



# VITTHALA TEMPLE



ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF INDIA  
HAMPI CIRCLE



Aerial view of Vitthala Temple

The Vitthala Temple, one of the most magnificent architectural ventures of the Vijayanagara Empire is situated on the south bank of Tungabhadra. This temple, like the Virupaksha, Balakrishna and Tiruvengalanatha temple complexes also formed the nucleus of an urban center. The temple may be reached either from the west by walking on from Virupaksha temple Rathabidi (Hampi Bazaar) along the river bank, or from the east through the Areshankarana bavi bagilu (Talarigatta Gateway).

Vitthala, also known as Vithoba, is an incarnation of Vishnu as Krishna. An inscription dated to 1408 CE from Tirthahalli region, records the donation of a village named Nagasamudra to a group of Brahmins "at the time of a lunar eclipse, in

the presence of Vitthalesvara, on the banks of the Tungabhadra".

This record indicates that Vitthala was already in worship at Hampi. Another reference of Vitthala may be had from Telugu poet Haribhatta's Uttara Narasimha Purana that Proluganti Tippa, a general of Devaraya II, built a *bhogamandapa* (hall for preparation of food) to the god Vitthalapathi. Thus, it was considered that this temple was built under the patronage of Devaraya II (1422 - 46 CE).

There are about 28 inscriptions in the temple complex, mainly donative grants reflecting the life of the temple. However, there are no other authentic epigraphical evidences to determine the date of its original foundation and patron. Substantial additions to the temple were made during the reign of Krishnadevaraya (1509 CE to 1529 CE).



## Architecture

The temple faces east and consists of the main shrine, hundred pillared hall, *kalyanamandapas* and subsidiary shrines. All these are enclosed in a *prakara* (enclosure) wall with *gopuras* (entrance gateways) on the east, north and south. The main temple consists of a *garbhagriha* (sanctum), *antarala* (antechamber), *pradakshinapatha* (circumambulatory passage) around *garbhagriha* and *antarala*, *rangamandapa* (pillared hall) and *maharangamandapa* (large pillared hall). The *garbhagriha* and *antarala* are square and have doorways depicting Vaishnava *dwarapalas*. The *garbhagriha*, now empty, was

enshrined with Vitthala and his wife Rukmini and worshipped till the defeat of Vijayanagara in the battle of Talikota (Rakkasa-Tangadi) in 1565 CE. The *pradakshinapatha* around the *garbhagriha* and *antarala* is set at a very low level from the floor of the *garbhagriha* and are accessed by steps. Above the *garbhagriha* is a square triple storeyed brick tower. The uppermost *tala* has a circular *griva* surmounted by a hemispherical *shikhara* (crowning cupola) and the *stupika* (finial) is now lost.

The *rangamandapa* is square and has 16 pillars, out of which 4 pillars are set on an elevated floor to form the center part of the mandapa. It has *mukhamandapas* (pillared porch) on its north and south sides with flight of steps decorated with balustrades. The north porch are provided with seating benches with back rest.

Shikhara



Maharangamandapa





Pillars: Maharangamandapa



Depiction of foreigners on adhisthana of Maharangamandapa

The *maharangamandapa* added in 1554 CE was identified as *Uyyale* (swing) *mandapa* on the basis of an inscription on the base of the *adhisthana* of *rangamandpa* (on the north side). It records a donation ceremony performed by Udagiri Timma Rajayya Deva Maha Arasu, a member of the Aravidu family, for the celebration of numerous festivals, especially swing festivals to be celebrated in the hall of the swing built as a personal offering to the god Sri Vitthala. This spacious *mandapa* is built on *adhisthana* with mouldings, the lowest having friezes of horse riders and attendants in foreign dress. The *mandapa* has 56 composite

columns or pillars, some of them when tapped gently, produce musical notes. Twelve pillar types have been identified and the basic pillar composition consists of core column shafts and projections. The column shafts have square section and the projections have colonnettes and sculptures of animals and deities. These animals and deities like Kaliyamardhana-Krishna, Narasimha, Trivikrama etc. are large scale compositions and extend outward from the column shaft. Two pillars depict a princely figure in *anjali* mudra, probably of the royal donor Udagiri Timma Rajayya.



Udagiri Timma Rajayya



Purandaradasa  
at the feet of Narasimha



Horse Rider



Musician



Maharangamandapa

decorated with frieze of leaf shaped medallions, meandering creepers, swans, flying celestials, courtly couples and other figures. The roof slab above has a frieze of *yali* (a mythical animal) torsos with votive figures at the corners. The brick and plaster parapets consist of pilastered niches and square pavilions with temple like towers capped with *kutas* (square to dome roof) and *shalas* (with barrel vaulted roof) at the corners.

### Hundred Pillared Hall

At the southwest of the temple is located the *Nuru Kambadamandapa* or hundred pillared hall. An inscription on its north wall, dated to 1516 CE refers to its construction by Krishnadevaraya. Built against the south *prakara* wall, it faces east and has three different levels of floor areas; the highest is at the rear end and the lowest at the front. The rear and the intermediate levels have wide central rectangular bays with richly decorated composite type pillars.



Hundred Pillared Hall



Lakshmi-Narasimha



Trivikrama



Hiranyakashipu  
Vadha

Above the columns are the *pushpapotika* brackets (a type of brackets with drooping lotus-bud) that support the beams with decorated reliefs depicting the scenes from the Ramayana, Mahabharata and Bhagavata. The ceilings have heavy and broad slabs decorated with enlarged lotus medallions.

On the exterior, from the beams project the overhanging double curved eaves. On the undersides, the eaves have triple sets of ribs and rafters, with stone rings and looped snakes probably for hanging lamps. The outer surface of the eave is

## Kalyanamandapa (Southeast)

Another important component of the temple complex is the *kalyanamandapa* situated on the southeast side. It is an open *mandapa* with 48 pillars. In the middle of the *mandapa* an elevated square platform is formed by 12 pillars. The pillars are depicted with Hanuman, Garuda, Surya, Ramayana sculptures, Dasavataras of Vishnu, dancers, saints etc. There are also depictions of warriors in varied dress, some with turbans and beards, others with headgears and holding an assortment of weapons. The ceiling panel over the projecting bay on the west side has depiction of boats, probably an illustration of Vasantotsava.



Ceiling: Vasantotsava

This *mandapa* has flight of steps on the east, north and west flanked by animal balustrades. The eave and the brick and plaster parapet are similar to that of the *mahamandapa*.

## Kalyanamandapa (Northeast)

This *mandapa* is situated towards the northern end of the temple complex. It has two different levels of square platforms defined by 4 and 16 pillars respectively. The east side is walled in and has a doorway opening; however, no steps are provided. The north side of the *mandapa* is provided with buttress and retaining walls, a later intervention. On the south west corner of the hall are two diminutive sub-shrines, one of them enshrining a Hanuman slab.



Kalyanamandapa (Northeast)

## Adinarayana Shrine

This shrine is located on the northwest corner of the temple complex. An inscription on the south side of *adhithana* dated to 1529 CE records that Saluva Narasayya caused the construction of this temple and identifies the deity as Adinarayana. It faces east and has a *garbhagriha*, an *antarala*, a *rangamandapa* and *mukhamandapa*. There is one more *garbhagriha* attached to *rangamandapa* towards north. The *rangamandapa* is square and stands on four central pillars set on an elevated floor in the center. The *mukhamandapa* is square and stands on



Kalyanamandapa  
(Southeast)



Adinarayana Shrine

16 pillars. The lower and upper squares are depicted with Vaishnavite deities.

### Shrine on the Southwest

There is another shrine on the southwest corner of the temple complex. It faces east and consists of a *garbhagriha*, an *antarala* and *mukhamandapa*. The outer walls of *garbhagriha* and *antarala* are decorated with pilasters, *kumbhapanjaras* (decorative motif – a pot usually with overflowing foliage carrying a miniature vaulted-apsidal shrine) and niches. Above the *garbhagriha* raises a brick *shikhara* which is partly damaged.



Shrine on the Southwest



Lakshmi Narayana Shrine

### Lakshmi Narayana Shrine

This shrine is located on the west of the temple complex and built into the colonnade on the west *prakara* wall. It faces east and consists of *garbhagriha*, *antarala* and opened pillared *mandapa* with six pillars at the front. An inscription dated to 1545 CE on the south side of the *garbhagriha* doorway specifies the deity. The *garbhagriha* and *antarala* have doorways with Vaishnava *dwarapala* with *Gajalakshmi* on the lintel. Brackets, beams and angled eaves can be seen, but there are no traces of side walls.

### Shrine of 13 Alwars

A platform abutting the colonnade, towards the east of north *gopura* is considered to be a shrine of the 13 Alwars. An inscription dated 1534 CE on the *adhithana* of the main temple records the consecration of the images of the Alwars including Tirukachinambi Alwar by Gandhada TippiSETTI, during the time of Achyutaraya.



Shrine of Alwars

## Yoga Varada Narasimha shrine

A small platform, as an addition to the west colonnade, is found to the north of the Lakshmi Narayana shrine. An inscription on its *adhithana* mouldings dated to 1532 CE mentions the installation of image of Yoga Varada Narasimha by the great Madhava saint Vyasaraaya.

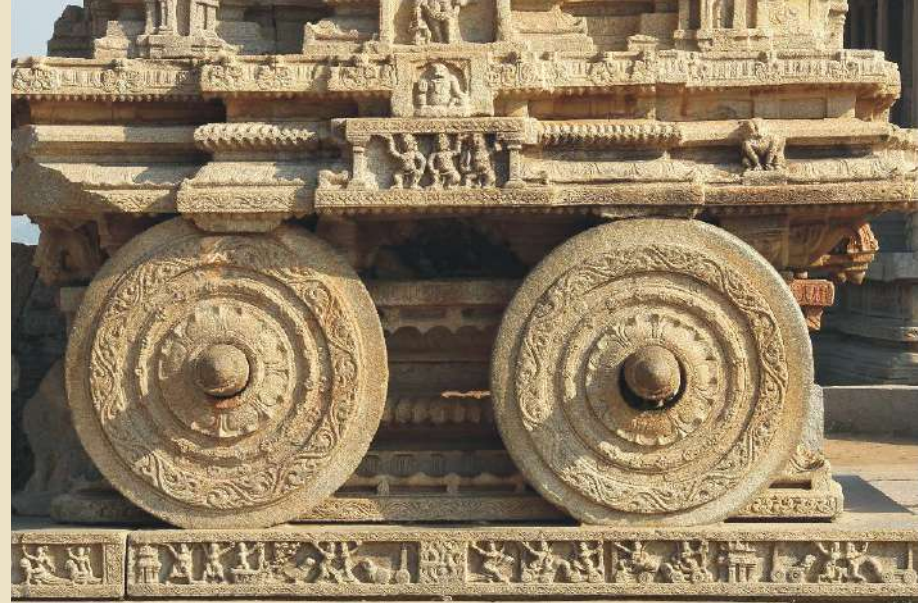
## Kitchen or Store Room

It is a pillared hall set into the southeast corner of the complex. It is partly walled in on the west and north, with a doorway on the west.

## Vahana Mandapa or Stone Chariot

Built in the main temple axis on the east is the *vahana mandapa*. It is a small shrine built in the form of a stone chariot, resembling its wooden counterpart. It is square, faces west and houses a panel of Garuda, the *vahana* of Vishnu.

The wheels are set on a basement moulding with a frieze representing the mock battles of the Vasantotsava festival, Kama and Rati riding on parrots, warriors and dancing girls. The other



Stone Chariot

mouldings on top are decorated with motifs of creeper, lotus etc. and are partly concealed by wheels.

The *pushpapotika* brackets at the east and west carry the *adhithana* mouldings of the shrine chamber above. A *makara* (crocodile) headed *pranala* (protruding spout) can be seen at the north side of the *adhithana*.

Stone Chariot (1856)





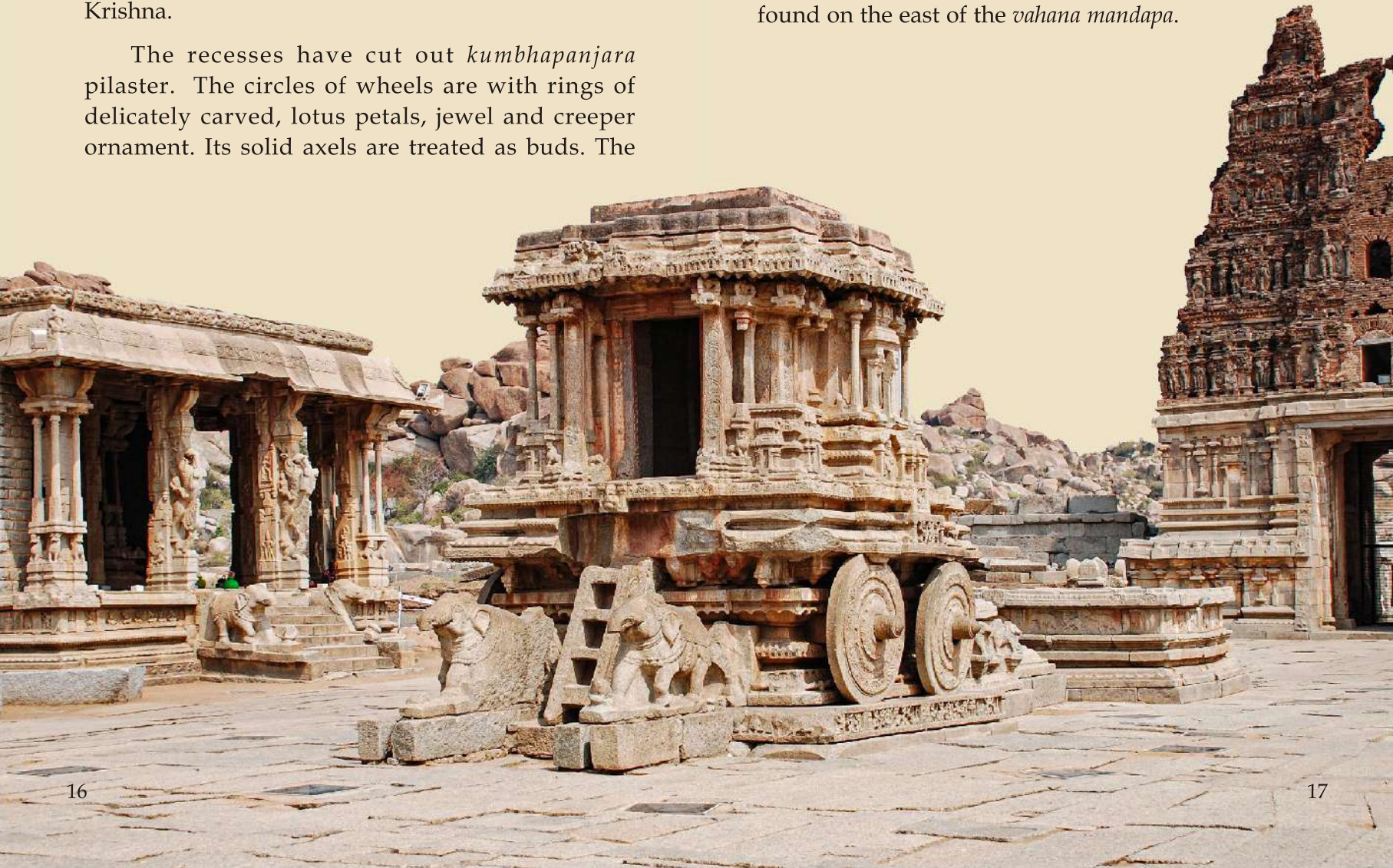
inclined slabs with steps on the west are flanked by sculpted elephants.

The old photographs of 1856 show that it had a two storeyed *shikhara* of Dravidian type made of brick and mortar. The lower level had pilastered elements headed by *kutas* and *shalas*, and the upper level is with a circular *griva* and hemispherical *shikhara*. This is one of the best-known stone chariot of Vijayanagara period.

Another example, of smaller dimension, is the one at Venkataramana Temple at Tadapatri, Anantapur district, Andhra Pradesh. A line of four square *pithas* with different basement mouldings are found on the east of the *vahana mandapa*.

The walls are defined by projection and recess. The projections have colonettes, split pilasters, and niches with standing figures of Vitthala and Krishna.

The recesses have cut out *kumbhapanjara* pilaster. The circles of wheels are with rings of delicately carved, lotus petals, jewel and creeper ornament. Its solid axels are treated as buds. The



## Prakara

The whole temple complex is enclosed by rectangular *prakara* (enclosure wall) with three *gopuras* (entrance gateway with a towering superstructure) on the east, north and south. The *gopuras* consist of granite *adhithana* and walls and three storeyed pyramidal brick towers. The lower portion of the *gopuras* is intact, while the upper are in ruined condition. The inscribed slabs on the east and south *rangamandapa* doorways of the main temple, dated to 1513 CE, record that Krishnadevaraya's two queens, Tirumaladevi and Chinnadevi, built entrance pavilions with *gopuras*. Outside the east *prakara* wall, is a large *mandapa* and stepped tank on its right and a *mandapa* and a ruined pavilion on the left. A column now in ruins is also found outside the east *gopura*.



Rangamandapa: Inscribed Slabs



Entrance: East Gopura and other structures



East Gopura (view from west)

Colonnade streets run on the east and north of the east *gopura* of the Vitthala temple. The street on the east runs for about 1 km and is flanked by triple lines of columns. These columns are separated by a broad paved street approximately 45 m wide. The northern side of this street are dotted with *mandapas* and tanks. Among them, the Paramkusa *mandapa* on



South Gopura: Vittala

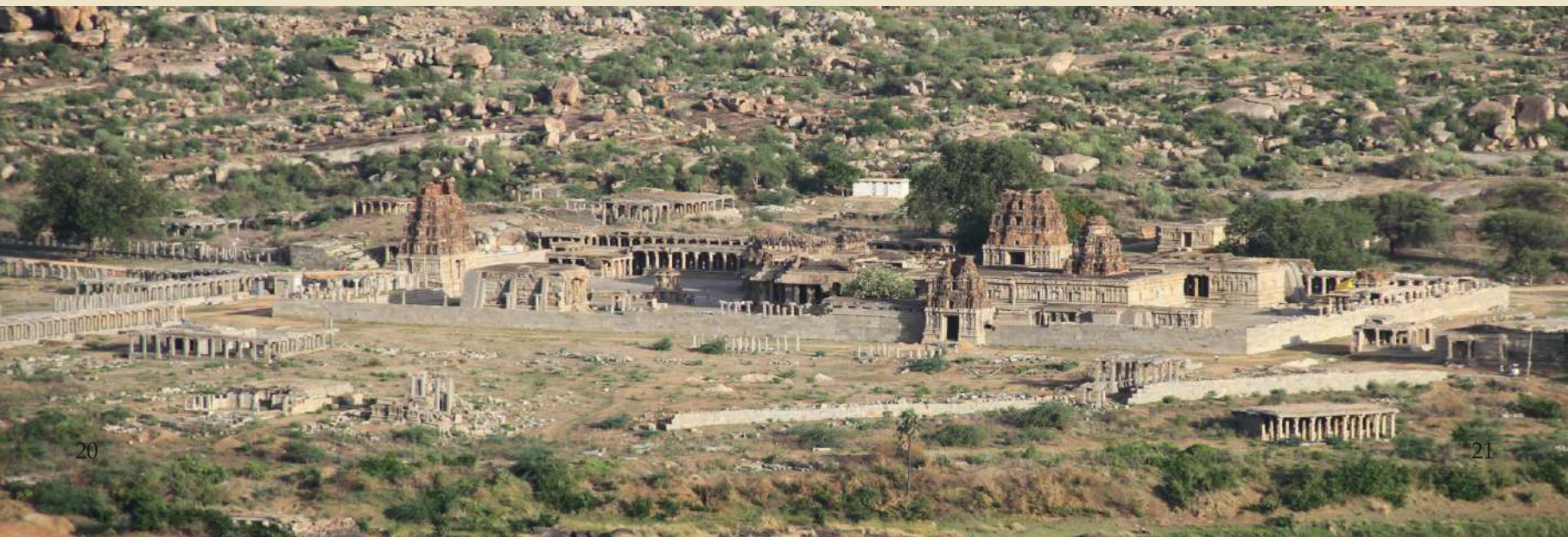


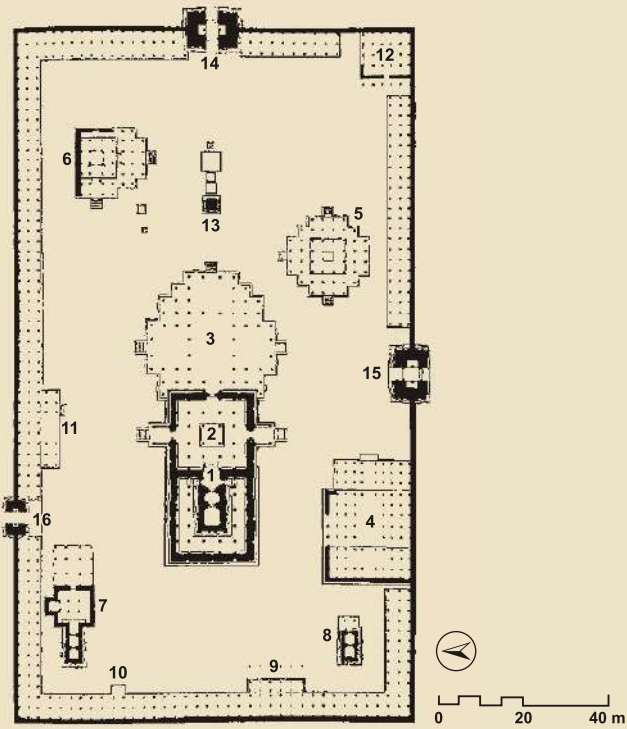
South Gopura: Rukmini

the extreme end of the street and a large, stepped tank used for water festivals are the most remarkable ones. The southern side of this street has a Vishnu temple, popularly known as Kuduregombe Mandapa and two small tanks.

Another colonnade street on the north, bordered by galleries, stretches to about 122 m and ends at the temple of 'Bomma (Brahma)Vitthala'.

One of the largest temples in Hampi, the architecturally and sculpturally florid, Vitthala temple, portrays the high watermark of perfection of the Vijayanagara style.





Site Plan: Vittala Complex

1. Main Temple
2. Rangamandapa
3. Mahamandapa
4. Hundred Pillared Hall
5. Kalyanamandapa (Southeast)
6. Kalyanamandapa (Northeast)
7. Adinarayana Shrine
8. Shrine on the Southwest
9. Lakshmi Narayana Shrine
10. Yoga Varada Narasimha shrine
11. Shrine of Alwars
12. Kitchen or Store Room
13. Vahana Mandapa or Stone Chariot
14. East Gopura
15. South Gopura
16. North Gopura



## MAP OF HAMPI



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|--|--|
| 1. Virupaksha Temple                           | 53. Brahma Vitthala Temple                         |
| 2. Manmatha Honda                              | 54. Pushkarni                                      |
| 3. Group of monuments at Hemakuta Hill         | 55. Kuduregombe Mandapa                            |
| 4. Two Storeyed Mandapa                        | 56. Gejjala Mandapa                                |
| 5. Sasivekalu Ganesha                          | 57. Talarigatta Gate                               |
| 6. Kadalekalu Ganesha Temple                   | 58. Ahmed Khan's Mosque                            |
| 7. Krishna Temple                              | 59. Malyavanta Raghunatha Temple                   |
| 8. Lakshmi Narasimha Temple (Narasimha Statue) | 60. Ganagitti Jaina Temple                         |
| 9. Badavilinga Temple                          | 61. Bhima's Gateway                                |
| 10. Chandikeswara Temple                       | 62. ASI Museum                                     |
| 11. Uddhana Virabhadra Temple                  | 63. Pattabhirama Temple                            |
| 12. Thurtu Kaluve (Canal)                      | 64. Domed Gate                                     |
| 13. Hampi Bazaar                               | 65. Chandrasekhara Temple                          |
| 14. Greenlaw's Photo Gallery                   | 66. Saraswati Temple                               |
| 15. Kampa Bhupa Marga                          | 67. Octagonal Water Pavilion                       |
| 16. Yeduru Basavanna (Monolithic Bull)         | 68. Queen's Bath                                   |
| 17. Matanga Hill                               | 69. Mahanavami Dibba                               |
| 18. Achyutaraya (Tiruvengalanatha) Temple      | 70. Stepped Tank                                   |
| 19. Soolai Bazaar (Achyutapete)                | 71. King's Audience Hall                           |
| 20. Yantroddharak Anjaneya Temple              | 72. Hazara Ramachandra Temple                      |
| 21. Kodanda Rama Temple                        | 73. Pan Supari Bazaar                              |
| 22. Chakratirtha                               | 74. Pattana Yellamma Temple                        |
| 23. Varaha Temple                              | 75. Palace of Vira Harihara                        |
| 24. Narasimha Temple                           | 76. Noblemen's Quarter                             |
| 25. Sri Raghunandanatirtha Brundavana          | 77. Prasanna Virupaksha (Underground Shiva) Temple |
| 26. Gateway                                    | 78. Lotus Mahal                                    |
| 27. King's Balance                             | 79. Elephant's Stable                              |
| 28. Purandara Mandapa                          | 80. Guards' House                                  |
| 29. Sri Naraharitirtha Brundavan               | 81. Ranga Temple                                   |
| 30. Stone Bridge                               | 82. Anjanadri Hill                                 |
| 31. Inscribed Vishnu Temple                    | 83. Pampa Sarovara                                 |
| 32. Vitthala Temple                            | 84. Chandramouleshwara Temple                      |
|  | 85. Nava Vrindavana                                |



## ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF INDIA HAMPI CIRCLE

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