

Art and Literature in Vijayanagara Empire

The art and architecture of South India flourished during the early Muslim period but faced considerable damage during Alauddin's invasion. When Bukka I came into power, he extended invitations to scholars and artists from various parts of India to Vijayanagara. This made the city a significant contributor to the development of Dravidian-style architecture. During this era, the construction of large and majestic Gopurams, which are monumental entrance towers, became a prominent feature.

Vijayanagara's contributions to the Dravidian style included:

1. The construction of Kalyana Mandapa, where ceremonial weddings of deities were conducted alongside traditional Mandapas.
2. Elaborate pillars were crafted with intricate designs, often showcasing a majestic horse sculpture standing on two raised feet. These pillars were widely employed in the construction of magnificent monuments and spacious gathering areas. They were decorated with large, gracefully curved leaves along their upper edges.

Vithhal Swami and Hazara temples are well-known examples of an architectural period known for its distinct features, including elevated platforms, large assembly halls, and intricately adorned pillars. Cities such as Kumbakonam, Kanchipuram, Srirangam, Chidambaram, Tirumala, and Vellore are filled with temples that showcase the style of the Vijayanagara era.

The architectural style of the Vijayanagara Empire, often referred to as Dravidian, possessed unique characteristics. It involved repairing and enlarging partially destroyed temples, reshaping them, and constructing new temples over the ruins of the old ones. These newly built temples were notably large and could accommodate a vast

number of devotees simultaneously. Interestingly, Indo-Islamic influences were observed in secular buildings through the use of domes and lotus motifs.

During the Vijayanagara period, architecture was richly adorned, reflecting the advancement of ancient Indian sculpture. They created thousand-pillared (Hazara Temple) Mandapams, which were remarkable for their pillars adorned with figurative carvings, showcasing the excellence of Vijayanagar temple architecture. Temples of this era featured walls that depicted a variety of mythological tales, and the entrances were marked by grand Gopurams adorned with intricate designs. These Gopurams, with their size and number, became increasingly impressive.



Hazara Ram Temple

The ruins of the grand Vijayanagara Empire continue to display aesthetic and artistic elements. Vitthal and Hazara Ram Temple serve as prime examples of this heritage, characterized by elevated platforms, spacious auditoriums, and decorative pillars.

Even after the empire's decline, the final phase of Vijayanagara architecture continued to flourish in the form of the **Madurai style**. This style is evident in various locations such as Madurai, Rameswaram, Srirangam, Thiruvallur, Chidambaram, Thinnaveli, and several places in the far South.

Vijayanagara was home to numerous highly skilled painters in its royal court, although the practice of painting gradually declined over time. Portuguese writers and Abdur Razzag have documented the presence of these talented painters in the service of the Vijayanagara emperor.

The period also witnessed the development of musical art and the emergence of **Lepakshi painting**, a distinctive style drawing themes from the Ramayana and Mahabharata. Additionally, a new style known as the **Yakshini style evolved**, combining elements of dance and music.

Literature

The rulers of Vijayanagara were renowned supporters of education and learning. They played a crucial role in a period of revival for Sanskrit literature and the emergence of a neoclassical era for Dravidian languages like Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, and Malayalam. Although these languages drew inspiration from Sanskrit, apart from Tamil, much of their content was rooted in original Sanskrit texts. This literary activity became a means of cultural exchange, especially during the Bhakti movement.

Similar to North India, Sanskrit remained an important language for imparting knowledge among certain groups in Vijayanagara society. The Vijayanagara court supported the creation of historical fiction and autobiographical works. Led by scholars like **Sayana**, many Sanskrit intellectuals produced religious literature and wrote commentaries on four Vedas, Brahmanas, and Aranyakas. **Hemadri** also made a significant contribution with his commentary on the Dharmashastra, a legal and ethical text. However, it's worth noting that these

contributions had limited influence on the development of social institutions.

Most Vijayanagara rulers were highly educated, and some made significant literary contributions. **Krishnadevaraya**, a scholar proficient in both Sanskrit and Telugu, patronized numerous scholars. He is said to have composed five texts in Sanskrit and a Telugu composition known as '**Amuktamalyada**'. One of his notable Sanskrit works is '**Jambavati Kalyanam**'.

The court of Krishnadevaraya was adorned with eight eminent Telugu poets known as '**Ashtadiggaja**'. The most celebrated among them was **Peddan**, who authored '**Manu Charit**' and '**Swarachit Sambhava**'. **Timmana** composed '**Parijatapaharanam**', while **Tenali Ramakrishna** contributed '**Pandurang Mahatmya**'. These poets ushered in a new era of Telugu poetry, with Peddan earning the title of the father of modern Telugu. Timman's love story remained a source of fascination for a long time, capturing people's imaginations.

During this time, the translation of Sanskrit literature and other secular works into the Telugu language witnessed significant growth, a development actively encouraged by Krishnadevaraya. The scholars of Vijayanagara made their greatest contribution by paving the way for a new form of Telugu poetry known as '**Prabandh**'. Some writers introduced '**Yakshagana**', a type of rural drama, and **Ruler Tirumal** wrote a commentary on Jayadev's '**Geet Govind**'.

The reign of the Vijayanagara Empire also witnessed the development of the Kannada and Malayalam languages. **Madhura**, a prominent Kannada scholar of this period, composed '**Dharmanathapuram**'. In Malayalam, the first authentic literary work, '**Unnuneeli Sandesam**', appeared, drawing inspiration from Kalidasa's '**Meghdoot**'. **Madhav Panikker** translated the Bhagavad Gita into the Malayalam language during this period.

In summary, the prosperity of the Vijayanagara Empire provided poets with the

opportunity to create new classical forms that seamlessly blended love, devotion, philosophy, and instruction. The aesthetic sense of contemporary poets took center stage, giving rise to new creations like ‘**Prabandha**’ and ‘**Yakshagana**’, among others.

Question: Discuss the contribution of Krishnadevaraya in the field of literature and art.

Answer: Krishnadevaraya stands as one of India’s eminent rulers, not only laying a strong foundation for administration but also making monumental contributions to literature and art. In the realm of creative talent, Krishnadevaraya’s stature rivals that of Akbar. Remarkably, he fostered an environment that nurtured his creative talents, even amid constant conflicts with neighboring states. His reign witnessed the Vijayanagara court blossoming into a great patron of scholars and artists.

The Vijayanagara rulers had long been enthusiastic patrons of Sanskrit. Even before Krishnadevaraya’s reign, commentaries on the four Vedas were authored within the Vijayanagara court, and this tradition endured during his rule. Krishnadevaraya himself was a formidable scholar, well-versed in both Telugu and Sanskrit. In Telugu, he composed a treatise on politics and administration called “**Amuktamalyada**.” His contributions extended to the realm of Sanskrit, where he authored five works. Additionally, a scholar named **Tenalirama**, who resided in Krishnadevaraya’s court, composed “**Panduranga Mahatyam**.”

Krishnadevaraya’s patronage extended to languages like Telugu, Tamil, and Kannada, but it was Telugu literature that flourished most abundantly under his rule. His era is celebrated as the renaissance period of Telugu literature, having eight Telugu scholars, known as “**Ashtadiggajas**,” in his court. Foremost among them was **Peddana**, who authored the noteworthy text “**Swarochita Sambhava**.” Another luminary was **Nanditimman**, who penned “**Parijatapaharanam**.”

Parallel to these literary advancements, Krishnadevaraya’s reign witnessed significant developments in art. **The Dravidian style** of architecture experienced a revival under his patronage. The Hazara Temple and the Vitthal Swami Temple, constructed during his rule, stand as prime examples of excellent architecture. This period also marked the evolution of various elements within the Dravidian style. While Gopurams had already been under construction, Krishnadevaraya’s reign saw the development of magnificent Gopurams. Pillars became highly decorative, featuring sculptures of supernatural animals carved from the monolithic stone. In addition to Mandapas, the construction of Kalyana Mandapams began, where divine marriage ceremonies took place.

A distinctive style of painting, known as **Lepakshi painting**, emerged during the Vijayanagara Empire. Themes were drawn from the **epics, Ramayana and Mahabharata.** Furthermore, a unique style combining dance and music, termed the ‘**Yakshini style**,’ evolved during this era.

In essence, Vijayanagara’s political glory may have lasted only two centuries, but its cultural legacy has firmly entrenched itself as an integral part of Indian heritage.

Question: Evaluate the contribution of Firuzshah Bahamani and Mahmud Gawan in the field of education.

Answer: Firuzshah Bahamani and Mahmud Gawan both stood out as capable administrators of the Bahmani kingdom. Their tenures saw substantial strengthening of the Bahmani state, both in terms of politics and administration. Furthermore, they made noteworthy contributions to the field of education.

Firuzshah Bahamani, a prominent ruler from the Bahmani dynasty, stood out as a highly respected scholar. His expertise spanned a wide range of subjects and languages. He possessed deep knowledge of religious matters, including Quranic interpretations and Islamic law, and showed a keen interest in fields like botany,

geometry, and logic. His linguistic skills extended to Persian, Arabic, Turkish, as well as local languages such as Telugu, Kannada, and Marathi. Additionally, he was an impromptu poet (Ashu Kavi).

Firuzshah Bahamani was personally committed to education and literature, and he actively promoted educational advancements in his state. To strengthen education, he encouraged the migration of renowned scholars from other regions to settle in South India. He also established an observatory in Daulatabad to promote the study of astronomy and founded Madrasas, educational institutions, to spread learning at the grassroots level.

Following in the footsteps of Firuzshah Bahamani, **Mahmud Gawan** carried forward this tradition, taking significant advancement in education. Similar to his predecessor, Mahmud Gawan was a man of literary and cultural inclinations. He extended patronage to numerous scholars in his court, and these scholars played a pivotal role in promoting educational activities within the state. Mahmud Gawan's initiatives encompassed the establishment of not only Madrasas for primary-level education but also a college in Bidar dedicated to higher education. Additionally, he commissioned the construction of a three-story building to accommodate teachers and students, facilitating accommodation for a thousand individuals. The state provided both educators and students with complimentary food and clothing. This collaboration between the state and education attracted distinguished scholars from Iran and Iraq during that period to teach in the Madrasas founded by Mahmud Gawan.

Thus, commendable efforts exerted by Firuzshah Bahamani and Mahmud Gawan significantly propelled educational development within the Bahmani kingdom. However, subsequent rulers were unable to sustain this

tradition due to conflicts among the Amirs (Nobel) and a prioritization of unity within the state over cultural endeavors.

Sultan Ibrahim Adil Shah II of Bijapur (1580-1627 AD) :

Ibrahim II stands as a remarkable and unique ruler in history, leaving an enduring mark on culture and the religious sphere. He serves as a shining example of a policy rooted in religious harmony and unity.

1. Ibrahim II's legacy includes the construction of remarkable structures adorned with excellent carvings. Notable among these architectural marvels are **Anand Mahal, Mihtar Mahal,** and the group of buildings known as **Ibrahim Roza.**
2. His deep love for music and remarkable skill in composing music resulted in the creation of a unique literary work called '**Kitab-e-Nauras,**' which stands as a testament to his exceptional musical talent.
3. Ibrahim II was a leader who believed in religious harmony. He had a strong devotion to Saraswati, the goddess associated with knowledge and wisdom, even though this involved idol worship, which was not in line with Islamic teachings. He appointed a significant number of Marathi Hindus to key positions in his administration.
4. Ibrahim II's court didn't just celebrate Indian culture; it also welcomed influences from around the globe. People from far-flung corners of the Muslim world sought refuge, support, and protection in his court. These individuals included writers, artists, and scholars who were all drawn by the vibrant intellectual and cultural environment he fostered. Some scholars even draw parallels between his court's role in the medieval period and the modern-day UNESCO, underscoring its pivotal role in promoting global culture.

