VIJAYANAGAR ARCHITECTURE - GS I MAINS

Q. The Vijayanagara Empire represents a distinct and influential period in Indian architectural history. Discuss. (10 marks, 150 words)

News: *Lepakshi Paintings – Marvels of Vijayanagara Art*

What's in the news?

- The temple in question at Lepakshi, is the Veeradhadra temple complex, an excellent example of Vijayanagara art, of an illustrious ruling dynasty of south India.
- The main centres to study, reflect upon and admire their art and architecture are at Hampi, Lepakshi, Tadipatri, Melkote, Kolar, Bellary, Chikballapur and Chamarajnagar.

Vijayanagar Architecture:

- Vijayanagar architectural style was known as a **new design form under the already established Dravida style**. This was later called **Provida style.**
- **Its architecture replaced the soft stone with hard stones.**
- Architecture included temples, monolithic sculptures, palaces, official buildings, cities, irrigation, step wells, tanks etc.
- It showed the blend of Hindu and Islamic forms of architecture.

Important features:

- Followed Deccan idioms, used granite stones, composite pillars, chariots, multiple boundaries around temples, religious structures like Mahanavami Tibba or Kalyana Mandapam or Hazara Ram temple, the ornamentation on temples walls, horse as most important motive, Raya Gopurams.

Important temples:

- Vittal temple, Lepakshi temple, Virupaksha temple and Narasimha Temple.
- There was construction of a lot of secular architecture at Hampi which was used for residence of monarchs.
- Most important temples of Vijayanagar style are found in Hampi ruins. Vittalaswamy & Hazra Ramaswamy temples are best examples of this style.

Temple Architecture (Vittalaswamy Temple):

- The iconic temple has amazing stone structures such as the incomparable stone chariot and the fascinating musical pillars.

- This predominant monument of Hampi is a major attraction of the ruined town and is a must-see for visitors and tourists.

Defence architecture:

- Famous for its **seven-layer fortress** wall which enclosed the city, agriculture hinterland and forest.
- **Several gateways** and square bastions in the wall.
- Main gate was large and guarded by a flanking bastion.

Religious architecture:

- New style of architecture called Provida style-with **large numbers of pillars and piers.**
- Horse was the most common inscription on pillars.
- Construction of **large Raya Gopuram (gateways) and Kalyanamandapam** with carved pillars in temple premises.
- Mandapams were having 100 to 1000 pillars, these mandapams were used for sitting the deity on festival occasions.
- **The monolithic carving of Nandi.**
- Example – Vithalswami and Hazra temples at Hampi, Varadaraja and Ekambaranatha temples at Kanchipuram and Chidambaram temples.

Secular architecture:

- Palatial buildings and subsidiary buildings like water palace, well.
- Public audience hall, horse and elephant stables. these buildings were in Indo-Saracenic in character (Hindu and Muslim features)
- The **Lepakshi Mural Paintings,** the technique of which was probably inspired from the Ajanta paintings of Maharashtra under the Vakataka patronage, had a rather secular theme than a religious one.
- Use of domes, vaults and arches, due to the presence of Muslim architects, accentuating the secular mindset prevalent in the kingdom.

Civilian architecture:

- Palace complex, Audience Hall, pleasure pavilion, secretariat hall, tanks etc.
- Indo-Islamic in nature as an arc with a key hollow dome can be seen.
- Lotus Mahal, Queen's bath has octagonal water pavilion.