

DSE: Perspectives on South Indian Past II: Vijayanagara

Credit distribution, Eligibility and Pre-requisites of the Course

Course title & Code	Credits	Credit distribution of the course			Eligibility criteria	Pre-requisite of the course (if any)
		Lecture	Tutorial	Practical/ Practice		
Perspectives on South Indian Past II: Vijayanagara	4	3	1	0		

Learning Objectives

This syllabus offers students a nuanced understanding of the Vijayanagara Empire by drawing on key readings that explore its political, socio- economic, cultural, and religious dimensions. Through the study of themes such as kingship, imperial legitimacy, courtly culture, temple architecture, and visual representation, learners gain insight into how power was constructed and communicated in a stratified society. Religion, art, and architecture emerge as central to this process, not merely as expressions of devotion but as instruments of statecraft and imperial authority. Temples like the Virupaksha complex and the royal centres at Hampi served both spiritual and political functions. The use of divine imagery, courtly aesthetics, and monumental design reveals how sacred spaces reinforced dynastic legitimacy and power. The readings highlight the symbolic and strategic use of rituals, titles, and urban design in shaping imperial identity. It also encourages students to engage with scholarly debates on gender, patronage, and the blending of cultural traditions, helping them develop a critical and contextual approach to South Indian history.

It sheds light on the nature of Vijayanagara society, emphasizing its hierarchical character, where status was mediated through ritual, service, and proximity to power. Students also come to understand how social roles were shaped by the intersections of caste, gender, and occupation within the broader

Learning Outcomes

- Analyze rituals, titles, and court culture as tools of political legitimacy
- Understand the role of craft production in supporting urban and temple-based economies.
- Analyze the circulation of currency hoards as evidence of a monetized and expanding market network.
- Engage with gendered and religious experiences in a stratified society.
- Explore cultural blending in courtly and visual traditions.
- Interpret art and architecture as expressions of power and piety

Syllabus

UNIT I: FORMULATION OF IMPERIAL IDENTITY (12 Hours)

- a) Kingship and Political Practices; Nature of state
- b) Strategies of Imperial Legitimization and Control
- c) Courtly culture

UNIT II: STRUCTURES OF ECONOMY: AGRARIAN AND URBAN (11 Hours)

- a) Agrarian Base and Temple Economy
- b) Urban Centres and Trade Networks
- c) Crafts, Monetization, and Guilds

UNIT III: (RELIGION, SOCIETY AND GENDER (11 Hours)

- a) Temple and Sectarian landscape.
- b) Social Stratification and Religious Patronage.
- c) Women, Agency, and Representation

UNIT IV: (3 Weeks) VISUAL ART (11 Hours)

- a) Temple and Courtly Architecture: Hampi, Virupaksha Temple, and royal complexes
- b) Iconography and Visual Culture

UNIT I This unit enables students to understand how imperial identity was constructed in the Vijayanagara Empire through kingship rituals, symbolic titles, and monumental architecture. It also deals with the historiography and the more recent approaches to Vijayanagara state. It helps them analyze strategies of legitimization such as royal ceremonies, courtly display, and the spatial organization of the capital that reinforced authority and control. Through the study of urban design and material culture, students will grasp how political power was communicated visually and ritually. The unit also highlights how Vijayanagara rulers adapted symbols which originated outside Vijayanagara to enable them to participate in pan- Indian political culture to project sovereignty.

- Fritz, John M. (1986). "Vijayanagara: Authority and Meaning of a South Indian Imperial Capital". *American Anthropologist*, New Series, vol.88 no.1, pp.44-55.
- Sinopoli, C.M From the Lion Throne: Political and Social Dynamics of the Vijayanagara Empire. *Jouma! of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 43:364-398.
- Karashima, Noboru. *A Concise History of South India* (OUP, 2014), Chapter 1.
- Christopher Chekuri, A Share in the World Empire Nayankara as Sovereignty in Practice at Vijayanagara 1480-1580. *Social Scientist* .Jan -Feb,2012.Vol.40 pp.41-67
- Karashima,Noboru, *Vijayanagara Nayakas in Tamil Nadu and the King In Karashima,Noboru,* (ed.) *Kingship in Indian History*, Manohar Publications , New Delhi, 1999.

Unit II This unit contextualizes new socio- economic processes leading to a mixed rural and urban economy which signifies crucial changes in the patterns of landownership, disintegration of the older institutions, more intensive urbanization, increase in craft production,cultivation of cash crops, a fair degree of monetization and expansion of trade and trading networks and regions.The new emerging groups in all these spheres of activity had to be accommodate and thus temple society expanded. This unit also highlights how Vijayanagara rulers effectively utilized existing institutional structures such as temples and caste and merchant groups as primary investors and decision makers over productive processes. It is also intended to study how royal investments in production activities varied with the nature and importance of the commodity.

- Palat, R.A." The Vijayanagara Empire. Re-Integration of the Agrarian Order of Medieval South India, 1336- 1565, in H.J.M Clasessen and P. Van De Velde, *Early State Dynamics*, 1987, pp.170-86.
- Breckenridge, Carol, *Social Storage and the extension of Agriculture in South India 1350-1750*. In A.L.Dallapiccola (ed.) *Vijayanagara- City and Empire: New Currents of Research*, Stuttgart, Steiner- Verlag.
- Stephen,S Jeyaseela, *The Coromandel Coast and its Hinterland : Economy, Society and Political System (CE 1500-1600)* Manohar, New Delhi ,1997. (Chapter 4,5).
- Mukund Kanakalatha, *The Trading World of the Tamil Merchant*, Hyderabad, Orient Longman 1999. (Chapter 4- Trade and Merchants: The Vijayanagara Period(1400-1600) pp.42-52.

- Sinopoli, Carla., *The Political Economy of Craft Production: Crafting Empire in South India, c. 1350-1650* , Cambridge University Press, 2003
- Ludden ,David *Caste society and units of Production in early -modern South India.*
In Burton Stein and S.Subrahmanyam (ed.) *Institutions and Economic Change in South India*, Oxford: Oxford University Press , 1996, pp .105-13
- Phillip B. Wagoner, ‘Money Use in The Deccan, C. 1350-1687: The Role of Vijayanagara-ra Hons In The Bahmani Currency System’, *Indian Economic And Social History Review* 51, No. 4 (2014).

Unit III This unit enables students to critically examine the religious and social structures of the Vijayanagara Empire through the lens of temple networks, sectarian affiliations, and patterns of patronage. It explores how temples functioned as centers of power, shaping both spiritual and social identities. The identities were constructed on the basis of religious community (devotion to either Shiva or Vishnu) which got consolidated in this period and attempts were made from above to create a synthesis of regional traditions through homogenization under the rubric of Vedic tradition. It also notes that religious patronage displayed a patterned character very different from earlier times as temples became pilgrimage places under the combined patronage of merchants, soldiers and sectarian leaders. Students will understand the interplay between kingship and religious authority, the role of caste in organizing social life, and the significance of women as patrons, performers, and agents within sacred spaces. The unit also highlights the contributions of artisans and the material culture of devotion, allowing for a deeper understanding of gender, identity, and imperial ideology in pre-modern South India.

- Champakalakshmi, R. *Religion, Tradition and Ideology: Pre-Colonial South India* (OUP, 2011)
Chapter 7 *Caste and Community Oscillating Identities in Pre- Modern South India.*
- Arjun Appadurai, “Kings, Sects and Temples in South India, 1350-1700 A.D.” *Indian Economic & Social History Review* 14, no. 1 (1977): 47-73.
- Verghese, Anila. “Deities, Cults and Kings at Vijayanagara”. In *The Archeology of Hinduism* edited by Elisabeth A. Bacus and Nayanjyot Lahiri. Routledge Tylor and Francis group, Vol. 36, No.3, September 2004, pp 416-431.
- Stein, Burton, *Patronage and Vijayanagara Religious Foundations* . In *The Powers of Art: Patronage in Indian Culture*, B.S. Miller (ed.) Delhi, Oxford University Press, pp. 160-167.

- Noboru Karashima, *Towards a New Formation: South Indian Society under Vijayanagar Rule* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp 117-182.
- Sinopoli Carla M., *The Political Economy of Craft Production: Crafting Empire in South India, c. 1350-1650* (Cambridge University Press, 2003)
- Sinopoli, Carla M. Identity and Social Action among South Indian Craft Producers of the Vijayanagara Period. *Archaeological Papers of the American Anthropological Association: Volume 8, Issue. 1998.* pp 161-172.
- Vijaya Ramaswamy, "Artisans in Vijayanagar Society." *Indian Economic & Social History Review* 22, no. 4 (1985): 417-444
- Orr, Leslie. *Donors, Devotees, and Daughters of God: Temple Women in Medieval Tamil Nadu* (OUP, 2000). pp 135-180.

UNIT IV This unit explores the architectural splendour of Vijayanagara preserved in the monuments at Hampi consisting of religious, courtly and military buildings. The city was conceived to both enhance existing cosmic ties through careful planning and to create new associations with the construction of large temple complexes. It also explores how visual representation of Rama's mythology in the architecture, sculpture of Vijayanagara served to reinforce the legitimacy of the king and define the empire. The richly carved and representation of various divinities contribute to the legacy of art and architecture of Vijayanagara.

- Dallapiccola, Anna L., "The City of Vijayanagara KISHKINDHA, The Monkey Kingdom In Vidya Dehejia (ed.), *The Legend Of Rama: Artistic Visions*, Bombay, Marg Publications, 1994.
- Dallapiccola, Anna L. *Gods, Patrons and Images: Stone Sculpture at Vijayanagara In Paradigms of Indian Architecture: Space and Time in Representation and Design*, ed G.H.R. Tillitson, pp 136-158. Surrey, England : Curzon Press.
- Sinopoli Carla M., *Defining a sacred landscape: temple architecture and divine images in the Vijayanagara suburbs.* In A.J.Gail and G.J.R. Meivessen(ed.) *South Asian Archaeology Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag*, pp.625-636
- Fritz, J.M. G.Michell and M.S.Nagaraja Rao, *City of Victory Vijayanagara: The Medieval Hindu Capital of Southern India*, New York, 1991.
- Michell George, *Royal Architecture and imperial style at Vijayanagara*. In B.Stoler Miller, *The*