

RASHTRAKUTA TEMPLES AT CHIKKA-MAHAKUTA

*M.H. Vaddar**

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.21253257>

ABSTRACT

The Rashtrakuta temple at Chikka Mahakuta is not known by any name, even locally. Nor is it cared for. But it does catch the attention of an art historian. Rashtrakuta temples can be seen at Aihole, Badami, Pattadakal, Bachanagudda, Gudur, Yankachi and other places in Bagalkot district. One has to note that early Chalukya centers continued to attract the Rashtrakuta builders.

KEYWORDS: *Shiva Temple, The Bhairavesvara Temple, The Adikesvara Temple.*

Introduction:

A study of Rashtrakuta temples located outside the precincts of the Chalukyan centers gives us a clear indication that these temples located in the Mahakuta region belong to the transition phase from the early Chalukyas to that of the Rashtrakutas. About half-a-kilometer from Mahakuta, on the road leading to Chikka Mahakuta, we have two more temples - Adikesvara and Bhairavesvara next to one another. These two above mentioned temples and the one located to the south of the apsidal temple can be dated to either the closing years or to the beginning of the Rashtrakuta period purely on architectural grounds and stylistic considerations.

* **Dr. M.H. Vaddar**, Assistant Professor, Department of History, B. V. V. Sangha's Basaveshwar Arts College, Bagalkot.

Shiva Temple:



This temple located to the south of the apsidal Shiva temple at Chikka Mahakuta is the only Rashtrakuta structure to be found in this place. On plan it consists of a square garbhagriha, and a sukanasi. The garbhagriha is quite large, like many temples of the later post-early Chalukya period in the heart of the Chalukya land. The garbhagriha has four corner pillars. The ceiling is flat, and the beams that support the ceiling are placed on the four corner pilasters. The ceiling is plain without any decorative motif. Within the garbhagriha is a linga with a round pitha. Though a lot of disturbance has taken place in the garbhagriha, the pitha and the linga remain original. It may be noted here that the Rashtrakutas preferred a round pitha. The sanctum door is simple. It consists of three shakas. The first shaka is indented, the second shaka depicts a pilaster which is decorated with a medallion at the base, patta on the shaft and another patta with medallion on the top of the shaft. The pattas and the medallions of the shaft are unfinished. There is no lintel on the doorframe. Above the brackets of the pilasters there is an eave. An interesting part of the eave is its underneath portion. Here we have a row of hamsas, which is a typical Rashtrakuta feature. The eave is plain without any decoration. What may be called as an architrave depicts four dentil blocks. The base of the first jamb is broad and plain. The ceiling of the sukanasa is flat and plain. The width of the sukanasa is less than the width of the sanctum, and is more or less as wide as the doorframe of the garbhagriha. The sukanasa doorframe is very simple without any lintel and with two recessing narrow bands on all the three sides, in the inside of the doorway. The adhithana of the temple is now covered by soil. Only jagati, gala and kapota moulding

with uncarved blocks, meant for carving kudur can be seen. The outer-walls of both the garbhagriha and the sukanasa are, monotonously plain. Above the wall we have the eave in the shape of a kapota with uncarved blocks. Above, the garbhagriha rises the kadamba-nagara-sikhara, of six steps in pyramidal fashion, with a square stupa on the top. The sukanasa of the sikhara has fallen. The broken amalaka that once adorned the top of the sikhara, is now lying nearby. That this temple was a creation of the Rashtrakuta period, is indicated by the following facts: (1) The adishthana resembles the adishthana of the temples of the Rashtrakuta period in the Badami and Aihole region. (2) The plan of the temple with only a garbhagriha (larger) and a smaller sukanasi is something, which never occurs in the early Chalukya structures. The kadamba-nagara-sikhara of this temple has no parallel in the early-Chalukya period, but similar sikharas can be seen in the Rashtrakuta temples of the eighth and ninth centuries. In all probability this temple was built at the closing years of the eighth-century during the Rashtrakuta period.

The Bhairaveshvara Temple:



About 1/2 km. from Mahakuta complex of temples, towards the Chikka Mahakuta are located in the fields, by the side of the road, two temples. These are locally known as temples of Bhairavesvara and Adikesvara. The Bhairavesvara temple on plan possesses a garbhagriha, ardhmantapa, and navaranga. This temple which is dilapidated to some extent on the outside, is considerably large in size. It possesses a dravida sikhara. The garbhagriha is square and it has corner pilasters and four pillars

in the middle. In addition to corner pilasters, there are eight more pilasters on the walls in line with the pillars. The pillars are square in shape and are crowned by a 45-degree cut-profiled bracket with a projecting block. The pillars are severely plain. The pilasters are tetragonal in shape. A point of interest is, the floor level of the garbhagriha, is nearly two feet lower than the floor level of the ardhmantapa and the navaranga. There is a pranala on the outside, which is placed below the adhishtana. In the center of the garbhagriha, there is a Siva-linga of considerable size. The round pitha is original, while the linga, which is very small in height, seems to be a later insertion. The garbha-griha door is fluted into five shakas, which are severely plain. One of the shakas depicts a pilaster, which has a square base, multi-fluted shaft with octagonal square bands. The top of the shaft is cylindrical in shape which supports a circular cushion lid and a square but a large abacus. Three armed 45-degree cut-profiled brackets crown the abacus. Adjoining the sanctum, is an ardhmantapa, which is made up of two pilasters on either side of the garbhagriha door and two pillars in front of them. The pillars stand on a square pitha. Above the doorframe is a kapota moulding. The pillar is basically square, followed by a triangular mould, from which a vertical band arises and merges with a square patta. Above this patta is another patta, with a triangular moulding, with a vertical band, and again a triangular moulding. Adjoining the mantapa is a square navaranga. It houses four pillars, which are placed on a square platform in the center of the hall. The pillars stand on square pithas. On top of the shaft is a circular base followed by circular cushion lid, which is followed by 45-degree cut-profiled bracket with a median patta at right angle. Only two pillars are of this type, while the other two pillars in the navaranga have only a square patta. The pilasters attached to the walls are tetragonal in shape. The ceilings of the navaranga are flat and plain. Within the navaranga are kept sculptures of a Nandi facing the garbhagriha, a Saptamatrika panel and a sculpture of mutilated Vishnu. The Saptamatrika panel is very much worn out. Their respective vahanas carved below them are almost obliterated. Matrikas are shown with four hands holding their respective attributes,

which are again indistinct. The sculpture of Vishnu, which is unfortunately mutilated, is a fine example of artistic work of this period. Here Vishnu stands in samabhanga. Three of the arms are completely damaged. The upper right hand holds a lotus. Behind him is a prabhavali, made of a ring with petals. It looks like a shiraschakra than a prabhavali. On either side of Vishnu, in the bottom portion of the sculpture are four attendants, one of them a lady. Behind Vishnu is an elaborately carved prabhavali. It contains fine reliefs of Varaha, Narasimha and Matsya and flying Gandharvas. Above the doorway is a kapota moulding. The doorframe of the navaranga is simple and resembles the doorframe of the garbha-griha. The lintel has a Gajalakshmi. The adhisthana on the outside consists of upana, kanta, tripatta kumuda, kantha and kapota moulding with uncarved blocks. The tripatta kumuda is indicative of an earlier date and of its construction during the Rashtrakuta period. The outer walls of Bhairavesvara temple are marked by a series of projections and recesses. Pilasters form the projections and recesses. At regular intervals in both the Navaranga and garbhagriha sections of the walls, we also come across, panjaras. These panjaras depict sikhara models. In the ardhmantapa, we find two windows, with twelve small holes. The eave is in the form of a kapota showing sala and kudu motifs. Above the eave runs a parapet. An interesting aspect of the parapet is that it contains oblong and cross like dentils. Outside the Bhairavesvara temple a broken Nandi image is kept. The sikhara is a tri-tala of the Dravidian order, with salas and karnakutas. The base of the sikhara has a series of pilasters with three armed brackets. The stupi is of indented square type with plain nasika decorations. The kalasa is lost. This Bhairavesvara temple is also known as Naganatha temple. This temple may belong to the closing years of the Rashtrakuta period.

The Adikesvara Temple:

This temple is situated to the right of Bhairavesvara temple. It is locally known as Adikesvara temple. Recently, this temple has been completely rebuilt. The adhisthana has upana, jagati, kanta, tripatta kumuda, kanta and kapota and a moulding

with dentil heads which are uncarved.



The walls are monotonously plain. A series of circular rings. Above the shaft is the circular cushion lid over which sits the square indented abacus. The brackets are similar to the brackets of the ardhmantapa pillars. These are four-armed and they support the beams over which the ceiling is built. As a result of this the navaranga is divided into many ankanas. The central ankana above the circular platform is very broad, while other eight ankanas are smaller in size and run around the central broad ankana. The ceiling of the side ankanas is flat and plain, while the ceiling of the central ankana is elaborately worked out. It is octagonal in shape and domical at the top. This dome is decorated with an overhanging bud. The navaranga doorframe resembles the doorframe of the garbhagriha with carved shakas, one of them depicting a pilaster. The only difference is that the second shaka is circular in shape and plain, while in the garbhagriha section this jamb is decorated with scrolls containing tiny figures of musicians and dancers. A modern unit has replaced the right side jamb of the navaranga doorway. The lintel depicts Gajalakshmi. On the basis of architectural elements and stylistic considerations, this temple appears to be more advanced than the Bhairaveshvara temple and can be dated to the end of eleventh century.

References:

1. Rashtrakuta three temples; one Later Chalukyan temple.
2. Gary Tarr could not identify it as Rashtrakuta, and compares it to the early Chalukyan temples, and speaks of the absence of the features.
3. Rajashekara Rashtrakuta Art in Karnataka, Dharwad, p. 13.