



PRE- EMINENCE OF SCULPTURES & PAINTINGS HAS DIMINISHED THE HINDU ARCHITECTURE OF AKHAND BHARAT

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Abstract: This researcher aims to examine the role of architecture of ancient and medieval India. It is characterized by a rich and diverse artistic tradition that incorporates sculpture, painting, and other decorative elements into building design. While some may argue that the pre-eminence of sculptures and paintings has diminished the architectural achievements of this period, this is not an accurate assessment. Instead, sculptures and paintings were an integral component of Indian art and architecture, often used to enhance and complement architectural structures and to promote religious devotion and cultural education. The temples of Khajuraho, the Ajanta and Ellora caves, and the Konark Sun Temple are examples of Indian architecture that showcase the skill and mastery of Indian artisans and the integration of sculpture and painting into building design. Ultimately, Indian architecture represents a rich and diverse artistic tradition that continues to inspire and captivate people around the world.

Index Terms – Sculptures, paintings, frescos, iconography.

I. INTRODUCTION

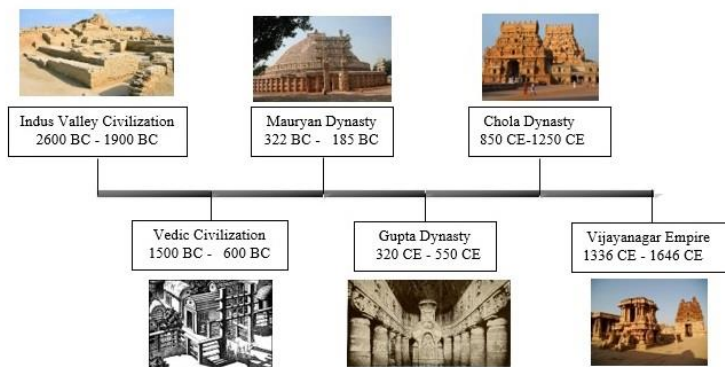
Ancient Hindu architecture is known for its diverse range of site plans and building plans, which varied depending on the specific purpose of the structure and the prevailing architectural styles of the time. Some of the most common types of ancient Hindu site plans and building plans include:

Temple plans: Hindu temples are typically designed to be a place of worship and are therefore laid out in a specific manner to facilitate religious rituals and ceremonies. Temple plans can be broadly categorized into three types: Nagara style, Dravida style, and Vesara style.

- Palace plans: Ancient Hindu palaces were often built to accommodate the royal family and their court, and were designed to reflect the status and power of the rulers. Palace plans were often characterized by their grand entrances, courtyards, and audience halls.
- Fortification plans: Ancient Hindu forts were built to protect cities and towns from invaders and were therefore designed with strong defensive features such as walls, gates, and watchtowers.
- Residential plans: Ancient Hindu homes and apartments were designed to meet the needs of the residents, with features such as courtyards, verandas, and living spaces that were arranged around a central open area.
- Civic plans: Ancient Hindu cities were often laid out in a grid pattern, with wide roads and public spaces that facilitated commerce, transportation, and social interaction. Some of the most famous examples of ancient Hindu civic plans include the cities of Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa, which were built during the Indus Valley Civilization.

Overall, ancient Hindu site plans and building plans were characterized by a deep understanding of the natural environment and a desire to create structures that were both functional and beautiful. This has led to a rich and diverse architectural tradition that continues to inspire and influence architects and designers around the world.

The timeline of Hindu Architecture are as follows:



THE INDUS VALLEY CIVILIZATION

It is also known as the Harappa Civilization, was a Bronze Age civilization that existed from approximately 2600 BC to 1900 BC in the region of the Indus River in present-day Pakistan and northwest India. Although the religious practices of the Indus Valley Civilization remain a mystery, archaeological evidence suggests that they were highly advanced in terms of urban planning and architecture.

The Indus Valley Civilization is known for its well-planned cities, with wide streets, brick buildings, and complex drainage systems. The architecture of the Indus Valley Civilization was highly sophisticated, with buildings made of brick and stone, and some structures featuring elaborate carvings and decorations.

- One of the most significant architectural features of the Indus Valley Civilization is the Great Bath, a large, rectangular tank located in the city of Mohenjo-Daro. The Great Bath is thought to have been used for religious or ritualistic purposes, and it was surrounded by a brick colonnade with steps leading down into the water. The tank was constructed with waterproof materials, such as bitumen, to prevent leaks and ensure its longevity.
- The cities of the Indus Valley Civilization also featured large public buildings, such as granaries and warehouses, which were built to store food and other resources. These buildings were constructed using a technique called corbelling, in which each layer of brick or stone is placed slightly farther inward than the layer below it, creating a curved effect. This technique helped to distribute the weight of the building and make it more stable.

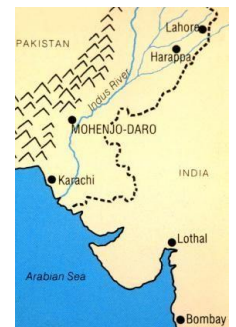


Image Source: Pinterest



Image Source: The Great Granary of Harappa@ harappa.com

Image Source: Grid Pattern of Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro@ INSIGHTSIAS

Image Source: Drainage System of Harappa@ Knowledge center

- The Indus Valley Civilization also featured private homes with multiple rooms, courtyards, and even indoor plumbing. The houses were constructed with mud bricks and featured flat roofs, which were used for sleeping and other activities. Many of the homes had wells or cisterns for collecting and storing water, and some even had bathrooms with advanced drainage systems. Overall, the architecture of the Indus Valley Civilization was highly advanced for its time and reflects the culture's emphasis on order, efficiency, and organization. The use of brick and stone, along with advanced techniques for water management and construction, helped to create a highly functional and aesthetically pleasing urban landscape.

THE VEDIC CIVILIZATION

The Vedic period in India, which spanned from approximately 1500 BCE to 600 BCE, was a time of significant religious and cultural development. During this period, the Vedas, a collection of religious texts, were composed, and the Vedic religion emerged as the dominant religion in the Indian subcontinent. In terms of art, the Vedic period saw the emergence of a unique style of sculpture, painting, and iconography, which was quite different from the art of the Indus Valley Civilization.

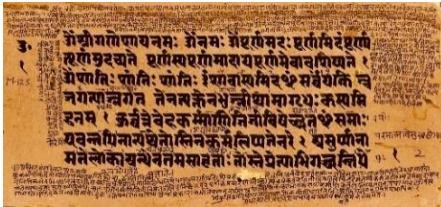


Image Source: Early & later Vedic Literature (1500 to 600 B.C) @https://www.wbpscupsc.com/vedic-society/

- Sculpture during the Vedic period was predominantly focused on the representation of deities and religious themes. Vedic sculptures were typically made of stone, wood, or terracotta and were often characterized by their intricate details and stylized features. Sculptures of deities such as Indra, Varuna, and Agni were commonly depicted with multiple arms and various symbolic attributes, such as weapons or animals. The focus on religious themes in Vedic sculpture reflects the dominant role of religion in Vedic culture.



Image Source: Pinterest



Image Source: Pinterest



Image Source:
Lord Agni
with an aura
of flames,
seated on
ram@
Wikipedia

Image Source: Lord
Indra- Kings of the
Devas@Original
Buddhas

Image Source:
Lord Varuna in
Vedas@<https://sreenivasaraos.com/tag/varuna-in-vedas/>

- Paintings and frescos from the Vedic period are relatively rare, as most of the art from this period was created using perishable materials such as wood and textiles, which have not survived over time. However, some cave paintings and rock art from this period have been discovered, which depict scenes from everyday life, as well as religious themes. These paintings were typically created using natural pigments and featured stylized figures and decorative elements.

- Iconography during the Vedic period was highly symbolic, with many deities being associated with specific attributes and animals. For example, Indra was associated with thunder and lightning, and was often depicted holding a vajra, or thunderbolt, in his multiple hands. Similarly, Varuna, the god of the oceans, was often depicted holding a noose, which symbolized his ability to control the tides.

Overall, the art of the Vedic period was characterized by its focus on religious themes and its highly symbolic nature. Sculptures, paintings, and iconography were all used to convey important religious messages and reflect the dominant role of religion in Vedic culture. In contrast, the art of the Indus Valley Civilization was more focused on functional and utilitarian aspects of urban planning and architecture.

MAURYAN EMPIRE

The Mauryan Empire, which existed from 321 BCE to 185 BCE, was a significant period in the history of Indian art. During this period, art and architecture flourished under the patronage of Emperor Asoka, who promoted Buddhism and commissioned numerous monuments and artworks throughout the empire. However, it is difficult to compare the art of the Mauryan Empire directly with the art of the Indus Valley Civilization and the Vedic period, as they were distinct cultural and historical contexts with different artistic traditions and practices.

- In terms of sculpture, the Mauryan Empire is known for its highly polished and detailed stone carvings, which were often used to depict Buddhist themes and figures. The most famous example of Mauryan sculpture is the Lion Capital of Asoka, which features four lions standing back-to-back and is now the national emblem of India. Other Mauryan sculptures include depictions of Buddha, Bodhisattvas, and various animals and mythical creatures.



Image Source: The Lion Capital, Mauryan Empire: Art and Architecture@ www.upload.wikimedia.org

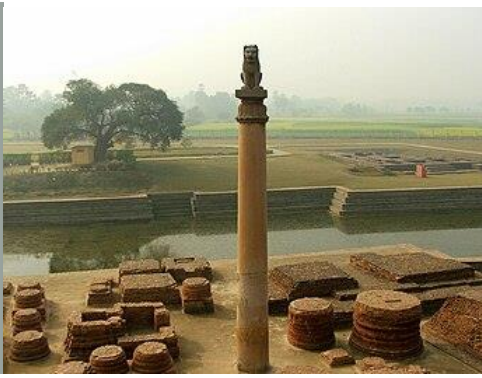


Image Source: One of the Pillars of Ashoka, in Vaishali, Bihar@ Wikipedia

- Painting and frescos from the Mauryan period are relatively rare, as most of the surviving artwork from this time is in the form of stone carvings and reliefs. However, some painted pottery and wall paintings have been discovered, which depict scenes from everyday life and religious themes. These paintings were typically created using natural pigments and feature stylized figures and decorative elements, similar to the art of the Vedic period.
- Iconography during the Mauryan period was highly influenced by Buddhist themes and symbols, such as the lotus flower, the wheel of dharma, and the Buddha's footprints. These symbols were often incorporated into Mauryan art and architecture, including the pillars and rock edicts commissioned by Emperor Asoka.



Image Source: Dharma Chakra @ Adobe



Image Source: Buddha Footprint@ Wikipedia

Overall, while the Mauryan Empire was a significant period in the development of Indian art, it is difficult to compare it directly to the art of the Indus Valley Civilization.

THE GUPTA DYNASTY

The Gupta dynasty (320 AD- 550 AD) was known for its significant contributions to architecture and city planning in India. While sculpture, paintings, murals, iconography, and frescoes were highly valued during the Gupta period, they did not diminish the importance of architecture and city planning. During the Gupta era, numerous temples, palaces, and public buildings were constructed, showcasing the sophistication and excellence of Indian architecture. Some of the notable architectural achievements of the Gupta dynasty include the rock-cut caves at Ajanta and Ellora, the Dashavatara temple in Deogarh, and the Udayagiri caves.

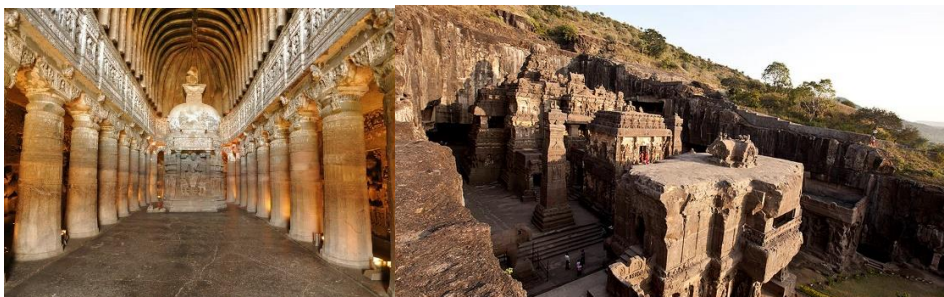


Image Source: Ajanta Caves@ Wander Heads



Image Source: Jataka, Ajanta and Ellora Caves Repository of art and culture of ancient India@indianluxurytrains.com

Image Source: Ellora Rock cut @UNESCO, World Heritage Convention



Image Source: Dashavatara temple, Deogarh @ Temple Architecture in India, gharshiksha.com

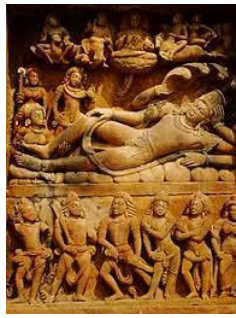


Image Source: Dashavatara temple, Deogarh @ Wikimedia



Image Source: Tales of a Nomad, Udayagiri Caves and Vidisha @ Tales of A Nomad

- Ajanta and Ellora are two historical cave complexes located in the Aurangabad district of Maharashtra, India. These cave complexes are renowned for their magnificent rock-cut temples, sculptures, and paintings that date back to the 2nd century BCE. The Ajanta caves comprise around 30 rock-cut temples and monasteries that were used by Buddhist monks for meditation and religious rituals. The Ellora caves, on the other hand, are a combination of Buddhist, Hindu, and Jain temples and monasteries that date back to the 6th century CE.
- The Dashavatara temple in Deogarh, also known as the Vishnu temple, is a Hindu temple located in the Lalitpur district of Uttar Pradesh, India. It was built during the Gupta period in the 6th century CE and is famous for its intricate carvings and sculptures. The temple is dedicated to Lord Vishnu and depicts his ten avatars, or incarnations, in the form of stone carvings.
- The Udayagiri caves, located in Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh, India, are a group of rock-cut caves that date back to the 4th century CE. The caves are dedicated to Lord Vishnu and depict scenes from Hindu mythology. The Udayagiri caves are famous for their intricate carvings and sculptures, which showcase the skill and artistry of ancient Indian craftsmen.

Overall, these sites are considered some of the most important and well-preserved examples of ancient Indian architecture and art, and continue to attract visitors and researchers from around the world.

Furthermore, the city of Pataliputra (modern-day Patna) was established as the capital of the Gupta Empire, and significant urban planning was undertaken during this period. Pataliputra, The city was known for its advanced city planning and infrastructure, and was considered one of the most well-organized and well-planned cities of its time.

- The city was situated on the southern bank of the Ganges River, in the present-day state of Bihar. It was built on a grid-like pattern, with wide and straight streets that intersected at right angles. The city was divided into several neighbourhoods, each with its own marketplace, temples, and residential areas.
- The city also had a sophisticated water management system, with wells, canals, and tanks that supplied water to the residents. The city was surrounded by a moat and high walls, which provided protection from external threats.

In addition to its impressive infrastructure, Pataliputra was also known for its cultural and intellectual achievements. The city was home to several renowned scholars, artists, and philosophers, and was a center of learning and innovation.

Overall, Pataliputra's city planning and infrastructure were considered advanced for its time and continue to inspire modern urban planners and architects.

In summary, while the Gupta dynasty did place a high value on sculpture, paintings, murals, iconography, and frescoes, they did not diminish the importance of architecture and city planning. In fact, the Gupta dynasty is renowned for its significant contributions to Indian architecture and urban planning.

THE CHOLA DYNASTY

The Chola dynasty, which ruled southern India from the 9th to the 13th century AD, was known for its impressive contributions to art and architecture. While it is true that the dynasty's sculptures, paintings, murals, iconography, and frescoes are highly regarded and often studied, it is not accurate to say that these art forms diminished the importance of architecture and city planning.



Image Source: The Brihadeshwara Temple, Thanjavur @Myserviceera

In fact, the Cholas were known for their impressive temple architecture, which blended Dravidian and Nagara styles to create unique and innovative structures. The Brihadeshwara Temple, also known as the Big Temple, is a Hindu temple located in Thanjavur (Tanjore), a city in the south Indian state of Tamil Nadu. The temple was

built in the 11th century CE during the reign of the Chola dynasty, and is one of the most prominent examples of Tamil architecture and Dravidian temple design.

- The temple is dedicated to Lord Shiva, and is famous for its towering vimana (tower), which is over 200 feet tall and is made entirely of granite. The vimana is topped by a large stone kalash (pot), which weighs over 80 tons and was brought to the site using an innovative ramp system.
- The temple complex also features several smaller shrines, as well as a large Nandi (bull) statue made of black granite, which stands guard outside the main sanctum. The temple walls are adorned with intricate carvings and sculptures that depict scenes from Hindu mythology and everyday life, and the gopuram (entrance tower) is also elaborately decorated.

In addition to its architectural and artistic significance, the Brihadeeswara Temple is also an important site for Hindu religious practices and festivals. It is considered one of the Great Living Chola Temples,

The Cholas also prioritized city planning, with many of their towns and cities featuring well-designed layouts and infrastructure. Gangaikonda Cholapuram is an ancient city located in the Indian state of Tamil Nadu. It was built by the Chola dynasty in the 11th century CE as their capital and is renowned for its impressive city planning and architecture. Some of the key features of the city's planning and architecture are:

1. The city was laid out in a grid-like pattern, with streets running in straight lines that intersected at right angles. This layout was typical of Chola city planning and is still used in some South Indian cities today.
2. The city had a sophisticated water management system that included large tanks, wells, and canals. This system ensured a reliable supply of water for the city's residents and allowed for irrigation of nearby agricultural land.
3. The city was home to several magnificent temples, including the Brihadeeswarar Temple, which was built in the same style as the famous Brihadeeswarar Temple in Thanjavur. The temple was dedicated to Lord Shiva and featured intricate carvings and sculptures.
4. The city was surrounded by a large wall that provided protection from external threats. The wall was several kilometres long and had several gates that were guarded by soldiers.
5. The city also had a royal palace, which was built on a raised platform and featured several courtyards, halls, and chambers. The palace was constructed using a mix of stone and wood, and was decorated with paintings and sculptures.



Image Source: The Gangaikonda Cholapuram, Tamil Nadu@Wikipedia



Image Source: The Gangaikonda Cholapuram, Tamil Nadu@Wikipedia



Image Source: Remains of Maaligai Medu (Part of city planning) @Wikipedia

Overall, Gangaikonda Cholapuram is considered a masterpiece of South Indian city planning and architecture, and is recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The city's design and infrastructure were innovative for its time and continue to inspire architects and urban planners today.

While the Cholas certainly excelled in the field of art, it would be inaccurate to suggest that their emphasis on sculpture, paintings, murals, iconography, and frescoes came at the expense of their architectural and city planning achievements. Rather, the dynasty's artistic and architectural accomplishments were complementary and mutually reinforcing, contributing to a rich and varied cultural legacy that continues to inspire and fascinate scholars and art lovers alike.

THE VIJAYNAGAR EMPIRE

The Vijayanagara Empire, which existed from 1336 to 1646 AD, was a prominent South Indian empire known for its impressive architectural and artistic achievements. While it is true that the empire's emphasis on sculpture, paintings, murals, iconography, and frescoes played a significant role in the artistic legacy of the empire, it did not necessarily diminish the importance of architectural features in building and city planning.

In fact, the Vijayanagara Empire was known for its impressive urban planning and architectural feats. The capital city of Hampi.

1. Hampi was the capital city of the Vijayanagara Empire, located in the present-day Indian state of Karnataka. The city was founded in the 14th century CE and is renowned for its impressive architecture and city planning. Some of the key architectural features and city planning of Hampi are:
2. The city was built along the banks of the Tungabhadra River, and the landscape was shaped to accommodate the city's infrastructure. The river was used for irrigation, and several canals were built to ensure a reliable supply of water for the city's residents.
3. The city had a well-defined urban layout, with several markets, residential areas, and public buildings arranged in a grid-like pattern. The city was divided into several quarters, with each quarter having its own distinctive architectural style.
4. The city was home to several magnificent temples, including the Virupaksha Temple, which was dedicated to Lord Shiva and is still a popular pilgrimage site today. The temple featured intricate carvings and sculptures, and was decorated with vibrant colors.
5. The city also had several impressive public buildings, including the Hazara Rama Temple, which was used for royal ceremonies and had a thousand carved panels depicting scenes from the Ramayana.
6. The city was surrounded by a series of fortifications, which provided protection from external threats. The fortifications were several kilometres long and included several gateways that were guarded by soldiers.
7. The city had a sophisticated water management system, which included several tanks and canals that collected and distributed water for irrigation and domestic use.

The Virupaksha Temple is an ancient Hindu temple located in the city of Hampi, in the Indian state of Karnataka. The temple is dedicated to Lord Shiva, and is believed to have been built in the 7th century CE by the Chalukya dynasty, although it has undergone several renovations and additions over the centuries.

- The temple is known for its impressive architecture, and is a major pilgrimage site for Hindus. The temple complex covers an area of around 26 acres and consists of several mandapas (pillared halls), gopurams (entrance towers), and courtyards. The main gopuram is over 50 meters high and features intricate carvings and sculptures.
- One of the most striking features of the temple is its inner sanctum, which houses a Linga (symbol of Lord Shiva) that is believed to be one of the oldest in India. The sanctum is accessed through a narrow doorway and is surrounded by smaller shrines and chambers.
- The temple complex also features several smaller shrines dedicated to various Hindu deities, including Lord Ganesha and Goddess Bhuvaneshwari. The walls of the temple are adorned with intricate carvings and sculptures that depict scenes from Hindu mythology, as well as scenes from everyday life.

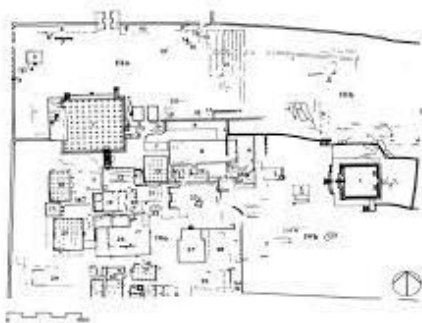


Figure 3
Zone of royal performance: densely clustered structures (IVa) are dominated by the 100-
recessed hall (IVa 1) and the enclosed platform (IVa 1).

Image Source: Vijayanagara Town plan @Dailyo



Image Source: The Stone Chariot, Hampi @The Federal

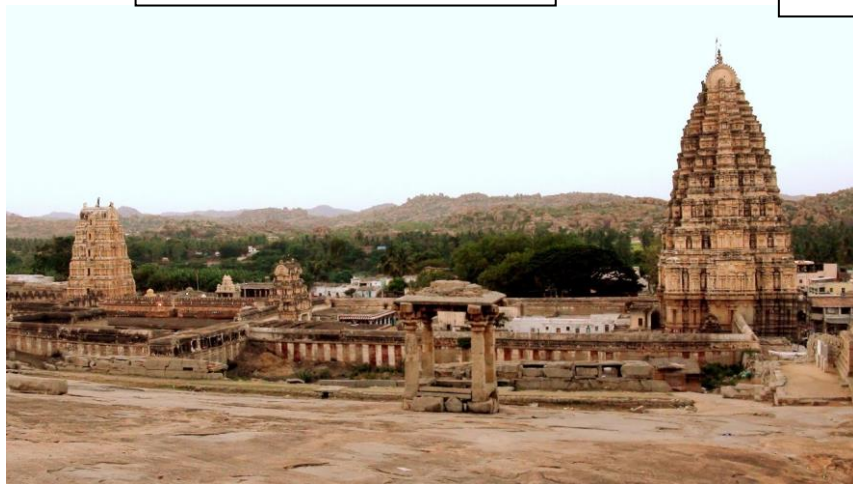


Image Source: The Virupaksha Temple, Hampi @Wikipedia



Image Source: Vijayanagara Empire monument, Hampi@freepik.com

The temple is an important site for several Hindu festivals, including the Virupaksha Car Festival, which is held every year in February or March. During the festival, the temple's processional deities are taken in a grand procession through the streets of Hampi, accompanied by music and dancing.

- The Hazara Rama Temple is an ancient temple located in the city of Hampi, in the Indian state of Karnataka. The temple was built in the 15th century CE during the reign of the Vijayanagara Empire and is dedicated to Lord Rama. The temple is known for its elaborate carvings, particularly the friezes that depict the story of the Ramayana, which is why it is named Hazara Rama Temple, meaning "a thousand Rama" in Sanskrit.

- The temple is a small, compact structure that consists of a sanctum, a pillared hall, and an open courtyard. The outer walls of the temple are decorated with bas-relief carvings that depict various scenes from the Ramayana. These carvings are particularly striking as they depict multiple scenes simultaneously in the same panel. The temple is also adorned with sculpted pillars and ceilings, which depict mythical creatures and floral designs.
- The temple was used by the royal family of the Vijayanagara Empire for their private worship and ceremonies. The sanctum houses four sculptures of Lord Rama, which are believed to have been brought from elsewhere and installed in the temple. The temple also has several subsidiary shrines dedicated to other deities, including Lord Vishnu and his consort, Goddess Lakshmi.
- The Hazara Rama Temple is considered one of the finest examples of Vijayanagara architecture.

Moreover, the Vijayanagara Empire was known for its use of intricate and ornate architectural features such as pillars, arches, and domes, which were often adorned with sculptures and carvings. These features were essential components of the empire's artistic and architectural style and were employed to create grand and awe-inspiring structures.

CONCLUSION:

Overall, each of these Indian civilizations made significant contributions to the development of Indian art, and it is difficult to say which had the most prominent role in sculpture, painting, frescos, murals, and iconography. Rather than comparing these periods, it is more useful to appreciate the unique contributions of each and the ongoing artistic traditions that they helped to create.

No, it is not valid to say that the real architecture achievements of Hindu architecture have diminished because of sculptures and paintings. Sculpture and painting are important components of Indian art and architecture, and they were often used to enhance and complement architectural structures. In fact, many of the most famous examples of Indian architecture, such as the temples of Khajuraho, the Ajanta and Ellora caves, and the Konark Sun Temple, are renowned not only for their architectural features but also for their intricate sculptures and paintings.

Furthermore, sculpture and painting were not just decorative elements in Hindu architecture, but often served important religious and cultural functions. For example, sculptures and paintings of deities and other religious figures were used to educate people about Hindu mythology and to promote religious devotion. Similarly, frescos and murals were often used to depict historical events, courtly life, and other cultural themes.

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