

Rudreshwara (Ramappa) Temple- The Jewel of ‘Kakatiyan’ Architecture

Towards world heritage recognition

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Introduction

‘Heritage is our legacy from the past, what we live with today, and what we pass on to future generations. Our cultural and natural heritages are both irreplaceable sources of life and inspiration.’ – UNESCO World Convention

The Rudreswara Temple, popularly known as Ramappa Temple, is a living temple located amidst the fields of Palampet village in Warangal district of Telangana (India) is a testimony to the zeniths of ‘Kakatiyan’ art and architecture. The lush forest (hills), the lake (Ramappa Lake), the temple complex and the overall atmosphere presents a picture of serenity blended with beauty to every tourist and scholar as a specimen of Kakatiya culture which serves as a rewarding revelation. Built in the medieval period, the temple is the only ‘Kakatiyan’ structure which survived the Muslim invasions.

Rudreswara Temple

The Rudreswara Temple of Palampet was built during the Kakatiya dynasty, which reached its apogee between 11th to 13th centuries A.D. The temple is decorated with a profusion of sculptures that are among the greatest masterpieces of Indian art. They strike a perfect balance between architecture and sculpture. Recharla Rudra (AD 1213) built the temple of Rudreswara, now famous as Ramappa temple; this ornate example proclaims the prestige of the ‘Kakatiyas’.

The temples of Palampet were the pious works of this chief, Recharla Rudra, in 1213 A.D during the reign of Kakatiya Ganapatideva¹. According to the inscription² of the four sides of the slab setup in the ‘mandapa’ of the courtyard of the temple complex, ‘Recharla Rudra; as part of the Saptasantaras³, constructed the Ramappa Lake and the Temple complex in 1213 A.D. The temple during the ‘Kakatiyan’ era not only served as a place of worship but it also flourished as a “landholder, employer and consumer of goods and services, as bank, school and museum, as hospital and theater, in short, as a nucleus which gathered around itself all that was best in the arts of civilized existence and regulated them with the humanness born of the spirit of dharma, the medieval Indian temple has few parallels in the annals of mankind”.⁴ These temples which

¹ I.A.P.Wgl district. No. 50, p.141

² I.A.P, Wgl district.No, 50,pp. 141-149.

³ The philosophy and manifestation of *Saaptasantara* embodied the puranic theism and function as a bulwark of popular kingship. The *spatasantaras* constituted of gifting: (i) Brahmin villages, (ii) gifting of son, (iii) dedication of a literary peace, (iv) hoarding of treasure, (v) excavation of tank, (vi) raising of grove, and (vii) construction of temple.(P. S. Kanaka Durga)

¹ SV Collage of Architecture, Madhapur, India.

once were the nucleus of development of a region still hold the potential to enhance the social status of its region.

The temple complex consists of a series of built forms with the main temple dedicated to lord Rudreswara (Shiva). It consists of Mukhamandapa, Rudreswara Temple, subsidiary shrine temple at the north and south of the main temple, a dharmasala and an inscription pillar describing the glory and the construction of the Temple. All these built forms together are enclosed in the Prakara to form the temple complex of the Ramappa Temple. These elements of the temple are separated and there is a proliferation of buildings which all combine to function as a temple⁵ and this reveals the maintenance of perfect architectural harmony and unity in the spatial organization of a temple. The sanctum sanctorum of the temple is a trikuta (stellate floor plan) variety in the 'Kakatiyan' architecture, a style developed by the later Chalukyans and being carried forward by the 'Kakatiyas'.

The temple is mainly known for its shilpakala (sculptures), hence named after the main sculptor of the temple- Ramappa. The sculptures on the brackets of maidens (madanikas) are a facial handwriting of the 'Kakatiyan' sculptors and their easy manipulation of the chisel which reached its climax of graceful fluency in modeling, designing and carving these madanikas. The madanikas in the dance poses were the inspiration for documenting a Dance treatise named Nritya Ratnavali written by the 'Kakatiya' military general Jayasenapati.

The Geo-technical appraisal of the temple is a man-made genius with the creation of feather lite spongy bricks in the 12th century. Sand- box technology, a method of constructing foundation by simply excavating a wide foundation pit and filling it with sand which acts as a 'sand cushion'⁶ under the foundation and this has kept the temple safe from the seismic movements of the earth for over 800 years. The components of the temple are binded with each other using the interlocking method instead of any mortar.

Towards World Heritage Recognition

The Strategic objectives of the World Heritage Convention to be fulfilled for any heritage site to be given world recognition are the following:

1. Strengthen the **Credibility** of the World Heritage List;
2. Ensure the effective **Conservation** of World Heritage Properties;
3. Promote the development of effective **Capacity-building** in States Parties;
4. Increase public awareness, involvement and support for World Heritage through **Communication**.
5. Enhance the role of **Communities** in the implementation of the World Heritage Convention.

Credibility

⁴ P.S. Kanaka Durga, *Sate and society under the Kaktiyas of Warangal: A critical Appraisal (A.D. 1000- 1323)*

⁵ Y. Gopal Reddy, *the Ghanapur Group of Temples*, Hyderabad, 1985, p. 20.

⁶ Prof. M. Pandu Ranga Rao,(2011), geo-technical splendor of the Kakatiyas, *Kakatiya Heritage Trust*, Pg.no. 7-15. INTACH, Warangal chapter

This living Temple belonging to the 'Kakatiyan' era exhibits the interchange of human values over a span of 200 years i.e. 11th to 14th century A.D. in the telugu language speaking region (trilingadesa) of the Indian sub-continent. It is a prodigy of sculpture making, seismic resistant sand box technology and the engineering innovation by creating the floating bricks. The 'Kakatiyas' have carefully adopted the temple form- trikuta from the later 'Chalukyas' and transferred the same values to the 'Vijayanagara' dynasty. The temple represents a full development of the medieval Deccan style⁷ proving its Outstanding Universal Value.

Conservation

The Archaeological survey of India (ASI) by its responsible conservation of the 'Kakatiyan' heritage has ensured that the safety and has carefully safeguarded its Outstanding Universal Value. The ASI have been protecting and conserving the temple since the formation of the department. Before the formation of the ASI, the temple was protected by the Archeological Department of His highness the Nizam's Dominion.

The Temple has been glorified since its undertaking by the 'Archaeological Department of His Highness The Nizam's Dominions' in 1914. They had identified the temple and restored the beauty of the temple which was hidden in the thick vegetation growth and the unlevelled land. By 1931 the temple was well conserved and opened for public visitation. Since then, the temple is a must visited spot for the tourists nearby.

Capacity-building

An integrated Management plan has been prepared for implementation aiming at the value based management and also to ensure the safeguarding of the outstanding universal value of the heritage precinct. To manage the temple for the coming generations and to keep it intact, the management goals are categorized into long, mid and short term goals.

The 'Archaeological Survey of India' (ASI) along with the 'Endowments Department' and the 'Local Temple Trust' is responsible for the conservation and protection of the temple complex.

Communication and Communities

Being a living temple, the process of rituals like the lighting of an oil lamp in the sanctum sanctorum and pouring coconut water over the linga for which a passage has been provided in the temple design itself etc. are being practiced daily at the temple since its construction. The local people of the place visit the temple on a regular basis to offer their prayers to the deity. Therefore, the temple has reached its present status by the combined efforts of the communities and the government bodies.

Towards World Heritage Recognition

The Heritage Temple of Rudreswara (Ramappa) is nominated in the tentative list for consideration as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO- WHC holding the title 'the Glorious

⁷ G. Yazdani, Annual report of the Arcaeological departemen of his highness the Nizam's dominions, 1917.

Kakatiya Temples and Gateways', Warangal, Andhra Pradesh (India) as part of a serial nomination under criteria (i), (ii) and (iii) along with Rudreswara Temple (Thousand Pillar Temple), Hanamkonda and the Remnants of Swayambhu Temple and Keerthi Thoranas, Warangal Fort in 2014. Presently the Government of Telangana has decided to present Rudreswara (Ramappa) Temple as a cultural property under criteria (ii) and (iv) as it is the only intact and safe temple structure by any human or natural disasters.

Conclusion

The world recognition of the Rudreshwara temple is an introduction to the hidden outstanding art, architecture and technology of the 'Kakatiyas'. It is a step towards the development of a small village temple into a world renowned site.

References

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