

ART AND ARCHITECTURE IN THE PERIOD OF THE CHALUKYAS OF BADAMI**Dr.Arati Balvant Nadgouda**

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Introduction

The reign of Chalukyas of Badami for more than two and a half centuries constitutes a brilliant epoch in the history of Karnataka in particular and the Indian histories in general. The illustrious rulers of this dynasty like Pulikesin II and Vikramaditya II and others extended the frontiers of their empire from river Narmada in the north to river Cauvery in the South, and had their sway over the modern states of Karnataka, Maharashtra, Goa and major parts of Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Andhra and certain parts of Tamil Nadu. They also enriched the Karnataka culture in particular and the Indian culture in general in more than one way.

The Badami Chalukyas era was an important period in the development of South Indian architecture. They built many temples for the Hindu God Shiva. Their style of architecture is called "Chalukyan architecture" or Karnataka Dravida architecture". They built nearly hundred monuments and used reddish golden sandstone for buildings. Though they ruled a vast empire, the Chalukyan workshops concentrated most of their temple building activity in a relatively small area within the Chalukyan heartland - Aihole, Badami, Pattadakal and Mahakuta in modern Karnataka state.

1. Architecture

The greatest and everlasting achievement of the Chalukyas of Badami is in the field of art and architecture. Broadly speaking, there are three styles of Indian art namely, (1) Nagara style in North, (2) Dravidian style in South and (3) Vesara style Karnataka. The Bhubaneswar temple of Orissa, Puri and Jagannath etc. can be cited as instances of Nagara style. The Chola and Pallava temples are in Dravidian style. The Chalukyas evolved and developed a new style of architecture, known as the Chalukyan style, or the Vesara style, which is a combination of the Dravidian (the South Indian) and the Nagara (the North Indian) styles. The Chalukyas of Badami have left behind two types of monuments viz. (a) rock-cut halls and (b) structural temples, wrought in hard sand-stone.

(a) Rock-cut Halls:

The rock-cut halls or caves at Aihole and Badami are the earliest structures of the Chalukyas of Badami. At Aihole, the three rock-cut caves, one Jaina, one Hindu and one Buddhist (which is incomplete), are in their elementary stage and considered to be their earliest works. However, at Badami, there are three Brahmanical and one Jain rock-cut caves, which are developed ones. These Badami caves are characterised by the following three common features: (i) a pillared verandah, (ii) a pillared hall and (iii) a small square cell or garbhagriha, where the deity is installed.

Though the frontage is dull, in the interior, the spectator, according to Percy Brown, "finds himself bewildered by the wealth of symbolism and mystical imagery which surrounds him on all sides." Here are found wonderful, giant images of Vishnu seated on the Anantha Naga, whose five hoods spread over His Crown as if to protect it, Siva, Mahishasura Mardini, Ardhanarishwara, Narasimha, Varaha, Nataraja and Trivikrama. These giant images in their

vigorous expression are great works of art by all standards. Commenting on the beauty and artistic excellence of the Chalukyan art, Dr. M. Sheshadri writes : "The Chalukyas cut rocks like Titans and finished like jewellers."

The inner balls are marked by rows of pillars, which are mostly square in section or polygonal with most attractive and beautiful floral designs, and supporting five bracket images, mostly amorous couples.

(b) Structural Temples:

Aihole has been rightly described as "one of the cradles of Indian temple architecture" by Percy Brown. It represents the best Chalukyan structural architecture. There are about seventy temples at Aihole, of which three are noteworthy. These are the Ladh Khan, Huchimalli Gudi and the Durga temples.

i) The Ladh Khan temple

The Ladh Khan temple has a simple hall, which is open in the front and enclosed by walls on three sides. The hall contains two square groups of pillars, which are carved with the Kalasha motifs and the Ganga and the Yamuna images. It indicates considerable Gupta influence too and impresses the visitors very much.

ii) The HuchimalliGudi temple

The HuchimalliGudi temple is characterised by the antechamber in front of the garbhagriha. It is covered by a projection from the tower on the garbhagriha. This ardhmandapa roof has been considered "the most lasting contribution of early Chalukyan structural art."

(iii) The Durga temple

The Durga temple of Aihole appears to be an imitation of the Buddhist 'Chaityalayas'. The rear of the temple is marked by the shape of the 'Gajaprushta' (i.e., buttocks of an elephant). The temple has a pillared ball with the path for going round the sanctum.

At Pattadakal, there are about ten temples, which belong to this period, seven of whom follow the Dravidian style and the remaining three have imitated the Nagara style. Among the Dravidian style temples, the temple of Virupaksha (740 A.D.) has attained artistic excellence of the highest order. It was built by queen Lokamahadevi, the queen of Vikramaditya II. It has many characteristics in common with the Kailasanatha temple at Kanchis. In the words of Percy Brown, "There is a bold beauty in the appearance of the Virupaksha temple as a whole, which is best seen in the exterior." The deep interest of the architect in Ornamental details is best reflected in the mouldings, pilasters, brackets. Cornices and the perforated window. It is, in sum a marvellous work of art.

2. Sculptural Representations and Paintings

The sculptural representations of the Chalukyan period, whether floral or human, are characterised by their plastic beauty and serene and restrained expressions.

Fragments of paintings, found in the cave Nos. II and III of Badami, were originally in gay colours, but have recently vanished. The scene depicting the betrothal of Siva and Parvati in Cave No. III is the best preserved. The Cave No. I at Ajanta is assigned to the Chalukyan period. Among the most outstanding scenes mention must be made of 'the Temptation of the Buddha' and 'the Persian embassy'.

Conclusion

The rule of the Chalukyas marks an important milestone in the history of south India and a golden age in the history of Karnataka. The rise of this empire saw the birth and development of new style of architecture called “Chalukyan architecture”.

To sum up in the words of Dr. P. B. Desai, "Karnataka reached a zenith of overall development which was unheard before. This great, powerful, glorious basement, laid by the Chalukyas raised Karnataka to the peak of fame. The people were happy."

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