

# The Significance And Distinctiveness Of The Vaishnavite Temples Of The Vijayanagara In Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka And Tamil Nadu

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The Vaishnavite temple of the Vijayanagara Empire spanning Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Tamilnadu represents a unique confluence of spiritual devotions, architectural brilliance and regional cultural synthesis. These temples are significant for their role in promoting Vaishnavism as a unifying spiritual and cultural force in South India, showcasing the exceptional blend of Dravidian architecture, intricate Carvings and thematic representations of Lord Vishnu's various incarnations, Such as Rama, Krishna and Venkateshwa reinforcing the bhakti tradition. The temples such as Sri Venkateswara Temple in Tirupati, Chintamani Venkata Ramana Swamy temple or Venkateshwara temple at Tadipatri, Vittala Temple Hampi, Madhavaraya temple at Gorantla demonstrate symbolism and rituals. They also endeavour architectural features like towering gopurams, extensive curved pillars and spacious mandalas, highlighting their artists and spiritual grandeur. Moreover, they served as limbs for religious scholarship, art, music and community gatherings, reflecting the Vijayanagara Empire's dedication to fostering cultural and spiritual cohesion. Their distinctiveness lies in their ability to integrate served places With Imperial patronage, creating enduring monuments that continue to inspire devotion and academic invasion. They also offer invaluable insights into South India's religious and cultural history.

**Keywords:** Vaishnavite temples, Vijayanagara, Bhakti tradition, Dravidian architectural elements, cultural synthesis, religious scholarship, spiritual heritage.

## Introduction

The Vijayanagara Empire dominated the political and Cultural landscape of medieval South India for more than centuries, founded in 1336 AD by the Sangama brothers Harihara and Bukkaraya. It left an enduring legacy in the form of its magnificent temples found across the states of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Tamilnadu. It showcases the empire's artistic and religious favour, reflecting a unique blend of architectural styles and devotional practices.

## Aims and Objectives

- To investigate the role of Vaishnavite temples in promoting Vaishnavism and shaping religious practices in Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Tamilnadu.

- To explore the role of the Bhakti movement and the proponents of Vaishnavite philosophy and the dissemination of ideology in these regions.
- To understand the cultural and historical contributions of the Vijayanagara Empire in fostering Vaishnavite traditions across South India.
- To explore the distinctive architectural Styles of Vaishnavite Temples under Vijayanagara in these regions.
- To highlight the unique artistic innovation and sculptural practices in these temples.
- To compare and contrast the regional varieties in temple architecture and design across these three states.

### **Significance**

The Vijayanagara rulers were staunch proponents of Hinduism and played a pivotal role in reviving and promoting Vaishnavism. They constructed numerous grand temples dedicated to Lord Vishnu and his various incarnations fostering a renounced sense of religious devotion among the populace moreover, it marked a strong emphasis on religion, art architecture and cultural integration of Vaishnavism, one of the prominent Hindu traditions centred on the worship of Lord Vishnu and his incarnations, thrived during the Vijayanagara Period. The patronage of the rulers and the strategic role of Vaisnavite Temples, not only served as religious centres but acted as hubs for serial, cultural and political activities.

### **Review of Literature**

Vijayanagaras glory and grandeur has been epitomized “A Forgotten Empire” by Robert Sewellis a captivating journey through the Remnants of the once-mighty kingdom the Vijayanagara Empire. Seweels's meticulous research, combined with vivid prose, transported readers to a bygone era of grandeur, power and artistic brilliance this book breathed life into a civilization that had been largely overlooked by history.

This book delves into the rise and fall of the Vijayanagara Empire and the narratives enriched by firsthand accounts from Portuguese travellers, providing a unique glimpse into the opulent court, the bustling cities, and the intricate social and religious fabric of the empire. The author explains vividly the architecture and the thriving Trade network the archaeological findings, and literary sources to create a comprehensive picture of Vijayanagara's history. Moreover, his contribution Not only sheds Light on a significant period In Indian history but also serves as a testament to the resilience and creativity of human civilization.

Another book Vijayanagara: As seen by Domingo Paes and Fernao Nuniz 16th Century Portuguese Chronicles and others, by Vasundhara Filliozat, provides a vivid picture of the Empire's grandeur and complexity. She meticulously translated the Portuguese text into English providing the accuracy of the translation by cross-referencing the texts with other historical sources. By analysing the traveller's accounts she highlighted the cultural practices, beliefs and artistic traditions of Vijayanagara people.

Besides, The Bhakti also played a pivotal role in the designation of Vaishnavism in Tamilnadu in this regard, S. Krishnaswami Aiyangar Authored “ Early Bhakti Movement in South India, was considered as one of the pioneering works of South India dealing with deeply researched

account of the origins and growth of Vaishnavism in South India, particularly its early phases from Vedic and Pan Indian Tradition into localized Tamil religions culture, highlighting the role of Alvars. He also explores the influence of Bhagavata cult and Tamil Sangam literature, reflected in the rise of Temple worship are iconography, referring historical, epigraphical and literary source both in Sanskrit and Tamil Languages.

However K.A. Nilakanta Sastry's "A History of South India" provides a comprehensive overview of the Vijayanagara empire. It also delves into the various aspects of Vijayanagara history including political, economic and social dimensions. It also shed Light on the significant role of Vaishnavism in shaping the religious and cultural landscape of the empire, Sastry also highlighted the significance of patronage extended by Vijayanagara kings to Vaishnava Institutions and temples. He also discussed the Vaishnavite saints and their literature and philosophies disseminated which led to the resurgence of Vaishnavism in South India.

This book discussed the distinctive architectural styles of Vijayanagara Vaishnavite temples, characterized by their grandeur, intricate carvings and imposing gourami, which showcase the dexterous achievements in architecture of Vijayanagara style.

K.R. Srinivasan's *Temples of South India*, offer a comprehensive and insightful exploration of the rich and diverse cultural heritage of South India, based on extensive research with richly illustrated works. Srinivasan delves into the evolution of Dravidian style highlighting its distinctive features such as massive gopurams, intricate carving and pillared hall. He explores the unique aesthetics of Hoyasala architecture characterized by its delicate carvings, ornate sculptures and graceful proportions. This book examines the grandeur and complexity of Vijayanagara architecture With imposing temple complexes and intricate sculptural details. The author discusses the profound Religious significance of South India temples dedicated to Hindu deities like Lord Vishnu, Lord Shiva and Shakti, and explores the Vedantic sects and their philosophies that shaped the development of temple architecture.

Analysis of innovative architectural techniques employed by South Indian builders, such as the use of corbelled domes, intricate stone carving, and complex structural systems, was elaborated by the author. Moreover, this book also addresses the factors that led to the decline of temple building in South India, including political instability, economic decline, and changing religious practices. A comprehensive and insightful exploration of the Vijayanagara empire, including complex Political and administrative structures and examination of intricate balances of power between Central authority and regional rulers, has been narrated by Burton Stein in his work *The New Cambridge History of India: Vijayanagara*. He Examines the economic foundation of the Vijayanagara complex including agriculture, Trade and mining. He discusses the social hierarchy, caste region and role of different social groups in the empire and focuses on the importance of Hinduism and the patronage of art and architecture. This book analyzes the military strategies and tactics employed by the Vijayanagara rulers to defend their empire and expand its territories the Empire's relations with the neighbouring Kingdom and its interrelations with foreign powers. Stein's approaches to interdisciplinary methodology

draw from History, sociology, economics and cultural studies based on the extensive Research and Analysis of Primary and Secondary Sources.

To contributed in the highlighting“Vijayanagara: splendours in Ruins byGeorge Michellestands out the rich visual content with photographs, capturing the majestic beauty and haunting decay of the Vijayanagara ruins, from intricate carvings on temple walls to the sweeping vistas of the Rocky landscapes. George Michell brings forth the site's architectural marvels to life and enhances the appreciation of the historical significance of the forgotten empire. He also contextualizes the empire’s rise and fall within the broader political, economic, and cultural dynamics of medieval South India, highlighting its achievements in governance, Trade, and artistic endeavours. The author examines iconic structures such as the Virupaksha Temple, the Vittala Temple, and the royal enclosures, providing detailed descriptions that reveal their historical and artistic importance. He also delves into the symbolism and function of the architectural forms, offering insights into the empire’s spiritual and cultural ethos, blending historical insight with detailed analysis of the site's architectural and cultural legacy.

Another work on Vijayanagara Architecture brought by George Michell *Vijayanagara: Architectural Traditions and Styles* delves into the architectural marvels of the empire through visual representation, offering a comprehensive overview of the empire’s architectural heritage, from its humble beginning to its zenith.

He meticulously examines the various architectural styles and techniques employed by Vijayanagara architects, highlighting the intricate details and symbolic significance of each element. The author contextualises the architectural development within the broader historical and cultural framework of the Vijayanagara empire; Mitchell also explores the relationship between architecture and the political, social and religious factors that shaped the empire. He discusses the influence of earlier architectural traditions such as the Hoysala and Chalukya styles on the development of the Vijayanagara's unique architectural vocabulary.

John. F. Fritz and George Michells'swho contributed a work entitled “*Sacred Architecture in Vijayanagara: The Ramachandra temple* is a scholarly exploration of significant religious structures of the Vijayanagara empire. It compiled a comprehensive analysis of the Temple's architecture, sculpture and inscriptions. The authors explore the deep into the historical and cultural context of the temple, training its origins to the 15th Century by examining the intricate details of the Temple's design from its imposing entrance to its ornate interior. This book provides a detailed description of the Temple's sculptural programme In a rich narrative and the symbolicsignificance of the carvings.The authors draw on a wide range of disciplines, including Art History, archaeology and religion offering a multifaceted understanding of the temple with a multidisciplinary approach.

In this regards “*Architecture of the Vijayanagara Empire* by Anila Vangheseis a masterful exploration of the artistic and architectural legacy of the Vijayanagara Empire. This book documents the grandeur of the empire’s cultural achievements presenting an advanced analysis of its temples, sculptures and urban planning. Varghese brings the overview of the Empire’s History and Socio-PoliticalContext, delving into detailed studies of its architectural marvels

such as Virupaksha and Vittala temples. Her analysis highlights the synthesis of various regional styles in Vijayanagara art. She discloses the temple rituals and iconography and draws the connection between the architectural design and spiritual practices of the time. Her interdisciplinary approaches, combining art history, archaeology and textual studies, make the book richly layered.

A Japanese scholar Noboru Kirshima explored “A Concise History of South India: Issues and Interpretation” edited by Noboru Karprovides a comprehensive overview of South India's historical trajectory, addressing initial issues and offering fresh interpretations of its political, social and cultural history. This book covers South Indian history from the early historic period to the colonial era specifying the political structures, economic systems, religious practices and cultural development, reflecting the diversity and complexity of the region. This book elucidates the initial engagement with historical sources and methodology the contributors challenge traditional narration, offering advanced interpretations that incorporate Epigraphic evidence, literary sources and archaeological findings. It also analyses political entities and the dynamic socio-economic system that shaped South India's cultural and commercial landscapes And also Focuses on the transformative impact of the colonial period On South Indian society. This book is particularly notable for its balanced perspective, integrating Local histories with broader regional and global contexts. It highlights the contributions of South India to Indian and world history such as Maritime Trade networks, temple architecture and religious philosophies. It also compiled the marginalized voices of women and lower castes in history with academic region and vitality.

Besides, Adam Hardy's *South Indian Temple Architecture: A visual feast and intellectual delight*, delves into the evolution of the South Indian temple architecture, tracing its roots from ancient Dravidian traditions to the magnificent structures of the Hoysala, Chola, Vijayanagara empires. It offers a thought-provoking analysis of the underlying principles and philosophies that shaped these architectural masterpieces. Hardy explores the relationship between the Temple's form and function, the cosmic symbolism inherent in the initial design, and the role of the temple in the lives of the people through stunning visual Presentations high-resolution Photographs and detailed architectural drawings.

### **Selective Temples in these Religions**

The temples like Madhavaraya temple at Gorantla and Gandikota, Chintalu Venkata Ramana temple at Tadipatri in Andhra Pradesh, Vijaya Vittala Temple at Karnataka and Ranganath Swamy temple in Tamil Nadu became significant pilgrimage cities they attracted from across the empire, fostering a sense of unity and spreading Vaishnavite ideology.

The performance of regular rituals such as Brahmotsavams and other annual rituals celebrated the glory of Lord Vishnu at these temples, gathering and reinforcing the Vaisnavite faith.

However, these temples were centres for propagating the teachings of Vaishnavism and the doctrines of Ramanujacharuna and Madhava Vaishnavism including Srivaishnavism. Proponents like Vedanta Desika and Madhava contributed to the theological framework

emphasizing Lord Vishnu as the Supreme being and the path of devotion. The temples are also accessible to common folk to resist the Divya Prabhardham and Vedic hymns as well.

The prescribed rituals such as yagnas (penances), Pooja and annual festivals became standardized practices followed in tem across South India integrating Agamic traditions with local customs including a unique blend of practices. Besides, the Vaishnavite temples were endowed with vast lands, wealth and resources ensuring their prosperity and influence and the revenues were used for temple maintenance, festivals and welfare activities strengthening their role as community centres. The priests and temple architects hold a significant position in societal decision-making, further embedding Vaishnavism in everyday life. These temples promoted social cohesion by involving people of different castes in the temple activities, free meals(Anna prasadam) and Shelters offered by these temples emphasized the values of service and equality. The dissemination of education and knowledge endeavour endorsed by these temples, where the scholars trained in these temples carried Vishnu teachings far and wide, influencing the spiritual landscape of South India.

These temples during the period of Vijayanagara not only acted as places of worship but also as dynamic Institutions that fostered the growth and dissemination of Vaishnavism in Andhra

Pradesh, Karnataka and Tamilnadu. They also shaped the religious and cultural fabric of South India through architectural magnificence, ritualistic traditions, literary contribution and socio-economic parameters, leaving a lasting legacy that continues to influence these regions even today. The Vijayanagara Period witnessed a significant consolidation of the Bhakti movement in South India, especially through the propagation of Vaishnavite philosophy. It emphasized personal devotion(Bhakti) to a personal deity, rejecting rigid caste hierarchies and ritualistic practices and a direct and emotional connection with the deity bypassing intermediaries like priests. This movement embraced people from all social statuses challenging the caste systems. The devotional literature was composed in regional Languagesuch as Telugu, Kannada and Tamil making it across to the masses and also absorbing Local traditions and practices, creating a syncretic religious culture.

An interdisciplinary approach to the Vaishnavite temples of South India by S. Gangadharan delved into Vaishnavite temple's historicity, religious significance and Socio-cultural role has been discussed on the study of history, architecture, epigraphy the religious texts like Divya Prabhandas. He also explored the theological understanding of Vaishnavism and its role in the development of temples, focussing on Alvara and Their hymns. However, this book entitle "Vaishnavite Temples of South India", a study of Divyasetras in Tamilnadu highlights how the temples functioned as hubs of cultural, socio and economic activity, not just religious centres and focussed on comparative study of this temples in the states of Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka.

Recently, a book on "Vijayanagara": The Never To Be Forgotten Empire", compiled by V. Suryanath Kamath, focussed on the establishment of Vijayanagara Empire, Its political strategies and diplomacy that enabled to consolidate the power over Southern India, providing key battles and the role and the other hand , he devoted to the artistic and architectural achievements of the Empire. It also explains the architectural innovations of Vijayanagara period, - Iconic gopurams, Mandapas and intricate sculpture. Kamath put forth the economic



prosperity and the royal patronage, trade commerce and its links to Southeast Asia, the Middle East and Europe by painting a picture of Vijayanagara as a prosperous and cosmopolitan state in Medieval India.

The role of Vijayanagara as a bastion of Hindu Culture during a tumultuous period has been effectively represented by the author. This book serves as an inspiring reminder of a civilization that thrived against the odds and left an indelible mark on the cultural landscape of South India. Finally, the author justified to the title of this book.

### **The Key Proponents of Vaishnavite Philosophy**

1. Alvars (6th-9th A.D) who composed the devotional hymns, especially Divya Prabhandham were integrated into temple rituals during this period. Their legacy was preserved and promoted by Sri Vaishnavite scholars and temple traditions in Tamil Nadu.
2. Ramanuja Charya (1017-1137 A.D). A prominent philosopher and theologian, Ramanuja founded the Vishishtadvaita (qualified non-dualism) school of Vedanta. His philosophy emphasized the inseparability of the individual soul (Atma) from the Supreme being (Paramatma) while maintaining their distinct identities. Ramanuja's teachings gained widespread acceptance in South India, particularly Tamil Nadu and Karnataka. His entourage in religious practices resulted in the prominence of Vaishnavite temples such as Venkateswara Temple Tirumala, Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy Temple Ahobilam, Laxmi Narasimha Swamy Temple, Mangalagiri also popularly known as panakala Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy, Simhachalam also come into bring.
3. Madavacharya (1479-1531) The founder of the Dvaita (dualistic) school of Vedanta, Madavacharyas's philosophy asserted the absolute difference between the individual soul and the absolute soul. His teachings gained prominence in Karnataka where established several Mathas(monasteries) that continue to influence Vaishnavism today.
4. Vallabha Charya (1479-1531) a prominent shuddhadvaita (pure non-dualism) school of Vedanta Vallabhacharya emphasized the absolute oneness of God and the individual soul while acknowledging their apparent difference. His teachings gained popularity in North India and gradually spread to other regions including Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka.
5. Annamacharya (1404-1503) is sent poet and one of the earliest proponents of the Bhakti movement in Andhra Pradesh who composed over 32 devotional songs in Telugu praising Lord Venkateswara of Tirumala, they combined metaphysical insights with emotional devotion, making Vaishnavism accessible to common folk. He advocated equality and criticized social injustice, including caste-based discrimination. His son Tallapakapedda Tirumacharya also continued the legacy of his father and composed devotional songs and promoted Vaishnavi in Andhra.
6. Purandara Dasu (1484-1564) Purandara Dasu composed thousands of devotional songs in Kannada emphasizing devotion, morality and spiritual discipline. He also played a key role in spreading Vaishnavism among the rural population through single heartfelt compositions. He was known as the father of Carnatic music for his contribution to Music and used it as a medium to propagate Vaishnavite teachings.
7. Vedanta Desika (1268-1369): He was a philosopher and a poet who systematized the teachings of Sri Vaishnavism and defended its doctrines against rival sects. He composed

in Sanskrit And Tamil blending theological rigour with Poet's expression. His Rahasyatrayasara emphasized pro paths to Lord Vishnu as the path of liberation.

8. Pillai Lokacharya (1205-1311) is another prominent Sri Vaishnavi scholar whose compositions focus on the compassionate nature of Lord Vishnu and the concept of surrender (Saranagati). His text "Sri Vachana Bhushanam" provided a Theological foundation for Vaishnavite practices.

The Bhakti movement fostered religious Unity across linguistic and cultural boundaries, with Vaishnavite poetry serving as a common thread and they challenged caste-based discrimination and emphasized the equality of all devotees before God by Ramanuja and Kanakadasa. Moreover, this moment inspired a flourishing of literature, music and temple architecture leaving a lasting cultural legacy. Besides, the Vijayanagara rulers also patronized Vaishnavite Institutions, seeing them as instruments for promoting social Cohesion and legitimizing their role in Andhra Pradesh Karnataka and Tamilnadu. The Effects of Saint Poets Philosopher and the Institutions Transformer The Spiritual and cultural landscape of South India emphasizes personal devotion Bhakti social inclusivity and the use of vernacular Languages issue that Vaishnavi's I'm became deeply rooted in the arts of common folk shaving their religious and cultural identity for generation to come.

Vijayanagara witnessed the Confluence of artistic traditions, innovations and cultural synthesis creating disting to architectural and sculptural styles.

### **Dravidian Style with Regional Adaptations**

These Vaishnavi temples are reoriented in Dravidian architectural tradition incorporating regional elements reflecting in the unique ethos of Andhra Pradesh much as the kakatiyaan usage of granite and the prominence of Vaishnavitethemes sculptures reflects the regiondeep-rooted Vishnu worship and align with the border religious policies and the depiction of festivals dance forms especially folk dances of Kakatiya and rituals are uniquely reflections Andhra cultural life during these period while the Kannada architectural features like Gopuram, garbhagriha and spacious halls for congregational worship and adorned with sculptures and the circumambulatory path also incorporated into Vijayanagara Vaishnavite temples. In addition, Hoysala's usage of a mix of granite for structural components and steatite for detailing carvings enabled intricate sculptural works. The Vaishnavi including Narayana, Rama, and Krishna dominant programme including dasavathara panels also incorporated in the Vaishnavite temples of Vijayanagara. The Madhavaraja Swamy temple at Gorantla representing this iconic programme later followed in these regions.

Moreover, Tamilnadu's sculptural and artistic traditions were integrated into the Vaishnavite temples contributing to the spiritual and cultural grandeur of the Tamil Dravidian layouts with a vast courtyard. Granite became the primary material for sculptures showcasing the religious expertise in stone inflammatory provided the nails and intricate carvings surviving in both cultural and decorative elements. The bas-reliefs and panels depicting mythology, particularly from Ramayana Mahabharata and Bhagavata Purana adorned the walls and ceilings of mandapas. The display of fluidity andrealism represents gods and Goddesses, dancers and Warriors with the dynamic nature represented in the Vijayanagar temples. The Vaishnavite rituals like brahmotsavams and the metal sculptures mounts for deities like Garuda for Vishnu



were crafted with minute retailing besides the sculptures of lavas were installed in temple niche narratives the Tamil Nadu's deep-rooted Bhakti tradition the Chariot shrines were also incorporated in Vaishnavite temples of Vijayanagara which were used during the festivals to carry Vishnu's Idol through the street. The God and his consort shrine known as Amman Koil was a prominent future Tamil temple component incorporated in the Vijayanagara Vaishnavite Temple architectural programme.

The Tamil artistic traditions murals and frescoes adorned the ceilings of the sanctum and adjoining areas in the colourful narratives of Lord Vishnu mythological representations visible at Lepakshi temple, the secular themes are also depicted on the panels of this temple complex moreover the Tamil tradition of dance, music and other rituals used in the temple activities during the brahmotsavam or other rituals as well.

The Chariot shrines were another architectural feature during the Vijayanagara period, the Chariots were used during the festivals to carry Lord Vishnu's Idol through the street. These chariots are decorated with rich carvings of motifs, floral designs and other celestial designs.

### **The Case Study of Madhavaraya Temple**

This temple is located in the Gorantla village in Puttaparthi district of Andhra Pradesh is a significant example of Vijayanagara architecture and is dedicated to Lord Vishnu in his form as madhavaraya. It was constructed during the period of Harihara 2 this temple is richly adorned with iconography that reflects Vaishnavism where the depiction of Lord Vishnu in various forms can be seen in this Temple's sculptures. The prime feature of the dasavatharam of Lord Vishnu is also showcased here and the divine Mount of Lord Vishnu, Garuda also featured here. The carvings of Alwar and Vaishnavite saints are often found in this temple.

### **Architectural Splendour**

This temple is an exquisite example of Vijayanagara architecture evidenced by

- The grand gopura is adorned with intricate carvings.
- The multiple Pillared displays the images of gods and Goddesses, dancers and musicians in addition
- The mythical creatures like yalis were also represented.
- The walls and ceilings were decorated with floral motifs, geometric patterns narratives of Ramayana and Mahabharata and other secular and folk elements also seen here.
- Pushkarini or water tank also became a vital part of the Vaishnavite Temple during this period. This stepwell is used for the ritual purification of the people and Idols during festive occasions. This structure constructed in or around the temple reflects engineering practices.

The Significance of this temple served as a hub for religious and cultural activities and reflects the synthesis of Dravidian temple architecture with local artistic traditions.

### **The Case Study of Karnataka: The Vittala Temple**

This temple was constructed during the reign of Devaraya 2 (1422-1446) of the Saluva dynasty and later significant expansions were carried out during the Rise of Krishnadevaraya (1509-1529) located in Hampi Karnataka it was dedicated to Lord Vishnu in the manifestation of Lord Vittala this temple complex spread in a large area and comprises several structures including main hall, marriage hall, ceremonial hall and sanctum sanctorum. It is adorned with intricate sculptures depicting scenes from Hindu Mythology in a Dravidian style using granite its construction incorporates Open Spaces and admitting light and ventilation.

**Architectural innovations:** this temple's most striking feature is the stone chariot curved in granite resembling a temple Chariot used in procession and adorned with horses and floral motifs. One of the most fascinating architectural innovations of the temple is its musical pillars found in the main pillared hall, they produce musical notes when struck the pillar and each represents different instrument narratives the advanced understanding of acoustics of the Vijayanagara empire this Temple also features a water tank or Pushkarini including aqueducts and stone channels ensuring water supply for rituals and surrounding settlements. The Dynamics have been reflected in the depiction of life-like postures such as dancers' made moments explaining the understanding of human anatomy and motion. The recurrent themes of mythical creatures, floral patterns and celestial beings have been depicted in the pillars and walls of the temple.

### **Sri Ranganatha Temple, Srirangapatna**

Sri Ranganathan Swamy temple popularly known as Srirangam temple and considered as the foremost 108 Divya Desams is a Masterpiece of temple architecture carving the extent of 156 acres it is one of the largest functioning Hindu temples in the World. The early Cholas constructed this Temple as stated by 9th century inscription and later Pandyas also made significant expansions of this Temple. However, the Vijayanagara rulers particularly Sri Krishnadevaraya made significant contributions to the temple adding the structural edifices like Kalyana Mandapam and the richly sculptured pillar and halls of it and the Nayakas of Madurai also added temples artistic and structural development by adding Rajagopuram which stands 236 feet tall and is one of the tallest Towers in the world. Besides this Temple features 21 gopurams each adorned with intricate carvings depicting Hindu myths and legends. It includes several halls; it is a repository of Tamil culture and Vaishnavite architecture presenting the Dravidian style. The continuity of Tamil bhakti favour lasted until the zenith of the Vaishnavite Temple in South India.

### **Findings**

1. The Vaishnavi Temple of Vijayanagara in Andhra Pradesh Karnataka in Tamil Nadu were endowed with not only places of worship but also centres of learning cultural activity and community gatherings.
2. They promoted Vaishnavism and the philosophy of Sri Ramanuja's Vishishtadvaita (non-dualism)
3. Royal patronage was rendered to these temples as the rulers were staunch followers of Vaishnavism and extended to the temple expansion and ritual practices advocated by Ramanujacharya. It symbolises their devotion and saving as a means to legitimise their rule.

4. They promoted the local economy through festivals and Temple makers offering pilgrimage hubs and enhancing regional trade and Commerce, rituals and festivals fostering cultural harmony across the empire.
5. In the spite of architectural innovations the culmination of local architectural features with Dravidian architecture led to the Grand Entrance Towers with elaborate sculptures becoming a Hallmark of their innovation.
6. Water tank: for rituals and purification and common features in Vijayanagara period and lasting till today.
7. The large enclosures with massive stone walls symbolising a temple as a cosmicprotector and spiritual fortress.
8. They also served as centres of Music and promoted regional languages such as Annamacharya from Andhra Pradesh composed keerthanas to praise Lord Venkateswara, Purandara Dasa in Karnataka and the Alvars of Tamilnadu as well.
9. The representations of Lord Vishnu's geography and various forms of anincarnation blending spiritual with artistic expression.

### **Conclusion:**

The Vaishnavite temples of Vijayanagara Empire in Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Tamilnadu stand as powerful testament to the Empire's profound prowess. The rulers were ardent patrons of Vaishnavism and their patronage led the construction and expansion of numerous temples. This era also witnessed a peak in Dravidian temple architecture challenged by grand structures like Kalyana Mandapa (Marriage Halls) Royal Gopurams enhancing the grandeur of these sacred sites. The Vijayanagara architecture reflects various regional styles, creating a unique synthesis that reflected the empire's vast territorial expansion. This fusion of styles is evident in the temples found across Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Tamilnadu. Moreover, these temples overall serve not only as religious centres but also as hubs of socio, cultural and economic activities. The continuity of Ancient temple traditions were followed preservation of existing and expansion of temple complexes.

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