



## ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES IN LATER CHALUKYAN TEMPLES OF KARNATAKA

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### ABSTRACT :

*Between the earlier and the later Chalukyan temples there appear to be no transitional examples to bridge over the gap, excepting, perhaps, Kallesvara at Kukkanur, and the old Jain temple at Lakkundi in the Gadag district. About the middle of the eighth century the Rashtrakutas of the north, whom we have already seen cutting rock-temples at Ellora, swept down upon the Chalukyas, took possession of their dominions, and held them until about A.D. 973, when a descendant of a side branch of the Chalukyan family regained possession of their ancestral lands. This may account for the absence of buildings during the period the country was in the hands of strangers. Not only in style is there a great difference between the earlier and the later work, but the material used has changed from the rougher grained sandstone to the more compact, tractable, and finer grained black stone known as chloritic schist, which dresses down to a much finer surface, and has enabled the sculptors to produce so much of that beautiful, delicate, lace-like tracery which characterises the later work, and which it would have been difficult to produce in the coarser material<sup>1</sup>. With it the circular shafts of the pillars have been brought to a very high state of polish. Hence, an attempt is made to elaborate some architectural features of later chalukyan temples of Karnataka.*

**KEYWORDS :** Chalukyan family , finer grained black.

### INTRODUCTION:

Lakkundi, the ancient Lokkigundi, now rather a deserted-looking village in the Dharwar district, full of the ruins of old temples enclosed within the old fort walls, was once a place of considerable importance. We learn that in A.D. 1191, the Hoysala king, Ballala II., made Lokkigundi his headquarters after finally extinguishing the Chalukyan family and annexing their territory to his own in the south<sup>2</sup>.

The old Jain temple in the west end of the village is, probably, the oldest temple here. We have far fewer temple inscriptions to help us in dating these later temples, though the country is full of inscribed tablets recording miscellaneous grants. A grant to a temple may not give us any clue to the date of its construction, yet we can gather from it the simple fact that the temple is not later than the inscription. This Jain temple is not far removed from the temple of Kallesvara at Kukkanur, which we may take as an intermediate example between the earlier and the later style<sup>3</sup>. In both the size of the masonry has diminished, and we no longer find the heavy cyclopean blocks as used in the former. They are yet sufficiently heavy enough to be piled up without any cementing material, and, practically, no through or bond stones. In fact, all through the period of the older and medieval stone temples, here and elsewhere, no mortar or cementing material was used<sup>4</sup>. The masons depended upon flat horizontal beds with the weight of the superstructure to retain all in place. When their buildings did give way, through unequal settlement of the foundations, or cracking of beams or supports, the masonry generally rolled down like a house of cards.

Their foundations were poor, and of hardly any depth; many buildings were raised upon a layer of great undressed boulders spread upon the surface of the ground, and this not for want of funds, since they lavished an abundance of expensive decoration upon the superstructure. Over most of the Deccan the soil is firm, and the rock rises to or very near the surface<sup>5</sup>. In Northern Gujarat, where the soil is very sandy, most of the more important stone temples rested upon a substantial brick foundation.

The dedicatory block, above the doorway, which has frequently been alluded to, is a small, square, projecting panel on the middle of the lintel, upon which is generally carved an image of the deity to whom the temple is dedicated, or of some member of his train; and, thus, should the image in the shrine be missing, it is not difficult to say what deity occupied it. An apparent exception to this rule is the image of Gaja-Lakshmi, or Lakshmi with her elephants, frequently found upon the outer doorways of Jain temples in the Chalukyan districts, but never upon the shrine doors. This, in the past, has led to many mistakes, for she is found upon the outer doors of nearly all Brahmanical temples in this district as well. Because she was seen in old photographs over Jain doorways, it was taken for granted that all temples having her in the same position were Jain; but the great majority of temples in the Chalukyan country are Brahmanical. Lakshmi, here, was a favourite with both communities. Around the shrine walls of a temple are, usually, three principal images, one on each side and one at the back. The one at the back gives another clue to the original dedication of a temple<sup>6</sup>, for it has some immediate connection with the image in the shrine. Jain shrines have, as a rule, less figure sculpture upon them, and what there is a repetition of the Jina which is seated in the shrine. A Jain image always presides upon the dedicatory block over the shrine door of a Jain temple.

In Hindu temples the object of worship within the shrines of the Saiva or Lingayat cults is the Linga, or phallus, of Siva, except in temples to goddesses, which have an image of the appropriate deity. In Vaishnava temples there is installed an image of Vishnu or of some avatara or incarnation of him, as well as such allied deities as Surya-Narayana. In Jain shrines is always found an image of one of their twenty-four Jinas, or Tirthankaras (teachers), selected by the donor of the particular temple as his special favourite<sup>7</sup>. These are either clothed or nude, according as the donor belonged to the Swetambara (white robed) or Digambara (nude, sky-clad) sect, and are found either sitting or standing with the arms hanging by the side in the latter case. The Digambara images are nude to the waist, and in this particular they differ from Buddhist statues, which are shown with but one arm and shoulder bare, or fully clothed.

Passing on to the more elaborately decorated temples of the tenth to the thirteenth centuries, we may take that of Kasivisvesvara at Lakkundi as a fair example. Plate 22 shows the south side of the same. In this will be seen the storied arrangement of the tower, still discernible, though much masked by the superabundance of ornament; and it will also be seen how the vertical bands of the northern tower are simulated by the arrangement of the trefoil niches, ranged, in line, one above the other. As a purely decorative detail, the miniature sikhara, or tower, of the northern type is often introduced into niches around the temple walls. The rich lace like work, for which these temples are noted, is seen in the mouldings around the doorways, much of it being so thoroughly undercut as to have the appearance of the finest fretwork, standing away from the stone, and held to it by but a few tiny struts beneath. The village is full of these old shrines, which are, now, nearly all deserted or used for other purposes.

Even more elaborate is much of the carved work in the old temple of Mahadeva at Ittagi, 6 miles away across the border<sup>8</sup>. This is a much larger building than that of Kasivisvesvara, it having what the other does not possess, a large open pillared hall.

The tower, as it now stands, rises in three tiers, or stories, with a few of the lower courses of the masonry of the fourth which carried the finial. These stages are quite distinct, and are not so cut up and masked by decorative details as in Kasivisvesvara and others of the same class. The little cusped niches, which adorn the middle of each story, rising one above the other, are very handsome; and the delicate work is further enhanced by the rich dark shadows in the niches. Some eighteen to twenty-four inches of the basement is still covered up with the silt of ages, the lowest mouldings being hidden.

The triangular corner slabs of the central ceiling of the outer pillared hall are marvels of fretted stone. The great slabs have been worked into a rich heavy mass of hanging arabesque foliage and makaras<sup>9</sup>,

which emerge from the jaws of a kirttimukha or grotesque face. The spirited convolutions of the design, with their circling excrescences and bewildering whorls, form, altogether, as rich a piece of work as will be found amongst these temples. What adds to the effect is the remarkably deep undercutting, so that the whole of this petrified mass of foliage hangs from the ceiling by a forest of little struts, hidden in the dark shadows behind it, and connecting it with the main body of the slab.

The great open hall, at the east end, was originally supported upon sixty-eight pillars, of a totally different style from those of the earlier temples. By this time the masons had learnt something about the strength of materials, and that a much lighter pillar was sufficient. Twenty-six of these are large ones standing upon the floor and forming the main support of the roof; the rest, which were dwarf pillars, stood upon the surrounding bench, or scdile, and carried the sloping eaves<sup>10</sup>. The larger columns are of different patterns, but are arranged symmetrically with regard to their designs. The four central ones are of the most complicated design, and are similar to those in the porch of the temple of Dodda Basappa at Dambal. There are also round and square shafted pillars as in Kasivisvesvara at Lakkundi, the round sections, as usual in this type of pillar, having been turned in the lathe. It must not be supposed that they were turned in a horizontal position, for that would have been impossible. They were turned in a vertical position, and the fixed tool was brought up against the roughly dressed shaft as it revolved. On many pillars the fine grooves of the sharp-pointed tool are left, but, in the more finished examples, the surface has been polished almost as smoothly as glass.

#### CONCLUSION:

Other highly decorated temples, of about the same period, are found in many places within the old Chalukyan boundaries, and there is hardly a village that has not some remains, either as the ruins of an ancient shrine or inscribed slabs. The more notable remains are found at Gadag, Haveri, Hangal, Bankapur, Kuruvatti, across the river, Dambal, Chaudadampur, Niralgi, Harahalli, Galagnatha, Harihara, Rattihalli, Balagamve, across the border in Maisur, Unkal, Degamve, and Belgaum. The little temple of Sarasvati, the goddess of learning, at Gadag has some elaborately designed pillars, and there are no others that are equal to these for the crowded abundance of minute detail which covers their surfaces. It consists, chiefly, of repetitions of miniature shrines, tiny pilasters, panels containing Lilliputian deities and attendants, rampant lions, and a host of other detail. The little images are adorned with necklaces, bracelets, anklets, and a profusion of other jewellery, each bead and jewel being fashioned with the most careful and delicate touch. Other pillars in this shrine are decorated with a beautiful diaper pattern around their shafts, of which there is just sufficient to make us wish for more. At Kuruvatti some of the flying figure brackets are still to be seen. These existed in most of the temples, but nearly all have been removed or destroyed. The evidences of the religious zeal of the iconoclasts of Islam are everywhere apparent among these shrines. At Dambal we come across a temple built upon a totally different plan from those generally met with at least, so far as the exterior is concerned. The star-shaped plan, occasionally indulged in, was obtained by revolving a square about its centre that is, the intersection of its diagonals. The angles of the square will thus travel round upon a circle, and, if the angles are stopped at points equidistant from one another, they will form the periphery of the plan of the proposed building, all the angles of which are right angles. The hall follows the same plan, though larger, the two giving an outline of a serrated 8. But, less frequently, temples have been found where the angles were not all right angles. A circular plan is not found, the nearest approach being a circular corridor, containing images, surrounding an ordinarily planned temple at the Marble Rocks, near Jabalpur. The Hangal temple is noted for its very large domical ceiling in the main hall, which rises, like some of those in North Gujarat, in concentric circles of cusped mouldings, and then, at the apex, falling again in a great rosette or pendant.

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6. *Ibid*
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8. *Ibid*
9. James Fergusson, *Architecture in Dharwad and Mysore*, p.133
10. *Ibid*