CHAPTER - VIII.

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The study of the temple art of Kalachuris of Ratanpur as attempted and submitted in the previous chapters may have quite a few shortcomings. The extensive area of Kosala or present Chhattisgarh with its far flung, hilly and forest-infested regions, not easily accessible also, has proved an obstacle to cover all the ancient sites. Most area of Bastar district, western parts of Bilaspur district, particularly Pendra Tehsil upon the Maikal range of their hills and some tribal parts of Surguja and Raigarh districts have not been thoroughly covered under the present study, and only such sites which are well known and falling on the traffic roads, have been touched upon. During the visit to the known sites, however, attempt was made to contact the knowledgable persons for the information of the temple-sites. In numerous cases, the sites were reported to have got ruined during the present older generation and practically nothing left in situ.

But the redeeming feature, however, is that the loss caused by the fast disappearance of some sites is being more than compensated by the discovery of the new temple-sites. The same has been possible either through the thorough survey of the area or the clearance of certain sites in the state of semi-preservation, where the mounts have hitherto concealed the sculpture belonging to the ruined temple or temples at the sites. Sometimes the sub-structure of the temple with its foundation, platform,
if any, parts of the walls and the door-ways may also be revealed as the result of the clearance of the site. Most of the discoveries, however, have been, the result of digging, official or private for the purpose other than the regular excavations conducted by the state department of Archaeology, a University Department of Archaeology or the Archaeological Survey of India. The private digging, for the purpose of constructing water-reservoirs, their embankments, the clearance and digging of the already existing tanks to desilt and deepen them and the digging of cannals etc. have also, sometimes yielded startling and very important temple-sites or the sculptures belonging to them. Over the past few years, many important temples, their hitherto unknown original position and the sculptural pieces belonging to these newly found sites or the ones that are yet to be unearthed, have seen the light of the day. Therefore, the study of the temple-art of Kalachuris, in fact, can never be complete and perfect in itself. It requires a constant effort to take into account and look at the things in the broader context including the discoveries of the day.

It is also my humble submission, that instead of the work to be done on the individual basis, it has to be under some bigger project and conducted by a team of the workers and researchers under the competent guidance.

Take the case of Malhar, for example. Its Kedaresvara temple, referred to in the inscription and thus the name already known, its actual existence, as it is at present, could be made possible after the
excavations in 1935 only. Then, the more ancient structures at and around Mallar were revealed after the excavations conducted there by the Department of Ancient Indian History, Culture and Archaeology, University of Saugar from 1975 to 1978. They include a Buddhist temple with an image of Herajra at HIR-4 (a trench) belonging to Vajrayana sect, the remains of a Saivite temple from trench No.2 and a Buddhist Chaitya temple from the trench No.6, also belonging to the Vajrayana sect.\(^1\) Early in the 1980, the Archaeological Survey of India, cleared the mound and the debris around the site known as Deur. The result was the sub-structure of the Bhima deul, as it is known now. The full account of the temple has been given at the proper place. Then, there is the discovery as recent as in January 1984, a villager-farmer, a Gond by caste, while trying to his waste land into cultivation beyond the Jaitpur village, started digging it. He struck the lower part of a temple and after careful and laborious operations, brought up some sculptures also. They are reportedly lying in his house. They are yet to be seen and studied by the author, who has simply seen the newspaper reports about this finding.

Apart from above mentioned findings at Mallar, concerning the temple-sites which involved some sort of digging, stray examples of the discovery of a sculpture

\(^1\) Malhar, University of Saugar, 1978, p.35.
or two, from the place or the neighbourhood is reported every now and then. No year passes without such reports from the place. The temporary museum, in the form of a shade, built by the State Government, at the place, preserves most of these sculptures.

Another illustrative example of the discovery of the ancient temples, partially known earlier, are those at Tumman, the first caipal of the Kalachuris in Kosala, before shifting it to Ratanpur. The inscriptions of the dynasty did refer to at least three temples built by them. But what was noticeable at the site, till 9 1977, when I first visited it, were the remains of one temple in the state of semi-preservation, the ruins of the remaining two and the broken stone pieces littered about the site. But during the years 1978 and 1979 the clearance of the huge mound round the existing semi-preserved temple, not only revealed the full plan of the later with high plinth, stairs, mandapa with side transepts and another wide wall of the garbha-griha, but also the two rectangular platforms parallel to the temple, one on each side. They also reveal the plans of the temples with the terrace to be approached in the flight of the steps and the two ends of the same the cells. One of the later, has, installed within it, a Siva-linga. Obviously the plan shows the mandapa in the centre and through it the garbhagrihas at the two ends. These two examples, in addition to the existing temple of Mamabhanja, at Barsur in Bastar district have indicated
the existence of this style of the temple plan during the reign period of Kalachuris in Kosala.

The two most important discoveries of seventies, with regard to the temple-sites of Kosala, however, are the result of the two categories of operations mentioned above—the thorough survey of the area and the private digging. The former resulted in the now famous twin temples of Derani and Jethani on the bank of Maniyari river, a tributary of sonath, near Tala and Sargaon villages in Bilaspur district. Dr. V.S. Thakur of the Durga Mahavidyalaya, Raipur takes the credit for having reported the same. The author is indebted to him as well as Prof. R.N. Mishra, Head of the Ancient Indian History, Culture and Archaeology Department of the Jiwaji University, Gwalior. The later informed him about the same and the author visited the site in March 1976 and read a research paper on the art of the temple in the seminar held by the Khairagarh University of Arts and Music in the same month. The temples turned out to be the earliest extent examples of the Kosala area. At the proceedings of the same seminar, information was received about the discovery of the Siva temple at Ghatiyari near Gandai, another site of a Saivite temple, in Rajnandgaon district. The temple of Kalachuri period, with full plan exposed, throws a significant light on the evolution of the temple architecture during the period, since, it is of almost a panchayatana order. The decorated door frame of the cella-doorway, beautifully and artistically designed pillars of the antarala
(vestibule) and the large number of the sculptures unearthed as a result of the digging, done initially by the land-lord wanting to convert this portion of his agricultural land into a water-reservoir for the purpose of irrigation and later taken over by the State Department of Archaeology, has acquired much importance and drawn attention of the scholars. It needs a separate and individual study of the site, piece by piece, to fully appreciate and analyse it. We have to wait till the same is done. It may make us revise some of the prevailing opinions about the art of the Kosala region in general and that belonging to the Kalachuri period in particular.

The author had an occasion to visit Hungeli, a tehsil headquarters in Bilaspur district, late in 1979. It was reported there, that a large and beautiful statue of a Jaina Tirthankara, has been seen in the forest region, near the villages Devsara and Bakela in Pandaria region of the tehsil (the later has been declared a tehsil now). After the difficult journey of the rough forest tracks and crossing of several nullahas, when the author could see the sculpture for himself, it turned out to be an inscribed image of tirthankara Parsvanatha. The three-lined epigraph gives the name of the donor as Ahila, the son of Nahila, who had caused the statue to be made and installed. The site, situated on the bank of Hanf river, across which another and more important site of Kankalin, falling within Kawardha tehsil
of Rajnandgaon district, suggests, that during the Kalachuri's of Ratanpur, it was a flourishing town, situated on both banks of the river. Perhaps it was full of temples, of which only ruins are left now. Of course, there are some mounds also, at Kankalin, which, when excavated scientifically, may reveal foundations and, may be, the jagatis (platforms) of the temples, apart from the sculpture that must be buried within them.

A potential site, once a capital town of the Naga dynasty of Bhoramdeo including the later, the areas around the Madwa-Mahal, Chherki Mahal, Garhi or the fortress on the hillock nearby and the debris around the walls and foundations of the structures, awaits an extensive digging and clearance of its whole area spread over some twenty square kilometres. Even the desitting of the natural lake on the bank of which the main temple of Bhoramdeva and a brick temple in its courtyard are situated, may reveal quite a few antiquities. Recently, the author received a report that during the construction of road between Madwa Mahal and Bhoramdeva, undertaken by the N.S.S. (National Service Scheme), the students of the Digvijaya College, Rajnandgaon, the district headquarters within which the site falls, dug out a statue of a goddess as tall as about 5'6" who is holding a child in her two hands. She is reported to have more hands, but unless seen personally, it is very difficult to say whether she can be identified as a mother-goddess (matrika) or some particular goddess.
The said road is to link Bhoramdeva and other sites in the neighbourhood with Kawardha and to be finally completed by the state P.W.D. as the site is being developed by the Department of Tourism to attract the tourists' traffic. I feel, personally, however, that, before the place is so allowed open to the crowd of the visitors, clearance work should be taken upon the priority basis, by the State Department of Archaeology or Archaeological Survey of India and the material found as the result of the same, preserved in the museums.

Early in 1980, the author, while his stay at Bilaspur, received the reports of discovery of some Siva lingas as the result of the digging of an existing tank at the village Budgahan near Baloda, a block headquarters in the Janjgir tehsil of the district. The visit of the site proved quite useful. In fact the Siva lingas, then three in number, revealed the cellas (garbha-grihas) in which they had been installed and the plinth and foundation of the temples concerned. Though the temples are of the small size and no sculpture or decorative stone slab was unearthed during the operations, they belong, obviously to late Kalachuri period. The example goes to show that how rich the whole area has been in the monuments of the Kalachuri period.

During the summer that following people of the village Ganiyari were reported to have dug-out a number
of fine sculptures of cult-deities while desiting the Deur tank, on the bank of which incidentally the Deur temple (of Siva infact) is situated. The visit at the site proved equally useful as most of these sculptures belong to the Deur. They got submerged in the tank when the temple started crumbling down and losing most of its sikhara and walls. These sculptures occupied the jangha parts of the same, either enshrined in the niches or the projections.

Under my study of the late Pahalchuri temples or the temple-sites where only a few sculptures are to be seen among the ruins, I have presented an account of a temple at Palari on the Dhamtari-Gundar debi road inside Durg district. It was neither reported earlier in any of the previous publications, nor in the unpublished research works. I got to the site in the year 1976 mistaking the place for Palari in Raipur district which is known for its brick-temple and the Balsamundra tank both belonging to the Panduvansi period. Once at the place I enquired with the local people, ( a habit that I had developed during my visit of Kosala right from the year 1973) whether there was any ancient site in or around the village. They volunteered the information of the temple which I have included in my study. The Palari in Raipur district, however, I visited afterwards. This example illustrates some facts. The first and the foremost, the area so far flung as Kosala or Chhatisgarh, is yet to be surveyed thoroughly. The attempt demands
resources in form of the additional government grant, the vehicles and at the top of all, a team of hard-working specialised personnel. Secondly, sometimes such unusual things as the mistaken visit of a place initially may ultimately lead to the discovery of a new site. Thirdly, the surveyor, as far as possible, must be conversant with the local dialect without which, there is always a possibility of misguidance and misunderstanding. One thing leads to another, therefore, an useful fact about such visits is that, one gets information about other sites in the neighbourhood or on the same road, if the journey is extended. At this village of Palari, I was informed about the rich sculptures, mostly those of the cult-deities, placed on a platform in a village Kunwar, about 4 kilometres away. I pedalled up to the later and to my pleasant surprise, I found, apart from the collection of the art-pieces near the village "chaupal", a number of the fine images and the decorated stone-slabs utilised by the people for the building purpose. In particular, the foundations of some puces houses had them fixed during their construction.

I experienced the similar adventure of finding out new sites on the Khairagarh-Pandadaha-Lanji road. A doctor friend of mine was kind enough to take me on the side on his motor cycle on the forest-track, then under construction by P.W.D. Most of these sites have been included in the chapter sixth dealing with the late Kalachuri temples. I start imagining sometimes that the sites by the roads being approachable by
vehicles are always prone to the thefts and smuggling, and whatever is left there now, is only a part of the original art-treasure. The lack of governmental action against the culprits and of the safety arrangements, might have resulted and may further result, in the loss of our ancient heritage. Another thing that of ponder over, is, the places situated far away from the roads, deep into the forest infested and hilly regions, not possible to approach with the help of any vehicle. The fact that about one-third area of the Chhatisgarh is still covered by the forests, it is a high-time we concentrate our efforts on sending out team of surveyors in such interior parts of the area to bring to light the hidden sites and take measures to protect them as well. While moving on the road referred to above and throwing a glance over the forest on both of its sides, I had a feeling that the tribal-villages inside them may also have some ancient temple sites or the mounds concealing some ancient sites buried into them. The examples of existence of sites in such areas are evidenced by the temples of Bhoramdeva etc.

I came back to my earlier statement that the study of the temple art of the Kalachuri period, or for that matter of any area, is a continuing process with more and more information and discoveries brought to our knowledge with the every passing year, therefore, although, I have made an attempt at it, I can not make a claim of its perfection. It is my humble submission that such study should always be treated as the one based
on the material as existing today. Tomorrows state of the things may present a new and broader context due to the additional information that may have been received or a new discovery that may have been made and reported in the mean time. The study by an individual or a group, that will follow, afterwards, will, essentially take appraisal of this new data, before proceeding with his mission.