



## The Chennakeshava Temple of Aralaguppe-Its Features And Perspective of Hoysala Architecture:

Reshma Anjum

Research Scholar, Department of Studies and Research in History and Archaeology, Tumkur University, B.H.Road, Tumakuru-572103, Karnataka.

### ABSTRACT

*In this paper, I aim to clear the concept about the Chennakeshava Temple of Aralaguppe of Tiptur Taluk, in Tumakuru district. It is important to know the features of the temple and the perspective of the hoysala architecture with reference to the Chennakeshava temple of Aralaguppe. Although all the temples of hoysalas amplify the spatial units, i.e., garbhagraha (sanctum), sukanasi (vestibule), navaranga (closed hall of worship), and mukhacatuski (pillared entrance hall) and so on, but they are not uniform in context with the Hoysala Temples. This paper is based on the research and an attempt to highlight the Chennakeshava Temple in a Taluk, its features and perspective of Hoysala architecture.*

**KEYWORDS :** Chennakeshava, Aralaguppe, Hoysala Architecture, Ekakuta, Vimana, Garbhagriha, Sikhara.

### 1.INTRODUCTION- A Short History of Hoysalas:

The Hoysalas, who were the feudal lords of the Chalukyas of Kalyani, became independent in the eleventh century and founded a new dynasty with their name. The Hoysala were a dynasty of Hindu kings, who ruled a medium sized kingdom in Karnataka Southern India, during the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries. They began their career as a chiefs of hill tribes in the mountains of the Western Ghats. These are the mountains that separate the western coastal belt of peninsular India from the central plains called the Deccan plateau. Karnataka nearly completely consists of these vast plains; the ghats are low here and the coastal belt only narrow.

Hoysala dynasty is a South Indian dynasty that existed between 1110 A.D. and 1326 A.D. Vinayaditya (1047-98) ruled an area centered on Dorasamudra (modern Halebid), which became the dynasty's capital. His grandson Bittiga (later called Vishnuvardhana; reigned c.1110-42) made extensive conquests, including the Mysore plateau, and built magnificent temples at Dorasamudra that were noted for their intricate and elaborate sculpture. Bittiga's grandson, Vira Ballala II (reigned 1173-1220) extended Hoysala control North of Mysore and made the dynasty the most powerful in South India. The Hoysalas later came into conflict with the empire of Vijayanagar and the Muslim sultans of Delhi, and the last Hoysala rule was overthrown in 1346. At its height the dynasty ruled over parts of the modern states of Mysore, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, and Tamil Nadu.

The rulers of this clan were called the Yadava Kings who ruled with tremendous power after having defeated the Chalukyas and rose above all to become the paramount rulers even over the Cholas and Pandyas in South India. The Hoysala dynasty originally had their capital at Halebid (about 17 kms from Belur) where they ruled for over 150 years. However, it was attacked by invaders a couple of times during the 14th century, reducing the once grand capital to poverty and ruins. Thus, the Hoysalas shifted their seat of power to Belur which stood proud as a powerful empire back then.

### Administration:

The framework of Hosalya Dynasty was inherited from Chalukyas. The Hosalyas divided the kingdom into Nadus, Kampanas, Vishayas and Deshas. The officer who managed small territories units like nadus in the kingdom were called as Nadaprabhu, Nadagauda and Nadasabhova. Each was governed by a minister called Mahapradhana who headed the local body. The treasure Bhandari who reported to the province was known as Dandanyaka. Dandanyakas were in responsible for charge of armies and the chief justice namely the Dharmadhikari of the Hoysala Court. The supervisors or officials Heggaddes and Gavundas used to supervise the local farmers and labourers. The person who looked after the towns and who had both civil & military functions was called the Pattanaswami.

### Economy:

The economy during the Hoysalas period was predominantly Agrarian. There were very few basic industries which flourished. The trade was very decent and organized into guilds, which helped in the growth and promotion of fair trade. The Hoysalas had contacts and trade with Chola, Chera, Magdha, Malaya, Pandya, Kosala, Persia, Nepal, Arabia and other countries.

### Religion:

The Hoysalas followed Hinduism along with Jainism and Buddhism. We can find the evidence in the Jain Places in Shravanbelagola and Kambadahalli. The important inspired Philosophers Basavvana, Madhavacharya and Ramanajacharya spotted the religious movements which are found in Hoysala rule. Hoysalas were the most powerful and had great valour. The Dynasty is known for its intense blend of bravery and cultural richness which is an epitome in the history of India.

### Decline:

With the rise of Tughlak Sultans in 1320 AD, the Hoysala independence found its end, 200 years after its formation by accepting their overlordship. King Ballala III died in 1342, but the new rulers of Vijayanagar kingdom did not give his son the opportunity to assume power. And so, the Hoysala kingdom came to an end without having been conquered destructively.

### Perspective and features of Hoysala Architecture:

Often, in human history, less cultured but pugnacious nomadic people establish themselves as rulers over sedentary people not seldom adopting a lot of the culture of the ruled. Something comparable appears to have happened in Southern Karnataka when, during the 11<sup>th</sup> century, the Hoysala formed a small kingdom in the plains to the east of their part of the ghats, in the region around Belur and Halebid. During the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries their power extended and provided this region with the prosperity necessary for temple-building. Since the death of King Harsa Vardhana, many dynasties were enumerated in the various Indian medieval histories. After the 11th century, numerous architectural styles, mainly named after the dynasties, were found throughout the Indian continent. Though these dynastic styles have individual characters, various architectural and sculptural expressions show many similarities, reflecting very similar conceptions. The masonry temples dated from the 4th or 5th century and their progeny, found over the continent by the 7th century, often are quite different from any other forms of religious architecture throughout the world. In the architectural history of India, the evolution of the styles involved a conscious reflection and transformation from the precious dynastic styles, with significant reference to political and religious needs. One such dynastic styles is that of the Hoysalas in lower Karnataka. Not provided by the Hoysala, of course, was the sophisticated architectural style of the temples. Their architectural style derived completely from the rich tradition that already existed in Southern India, and that continued in its development during Hoysala rule.

This southern tradition of temple-building is called the **Dravida tradition of temple architecture**. It emerged in the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> centuries AD, simultaneously in Karnataka and Tamil Nadu, and reached its first mature achievements in Pattadakal (Karnataka) and Kanchipuram (Tamil Nadu). A continuous line of development connects the Dravida temples found in Pattadakal with the temples built during Hoysala rule.

Following are the basic features of Hoysala Architecture:

#### Style:

- Temple base is star shaped, and not square shaped
- Open Mandapa, closed by a compound wall.
- Miniature shrines within compound wall
- Temple wall profusely decorated with royals, sages, dancers and even Kamasutra figures.
- Gopuram usually seven storey
- Two Vimana and three Vimana structure- made from single granite.

#### Material:

- Soapstone, granite, schist stone and wood
- Sculpture are carved on schist stone is soft when quarried but hardens when exposed to air, thus preserving the fine details for a long period.

#### Deities:

- Shaiva, Vaisnava and Jain- depending on village demography.
- There are even twin-temples with both Shiva and Vishnu, indicating that devotees of Shaivism and Vainshnavism didnot have bitter rivalry- at least until the fall of Hoysala empire.

#### Chennakeshava Temple-Aralaguppe:

Among so many magnificent temples built by the Hoysalas, there are some small gems of their magnificent temples left in Araguppe. The Chennakeshava temple of Aralaguppe is also one built in a small village in Tiptur Taluk of Tumakuru district. Aralaguppe was known as 'Alariguppe' according to inscriptions from the bygone era. The Chennakeshava temple here has all the usual characteristics of the Hoysala architectural style, which is said to have been introduced first in the Hoysaleshwara temple, Halebid.

The Chennakeshava temple stands on a raised platform in the centre of the village. This is Ekakutachala temple a single celled temple, with its star shaped garbhagriha and tower is of a simple ground plan consisting of an antarala (vestibule), navaranga and an entrance ankana fitted with pierced stone windows, which allows subdued light into the temple. The temple follows the contours of the vimana and has a flight of steps in the front flanked by two miniature towers on each side.

One detail is unusual here that the front side of the closed hall is open here. Both this open side and the porch are provided with stone screens above the parapet-wall. Against the southern side of the shrine a coarse later addition has been built which is a second temple, built around a venerated wall-image that is sculptured on the outside of the shrine of the old temple.

The decorative friezes running around the temple wall provides many spectacular scenes. The row of six friezes carved one above the other, separated horizontally by deeply cut recesses, consists of caparisoned elephants, horses, creepers, mythological frieze, makaras and lastly hamsas. The mythological friezes tell the story of Ramayana and Bhagavata. The lowest friezes of elephants and horses are picturesque representations of the turbulent wars fought by the Hoysalas to build and consolidate their empire.

The wall decorations are as profuse as in any other ornate Hoysala temple. Here also we see the regular scheme of dividing the outer wall into two portions by a horizontally running cornice. The lower half has the sculptures standing below a canopy of creepers.

sists of koota aedicule each one rotated by 22.5 degrees, 45 degrees, and 22.5 degrees successively. The tower of the vimana with four talas has a vedike and koota roof at the top, which follows the contours of the sanctum below. The top kalasa is missing. The interior of the temple is elaborate and fine. The cella contains a large Vaishnava pedestal with a cult-image of Keshava that is too small for it, probably it is not the original one.

The navaranga is of the usual nine ankanas or divisions and has two niches containing Ganesha and Mahishasuramardini, both of exquisite workmanship.

A six-feet tall slightly damaged Keshava idol is kept in the navaranga and perhaps, was the original deity that adored the garbhagriha, but at present there is a smaller idol for worship. The pillars that support the navaranga and the ceilings are elaborately worked. The fine workmanship of the pillars is eye-catching.

On the south side of the temple, attached is the Lord Ugranarasimha temple. This part of the temple looked like a later addition to the main temple. The addition gives an awkward look to the main temple. An article printed in the Deccan Herald states that, 'Though Mysore archaeological report 1935, talks of removing this obstruction and building a separate temple for Narasimha, perhaps due to the unwillingness of the local villagers the project has remained on paper only'. The temple is being maintained by the ASI.

#### Concluding Remarks:

Though the temple is simple and elegant, it is a highly articulate example of Hoysala architecture. The Chennakeshava temple, dedicated to the Hindu god Vishnu, is located in Aralaguppe, a small town in the Tumakuru district, Karnataka state, India. The temple was built around 1250 AD during the rule of the Hoysala Empire King Vira Someshwara. The temple is a protected monument under the Karnataka state division of the Archaeological Survey of India. There is a permanent guard to take care of this temple.

#### RESHMA ANJUM:



Research Scholar, Department of Studies and Research in History and Archaeology, Tumakuru University, B.H.Road, Tumakuru-572103, Karnataka. Qualification: M.A., M.phil.(History) Occupation: Store Supervisor, KSRTC, Tumakuru Division, Tumakuru.

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The vimana of this temple is in the shape of 16-pointed star and con-