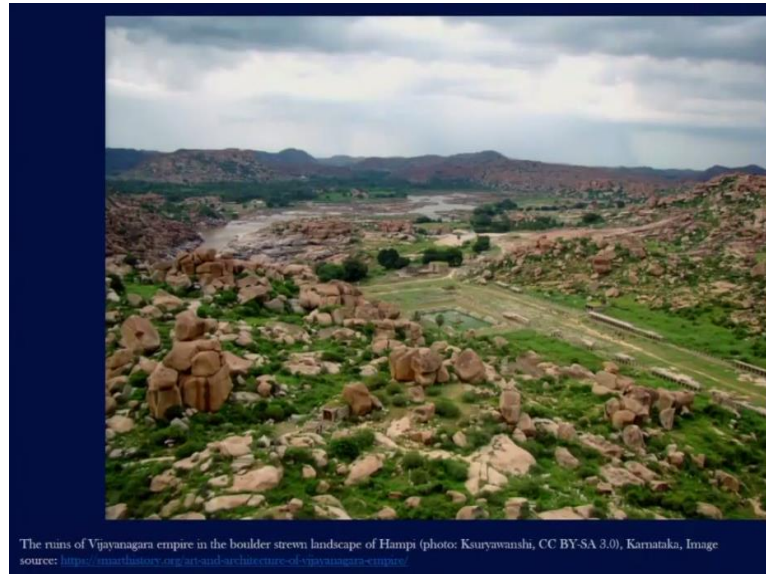


Indian Art: Materials, Techniques and Artistic Practices
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Lecture – 24
Stone: Memorials, Architectural Remnants and Objects

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Hello everyone. We are here when we have been talking about the use of stone in different purposes. So, we have looked already into some of the different kinds of stones and also different kinds of structures starting with the objects which are more closely intertwined with the daily life activities. And then we have also looked into the ones which are part of the royal enclosures, which are also part of the temple complexes and so on.

So, we see that there is a lot of different kinds of expressions, which have been part of the way in which stone is incorporated in these different modes of storytelling, at the same time different modes of devotion, and also at the same time paying homage to our ancestors and many different kinds of expressions and how stone has always been a very important part of this visual culture and material culture.

Now, here what we have, so we have already looked into some of the stones for example the Mathura sandstone and then the use of basalt. So, today we will continue the discussion with looking into the use of granite and basalt going back to that. So, we are still in the Deccan

region of India, Deccan and further south and here we are and this is on screen we have the ruins of the Vijayanagara empire and what we see in this image.

Why I wanted to particularly show this image is because to give a sense of the landscape there. So, one can see that this is the Vijayanagara empire as we know that is actually situated right beneath the Deccan sultanates and we will be touching upon Deccan sultanates and so the Deccan sultanates were there and then believe that there is this large chunk of the Indian peninsula was ruled by the Vijayanagara rulers.

And the Vijayanagara dynasty was active from a mid-14th century to the mid-16th century. And then the city of Hampi was sacked, but then the rulers moved to further down south to Penukonda and Chandragiri. So, what we find that there was a lasting presence of this Vijayanagara rulers in this area and the place where the city of Hampi or Vijayanagara was situated and the Empire was known as Vijayanagara empire.

And at the same time, the capital city of the empire was also known as Vijayanagara. So, Vijayanagara as a site is a very interesting one because we see there is this river Tungabhadra and today the city or this medieval metropolis which is now in ruins. So, this particular site we find that to be closely that is in a close proximity to the river Tungabhadra. And then around that area, we have this one very important religious site that is the Matanga hill.

Which has been considered to be the birthplace of Hanuman this Hindu God and then also this area also have some of the people at different times they have created connections with this particular site with the kingdom of Kishkinda which was mentioned in the Hindu epic Ramayana. So, there are some of those religious associations that we find with this site and the Matanga hill is right opposite of the city of Vijayanagara and the area was divided by the river Tungabhadra.

And that is also something that we find that there are many of these religious sites, the sites which were considered to be sacred and Tungabhadra, the river is also considered sacred the water and the goddess, goddess Pampa and that is how we find that how all these sacred sites, for example with the Matanga held with the deification of Tungabhadra, and then there were the other deities, who were the protective deities of the Vijayanagara empire and so on.

So, altogether they had these different sites put together we find that there was a tremendous importance of this site from the Hindu religions point of view. And the other time we also find the place which was again further north from Vijayanagara or Hampi, Anegundi. Anegundi is the place where we find that some of the early fortifications were there. And as you can see in this landscape that this is the Deccan Plateau.

This very characteristic of Deccan plateau with all these boulders and these big chunks of rocks and the rocks are all granite. So, what happens in this plateau like landscape already gives protection to the people whoever try to flourish there. And at the same time, we can see that how the stones which are found from these places they were also carved and they were made use for making the fortification.

So that is how we see that there was a possibility for surrounding the city with extra security and that is how this particular site became such an important one. So, in one hand, we find this high religious importance for the Hindus in Vijayanagara, and on the other hand we also find that this landscape and the presence of this table land and how there are so much of the stones available in abundance.

And so, the stones which were then made part of the fortification for the city so that had also added to the flourishing of the city of Vijayanagara and then protecting it for more than 200 years or so. So, this is something we find that how the natural landscape there and then this particular kind of stone that we are talking about granite had contributed to the flourishing of the city, granite being one of the hardest rocks on earth.

So, one can imagine that how the walls will not be easily penetrable and that is probably the reason how the city of Vijayanagara was also made protected. So, these are some of the things that even if we find that there are the political reasons involved, there are the military strategies those were also there, so we are not specifically talking about the art practice but we are talking about this broad material culture.

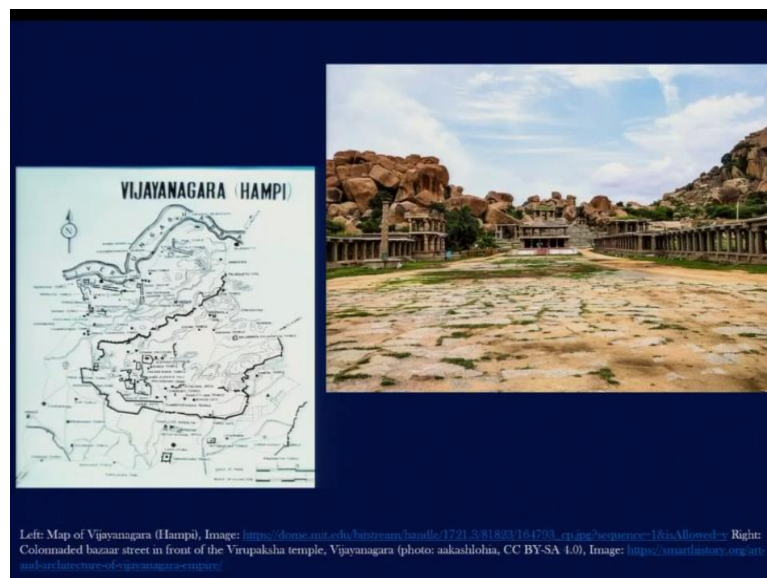
That how material is incorporated not only as part of like understanding spirituality, religion for our daily needs, but it is also something that gives protection to us. So, that is how we find that how this particular material that this granite stone is something of high importance and how those were incorporated to build this city of Vijayanagara which is known as Hampi

today. So, the ruins that we find there it is spread across in this large area and then what we have there.

For example, here as you can see that there are the water harvesting systems like the Pushkarni the term which is used for it and we can see the river in the background here and then there are this kind of this colonnade and covered corridor like spaces. So, one can imagine that how those spaces might have been used here and we have some specific information on them that how this used to be the places for the bazaar area.

So, one can see how in one hand there are the natural rocks which are here which dots the landscape with all these different hues and at the same time the same material is then incorporated for making those covered corridors, for making this bazaar area or the marketplace. And at the same time, we also see how this Pushkarni or this water body was also created and then then the creation of the water body and then excavation of it and then also paving the sides and everything all incorporated the locally available stones.

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So here is also a map of Vijayanagara or Hampi and here you can clearly see what I was talking about in terms of the Royal centre and then also the spaces which are considered more sacred. So here is the river Tungabhadra in the left side of the screen, and then by this area there are several important temples. So, here we find this very important temple dedicated to Virupaksha.

And then Virupaksha is considered to be a form of Lord Shiva and who is also the consort of Goddess Pampa or who is the personification of the river Tungabhadra. And this side there will be the Matanga hills on the other side of the river. And then for that reason, what we find here that there is this temple side and then there are the bazaar and all this. And then there are other places for public gathering at the same time like the social other activities.

For those reasons, the site which are close to the river one can see that those areas are considered as like the sacred centre. So, there are more of the temples and social activities and everything else and then we find this particular area to be more secured and that is one can see that this is the area which is fortified more vigorously and that is the place which is the Royal centre.

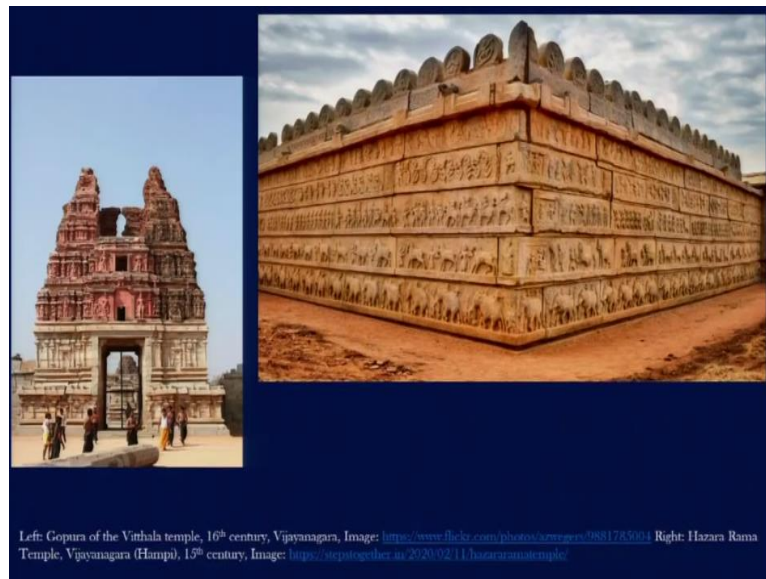
So, the Royal centre is like a fortification within the city of Hampi, so this means that these places are of high importance to the state and that is the reason why that needs to be protected. So, here on the right side of the screen, we have another image in which we find that there is this open area which is either that is flattened or this valley like space was found and utilized for making it as a market.

So, we see this long promenade here, like here and it is a broad promenade from which people can walk through and perhaps like the vendors and all those people can also gather there. And then by the sides, we find these colonnades or this covered corridor ways and through which one can walk through and then people also can sit there and sell their stuff. So, that is how some of the structures of the bazaar areas that we find them to be existing.

And so making this structure stable is also something that is highly dependent on the kind of material they use for building and it comes with no surprise that stone would be the chosen material for that because of its durability, stability and of course how that also gives protection. So, those are the things that we find that how this very interesting site of Vijayanagara or Hampi where we find the natural boulders.

And at the same time how those natural boulders or those large chunks of rocks, they were transformed into the architectural fragments like the pillars and then the bars and then of course, although all of them they were made into those architectural fragments and that is how this entire city space was constructed.

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So, talking about the use of stone, we also find that there are also as we have already noted that the material characteristics of the stones, so they have contributed to the final outcome of the images that we see on the surface. So here what we have in the right side of the screen, we have this very well-known temple in Vijayanagara or Hampi and that is called the Ramachandra temple or Hazara Rama temple.

And Hazara Rama temple is called because there are numerous reliefs, these narrative panels which depict the story from Ramayana. So, that is a reason it is called like the thousand Rama temple or the numerous narrations about Rama and that is how this came to be known as the Hazara Rama temple. Now, if we see that what is the characteristic of this relief, so the relief here what we see there are those rectangular pieces of stone like this one, it is almost like a larger version of the bricks.

And then what we have that in the rectangular pieces of stone, there are the carved images and then all those carved images are joined together for either continuous narratives or like just separate narrative scenes, but that is how one after another they are put together for making the entire enclosure. And here what we see that all these are happening in the exterior wall of the temple here. And this temple is entirely made of the granite stone, so that also affects the making of these images.

So, for example, if we come close to the surface, we find that the surface is quite rough, so it is not really like it was smoothed and then the execution of the figures that we also have

there they are executed with the vital or the primary expressive qualities, but they are also at a lot of times we find them to be devoid of much finer details. And there is no surprise that why this is also devoid of much finer details.

Because of the character on grenade in which we can find that the carving, chiseling on to the top of the stone itself is such a tiring and tedious work that to have the images separately carved and having all the possible details on them, it will probably not be possible to have them as part of this such a large project. So, those are the things that we find that how the character of the stone, the kind of challenges that they pose to the artisans or the sculptors.

All of those things, that the material qualities and then the details of the production all of them they affect heavily on the final outcome of these images or the final outcome of these temples of the sites. Now, if we move to the left side of the image, then there is also something that we see about the use of materials, something that I have touched upon in the earlier lecture where we find that there are different kinds of material incorporated for making certain kinds of structures.

So, here we have a gopura or the entrance gateway and that is towards the Vittala temple or the Vijaya Vittala temple that was made in the 16th century. And so, in this one what we have like the base of the gopura, the gopuras are the ones which are the pyramidal and really monumental and lofty gateways which announces or which marks the entry to the temple complexes in southern India.

So, we find that there have been the gopuras or like the entrance gateways during the Chola period and so on. But then, after 14th century, we find that the making of these gopuras that had actually become much more sort of pompous and much importance and skill and resources were spent for making these gigantic gopuras. And a lot of times we also find that how the later rulers they have added to the existing temples. So, they did not make any alteration to the main shrine or the main temple complex.

But then they added this lofty entrance gateways so that their presence, even though they have added those things at a later time, their presence can still be remembered by the people during that time and in the successive generations. So, here what we find this in this making of the gopura in the Vijaya Vittala temple or the Vittala temple, here the base of the gopura is

also made of granite. And as we see the base of the gopura that also has the horizontal registers.

In which the entire surface is divided with keeping this central gateway, keeping a large space for the central gateway. And then there are also the architectural motifs which are used there, there also the repetition of the columns and the smaller version or the miniature versions of the shrines, they are all placed within the gopura structure in the base of the gopuram. Now, on the top of it we find here there is a completely different material that is used and that is brick and lime mortar.

So, those are the things which we know that they are much more lightweight material. So, if we think about the scale of the gopura, which were really monumental and lofty as I have already mentioned it before, so there needs to be a sound understanding about the weight of the material and how that can be handled in the real space. So if there is entire this pyramidal structure that is there on the top of this entrance, and then it might not be the entrance.

The base might not be able to hold the weight of it as good as it might be with for the brick structure. So, that is the reason what we have here is that there is this importance of this brick structure on the top of the granite one and so this is also something that one can see that people have been aware of not only just the possibilities of using stone. For example, for protection and locally available material and everything else, but it is also like they were aware of the limitations of the stones as well.

So, if there are particular kind of structures, there are particular kinds of projects which required this kind of vertical growth like the gopura, then stone will probably not be the most suited material that we cannot say for all the structures. So, for example if we are thinking in terms of the Rajarajeswara temple in Thanjavur like the entire temple complex when is big enough to hold the weight of the superstructure or the shikara on the top of it.

Then one can see that the use of granite can be justified, but not for a smaller structure like this gopura or this entrance gateways. So, those are the ways in which we can see that people were, the sculptors, the artisans were aware of both the possibilities as well as the challenges posed by this material and that is how they have made alterations to their practices and that is how they have carefully chosen the material for pursuing these works.

Nellore as you remember some of the early the stone tools we have also looked at as part of this discussion on stone, so this is the same district from where we also find this particular hero stone and this one is perhaps from 16th or 15th century.

So, in this one we see there is a very specific kind of practice that is being performed and author Mary Storm has written about it. So, this is something called dehatyaga and that basically means leaving the earthly body. And so in this group of heroes stones that we find in Nellore district here, they actually depict people who are willingly sacrificing their own life perhaps for the deities or for other causes.

So in this one, we find that there is this man who is perhaps in the process of chopping his head. And one can see that even though the act of chopping one's head that might sound gruesome, but what we see here is that this person, he stands still and unlike the ones we see in the narrative scene where there are profile views of the figures, here we see the standstill and in the frontal view, almost like they are the deities.

And then if we also see their expression, their expression is calm and there is really no disturbance in their face. So, it is a very calm, peaceful position and their expression also adds to that and at the same time what they are performing is something that we do not associate with peace or with the regular activities. So, that is how the heroism of these characters are being portrayed in to have the contrast between this calm expression and this almost gruesome act of sacrificing themselves for whatever cause.

So, these are the kind of things that we have that how these memorial stones they also contribute to our understanding of the material culture and how that is used. So, one of the purposes of making these hero stones was also to make these people who have sacrificed themselves as immortal in the public memory. So, for that reason one can see that using the locally available granite stone or basalt stone was an appropriate choice.

Because the stones, they are long lasting unlike wood or something that is drawn on paper or any other expressions. So, to make them immortal in the public memory they also need some kind of material which will also be long lasting, so that is how we find this one of the hardest stones on earth like granite is used here for making this hero stones. Thank you.