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Krishnadeva Raya: Vijayanagara’s Golden Age Emperor

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Krishnadeva Raya: Vijayanagara’s Golden Age Emperor

Practice: 6 MCQs

Krishnadeva Raya ruled Vijayanagara from 1509 to about 1529. He is often called the greatest king of his dynasty.

This lesson follows his wars in the north and east. It then covers the horse trade, the visitors, his poetry and his work at Hampi. It ends with how his reign closed.

- **Dynasty:** Tuluva, of the Vijayanagara Empire.
- **Reign:** 1509 to 1529 (some sources 1530).
- **Wars:** Raichur doab, Udayagiri and Kondavid.
- **Book:** Amuktamalyada, a Telugu epic.
- **Hampi:** World Heritage Site since 1986.

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1. Who was Krishnadeva Raya?

Picture a king who fights in the morning and writes poetry at night. That was **Krishnadeva Raya**. He ruled the **Vijayanagara Empire** in South India. He belonged to the **Tuluva dynasty**.

Most sources give his reign as **1509 to 1529**. Some sources say **1530**. He is generally regarded as the greatest of the Vijayanagara kings.

1.1 Why is his reign called a golden age?

Three things happened together. The empire won wars. Poets and builders were paid to work. Foreign visitors wrote about a rich, busy capital.

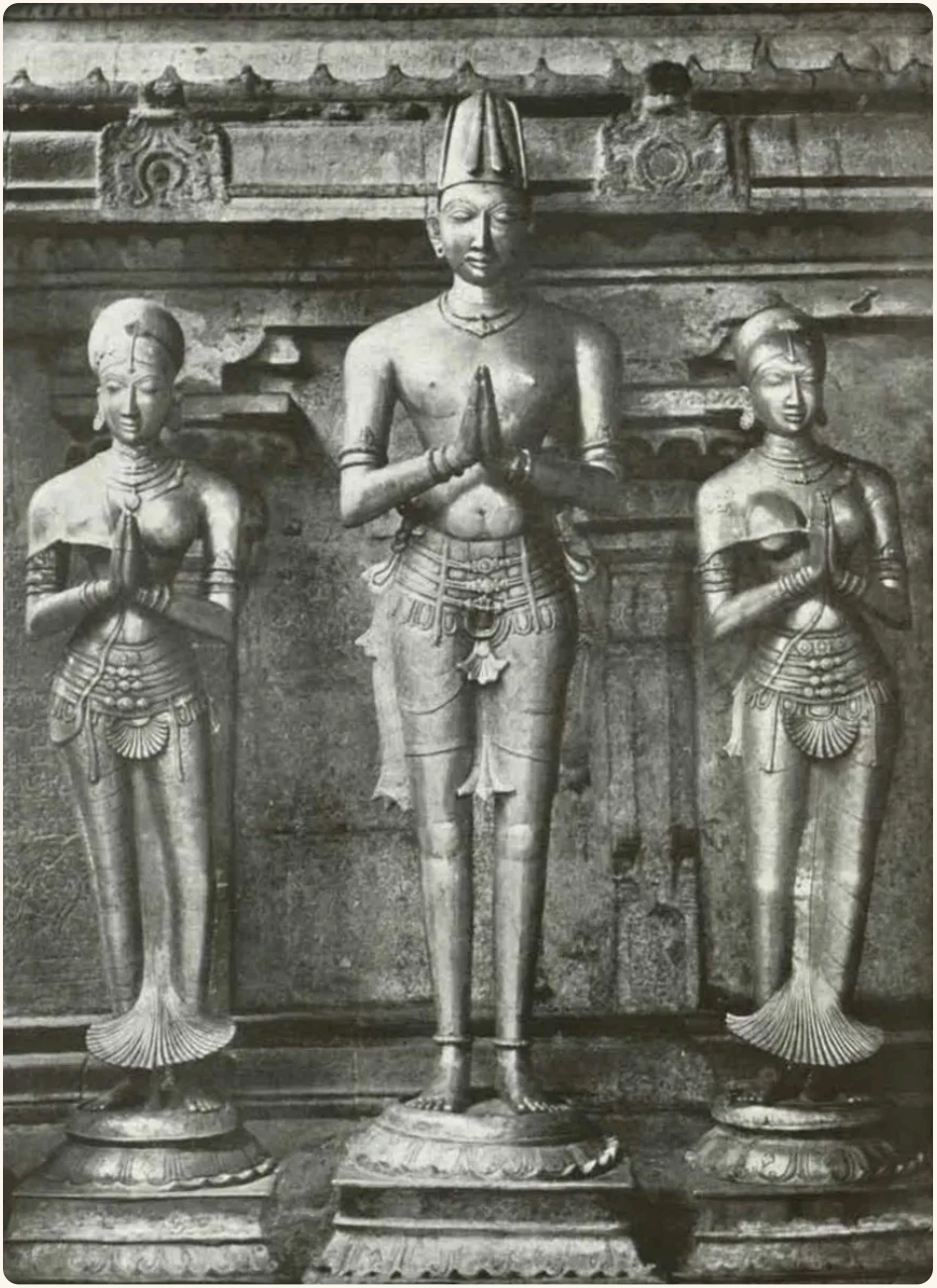
- **War:** he took forts from the Deccan sultans and from Orissa.
- **Art:** Telugu, Kannada and Sanskrit all flourished at his court.
- **Stone:** Hampi gained new gateways and temples.

1.2 A quick timeline to remember

Dates differ a little between books. Use this table as a map, and keep the hedges.

Year	Event
1509	Krishnadeva Raya becomes king
About 1512	Raichur is taken from the Bijapur side
About 1513 to 1514	Udayagiri is captured
1515	Kondavid falls after a siege

Year	Event
1520	Decisive victory over Bijapur; Paes visits
1529 to 1530	The king dies; Achyuta Deva Raya follows



Bronze donor statues of Krishnadeva Raya and his queen consorts, Chinna Devi and Tirumala Devi, at the Tirumala Venkateswara Temple. Photo via Wikimedia Commons.

Sources:

- Krishna Deva Raya (Britannica)
- Hampi (Archaeological Survey of India)
- Hampi (UNESCO World Heritage Centre)
- A Forgotten Empire (Robert Sewell, Project Gutenberg)

True or false: Krishnadeva Raya belonged to the Tuluva dynasty.

2. How did he win the northern wars?

Start with the map. North of Vijayanagara lay the Deccan sultanates. East of it lay the Gajapati kingdom of Orissa. Krishnadeva Raya had to face both.

2.1 The Raichur doab

The **Raichur doab** is the land between the Krishna and Tungabhadra rivers. It was the great prize. Both Vijayanagara and the Bijapur sultans wanted it.

Dates differ by source. Raichur was taken from Ismail Adil Shah about **1512**. The chronicler Nuniz places the decisive victory over the Bijapur sultan in **1520**. So write it as “1512 (Raichur taken) and 1520 (decisive victory)”.

2.2 The Orissa campaign

Next he turned east. Around **1513 to 1514** he marched against **Udayagiri**, a strong hill-fortress in the present Nellore district. It was held by the king of Orissa.

- **Udayagiri:** after the capture, a statue of the god Krishna was carried to Vijayanagara.
- **Krishna temple:** the king built it in the capital to hold that statue.

- **Hazara Rama temple:** he built it near his palace enclosure at about the same time.

The next target was **Kondavid**. It fell after a siege of about two months, in **1515**. The king left his minister **Saluva Timma** there as governor.

Why did the Orissa war matter? It opened the east coast to Vijayanagara. The king now held forts from the Krishna river down to the Coromandel side. The chronicler Nuniz recorded the capture of an aunt of the king of Orissa at Udayagiri.

Sources:

- Krishna Deva Raya (Britannica) (section 2)
- A Forgotten Empire (Robert Sewell, Project Gutenberg) (section 2)

True or false: Udayagiri was a fort held by the Bijapur sultan.

3. Why did horses and the Portuguese matter?

War elephants were easy to find in the south. Good war horses were not. They came by sea from Arabia and Persia. So whoever controlled the west-coast ports held a military advantage.

3.1 Goa, Bhatkal and the horse trade

The Portuguese took Goa under Albuquerque. Krishnadeva Raya wanted horses. Albuquerque preferred to send them to him rather than to the Bijapur sultan.

The **Bhatkal fort** is a favourite exam point. The Portuguese asked Vijayanagara for a fort at Bhatkal as early as **1506**, under King Narasa. The question was still alive in Krishnadeva Raya's time. Treat the exact year of his permission with care, as sources differ.

3.2 What did the Portuguese traveller Paes see?

Domingo Paes visited Vijayanagara in the king's time. He wrote that the city seemed as large as **Rome** and very beautiful to see. He also called it the best-provided city in the world.

He added that it had groves, water channels, lakes and elephants. Notice that these are a visitor's impressions, not official figures.

3.3 Did Abdur Razzaq meet Krishnadeva Raya?

No. This is a classic trap. The Persian envoy **Abdur Razzaq** visited Vijayanagara in **1443**, in the reign of **Deva Raya II**. That is about sixty-five years before Krishnadeva Raya took the throne. Razzaq's visit came about twenty years after that of the Venetian traveller Conti.

So the visitors came in this order: Conti, then Razzaq, then Paes. Paes is the one who saw Krishnadeva Raya's city.

3.4 What did the Rayas do for water?

Vijayanagara stood in dry country. The Rayas built elaborate water-channels that carried river water to the fields. Where these channels ran, there were rich gardens, woods, and crops of rice and sugar-cane.

Paes also noted groves, lakes and water channels inside the city. So water works were part of what made the capital rich.



Visitors to Vijayanagara, in order. Original explanatory diagram.

Sources:

- A Forgotten Empire (Robert Sewell, Project Gutenberg) (section 3)
- Krishna Deva Raya (Britannica) (section 3)
- Vijayanagara (Britannica)

Think it through: why could Abdur Razzaq not have met Krishnadeva Raya?

Razzaq came in 1443, in the reign of Deva Raya II. Krishnadeva Raya took the throne in 1509. That is about sixty-five years later.

4. Why is he called a poet-king?

Krishnadeva Raya did more than pay poets. He wrote verse himself. He was a poet versed in **Sanskrit, Kannada and Telugu**.

His best-known work is the Telugu epic **Amuktamalyada**. The Sahitya Akademi lists a translation of it as “Emperor-poet Sri Krsnadevaraya’s Amuktamalyada”.

4.1 What is the rayala yugam?

Telugu literary history calls this period the **rayala yugam**, the “age of kings”. Courts of the time were known for their **prabandhas**, which are long, polished poems. Court poets of the time included **Pingali Suranna**.

4.2 A quick exam trap

Amuktamalyada is a **Telugu** work, not a Sanskrit one. Two earlier PYQs on this very point are linked in section 6.

Sources:

- Krishna Deva Raya (Britannica) (section 4)
- Sahitya Akademi English catalogue

True or false: Amuktamalyada was written in Sanskrit.

5. What did he build at Hampi?

Hampi was the capital’s stone heart. Vijayanagara architecture **reached its apogee** under Krishnadeva Raya. The **Raya Gopura**, the tall temple gateway, was first introduced in temples linked to him.

5.1 Which monuments should you know?

- **Virupaksha Temple:** the old living temple of Hampi.

- **Vitthala Temple:** an excellent example of Vijayanagara style, known for its musical pillars and stone chariot.
- **Hazara Rama Temple:** another fine example of the style.
- **Lotus Mahal:** a building in the royal enclosure.

5.2 When did Hampi become a World Heritage Site?

Hampi was designated in **1986**. The protected area is about **4,187 hectares**. The wider site has more than **1,600 monuments**.

5.3 How do you recognise a Raya Gopura?

A **gopura** is the tall gateway tower of a South Indian temple. The **Raya Gopura** is a large royal gateway of this style. It was first introduced in temples linked to Krishnadeva Raya. So if a question asks for a new feature of his reign, think of the Raya Gopura.

Sources:

- Group of Monuments at Hampi (UNESCO World Heritage Centre)
- Hampi (Archaeological Survey of India) (section 5)
- Vijayanagara (Britannica) (section 5)

True or false: Hampi was named a World Heritage Site in 1986.
Think it through: what new feature should you link to his reign at Hampi?

Think of the Raya Gopura, the tall royal gateway. It was first introduced in temples linked to him.

6. How did his reign end, and what do exams ask?

Krishnadeva Raya died of illness around **1529 to 1530**. He passed over his infant son and chose his half-brother **Achyuta Deva Raya**, who ruled from 1529 to 1542.

The empire did not fall at once. The decisive blow came at **Talikota in 1565**, long after his death. Hampi was left in ruins soon after.

6.1 The last plan he never finished

The king began preparing an attack on **Belgaum**, then held by the Adil Shah. He asked the Portuguese at Goa for help. But he fell too seriously ill to carry out the plan. He died soon after, aged about forty-two to forty-five, in 1530 by one count.

This is why books give 1529 and 1530. Write “1529 (some sources 1530)” and you are safe.

6.2 What do the PYQs keep testing?

The same few ideas return again and again. Open each paper below to see the real question.

- **Bhatkal fort and the Portuguese:** UPSC CSP 2024, Q56.
- **His revenue system:** UPSC CSP 2016, Q9.
- **His book and its language:** CDS I 2022, Q54 and CAPF ACs 2025, Q42.
- **A false-statement question:** NDA I 2017, Q111.

Now practise the ideas below.

Sources:

- Krishna Deva Raya (Britannica) (section 6)

- A Forgotten Empire (Robert Sewell, Project Gutenberg) (section 6)

Your understanding checks

Your 4 quick checks Answered 0 of 4 · Correct 0
This score resets when the page reloads.

Practice: 6 MCQs

Practice MCQs

1. Krishnadeva Raya's reign over Vijayanagara is generally dated to which years?

A. 1509 to 1529

B. 1336 to 1356

C. 1485 to 1509

D. 1529 to 1542

See answer ↓

2. Around 1513 to 1514, Krishnadeva Raya marched against which hill-fortress held by the king of Orissa?

A. Talikota

B. Udayagiri

C. Raichur

D. Bhatkal

See answer ↓

3. Krishnadeva Raya won a decisive victory over the Bijapur sultan in which year?

A. 1443

B. 1336

C. 1520

D. 1565

See answer ↓

4. Amuktamalyada, the work of Krishnadeva Raya, is a classic of which language?

A. Sanskrit

B. Telugu

C. Tamil

D. Persian

See answer ↓

5. In which year was Hampi designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site?

A. 1986

B. 1999

C. 1565

D. 2004

See answer ↓

6. Whom did Krishnadeva Raya choose as his successor, passing over his infant son?

A. His son-in-law Rama Raya

B. His half-brother Achyuta Deva Raya

C. His minister Saluva Timma

D. His nephew Sadasiva Raya

See answer ↓

Answer Key

1. **A.** The answer is **1509 to 1529**. Some sources give 1530 as the end year. Why the others fail: 1336 is the empire's founding. 1529 to 1542 is the reign of his half-brother Achyuta. Memory hook: the golden age ran from 1509 to about 1529. ↑ Q1
2. **B.** The answer is **Udayagiri**, in the present Nellore district. Why the others fail: Raichur was fought over with Bijapur. Bhatkal was a west-coast port. Talikota was fought in 1565. Memory hook: Udayagiri leads east to Kondavid. ↑ Q2
3. **C.** The answer is **1520**, in the fight for the Raichur doab. Raichur itself was taken about 1512. Why the others fail: 1565 is Talikota. 1443 is the visit of Abdur Razzaq. 1336 is the founding of Vijayanagara. Memory hook: Raichur 1512, victory 1520. ↑ Q3
4. **B.** The answer is **Telugu**. Krishnadeva Raya was also a poet in Sanskrit and Kannada. Why the others fail: Amuktamalyada is not a Sanskrit work, and it is not Tamil or Persian. Memory hook: the poet-king, a Telugu epic. ↑ Q4
5. **A.** The answer is **1986**. Vijayanagara architecture reached its apogee under Krishnadeva Raya. Why the others fail: 1565 is the year of Talikota. The other years are not Hampi's inscription date. Memory hook: Hampi, 1986. ↑ Q5
6. **B.** The answer is **his half-brother Achyuta Deva Raya**, who ruled from 1529 to 1542. Why the others fail: Saluva Timma was a minister, not a king. The other names belong to later events. Memory hook: Krishna, then Achyuta. ↑ Q6

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