



ALAMPUR – POPULARLY KNOWN AS DAKSHINA KASI

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ABSTRACT

In India we have so many temples and historical sites to know and to see their beautiful art and architecture. Among them Alampur is one. Alampur is a great pilgrimage center and is called a temple town. Its history dates back to the 6th century A.D. A group of nine temples with magnificent and elegant curvilinear Sikharas built by the Chalukyas of Bandami (6th to 8th and 10th to 12th century A D) . They were, t great patrons of art and architecture. These nine temples are popularly known as "Nava Brahma temples". Lard Shiva as Bala Brahmeshwara is the presiding deity and his consort Parvathi is enshrined here in the name of Jogulamba, one of the 8 Shakthies of India[1]. Alampur also finds place in the list of Shakthi Peethas. The town has also a temple dedicated to Yellamma or Renuka, more popular among the rural folk.

INTRODUCTION

We have some Buddha, Jain and Vedic religious cave temples and beautiful sculptures. As per historical evidences the first religious constructions were of Buddhism. Buddhists started their constructions in 3rd century BC. Much before the Hindu religious constructions were started. Some historians believe that Hindu religious constructions began some time around 4th century BC.

The rulers of south India, the Shatavahanas and Ikshwakas were basically Hindus. But they encouraged the constructions of Stupas and cave temples of Buddhism. That is the reason why we can't find Hindu religious constructions. Recently the Archaeological survey of India found "Harithy" temple at Nagarjuna konda, which was the edpcational centre for Mahayana Buddhism. By this evidence we understand that in Ikshwakas reign Vedic temples were also in existence. During 6th and 7th century A.D., Pallavas and Chalukyas of Badami strengthened Vedic religion in South India; Whereas Guptas started so many religious constructions in North India. Thus various Vedic religious temples were constructed by these rulers in India.

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The great monuments located Alampur have parallels at Aihole, Badami and Pattadakal in Bijapur district of Karnataka and they can be called as a veritable museum of Art and architecture of the early Chalukyas and the Rastrakutas. In Andhra Pradesh the constructions of Badami Chalukyas were found in Alampur and in Sangameswaram. Alampur constructions are rich in style than the other constructions of Chalukyas of Badami.[2].

Alampur is one of the sacred places of worship near Kurnool. Alampur, previously known as Halampur lies near the confluence of the Tungabhadra and Krishna rivers. It is the home to many Hindu temples some of which were constructed in the medieval period by many dynasties who ruled the place. It is well known as Dakshina Kailasam of the South India.

Alampur lies about 200 kilometers from the capital city of Hyderabad. Srisailam lies in the western end of Alampur[3]. So it is considered to be the western gateway of Sree Sailam. Siddhavattam, Tripurantakam and Umamaheswaram serve as the southern, eastern, and northern gateways respectively.

The Nava Brahma temples of Alampur are important shrines of the town. All the 9 temples of the Nava Brahma temples, dedicated to Lord Shiva were built by the Badami Chalukyas, about 1200 years ago. The temples exhibit excellent specimen of Chalukyan architecture and sculpture. Several sculptures on the temples which date back to the 8th century are considered prominent for their beauty and splendour.

The Alampur site preserves archeological remains in the form of temples exhibiting a hybrid style of architecture. Most of the temples in south India are characterized by the gopuram styles. As we walked through the courtyard of the Alampur temples, we notice a striking resemblance to the temples of Orissa. However, the carvings of the pillars are identical to the cave temples of Western India and therein lay the difference. The shrines are in a square pattern and have a passage for pradakshina around them. All the temples are dedicated to Lord Shiva. The sculptures are primitive compared to the later day temples. The Navabrahma temples are all enclosed in a courtyard on the left bank of the river Tungabhadra. The Bala Brahma, which dates back to the year 702 AD, is the main shrine of worship as per the inscriptions seen here. The Taraka Brahma temple is partly in ruins, and it has no image in the sanctum sanctorum. It bears Telugu inscriptions of the 6th-7th century AD. The Swarga Brahma temple with an imposing tower is considered to be among the finest in Alampur, and is an excellent specimen of Chalukyan architecture and sculpture. It contains several sculptures in bas-relief, and it dates back to the end of the eighth century. The Padma Brahma temple, also partly in ruins, contains a Shiva lingam. The Viswa Brahma temple is among the most artistic of the Nava Brahma temples. The sculpture depicts scenes from the epics. We also find in the enclosed courtyard the Suryanarayana temple dating back to the 9th century. This temple has bas-reliefs representing the incarnations of Vishnu. There is also a

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Narasimha temple with inscriptions from the period of Krishna Deva Raya of the Vijayanagara Empire. According to historical records, Alampur retained its importance as a major religious center all through its history. The protective walls and gateways in the town and the 11th century Papanasi group of temples (which have been dismantled and re-erected at about four kilometers distance to the southeast) stand testimony to that. It is evident that early temple building was experimental in nature, as the temples have no distinct form of architecture and the innovative trend reflects the mingling of new forms and ideals. This important shrine seems to have been constructed towards the end of the 7th century A.D. There is an inscription above the dwarapalika image, which states that the shrine was constructed by Lokaditya-Ela-Arasa, in honour of the queen of Vinayaditya, called Mahadevi.[4] Like all other temples the Swarga Brahma is a hall temple, except the Taraka Brahma temple. The shrine is at the end of the rectangular hall, which is divided into a nave and side aisles by the use of pillars connecting the passage. Like the Kumara Brahma, the Swarga Brahma also has a porch. The panels on the outer walls carry relief figures of the Krishna Lila, Animals, Garuda-nose faces and Matrumurti.

The pattern of carving is the same as on the Vishva Brahma temple. Although there had been relief carvings in Aihole and Pattadakal, the pantheism here shows a passionate enthusiasm for exaltation of human form to divine status. There are Pauranic scenes, loving couples and flying spirits. And in the midst of these are the independent realizations of the gods, by the release into a certain innocence and freer interpretation of the icon beyond the manner of the Chalukyas in the west.

One of the new dhyana mantras is a wall sculpture entitled Lingodbhavamurti of Shiva, inset into a tall phallus, with worshipping figures in a rectangular panel from which the lingam is carved. And a truncated figure shows the remains of a dynamic sculpture of Shiva as Tripurasura Samharamurti. The mobility of the carving skillfully releases energies into the universe with terrifying violence.

Another broken figure is a relief of Gangavatarana, again as a demonstration of the Alampur sculptor's genius for release of potential power of the gods. A similar sculpture of Shiva involved in the Tandava dance is a heroic image. The frenzy of the movement is caught in the ecstatic moment, by some Viswakarma, realizing himself through the expression of muscular energies into the universal image of dance incarnate.

Shiva is shown in another mood as he stands, pensively, with the gracious bend of his body, almost supplicating Parvathi. The Mithuna couples show the sculptor's sensitiveness to tenderness between the male and the female, through the evocation of desire lurking below the surface of life and evoked here through the woman's shy withdrawal and the man dragging her by the arm from the natural urge of seduction.

The Swarga Brahma temple has a six pillar porch on the east, the Puranghata pillars being decorated with amalkas. There are horned dwarapalas by the doorway. Ganga and Jamuna are symbolically carved on the door-frame with the GarudaNaga motif above. The temple has a curvilinear Sikharas of the northern style, with a figure of dancing Shiva carved in the Chaitya window of the Sukanasi.

Padma Brahma Temple This temple is in the Swarga Brahma style. Apart from the sculptures of two dwarpalikas near the square gateway, with the flying figure on the top, the sculptures on the facade of this temple have all been destroyed.

The Garuda Brahma temple Modeled on the Padma Brahma, this temple is distinguished by elaborate carvings on the pillars inside the hall, with the cool shadows secured for the extension of consciousness into the non-sensuous realms of calm.

Bala Brahma Temple This temple has remained in worship through the centuries. Therefore, it has often been renovated. The images are a mixture of routine sculptures like Jogulamba, Durga, Narasimha and the Rishis. In the courtyard are images of Mukhalinga, Sahasralinga and Mahishasuramardini. The most vital image is the mother goddess in the small shrine.

Araka Brahma Temple The roof of this temple has disappeared. **Kumara Brahma Temple** The style of construction of this temple approximates to the other Nava Brahma shrines. There is a row of seven heads, carved on the hall door frame of this temple, of which the significance seems to be lost to us. The pillars of the porch of this shrine have detailed intricate carvings. **Veera Brahma Temple** There is nothing to distinguish this temple from the others.

Vishva Brahma Temple Except that it has no porch; the plan of the Vishva Brahma resembles the Swarga Brahma. The sculptures on the facade are also similar, both in theme and execution, though the virtuosity has disappeared because of the vandal's axe. Thus the figure of Trivikrama might have been a magnificent carving when it was whole. Also, the Gangavatarana was once a highly energetic sculpture. The Mithunas are also damaged. The floral relief of makaras and birds with flying figures indicate the lyricism of desire flowing through them from the springtime of the Chalukyans sensibility.

Alampur earned the name of the Kasi of the south and called as Dakshina Kasi due to similarities with that of the holy place 'Kasi' While Kasi is on the banks of the Ganga, Alampur is on the banks of the river Tungabhadra, a tributary of the Krishna River. The principal diety at Kasi is Visveshwara whose divinity corresponds with that of Brahmeshwara of Alampur.

Alampur too has 64 bathing ghats just as Kasi does. A significant and rare occurrence at Alampur just as Kasi does is that the river flows from south to north at this place, considered

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extremely auspicious and ideal for constructions of temples. The most important similarity between Alampur and Kasi is confluence of two sacred rivers. Sangam of the Ganga and Jamuna Rivers at Kasi like-wise there is a confluence of the Tungabhadra and Krishna Rivers close to Alampur. Another important similarity is Kasi has 18 Teerthas while Alampur also has 18 Teerthas (Holy bathing ghats).

CONCLUSION:

Alampur presents us with its rich glorious legends, historical evidences, temples, mandapas and sculptures all are to be seen on the banks of the holy River Thungabhadra, the tributary of river Krishna.

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