

THE GEOGRAPHICAL CANVAS OF HAMPI

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Abstract:

This research paper examines the significance of the geographical features within the ancient city of Hampi in Karnataka, India. Hampi is a UNESCO World Heritage site and was once the capital of the Vijayanagara Empire during the 14th to 17th centuries. This paper aims to explore how the unique geographical features of Hampi, such as the Tungabhadra River, rocky landscapes, and strategic location, influenced the city's development, trade, and defense. The research paper employs a combination of historical analysis, geographical mapping, and archaeological findings to establish a comprehensive understanding of Hampi's geographical canvas. Additionally, the paper acknowledges the impact of the geographical canvas on the cultural and religious aspects of Hampi. the geographical canvas of Hampi holds immense historical and cultural significance. Understanding its various geographical elements not only deepens our knowledge of the city's past but also sheds light on how these features shaped Hampi's development and contributed to its prominence in the region.

Keywords: Hampi, Geographical Canvas, UNESCO World Heritage site, Vijayanagara Empire.

Introduction

Hampi-which is presently a small village in Hospet taluk of Bellary district, Karnataka, was once the biggest city in the world and its vastness and richness not only rivaled the great city of Rome but also heaven- is situated on the banks of River Tungabhadra. It has occupied a prominent place in the world heritage history. The great Vijayanagar Empire, which reached pinnacle of cultural

grandeur in the annals of South India actually took its birth and spread its wings in this very soil of Hampi. The natural beauty of Hampi is enhanced by the huge and multiple mountain ranges filled with heaps and heaps of big granite boulders, natural caves, deep valleys, steep slopes and crowning to all these, the lifeline and gift of this area, the Tungabhadra River, which runs graciously along the zigzags

Please cite this article as: Chaluvvaraju. (2023). The geographical canvas of Hampi. *SRUJANI: Indian Journal of Innovative Research and Development*, 2(4), 9-13.

of these mountain ranges. Many a prehistoric sites have been identified on both sides of the river for which plenty of proofs have been gathered. Moreover many myths, stories, poems and oral epics have evolved in this place. For that matter, the Tungabhadra has got more prominence in the folks than Lord Virupaksha, the local deity. Hampi has got a natural fortress in the form of big boulderous mountains surrounding it. The plains here and there with fertile volcanic soil enriched the agriculture of Hampi. That's why the Vijayanagara kings built many dams' canals and tanks using the indigenous knowledge, which are intact and used till today. This shows the height of indigenous technique. Indeed they are the living guidance and examples to modern engineers.

The *Jambunath* temple, in the midst of rich iron Ore Mountains and green forest is situated to the south of Hampi. Since Iron Age people were using the rich ore to produce pig Iron and steel. Even today we can see the old furnaces and steel making sites used by the *Mudde Kambara*, a blacksmith community with their deity *Kaali* provide ample proof of the once flourished mining and steel industry. The *Kaali* temple, which was once on top of the mountain, is now shifted to the bottom of the hill. We can see lots of ancient pig iron centers at Sandur, Kakubal, *Gollara Hatti*, *Dhanayakana Kere*, *Naagena Halli* etc. The cave paintings around these places with the sketches of Tigers, elephants, Leopards tells us that this place

was once a dense forest supporting these animals.

This place is endowed with many rare medicinal herbs which are being used by many saints till today through local medical practices. The fact is proved by both the foreign and national researchers.

The geographical condition here is also very conducive for different communities to settle and flourish. The pastoral communities like *Gollas*, *Kurubas*, hunting communities like *Bedas*, *Adavi chunchas*, *Myasabedas*, *Hakkipikkies*, and *Korachas* etc were living here since pre Vijayanagara period.

Hampi has got a prominent place in the literary and pilgrimage history of the world. The literary feats of Harihara and Raghavanka, The local deity Viroopaksha, the Birth place of Hanuman, Ramas temples, Jain *basadis*, *Pampa Sarovara*, Ramayana's *Kishkinda* and so on , provide historical and pilgrimage status. It is known by many names like Hampi, *Pampa Kshetra*, *Dakshina Kaashi*, etc in different puranas.

Hampi is surrounded by Kamalapur in the south, Tungabhadra River in the north, Kampli in east and Huligi in the west. It is also called the '*Pancha Linga Kshetra*' as it is surrounded by Kinnareshwara (near Ramasagara) to the east, Somanatha (near Shivapura of Koppal District) to the west, Jambunatha (near Hospet) to the south, Vanibhadreshwara (near Gangavati) to the north and Virupaksheshwara at the centre.

We can call Hampi and Tungabhadra River, the 'Cradle of Karnataka Civilization'. The River Tungabhadra is an invaluable gift of nature to this area. *Ganga snanam tunga panam* is the famous saying which tells a lot about this sacred river which is equal to the Ganges. In this way, Hampi has a long history starting from prehistoric period to modern times and hence attracting thousands of tourists, devotees, historians, scholars researchers and many more every day. But such an empire also met its end politically during Rakkasatangadagi war. What remains today are the devastated remains of a great grand city. The devotees, historians, researchers and tourists who visit here talk with these stone remains in their own language and shed tears about their fate. The mountains and rocks fallen buildings are not merely dead remains but living organisms, and family members to the common folks here as they have given voice to these things and kept an unbroken relations till today.

If you have the heart to listen, every stone here, every fallen building here tells its own story. The giant 'Akka-Thangi Gundu', a pair of boulders represent two sisters immortalized by the folk stories and thus speak of the human relations and culture. It may be a mere coincidence that one of these rock broken recently, representing the breaking human relations among the family members. In this way hampi is an eternal bowl of wonders for researchers.

The geographical environment of Hampi was not only complimentary to build Vijayanagar but prior to that, the area was the dwelling place of the nomadic tribes. This is evident from the fact that many ruins and dwelling places of Adima community that have come to light. There are many more dwelling places and subject matters in this area which have yet to see light.

There are two huge rocks with their heads joined at the top called *Akka-Thangi kallu* at the back of Virupaksha temple adjacent to Gayatri peetha. Many colour paintings such as `bulls, deers, group of animals, hunters etc are there on the inner sides of the rocks. Though worn out by natures harshness, if viewd patiently, they are accessible to our vision.

Maasalayyana Gudda is situated on the right bank of the Tungabhadra River, to the east of Vijayavithala temple of Hampi. It is difficult to tread the path as it is surrounded by the huge rocks and big caves. One should use the foot path to reach there. On reaching the top of the hill, one can see about 2 to 3 acres of plain land surrounded by huge rocks which looks like a natural fort. On moving further, there are 2 huge rocks in the middle of the plain ground, sitting one over the other. To the north and at the height of 30 feet from the ground on the slope of the rock, painting of a big bull is found. Apart from this, many ruins are found here speak in support of the impression, that Adima people lived here.

This fact is proved by the search conducted in this area.

Though Anegundi in Gangavathi taluk, Pampa Sarovar, Anjanadri, Mallapura, Ramapura, Hnumana halli, Sanapura areas come under the jurisdiction of Koppal district, for administration and political purpose, these areas have an inseparable native and cultural relationship with Hampi, as they are situated on the left bank of the Tungabhadra River adjacent to Hampi. It is a confirmed fact that Anegundi was the original capital of Vijayanagar. It occupies an equally important place like Hampi in respect of historical religious and cultural aspects. Many more important places are found here like Talavara ghatta, Gatti kote, Chintamani Matha, Nava Brindavana, Valikashtha, Tara Betta, Durga devasthanana, Anjanadri etc. Many findings strengthen the claim that this area was the dwelling place of the *Adima* people. From Hampi, through Talavaraghata if one enters Anegundi by crossing the River finds to his left, lines of hills of rocks and slabs. These lines of hills are adjacent to the river. Beautiful fort built by stones, which is still in good condition, is built along the lines of hills. This area is also called Ghatti kote. There is a foot path to reach the Durga Temple on the top of the hill. By the side of it are found the caves. Along the foot path, there are paintings in white and red colors of human beings, animals and birds and other subjects.

There is a small plain ground near this place adjacent to the hill and the river.

There is a huge rock here on the slope of which only the head of the bull is painted. Paintings of human beings and animals, scenes of huntings are also found on the slopes of huge rocks, near the entrance to the fort on way to Durga temple. These paintings have also come under the influence of harsh nature since a long time. The paintings look blurred.

There is road to Ramapura and Mallapura in the middle of the road from Anegundi to Pampa Sarovara. About two kilometers from here, there is a place called Onake kindi. It is situated to the left side of the main road, about 50 meters away from the main road. There are heaps of huge rocks on both the sides, only a single person can crawl through the place. That's why this place is called by common people as Onake kindi. Though it looks like a normal hill, if one crawls and reaches inside, it is feast to the eyes and mind. It is beautiful treasure of naturally built fort of rocks.

In the middle of naturally built heaps of rocks, there is a vast expansive level ground. There is also a well atop the hill. Around this level ground and at the base of the hills, there are big caves on the slabs at the top of the caves and also on the slabs on both sides of the caves, there are pictures of human beings, standing in lines, pairs indicating males and females, pictures of hunting, pictures of hunting with weapons like bows and arrows and spears. Pictures of cows' capturing (Go Grahana), pictures of animals like bull deer, horse, peacock, wild hen etc.

pictures of hundreds of animals and birds are seen in the neighbourhood of the entrances of caves. As if it is entering the cave, a picture of about 8 to 10 ft long snake is seen on the top slab of the main cave.

A picture on extended slab looks distinct. A circular formation of stones and slabs is there. In the middle of the circle, picture of a man lying, around which a circle is drawn. This may be the indication of the burial place of people.

There are hundreds of pictures of human beings and animals in the caves, about 100 meter away from the main cave. These are called pictures of cow capturing or picture indicating cow capturing.

Near the tall extended slab, a picture of a man about 3 feet height in a standing position is seen. Like this many of colour paintings painted by *Adima* peoples are found in these caves. Some of these are in good state and some others in a dilapidated state due to harsh hand of nature.

Some peculiar stones are found in these areas which are called Flint Stones. They are also called Fire stones. Pieces of such stones are available even now. While preparing weapons from stones this type of stones have been formed. On observing the utilization and characteristics of these stones callers opine that this is the sign of delicate storage culture. Big caves in this area indicate the existence of group of people in the area.

As replica of Kannada culture, Kannada University has come up in

Hampi area. Signs of human dwellings of *Adima* culture are found in this area also. There are carved pictures of animals and human beings seen on the slab at Giriseeme of aboriginal tribes study division. A coloured painting of bull is found on the extended part of huge rock to the left of Byluvaddigere road to the east of Giriseeme in the campus of the University. Thus Hampi not only contains the matters of traditions and cultures, but it has also protected and developed in its lap, all the layers of human culture. Apart from protecting the rare places and their special futures, there is need of more study.

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