



Vijay Vittala Temple, an Architectural Masterpiece with Mysterious Musical Pillars

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ABSTRACT

India being rich country in culture and heritage has created history for thousands of years that built the kingdom to leave behind a legacy that eventually gives the impression about ancient civilization. Structures of India are fascinating in nature and they amazed us with their architecture. There is such structure that do not flow science law and they only exist because of some mystery or else. There are some myths of these Structures, likewise with the mystery of musical pillar we have a temple i.e., Vijay Vittala temple and the temple is situated in Hampi, Karnataka. The Vijay Vittala temple, which is one of Hampi's most famous and greatest structures, entices visitors with its magnificent beauty. The temple is situated near the banks of the Tungabhadra River in Hampi's north eastern region. At the Vittala Temple, Lord Vitthala, an avatar of Lord Vishnu, is honoured. A Vitthala-Vishnu idol formerly stood in the temple, but it was lost to the ravages of time. The temple was established as a dwelling for Lord Vishnu in his Vitthala incarnation, according to legend. The temple exemplifies the sculptors' and artisans' immense creativity and architectural perfection throughout the Vijayanagara era. The temple possesses characteristics and elements that are typical of traditional south Indian temples. The beauty of the temple surpasses that of any other landmark in Hampi or from the time. The Vittala temple complex is a large area encircled by high walls and three massive entrances. There are various halls, shrines, and buildings inside the temple complex. Each of these structures is made of stone and is a unique work of art in its own.

Keywords: Mystery, Musical Pillars, Vittala Temple, Stone Chariot

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The ancient monument of Hampi is Vijay Vittala Temple which is well known for its architecture and its craftsmanship. It is a world heritage site in Hampi, Karnataka, and one of the largest and most famous buildings. The Vijay Vittala temple is located in the northeastern part of Hampi, near the bank of Tungabhadra River. The temple is dedicated to Vittala and known as Vijay Vittala temple, and it is dedicated to Lord Vishnu in Vittala form. With a courtyard measuring 500 by 300 feet and an average height of 25 feet, the Vijay Vittala temple is built in the Dravidian style of architecture.

1.1 History

Hampi is also known as Pampa Kshetra. The famous Tungabhadra River Pampa inspired the name Pampa Kshetra. According to myth, it is said that Pampa was Brahma's daughter who was later married off to Shiva, where the city was built. The Vijay Vittala temple was established during Devaraya II's reign in the 15th century. The Vijaynagara Empire was ruled by Devaraya. Hampi is also associated with a fantastic mythical story. And it is said that Ram and Lakshman stopped in the Kishkindha Vanara Kingdom when they set out in quest of Sita, who had been kidnapped by Ravana. Ram, Hanuman, Sugreeva, and Vali live in several majestic mountains.

2.0 Architecture of Vijay Vittala Temple, Hampi

The Vijay Vittala temple is built in the Dravidian architectural style. It has a distinct quality and characteristics that are typical of temple construction in South India. It features intricate, creative carvings as well as stunning architecture. The temple complex contains numerous rooms, shrines, and pavilions. The structures are made of stone and each and every structure is a beauty in itself. The Vijay Vittala temple consists of three different parts i.e., Mukha mandapa, the central rangamandapa and the sukhanasi or garbhagriha. In the courtyard of the Vittala temple, there is a Garuda shrine in the shape of a stone chariot. In the 1940s, a tower above the chariot was demolished. There are 4 sections to the mandapa, two of which face the

temple sanctuary. The mandapa includes 56 carved stone beams of various diameters, shapes, lengths, and surfaces that generate musical sounds when touched. According to local myth, this hall was once used for public music and dancing festivals.

The temple has three gopura entrances in north, south, and east directions. The outer Mukha mandapa stands on a five feet basement and it has three entrances. The mandapa has 56 natural pillars, each of which appears to be its own monument. The ceilings of the Vijay Vittala temple are decorated with lotus designs. Around this forming mandapa are the Garuda Temple (clockwise from east), Kalyana mandapa (wedding ceremonies), the 100-pillars mandapa, the Amman shrine, and the Utsav mandapa (festival hall). The wall enclosure is approximately 1.3 hectares (3.2 acres) in size, and it features a colonnaded verandah that faces the compound walls.

The Ranga Mandapa, which is the temple's most impressive part, is reached via the mukha mandapa. The pillars represent Dravidian characters. The ornamental aspect of the mandapa's composite pillars, as well as the intricate carvings of gods and goddesses and fretwork, makes them especially remarkable. A huge enclosure with sixteen exceptionally gorgeous towering pillars stands in the centre. The sukhanasi and Garbhagriha entrances are on the western side of the temple. There's a pradakshina Patha with pierced windows (Jalandhras) that lets in ample light and air. Krishnadevaraya added the Phala puja mandapa and Kalyana mandapa to this structure. The garbhagriha had a Vishnu image in the form of Vittala to which the god was regularly worshipped and numerous festivals were held on a grand scale. Another important attraction is the stone chariot which is in front of the rangamandapa. The Ratha or the stone chariot looks like a miniature Dravidian temple, which originally had a brick tower. It has four wheels; two on either side or it is said that the wheels could be turned on its axis.

The Maha Mandapa or main hall of the Vittala Temple situated in the inner courtyard of the temple complex. This monument is of immense beauty and is situated on a highly ornamented base. The base is decorated with carvings of warriors, horses, swans and several other ornamented designs. Four smaller halls comprise the Maha Mandapa. The steps on the eastern side of the Maha Mandapa are embellishing with elephant balustrades. There are forty pillars interlining the facade of the temple. And they are 10 feet tall in height. On wonderfully carved decorated pillars, the Maha Mandapa's central area displays 16 magnificent Narasimha and Yali sculptures. The Maha Mandapa's ceiling is a lavishly designed structure of the temple. The Maha Mandapa's ornately carved pillars represent the magnificence of the temple.

Large life-size figures of men, women, gods, and goddesses adorn the gopuram of many Vijayagara temples. Temple pillars often have engravings of charging horses or hippogryphs (yali)—horses standing on hind legs with their fore legs lifted and riders on their backs. The horses on some pillars stand seven to eight feet tall. On the other side of the pillar are often carvings from Hindu mythology. [A systematic study on Vijayanagra Art and Architecture an outline, Dr. Anand Kumar]

2.1 The Musical Pillars Of The Ranga Mandapa

The Ranga Mandapa is the main attractions of the Vittala Temple. The 56 musical pillars that make up the enormous mandapa are known as SAREGAMA pillars, which refer to the musical sounds they release. When the pillars are tapped gently musical notes are emanated. There are several sets of giant pillars and several sets of minor pillars inside the Mandapa. The ceiling of the Ranga Mandapa is supported by each main pillar. The main pillars have been made to resemble like musical instruments. In the halls where musical pillars have been installed, there are no side-wall enclosures. So that the pillars' sounds aren't distorted by the room's acoustics, two or three pillars with the same frequency can be found in some clusters. When one of these pillars is struck, it also strikes the other pillars with the same frequency. Begin to vibrate as a result of resonance. Each major pillar is encircled by seven minor pillars. These seven minor pillars emit seven different musical notes from the representative musical instruments. The notes emanated from these pillars vary in sound quality depending on whether the instrument is a percussion, string or wind instrument. In the centre, the other 16 pillars form a rectangular court. Musical pillars (See fig. 3) in the temple are composed of solid granite stone and when tapped with fingers they emit a variety of musical sounds. Two of the music columns in pillar number 11 are chosen for the acoustical analysis. The sound of pillars produced while tapping is recorded with the audio player. This specific pillar is chosen because they are famous for producing doorbell sounds like 'ding-dong'. One of the columns in pillar 11 would produce the sound 'ding' and the second one would produce 'dong' sound. At the start both the columns are tapped individually and their spectra are analyzed. The fundamental frequency of the column which produces 'ding' sound is 646 Hz and the column that would produce 'dong' sound is 538 Hz [Musical Pillars and Singing Rocks, M.G. Prasad and B. Rajavel]. Many studies have been conducted in order to comprehend the secrets of the musical pillars. It has been confirmed that the pillars are not hollow. It is believed that a proportion of silica in the pillars may account for these musical sounds. The sculptors of the musical pillars may have synthesized musical notes through mechanical means, and now a day's music is being synthesized electronically. Whatever the case may be, the melodic pillars are a constant homage to the sculptors' astounding skill. By using a contact microphone and an amplifier-loudspeaker system. A cluster of musical pillars can be converted into an electromechanical instrument. Such as an electronic guitar. [Musical Curiosities in the Temples of South India, H. V. Modak]



Fig. 1 Sculpture of the Temple

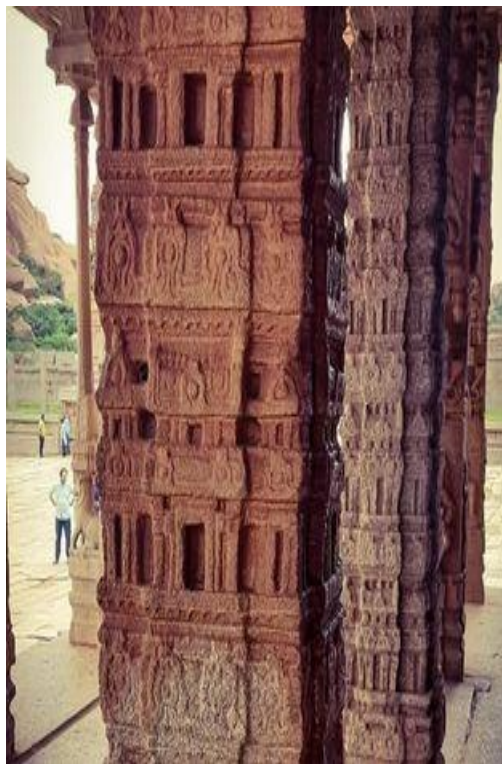


Fig. 2 Pillars of the Temple

In Vijay Vittala Temple's Ranga Mandapa, there are several interesting musical pillars. The Saptaswara pillars were the first to be created (see fig. 4) because they are said to make sounds similar to the Indian musical scale's seven basic notes. Another musical pillar worth mentioning is the one with a damaged sculpture of a cymbal (tala) player. The rhombus-shaped pillars in the back made higher-pitched tones that sounded like cymbals or Nattuvangam. During classical bharatanatyam (dance) performances, cymbals are utilised as a timing aid and musical accompaniment. The columns of this musical pillar, which feature a sculpture of an Mridangam player, were found to produce a deeper pitch, similar to that of an Mridangam. A pillar with a classical dancer sculpture (see Fig.2). It's thought to be a portrait sculpture of Chinnamma Devi, Krishnadevaraya's queen and she was a well-

known supporter of the arts and a renowned classical dancer. Some say she was the inspiration for the magnificent Ranga Mandapa and Musical Pillars of Vittala Temple at Hampi.

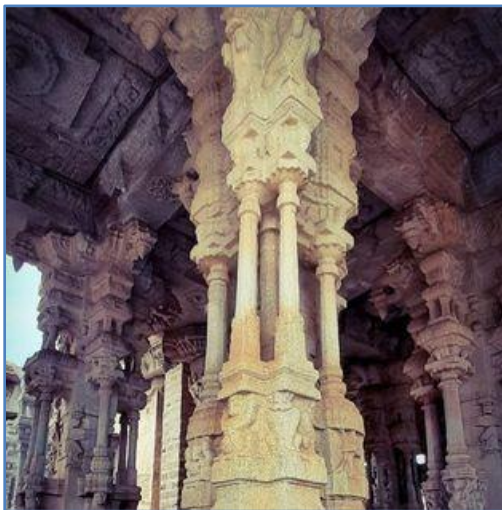


Fig. 3 Saptaswara Pillars Of Ranga Mandapa

2.2 The Stone Chariot of Vittala Temple

To the west of the stone Chariot is the major temple dedicated to Vittala or Pandu-ranga, a manifestation of Vishnu. The stone chariot has four wheels, similar to the original chariots or Rathas used to carry deity idols around the temple. (See Fig. 5). The stone chariot is made out of a single rock. As per the mythology Lord Vittala is an aspect of Lord Vishnu. Garuda is Lord Vishnu's vehicle (lord of eagles). The detailed carvings of gods and goddesses, as well as the fretwork, make the mandapa's composite pillars particularly impressive. The chariot is built on a rectangular platform with a great height. Mythical war scenes are engraved all around the base of a platform. The Stone chariot was built during the 16th century by the King Krishnadevaraya got inspired by the chariot of Konark Sun temple while fighting in Odissa. The Stone chariot represents an artistic perfection of the Vijayanagara Empire. And was inspired by the Dravidian style of architecture, the chariot is a massive structure which shows the skill of the earlier craftsmen and architects. The attraction of the chariot comes from the assumption that it looks to be one solid structure but is actually made up of granite slabs connected by well hidden links.

The base on which the chariot rests represent beautiful mythical battle scenes in intricate details. Horse sculptures used to be present, but today elephants are seated. The back legs and tails of the horses may be seen clearly behind the elephants. There are also the ruins of a stairway that priests used to go to the inner sanctum to adore Garuda's sculpture, which is located between the two elephants. Stone Chariot of Hampi is one of India's most known archaeological destinations. The Indian government printed a 50 rupee note with a stone chariot on it. The temple's stone chariot must have been painted with bright colours using natural dyes when it was at its peak. There is colour evidence beneath the chariot's undercarriage.



Fig. 4 Stone Chariot of Vittala Temple

2.3 The Maha Mandapa of Vittala Temple

The Maha-Mandapa, also known as the Sabha Mandapa, is exactly aligned along the central axis of the rectangular courtyard, facing the Stone Chariot. The massive Sabha Mandapa leads to the Garbha Griha towards its other end. The elevated open hall known as the Maha-Mandapa or Great Hall, which faces the Stone Chariot, is reached via a series of steps flanked by elephant balustrades. The Sabha Mandapa is a massive pavilion whose roof is supported by massive columns which are made up of a cluster of slender pillars. These columns are monolithic pillars that have been carved out of single granite blocks and are this is the most notable feature of the Maha Mandapa. The pillars are also known as the Vittala Temple Musical Pillars or SAREGAMA pillars because they create musical notes when tapped. Four smaller halls comprise the Maha Mandapa. An elephant balustrade may be found on the Maha Mandapa's steps on the eastern side.

Each of the pillars that surround this chamber has musicians, dancers, and drummers carved onto it. Because of the musicians' sculptures on the pillars, the eastern hall is termed as the musician's hall.

The southern hall is dominated with an uncontrolled mythical creature known as Yalis. The capitals of each pillar's branches into heavily ornamented corbels which put an end to the lotus buds.

The northern hall is surrounded with a series of pillars with the Narasimha (the man-lion embodiment of Vishnu). Most notable ones are the Narasimha slaying Hiranyakashipu on his lap. Prahlada can be seen sitting at the bottom in a praying like posture. A little further ahead is where you'll find the sanctum.

2.4 The Garbha Griha of Vittala Temple

The Garbha Griha of the Vijay Vittala Temple is linear from the Stone Chariot behind the Sabha Mandapa. It can alternatively be reached by a door or a flight of steps on the southern side. Outside the entrance of the Garbha Griha the traditional Dwarapalakas or guardsmen are stand. However, one of the partially damaged statues is remained. The Garbhagriha itself is empty and the idol of the deity missing. On the Gopuram and on the outer walls, carvings are found which gives an indication how the idol must have looked like. The carvings of Gods and Goddesses, as well as Vittala, adorn a Vimana that sits over the Garbhagriha. Around the sanctuary, there is a covered and semi-dark there is a circumambulatory path or pradakshina path. The outer walls of the sanctum are covered with Kumbha-Pankaj as and another iconography associated with Lord Vishnu.

3.0 PRESENT CONDITION OF VIJAY VITTALA TEMPLE

The temple of Hampi, Vijay Vittala Temple is partially ruined. The sanctum of the temple once had an idol of Lord Vittala. In the sanctum, there is no longer any idol. The temple's main western hall was long ago demolished during the Mughal onslaught that brought the Vijaynagara Empire to its demise in 1565 A.D. The wheels of the chariot were once functioning and could be rotated by the general public. However, the Indian government sealed the wheels a few years ago to prevent them from being damaged. Even tapping musical pillars to emit musical notes is prohibited, as tapping has

harmed the Ranga Mandapa's musical pillars in the past. It is also prohibited to touch musical pillars in order to trigger them to generate musical notes, as tapping has caused some damage to the Ranga Mandapa's musical pillars over time.

4.0 CONCLUSION

The paper enlighten about the architectural style of the temple, also the temple has some beautiful stone structures - like the stone chariot and the interesting musical pillars. The Vittala temple is considered the most prominent temple and monument in Hampi. The Vijayanagara Empire's sculptors and artisans possessed enormous inventiveness and architectural expertise, as seen by the temple. The Vijayanagara architects also made a contribution: the Vijay Vittala temple's gateway has a towering Gopuram, a common characteristic of South Indian temple architecture, as well as the mystery of melodic pillars that produce musical notes when lightly tapped. Musical pillars are made of stone have been preserved as a huge amount of information about ancient music and art. Another attraction of the temple is stone Chariot it is a shrine dedicated to Garuda, the official vehicle of Lord Vishnu. Stone Chariot in Hampi is one of the three most popular stone chariots in India also the chariot has carvings depicting mythical battle scenes. UNESCO has designated the temple as a World Heritage Site.

References

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