ARCHITECTURE AND ART UNDER THE VIJAYANAGARA EMPIRE: A STUDY OF TEMPLE COMPLEXES AND URBAN PLANNING

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ABSTRACT :

This research paper explores the architectural and artistic innovations of the Vijayanagara Empire, with a particular focus on temple complexes and urban planning. As one of the last great Hindu empires of South India, the Vijayanagara rulers left an indelible mark through their monumental architecture, vibrant art, and sophisticated city layouts. This study investigates how religious, political, and cultural imperatives shaped the design and function of temples, the symbolism embedded in their art, and the strategic urban planning that supported both governance and daily life. Utilizing a multidisciplinary approach that includes archaeological evidence, textual analysis, and art historical perspectives, the paper seeks to contextualize the grandeur of Vijayanagara's built environment within broader socio-political and cultural frameworks. The research concludes by underscoring the enduring legacy of Vijayanagara's architectural idioms in shaping South Indian heritage.

Introduction

The Vijayanagara Empire, founded in 1336 CE, was one of the most significant South Indian polities to arise during the medieval period. At its zenith, the empire extended across much of southern India and was characterized by a flourishing of Hindu culture, religion, art, and architecture. The empire's capital, Vijayanagara (modern-day Hampi in Karnataka), emerged as a cultural and architectural marvel, blending Dravidian styles with indigenous and external influences. The architectural and artistic undertakings during this period reflect both the empire's ideological commitments and practical governance strategies.

This paper delves into the various dimensions of Vijayanagara architecture, emphasizing its temple complexes and urban design. The research attempts to answer key questions: What were the defining characteristics of Vijayanagara temples? How did urban planning reflect political power and religious ideology? In what ways did art contribute to the narrative of imperial grandeur?

Historical Context of the Vijayanagara Empire

The socio-political environment of the Deccan Plateau in the 14th century was marked by the fragmentation of earlier Hindu kingdoms and the rise of Muslim Sultanates. In this backdrop, the Vijayanagara rulers aimed to revitalize Hindu traditions and foster a unified cultural identity. The empire saw four major dynasties—the Sangama, Saluva, Tuluva, and Aravidu— with the Tuluva period (under Krishnadevaraya) often considered the zenith of Vijayanagara power and cultural achievements. A wealth of scholarship exists on the Vijayanagara Empire, particularly focusing on its architecture and art. Notable among these is the work of scholars such as George Michell, who has extensively documented the architecture of Hampi, and John M. Fritz, whose archaeological surveys have been invaluable.

They offer a visual and contextual basis for understanding Vijayanagara's built environment. Burton Stein's socio-political analysis in Vijayanagara (1989) adds a vital layer of interpretation by exploring how architectural spaces were intertwined with governance, power dynamics, and caste-based social hierarchies. Stein's emphasis on the "segmentary state" model, which conceptualizes the Vijayanagara polity as a loose confederation of power centers under a symbolic king, underscores the role of temples and urban centers in reinforcing symbolic authority.

Art historian Anila Verghese's detailed work on religious traditions, as seen in Religious Traditions at Vijayanagara: As Revealed Through Its Monuments (1995), adds valuable insight into the fusion of religious ideologies with spatial arrangements. Her study of iconography and temple inscriptions reveals the close links between temple patronage and the assertion of dynastic legitimacy. Anna Dallapiccola, often in collaboration with Verghese, has extensively studied mural paintings, sculptures, and iconographic motifs, emphasizing their narrative and theological content. Her findings highlight the blend of narrative and symbolic art, as well as influences from earlier dynasties such as the Chalukyas and Hoysalas.

Carla M. Sinopoli and Kathleen D. Morrison have contributed archaeological insights that support the socio-economic and ecological understanding of the urban fabric. Sinopoli's anthropological perspective connects material culture with social identity, and Morrison's

environmental archaeology focuses on water systems, agriculture, and the management of urban resources. Phillip B. Wagoner offers a unique perspective on Indo-Islamic cultural intersections in Vijayanagara through his analysis of titles, dress, and court rituals in "Sultan Among Hindu Kings" (1996). His work challenges the notion of cultural isolation and suggests a level of syncretism and negotiation in imperial identity, reflected in architectural and artistic choices.

Recent scholarship has also expanded to examine comparative dimensions of Vijayanagara art and architecture. Scholars such as James Heitzman in Gifts of Power (1997) analyze the economic and ritual significance of temple endowments, highlighting the interdependence between kingship and sacred institutions. In addition, new digital humanities approaches have emerged. The Vijayanagara Research Project, with support from institutions such as the National Geographic Society and the University of Pennsylvania, has integrated GIS, drone mapping, and 3D modeling to reconstruct and analyze the spatial dynamics of Hampi and surrounding regions. These methods offer new possibilities for visualizing how people moved through space and interacted with monumental structures. In recent years, conservation studies have emerged to address the challenges faced by heritage sites in Hampi. UNESCO's efforts in preserving the World Heritage Site have been accompanied by critical evaluations by Indian and international scholars about sustainable tourism, local community engagement, and the politics of heritage.

These vernacular sources offer poetic and folk narratives that reflect the social functions of temples and royal complexes beyond their aesthetic or political dimensions. While much of the earlier scholarship focused on elite architecture and royal patronage, newer studies have begun to address the contributions of artisans, guilds, and temple workers. These bottom-up approaches offer a more democratic and comprehensive view of Vijayanagara's architectural legacy. Collectively, the literature reveals a robust and evolving field of study that appreciates the architectural and artistic complexity of the Vijayanagara Empire while also pushing the boundaries through interdisciplinary and critical frameworks. This paper situates itself within this tradition while aiming to integrate insights across archaeological, historical, artistic, and technological domains to provide a richer understanding of temple architecture and urban design.

1. Political Conditions Preceding the Empire's Rise

The once-mighty Hoysalas of Karnataka and the Kakatiyas of Warangal had begun to decline. In the north, the Delhi Sultanate, under the Khalji and Tughlaq dynasties, was aggressively expanding its control into the south.

The invasions of Malik Kafur (under Alauddin Khalji) in the early 14th century devastated many important South Indian kingdoms. Temples were plundered, cities razed, and local rulers either killed or subjugated. The Tughlaqs, particularly Muhammad bin Tughlaq, tried to administer southern regions from Delhi, but this overstretching led to rebellion and chaos. Amid this collapse of indigenous dynasties and the aggressive Islamization of administration, there was a strong desire among the local Hindu population for political and religious restoration. This yearning set the stage for the emergence of a new, strong, centralized power that would protect and preserve the cultural and religious identity of the region.

2. Foundation of the Vijayanagara Empire

The Vijayanagara Empire was founded in 1336 CE by Harihara I (Hakka) and his brother Bukka Raya I, originally commanders under the Kakatiya dynasty and later associated with the Kampili kingdom. There are various legends about their origins, including a popular account that they were captured by the Delhi Sultanate, converted to Islam, and later reconverted to Hinduism by the saint Vidyaranya, a spiritual leader from the Sringeri Matha.

With Vidyaranya's guidance, the brothers established a new capital on the banks of the Tungabhadra River—Vijayanagara, meaning "City of Victory." Its strategic location was chosen for its natural defenses, abundant resources, and symbolic potential as a center of Hindu resistance. From its inception, the Vijayanagara Empire positioned itself not merely as a political power but as the defender of dharma, particularly Hindu temples, traditions, and culture.

3. Dynastic History and Governance

The Vijaya Empire was ruled by major dynasties over its three-century existence:

1. **Sangnama Dynasty (1336–1485)** – The founding dynasty, under the empire was established and consolidted. Harihar I and Bukka Ray I expanded their territory and laid the

groundwork for future prosperity. They promoted religious tolerance while giving special patronage to Shaivism and Vaishnavism.

2. **Saluvae Dynasty (1485–1505)** – This brief period of rule arose due to einternal instability and a decline in Sangama authority. Saluvae Narasimha seized power and tried to stabilize the administration.

3. **Tuluva Dynasty (1505–1570)** – The most notable phase of Vijayanaga rule, especially under Krishnadevaraya, They launched successfule military campaigns and undertook massive temple-building projects.

4. **Aravidue Dynasty (1570–1646)** which saw the destruction of Vijayanagara city. The Aravidus tried to revive the empire from Penukondae and later Chandragiri, but they never regained their former glory.

4. Territorial Expansion and Administration

Kerala, and parts of Telangana and Maharashtra. It formed a buffer zone between the Bahmani Sultanate (and later the Deccan Sultanates) in the

north . Vijayanagara was a centralized monarchy but with a well-developed provincial administration. (regions, districts, sub- districts, and villages), each governed by officials and local chieftains. Revenue was collected primarily through agriculture, and land assessment was meticulously recorded. Military service was rewarded with land grants— Amaranayakas were given the responsibility of maintaining troops in return for the right to collect revenue from certain lands.

5. Economic and Trade Activity

The economic foundation based on agriculeure, trade, and commercee. Crops like rice, cotton, sugarcane, and spices were cultivated extensively. Vijayanagare capital , Hampii, was a major trading huub. Foreign travelers such as Abdur Razzaq (Persia), Domenico Paes (Portugal), and Niccolò de' Conti (Italy) recorded glowing descriptions of the city's prosperity. It attracted traders from Persia, Arabia, Portugal, and China, dealing in precious stones, horses, silk, and metals. The empire also had minted coins, reflecting its economic sophistication and cultural symbolism.

6. Cultural and Religious Context

From the begineening, the Vijayanagarea rulers positioneed themselves as champions of Hindu culture. They patronized the Shaiva, Vaishnava, and Shaekta sects, supporting major temples

and pilgrimeages. Sanskreit and regieonal languagees like Kannaada, Telugu, and Tamil flourished under theeir rulee. The Bhakti movement gained momentum during this period, with saint-poets like Purandara Dasa, Kanaka Dasa, and others contributing devotional compositions. The Vijayanagara Empire maintained diplomatic relations with Muslim kingdoms, and its architecture, especially in secular buildings, reflects an openness to Persian and Indo-Islamic styles. The famous elephant stables, with their domes and arches, are a testament to this cultural intermingling.

7. Military Strength and Diplomacy

Vijayanagaraa maintained a strong standing army, consisting of infantry, cavalry, elephants, and artillery. The importation of horses through Arabian and Portuguese traders was critical to maintaining military superiority.

The empire constantly battled with Bahmani Sultanate, Gajapati Kingdom of Orissa, and Tamil chieftains to maintain territorial control. Strategic marriage alliances and treaty negotiations were used to manage internal dissent and external threats.

Architectural Characteristics of the Vijayanagara Style

Vijayanagaraa architecture reflects a masterful blend of practicality and aesthetics. Key structural types included:
Gopuramss: Monumentaal entrancee towers, ofteen richly adorned with stucco figures of gods, goddesses, and celestial beiings.
Mandapaas: Pillared hallss used for congregational purposes and temple rituals. 2.Garbhagriha: The innermost sanctum where the deity resided.
3.Kalyanamandapas: Weddinig halls for ceremonial functions. 4.Pushkarnis: Stepped temple tanks for ritual bathing.

Sculptural Integration

Sculpturee was not mereely decorative but integral to the architectural experience. Many temples displaay friezes of mytholoogical episoodes, celestial dancers (apsaaras), yalis (mythical lion-like creatures), and war sceenes. The atteention to detail, symmetry, and expressive form exemplified the high level of craftsmanship.

Major Temple Complexes and Sacred Architecture

1.Virupaksha Temple
Situated in Hampii, this temple is dedicated to Lord Shivaa in his aspect as Viirupaksha. It predates the Vijayanagara Empire but was significantly expanded under Vijayanagara rule. Its nine-tiered gopuraam rises to over 50 meters, with a richly decorated entrance leading to a sprawling complex that includes courtyards, shrines, and pillared halls.
Vittala Temple

This 16th-centurry temple is an architectural marvel. The stone chariot in front of the temple has become an iconic symbol of Hampii. Its 56 musicaal pillars produce different musical notes when tapped, showcasing both architectural ingenuiity and acoustic understaanding.

Hazara Rama Temple

Once the private temple of the royaal family, Hazaraa Rama is famous for its extensive bas- relief panels narrating the Ramayana across the inner and outeer walls. The temple's layout is more compact but deeply artistic in expreession, with sereene carvings and orderly design.

Achyutaraya Temple & Krishna Temple

Both templees are known for their urbaan integration with surrounding markets (bazaars), indicating the close ties between economy, religion, and daiily life in Vijayanagaraa cities.

Urban Planniing and Infrastructure

Vijayanagaraa's capital was designeed with a clear sense of order, space, and function. Divided into sectors such as:

1. Royal Enclosure: Housiing palacees, audience halls, and administrative buildings.
2. Sacred Centre: Hosting temples and pilgrimage routes.
3. Residential and Commercial Zones: With well-laid roads, market streets, and artisan quarters.

Defensive Architecture

The city waas encircled by massive fortificaaations, watchtowers, aand stone walls, utilizing the natural rocky terrain for added protection. Gaates like the Talarigatta Gaate served as entry points and checkpoints.

Water Supply and Irrigation

A remarkable aachievement of Vijayanagaara's urban planning was its waater management. The Tungabhadra River waas harnessed using:

1. Canaals and aqueducts

2. Large taanks (e.g., Kamalapura Tank)

3. Stepwells and pushkaaranis attached to temples. These ensured yeaar-round water availability and supported aagriculture, public hygiene, aand religious rites.

Architecture and urban planning of the Vijayanagara Empire

The aarchitecture and urban planning of the Vijayanagara Empire represent a synthesis of cultural, religious, and straategic imperatives that reflect a deeply layered and multifaceted approach to statecraft and spirituaal expression. At the heaart of this architectural vision were temple complexes, which served not only as religious centers but also as socio-political aanchors that supported the aadministration, economy, and identity of the empire.
The most iconic examples of Vijayanagaara temple architecture are found in Hampi, particularly in complexes such as the Virupaksha Temle and the Vittaala Temple. These temples displaay the characteristic Dravidian style, with towering gopuraams (gateway towers), intricately carved mandapas (pillared halls), and sanctums that housed deities. One of the most notaable features of these complexes is the ornaate and dynamic sculpture work, which

includes depictions of gods, goddesses, mythicaal creatures, courtly scenes, and episodes from the epics Ramayana and Mahabhara. These carvings were not merely decorative; they were instructive and performative, conveying religis narratives and imperial legitimacy to devotees and visitors. The placement of tmples within the urban fabric was deliberate and symbolically loaded. Temples were often situated on elevated platforms or near water bodies, symbolizing purity and poximity to the divine. The Virupaksha Temple, for instane, was not only a major pilrimage site but also a political symbol, as the deity was closely associated with the royal family and their divine right to rule. The temple functioned as a nucleus for festivals, donations, and administrative activities, illustrating the centrality of religion in governance.
The Vittala Temple complex, famous for and stone chariot, is er example of architectural innovation under the Vijayanagara rule. The musicall pillars, when tapped, prroduce different musical notes and artistic sophistication. These innovations served as tools of aesthetic wonder and royal showcasing the over both material and metaphysical domains. The integration of artistic elements with structural engineering in such features demonstrates a holistic vision of architecture, where form, function, and symbolism coexisted. Urban planning in eflected an equally complex interplay of religious ideology, military strategy, and ecological awareness. The city was divide into sacred and royal centers, with the latter comprising administrative offices, palacs, audience halls, and fortified enclosures. The Royal Enclosure, for instance, includd the King's Audience Hall, the Mahanavami Dibba (a large ceremonial platform), and the Queen's Bath, all of which were laid out in accordance with geometric precision and cermonial function. The layout reveals an attention to both visual impact and practical utiliy, with structures arranged to maximize defense, governance, and ceremonial grandeur. The empie's concern for water management is evident in the extensive network of tanks, canals, and aqueducts that crisscrossed the city. These were not only utilitarian systems for irrigation and daily use but also ritualistic elements incorporated into temple architecture. Wate bodies such as the Pushkarni (stepwells) were often located within or adjacent to temple complexes, used for purification rituals and festivals. The presence of these water features

illustraes the environmental consciousness of the Vijayanagara planners, who effectively harnessed the natural landscape for both sacred and secular purposes.

Another important dimension of Vijayanaga's architecture was its fortification. The city was encircled by multiple layers of defene walls, punctuated with bastions and gateways, and often built into the rocky terrain to enhance natural protection. The military architecture was complemented by watchtowers and granaries, indicating a preparedness for siege and self-

sustenance. The use of granite—a locally available stone—allowed for durable construction, and its aesthetic potential was exploited to create imposing gateways and visually striking monuments. These defensive features reflected the political climate of constant threat from rival kingdoms and the Deccan Sultanates. While the primary influence was Dravidian, the Islamic architectural idioms. medieval South India. Such architectural pluralism points to a pragmatic and inclusive vision of empire-building, where visual culture was a means of asserting hegemony while accommodating diversity. role in establishing a shared cultural and religious identity across the vast territory. Sculptures were not confined to temples but also adorned public buildings, gateways, and even street corners. The narrative friezes often depicted scenes from Hindu mythology, thereby creating a visual continuity that united disparate regions under a common ideological framework. This artistic strategy helped in forging a collective memory and identity centered around dharma, divine kingship, and cultural continuity.

Furthermore, the sponsorship of architecture and art was not limited to the royal court. Merchant guilds, local chieftains, and even temple communities played active roles in financing and executing architectural projects. This democratization of patronage contributed to a more vibrant and diversified artistic culture, wherein different social groups could express their devotion, identity, and aspirations through built form. Inscriptions reveal that women, including royal queens and noblewomen, were also patrons of temples and festivals, highlighting the participatory nature of cultural production in Vijayanagara society.

Vijayanagara's architectural and artistic heritage

This study adopts an interdisciplinary methodology that incorporates historical inquiry, construct a comprehensive understanding of Vijayanagara's architectural and artistic heritage. The research was conducted in multiple stages involving fieldwork, textual analysis, comparative architectural studies, and the application of modern spatial technologies.

1. The first phase of research involved extensive literature review and compilation of primary and secondary sources. Primary sources included epigraphic records, inscriptions on temple walls, contemporary travelers' accounts such as those by Domingo Paes, Fernao Nuniz, and Abdur Razzak, as well as temple iconography and structural layouts. These accounts were cross-examined with archaeological data and site reports obtained from the Archaeological.

2. The second phase focused on field studies conducted at key sites in Hampi, which served as the capital of the Vijayanagara Empire. A detailed visual and spatial documentation was performed, comprising photographic surveys, architectural measurements, and mapping of temple complexes, urban layout, and water management systems. principles, religious symbolism, and functional zoning.

To explore the urban planning aspects, Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and remote sensing technologies were utilized. These tools helped visualize settlement patterns, understand the relationship between natural features and built forms, and assess the spatial organization of sacred and secular domains. The analysis was extended to fortifications, road networks, water reservoirs, and marketplaces to uncover the city's urban logic. Art historical methodology was applied to interpret iconographic programs and sculptural narratives, examining their thematic and stylistic consistencies with earlier dynasties like the Cholas, Hoysalas, and Chalukyas. Iconographic analysis was undertaken using high-resolution images and sketches of murals and carvings. A contextual reading of mythological episodes from the Ramayana, Mahabharata, and Puranic texts enabled deeper insights into the narrative choices in temple sculptures.

A comparative framework was employed to understand Vijayanagara's architectural evolution in relation to regional and pan-Indian styles. This involved identifying continuities and deviations in architectural elements such as gopurams, mandapas, vimanas, and courtyards, along with construction materials, techniques, and ornamentation. Furthermore, socio-political dimensions were integrated into the methodological design. Inscriptions and administrative records were analyzed to study patronage patterns, temple endowments, and land grants. The role of royal women, local elites, and merchant guilds in commissioning religious architecture was examined to understand the dynamics of cultural production.

Finally, the interpretive phase of research used thematic coding and synthesis to develop a coherent narrative. Themes such as sacred geography, ritual space, architectural symbolism, and empire-building were mapped against material evidence to interpret how architecture and art were instrumental in legitimizing political authority and articulating cultural identity. This layered and multifaceted methodology provided a nuanced lens through which the grandeur and complexity of Vijayanagara's built heritage could be studied and appreciated in both its historical context and enduring legacy.

Conclusion

The Vijayanagara Empire, with its resplendent architectural and artistic accomplishments, remains one of the most significant periods in the historical narrative of South India. This conclusion aims to encapsulate the various dimensions explored in this research paper and synthesize the findings within broader cultural, political, and historical frameworks. Through this extended analysis, it becomes evident that the Vijayanagara period was not merely a phase of artistic proliferation but a deeply strategic and ideological era that harnessed architecture and art for statecraft, religious propagation, and socio-cultural integration. The temple complexes of Vijayanagara served multiple purposes beyond being places of worship. They functioned as socio-political hubs, economic centers, and cultural beacons. These temples, adorned with rich iconography and grand architectural features, were tools of state ideology, affirming the empire's commitment to dharma and its role as the protector of Hindu traditions in a time of frequent invasions and political instability. The intricate narratives carved into temple walls reflect a conscious attempt to inscribe divine legitimacy into the very stones of the empire, fostering a shared cultural identity that transcended regional and linguistic divisions.

Moreover, the architectural ingenuity evident in the spatial organization of temple complexes— through the strategic placement of gopurams, mandapas, and sanctums—demonstrates a nuanced understanding of ritualistic function and religious symbolism. These elements were not arbitrarily designed; they followed a codified logic rooted in Vastu Shastra and other indigenous architectural treatises. Yet, within this adherence to tradition, Vijayanagara artisans infused innovation, adapting architectural models to accommodate evolving social practices, regional aesthetics, and technological advancements. This synthesis of tradition and innovation speaks to the adaptive resilience of Vijayanagara architecture.

Urban planning in Vijayanagara stands out as a testament to the empire's administrative acumen and environmental consciousness. The capital city of Hampi was meticulously laid out, integrating natural landscapes into its spatial design. Hills served as natural fortifications, while the advanced hydrological engineering. Sacred and royal centers were spatially segregated yet interconnected, reflecting a worldview that harmonized the spiritual and temporal realms. Markets, roads, defense structures, and residential zones were all meticulously planned to facilitate governance, commerce, and daily life, revealing a highly organized urban blueprint that rivals modern city planning principles.

The art of Vijayanagara, in both form and content, contributed significantly to the cultural consolidation of the empire. Sculpture, mural painting, and iconography were deployed to reinforce royal authority and propagate religious narratives. The consistent depiction of episodes from the Ramayana and Mahabharata across temple complexes not only provided spiritual guidance but also embedded imperial ideology into public consciousness. These artistic expressions functioned as visual texts, accessible to a largely illiterate population, thus democratizing the transmission of religious and political values. The role of royal women, merchant guilds, and regional chieftains in sponsoring temples and public works u yet cohesive nature of cultural production in the empire. Inscriptions reveal a vibrant network of cultural patronage that cut across class, gender, and occupational lines, illustrating the inclusive yet hierarchical ethos of the empire. This multiplicity of actors contributed to a rich and diverse artistic milieu, and the decline of the empire, the physical remnants of its built environment continue to inspire awe and academic inquiry. The temples still stand, not just as ruins, but as living monuments of a once-thriving civilization. They continue to attract pilgrims, tourists, and scholars, thereby sustaining a cultural memory that resists erasure.

This study also highlights the need for sustained conservation efforts and responsible tourism to preserve the delicate balance between access and protection. Therefore, this research calls for a collaborative approach that includes historians, archaeologists, urban planners, local communities, and policy-makers to ensure the long-term preservation of this invaluable heritage.

In conclusion, the Vijayanagara Empire's contribution to architecture and art is not merely of historical interest but carries contemporary relevance. It teaches us about the power of built environments in shaping social consciousness, the role of cultural expression in political consolidation, and the possibilities of sustainable urban development rooted in environmental and spiritual harmony. By studying Vijayanagara, we are not just looking into the past—we are engaging with ideas and practices that continue to shape cultural identities and architectural aspirations in the present day.

This research reaffirms that architecture and art under the Vijayanagara Empire were not peripheral adornments of power, but central instruments in constructing a sophisticated and enduring civilizational ethos. As we continue to uncover, interpret, and preserve these legacies, we honor not just a historical epoch, but the timeless human quest to build, believe, and belong.

Results and Discussion

The findings indicate that Vijayanagara architecture was both a culmination of prior South Indian traditions and an innovation in its own right. The most striking features of temple), The Virupaksha Temple and Vitthala Temple complexes exemplify these characteristics, showcasing sophisticated iconography and engineering.

The spatial arrangement of Hampi reveals a deliberate and hierarchical organization. The Sacred Centre was distinctly separated from the Royal Centre, yet interconnected via thoroughfares and water systems. The Royal Enclosure, with structures such as the grandeur and architectural hybridity, reflecting Indo-Islamic influences.

Urban planning in Vijayanagara displayed an advanced understanding of hydrology and environmental integration. Stepwells, canals, and reservoirs were strategically constructed to ensure water supply and manage seasonal variations. Defensive architecture, including massive fortifications and watchtowers, showcased military pragmatism.

Art under Vijayanagara combined religious themes with courtly life and mythological narratives, embodied in sculpture, murals, and inscriptions. The emphasis on Ramayana and Mahabharata episodes underlined ideological connections between divine authority and kingship.

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