



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CREATIVE RESEARCH THOUGHTS (IJCRT)

An International Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

General Features Of Kakatiya Temple Architecture In Warangal District

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With the arrival of the Kakatiyas in the political arena of medieval Andhra, temple construction activities gained momentum. The monuments of the Kakatiyas spread widely throughout their kingdom gives us an opportunity to study the art and architecture of the Kakatiyas. The temple became a symbol of various socio-cultural activities during the medieval history of the Deccan. A temple is not only sacred but also a nucleus for the entire community in all its cultural and spiritual aspects.¹ In those days the establishment of temples was considered one of the seven dharmas known as the *Saptasantanas*,² namely one's own son, adopted son, Sahitya Krishi, an Agrahara, a garden, a tank and a temple. The Kakatiyas, in particular, gave importance to the three "T's" i.e. Tank, Temple and Town system. A tank is constructed below the current, a temple is built there, the surrounding township is developed with all facilities and many temples are found to enable people to come and settle in those townships. It was built very close to the tanks during the Kakatiya period.

General features of Kakatiya Architecture

As the temple was a place of assembly in those days, its architecture acquired considerable significance and importance. These temples were not only places of worship but also centers of education, hostels, hospitals and embodiments of fine arts and culture³. Hence huge temple complexes were built with many smaller temples, mandapas and huge pillared shrines. In the construction of small temples, Kakatiya architects adopted excellent techniques like sand cushions, cavity walls and lightweight porous bricks.

Kakatiya art connoisseurs and pioneers in the field of architecture. As vassals of the Western Chalukyas in early political life; They continued the architectural tradition of the Chalukyas⁴ to some extent, but added an indigenous character to it. Chalukya architecture is a fusion of northern and southern Indian arts. The Kakatiyas simplified it by avoiding it, making the group decoration and look more powerful and charming.⁵ Kakatiya kings and nobles built many magnificent temples. They are found in Warangal. Palampet, Ghanpur, Kondaparthi, Katakshpur, Nekkonda, Ainavolu, Jakaram and other areas of Warangal district. These temples serve as sculptural treasures to learn more about the socio-economic, cultural and religious conditions of the Kakatiya period. In this chapter an attempt is made to study the architecture of the Kakatiya temples of Warangal district, where we can also see the sculptural wealth of that period.

The main units of the ground plan of Kakatiya temples in Warangal district are *garbhagriha*, *antarala*, *mukhamandapa* or hall and *sabhaor ardhmandapa* or porch.

Ground plans:

The ground plans of the kakatiya temples may be classified into five types⁶ viz., (1) *Ekakutas*(single shrines). (2) *Dvikutas*(double shrines). (3) *Trikutas* (triple shrines). (4) *Catuskutas* (four shrines) and (5) *pancakutas* (five shrines).

1. **Ekakuta:**

Ekakuta means a single shrine with *sanctum sanctorum* and *ardhamandapa*. In some temples of the Kakatiyas, a *vasara* called *antarala* was also added to house the image of the deity and shelter the devotees. In such cases the unit is called *antarala* when a verandah projects opposite the *garbhagriha* and that part is covered with side walls and roof, or when the verandah portion forms a small cellar between the *garbhagriha* and the *mandapa*. These Ekakuta temples abound in Kakatiya architecture and such temples can be seen at Ghanpur, Kondaparthi, Palampet, Ekavira Devi Temple in Mogilicherla and Warangal Fort in Warangal district.

In the later type of *Ekakuta*, the *garbhagriha* and *antarala* are arranged in a wide rectangular hall with a pillar and the *pradakshinadhara* is completely covered and this type of temple is known as *sandhara*. This plan can be seen in Ekaveera temple in Mogiliser, Rama temple in Venkatapur village near Inavolu, hill temple at Nashkal village (St Ghanpurmandal, Warangal district).

In another variety of temples, *garbhagriha*, *antarala* and *sabhamandapa* function as a hall or pavilion large enough for ritual dance or feasting. The Shiva and Vishnu temples in Matedu village of Thorrurumandal, Shiva temple, Rama temple and VenugopalaSwamy temple in Madikonda are examples of this type.

2. *Dvikuta:*

Dvikuta or *Yugala* falls into the second group of temples consisting of two temples standing side by side in an 'L' shape, facing each other or connected by a common *sabhamadapa*. Construction of twin temples is further encouraged and beneficial for religious purpose. Sometimes to accommodate two more deities of the same religion, the *Yugala* type is adopted. *Sambhamandapas* are used for cultural purposes like conducting dance and musical concerts on festive occasions. The temple in Veditela village, Chityalamandal, Warangal district belongs to this type.

3. *Trikuta:*

Trikutas can be described as a group of third temples, consisting of three mandirs of similar dimensions arranged on three sides of a common *sabhamandapa*. Each shrine has a *garabhgriham* and *antaralas*. The Mandagapattu inscription⁷ of Mahendra Varma I, the greater Pallavas of Kanchi, clearly states that he created a temple with three cells for the Trinity. It can be assumed that *Trikutaka* worship was popular even in the early medieval period. Trikutas of this type can be found at Palampet in Ghanapurmandal, Ghanpur, Warangal Kota, Hanmakonda in Raghunathapallimandal, Rajavaram in St. Station Ghanpur Mandal, Janakipuram in Dharmasagar Mandal, Vardhannapet Mandal Katriyala, Rajavaram, Ippaguda Village under Station Ghanpur Mandal and in many parts of Warangal District.

4. *Catuskuta:*

Catuskuta style temple is a hybrid form of Trikota. The best example of this type is the Pachala Somesvara temple in Panagal Nalgonda district,⁸ built by the Telugu *Chodas* of Kandur.

5. *Panchakuta:*

The last category of Kakatiya temples in Warangal district is the *Panchkuta* temple known as *Erukala-Nancharigudi* at Ramanujapur, Venkatapurmandal, Warangal district. It has five shrines and the catch includes *gaebhagraha* and *antarala*. Two temples were erected on the east and west sides and one on the north side. All the shrines are connected to a common *sabhamandapa*. The arrangement of shrines is unique.

Architecturally it appears to be a *trikutachala* consisting of a single *sabhamandapa* and over time, Kakatiya architects added two more mandirs to the original structure and connected it to a second *sabhamandapa* with the intention of converting it into a *Panchakuta* temple. There is also a similar temple in Atmakur village of Atmakurmandal of Warangal district.

ART ON THE ARCHITECTURAL MEMBERS

The Kakatiyas built innumerable temples and practiced various performing arts. They expressed their love for the arts by building temples and creating magnificent sculptures on them along with a good number of loose icons meant for cult worship. Plastic art reached its pinnacle during the reign of the Kakatiyas, which is truly a testament to their aesthetic sense.

Kakatiya art is represented on pillar mandapams, *adhistanas* and structural members like *mandapas*, *adhistanas*, and *padavargas*, *prasharas*, *beams*, *ceiling* and *vimana*, which provide space to display the architectural wonder.

Typically, the Kakatiya temples at Palampet, Ghanpur have an *adishthana* decoration that includes creepers and *vajra bandha* motifs. The spire of the Swayambhu Temple at Warangal Fort is defaced with friezes of elephants, horses, swans and *gajavyalas*. The Kakatiya sculptor has always maintained a judicious balance between architecture and art, as the *adhistanas* of Kakatiya temples are neither plain nor crowded with ornate designs and figure sculptures.¹⁰ The *kakashanas* on the capitals are also decorated with sculpture. They are carved with a frieze of elephants. The *Kakshanas* at Palampet are decorated with some mythological themes like deities, goddesses, dancers' musicians and romantic figures, Mahishasuramardini and Narasimha slaying Hiranyakashipu¹¹ and etc.

Wall Decoration

The outer wall construction of early Kakatiya temples was kept plain. During Rudradeva's reign the evaluation of external wall decoration began with a plain central band of gradual architectural pilasters.¹² Projections and intervals, *stambika*, *vimana* patterns and rows of gods, goddesses, male and female figures, musicians, dancers and animals are carved on the exterior walls of Kakatiya temples.

Kapota or Cornice

A *kapota* or cornice usually refers to a particular part of the roof that extends beyond the walls of the temple. It helps to spread and balance the weight of the roof and superstructure and protects the walls and exterior sculptures of temples from rain and projected elements.¹³ Kakatiya temples have short and projected cornices. Small cornices are usually flat, thick and not significantly projected. Projected cornices are massive, impressive, more than a foot from the base of the roof. The upper edge of the cornice is decorated with a row of semi-circular elevations. The lower part of these *kapotas* is divided into different compartments by introducing horizontal and vertical rafters, which are decorated with series of hanging lotus motifs. Similar motifs are found at Palampet and Ghanpur in Warangal district.¹⁴

Sikhara

Sikhara or superstructure is the part of the temple which is usually seen at the top of the sanctum sanctorum. Most of the Kakatiya temples have semi-flat roofs. They were built with bricks and stones. *Nagara shikhara*¹⁵, *Bhumija shikhara*¹⁶ and *Dravida shikhara*¹⁷ are different types of *shikharas* found in Kakatiya temples.

Doorways

Kakatiya architects and sculptors devoted their best care, attention and skill in the design and decoration of doors and created masterpieces.¹⁸ No amount of description can justify the charm, beauty, variety and vibrancy displayed in the skills of carving every inch of the door. They are meticulously planned, exquisitely designed and decorated. Usually black basalt, granite and sandstone are selected for the purpose.

The doors of Kakatiya temples at Swayambhu Temple in Fort Warangal, Palampet Temple, Thousand Pillar Temple at Hanmakonda are richly decorated with floral scrolls, *vyalas* and figure carvings (Plts.149, 151 and 152). They are minutely shaped with foliating projections. Richly carved lintels surmount the doorways. Jambs decorate the *stambasakha*, plain sunken bands and *ratnapuspasakha* with *purnakumbhabase*. The lower part of the base is occupied by gatekeepers. They represent male and female figures standing in graceful *tribhanga* poses, holding cameras and *purnakumbhas*. The *Mangal plaque* is decorated with the image of Gajalakshmi.

Lintels

Lintels of most Kakatiya temples are arranged in layers one above the other. The lower part is very intricately carved with carvings of creepers and figures. The doorways of the thousand-pillared temple at Hanamkonda are decorated with dancing Narasimha and Nataraja. Temple pits at Jakaram and Ramanujapur in Warangal district are carved with *Saptarishis*, *Dikpalas* and Shiva Natarajas.

Architrave

The Kakatiya sculptors have decorated this particular doorway very gracefully. They are decorated with three or five *nagaravimanas*, sculptures such as Shiva Nataraja accompanied by musicians and dancers.¹⁹ In some cases, the entire panel is canopied by a floral arch elaborately designed from the mouths of makaras placed at the extreme ends of the architrave. The best decorative sculptures of this type are found in the Thousand Pillar Temple, Shiva Temple in Machilibazar, Venkateswara Temple in Gudibandala area of Hanmakonda, Ramalingeswara Temple in Ramannapet in Warangal city, Palampet in Warangal district, Nidigonda, Ghanpur.

Cellings

Cellings are considered one of the main features of the temple interior. They are meant to enhance the interior decoration effect of the temple. Generally, the central roof of the *sabhamandapam* is the center of attraction in the temple. Sculptors of that period concentrated their skill and attention and used black basalt for this piece. Most of the roofs of the temples are decorated with *Susniapatta* (eight-petaled flower), *batasuniya* (sixteen-petaled flower) and *caukaphula* or *caudaphula* (four-petaled flower). The triangular corners are decorated with leaves, *kirtimukhas*, deities, deities and *dikpalas*. Various techniques are used in molding and designing the piece. In some cases, the triangular stabs are very artistically decorated with floral

scrolls, bead designs, *vyalas* and wands etc. The lotus is pendant. But in the thousand pillared temples at Hanmakonda and the main temple at Palampet a huge cylindrical pendant projection radiating from its center is observed. The pendant is engraved with the figures of Nataraja and Ashtadikpala (Plt.201).

Pillars

This pillar is the most important in the temple architecture. The pillars of Kakatiya temples are distributed in the *sabha* and *mukhamandapa* nature which not only enhances the interior elegance of the temple but also gives immense depth to the interior of the temple.²⁰ The height, splendor and grandeur of a temple mainly depends on its pillars. In Kakatiya temples, the pillar never retains its basic character as an architectural member, although it is intricately and exquisitely carved.²¹ The pillars of Kakatiya temples have a beautiful luster and display various patterns and motifs.²² The decoration of the pillar is profuse, but it is tasteful on the foot, shaft and capital, including brackets.²³

Bracket Figures

The most striking feature of Kakatiya temples are the bracket figures. They are gracefully designed and beautifully designed to give added elegance to the exterior of the temple.²⁴ Two types of bracket figures are recognized in sculptural representation. The first type represents the decorated architectural pieces (lateral brackets)²⁵ and the second type represents the mythological animal *Vyala's* animal (*madanika*).²⁶ The most beautiful representations of *Madanika* are found in the main temple of Palampet. The Kakatiya sculptors' facile handwriting and easy manipulation of the chisel culminated in the elegance of modelling, designing and carving these *Madnikas*.²⁷

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