

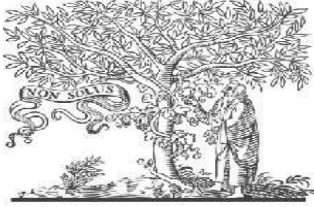


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Chaya Someshwara Temple The Magnificent Architectural Engineering and Art Grandeur

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Abstract

Panagal of Nalgonda was a significant religious place during Kakatiya period. An inscription mentioning Pratap Rudra the greatest Kakatiyaking on PachalaSomeswara temple supports the assertion that these temples were erected for the greater glory of the Kakatiya ruler's favorite god, Shiva.Chaya SomeswaraSwamy temple and PachalaSomeswara temple are two well-known Shiva temples.The Chaya Someswara is a trikuta shrine with a common hall formed by plain wall and a nominal adhisthana for its vimana with Phamsana superstructures crowned with a square shikara. When daylight is present, the Shiva lingam of Chaya Someswara (chaya means "shadow" in Telugu) is straddled by a constant shadow of a pillar.The pillars of the temple are adorned with relief sculpture of episodes from the two great epics of India, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata.

The research paper is a study of the Art and Architecture of the Chaya Someshwaraand the shadow that falls inside the garbhagriha. The paper is based on field work and survey conducted as part of documenting the temples for applying a Project.

Keywords: Chaya Someshwara, Siva, Architecture, Shadow

Introduction

Nalgonda District is located between 16°-25 and 17°-50 of the northern latitudes and 78°-40 and 80°-5 of the eastern longitudes. Medak and Warangal districts border the district on the north, Guntur and partly Mahabubnagar district on the south, Khammam and Krishna districts on the east, and Ranga Reddy and Mahabubnagar districts on the west. The district has a total size of 14,240.00 Sq. Kms (Miriyala Ramesh Kumar: 2015: 301).

The territory was once a part of Andhra Satavahana Empire. Later a branch of the Andhra Rulers ruled over this territory with Panagal as their capital till Kirtivarman, the Chalukyan King, conquered them. Later it formed part of the Warangal who constructed among other buildings, the temples of Sri PachalaSomeswara and Sri Chaya Someswara at Panagal in Nalgonda. Later Nalagonda became the capital of Jalakhan. After the dissolution of the

Bahmani Kingdom, the territory was occupied by the Qutub Shahis (1424). Later when Asafhjis established their independent kingdom, the district was brought under their control till 1948. Finally, it became part of Andhra Pradesh with effect from 1956 (Miryala Ramesh Kumar: 2015: 301).

Chayasomeshwara Temple

The temple is situated about a mile to the east of Panagal in the Nalgonda district of Telangana. The Chayasomeshwara is a Trikuta, situated inside the compound built of large blocks of stones. There are three entrances to the temple, one in the east, consisting of a four pillared mantapa, another in the south, consisting of a long narrow mantapa and the third in the west, consisting of a two storeyed mantapa. There are six small subsidiary shrines inside the compound, two in the south, three in the west and one in the north, each with walls on three sides and two pillars in the front (Rama Rao: 1966, 88).

The main shrine consists of a mukhamantapa with a roofed porch in the south and three shrines to the north, east and west. A low adhistana in the front consists of a flat upana, deep gala adorned with four petalled lotuses and a flat alingapattika. The outer side of the vedi is decorated with a row of elephants, human figures, and a flat band. The vimana of each shrine consists of twelve steps, a narrow gala and a Nagarasikhara with a simhalalata on each face. A row of miniature vimanas adorn the

edges of the roof of the front part of the mukhamandapa and the porch. A sukhanasa projects from the front base of each vimana with a big simhalalata gable in its front. The entrance of the porch is made of four short pillars and a flight of four steps (Rama Rao: 1966, 88).

The three shrines are similar in construction. The jambs in the doorway of the garbhagriha contains relief works of the dvarapalas and the lintel with the figure of Gajalakshmi. The architrave above is decorated with a row of miniature shrines. A kutagara is found on two slender pillars on either side of the wall. Only the vedis are found in the sanctuaries in the north and south. There is a deep pit filled with water in the garbhagriha of the western temple, and the linga of Someshwara is set on a vedi. The shrines in the north and south contain only the vedis. In the garbhagriha of the western shrine there is a deep pit filled with water and the linga of Someshwara is installed on a vedi. A square beam of shadow above the Linga on the wall is observed throughout the year.

A kutagara is mounted on two slender pillars on either side of the wall. Only the vedis are found in the sanctuaries in the north and south. There is a deep pit filled with water in the garbhagriha of the western temple, and the linga of Someshwara is set on a vedi.

Architectural Features

The trikuta shrine called the Chayasomesvara or the Saila-Somesvara is situated near a cistern. The temple faces east. The vimana of the Chaya Someshwara

is plain square with divisions. The arrangement envisages a trikuta complex sharing a common gudhamandapa following the Karnatan convention. The plain cubiform vimana, has its origin in the indigenous dolmen tradition of the pre-and proto-historical times and frequently observed in the buildings of Telangana. The columns inside are mainly of the Citrakhandia order, with components either sparsely or profusely decorated or almost totally left plain (Dhaky: 1996, 447). The whole complex is surrounded by a prakara-wall of large blocks, now partly ruined. It has three entrances, the other two being a long narrow mandapa at the south, and a two-storied open structure at the west entry. Within the prakara, besides the main trikuta temple, there also are six plain subsidiary shrines without porches, two located in the south, three in the west, and one in the north. None of them is architecturally significant nor does their relational layout bears out any symmetry in disposition of the complex's overall plan.

The main trikuta shrine with a common hall is an austere building formed by plain walled cubes and a nominal adhisthana for its vimanas but with shapely phamsana superstructures crowned with a square sikhara (known as "Dravida-ghanta" in the western Indian Vastusastra, the Aparajitaprccha)(Dhaky: 1996, 456). The hall's facade has an adhisthana of the advanced mancabandha class, having stylized flowers in the kandhara, topped by a kapota and a gajapatti and next a kaksasana

bearing on its face the frolicking bhutas and other figures in panels, all somewhat worn out. The edge of its flat roof is lined by hara at the east facade as well as along the catuski's roof. The interior of the hall has a peripheral bench with the kandhara having flowers inset in panels, some tall and rhomboid and some squarish. The bench supports plain abbreviated Citrakhandia pillars, while four decorated Citrakhandia pillars form a sala-catuski above a rangabhumika. Their padma-mandi is reminiscent of the Pallava type(Dhaky: 1996,456) the total shape of these pillars of the Chayasomesvara temple hall is still far away from perfection, because the cubical section is rather large and the following lasuna part above is rather narrow and much too constricted. An Asta-Dikpala ceiling with Natesa in the center covers the nave of the hall. Each antarala has a pair of thin archaic pillars resembling those at the antarala of the four shrines (Dhaky:199, 457).

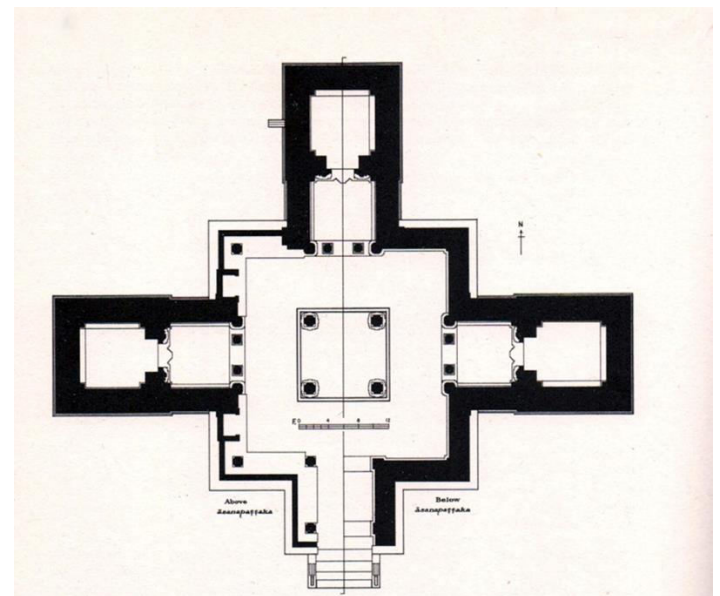
The mysterious shadow is a huge attraction. The Chaya that falls on the deity, facing east and seen on the wall behind the Shiva linga looks like a shadow of one of the pillars in the sabhamantapa. But it is not the shadow of any pillar but a consolidated shadow of all the four pillars. Another architectural wonder apart from the shadow that falls on the deity, if one stands in front of the Shiva Linga in the inner sanctum, they will find their own shadow divided into two parts behind the wall of the deity.

The shadow is caused by the distraction of pillars, according to science and scholars investigating the cause of this enigmatic shadow attribute it to the CV Raman Effect. It is said that the architect who designed the temple positioned columns in such a way that the sunlight entering the temple casts a shadow inside the garbhagriha having the Shivalinga. The temple has a low surrounding wall to allow unhindered inflow of light. The Garbhagudi are connected to the sabhamantapa through vestibules. Each vestibule has two pairs of beautifully sculpted pillars. The shadow is not of any single pillar but a combined shadow of the four central pillars in the sabhamantapa. The Maha Shivaratri is celebrated with tremendous fanfare, and devotees from all across Telangana and Andhra Pradesh flock to the temple to seek the blessings of God Someshwara.

Among the temples that leaves the devotees captivated is the Chayasomeshwara temple at Nalgonda. The science and artistry of temple construction, as documented in ancient Indian scriptures, bear witness to temples all over the country, each one distinct and magnificent in its own history and style. The Chayasomeshwara is one such temple that surpasses the others in the scientific implementation of optics. The shadow formed on the Shivalinga in the garbhagudi due to the scientific placement of the pillars that scatters light resulting in

the shadow, provides evidence to the engineering skills employed by the architect. Apart from the shadow in the temple, the pillars are beautifully carved depicting the stories from the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. The ashtadikpalas in the ceiling of the hall displays the artistic creativity. The architectural brilliance and the vivid texture of the shapes that adorn the exterior and interior with such astonishing clarity attest to the architectural genius and demonstrate the great perfection achieved by the sculptors and architects of that era.

Photos



Plan of Chaya Someshwara temple
(Courtesy: Encyclopaedia of Indian Architecture)



Exterior of the ChayaSomeshwara Temple



The Chaya (shadow) inside the garbhagriha throughout the year Interior view of the temple



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