

The temples of Lakshmeshwara: An analytical study

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Abstract

Lakshmeshwara is a capital of Puligerenadu in medieval times. It is well known that puligerenadu played an important role in the medieval history of Karnataka. In fact, the region was also one of the outstanding administrative units in Karnataka. The temples of Lakshmeshwara may be classified into Shaiva, Vaishnava, Jaina and Islamic. A few temples of the Lakshmeshwara have been studied by some scholars. Among them Dr. S. Shettar and Dr. R.M.S hadaksharaiah are prominent. Lakshmeshwara had been receiving great patronage by the rulers right from the early chalukyas to the Vijayanagara period.

Keywords: lakshmeshwara, garbhagriha, antarala, navaranga, mahamantapa, mukhamantapa and ground plane, shankha basadi ananthanatha basadi adhisthana, adhisthana tiers, upana, jagathy, padma, kantha and kapotha

Introduction

Lakshmeshwara is a town belonging to the Shirahatty taluk of Gadag District. It is situated at 15.13°N 75.47°E and has an average elevation of 2080 feet. It is about 40 kms from south of Gadag towards Haveri road. It is famous for its prolific culture. There are theories of the origin of the name Lakshmeshwara from King Lakshmanarasa who was ruling Puligere or from the temple called Lakshmi gudi, which was situated in Lakshmanarasa. There are many important temples in this historic town. Someshwara, Lakshmi linga, Baleshwara, Linga Someshwara, Olamatha, Vacheshwara(Hojeshwara), Golleshwara and other Temples. There are two ancient Jain temples called Shankabasadi and Sannabasadi are in the town, as well as a notable doodh nana dargah. Lakshmeshwara is also home for many smaller shrines, a Masjid, the Kodiyellamma temple, the Mukha Basavanna shrine, and a gigantic idol of Suryanarayana etc.

The present article 'The Temples of Lakshmeshwara - A Analytical Study' is primarily embodies the field work conducted by author at the place where the temples are situated in the Lakshmeshwara.

Brief History

Lakshmeshwara is a capital of Puligerenadu in medieval times. It is well known that puligerenadu played an important role in the medieval history of Karnataka. In fact, the region was also one of the outstanding administrative units in Karnataka. It was mainly because of its strategic location that the rulers of various dynasties in Karnataka had tried to bring it under their control. Thus, right from the early chalukyas down to the decline of the Vijayanagara empire in the 16th century A.D., its position as the capital remained undisturbed. Lakshmeshwara was at its height of glory particularly under the Rashtrakutas and the Chalukyas of Kalyana.

The temples of Lakshmeshwara may be classified into Shaiva, Vaishnava, Jaina and Islamic. A few temples of the Lakshmeshwara have been studied by some scholars. Among them Dr. S. Shettar and Dr.R.M. S hadaksharaiah are prominent. Lakshmeshwara had been receiving great

patronage by the ruler's right from the early chalukyas to the Vijayanagara period. They built huge number of temples here. Most of the temples were undergoing renovations during the periods of the Chalukyas of Kalyana and Vijayanagara dynasties. Since most of the temples, as mentioned in the inscriptions, were in ruins.

Someshwara temple

The most important Temple at Lakshmeshwara is the Someshwara. It is situated in the North part of the Lakshmeshwara town. This temple flourished as a religious center during the days of the Chalukyas. As per an inscription dated 1102 A.D, where god is referred as Muddeshwara and later the god is referred as Swayambhu – Somanatha. According to this inscription, it was built by Someshwara, a mahasamantadhipathi, for in the memory of his son sovideva in 1096 A.D., The high walls of the Someshwara temple lend a feeling of a fort. It is a superb specimen of exclusive Chalukyan art and architecture. The principal deity that is worshipped in the temple is Lord Shiva. There are many small temples surrounding this big temple. Hence, it is called as the temple complex. The Someshwara temple facing east, is oriented in West-East direction. It has also entrances with mahamantapa on the South and North side of the Navaranga. The Someshwara temple consists of a garbhagriha, an antarala, a navaranga, a mahamantapa and a mukhamantapa in the ground plane.



Fig 1: Someshwara temple-Lakshmeshwara.

The garbhagriha of the temple is having sculpture of Uma-Maheshwara. It is believed that the idols of Shiva, Parvathi and Nandi were brought by an ardent Shiva devotee from Saurashtra. Hence, the temple is also referred to as Saurashtra Someshwara. The doorframe of garbhagriha has three shakhas. The lalata of the garbhagriha doorframe has the sculpture of Gajalakshmi. The antarala doorframe has the three shakhas comprising rosetti, patra and pilaster motif. The lalata of the antarala dwara has no sculpture. The jalandras are fixed at the sides of the doorframe.

The navaranga has four pillars at the centre. The ceiling of the navaranga has Bhuvaneshwari. It may be noted that two rows of three lotus each are shown in one of the ankanas. Navaranga has three entrances. The doorway of the Northern side of the navaranga has seven shakhas. Such has, rosette, floral decorations, pilaster motif with the figures of Naga-Nagini couples, deity figures, pilaster motif with the human figures, rider on an animal. The lalata is plain. The Uttaranga contains seven shikhars. Lower (Pedy) part of the doorframe has the sculptures of Ganga-Yamuna, Rathi-Manmatha. At the each lower side of the dwara has the sculptures of shaiva (male and female) dwarapalaka. The doorway of the Southern side of the navaranga has five shakhas. Such has, rosette, floral decoration, pilaster motif, floral decoration with the figures of musicians and patra. The lalata is plain. The Uttaranga contains shala shikhara in between Dravida vimanas. Lower (Pedy) part of the doorframe has the sculptures of Ganga-Yamuna, Rathi-Manmatha.

The main entrance of the navaranga is at the Eastren side. This doorframe has seven shakhas. Such has, rosette, floral decorations, pilaster motif, plain with sockets, pilaster motifs, plain with sockets and patra. The lalata is plain. The Uttaranga and the mukhamantapa of the eastern side appear to have been renovated.

The Northern and Southern entrance of the navaranga have mukhamantapa. This mukhamantapa has adhistana, pillar, sloping parapet as well as ceiling. This adhistana is not similar to the main temple. Besides, two pillars of the Northern mukhamantapa are distinct from the Southern mukhamantapa. Obviously, these parts were also added at a later period.

The Someshwara temple is having Mahamantapa. It is just adjoining the navaranga of the temple. It contains twenty four pillars, arranged in six rows. Two pillars each in the first and last rows, four pillars each in the second and forth rows, six pillars each in the third and fourth rows. The ceiling of the mahamantapa is decorated beautifully. The mahamantapa has four entrances on four sides. The Eastern doreframe of the mahamantapa is almost similar to the doreframe of the antarala. The Southern doorframe is similar to the Eorthern dwara. The Northern doorframe of the mahamantapa is different. It has three shakhas, such as, rosette, floral decorations and patra. In the lower side, the figures of the dwarapalakas are chopped off. The mahamantapa of the someshwara temple is appear to have been during the Vijayanagara time.

An inscribed hero stone fixed in the ceiling of the mahamantapa. It consists of four panels. The lowest panel depicts the war scene in which meny foot soldiers fighting with bow and arrow. Among them the figures of three heros are prominently shown. The second panel has also shown the fighting scene, the third panel has the depiction of three deceased heroes, each of them being carried by two

damsels. It has one more panel at the top. But it is broken.

Elevation of the temple

Someshwara temple is having Adhistana, wall, prastara, griva, shikhara, and stupi in the external elevation. Adhistana is an ornamental base on which the temple stands. Adhistana of the garbhagriha, antarala and navaranga bears a series of ornamental mouldings. Such as, upana, jagathi, kumuda, kantha, pattika, prati and kapota. The adhistana of the mahamantapa is in manchabandha type. The lower part contains rosette and the upper part contains plain pilasters shown horizontally.

The bhitti on the adhistana of the garbhagriha, on the North, on the South, on the West are having niches. The remaining part of the garbhagriha wall contains a deity with torana and a kirtimukha and torana capped by sikhara motif. On the wall of the garbhagriha, antarala and navaranga, the figures of the Ganesha, Vishnu, Shiva, Parvathi, Chamundi, Uma-Maheshwara etc, are shown. The wall of the mahamantapa is plain with grills here and there. The parapet wall almost extends from the navaranga.

The vimana of the temple was slight renovated recently. There is no uniformity in the alignment of the exterior garbhagriha, sukhanasi and other parts of the elevation. Thus, the whole temple had been frequently altered by the various rulers, who ruled over puligerenadu-300. Mahamantapa of the temple was renovated during the Vijayanagara period.

Lakshmi Linga Temple

Lakshmi Linga Temple is situated in central part of the Lakshmeshwara town. It is also called as Lakshmaneshwara. Temple is in trikuta form, it has three garbhagrihas on the East, on the North and in the South directions, three antaralas, a navaranga in its ground plan. The main temple is facing towards the East.

The main(Eastern) garbhagriha of the temple has no deity. The doorframe of the this garbhagriha has pancha shakhas. Such as, rosette, plain, pilaster, plain and patra. The lalata is plain. The ceiling of the garbhagriha contain lotus decoration. The Uttaranga is plain. Antarala also has no deitie. The doorway of the this antarala has two shakhas. Namely, rosette and pilaster. The lalata has shivalinga (later period). The lowerpart of the doorway is also plain. The Northern and Southern garbhagrihas are also beautifully decorated doorways. We have seen saptha shakhas in each doorframe. Such as, rosette, floral decoration, pilaster, floral decoration, patra and floral decoration. Lalata has Gajalakshmi sculpture. The part of antarala is renovated.

Very attracted part of the temple is Navaranga. It has four pillars on the raised plinth and is covered by a highly decorated deep dome-shaped ceiling called Bhuvaneshwari. It has a circular astadikpalaka panel. This type of the navaranga was common in the later chaluky period. The ceiling in the remaining eight ankanas have lotus decoration. The doorway of the navaranga has five shakhas. Such as, plain patra, rosette, plain and floral decoration. At the either side of the navaranga dwara are the tall and prominent niches. But, there is no sculptures in the niches.

Lakshmi Linga Temple has mahamantapa. But, this part of the temple is fully renovated. It has twenty four pillars in six rows, one in each at the rear side. Seven in each at the middle and four in between the rear and the middle. Kakshasana is also placed around the mahamantapa. The

small pillars are placed over the kakshasana. The doorframe of the mahamantapa has seven shakhas. Such as, rosette, floral decorations, pilaster, floral decorations, pilaster, rosettee and patra. The lalata has Gajalakshmi sculpture. The uttaranga has nagara type of seven vimanahas. Middle of the each vimana padmavathi was seated. The lower part of the doorframe is plain.

Elevation of the temple

The Lakshmi Linga temple was built upon the adhistana. Adhistana of the garbhagriha, antarala and navaranga has many tiers. Namely, upana, jagathi, padma, kumuda, kantha, prati, kapota etc. The makara pranalas are fixed to each of the garbhagriha. The bhitti of the three garbhagrihas has niches on three cardinal directions. These niches are beautifully decorated. But niches are empty. Niches consist of doorframe with four shakhas. The standing elephants are projected on four sides. The projected kapota ends have decorative garlands at the lower side. Nagara type of shikhara was seen on them. Shiva, Bhairava, Ganesha, Vishnu, Narayana, Chamunda, Vaishnavi, Bhairavi and other deities are shown on the top of the vimana.

Balleshwara Temple

This temple is situated in Bastibana of Lakshmeshwara. Temple consists a garbhagriha, an antarala and a navaranga in the ground plan. Shivalinga was placed in the middle of the garbhagriha. The doorframe of the garbhagriha has five shakhas. Namely, plain, plain, diamond, pilaster motif, circular pilaster motif and plain. The lalata of the doorframe has Gajalakshmi sculpture. The lower part of the doorframe is empty.

The navaranga of the temple has four pillars on the raised plinth at the centre. These pillars consist of a pitha, pedestal, cylindrical shaft, corbels, abacus and capital. The ceiling of the navaranga has decorated lotus. The doorframe of the navaranga consists of seven shakhas. Namely, rosette, plain, pilaster, plain, a circular pilaster, padma and plain. These shakhas continued up to pedya. The lalata has sculpture of Lakshmi. According to the architectural features of this temple, it was built around 11th Century A.D.

Elevation of the temple

The Balleshwara temple was built upon the adhistana. Adhistana consists of five tiers. Namely, upana, jagathi, padma, kumuda, kantha, and dentil heads. The bhitti has plain pilasters. These pilasters are capped by the toranas. Kumbhapanjara's are placed between the pilasters. Some figures of deities are shown here. On the Southern side, Dakshinamurthy was prominent. He wears a jatamukuta, earrings, necklace and other ornaments. Shiva, Darpanasundari, Buhvaraha, dancing Ganesha, Nataraja, Vidyadharas, and other sculptures are shown here. Above the vimana shikhara motif and at the top stupa was placed. Daksha and parvathi sculpture was placed at the chaitya motif with keerthimukha. On the Western side, Shiva, Vidyadhara, Chamundi, Bhairava, Bramha and other sculptures are carved. On the Northern side, Ugra-Narasimha, Parvathi, Nataraja, Chamundi, Nataraja, Mahishamardhini, Ardhanareeshwara, Vidhyadhara and other figures are placed.

Golleshwara Temple

Golleshwara is another important temple in the

Lakshmeshwara. It is situated at western part of the Lakshmeshwara. The original structure of the temple stylistically belongs to the 9th century A.A.D., Temple consists a garbhagriha, an antarala, a navaranga and a mahamantapa in its ground plan. Shivalinga was placed in garbhagriha with a silver mask. Parvathi sculpture was also there behind with the Linga. The doorframe of the garbhagriha has two shakhas. The navaranga of the temple has four pillars at the centre. Ceiling of the navaranga was renovated later during the Vijayanagara period. The doorframe of the navaranga has saptah shakhas. Namely, rosette, floral decoration, pilaster (sugarcane), pilaster, pilaster(circular), plain and animals. The lalata is plain. Pedya part of the doorframe has ganga-yamuna, rathimanmatha. Uttaranga part has shikharas (dravida-nagara). At the sides, srinidhi and padmanidhi are seated. The navaranga has two more entrances in the North and South directions. But, these two doorframes are renovated.

The mahamantapa of the temple has 16 pillars in four rows. Ceiling of the mahamantapa was renovated later during the Vijayanagara period. The doorframe of the mahamantapa has six shakhas. Such as, rosette, plain, pilaster, plain, pilaster (circular) and plain. These shakhas were continued upto pedya motif. Lalata consists a carved Ganesha sculpture.

Elevation of the temple

The Golleshwara temple was built upon the adhistana. Adhistana consists of five tiers. Such as, upana, jagathi, padma, kumuda, kantha, and dentil heads. The bhitti has plain pilasters. These pilasters are capped by the toranas. Kumbhapanjara's are placed between the pilasters. The temple has kadambanagara shikhara. The temple has been renovated during the Vijayanagara period.

Shankha Basadi

Puligere is one of the most important Jain centre in the history of medieval Karnataka. It is treated as golden age in the 10th Century A.D. of Jain literature. More number of Basadies and other Jain monuments were traced in Lakshmeshwara. As per many inscriptions, Shankha Basadi is one of the most important Jain monument in Lakshmeshwara. It is dedicated to Neminatha. It is also called as sahasrakuta Jinalaya. According to an inscription, this Jinalaya is built by Kumkuma Mahadevi during the period of Kirtivarma II. It is situated in Bastibana area, southern part of Lakshmeshwara. Basadi consists a garbhagriha, two navarangas and one mahamantapa in its ground plan. A sculpture of Thithankara is enshrined over a peetha. This peetha bears the figures of three lions flanked by rosette.

In the first navaranga, Naminatha Thirthankara (22nd Thirthankara) sculpture is placed over a peetha. This peetha consists an elephant and a lion on both sides. The doorframe of this navaranga is covered by metal plate. There is no sculptures in the second navaranga. The doorframe of this navaranga has pancha shakhas. Namely, rosette, floral decoration, pilasters, human figures and patra. The lalata has a Thirthankara image. Mahamantapa of the Basadi is renovated. It contains sixteen pillars in four rows. These pillars are in five varieties.

Elevation of the Basadi

Adhistana of the Shankha Basadi has seven tiers. Such as,

upana, jagati, kantha, padma, gala, kantha and kapotha. Bhatti of the garbhagriha and navaranga of Basadi is renovated. The bhatti of the mahamantapa has rosette designs. Below of these design, sculptures of musicians, erotic figures etc are placed. The bhatti has a sloping kapotha. It has a rekha nagara Vimana. It contains the figures of Thirthankaras on all the sides. There are 57 Thirthankara figures on the Northern side, 45 on the Western side, 49 on the Southern side. on the upper four sides, 674 figures of the Thirthankaras are placed. 884 Thirthankaras figures are carved on four sides at the top. The Jaina bimba is capped by the kalasa. Hence, this Basadi is also called as sahasrakuta Basadi. There is a Manasthamba erected in front of the temple.

Sendraka Durgashakti, a feudatory of Pulakeshin II of early chalukya dynasty, is said to have given donates to this Basadi. An inscription of Vinayaditya dated 686 A.D., refers to a grant to Jain acharya of Devagana and mulasangha of Lakshmeshwara. Another inscription of Vikramaditya II, dated 734 A. D., mentions gifts to Sweta Jinalaya. Hence it clears that, this jinalaya is also called as Sweta Jinalaya. All these inscriptions are shows its importance in the history of medieval Karnataka. And also it proves that, Lakshmeshwara was one of the most important centre during the 8th century A.D., to 12th century A.D., According to kannada literature, Adikavi Pampa wrote Adi Purana, seated in this Basadi.

Anantanatha Basadi

Anantanatha Basadi is situated near bus-stand area of Lakshmeshwara. According to its architectural features, the basadi was belonging to 10th-11th Century A.D.. The Basadi consists of three garbhagriha, each with an antarala, a common navaranga and a mahamantapa. The main(central) garbhagriha facing the North. A Thirthankara sculpture was placed here. Thirthankara is in samabhanga and is flanked by yaksha and yakshi. The plane prabhavali is in rectangular shape. The chouries are shown at the sides of the Thirthankara and over his head the mukkode is shown. Another garbhagriha, which was in Southern direction has a Thirthankara. The sculpture has a makaratorana and mukkode on the top of the head. Another garbhagriha, which was in Northern direction has a Parshwanatha Thirthankara sculpture. The peetha has the figure of lion. The doorframe of the centre garbhagriha has pancha shakha. Namely, plain, rectangular, pilaster, plain, pilaster(pilaster) and plain. The doorframe of the antarala has two plain shakhas and it has no figure in its lalata. The rectangular jalandras are fixed in the sides of doorframe. There are two niches in the walls at the sides of the antarala. Similarly, the remaining two garbhagrihas and antaralas are also same in features. The navaranga has four pillars over a raised platform. ceiling has a decorated lotus figure. The doorframe of the navaranga is in simple form.

The mahamantapa of the anantanatha Basadi has sixteen pillars in four rows. These pillars are in different types. The doorframe of the mahamantapa has five shakhas. In the lalata, the Jinafigure was shown. Another garbhagriha was placed, adjoined to the Western wall of the mahamantapa. The garbhagriha enshrined with a Thirtankara of Parshvanatha sculpture at the centre. He has seven hooded Naga canopy. Just in front of this sculpture, there is also another Thirthankara sculpture. It contains around it sixteen Thirthankaras. Besides the Thirthankara, Yaksha and

yakshini are also placed. The doorframe of the garbhagriha has seven shakhas. Namely, rosette, floral, pilaster(circular), plain, pilaster(circular), pilaster(plain) and patra. The ceiling of the garbhagriha has lotus figure.

Anantanatha Basadi was built upon the adhistana. Adhistana has five tiers. Such as, upana, jagathi, padma, kantha and kapotha. The bhatti of the Basadi is plain. It consists pilasters and these pilasters are capped either by the shakha motif or torana. On each cardinal side of the bhatti of the three garbhagrihas are having niches at the middle. These niches are beautifully decorated. The doorframes of the niches are having some shakhas and four plain shikharas. The lalata of the niches are capped by Rekhanagara type of shikhara. The three garbhagrihas are having kadambanagara type of shikhara.

Conclusion

The article focus upon the analytical study of the Temples of Lakshmeshwara. It has enabled us to know the temples of Shaiva and Jaina faiths. Among the different religions, Jainism had received great patronage by the rulers and their feudatories right from the early chalukya to the Vijayanagara period. The study of the Someshwara temple has clearly shown that the entire temple was renovated, especially, the bhatti, the shikhira, doorframes between 11th and 12th century, and addition of mahamantapa and prakara as well as small shrines during the Vijayanagara period. The Balleshwara temple has several features of Rashtrakuta period. But, this temple is also renovated at the later period. Thus the temples of Lakshmeshwara has provided the various types of temples and basadies, some with rare features.

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