



Lecture Series on World Heritage and Culture
78th Lecture on 'Sacred Geography of Karnataka Part4'

By

Dr.G.Sethuraman, Art Historian and Dr.V.Vedachalam Archaeologist
On 8th March 2020, Sunday, 5.00 pm - 7.00 pm at DHAN Foundation, Madurai



SACRED GEOGRAPHY OF KARNATAKA- Part 4

The Sacred Geography of Karnataka –Part 4 confined to the sacred and secular monuments located in the famous city of Hampi, the capital of the great Vijayanagarempire which ruled most part of the southern India for a few centuries. The brothers, Harihara I and Bukka I, transformed Hampi into Vijayanagara, city of victory, the greatest of all fortified citadels in this era. In CE1342 the last representative of the Hoysalas, the son of Ballala III, died and their political power practically disappeared. It was during this time the five sons of Sangama were serving under the Sultan of Delhi. They took the opportunity of the decline of Hoysala power, reconverted to Hinduism and declared independent rule under the first son of Sangama who created the Sangama dynasty. “They may well be hailed as the *PancaPandava* heroes of the Vijayanagara Age, who heralded the freedom of the South and but for them the Deccan would have been completely overrun by the Deccani Muslims who would almost surely have proselytized the entire region to Islam”. Harihara and Bukka established their legitimacy as leaders by patronizing the Virupaksa temple on the south bank of Tungabhadra and visiting the Sringeri mutt in Western Ghats. They raised a huge army and within a few decades they brought major part of South India under their control their efforts to bring the northern region were unsuccessful because of the dominance of the Bahmini sultans. In this memorable venture the great Hindu sage, Vidyaranya of Sringeri mutt, played a significant role and rendered the brothers the necessary moral and spiritual guidance. Acting under the orders of Vidyaranya, the brothers completed their imperial schemes and founded in about CE 1336 the splendid city of Vijayanagara or Vidyanagara as the capital of their empire. Prior to the rise of the Vijayanagar kingdom, Hampi and its environs were under the control of various dynasties which ruled over the Karnataka region in succession such as the Kadambas, the Chalukyas of Badami, the Rashtrakutas, the Chalukyas of Kalyani, the Hoysalas, Yadavas and others. Immediately, before the rise of the Vijayanagar kingdom the place was under the control of the Kampili chiefs. Traditionally known as *Pampa-Chetra*, *Kiskindha-Chetra* or *Bhaskara-Chetra*, Hampi has an unbroken tradition of sanctity from ancient times and still continues to be an important pilgrimage center. “Pampa is the ancient name of the river Tungabhadra. The word Hampe or Hampi is generally held to be a later Kannada form of the term Pampa. The ancient Kishkinda of the *Ramayana* is believed to have been situated close to Hampi. Hampi and its environs are considered holy ground and many of its sites and names are connected with the episodes of the *Ramayana*”.

Hampi or Vijayanagara was ruled by different dynasties such as Sangama, Saluva, Tuluva, and Aravidu. Though there were many architectural monuments of the pre- Vijayanagar period, in and around Hampi, most of the edifices of historical

importance were erected by the Vijayanagara kings. Of the Vijayanagara rulers, the most famous personality was Krishnadeva Raya, a member of Tuluva dynasty, who ruled a vast empire between CE 1509 and 1529. Under him the empire passed through a golden age. He had won in almost in all his battles and had friendly relationship with the Portuguese. As an accomplished scholar and poet, he wrote many Sanskrit and Telugu works. He was a liberal patron of art and letters. South Indian architecture owes much to the building activities of this ruler who made munificent gifts to innumerable temples. The capital city was lavishly embellished by him. He made many improvements to the existing structures and built new ones also. While a considerable proportion of the buildings was due to the liberal patronage of Krishnadeva Raya, the structures in the city range from the time of the early rulers like Harihara II to that of Sadasiva. The monuments consist mainly of religious, civil and military buildings. "Two hundred years of immense wealth and power are reflected in the plan of Vijayanagara, which is surely the largest for any contemporary city in India, with the central part alone measuring no less than 25 square kilometers. However, only those features built of solid masonry survive, notably the fortification walls and gateways, temples and shrines, colonnades and tanks, and ceremonial, recreational and residential structures associated with the king, court and military. The population of the city included Hindus, Jains, and Muslims of diverse social and economic backgrounds. Archaeological evidence suggests these varied populations lived in separate quarters with their own places of worship. These quarters were linked together by roads and paths. Information about these residential zones, however, is still far from complete, and archaeological exploration is still required". All the foreign travelers who visited Hampi remarked upon the goods that filled the urban markets; according to THE Portuguese traveler Domingo Paes, Vijayanagara in the reign of Krishnadeva Raya was "the best provided city in the world". The city which flourished as a center of attraction for more than two centuries was mostly ruined after its defeat by the Bahmini sultans in CE1565. The city was thoroughly devastated, looted, pillaged and burnt. The later Vijayanagara rulers were unable to re-establish their headquarters there, despite several attempts. While the medieval imperial city is at present in ruins, the village of Hampi, with its temple of Virupaksa and the holy sites and temples of the Matanga and Malyavanta hills, still continue as a center of pilgrimage.

Temples

Of the temples of Vijayanagara (Hampi), the most notables are the Virupaksa temple, Harara Rama temple, Durga temple, Kodandarama temple, Thiruvengadanatha temple, Krishna temple, Achuta Raya temple, Rama temple, Vithala temple, Jain temples, etc. The Vijayanagar rulers had the boar crest and made use of the sign manual 'Virupaksa', since they considered themselves the

deputies of the god Virupaksa. Most of the Vijayanagara temples at Hampi have a covered and pillared *pradakshina* – *prakara* (circumambulatory corridor) round the sanctum (*garbhagriha*) and *antarala*. The sanctum and *antarala* have a continuous *adhithana* which starts at a level lower than the covered *prakara*. The exterior wall surfaces of the covered *prakara* are decorated with *adhithanamouldings*, wall pilasters, *kumbha-panjaras*, and *devakosthas*. Generally, the *ardhamandapa* has four ornate central pillars and two side porches with steps and *surulyali* balustrades. The *mahamandapa* is a highly ornate structure with many fine specimens of composite pillars. It is the most profusely embellished part of a Vijayanagar temple being rivaled only by the *kalyanamandapa*. The *kalyanamandapa* is one of the highlights of the Vijayanagara style. This *mandapa* is usually an open pillared hall with a raised platform. There will be a *pitha* (pedestal or platform) to place the images of the gods and goddesses during on the occasion of the celestial marriage festival. The pillars of the *mandapa* are mostly composite pillars with sculptural decorations. The pillar capitals (*pothigai*) are *puspapothigaitype*. The *mandapas* often have large elephant balustrades flanking the entrance steps. The main cornice of *mandapa* is of the cyma recta type often highly ornate, with simulated wood – work below. The Vijayanagaragopuras at Hampi are in typical style, though they are of moderate size. Each temple is approached along a colonnaded street, which served as a bazaar during festive occasions. There is a tank, near each temple, for bathing and religious ceremonies.

The Hazara Rama temple, obviously intended for royal worship, and a residential area with quarters is named after the king who laid them out or after divine figures. The name of the Hazara Rama temple is popularly taken to mean ‘the temple of the thousand Ramas’ on account of the numerous Ramayana bas – reliefs on its walls. But the temple was evidently called Hajara – Rama, because it was the palace temple and was also at the entrance to the royal palace-enclosure. “Erected by Devaraya I in the early part of the fifteenth century, it is of outstanding interest for both the quality and subjects of its carvings. First to be noticed are the long lines of reliefs that wrap around the outer face of the compound walls of the temple complex. These depict processions of elephants, horses with Muslim attendants, and different military contingents of soldiers. There are also women playing drums, dancing with sticks, and enjoying the water sports of the *Vasantotsava* festival. The variety and realism of the carvings are such that no two figures or animals are shown exactly alike”. Entrances on the east and north have columned verandahs without any towers; columns with sculptured blocks and capitals are sheltered by overhanging eaves. The principal shrine has a small square vimana with delicately articulated walls. Pilasters capped with pediments of different designs frame deep niches; wall recesses have pilasters standing in jeweled pots. While no sculptures are preserved in the niches, the walls themselves are covered with narrative carvings.

The brick and pilaster tower over the sanctuary rises in a series of storeys capped with *akuta* roof; a vaulted projection on the east is faced with a prominent arch. Adjoining square *mandapa* is approached through porches on three sides. Ornate basement mouldings decorated with lotus petals, jeweled ribs and miniature animals flank the doorways. The polished granite columns of the interior have ornate sculptured blocks and curved lotus brackets. The secondary shrine to the north has two small rectangular sanctuaries, one of which is capped with *asala* roof. The eastern entrance gateway has fine images of Bhairava, and Mahisamardini carved on the columns in the passage way. Immediately to the right (north) can be seen other reliefs on the inside face of the compound walls. These depict Ramayana episodes. The carving on the *mandapa* walls illustrate 108 scenes from the *Ramayana*. These proceed in a clockwise direction around the walls of the square *mandapa*. The most notable among the Ramayana scenes depicted in this temple walls are the scenes of Rama giving his ring to Hanuman and Sita giving her hair jewel to Hanuman. There is a similar but smaller temple dedicated to Lakshmi- Narasmha within the Hazara Rama temple complex. Here also, in addition to the sculptures depicting the story of Narasimha slaying the demon Hiranyakasibhu, there are sculptures of Ramayana scenes. A short distance east of the Rama temple compound is a reconstructed *dipa – stambha* and a small Hanuman shrine.

The Virupaksa or Pampapati temple faces east and dominates the long and broad street flanked on either side with the dilapidated remains of many ancient buildings. It is considered as the most sacred of the temples at Hampi. “Pampapati means either the lord of Pampa, the daughter of Brahma or the lord of the Pampa – *tirtha*. The Tungabhadra here is known as the Pampanadhi”. As per the legends, the original temple built at this site was dedicated to the goddess Pampa, who worshipped Siva as Virupaksa and her only wish was to marry Siva. He was so pleased with her austerities that he granted her wish and married her. The Pampapati temple is located to the north of the river Tungabhadra, immediately to the north of the Hemakuta hill. The various parts of the temple complex are within a long rectangular enclosure divided into two large courts. The lofty eastern *gopura* gives access to the outer court, while a smaller inner east *gopura* leads to the inner court containing the main *vimana* with its numerous subsidiary shrines. The temple complex seems to have assumed the present form even during the time of the visit of Domingo Paes. The east *gopura*, the main entrance to the temple, is a well-proportioned nine – storeyed structure 52 metres high with the usual two- tiered stone base and a superstructure in brick. From the literary evidence it is presumed that the *gopura* was originally built by one ProlugantiTippa, an officer of Devaraya II (CE 1422-46) and later repaired by the great king KrishnadevaRaya in CE 1510. “From the east *gopura* one enters the large outer court containing many sub – shrines and a large number of *mandapas* including what are termed the *Phalapuja –mandapas*.

The so-called old *Phalapuja- mandapa* at the south – west corner of the court is in Vijayanagara style with composite pillars, while the new *Phalapujamandapa* at the north – west, although so named, has earlier types of pillars. The small three – storeyed inner east *gopura*, named after Krishnadeva Raya, forms the entrance to the inner court. It was built by Krishnadeva Raya in 1510". The inner court is surrounded by a colonnade. The central shrine stands behind a columned *mandapa*. The most important structure within this courtyard is the hundred pillared *mandapa* built by Krishnadeva Raya. The interior of the *mandapa* has 16 *yali* pillars. The most splendid decoration appears on the ceiling divided into panels containing paintings depicting the marriage of Pampa and Virupaksa, Rama and Sita, Siva as Tripurantaka shooting arrows at the demon kings Kamadeva, shooting arrow on Siva, etc. In one of the panels sage Vidyaranya is shown seated on a palanquin. The Durga image of this temple, referred to by Paes, has been taken to Anegondi and kept in the Pampasarovara caves during the troubled days of the kingdom.

The Vithala temple is the most perfect example of the rich sculptural embellishment which is the characteristic of the Vijayanagara architecture. It is located on the southern bank of the river Tungabhadra and may be reached from the west by walking on from Hampi bazaar along the river bank, or from the east through the Talarigattu gateway. The Vithala temple portrays the high watermark of perfection of the Vijayanagara style, and one may well say that there is no other building which could stand comparison with it in florid magnificence. This temple seems to have been erected by Devaraya II, but the whole work could not be completed till 1565CE. It is believed that Krishnadeva Raya had contributed much to the building of this magnificent temple dedicated to Vithala. "The cult of Vithala, or Vithoba originates from Pandharpur in southern Maharashtra. Although today associated with Krishna, Vithala was worshipped in pre – Vijayanagara times as a folk god of cattle". The Vithala temple contains over thirty inscriptions mentioning the substantial additions to the temple during the reign of Krishnadeva Raya, Achyutaraya and Sadasivaraya. The two *gopuras* of this temple were erected by the royal queens of Krishnadeva Raya – Chinna Devi and Tirumala Devi. The three lofty *gopuras* on the east, south and north sides are now ruined. In 1534, the Alvars were installed in a shrine to the north within the temple enclosure. The main structure of the temple stands on a five feet high ornate plinth adorned with well moulded plinth. Of friezes depicting horses and miniature shrines containing Vishnu images, its three sides are stately flights of steps. The steps on the front entrance are guarded by elephant statues while the other two entrances have steps flanked by ornamental balustrades. There are six other structures within the enclosure. There are many structures like *kalyana – mandapa*, *utsava – mandapa*, hundred pillared *mandapa*, a stone temple car, and Amman (goddess shrine). Facing east, the sanctum of the god along with its axial *mandapas* forms a long and low structural group, about 7.6 metres in

height and 70 metres in length. The group comprises the open *mahamandapa*, a closed *ardhamandapa* with side porches and a covered *pradakshina* – *prakara* enclosing the *antarala* and *garbhagrha*. The *mahamandapa* contains fifty – six pillars, each 3.6 metres high, forty of which are regularly disposed to form an aisle all-round the three sides, while the remaining sixteen form a rectangular court in the center. The *tritalavimana* of the sanctum is well-finished in an ornate style. The stone chariot which is in the temple, seldom fails to attract the attention of the visitor. It has a Garuda image in it. All the intricate and delicate details found in a wooden *ratha* are stimulated in this stone car and even its stone wheels revolve. The brick superstructure of the *ratha*, shaped like a *vimana*, is no longer extant.

There is a temple called Pattanada Ellamma temple dedicated to the guardian deity of the city. It is located midway between the Hazara Rama temple and the Zanana enclosure under a large margosa tree. The south facing temple has a long pillared *mandapa* in front with ornate cubical Vijayanagara pillars. This temple predates the Vijayanagar period. There is a huge monolithic image of Lakshmi Narasimha, about 6.7 metres high. Though of great size, it is a carefully carved and well finished icon. It is a four armed seated figure, but all the arms are broken now. There is a large seven hooded serpent above the head. Originally there was a figure of Lakshmi seated on the left thigh. The image was one of the last additions made by Krishnadeva Raya at Vijayanagara, as an inscription states that Krishnadeva Raya made a grant in CE 1528 to the temple of Lakshmi – Narasimha which he had built and that the deity was made out of a single granite boulder by a Brahmana. There is a Krishna temple to the north of Narasimha image. An inscription of CE 1513, mentions that an image of Bala Krishna was brought from a temple at Udayagiri, by Krishnadeva Raya and enshrined in *amandapa* of this temple. To the north of the northern *gopura* of the Virupaksa temple there are about twenty shrines around the Manmatha Gundam tank. Most of them are small shrine cells with an *antarala* and a pillared porch. Beyond the Krishna temple there are two huge stone images of Ganapati on the slope of the Hemakuta hill. One is the Sasivekalu Ganesa about 2.4 metres high and ironically named Sasivekalu or mustard seed. Nearby is the other monolith called in the same vein, the Kadalekalu (gram) Ganesa. This 4.5 metres high image is housed in a large shrine with a fine open pillared *mandapa* in front. To the right of the Sasivekalu Ganesa is a small shrine – chamber built above two foot prints with an encircling serpent carved on the sheet – rock. It is generally known as Vishnupatha. There are also other temples called Kodandarama temple, Achyutaraya temple, Varahaperumal temple, Rama temple, Malyavanta Ragunatha temple, Chandrasekara temple, Thiruvengalanatha temple, etc.

There is a Jain temple called Ganigitti temple probably erected in the fourteenth century by a minister called Irugappa. A lofty *mana-stambha* in front of

the portico contains an inscription stating that the temple was built in CE 1385 by Iruga the minister of Bukka II, in the reign of Harhara II and that it was known as the *chaityalaya* of Kunthujinanitha. This north facing temple has a *garbhagrha* with an *antarala*, *ardhamandapa* and *mahamandapa* with an attached sub-shrine facing east.

Secular Buildings

“Passing through the two gateway structures south of the Hazara Rama temple, a walled enclosure is reached that measures roughly 300 by 250 metres. This quadrangular enclosure – once subdivided into smaller areas – is by far the largest in the royal centre and the only one to contain identifiable ceremonial structures. First to be seen is the audience hall with 100 stone footing blocks. To the south of the hall is a cluster of smaller and lower square and rectangular platforms, separated one from another by small courts, one of which is paved with chloritic schist or white limestone slabs. Dominating the entire enclosure is a square, multi-stage platform that occupies the north-east corner, one of the highest points in this zone, and from which there is a fine panoramic view of the royal centre. The lower two granite stages of the platform probably date from the foundation of the royal centre in the 14th century. They are covered with shallow reliefs illustrating a full range of royal activities carved in a rudimentary but vigorous style that is unique in the art of Vijayanagara. None of the topics illustrated on the monument are specifically linked with the Mahanavami, but the platform is popularly believed to have been the place where the king made sacrifices to a divinity in the course of this festival”. The carvings in the walls of the tiers include horizontal friezes of horses, elephants, warriors, dancers, musicians, foreigners, clowns, etc. The friezes are worth inspection as they depict contemporary social life. Originally this platform must have been a gorgeously painted and decorated pillared hall or pavilion of several storeys.

There is a place called Queen’s Bath. It is a large square structure with a plain exterior and an ornate interior. It faces south and has bath 15 metre square and 1.8 metre deep, surrounded by decorated corridors and projecting balconies with remnants of elaborate stucco work and variegated designs on the ceiling of each bay. Just north –west of the Queen’s Bath is the king’s palace enclosure. Parallel to its southern wall is a large rectangular masonry tank with a flight of steps besides inlets and outlets. There is a famous enclosure called Zanana enclosure. The wall of this enclosure is peculiar and seems to be only an enclosing wall rather than a fort- wall. The main entrance to it is rather insignificant and is on the west side. It has three watch towers located at south-east, north-west and north-east corners. The only buildings standing almost in their entirety are the Lotus Mahal and Women Guards’ quarters. The Women Guards’ quarter is at the north – west corner of the enclosure. “As in the case of many other buildings in the Vijayanagara ruins we do not know

the exact purpose for which this building stood, though some suggest that it was the quarters for the women guards of the Zanana. It is very unlikely this could be so, as the place is so ill-ventilated and is dimly lighted. Probably it was a storehouse or a magazine for both of which the building seems to be well suited”.

The Lotus Mahal is one of the best known monuments of the Vijayanagara period. “This delightful two -storeyed pleasure palace presents a fascinating synthesis of Hindu and Muslim architectural features. In plan it is an open pavilion on the lower level, and partly enclosed with windows and balcony seating on the upper level. Divided into squares, the building projects and recesses- with geometric regularity twenty-four stone piers with polished plasterwork carry graceful lobed and recessed arches. These support a series of decorated vaults and domes. Over the central bay on the upper level is a high pyramidal vaults with ribs and fragments of figurative sculpture. Typical of the outer elevation are the carved stone basement, the stucco decoration on the lobed arches, the deeply overhanging curved eaves at two levels, and the pyramidal roofs created by ascending tiers of recessed mouldings capped by temple – like finials”. There is an elephant stable, near Zanana enclosure, comprising a long line of eleven chambers, each of which could accommodate two elephants. Alternating domes and twelve- sided vaults rising above the arched doorways are arranged symmetrically to either side of a central raised chamber that may have been intended for drummers and other musicians. Unfortunately, the pyramidal tower with its curving eaves above the musicians’ chamber is now lost. The structure overlooking the parade ground from the north is almost as impressive as stables. It has an elevated gallery with eleven pointed arches with lobed profiles that could have served as a grandstand from which to enjoy the activities of the parade ground below. “To the west of the Hazara Rama temple there are some enclosures where the archaeologists have exposed palace structures of the type already noted in the noblemen’s quarter”.

Bibliography

1. D.Devakunjari, *Hampi*, New Delhi, 1998.
2. John M Fritz &George Michell, *HampiVijayanagara*, Mumbai, 2016.
3. George Michell, *Architecture and Art of Southern India*, Cambridge, 1995.
4. J.C. Harle, *The Art and Architecture of the Indian Subcontinent*, Penguin, 1994.
5. Susan L. Huntington, *Art of Ancient India*, New York, 1993.
6. SurendarSahai, *Temples of South India*, New Delhi, 2010.
7. R.N. Saletore, *Vijayanagara Art*, Delhi, 1982.



For further information: DHAN Tourism for Development web:

www.developmenttourism.in

Email tourism@dhan.org;