Turkish, Urdu, Kannada and Telugu.
- He was **tolerant** of other religions and had personally read both the Old and New Testament.
  - It was during his reign that **Gesu Daraz**, the famous Chishti Sufi saint established his Khanqah at Gulbarga.
- The **decline of the Delhi Sultanate** meant that many **learned men migrated** from Delhi to the Gulbarga.
- Firoz also **invited scholars and nobles from Iraq and Iran**.
  - Many of these West Asian migrants were Shiite. Under their influence, **Persian culture and Shiite doctrine** grew within the Bahmani Sultanate.
- He also **inducted a large number of Hindus in administration**, which possibly acted as a balance against the influx of foreigners called Afaqis or Gharibs.
- He built an **observatory at Daulatabad**.
- Having **initially defeated Devaraya I**, he was **later** dealt a crushing defeat by a Warangal-Vijayanagar alliance led by Devaraya I and was **forced to abdicate** in favour of his brother Ahmad Shah 'Wali'.

### Ahmed Shah Wali

- He is remembered more for his contribution as **sufi saint** than as a ruler. He was a close associate of Gesu Daraz and his death anniversary is jointly celebrated by both Hindus and Muslims.
- He **conquered Warangal**, thus breaking the Vijayanagar-Warangal alliance. Following this, he **shifted the capital to Bidar** to better control the newly conquered territory.



- As a result, **Vijayanagar was considerably weakened**. The period after Devaraya II was a period of chaos and the frontiers of Vijayanagar shrank on all sides.

### Mahmud Gawan

He was the **Wakil-us Sultanat (Prime Minister)** of the Bahmani Sultanate during the reign of **Muhammad Shah III**.

- He carried out the administrative reorganisation of the Sultanate by dividing it into 8 provinces '**Taraf/Atrafs**'.
- He also **strengthened the military by including local Marathas** in the army.
  - He introduced the practice of making **land grants** to top commanders, thus winning Maratha loyalty.
- He introduced the system of **survey and measurement** for land revenue.
- He **patronised arts and literature**.
  - He constructed the famous **madrassa at Bidar** in the traditional Persian style called '**REGISTAN**'.

During his tenure as Wakil, the factional struggle between the **Deccanis and Aqafis/Gharibs** peaked. As a result Muhammad Gawan was executed, shortly after which the kingdom disintegrated.

### Afanasy Nikitin

- He was possibly the first **Russian** traveller to come to India.
  - He has described both Vijayanagar and Bahmani kingdom in the 15th century.
- Nikitin calls **Mahmud Gawan**, 'Tuzzar', as Mahmud Gawan held the title of '**Malik-i-Tuzzar**'.
- According to him, the **land was very populous** and the **common people were very poor**. But the **nobles lived in great luxury**.
  - Nikitin was amazed to see the **king and the nobles ride on men**. Perhaps he refers to palanquins carried by four to twenty men on special occasions.
- It was his observation that, in India, **everyone goes naked**. All were **barefoot, walked fast** and were **strong**.
  - The intensity of heat possibly made people use scanty clothes. Perhaps this practice made Nikitin think that they went 'naked'.

### Successor States (1482-1687)

- **Ahmednagar** - it was ruled by the **Nizam Shahi** dynasty.
  - In **1601** it was forced to accept the Mughal suzerainty by Akbar.
  - It was finally annexed by Shah Jahan in **1636**.
- **Bidar** - it was ruled by the **Barid Shahi** Dynasty and was absorbed by the Ahmednagar Sultanate.
- **Berar** - it was ruled by the **Imad Shahi** dynasty, and was also absorbed by the Ahmednagar.
- **Bijapur** - it was ruled by the **Adil Shahi** dynasty.
  - It was forced to accept the Mughal suzerainty by the Shah Jahan in **1636** and later annexed by Aurangzeb in **1686**.
- **Golkonda** - it was ruled by the **Qutub Shahi** dynasty and suffered the same fate as Bijapur.
  - Shah Jahan established Mughal overlordship over it in **1636** and Aurangzeb annexed it in **1687**.

### Important personalities

- **Ibrahim Adil Shah** - He built the Gol Gumbaz at Bijapur, the largest dome in Asia.
  - He was also known as **Jagatguru** due to his religious tolerance, love for knowledge and music.
- **Malik Ambar** - originally a **slave from Ethiopia** named Chapu.
  - He was educated and trained in Baghdad, converted to Islam and renamed.
  - He was **sold into the service of Malik Dabir (Royal Scribe) of Ahmednagar** under whom he gained administrative and military experience.
  - After the death of his master, he was freed and became a **military leader**, raising his own force.
  - Mughal aggression towards the Deccan allowed him to quickly rise in power.
  - He became the **Prime Minister** and had his daughter married to the Sultan of Ahmednagar, becoming the **regent** and **de facto ruler of Ahmednagar**.
  - He joined hands with the Marathas to successfully resist Mughal encroachment.

### Bahmani - Vijayanagar Struggle

The 14<sup>th</sup> century saw the emergence of two powerful Deccani kingdoms.

- **Bahmani Sultanate** covered the linguistic region of **Telugu, Kannada and Marathi**. It was situated to the north of the Vijayanagar Empire.
- The **Vijayanagar Empire** covered the linguistic region of **Telugu, Tamil, Kannada**.
  - Their proximity led to a number of disputes between the two kingdoms and their history in rife with incessant warfare. For almost 200 years, they fought for the control of,
    - The **Konkan Coast**, including important ports such as Goa and Dabhol

- **Raichur Doab** (between the Krishna and the Tungbhadhra)
- **Krishna-Godavari Delta**
- During this period, their fortunes shifted constantly.
- Finally in 1565, the combined armies of 4 successor states (Ahmednagar, Bijapur, Golconda and Bidar) defeated the Vijayanagar Empire, being led by Rama Raya, in the decisive Battle of **Talikota/ Bannihatti/ Rakshasa Tagadi**.
- The Vijaynagar empire collapsed after this.
  - However, some of its Amara Nayakas continued to rule independently.