ART AND ARCHITECTURE OF THE MEDIEVAL PERIOD

"In the Vāstu Śāstra architecture is taken in its broadest sense and implies what is built and constructed. Thus in the first place it denotes all sorts of buildings – religious, residential and military and their auxiliary members and component members. Secondly, it implies town-planning, laying out gardens, constructing market places; marking roads, bridges, gates, digging wells, tanks, trenches, drains, sewers, moats; building enclose walls, embankments, dams, railings, ghats, flights of steps for hills, ladders, etc. Thirdly, it denotes articles of house, furniture, such as bed-steads, couches, tables, chairs, thrones, fans, wardrobes, clocks, baskets, conveyances, cages, nests, hills.

".......... Architecture also implies sculpture and deals with the making phallus, idols of deities, statues of sages, images of animals and birds. It includes the making of garments, ornaments, ........".¹

Against this background if we study the art
and architecture of a period, it reflects the cultural life of the people. The art and architecture during the 15th, 16th and 17th Centuries denote a major change in building pattern too. There appears to be some change in plan of the buildings, elevation, materials used, techniques adopted and stylistic patterns here and there.

4.1 Religious Architecture:

During the period of Hoysalas, the Vesara style of architecture was prominent. It is characterised by its Vesara śikhara, star shaped plan with elevated platforms, intricate carvings on the outer walls of the temple, lathe-turned rounded pillars, highly ornamented sculptures on the soft soap stone, multiple sanctums in the same temple, and diminishing size of the vimānas or even temples.

In the 15th, 16th and 17th Centuries particularly under the Vijayanagara rulers and their feudatories, there arose a new style of architecture which was a mixture of the regional styles within Vesara and the Dravidian styles. In this new style of architecture, the soft greenish grey soap stone gave
way to the hard granite which was available in the area. This change in the material gradually gave way to a number of changes in the stylistic patterns of architecture under the Vijayanagara rulers. "The Vijayanagara school of architecture was, without any doubt, influenced by the various types of architecture which preceded it.... The Vijayanagara school of architecture is a pleasant medley of all the currents which preceded it ...."2

"With the patronage of the rulers of the Vijayanagara empire, the principles of monumentalism as expressed in an expansion and repetition of architectural elements came greatly to influence the conception of the temple".3 Outlying elements of the complex were given more attention. Temple building was characterised by a desire to enlarge earlier sacred structures by the addition of successive enclosure walls, entered by a number of gateways.

4.1.1 Elevation:

The first innovation was in the elevation of the temple. In the early Vijayanagara shrines, the upanam was plain and smaller, as in Kadalekalu Ganesa temple. In the Vittala Swami temple it was decorated
with scroll of _vīnes_ and similar linear orramentation.

The South Indian sculptor utilised the symbolism of the lotus by making its petals as one of the bases of the temple above the _upānām_ and it has been called _padmam_. This feature of the Vijayanagara style was probably derived from Paṇḍyan art.

Above the _upānām_, another moulding was carved _kumudam_. "In the temples of Vijayanagara it is carved with the ridges from above and below with a band - space left in front and this too was filled up with different designs". 4

Next was the _kantham_. "The Vijayanagara sculptors probably made the finest use of this space occupied by this moulding". 5 They filled it up with the episodes selected from the social life in and around the kingdom. The long frieze was partitioned into compartments where the carvings of dancing girls, king's _darbar_, and such other features were filled up.

_Vēdīgal_ was the moulding above the _kantham_. It was an inverted _padmam_. According to R.N. Saletore, "The Vijayanagara craftsmen utilised this moulding and by considerably enlarging it, made it descending like the upper human lip in a continuous line but marked
it with partitions in the moulding itself. 6

4.1.2 Pradaksīna Paṭha and Garbhagrha:

The pradaksīna paṭha was around the garbhagrha as in the Viṭṭalasvāmi temple. Hence it is called sandhāra temple. But, sometimes, it was in the second prakāra of the temple, as in Acyuta Rāya's temple.

The garbhagrha was made square, śukanāsa, navaranga, prakāra and pradaksīna paṭha came to be added in course of time. Within the pradaksīna paṭha itself, are the shrines dedicated to the other deities.

The Keḻadi style of architecture, which was almost a continuation of the Vijayanagar style with some minor variations consists of garbhagrha, antarāla, with or without pradaksīna paṭha, mukhamantapa or pillared hall and an open corridor for pradaksīna paṭha surrounded by prakāra, with or without pillared corridors.

Keḻadi Rāmeśvara temple, Vīrabhadra temple and Pārvati temple bear these characteristic features.

4.1.3 Walls of the Temple:

On the walls of the temples, the decorative
pilasters and the niches can be seen, as in Hazara Rama temple. The *kumbhaḥpāṇḥaram* assumed its beautiful form in Vijayanagara art. The niches had no separate images, but had the double pillars, and was employed to adorn the *adhisthāna*, as in the Viṭṭala-svāmī temple. In the Hazara Rama temple, the walls are filled up with the relief sculptures of elephants, horses, footsoldiers and dancing girls in a variety of postures.

In the temples at Bīcanūr (Nagara) and Bhuvanagiri dūrga (Kauḷēdūrga) (Capital cities or headquarters of the Keḻadi rulers), we find that the walls are decorated with low or high relief sculptures of elephant riders, horse riders, *yōgis*, musicians and dancers in varied postures.

4.1.4 The Roof:

The sloping roof slab with lip-like projection is a peculiarity of the Vijayanagara school of architecture. The roof becomes elegant and ornate. Above this, was a quaint decoration composed as if it were of two interrogation marks joined together, "At either end of the roof rose three feather-like projections,
one larger than the other, and the last was the longest and below them was a suspended stone ring for hanging lamps. In the centre of the roof ran a belt of ornamentation adorned with swans and other figures and in the middle was carved the star-shaped design seen from the days of the Pāṇḍyas.\(^7\)

Over this roof ran a small panel of ornamentation, either of animals or deities or kudus. These kudus evidently enshrined certain images which have now unfortunately fallen away, as in the Viṭṭalasvāmi temple. "These kudus or small pavilions were placed all round the mandapas of the shrine while the garbha-grha was crowned by the vimāna.\(^8\)

The slopy cajja was the characteristic of the Keladi style of temples, as is found in Ikkerī Agho-rēśvara temple, Pārvati temple and Mukambika temple at Kollūr. The roof is flat with joints, covered with slabs at regular intervals, to avoid the seepage of water. This style of roof has been one of the regional characteristic features of the period in the Malnāḍ area, where there is torrential rainfall in the monsoon season.
4.1.5 The Pillars 'Order':

During the Vijayanagara period, the pillars became square, instead of lathe-turned round pillars of the Vesara style. The square pillars were cut into square partitions in the middle and the distance between each square was made octagonal.

Capital of the pillar appears to be different in style. Over this square pillar, was placed the closed lotus munai and above it the broad slab or the palagai with the lotus petals, three on each facade slowly protruding from each side.

The Çañuram of this square pillar which was rather suddenly broken, came to possess a leaf-like ornament, known as nāgabandham. In the Hazāra Rāma temple, the square pillar became ornamented.

The double bracket, in some temples, had a puspa bōdīgai or flowery corbel. This flowery corbel was purely Vijayanagara decorative motif.

The round pillars were rarely used in the Vijayanagara art. As a decorative pilaster, the round pillar came to exist in the Hazāra Rāma temple at Vijayanagara.
In the Kalyana Mantapa of Vitthalasvami temple, to the main pillar, extra pillars were attached. To this extra pillar were further attached equestrian riders, either Hindu or Muslim, or horses which are not often well executed. In some cases, extra pillars were supported by couchant lions.

The Keladi style of temples bear this square pillars with octagonal intervals and puṣpa boddīgai. Pillars of Aghorēśvara temple are fine examples of this period. Sometimes the extra pillars having rearing lions on elephants are attached to the main pillars in the mukhamantapa or prakāra. Mūkambika temple at Kollūr has this type of pillars in the inner prakāra and the outer prakāra.

4.1.6 The Gateways:

The gateway of the prakāra of the temple had over it, a gopura, and the entrance door was carved on its jambas and lintel with seated or standing figures of deities. A fine specimen of it is seen in the northern gateway of the inner courtyard of Acyuta Raya's temple.
4.1.7 The Gopuram:

The gateway of the prakara of the temple had the gopuram over it which was quite large. These gopuras were built by brick work carved or inlaid with stucco. "A typical gopuram is rectangular in plan with a central opening at ground level provided with wooden doors, often decorated with brass fixtures. Above it rises the tapering tower usually with a slightly concave profile". 9

As on the walls and the superstructure of the sanctuary itself, the tower of the gopuram is divided into a number of storeys which repeat in a diminishing scale the features of the walls beneath. On the summit of the tower is the characteristic barrel or vaulted roof form. These towers are celebrated for their rich ornamentation in which figure sculptures executed in painted stucco and brick, are provided at each storey to given visible expression to the vast pantheon of Hindu gods and goddesses, their consorts and attendant figures. 10

These gopuras were known as "Ravagopuras". Even after the fall of Vijayanagara, the Thanjavur and Madurai Nayakas continued this gopura style of
architecture in their territories.

4.1.8 The Stūpi:

Over this gōpuram is found the stūpi which is large. It resembles the Bhima Ratha's roof at Mahābalipuram, with two horn-like projections on either side. This can be seen in the Paṭṭābhi Rāma temple and Mālyavanta Raghunātha temple. In Kṛṣṇa temple, these gōpurams were over the ardhamantapa. Sometimes the stūpi becomes round, as in the vimānas of the Kṛṣṇa temple and the Paṭṭābhi Rāma temple. Between the two horn-like ornaments of the cupola, in Vijayanagara, is visible only a single kalaśa (vase). The Vijayanagara craftsmen thronged their gōpurams with decorations of the pilasters and the gōsthapāñjaram or the pavilion and at times with fine stucco work figures, as in Viṭṭalasvāmi temple.

4.2 Secular Architecture:

"In this category may be included that type of architecture which developed as a result of the contact with Islam and came into existence especially during the Āraviḍu dynasty." This new style of architecture came to be characterised as the "Indo-
Sarasenic*. In the Vijayanagara city, several buildings stand as the best examples of this style of architecture. Elephant stable, queens' bath, Lotus Mahal and the guards' quarters have these features of 'Indo Sarasenic' style of architecture.

4.2.1 The Dome:

The elephant stable consists of eleven large rooms with lofty, 'domed' roofs. Each compartment has two large niches on either side of the door and above each niche, three upper niches, which are smaller, are present. All these niches and the door have the typical arched facade. The original stucco and plaster adornment seems to have disappeared. Some of the traces of it can be seen in the interior.

There are the domes on each room, which are not similar to each other. Some have the two stepped dome with a crowning lotus motif dome and every dome is squinched with pointed arches at the corners. The domes have various shapes being vaulted, round and octagonal. The domes on the top of the stalls are also circular, vaulted and octagonal, lending a variety to the different domes, but whether they were finials or
śikharas cannot be made for they are missing in the existing ruins.\textsuperscript{12}

There is a square turret above the central apartment, which has two flights of steps. The upper turret is also having the similar conical arches.

4.2.2 Arches:

The 'Lotus Mohal' is a pavilion with two square in design, with recesses at its sides. The ground floor has an ornamented adhiṣṭhāna of stone, with 24 square pillars having foliated and recessed arches, with vestiges of medallions in their spandrels, scroll-designs and kīrtimukha emblems at the top.

The interior of this structure is plain, the square pillars are linked with the foliated arches, the ceilings comprising many vaults and the typical domes, designed symmetrically and the central ceiling only has a lotus bud design which is impressive. In the centre the corbels and immense niches with relics of seated images which, being disfigured, cannot be identified with precision. The central hall is crowned with domed and fluted towers one over another, making the entire structure imposing and striking.
According to George Michell, "Studying in detail the stucco decoration of the Lotus Mohal reveals a considerable fusion of Islamic and Hindu elements. Here are found foliate arabesques, meandering stalks, and geometric designs, familiar in the stucco decoration of monuments at Gulbarga and Bidar, in combination with geese and parrots, lion masks and other well known motifs. Vijayanagara artists evidently adopted ornamental features from both traditions, blending them into their own unique style".13

The following structures deserve a mention.

Queens Bath:

This is a square building, with an inner open courtyard. The arches with pillars all round this courtyard reflect the Muslim influence on this building. The arrangement for the regulation and flow of water to this building shows the superb technical know-how of the Vijayanagara engineers.

Guards' Quarters:

Built in a single structure, these are either incomplete or ruined. The arches in this building show the influence of the Muslim style of architecture.
Watch Towers:

The remains of watch-towers found in the capital city show the mixed style of architecture—both Hindu and Muslim. The arched windows (like niches) in the octagonal shape of the building exhibit the Bijapur style of architecture in the Vijayanagara buildings.

Some of the palatial remains of the Keladi period particularly Šivappa Nayaka's palace at Shimoga consists of wooden carvings of arched corridors. It consists of brick and mortar walls and wooden arches.

The Ra^jaguru Matha at Keladi has an open quadrangle, with arched corridors on all the sides. These arches are made within the thick wall of mud and lime mortar, associated with laterite bricks.

4.3. General Features of Architectural Style:

Vijayanagara empire developed its own style of architecture, which was different from that of their predecessors. During this period, the temple became more closely involved with the life of the town. The temples employed an increasing proportion
of the community as ritual programme became more and more complicated. The temple served as a centre for civic meetings, education, dance and theatre. A number of columned halls and artificial tanks of water became prominent in the temple courtyard. Additional pavilions were constructed for the goddesses and their vehicles.

"The overall stylistic principles of repetition and continuous expansion led to a general tendency to multiply the elements of the vertical profile of the walls; the plinth splits up into an ever greater number of elements and wall too, is divided into further horizontal subdivisions by the application of intermediate mouldings". Surface decoration of the columns in the halls and processional corridors of the temple complex were given more attention. The columns were decorated with considerable skill and artistry. The pillar design transforms the shaft into a central core of carved statuary, often of a monumental size and carved entirely in the round. One of the most characteristic themes, especially employed for the outer row of columns of the halls, displays a rearing horse or beast with rider supported by attendants or mythical animals. The virtuosity of
of such carvings represents a high point in the evolution of craft traditions in South India. The brackets of these columns exhibit considerable complexity in their design, due to outward projection of extended figures, beasts or inverted lotus designs.

"The temples of Vijayanagara are not the unified compositions of the Cōlas or of the Hoysalas. They are in fact, a number of small units, each with its own prescribed function, set rather haphazardly as dictated by the terrain, within a large rectangular enclosure. The basic unit of such a temple conglomerate was a flat roofed hall, supported on a series of elaborately crafted columns". 15

Instead of round pillars of the Hoysalas, the square pillars became prominent. They were embellished. Each pillar was divided into squares on which either mythical, religious or social subjects were carved.

The mukhamāṇḍapa was decorated with elephants elaborately designed or with dvarapālakas armed with maces.

The vimāna was sometimes erected over the ardhamāṇḍapa. The gopurams were made of brick work
finished with stucco work. This brick work was raised on a stone basement which was adorned with pillars, often single only, and between these, either the memorable kārtimukha often made its appearance, or there were carved gōstha pañjaram pavilion.

Vijayanagara sculptural art represents a rare collection of a variety of sculptures. "Probably in the whole range of South Indian sculpture it would be difficult to find a match to vie with the variety of Vijayanagara sculpture". The variety of themes in sculpture are drawn with a caricaturistic touch, pregnant with realism, vitality and power. "The Vijayanagara craftsmen developed a school of imagery in which he included icons of deities, Śaiva, Vaiṣṇava and Jaina, common people, kings and queens, nobles and animals, connected with their religious beliefs". The dvārapālaka icons, various representations of Śiva, Gānēśa, Vīrabhadra, Ugranarasimha, Hanumān, Garuḍa, Aṣṭadikpālaka, Jaina tīrthaṅkaras, are some of the fine specimens of the Vijayanagara art.

At Śrīśailam, is found a bronze image of Naṭarāja, which may be considered as one of the finest specimens of Vijayanagara art.
The monolithic sculpture - Sāsivekālu Gaṇesa, on the slope of the Hemakūṭa Hill is seated in a spacious open mandapa which has plain and rough pillars. The upper right hand holds the āṅkuṣa, upper left pāśa, lower right hand holds bhagnadanta and the lower left hand is broken. This is an interesting piece of art.

The Kadalekālu, Gaṇesa is enshrined in a large temple with a charming open pillared maṇṭapa (mukhamāṇṭapa). The pillars are high, slim and graceful in the typical cubical ornate Vijayanagara style with the puṣpabōdīgai corbels of an early period.

At Lēpakṣi, there is a huge statue of Viṛabhadrā, with sleeping curves of his form. There is a bend in his waist, he has 4 arms, and holds khadga, dhanus, bāna and khētaka (shield). He wears a garland of skulls, with a human head (kapāla) at his feet. In this image his jatāmukūta is profusely ornamented.

Uddāna Viṛabhadrā at Hampi is a large statue, with four arms holding the arrow, sword, bow and shield. Dakṣa stands to Viṛabhadrā's right.

"One of the temples to the north of the
Virūpākṣa temple has an impressive image of Devī, standing with eight arms, smiling, adorned with a karanda mukuta, śūla, with which she is attacking the prostrated demon Mahiṣāsura, placing her right foot on its back and with her left one planted firmly on the earth. Her vāhana viz., the lion (simha) is to her right side on the ground, while the Mahiṣāsura is looking at her. She is holding, cakra, bāna, khadga and śūla. She is adorned with large kundala. An immense torana surrounds this image.\textsuperscript{18}

The monolithic sculpture of Ugra Narasimha is carved out of a single granite boulder, lying near the south-western angle of the Kṛṣṇasvāmi temple. This image was graced with a huge necklace of several strands, the nature of whose precious stones cannot be determined. Behind this immense statue is the outspread hood of a huge serpent with six heads which canopy the deity, emerging as though from behind its neck upwards. It is super-imposed by a kīrtimukha and a fine prabhāvalī. "This colossal image nevertheless has been finely conceived to depict in sheer power an outstanding symbol of titanic energy, exquisitely spiritualised and magnificently wrought".\textsuperscript{19}
Some of the sculptures of this period also depict the aspects of social life of the people, their pastimes, costumes, variety of ornaments, weapons, infantry, cavalry, the chariot corps, the elephant corps, wrestling, festivals, and other characters.

Thus, the sculpture of the Vijayanagara period is innovative and composite in nature. The sculptures are varied, skillfully executed and versatile on a difficult medium or base of rough granite. "The sculpture of this period has a thrilling vitality, a freshness of expression and a freedom from the bonds of convention". 20

The tradition of Vijayanagara style of architecture was continued by many of their feudatories like Keladi rulers. At Madurai, Jinji, Vellur, Kumbhakonam, Kanchivaram, Tadapatri, Virupapuram, Srirangam, Ikkeri, Cidambaram and Candragiri, the same tradition and style of architecture were continued with regional minor variations.
Notes and References


3 George Michell, *The Hindu Temple* (An Introduction to its meanings and forms), New Delhi, 1977, p. 149.

4 Saletore, R.N., op. cit., p. 59.

5 Ibid., p. 60.

6 Ibid., loc. cit.

7 Ibid., p. 67.

8 Ibid., loc. cit.

9 George Michell, op. cit., p. 150.

10 Ibid., pp. 150-151.

11 Saletore, R.N., op. cit., p. 86.

12 Ibid., p. 88.


14 Ibid., p. 155.
