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ART AND ARCHITECTURE IN VIJAYANAGARA PERIOD- SOME REFLECTIONS

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## ABSTRACT

The Vijayanagara kings were the force behind the artistic activity of the period. The finest flowering of this movement is seen in the magnificent examples at Vjayanagara, once noted for gaity and colour, now deserted and known popularly as Hampi. Though the city became a victim of destruction and plunder, it retains its charm even the ruins. The in rulers Vijayanagara restored many shrines throughout south India and lavished wealth upon them. Krishnaraya provided the huge towers, called rayaguras after him and pillared halls to the temples at Tirupati, Srirangam, Tadipatri, Kanchi, Vellore and other places.

In conformity with the majestic resources of the Vijayanagara empire, there was an elaboration of ceremonial observations during this period. These observations were also reflected in the enlargement of



temple structures. Separate shrines celebrating various festivals were erected. notable The contributions of the Vijayanagara craftsmen were a shrine to godess, halls pillared and pavilions like Kalyanamandapa and the lofty gopuras. Most of the architectural structures built during the Vijayanagara period were confined to their capital city at Hampi. The gigantic boulders that surrounded Hampi supplied ample material for construction of the structure. Stone of two varieties, one granite and the other greencoloured chlorite was used for the buildings and the idols.

The paper highlights the art and architecture, finearts and paintings of vijayanagara period.

## **KEYWORDS**:

Vijayanagara craftsmen , architectural structures , artistic activity.

## INTRODUCTION

The Vijayanagara Architecture of the period (1336 - 1565CE) was a notable building idiom evolved by the imperial Hindu Vijayanagar Empire that ruled the whole of South India from their regal capital at Vijayanagara on the banks of the Tungabhadra River in Karnataka, India. The empire built a number of temples, monuments, palaces and other

structures over South India, with the largest concentration located in capital. The its monuments in and around Hampi, in the Vijayanagara principality, are listed as **UNESCO World Heritage** Sites. In addition to building temples. the new empire also added new structures and made modifications to hundreds of existing temples across South India. Some structures at Vijayanagara are from the pre-Vijavanagara period. The Mahakuta

hill temples are from the Western Chalukya era. The region around Hampi had been a popular place of worship for centuries before the Vijayanagara period with earliest records dating from 689 CE when it was known as Pampa Tirtha after the local river God Pampa. There are hundreds of extant monuments in the core area of the capital city. Of these fifty six are protected by UNESCO, six hundred and fiftyfour monuments are protected by the government of Karnataka and another three hundred monuments await protection.

Vijayanagara architecture can be broadly classified into religious, courtly and civic architecture, as can the associated sculptures and paintings. The Vijayanagara style is a combination of the Chalukya, Hoysala, Pandya and Chola styles which evolved earlier in the centuries when these empires ruled and is characterised by a return to the simplistic and serene art of the past. For the approximately 400 years during the rule of the Western Chalukya and the Hoysalas empires, the most popular material for temple construction was chloritic schist or soapstone. This was also true for sculpture as soapstone is soft and easily carved. During the Vijayanagar period the local hard granite was preferred in the Badami Chalukya style, although soapstone was used for a few reliefs and sculptures. While the use of granite reduced the density of sculptured works, granite was a more durable material for the temple structure. Because granite is prone to flaking, few pieces of individual sculptures reached the high levels of quality seen in previous centuries. In order to cover the unevenness of the stone used in sculptures, artists employed plaster to give the rough surface a smooth finish and then painted it with lively colours.<sup>1</sup>

## **TEMPLE ARCHITECTURE IN VIJAYANAGARA**

Temple Architecture of Vijayanagara reflects various traditional styles as well as innovative ideas Temple architecture of Vijayanagara demonstrates the religious bend of mind of its inhabitants. Moreover, the dynasties that ruled Vijayanagara have also left an indelible mark on the culture of this ancient kingdom through the numerous temples and their architectural and sculptural works.

The Vijayanagara period temples have been divided into three groups on the basis of the century in which they were constructed, namely those of the fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Temples of the fourteenth century are confined to its last two decades, specifically from the reign of the third monarch of Sangama dynasty, Harihara II (AD 1377-1404). Of the fifteenth century, the dated monuments are mainly those built in the first half of the century, from the period of the later Sangamas such as Devaraya I (AD 1406-1422), Devaraya II (AD 1424-1446) and even Mallikarjuna (AD 1446-65). During the latter part of the fifteenth century political turmoil and debility entered the kingdom. Since then no dated buildings are available from this period. However, the heyday of Vijayanagara temple architecture was once again initiated in the sixteenth century, prior to AD 1565 during the reigning period of Tuluvas.<sup>2</sup>

Two main traditions of temple buildings, namely the Deccan and the Tamil, merged to form the mature Vijayanagara style of temple architecture. The earlier influence was of the Deccan tradition that had developed in this area from the 10th-11th century AD onwards. Temple architecture in the Deccan, in the centuries prior to the Vijayanagara period, consisted of several closely related styles, using different materials. There were the sandstone monuments of Rashtrakuta dynasty while the later Chalukya-Hoysala temples were constructed entirely of schist. In contrast to sandstone or schist the artisans of this era used to create distinct style using the locally available granite. A number of pre-Vijayanagara temples are extant at the site, mainly on Hemakuta hill and around the Manmatha tank (to the north of the Virupaksha temple The temples were made plain, with one or smaller sanctuaries, the maximum being three, and opening off a common 'mandapa', which is often provided with a porch. The exterior walls of the 'vimana' are generally unadorned but the 'vimanas' are capped by pyramidal masonry superstructures. The 'mandapas' have columned interiors, each pillar with a separate base and a double capital. The hall and the porch are at times provided with seating slabs on the periphery. Epigraphs relating to these temples, if they exist, are inscribed on separate slabs, set up precisely for this purpose. The fourteenth-century Vijayanagara temples primarily follow Deccan idiom and this mode of temple building survived partially into the fifteenth century as well.

The predominance of the Deccan style in Vijayanagara period temple architecture was short-lived. By the early fifteenth century the Tamil tradition had earned popularity. During this time, the medium used for the temples built in this idiom was granite and the walls of the shrines were rhythmically divided by pairs of pilasters into alternating projections and recesses. The projections have niches for sculptures, framed by split pilasters and shallow pediments, comprising a 'kapota' capped by a 'sala'; the recesses have isolated pilasters standing in pots decorated with bands and tassels. The superstructures of the 'vimanas' are constructed of brick and plaster, as are the parapets that rise above the roofs of the attached 'mandapas' and porches. Another feature of the Tamil style is the entrance 'gopuras', which are solid constructions with central passageways. They support imposing pyramidal brick and plaster towers which are capped with enlarged 'sala' roof-forms, resembling barrel-vaults. Inscriptions are engraved directly on to the basement mouldings and walls of the temples of this style. This architectural tradition which had developed in the Tamil zone under the Chola dynasty and later Pandya dynasty, reached in its zenith under the Vijayanagara rulers and their successors, the Nayakas.

However, not all temple-building activity at Vijayanagara in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries conformed fully to the Tamil style; for in the fifteenth century, some shrines continued to be built according to the Deccan tradition. Even in the temples which are predominantly in the Tamil style certain characteristics of Deccan architecture persist: in particular, the 'navaranga' pattern of the 'rangamandapa', in which four central pillars divide the hall into nine bays and its ceiling into nine squares. Other features are the projecting porches off the 'rangamandapa', the seating slabs on the periphery of the hall and porches, and the vault-like projections in front of the 'vimana' towers of specific temples such as the Ramachandra shrine.<sup>3</sup>

#### **TEMPLES AT VIJAYANAGARA**

Vijayanagara is in Bellary District, northern Karnataka. It is the name of the now-ruined capital city 'which was regarded as the second Rome' that surrounds modern-day Hampi, of the historic Vijayanagara empire which extended over the southern part of India.

Most of the city lies on the south bank of the Tungabhadra River. The city was built around the original religious centre of the Virupaksha temple at Hampi. Other holy places lie within its environs, including the site of what is said to be Kishkindha where a Hanuman temple, the cave home of Anjana, Kesari and Shabari, a holy pond named the *Pampasarovar* are located. It also contains the cave home of Sugriva, the monkey king of the Ramayana.

The city at its greatest extent was considerably larger than the area described here; an account is given at the article on the Vijayanagara metropolitan area. The central areas of the city, which include what are now called the Royal Centre and the Sacred Centre, extend over an area of at least 40 km. It includes the modern village of Hampi. Another village, Kamalapura, lies just outside the old walled city, but is also surrounded by ruins and monuments. The nearest town and railway is in Hosapete, about 13 km (8.1 mi) away by road. Hosapete also lies within the original extents of the old city, though most of the items of interest are within walking distance of Hampi and Kamalapura.

The natural setting for the city is a hilly landscape, dotted with numerous granite boulders. The Tungabhadra River runs through it, and provides protection from the north. Beyond the hills, on the south bank on which the city was built on plain extended further the south. Large walls and fortifications of hewn granite defended the centre of the city.

#### **TEMPLES AT HAMPI**

Among the temples at Hampi, the most sacred Virupaksha temple is said to have been built prior to the foundation of the city, but many additions were made to it by Harihara I and Krishnadevaraya. The temple of Vitthala is a fine example of the Vijayanagara style. It 'shows the extreme limit in florid magnicence to which the style advanced'. Its construction began in the reign of Devaraya II and was continued even upto 1565 A.D. The temple lies in a rectangular courtyard of 538 ft. by 310 ft. This courtyard is in fact cloistered with entrances on three sides having three gopuras. The central structure dedicated to Vishnu in the form of Vithoba is a long and low structure 220 ft. in length and 20 ft. in width aligned from east to west. The super structure of the central shrine has since fallen.<sup>4</sup>

#### **HEMAKUTA HILL**

The hill is situated to the south of Hampi village. It bears several small temples that predate the construction of Vijayanagara as the capital of the empire, some being as early as the 10th century. The hill was fortified when the main city was constructed, and a number of more recent temples, tanks, entrances, and gopurams exist on the hill, some of which were never completed. On Hemakuta hill stands a tripleshrine temple of the Phamsana type, of the early fourteenth century, with an inscription within revealing that it was built by Vira Karhpiladeva. It has three shrines, facing east, west and north, each with its own common antechamber leading into a 'mandapa' and a front porch with secondary balcony seating slabs. The pillars within are of the heavy early type, exemplified by the four central pillars of the 'mandapa', each of which has a separate moulded base and a shaft comprising two cubical blocks separated by a sixteen-eightsixteen sided mid-section, a 'ghata', disc and 'phalaka' with convex base; the corbels are of the angled variety. The ceiling of the 'mandapa' is divided into nine squares. The central one alone is adorned with rotated squares and a lotus medallion in the centre. On each of the north, west and east walls of the 'mandapa', flanking the entrances to the antechambers, are two deep niches. On the temple's exterior lies a plinth of that is unadorned, but clearly defined, mouldings and a plain wall surface of dressed rectangular stone slabs, with a central horizontal band. Above the cellas are stepped pyramidal superstructures of stone, each with a square-domical 'sihhara' and 'sala' type projection.<sup>5</sup>

#### **KRISHNA TEMPLE**

This is a ruined temple, south of Hampi and Hemakuta hill. It was built by the emperor Krishnadevaraya after military campaigns in Orissa. The temple is contained in twin enclosures. Parts of the temple and its compound have collapsed, and while some restoration has been carried out, it is generally in poor condition. There is now no image in the inner sanctuary.

#### LAKSHMI NARASIMHA TEMPLE

Also to the south of Hampi is this massive rock cut idol of Narasimha, the fierce aspect of Vishnu, 6.7 m high. Originally the idol bore a smaller image of Lakshmi on one knee; this had fallen off, probably due to vandalism. The Lakshmi statue is now in the museum at Kamalapuram. Narasimha is depicted seated on the coils of Shesha. Shesha is shown here in a form with seven heads, the heads arching over Narasimha to form a canopy. The statue has recently been restored. The granite strap binding between his knees is a recent addition to stabilise it. The donation of this work is ascribed to either Krishnadeva Raya, or to a wealthy merchant during his reign.<sup>6</sup>

## **SUGRIVA'S CAVE**

This is a natural cave, said to be the original home of the monkey king Sugriva, where Rama is said to have met him and Hanuman on his travels. The cave is marked by coloured markings, and the attentions of pilgrims.

#### **KODANDARAMA TEMPLE**

This is situated to the east of Hampi, near the end of the colonnaded street that leads out from the Virupaksha temple. It is in the sacred centre of the city, and by a narrow point of the Tungabhadra river. This temple marks the spot where Rama crowned Sugriva. The temple is still in use, and the garbha griha contains statues of Rama, Lakshmana and Sita all carved out a single boulder.

#### **VITTALA TEMPLE**

Situated northeast of Hampi, opposite the village of Anegondi, this is one of the principal monuments of the city. It is dedicated to Vittala, an aspect of Vishnu worshipped in the Maratha country. It is believed to date from the 16th century. In the front of the temple is the famous stone chariot or *ratha*. This is itself a miniature temple, carved out of a single rock, to resemble the temple chariots or rathas in

which temple idols are traditionally taken out in procession. One of the notable features of the Vitthala Temple is the musical pillars. Each of the pillars that support the roof of the main temple is supported by a pillar representing a musical instrument, and is constructed as 7 minor pillars arranged around a main pillar. These 7 pillars, when struck, emanate the 7 notes from the representative instrument, varying in sound quality based on whether it represents a wind, string or percussion instrument. The temple is the venue of the annual *Purandaradasa* festival.

## THE KING'S BALANCE

This structure, the *Tulapurushandana*, stands to the southwest of the Vittala temple. consists of two carved granite pillars, spanned by a carved horizontal granite transom. This was used on ceremonial days, when scales were hung from the transom, and the *Raya* (the emperor) was ceremonially weighed against gold or jewels. The treasure was then distributed, to Brahmins or others in the city.

#### THE ROYAL CENTRE

This extensive area consists of a small plateau, which starts about 2 km (1.2 mi) to the southeast of Hampi, and extends southeast, almost to the village of Kamalapuram. It is separated from the Sacred Centre by a small valley, now consisting of agricultural fields, and which carries irrigation canals or streams that join the river opposite Anegondi. A granite platform overlooks the Royal Centre.<sup>[4]</sup> The Royal Centre contains the ruins of palaces, administrative buildings, and some temples directly associated with royalty. Little remains of the palaces except the foundations, as they were largely timber structures, for comfort. The temples and some of the other stone structures survive however, as do many of the surrounding city walls. An aqueduct runs through much of the Royal Enclosure and into the Great Tank where water was brought for special events. The west end of the tank is overlooked by a platform shrine. The aqueduct also runs into the large stepped tank, lined in green diorite, with a geometric design that has not required restoration.

#### **RAMACHANDRA TEMPLE**

The temple stands in a rectangular courtyard, with entrances facing to the east. Reliefs showing daily life and festival scenes occur on the outer walls of the courtyard. Scenes from the Ramayana occur on the inner courtyard walls, and on the temple itself. There is a well-relief of baby Krishna on the walls. The temple may have been exclusively for royal use. It is believed to be constructed at the site of Vaali's killing in the hands of Rama. It may have been a private shrine for royalty. It is unusual in that it has four black basalt columns in the *mantapa* (columned hall). The inner sanctuary of the temple is now empty.<sup>7</sup> This is also known as the Hazara Rama temple (temple of a thousand Ramas), due to the recurrence of images of Rama on the walls. Sometimes it is called the Hajara Rama temple (the Rama temple in the courtyard).

#### **UNDERGROUND SHIVA TEMPLE**

The temple has a Garbagriha with an antarala and Aradhamantapa and a Mahamantatapa. The mahamantapa has pillared corridors that fuse with the pillared Mukhamantapa, making a larger pillared frontal Mantapa which also encloses a Dwajasthamba. The pillars of this temple are plain. An inscription referring to this temple states that Krishnadevaraya donated Nagalapura and other villages for worship and offerings to the Gods for the merit of his parents Narsa Nayaka and Nagaji Devi.<sup>8</sup> At times the base of the temple is flooded and may be inaccessible. When it is accessible, masses of small insect bats may be found in the temple.

#### **LOTUS MAHAL**

A palace for the queen that has, among other things, pipes with running water. A construction of the later Vijayanagara period, this structure shows Islamic influence in its arched gateways and vaulted ceilings; its construction entirely in stone is a clear deviation from conventional Vijayanagara palace and house construction that used wooden structures on stone platforms.

#### **PUSHKARANI**

Also called the Stepped Bath, or the Queen's bath, this is a stepped well designed for bathing. Such sunken wells were created to provide relief from daytime heat. It would have been covered when the city was occupied.

#### **ELEPHANT STABLES**

A set of large stables, to house the ceremonial elephants of the royal household. The area in front of them was a parade ground for the elephants, and for troops. This is another structure that shows Islamic influence in its domes and arched gateways. The guards' barracks are located right next to the elephant stables.

#### **LEPAKSHI TEMPLES**

Lepakshi (Lat.13°,48' N.;Long.77°,36'E) is a small village situated fourteen(14) KMs to the east of Hindupur, in Anantapur District of Andhra Pradesh. The place can be reached by bus from Hindupur. It is famous for its temple of Veerabhadra and the mural paintings of the Vijayanagara period. There is a popular legend about this temple which runs as follows:<sup>9</sup>

During the 16th century Lepakshi was great centre of trade as well as pilgrimage with fine architecture blended with bold, graceful sculptures and exquisite paintings. Legend dates the Lepakshi town back to the days of the *Ramayana*. It is said that Lord Rama found the mythical bird *Jatayu* lying wounded here, its wings were cut off by *Ravana* when he abducted *Sita*. According to locals, after *Ravana* had cut the wing of the bird, Lord *Rama* said "*le pakshi"(rise bird)* and the bird rose. Hence, this sacred place was named as Lepakshi. Local lore has it that sage *Agasthya* installed the idol of *Papanaseswara* at the site. However, the temple as it exists today is of more recent origin. The temple at Lepakshi is not a merely a *Siva* temple but has a temple complex. The peculiarity of this temple complex is that it has idols of both *Siva* and *Vishnu*. The panchayatana advocated by *Adi Shankara* is probably implemented here in a slightly different from.

Lepakshi temple is said to have been built by two brothers, *Virupanna and Veeranna*. The temple was constructed during the reign of *Achyuta Devaraya*, who ruled the Vijayanagara Empire from 1530 A.D to 1542 A.D *Virupanna* was favoured by *Achyutaraya*.

During his routine visits he happend to see *Papanaseswaralaya* on *Kurmasaila*, which was at that time an insignificant structure. He decided to build a temple there and for the purpose engaged famous architects, sculptors and paintors.

For the construction he used funds from the imperial treasury. *Virupanna's* enemies reported to the emperor that the treasury funds were being embezzled and the treasure was in danger of being exhausted. In those days it was customary to pluck the eyes of the keeper of the royal treasury if he was found guilty of theft or embezzlement. The king ordered that *Virupanna* should be blinded. *Virupanna*, being a loyal servant carried out on the spot with his own hands, this order, and to this day, two dark stains are shown on the west wall of the southern entrance of the inner enclosure, which are said to be the marks made by his eyes which he himself threw at the wall. The builder of the temple did not survive long after this and hence the *kalyanamandapa* was left unfinished.

#### **VIJAYANAGAR PAINTINGS**

The paintings of the Vijayanagar represent the great revival of Hindu religion and art in South India. During the Vijayanagar era, the wall paintings made a comeback. The best representation of these paintings can be seen in the Virabhadra temple at Lepakshi. The Vijayanagar at Lepakshi are very decorative in style.

In most of the Vijayanagar paintings, human faces usually appear in the profile, figures stand with a slight slant with both feet pointing in the same direction. All these paintings are seen mainly on the ceilings of the mandapas and in the corridors of the temple. But unfortunately, most of them have got damaged now. Some of these Vijayanagar paintings depict the scenes depict Draupadi's wedding and Kiratarjunya

(Arjuna's penance). Few other pictures show Viruppanna and Viranna with their sons and guards. They are shown wearing long white robes with a printed cloth round their waist.

The Vijayanagar paintings have covered the ceiling of the great Virupaksha temple at Hampi and the themes of them are generally religious. There is simplicity and vigour in the style of the paintings with a sense of movement and energy caught in the figures, which represent a linear style. The ceiling of the Virupaksha temple mandapa has a painting, which depicts Vidyaranya, the guru of Harihara and Bukka, the founders of the Vijayanagar Empire being carried in a palanquin. These paintings show a rhythmic forward movement and do not look overcrowded. They also show the episodes from the life of King Manunitikanda Chola, who granted justice to a cow whose calf was run over by his son's chariot. In these paintings the king is shown sacrificing the prince under the chariot's wheels, but God Siva is restoring life to both the victims and praising the king's sense of justice. Most of these Vijayanagar paintings depict the mythological legends of Siva and stories from the epics but they also represent the life and customs of the Vijayanagar Empire.<sup>10</sup>

The paintings of the Vijayanagar period exhibit the revivalism of Hinduism. Wall paintings were given importance. At places like Hampi, Anegundi, Lapakshi, Somapallee, Kanchipuram, Varadaraja Perumal temple and vardhamana temple at Tirupparruthikundram one can see the paintings of the Vijayanagar period. In the walls and ceilings paintings relating to legends and myths are drawn. Scenes from Ramayana, Mahabharatha and vishnupurana are drawn. The Siva temples contain paintings associated with Saivism. Paintings of secular nature also came up during that period. It was also a period which devoted to miniature painting. Attractive figures have been drawn with decorations, ornaments and embellishements.

Pictures relating to Hindu mythology are seen in the ceilings of the Virupaksha temple. Pictures referring to Madana Vijaya. Tripura samhara are also available. The panel of Manmada and Rati is quite absorbing. The anger of Siva is portrayed in an excellent way. The Tripurantaka panel is also an interesting one. Siva's movement is depicted in the form of sun and moon.

The Virabhadra Swami temple at Lapakshi is an important one for its paintings. The ceilings of this temple contains a lot of paintings. The figures of Siva in the form of Linga. Parvathi are drawn in an exuberant manner. The costumes and ornaments are drawn a wonderful way. The colour combination is quite appealing. The Brahadeeswara temple at Tanjore, the Siddhalingeswara temple at Edeyur, the Vardhamana temple at Tirupparuthikundram etc. have the paintings of the vijayanagar period. They have even painted the figures of Portuguese the father of Krishna Devarya etc. Thus it was a period of developments in various fields. They reveal the glorious contributions of a Hindu empire to the Indian culture.

## **FINE ARTS**

Music and Dance played an important role in the cultural life of Vijayanagara. The purpose of Music and Dance is to provide pleasure and delight both to the ear and the eye. Both the folk songs and classical ones were equally popular among the masses and the classes. Likewise different styles of dancing was prevelent. "Since a visual representation of vocal music is impossible in the sculpture, contemporary music was represented in sculpture and paintings through musical instruments only." A large variety of musical instruments were used by the artists such as *Veena, Venu, Mridanga* and the like. During those days, atleast a modicum of knowledge, if not proficiency in performing, was considered as basic characteristic of culture. Even after five centuries the musical compositions of Purandaradasa and Annamacharya are popular and is enjoyed by thousands of Sangeeta Rasikas.

Glimpses of the festivals, amusements, social customs and religious beliefs of those medievial period show aspects of social life lead by ordinary people. Subjects were selected at random such as celebration of Holy festival, barbarous practices of Sati, religious vows of Sidi, sports like wrestling and hunting. Sathagopa Jiyar instituted a class of missionaries called Ahobala Dasaris to uplift the hill tribes. Saint Vyasatirtha (1478 - 1539), formost philosopher of Dvaita Vedanta, was, during the reign of Saluva Narasimha, the Spirtiual Advisor and Guardian Angel of the Kingdom was also the *Guru* of Krishna Devaraya. During 1499-1500 he installed 732 Hanuman idols in different parts of the kingdom beginning with the Yantrodharaka Hanuman at

Hampi. He lived at Hampi and he passed away on 8th March 1539 and his mortal remains are entombed at Navabrindavanam.

According to some historians, the defeat of the Vijayanagara army did not lead to any substantial political gains for the allied forces. Earlier, the Deccani Sultans had maintained a very efficient army because of a fear of a potential war at any time, but after this decisive battle of 1565 A.D., they became complacent and also quarrelled among themselves. This ultimately led to their demise at the hands of the Mughals of Delhi.

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