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An analysis of historical perspectives of Hindu temples in Andhra Pradesh

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Abstract

History of mankind has shown that man cannot live without God. 'If God did not exist, it would be necessary to invent him!' declared Voltaire. Belief in God, in a cosmic Power or cosmic Law, in a superhuman Spirit or Being is basic to all cultures. It is as it were, in the very blood of mankind.

All religions have their sacred places, places of worship. All words which denote such places of worship, etymologically speaking, mean more or less, the same thing. 'Devalaya' means a 'house of God'. 'Temple' and 'Synagogue' mean a 'building for religious exercises' and a 'house for communal worship'. A 'Hindu Temple' also means the same thing. A 'Hindu Temple' is a 'place of prostration before God'.

This Hindu Temples Hren into a popular Siva Temple and Vaishnava Temple and Shkti Temple Centres During the days of Chalukyas and Cholas. It be came an important Hindu Temples Centres During the Pallava and Chalukya period. The earlies inscriptions of the Hindu Temples Refer to his reign. Later on the Vijaya Nagara Kings Greatly improved the Hindu Temples.

In the Andhra Pradesh, the Aihole and Pattadakal group of temples (5th to 7th centuries) show early attempts to evolve an acceptable regional style based on tradition. A mount the better known early structural temples at Aihole are the Huchimalligudi and Durga temples as also the Ladhkan temple, all assigned to the period 450-650 A.D. Pattadakal another capital of the Chalukya Empire, was a major site of temple Building by Chalukyan Monarchs in the 7th and 8th centuries. During the Next Thousand years (From 600 to 1600 A.D) There was a phenomenal growth in Hindu temples Architecture Both in Quantity and Quality. Equally important are the temples of Kasinatha, Papanatha, Sangamesvara, Virupaksa and others in Pattadakal near Aihole as also the Svargabrahma temple at Alampur (Andhra Pradesh). It is in some of these temples, built by the later Calukyas, that we come across the vesara style, a combination of the Northern and the Southern modes.

In the same spirit, Hindu temples are not just sacred spaces, they are also secular spaces. Their meaning and purpose have extended beyond spiritual life to social meaning. It is the sacred duty of all the leaders of the Hindu society to make every effort in this direction.

Keywords: Devalaya, assigned, vesara, gopurams, elaborate

Introduction

Hindu temple (Sanskrit: Mandir, Prasada) is a house of god(s). It is a space and structure designed to bring human beings and gods together, infused with symbolish to express the ideas and beliefs of Hinduism. Broadly speaking, the images in the Hindu temples fall into three groups: Saiva, Sakta and Vaisnava respectively belonging to the three cults of Siva, Sakti and Visnu. The Gupta period was marked by the rapid development of temple architecture. Earlier temples were made of wood, but freestanding stone and brick temples soon appeared in many parts of India. During the next thousand years (from 600 to 1600 A.D.) there was a phenomenal growth in temple architecture both in quantity and quality. Pattadakal another capital of the Chalukya empire, was a major site of temple building by Chalukyan monarchs in the 7th and 8th centuries. The Pallavas laid the foundations of the Dravidian school which blossomed to its full extent during the Cholas, the Pandyas, the Vijayanagar kings and the Nayakas. The Evolution of the Concept of Hinduism Temples (Emanatiions of the Saiva and Vaishnava and Shkti Gods) Which was Largely Systematized During the Gupta period. Gained popularity in the deccen during the chalukyan period. In Hindu tradition, there is no dividing line between the secular and the sacred. In the same spirit, Hindu temples are not just sacred spaces, they are also secular spaces.

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A Brief History of Hindu Temples

How and when the first temple took its birth is anybody's guess. Temples do not seem to have existed during the Vedic mantras might have come into vogue by the end of the Vedic period. The view that the yagasala of the Vedic period gradually got metamorphosed into temples by the epic period owing to the influence of the cults of devotion is widely accepted.

In spite of the basic pattern being the same, varieties did appear, gradually leading to the evolution of different styles in temple architecture. Broadly speaking, these can be bifurcated into the northern and the southern styles. The northern style, technically called nagara, is distinguished by the curvilinear towers. The southern style, known as the dravida, has its towers in the form of truncated pyramids. A third style, vesara by name, is sometimes added, which combines in itself both these styles.

The earliest temples in north and central India which have withstood the vagaries of time belong to the Gupta period, 320-650 A.D. Mention may be made of the temples at Sanchi, Tigawa (near Jabalpur in Madhya Pradesh), Bhumara (in Madhya Pradesh), Nachna (Rajasthan) and Deogarh (near Jhansi, Uttar Pradesh).

There are many ancient texts laying down the formal architectural styles prevalent in the various regions so that the comprehensive text called the Vastu Sastra has its sources in the Sutras, Puranas and Agamas besides Tantric literature and the Bharat Samhita. But all of them are agreed that basically styles can be divided into nagara, dravida and vesara.

During the next thousand years (from 600 to 1600 A.D.) there was a phenomenal growth in temple architecture both in quantity and quality. The first in the series of southern or Dravidian architecture was initiated by the Pallavas (600-900 A.D.) The rock-cut temples at Mahabalipuram (of the 'ratha' type) and the structural temples like the shore temple at Mahabalipuram and the Kailasanatha and Vaikuntha Perumal temples in Kancheepuram (700-800 A.D.) are the best representatives of the Pallava style. The Pallavas laid the foundations of the Dravidian school which blossomed to its full extent during the Cholas, the Pandyas, the Vijayanagar kings and the Nayakas. The temples, now built of stone, became bigger, more complex and ornate with sculptures. Dravidian architecture reached its glory during the Chola period (900-1200 A.D.) by becoming more imposing in size and endowed with happy proportions. Among the most beautiful of the Chola temples is the Brhadisvara temple at Tanjore with its 66 meter high vimana, the tallest of its kind. The later Pandyas who succeeded the Cholas improved on the Cholas by introducing elaborate ornamentation and big sculptural images, many-pillared halls, new annexes to the shrine and towers (gopurams) on the gateways. The mighty temple complexes of Madurai and Srirangam in Tamil Nadu set a pattern for the Vijayanagar builders (1350-1565 A.D.) who followed the Dravidian tradition. The Pampapati and Vitthala temples in Hampi are standing examples of this period. The Nayaks of Madurai who succeeded the Vijayanagar kings (1600-1750 A.D.) made the Dravidian temple complex even more elaborate by making the

gopurams very tall and ornate and adding pillared corridors within the temple long compound.

In the Andhra Pradesh, the Aihole and Pattadakal group of temples (5th to 7th centuries) show early attempts to evolve an acceptable regional style based on tradition. A more better known early structural temples at Aihole are the Huchimalligudi and Durga temples as also the Ladkhan temple, all assigned to the period 450-650 A.D. Pattadakal another capital of the Chalukya Empire, was a major site of temple Building by Chalukyan Monarchs in the 7th and 8th centuries. During the Next Thousand years (From 600 to 1600 A.D) There was a phenomenal growth in Hindu temples Architecture Both in Quantity and Quality. Equally important are the temples of Kasinatha, Papanatha, Sangamesvara, Virupaksa and others in Pattadakal near Aihole as also the Svargabrahma temple at Alampur (Andhra Pradesh). It is in some of these temples, built by the later Calukyas, that we come across the vesara style, a combination of the Northern and the Southern modes.

The Evolution of Hindu Temples

In the temple the god was worshipped by the rites of puja or archana (reverencing a sacred being or object) as though the worshipers were serving a great king. In the important temples a large staff of trained officiates waited on the god. He was awakened in the morning along with his goddess; washed, clothed and fed; placed in his shrine to give audience to his subjects; praised and entertained throughout the day; and ceremoniously fed, undressed, and put to bed at night. Worshipers sang, burned lamps, waved lights before the divine image and performed other acts of homage. The same is true of most of the main religious centers of Northern India and South India.

The Evolution of the Concept of Hinduism Temples (Emanations of the Saiva and Vaishnava and Shakti Gods) Which was Largely Systematized During the Gupta period. The Gupta period was marked by the rapid development of temple architecture. Earlier temples were made of wood, but freestanding stone and brick temples soon appeared in many parts of India. By the 7th century, stone temples, some of considerable dimensions, were found in many parts of the country. Originally, the design of the Hindu temples may have borrowed from the Buddhist precedent, for in some of the oldest temples the image was placed in the centre of the shrine, which was surrounded by an ambulatory path resembling the path around a stupa (a religious building containing a Buddhist relic). The epic Silappatikaram (c. 3rd-4th centuries), for instance, refers to the temples of Srirangam, near Tiruchachirappalli, and of Tirumala-Tirupati (known locally as Tiruvekatam). The Badami caves contain several carvings of Vishnu, Shiva, and Harihara (an amalgamation of Vishnu and Shiva), as well as depictions of stories connected with Vishnu's incarnation, Krishna. Near the Badami caves are the sites of Aihole and Pattadakal, which contain some of the oldest temples in the south: some temples in Aihole, for example, date to approximately 450. For this reason these sites are sometimes referred to as the "laboratory" of Hindu temples.

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Religious Significance of the Hindu Temples

The Religion of the Hinduism is mainly Temple – Centred. They Laid Emphasis on the worship of the images of the Lord Consecrated in Temples and their worship Consisted of offering of Holy water, Flowers, incense, Lamps and Finally paying obeisance to him.

Although early temples in south India may have been made of disposable materials as early as the first few centuries of the common Era, permanent temple structures appear about the 3rd and 4th centuries, as attested in early Tamil Literature. From the Gupta period onwards, Hindu temples became larger and more prominent, and their architecture developed in distinctive regional styles.

The largest temple of the region, however, is the famous Black pagoda, the sun Temple (Surya Deula) of Konarak, built in the mid -13th century. In the temple the god was worshipped by the rites of puja or archana (reverencing a sacred being or object) as though the worshipers were serving a great king, In the important temples a large staff of trained officiates waited on the god.

The god's handmaidens (devadasis) performed before him at regular intervals, watched by the officials and lay worshipers, who were his courtiers. The association of dedicated prostitutes with certain Hindu shrines may be traceable to the beginning of the common Era. It became more widespread in post-Gupta times, especially in south India, and aroused the reprobation of 19th century Europeans. Through the efforts of Hindu reformers, the office of the devadasis was discontinued.

The same is true of most of the main religious centers of northern India but not of the regions where the Muslim hold was less firm, such as Telangana, Andhra Pradesh and South India. Despite the widespread destruction of the temples, Hinduism endured, in part because of the absence of a centralized authority: rituals and sacrifices were performed in places other than Hindu temples.

Conclusion

Thus it is seen that the temple which represents God and His abode, creation and the Creator, man and his true Self, has played no insignificant part in the life of our society, If today its effect has waned considerably, it is worth making a

study of the maladies affecting it and try to find out appropriate remedies.

The basic malady from which all other maladies spring is the lack of proper organization. This again is the outcome of the fact that the Hindu society is the most disorganized society in the whole world! Though organization and order are found in bits and pieces, here and there, in small and well-knit groups, the Hindu society as a whole suffers from an utter lack of discipline due to the absence of a central church controlling all sections of the Hindu society and claiming the loyalty of all. This problem is as urgent as it is big. It is high time that the highly respected and influential religious leaders of the Hindu society make an earnest attempt to tackle this problem on a war-footing. The earlier, the better. When the Hindus have enough catholicity to accept all the great religious system of the world as equally valid and true, they can certainly extend that catholicity towards their own innumerable sects and groups, thereby achieving greater amalgamation and cohesion!

The temple has occupied the most central place in the Hindu society for centuries and has been the greatest single factor in keeping it together. There is no reason why it should not be revitalized so that it can play even greater roles in the future. It is the sacred duty of all the leaders of the Hindu society to make every effort in this direction.

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