



Bio-Diversity as Reflected on the Erakeswara Temple at Pillalamarry in Nalgonda District

P. NARESH¹ AND K. VIJAYA BABU²

¹Research Scholar

²Dept of History, Kakatiya University, Warangal. E-mail: palnatinaresh06@gmail.com

Abstract: The Kakatiya kings had ruled the Telugu speaking regions from Warangal as their capital during the period from 1000AD to 1323 AD. During the rule of Ganapathi Deva (1199-1262 AD), Rudrama Devi (1262-1289) and Prathapa Rudra (1289-1323AD), the Kakatiya Kingdom emerged as a powerful state and there was all-round development. The Kakatiya Rulers had constructed several temples. The Ramappa Temple, Thousand Pillar Temple, Swayambhu Temple, Ganapeswara Temple of Kusumanchi, Ghanapur group of Temples of Mulugu region are well known. Pillalamarry village in Nalgonda district is known for beautiful temples of the Kakatiya times. There are Erakeswara and Nameswara trikuta temples in Pillalamarry village.

There are several aspects of Bio-Diversity reflected on the temple walls. There are several figures of lions, elephants, wild boars, cow and calf, swans, lotus flowers, creepers, snakes, birds, human figures both male and female etc, on the walls and pillars of the temple complex. They reflect the Bio- Diversity of those times and also the relation of man with the nature. The close relation of man with environment was well understood by the people of those times. The Bio-diversity reflected on the Erakeswara Temple complex would enlighten the present generation to understand the dependence of man on the nature, so that, modern man would be able to learn a lesson to protect the environment to save not only his life but also the life of the future generations.

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Introduction

The Kakatiya kings had ruled the Telugu speaking regions from Warangal as their capital during the period from 1000AD to 1323 AD. During the rule of Ganapathi Deva (1199-1262 AD), Rudrama Devi (1262-1289) and Prathapa Rudra (1289-1323AD), the Kakatiya Kingdom emerged as a powerful state and there was around development. The rulers and their subordinates had constructed several large irrigational tanks and promoted agriculture. The tanks are still existing in and around Warangal region

and providing water to the people for drinking and also for agriculture. There was a brisk internal and foreign trade which led to economic development in the kingdom. The writings of the foreign travellers like Marco Polo (Venice, Italy) are testimony to the prosperity and glory of the Kakatiya Kingdom¹.

The Kakatiya Rulers had patronised scholars and artists and promoted literature and fine arts like music, dance, sculpture art and architecture. Vidyanada, the court poet of Pratapa Rudra had written *Prataparudrayeshobushanam* in Sanskrit language. Vinukonda Vallbamatya had written *Kreedabhiramam* in Telugu, Palkuriki Somanadha had written *Panditaradya Charitra*, Kolanuganapathi Deva had written *Shivayoga Saramu*, Kakatiya Rudra Deva had written *Neetisaramu*, Baddena's *Neetisara Mukthavali*, Jayapa Senani's *Nritya Ratnavali* in Sanskrit are very popular writings².

The Kakatiya Rulers had constructed several temples and forts etc. The Warangal fort is very famous for its strength, art and architecture during the medieval times. The Temples of Palampeta, Jakaram, Ramanujapuram, Pillalamarri, Nagulapadu, Kusumanchi and several other places are known for their beautiful art, architecture and sculpture. The Ramappa Temple, Thousand Pillar Temple, Swayambhu Temple, Ganapeswara Temple of Kusumanchi, Ghanapur group of Temples of Mulugu region are well known. The sculpture art and architecture of these temples reflect the life and culture, art, crafts, costumes, sports, music and dance forms of their times and are inspiring the present generation³.

Pillalamarry village in Nalgonda district is known for beautiful temples of the Kakatiya times. There are Erakeswara and Nameswara trikuta temples in Pillalamarry village.

Erakeswara Temple

Erakasani, wife of Beti Reddi, built a beautiful temple in Pillalamarry and installed in it the god Erakeswara, named after herself in S. 1130.⁴

The main temple has three gate ways in the east, north and southern directions.

But at present only eastern gate is open and other two are closed.

South Eastern side (Agnayam)

There is a stone inscription installed in the south-eastern side in the temple. The inscription had been erected on a 4' raised foundation⁵. The inscription is in a rectangular shape with a height of 6' along with dome shape at the top.⁶ There are figures of cow and calf in the northern side on the inscription. The cow is bigger than the calf with long horns and looking towards eastern side. There is a Shivalinga image on the eastern side and the images of sun and moon were carved on the western side on the inscription. On the southern side, the image of Lord Ganesha was engraved on the inscription⁷.

There are elephant figures on the two sides of the doors in all the three directions. i.e. east, north and southern directions. The elephants engraved on the left side had raised their left forelegs and similarly the elephants engraved on the right side had raised their right forelegs giving an impression that the elephants are in walking mode. There is also a man riding on these elephants.

There is a 'pradakshina patha'⁸ at a height of 4' from the foundation level. Above this, there is an 'Upapitha'⁹ again at a height of 4'. On the 'Upapitha,' the walls of the temple were constructed. Around the 'Garbhagudi' there is 'Pradakshinapatha' with a 4' height and 6' width.

There are nearly forty seven (47) lotus flowers engraved on the outer side of the wall in the south eastern side.

North- Eastern side

There are nearly forty two (42) lotus flowers engraved on the outer wall of the temple with eight (8) petals each, which are called 'astadala padmas'¹⁰ with a bud in the middle.

At the eastern entrance gate

At the eastern entrance gate towards right side in the front portion, there are six (6) lotus flowers in a blossomed manner with a bud in the middle. Similarly, there are twelve (12) lotus flowers with four (4) large and four (4) small petals and a bud in the middle on the sidewall. There is one pillar on the right side wall, but it is in a damaged condition, only half of it is visible now. Like this, we find six (6) pillars here, which are partly visible. They are in the north, south and eastern directions. These pillars are rectangular in shape at the bottom and top and round in the middle. There are figures of flora and fauna engraved on the rectangular parts on the pillars.

In the eastern side of the pillar, we find two (2) figures of swans holding a lotus bud in their beaks in opposite direction to each other¹¹.

To the left side in the front portion, there are five (5) lotus flowers with four (4) large and four (4) small petals with a bud in the middle. There is a pillar above this wall. There are different figures of birds and animals on this pillar. The pillar is in rectangular shape at the bottom and top. It is in round shape in the middle. There are figures of sixteen (16) swans and creepers in the middle of the pillar. Above this, there are figures of elephants, swans, flowers engraved here. In the left side on a wall, there are twelve (12) lotus flowers with a bud in the middle of each flower engraved here¹².

On the outer walls in the north side

There is a staircase in the north side to enter into the *Garbagudi*. The 6'¹³ high *Pradakshinapatha* and the 4'¹⁴ *Upapeeta* served as a base to the *Garbagudi*. Beautiful sculpture had been engraved on the outer walls of the *Garbagudi*. There are broken pillars on the walls of the *Garbagudi* with some beautiful sculpture. There are figures of swans, elephants, wild boars, creepers and lotus flowers on the right and left sides of the flight of steps in the north side. On the pillar situated on the left side, there are a few figures of elephants, lions, flowers, creepers chiselled on the rectangular parts of the pillar¹⁵. They are at the bottom and top portion of the pillar. The lion figure appears on the elephant's head in a roaring posture. There are some figures of creepers and small lotus flowers in the middle of the pillar which is round in shape. These figures had been engraved on all sides of the pillar.

There are five (5) lotus flowers on the right side of the northern entrance of the *garbagudi*. Each flower has four (4) petals and a bud in the middle. There are fourteen (14) lotus flowers with four petals each inside the temple. Each flower has four (4) petals and one bud in the middle. Similarly, there are eleven (11) lotus flowers in a fully blossomed manner outside the temple¹⁶.

Left side in the North

There are five (5) lotus flowers with four (4) petals each along with a bud in the middle on the left side in the northern direction. Similarly, there are fourteen (14) lotus flowers inside and twelve (12) lotus flowers on the side wall on outer side¹⁷

In the Southern side

In the southern direction, on the left side, there are twelve (12) lotus flowers on the walls. Each flower had four (4) petals and a bud in the middle. While entering into the temple from south side, we can see fourteen (14) lotus flowers in the left side and five (5) more flowers on the front side.¹⁸

In the right side :- There are about fourteen (14) lotus flowers in a row at the bottom and five (5) more flowers with a bud in the middle in the front portion.¹⁹The pillars which are on the *Pradakshinapatha* on the walls appear in broken condition today in the southern side also. There are beautiful figures of swans, horses, elephants, wild boars and creepers on the rectangular parts of the

pillars on the top and bottom portions.²⁰ There are beautiful figures of creepers and twenty seven (27) small lotus flowers on the round shape part of the pillars. There is a chain like chiselling around these figures. Similarly, we can find figures of two (2) elephants in opposite direction to each other with joining trunks and also two (2) lions opposite to each other. They appear as if they are in a fighting mode with roaring face and raised tail.²¹

Pillar in the right side: This pillar is also like the left side pillar. But there is some difference in the figures and sculptures. The pillar is in a rectangular shape at the bottom and top with a round shape in the middle. There is a sculpture in the rectangular shape area. Swans, lions, flowers, wild boars were chiselled on four sides of the pillar.²² There are a few small lotus flowers and creepers on the round part of the pillar. Around them, a chain of beads had been engraved.

On the south side steps, there are some elephant figures on both right and left sides. A figure of a man was also engraved on each elephant as he is riding on the elephants. On the south-east side, there is a pillar, on which we can see figures of two (2) swans and a chain of beads and creepers in the middle of the pillar.

In the north-west, there are figures of eleven (11) lotus flowers with four (4) petals each and a bud in the middle. In the south-west part, there are eleven (11) lotus flowers with four (4) petals each and a bud in the middle. In the south-eastern part, there are fifty two (52) lotus flowers with four (4) petals and a bud each in the middle had been chiselled.

Inside the Temple

There is a Natyamandapa along with Antharala, Rangamandapa in front of the Garbagudi. The Natyamandapa has four (4) beautiful pillars. There are beautifully carved flora and fauna on these pillars. The pillars had been carved out of black granite stone.²³ They all look in a similar way. The bottom part of the pillars are in a rectangular shape and the middle part is in a round shape. Again, the upper part of the pillar is in rectangular shape. The highest part is also in a round shape.

There are five (5) female figures on the south-west side pillar. The female figures had been carved in different postures. The first lady figure from the left side is in a sitting posture, with a flute in her hands as if she had been playing the flute. The second lady figure appears as if she is playing a *mrudanga*. The third lady figure is in a dancing posture. Her right leg is in a bending mode towards left leg. The fourth lady figure is in a bending mode. There is some bow like instrument in her hands, which is not visible properly. Perhaps, they are some kind of musical instruments such as '*taalalu*' used to create music. The fifth lady figure is with a drum (*dolu*) in her hands²⁴.

On the pillars, in the north-western side, there are four female figures with beautiful ornamentation. These women figures had been pulling a rope with their hands. The pillar, in the south-eastern side, has a lotus at its lower level with four petals and a bud in the middle. These lotus flowers appear around the pillar. There are several beads encircling the pillar. At the bottom of the pillar, there are two female figures, one in a dancing posture, another in a drum (*dolu*) beating mode.²⁵

Natymandapam

There are four pillars to the *Natyamandapa* and eight pillars to *antharala* and *garbagudi*, coming to a total of twelve along with a wall. On the left side four (4) pillars, there are figures of flora and fauna carved beautifully.

On the two pillars of '*garbagudi*', we can find a few figures of swans. On the third pillar, the figures of lions were carved. On the fourth pillar, which is in the south eastern side, we can find the figures of flowers, creepers, elephants, wild boars, lions, swans, etc.²⁶

Inside the eastern gate, towards left and right sides on the pillars, there are figures of lions and lotus flowers.

Inside the temple, towards northern side, there are four pillars on which we find the figures of lions, elephants, swans and creepers.

At the Garbagudi

At the door frames of the *garbagudi*, both in the left and right sides, on the side walls, we can find five female figures. These female figures are in a dancing mode. They are similar to those, which are carved in the *antharala* and *rangamandapa*.²⁷ Similarly, there are female figures in a dancing mode towards right side which are also similar to the *Rangamandapa*.

Inside the *garbagudi*, there is a Shiva linga along with 'Panavatta'.²⁸ There is a lotus ceiling (*Padma palaka*) in the *garbagudi*, but the side walls are without any carvings and appear in a plain manner.

Garbagudi

In front of the *garbagudi*, on a pillar in the *Antharala Rangamandapa*,²⁹ there are four women figures on both the left and right sides. The female figure carved on the left side appears in a dancing mode with a bend at her waist and with her two hands raised upward. Her hair had been rolled into a bun like manner (coiffure) on her head. Another female figure also appear in a dancing mode by bending her waist and keeping her right hand on her waist and left hand raised upward. The third female figure appear in bending mode at her waist and keeping her two hands towards left side. She is in a dancing mode with her left hand in 'abhaya mudra'. She has a crown on her head.

The fourth female figure is also in a dancing mode with her right hand raised upward and left hand had been kept on her waist. Her left leg had bent (turned) towards her right leg.

Conclusion

There are several aspects of Bio-Diversity reflected on the temple walls. There are several figures of lions, elephants, wild boars, cow and calf, swans, lotus flowers, creepers, snakes, birds, human figures both male and female etc, on the walls and pillars of the temple complex. They reflect the Bio-Diversity of those times and also the relation of man with the nature.

In view of the above, we can understand that, the socio-economic and cultural life of the man was shaped by the geo-physical conditions and environment. The close relation of man with environment was well understood by the people of those times. The Bio-diversity reflected on the Erakeswara Temple complex would enlighten the present generation to understand the dependence of man on the nature, so that, modern man would be able to learn a lesson to protect the environment to save not only his life but also the life of the future generations.

Notes

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Erakasani, wife of Beti Reddi, built a beautiful temple in Pillalamarri and installed in it the god Erakeswara, named after herself in S. 1130, on Monday, the 3rd day of the bright half of the month of Jyesta, in the cyclic

year, Vibhava and gifted to the god 4 martu of wet land behind the Erukasamudramu, also named after her, 46 martus in Kroprolu and Upparlapadu and 12 martus near the Laksmanasamudramu, excavated by her at Pillalamarry. On the same day, Erakasani installed goddess Tripuradevi and gifted to her 12 martus of wet land in Pillalamarry and 2 martus of dry land in Erakapuram. She also gifted 10 martus of land to the god Komesvara, named after her father and Erakesvara on the bund of the Erakasamudram, named after her mother, both installed by her. Mention is made of gods Mahadeva, Betesvara and Erakesvara installed by Muturi Somaya, to whom also gifts were made.

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