

Hakka and Bukka



Hakka and Bukka were the first kings of the Vijayanagar Empire. Their real names were Harihara and Bukkaraya. But the people affectionately called them Hakka (or Hukka) and Bukka, and those names stuck to them. Those names are found even in one of the inscriptions.

Three dynasties ruled over the Vijayanagar Empire. The first of them was the Sangama Dynasty. Harihara and Bukkaraya were the first two kings of that dynasty. Harihara founded the Vijayanagar kingdom and Bukkaraya stretched it into an empire.

Hakka and Bukka are remembered for their heroic achievement. First of all we should know the conditions in our country at that time. Only then we can understand how difficult and how great was the achievement of Hakka and Bukka.

About 900 years ago, in the eleventh century A.D., India had to face a great danger. People of other countries attacked India. Three hundred years earlier, Islam had been founded in Arabia and had grown fast. People belonging to that faith entered India through the valleys in the Northwest. They wanted to spread Islam. Also they wanted to conquer this country and loot its wealth.

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Ghazni Mohammed was the first to invade this country to achieve these aims, and Mohammed Ghori and others followed him.

Northern India was first attacked in the eleventh century. A large part of it fell into the hands of the Muslim invaders. They began to spread their faith in that region. Their attention turned towards the South by about the thirteenth century. In his 'Discovery of India', Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru has written, "These repeated incursions... brought Islam, for the first time, to the accompaniment of ruthless military conquest... The new approach produced powerful psychological reactions among the people and filled them with bitterness."

The Sultans of Delhi invaded the South and conquered most of the state there.

Even against such terrible disaster, the brave people of the Hoysala Empire stood firm; they did not lose their own freedom. Dorasamudra was their capital. Kampilaraya was then the chief of Kammitadurga in the Tungabhadra region; he was subordinate to the Emperor. He fought with admirable courage against the repeated attacks of the Sultan of Delhi and finally laid down his own life in the service of his country.

In this way, South India was in great trouble. Just then appeared a great and ideal king. His name was Veera Ballala. He was the last of the kings of the Hoysala Dynasty. He fought very bravely for the protection of his country and religion. Finally he had even to lose his own kingdom. Under him there was a ruler named Sangama, ruling over a portion of the empire. He had his sons,

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Hakka and Bukka, threw themselves heart and soul into the fight for freedom under the leadership of Veera Ballala.

The task undertaken by Veera Ballala was a very hard one. Very powerful enemies had surrounded his empire. They had set up their military stations in important cities of the empire. The officers of the Sultan were in complete control of these cities. They had to be defeated and made incapable of helping one another. It was absolutely necessary that the people and their leaders should unite to achieve this goal. But unfortunately there was no unity among the Hindu kings. Veera Ballala had to awaken in them a pride for their own land and Dharma. They had small differences and personal Ambitions. Veera Bailala had to make them forget all these and face the enemies together.

Veera Ballala made his moves very carefully and cleverly. He approached the kings and officers under his command with great affection. Because of such an approach, they all became prepared to work harder and accept greater responsibilities.

Veera Ballala wanted to meet the kings of other states and get their help. But he did not want to do it openly. If he had done so, his enemies would have become suspicious. Therefore he said that he was going to visit holy places. During his tour, he met all the leaders; he made them understand the danger to their freedom and religion. His efforts were successful.

They all decided to unite and face the common enemy.

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Several of the provincial chieftains stood shoulder to shoulder with Veera Ballala and helped him in his work; the most famous of them were the brave Sangama and his sons.

Sangama was ruling over a portion of the land round about Hampi on the banks of the Tungabhadra. He had five sons named Harihara, Kampana, Bukkaraya, Marappa and Muddappa. Like their father, all of them loved their country, were brave and were devoted to their duty. The first three came to rank among the most important rulers under Veera Ballala by their merit, bravery and spirit of national service.

The eldest, Harihara, earned the confidence of Veera Ballala and was appointed a 'Mahamandaleshwara, (the chief of several smaller rulers) in the northern part of the Hoysala Empire.

The officers of the Sultan of Delhi had occupied Kammitadurga. They had set up camps on the borders and were giving much trouble to the people round about. These people had become disgusted and angry about this misrule and were prepared to rise in rebellion against the Sultan. But they were helpless; they had no leaders. According to the suggestion of Veera Ballala, Harihara and Bukkaraya assumed their leadership. They began the fight for freedom. Vidyaranya, the great saint of South India, blessed them and encouraged them. Harihara and Bukkaraya collected number of enthusiastic youths and gave them military training. They also collected large quantities of arms. Within a short time, they got ready quite a big army. Capable of fighting the enemies. This army attacked the enemy camps. The Sultan's officers had thought that the Hindus,

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always quarreling among themselves, would never unite. Therefore they were taken by surprise by these attacks. They were defeated and had to run away.

At this time, Veera Ballala had 'gone to Madurai to recapture it from the Sultan's forces who were holding it. He felt extremely happy to hear of the success that his generals had gained in the north. He returned to Tungabhadra and declared Harihara the Mahamandaleshwara of the region, according to the wishes of the local leaders. Bukkaraya was appointed the Crown Prince. Hampi, on the southern bank of the Tungabhadra, became the capital of this New Kingdom. This happened in 1336.

The new capital was named 'Vijayanagar'; the name means 'the City of Victory'; this was in honor of the grand victory that Harihara and his brothers had scored against the Sultan of Delhi. Later the empire that Harihara. Built was also named 'Vijayanagar'.

This was the first victory that the united kings of the South scored against the Sultan of Delhi. Thereafter it took several years more for them to drive out completely all the forces of the Sultan from South India. But Hindu Dharma had to regain strength. Harihara and his brothers with the help of Veera Ballala founded the Vijayanagar Empire and this was a good beginning. The attacks of the Sultan of Delhi ended and South India became free once again.

Later, Vijayanagar became a great empire in India. Famous emperors like Proudhadewa Raya, Krishnadeva Raya, Salva Narasimha and Aliya Rama Raya brought greater and greater glory to the throne of Vijayanagar. Still the people did not forget Hakka and

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Bukka. Their very names suggest that they were Kannadigas. Many dedicated warriors fought for the preservation of the freedom of the country and the preservation of Hindu Dharma. Hakka and Bukka were gems among these champions.

Harihara and Bukkaraya were really fortunate to have obtained the guidance and protection of such a great saint as Vidyaranya. Before he became a Sanyasi, Viayaranya's name was Madhava. He was a great scholar in the Vedas and other religious texts. At the age of thirty-one he gave up worldly life and became a Sanyasi (or monk). He saw the sufferings of the people all round him; he saw how they had to live in fear and without freedom, under the Sultan of Delhi; and he felt unhappy. He lived for fifty years after he became a Sanyasi, and was a tower of strength to those who fought for freedom. It was he who inspired Harihara and Bukkaraya to found the Empire of Vijayanagar and expand it. He always guided them with his advice and encouragement. Later Sri Vidyaranya became the Swamiji of Sringeri Mutt.

In the cultural and religious history of India, Hampi occupies as important a place as Kashi. Anegondi and Hampi were on the opposite banks of the Tungabhadra. There are many mythological stories concerning these twin towns and their surroundings. One of them is as follows:

Pampa was the daughter of Brahma. By strict and deep meditation on Lord Shiva, she became his wife. So Shiva became 'Pampapathi' (the husband of Pampa). He settled down in this region.

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The Ramayana is a very old and a very great epic (a long poem telling the story of a mighty hero) of India. Sri Rama is the hero of this epic; the great poet and sage Valmiki wrote this. He refers in the Ramayana to Hampi and the region around.

Kishkindha, the capital of Vali and Sugreeva of the Ramayana, is said to have been situated near Anegondi. Places bearing the names 'Sita Sarovara', 'Ramapada', 'Vali Bhandara', 'Sugreeva's Cave' and the 'Ashram of Shabari' bring back to us memories of that great epic. The hillocks nearby are popularly known as 'Rishyamooka', 'Malya-vanta' and 'Matunga'; these names appear in the Ramayana.

The crowning glory of the region is the temple of Virupaksha. It is one of the most important of the ancient monuments here. It was probably built in the fourth century, nearly a thousand years before the founding of the Vijayanagar Empire.

In 1336, Harihara was crowned the King of Vijayanagar. Bukkaraya became its Crown Prince.

But Veera Ballala's goal had not yet been reached. Hakka and Bukka had still much to achieve with their courage and strength. The Delhi Sultan's forces were still strong in several regions of Andhra Pradesh.

After crowning Harihara. The King of Vijayanagar, Veera Ballala returned to Madurai. The Sultan's officers in that region were giving much trouble to the people. There was no one to check them. They behaved as if they were independent kings. They looted the people's

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money. Veera Ballala had made up his mind to put an end to all this. He was building up an army for this purpose.

In the north Harihara and Bukkaraya were left to perform a similar task. The Sultan's forces were still strong in the north of the Tungabhadra and some important places in Andhra Pradesh. They knew very well that it was necessary for the freedom of the country to destroy the military camps of the Sultan's forces and drive them away from the south. They started collecting men and money. They tried to get popular support for this purpose. What remained of the Hoysala treasury was of use to them.

A king must have certain qualities if his subjects are to love and respect him. He must have a strong will to complete a task undertaken, whatever the obstacles. He must be able to foresee the results of every step he takes. A capacity to plan his work is one of the most essential qualities of a good leader. He should also know how to deal with his enemies and how to earn the friendship of other kings.

Hakka and Bukka had all these qualities. Their brothers Kampana, Marappa and Muddappa offered them all co-operation. More than all, the five brothers had fully developed in themselves a capacity to plan their action together and carry out their plans with efficiency. As a result, a fully equipped army, capable of facing the enemy with confidence, was soon ready.

It was not an easy task to teach a lesson to the officers of the Sultan and it could not be done in a short time. Hakka and Bukka had to struggle for five years before they could get any success. At last

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the enemies ran away. A very vast area between the Eastern and the Western Ghats came under the rule of Hakka and Bukka. Hakka took to himself the title 'Poorva-Paschima Samudradhishwara' (The Lord of the Eastern and Western Oceans). Having the good of his subjects at heart, he divided the large kingdom into several 'mandalas' (divisions) and appointed divisional administrators. The government had to be based on a good system; this took several years. His brothers fully co-operated with him in the task.

Just as the struggle for freedom was gaining victory after victory in the northern portion of the Hoysala Empire, very sad news reached Vijayanagar. The fight, which Veera Ballala had started against the cruel officers of the Sultan of Delhi in the region of Madurai, was still going on. Madurai was yet in the hands of the enemies. Veera Ballala surrounded that strong fortress. The local leaders did not render any help to him, because they were afraid of the Sultan's officers. Hakka and Bukka were too busy in the north to go to his help. Nor could they send any army to assist him.

At this stage, the Sultan's generals deceived Veera Ballala. They told him that if he permitted them to go back to their own places with their wealth and their belongings they would hand over Madurai to him without a fight. Veera Ballala believed them, raised the siege and turned back. The Sultan's army rushed out of the fort all of a sudden, and fell on Veera Ballala's army. In the unequal battle that followed, Veera Ballala was killed. He was eighty then.

Veera Ballala was a very unfortunate king. He fought for twenty long years in the cause of his country and Dharma. He showed a rare

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political farsightedness in the establishment of the Vijayanagar kingdom. But most people have forgot him.

Virupaksha, son of Veera Ballala, was in contrast an inefficient and incapable ruler. Veera Ballala had several chieftains under him. As long as he was on the throne they were all-afraid of him and were obedient. But once Virupaksha came to the throne, they wanted to become independent. So Hakka and Bukka themselves had to look after the welfare of the Hoysala Empire. In course of time, the Hoysala Empire merged into the Vijayanagar Empire.

After the death of Veera Ballala, the Sultan's generals once again became powerful. They recaptured the regions taken from them by Veera Ballad in 1361 and once again became the lords of the Madurai kingdom.

The kings of Vijayanagar had thus to continue the half-finished struggle for freedom in the South. But they used different tactics. They decided to surround Madurai instead of attacking it directly. All long the eastern coast, from Kancheepuram to Rameswaram they captured important places. The people in these regions, who had become disgusted with the misrule of the Sultan's officers gladly accepted the lordship of the rulers of Vijayanagar. Hakka and Bukka began making preparations to march on the Southern army posts of the Sultan of Delhi.

Harihara became the king when the New Kingdom was born in 1336. He ruled till 1356. He had to strengthen the defence of the borders; he had to build up a good system of government. These took up much of his time.

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As already said, the Sangama dynasty was the first to rule over Vijayanagar and Harihara was its first king. Kriyashakti Pandita of the Kriyashakti Peetha, belonging to the Kalamukhakirti sect, was his guide in administration. After the death of Veera Ballala, the southern parts of the Hoysala Empire came under the rule of the king of Vijayanagar. Dorasamudra, the capital of the Hoysala kings, had been attacked by enemies and was in a sad state. It could not resist another attack. So Hakka had to rebuild it and make it strong. He had to plan also the defence of the surrounding areas. Temples and mutts (seats of holy'-teachers of religion) were almost in ruins. Hakka had to bring back to the temples and mutts the honor due to them. He engaged himself in this work with sincerity and devotion. Four years after the death of Veera Ballala, Hakka visited Sringeri with his close relatives and officers. Adi Sankaracharya established the Sringeri Jagadguru Peetha at Sringeri in his efforts to give new strength to Hindu Dharma. When Hakka visited the Mutt, Sri Bharati Tirtha was in the seat. Hakka and his brothers were very respectful towards the Swamiji and requested his blessings. They also granted many donations in keeping with the worth and the high place of the Peetha.

Hakka and Bukka were incomparable warriors. They continued the freedom struggle started by Veera Ballala and saved Hindu Dharma and culture when they were in great danger.

Hakka died in 1356. Bukkaraya succeeded him as king.

When Hakka was fighting the enemies, and also later when he was the King of Vijayanagar, Bukkaraya gave him all support and was his right-hand man. But now he had to shoulder all the

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responsibilities himself. It was now his work to remove all the obstacles in the path of his country's progress. His achievements in this direction make as thrilling a history as the establishment of the Vijayanagar Empire.

Of course, the Vijayanagar Empire had been placed on firm foundations. But its enemies were always trying to undermine this foundation. Bukkaraya knew that his first duty was to strengthen the borders of his kingdom and protect them.

Most of the generals and officers of the Sultan of Delhi had been defeated and driven away from the South. But some of them had remained behind and they were trying to build for themselves independent kingdoms. One such adventurer was Allauddin Hassan Bahamani. He founded a New Kingdom in 1346 at Kalburgi (Gulbarga of today), north of the river Krishna. It became famous as the Bahamani Kingdom.

The Bahamani kings were adventurous. Their ambition was to capture the whole of South India. Particularly ambitious was Mohammed Shah, one of the Bahamani kings. Bukkaraya was wise enough to understand the danger from this king and developed friendship with the King of Warangal. Mohammed Shah invaded Vijayanagar thrice and all the three times, ran away completely defeated. But he and his successors put up a continuous struggle to capture and land between the Krishna and the Tungabhadra.

The war with Mohammed Shah taught Bukka a lesson; these was that he should always be alert and ready and that he should expand his army and equip it well. There were some kings under him

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who made a show of faithfulness towards him but were really unfaithful. Bukka had to bring them under his control. In the South, the Sultan's officers were again raising their heads after the death of Veera Ballala. They had to be checked. Madurai was to be saved. Bukkaraya planned to achieve all these things at one stroke. He decided to build a very huge army, unheard of in the South at any time.

As soon as the army was ready, Bukkaraya entrusted his second son, Kampana, with the task of capturing Madurai. Kampana was young but brave; he was determined to finish any task he undertook. He was an expert in the science of warfare. When Bukkaraya was engaged in driving the foreigners out of his kingdom, Kampana had fought by his side. He was also well trained in the art of ruling. He had, in addition, the wisdom to bring round to his own side the defeated enemies and make them faithful supporters of the Empire.

Tondaimandalam was a kingdom to the east of Vijayanagar. The Bahamani kings had an eye on it. The ruler of this kingdom was one Champaraya. Bukka had offered his hand of friendship to him but Champaraya had not cared for him. So the Sultans of Bahamani were planning to attack Tondaimandalam. Bukka saw that, if Tondaimandalam fell into the hands of the Sultan, his Vijayanagar would be in danger. So Kampana's army marched against Champaraya. Champaraya was defeated; the chieftains under him wanted to come to terms with Kampana. But Champaraya himself was stubborn. He took shelter in a fort known as Rajagambhira.

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Kampana had no choice; he had to attack Rajagambhira. Champaraya died in the battle. So Kampana was able to bring Tondaimandalam under the Vijayanagar King. By that time, he had received sad news. All worship had stopped in the sacred places of the south like Chidambaram, Srirangam and Madurai. Once, thousands of pilgrims used to go to these holy places. But now the sacred images were no longer there. The Sultan's officers were responsible for it. The local people, afraid of these foreigners, had shifted the idols from the temples to safer places. Kampana could not bear the news. He laid siege to Madurai. The Sultan's general died on the battlefield. Madurai became free. Srirangam also became free, thanks to Kampana.

After this glorious victory, Kampana became the Governor of the Southern Province of the Vijayanagar Empire. He had under his rule a vast area in the south upto Rameswaram. Virinchipuram or Marakatanagar on the banks of the Kaveri was his capital. The Bangalore and Kolar Districts of today were also under his rule.

Worship was resumed in the temples. People could freely move about, go on pilgrimage and worship God according to their faiths. Under the Sultan's officers, the Hindus could not even breathe freely. But now they could live happily as free men. They did not have to live in fear of sudden disaster. There was peace everywhere. Kampana achieved in the south what Hakka and Bukka had achieved in the north.

In 1375, an unexpected disaster struck Bukkaraya and the empire.

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The brave Kampana died.

He was to have adorned the throne of Vijayanagar after Bukkaraya. He was a warrior capable of safeguarding the freedom of his country and a ruler who could keep his subjects happy. It was really a great misfortune that Bukka and the Vijayanagar Empire lost him most unexpectedly.

Gangadevi, the wife of Kampana, has described his valor in her Sanskrit work, 'Madura Vijayam' or 'Veera Kampanaraya Charitam'. The book brings out very clearly the sad state of our country, our Dharma and our culture before, and how Hakka, Bukka and Kampana saved them. The whole work throbs with patriotic devotion.

Bukkaraya won great victories on the battlefield. He won equally great and enduring victories in times of peace as a ruler. During his reign, the empire, extending from the Tungabhadra to Rameswaram, enjoyed peace and plenty.

Bukka was a far-sighted and wise king. One mark of a wise leader is that he puts an end to a trouble before it becomes a danger. He is watchful; at the first sign of trouble he deals with it firmly. He is especially careful in guarding the unity of the people. One instance shows Bukka's greatness as a ruler:

Once it so happened that two groups in his own kingdom began fighting with each other:

The Jains were in a minority. The Shrivaisnavas, who followed a different religion, were in the majority. Differences of opinion

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developed between them. Gradually these grew, and they began to fight. News of this reached Bukka.

He sent for the leaders of both the communities and advised them thus: "Jainism is great and Shrivaisnavism also is great. Both of you should respect the faith of each other and help each other. Both of your faith show peoples how to live a life of goodness. Do they not both teach that you should give up violence and hatred and help others with love? The Delhi and the Bahamani Sultans are just waiting with their mouths open to swallow us. How could you fight with each other at this time? Do you not think that your internal fight will result only in danger to all?"

The leaders hung down their heads in shame. They promised the king that they would be friends thereafter.

Bukka called for a public meeting. There he made the leaders of the two communities join hands. He advised them again: "it is wrong to say that one man is high and another man is low. It is also wrong to think that one's loss is the other's gain. You should consider each other's troubles as your own." He also ordered that the Shrivaisnavas should compensate the Jains for their losses.

This incident is described in one of the stone inscriptions found at Sravanabelagola.

The mistaken idea that one religion was higher than the other was thus removed even in the early stages. People of all religions could respect one another and live together in peace and harmony. In this way Bukkaraya acted in time and put an end to a great danger to

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the unity and safety of the empire. This policy of his has set an example to people of all lands and times.

Under the Sultans of Bahamani and Delhi, the people could not worship their own Gods. Hakka and Bukka brought them the freedom to do so. Still, not many of them could read or understand their religious texts. The two brothers therefore made it possible for the learned in every religion to explain their religions to the masses. Sri Vidyanaraya wrote 'Vedantha Prakashika' for those who could not read and understand the Vedas in the original. Efforts were made to collect and publish Veerasaiva literature and 'Vachanas'. (The 'Vachana' is a form of literature in Kannada. The great Veerasaiva teachers put their teachings into short passages; these are in prose. They are very close to the spoken language; they are in a clear and powerful style, and contain vivid pictures.) Hakka and Bukka respected all religions equally. So Jain authors and writers could also freely write books on their religion. Hakka and Bukka were patrons of learning and literature. They were as interested in culture as in war. The age of these kings was a remarkable age; the king, the religious teacher, the scholar and the poet all respected one another; they worked together for the good of the people. Any country should be proud of such an age and such men.

After a successful rule of twenty- one years, Bukkaraya passed away in 1377. His son, Harihara the Second, succeeded him.

The period of Hakka and Bukka (1336-1377) is a very important one in the history of South India. Before them the Hindus were in great trouble because of their dis-unity. The Sultans of Delhi and

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Bahamani kingdoms were always trying to conquer the Hindu kingdoms. It was in such circumstances that these brothers brought the Hindus together. They respected all sects and groups and taught them how to live in co-operation and peace. They also encouraged learned men to write books so that people could understand religious texts more easily.

Hampi, the divine abode of Lord Virupaksha, became the capital of Harihara's New Kingdom; it grew in wealth and prosperity during the reign of Bukkaraya and later blossomed into a great city that enchanted tourists from different parts of the world.

Gangadevi, the poetess of the age and the daughter-in-law of Bukkaraya, has in her 'Madura Vijayam' described Hakka and Bukka as two wise and brave men who created a new nation, a new religion and a new society. The description is without doubt apt and richly deserved.

It is said that winning peace is difficult as winning a war.

True, it is difficult to win a war. It requires a powerful army. Food and arms have to be regularly supplied for the soldiers. The soldiers have to be sincere and faithful. The general has to be clever and wise. He must have the capacity to take quick decisions and give clear and exact orders to his army. He should also be an expert in the science of warfare. But it is even more difficult to administer the country, after the war is won, in such a way that the people live in peace, prosperity and happiness. An efficient army is to be maintained to prevent the enemies from attacking the land. Efficient officers has to be chosen to carry on the government. They should be

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kept under strict control so that they do not become too powerful and cruel towards the people. Care must be taken to see that the majority does not ill-treat the minority, that the rich do not make the poor work and suffer, and that the powerful do not trouble the powerless. Injustice to any section of the society has to be prevented.

Hakka and Bukka were patriots who won both war and peace. Acquiring the blessing of Dharma for their powers of brain and brawn, they created a new and great age in the history of South India.

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