



Galaganatha group of Temples

more shrines have been excavated, the shrine on the left is a magnificent rendering of Nataraja accompanied by Saptamatrikas. The Buddhist temple, on the hill partly is rock cut and partly structural. The Meguti Jaina temple has a rectangular shrine at the rear that houses the image of Mahavira Thirthankara. The temple is built on a raised platform, and a flight of steps leads to a large pillared *mukhamandapa*. A flight of stairs leads to another shrine on the roof, directly above the main shrine. From the roof, one can have a panoramic view of the plain dotted with temples. The Meguti temple has an inscription on its wall stating that it was built in the year 634 AD. This inscription is a great historical value and contains reference to the celebrated Sanskrit poets Kalidasa and Bharavi.

The prominent temple groups here are the Kontigudi group and the Galaganatha group. The Kontigudi group comprising four temples is simplest in form and considered to be the oldest. The Lad Khan temple, Gaudargudi temple and the Huchappayya math exhibit expanded versions of the simple flat roof *mandapa* type of temples.

The Ladkhan temple consists of a shrine with two *mandapas* in front of it. The shrine bears a Shiva linga. The *mukhamandapa* in front of the sanctum has a set of 12

carved pillars including the four massive ones at the centre. The *sabhamandapa* in front of the *mukhamandapa* has pillars arranged in such a manner as to form two concentric squares. There are also large monolithic perforated stone windows on the walls carrying floral designs. The plan of the building suggests that it could have been a village meeting hall, rather than a typical shrine for worship. This *mandapa* was used by a Muslim mendicant in the last century and hence it is known as Ladkhan temple.

The Huchiappayyagudi temple has a curvilinear tower (*sikhara*) over the sanctum unlike the Lad Khan temple. The interior of the temple has beautiful carvings. The Huchimalligudi temple, built in the 8th century shows an evolution in the temple plan, as it shows an *ardhamandapa* or an ante-chamber annexed to the main shrine. This also has a fully evolved curvilinear *sikhara*. The

Galaganatha group located on the bank of the river Malaprabha comprises nearly 30 temples. The main shrine of the group enshrining Shiva - Galaganatha has a curvilinear *sikhara*, and has images of Ganga and Yamuna at the entrance to the shrine.

The best known of the Aihole temples is the photogenic Durga or the fortress temple. The Durga temple is a more developed splendid structure, resembling on plan a Buddhist Chaitya. Standing on a high plinth, the temple has a *mukhamandapa*, *sabhamandapa* and *garbhagriha* with a passage bordered by pillars with carvings all apsidal in plan. There is a small pyramidal *sikhara* over the *garbhagriha*. There are some wonderful sculptures. On one side are the carvings of Siva on his Vrishabha vahana, Narasimha and Vishnu on Garuda and on one side Varaha, Harihara and Mahishasura Mardini trampling the buffalo demon on the other side.



Durga Temple

Museum



This museum is located in the Durga temple complex and surrounded by ancient fort wall on two sides, was originally planned as a sculpture shed in the year 1970 with the objective of collecting, preserving and exhibiting the sculptures, inscriptions and other architectural members collected by way of exploration and excavation in and around the monuments of Aihole. Subsequently the sculpture shed was converted into full-fledged museum in the year 1987. The objects mainly comprise of stone sculptures of Brahmanical, Jaina and Buddhist faith, mutilated architectural members, inscriptions, hero stones, etc., ranging from 6th-15th century AD.

The open-air gallery in front of the Museum welcomes the visitors. Sculptures comprising mainly Hero stones, Ganesha, Saptamatrikas, seated figures in the Chaitya arch, Jainas, Naga and Nagini figures datable from 7th to 10th centuries are displayed. After entering into the museum, the magnificent image of Ambika is seen in the first gallery besides a seated Buddha, Jaina, Lakulisa, matrikas and Ganesha. The right side entrance leads to galleries II - III in which Shiva, Ardhanariswara, standing Vishnu, matrikas, dwarapalaks are exhibited. The noteworthy sculpture in gallery - III is the image of Kalabhairava. In the verandah is a valley model of Aihole village, showing the present location of the village Aihole and the number of monuments in and around Aihole. The conservation works monuments are shown in the Translight boxes around the valley model. Trilingual touch screen Kiosk, giving information about history, art and architecture of Aihole, Badami, Pattadakal, is available in the museum.

Timings:
Museum : 9 AM to 5 PM all days
Site : Open from sunrise to sunset
Museum Entrance Fee:
 Indians, SAARC and BIMSTEC Citizens: ₹ 5 per head
 Others: ₹ 100 per head (Children up to 15 years free)
Videography charges:
 ₹ 25/- each per monument

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Aihole



Ladkhan Temple

Introduction

Aihole (Lat. 16° 55'; Long. 75° 52') is situated on the banks of the river Malaprabha, taluk Hunagund, district Bagalkot in Karnataka. It was a cultural capital during the Western Chalukyan rule (7th and 8th century AD). and occupies a unique place in the history of art, architecture and sculpture.

Approach

It is situated 36 Kms. from Badami, a taluk headquarters of the same name, district Bagalkot. Badami is the nearest railway station on Hubli-Sholapur line. Goa is the nearest airport and Hubli located about 139 Kms, has domestic air travel facilities. Aihole is the convenient place for tourist accommodation.

Legend

The etymological derivation of the place name is from Ayyavole Arya - volal (the valley of elders) or Aiholli / Aivalli and its Sanskritized form is Aryyapura. The name has an interesting story behind it. Parashurama after avenging the murder of his father, washed his blood stained axe in the Malaprabha River. The river is said to have turned red causing him to exclaim 'ai, ai! holi!' (ah, the river!).

Historical Perspective

Aihole is one of the most ancient places of the Karnataka state. In the Malaprabha valley Prehistoric sites

ranging from Paleolithic period to Megalithic period are reported in and around Aihole. Top of Maguti hill houses several dolmens of Megalithic period. The excavations at Aihole have revealed Pre-Chalukyan brick structures datable to Satavahana period. During Early Historic period the area was in the domain of the Mauryas and later on passed to the Satavahanas and then to Kadambas.

The emergence of western Chalukya dynasty founded by Polekeshi-I (c-AD 543-566) in sixth century AD with Vatapi (Badami) as their capital began a brilliant epoch in the history of Karnataka. This powerful dynasty ruled Deccan for nearly two centuries (AD 543-757). Among the early kings Kirtivarman-I (AD 566-597) and Polekashi-II (AD 610-642) succeeded for twelve years during the Pallava interregnum, Vikramaditya-I (AD 655-682) rejuvenated its glory and prosperity. Under Kirtivarman-II (AD 745-757) the empire reached its highest land mark and ultimately saw an end in the Rashtrakutas, the region came under the rule of the Chalukyas of Kalyan, Sevunas, Yadavas, Vijayanagara Kings and Marathas and finally was captured by the Britishers.

Architectural Perspective

Aihole with over hundred temples scattered in and around the village is famous as the "Cradle of Indian Temple Architecture". The political stability, abundant material prosperity, combined with peaceful atmosphere and a high level of religious tolerance in the Chalukyan dominion fostered all round cultural development, especially in the fields of art, architecture, literature, administration and other such arenas. For the first time in South Indian context, there was a great spurt in the religious architecture, both in the rock-cut and structural media. Experimentation in arriving at functionally viable and aesthetically appealing temple models was carried out in the three centers of architecture viz., Aihole, Badami and Pattadakal.

A number of indigenous architectural elements were harmoniously blended with the architectural and sculptural traits of the northern and southern styles, then in vogue. The greatest contribution of the Chalukyas of Badami, thus, is the evolving of the two main styles of temple architecture viz., the southern *dravida-vimana* and the northern *rekha nagara prasada* types through a series of experimentations that commenced at Aihole, continued at Badami and culminated at Pattadakal. The brief political conflicts with the Pallavas had a positive effect in so far as the efflorescence and diffusion of architectural and sculptural styles, proving beneficial to both.

Aihole was a great center of temple building activity. The temples can be seen here in *Dravida*, *Vesara* and *Nagara* styles. That is why the connoisseurs of Art and Architecture call it as a cradle of temple building activities. The noteworthy stylistic features and meticulous workmanship in temple architecture are seen in Trayambakesvara group, Jaina temple group, Gowri temple group, Ambigaragudi group, Jyothirlinga group, Meguti gudi group, Galaganatha group, the Durga temple, the Ladhkan temple, the Gaudaragudi, the Kontigudi and the Charanthimatha groups.

Monuments

The ancient fortification walls at Aihole may still be seen enclosing the town approximately in a circle. The paved entrance gateways and bastions are of particular interest as they furnish one of the most complete example of stone fortifications from this period. Both within and outside these walls are many temples belonging to various building phases. Despite the proliferation of ancient monuments at this site and the clear indication of an urban population (both inscriptional and archaeological), it is not known what function Aihole had for the Early Western Chalukyas. Temple inscriptions that mention the Ayyavole 500' guild of merchants suggest that the town was an important commercial center. Evidence of brick structural activity during the pre-Chalukyan period has been discovered and suggests that the town was already an important place prior to 5th century AD.

There are two rock cut cave temples, a Brahmanical temple - Ravana Phadi and a Jaina temple. The Ravana



Rock cut cave - Jaina temple

Phadi temple, excavated on a low hillock probably belonged to the 6th century. The square shrine, housing a rock-cut linga, is almost of the same size as the square *mandapa* in front. On the ceiling of the chamber connecting the front square *mandapa* and the main shrine are carvings of Vishnu on Garuda, a central lotus design and Indra on Airavata. On either side of the *mandapa*, two



Rock cut cave - Ravana Phadi