

Hampi: How a Place Became an Empire

Part -1

When I first stepped into Hampi, it did not feel like entering a tourist place. It felt like walking into a conversation between stone and time. Massive rocks lay scattered like silent witnesses, temples stood half-broken yet proud, and the wind carried stories older than memory. Hampi does not shout its history-it lets you feel it.

Long before it became ruins, Hampi was known as Pampa Kshetra, named after Goddess Pampa (Parvati). According to belief, this sacred land is where Lord Shiva and Goddess Parvati were married. This spiritual energy made the place important even before kings arrived. Faith came first. Power followed later.

In 1336, this sacred land became the capital of the Vijayanagara Empire. What started as a religious centre slowly transformed into one of the strongest empires the world had seen. Over 192 kings, across four dynasties, ruled from here. At its peak, Vijayanagara was the second-richest empire in the world, trading with many countries through international markets.

As I walked through the stone streets, I imagined how alive this place once was- markets filled with spices and horses, temples echoing with prayers, scholars discussing science, and artists carving stories into pillars. Hampi was not built only with stone; it was built with ideas. Architecture followed Vastu Shastra, water flowed through advanced stone pipelines, and science quietly lived inside temples.

Hampi respected all paths of belief. Shaiva, Vaishnava, Jain traditions coexisted peacefully. Religion was not a dividing line-it was a shared foundation. People of different identities, including those often ignored in history, were given dignity and place in society. This balance is what made the empire strong.

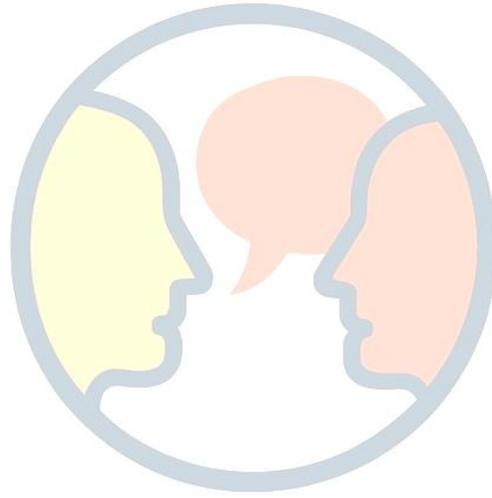
In 2009, Hampi was recognised as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, but its real value cannot be measured by certificates. Its value lies in what it teaches us today-that an empire becomes great not just through wealth or war, but through unity, knowledge, faith, and respect for nature.

Standing there, surrounded by ruins, I realised something simple yet powerful: Hampi did not fall because it lacked strength. It fell because human unity broke. Stones still stand. The silence remains. And maybe that silence is asking us to learn. Hampi is not just a memory of the past. It is a mirror-showing us what we were, and quietly asking what we want to become.

By – Pawan Mundhe

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