CHAPTER VI

ART AND ARCHITECTURE OF BANAVASI
The art-ethos of the larger Indian culture has been in its diversity, acceptance of other forms, and a spiritual and joyous response to life. This is evident in all the major ancient schools of Indian Art; the Mauryan, the Gāndhāra, the Mathurā, the Amarāvati and the Gupta which provided the same gallery to the works of the Buddhists, the Jainas, the Hindus, and the secular motifs. This open approach to art and life is the prime force, that culture and art lived here a greater continuity and flourish.

When we come to Banavāsi, it had had the great advantage of living in close touch with the Mauryas, the Satavāhanas, the Kadambas, the Vātapi Chālukyas, the Rashṭrakūṭas and the later Chālukyas, stretching over a period of more than 1,500 years. It is natural that their contacts generated local artistic responses similar to the overall Indian attitude towards art.

Though quantitatively the works of art available from Banavāsi is quite meagre, their variety, their style, and their approach to it, very well reflect the same ethos of Indian art. We have the Buddhist, the Jaina and the Hindu sculptures, figures of trees, birds and
animals, erotic figures and warriors, together depicting a spiritual humane world view, within this small canvas of Banavasi.

As we have already seen, Banavasi had been a significant politico-cultural centre or as a provincial capital, from the time of Aśoka Maurya. It was noted, for instance, that Aśoka sent a Buddhist monk, Rakkhita, to Banavasi to propagate the teachings of the Master. The way in which the Buddhist chronicles speak of the numerous conversions in Banavasi, would imply, even allowing for exaggerations, an impact of considerable magnitude on the local society in the religious sphere. It would have been natural that this new impact was transformed into corresponding art and architectural forms in abundance. At least from the time of the Sātavāhanas, this should have been the case. But unfortunately, the scant relics so far discovered do not, for whatever reasons, quantitatively compare with those found in other contemporary Buddhist centres like Amaravati (Andhra Pradesh) and Sannati (Gulbarga District, Karnataka). However, qualitatively they do indicate a maturity of a high order.

Perhaps the want of the basic raw material, the limestone, with which the Sātavāhana artists of lower Deccan were so much acquainted, first strikes out a possible reason for this lacuna. Because this region was thickly forested with many natural barriers, the
transportation of this material on a large-scale from elsewhere might have been rendered difficult. Hence this stone was not possibly used on a large scale. However, in meagre quantity it was imported here. For a few specimens of this limestone material such as the inscribed slab carrying the record of Vāsishṭiputra Sivaśri Pulumāvi, the Nāga sculpture slab carrying the inscription of Vinhukaça Chuṭukulānanda Sātkarāṇi, etc., have come to light at Banavasi. Modern Banavasi stands on the ancient site and the architectural and art specimens embedded within are yet to be brought to light by large-scale operations by the archaeologist.

In this chapter an attempt is made to give an account of architectural and sculptural remains at Banavāsi under separate heads.

I. Architecture:

The Period of Sātavāhanas:

The constructions of the early period, which can be assigned the Sātavāhana period, comprise brick structures of familiar types. The burnt bricks used for the structures usually measure 43 x 22 x 7 cm., similar to bricks used in many other contemporary sites. The ravages of time have not saved complete structures. Fragmentary structures have been found both inside and outside the fort which seem to follow a rectangular plan.
But since they are not fully exposed, the details are yet to be known.¹

At the locality called Donigudda, near the Varada river, excavations were conducted by the Department of Ancient History and Archaeology of the Mysore University and the State Department of Archaeology in Karnataka jointly.² In this excavation, a brick structure was found. This structure had an apsidal plan (fig. 4). It had triple line of walls with a narrow passage between each pair of walls. At the centre of the structure was a platform, 1.75 m high, possibly serving as an altar, for offering worship. The plan indicates that the front part of this structure possibly had a rectangular porch. The innermost part of the structure is axially divided into three chambers. Of these, the hind chamber is apsidal while the central and front chambers are rectangular. The continuity of the central outer wall could not be traced completely. The two narrow passages running along the apse of the structure were possibly intended to serve as circumambulatory paths (Pradakshināpatha). The plan of this structure recalls that of the famous Durga temple at Aihole (Bijapur District), where, too, two circumambulatory paths are provided.³ The latter temple, however, is built of stone and is dated to C. 7th/8th century A.D.⁴ The religious affinity to the apsidal structure at Banavasi could not, however, be ascertained. It would be too much of a guess to describe it as Buddhist,
because early Hindu temples also followed the apsidal plan as revealed in the excavations at Nāgarjunakoṇḍa (Guntūr District, Andhra Pradesh).

Within the fort at Banavāsi, to the right of the car street of the Madhukēśvara temple some structures were excavated behind the present residential area. They consisted of another apsidal temple. Built of large-sized burnt bricks (42 x 27 x 7 Cm), it was a double-walled structure. The outer wall was thicker (about 1.5 m.) than the inner one. The double-walls in between them provided for a circumambulatory passage (pradakshinā-patha). In the front part of this structure were rectangular chambers and in the apsidal hind part, a platform. A fragmentary stone head, supposed to represent Skanda, is reported from here. Stylistically the sculpture seems to belong to an early period and is very similar to the figure of Skanda excavated at Nāgarjunakoṇḍa datable to the Ikṣuaku times (3rd century A.D.). It is therefore possible that the apsidal structure in question may have enshrined this Hindu divinity originally. It may be incidentally noted that the cult of Skanda-Kārttikeya enjoyed considerable popularity in the early centuries of the Christian era.

The Period of the Chutus or the Ānandas:

After the fall of the Satavāhanas, Banavāsi came
under the independent rule of Chutus or Anandas. Their reign synchronised with that of the Ikshvakus of Nāgarjunakoṇḍa with whom they had matrimonial ties. The relation between these two far off kingdoms was obviously cordial; kings and queens of Banavāśi participated in the consecration of temples and vihāras at the Ikshvāku capital. It is indeed unfortunate that no structure has come to light in Banavāśi that could definitely be ascribed to these rulers. The Nāga image inscription in the Madhukēśvara temple enclosure, belonging to the 12th regnal year of Vinhukaḍa Chutukulāṇanda Sātakaraṇi states that a vihāra and a tank were caused to be erected. But it has not yet been possible to locate these structures.

The Period of the Kadambas:

In the succeeding period of the Kadambas of Banavāśi, so far as their architectural remains are considered, the picture still remains hazy. A couple of inscriptions of their period found in Banavāśi, however, do indicate that some temples were erected in the capital under the royal patronage.

The most important of these is the inscription of Mrigēśavarma. It is inscribed on a stone pillar which apparently once stood in front of a temple. It begins with an invocation to Vishṇu, which indicates that the temple, was perhaps dedicated to that deity. An image of
Narasimha installed in a shrine in the Madhukeshvara temple complex seems to be an imitation of an earlier image. It belongs to the Vijayanagara times. It is a two-armed image showing archaic iconographic features. On this ground, it has been suggested by some scholars that the original image of Narasimha, which served as a model to this Vijayanagara image, was enshrined in the Vishnu temple belonging to the period of Mrigeshavarma. In view of the fact that the early two-armed images of Narasimha (C. 4th-6th Cent. A.D.) are known from some other places like Kuppagadde, Halaṣi, etc., this suggestion possibly holds good. However, the features of this temple cannot be known till the area is subjected to large-scale archaeological investigation.

Within a distance of about 5 Km. from Banavasi is the village of Guḍnapur, where a huge mound indicating human occupation for considerable length of time is found. This yielded an inscribed pillar containing references to a Manmatha temple erected by king Ravivarma, his palace, its dancing hall and the apartments of the Royal Ladies. The relevant portion of the inscription reads like this (translation): "By .... king, Ravi, this abode for Manmatha was built. To the right of this was the living place (palace) of the king, to the left of which were the dancing halls in front of the ladies apartments ...."
Again, here too, it is the archaeologist that can throw further light on the detailed nature of these buildings.

There can be no doubt that many more temples of the Kadamba period existed here. The numerous lingas of early form, with somewhat an elliptical section at the upper part and a tapering rounded top, are sure indications of this fact. But nothing can be said about the nature of the temples that enshrined them.

Some scholars have suggested that the original portions of the Madhukēśvara temple might belong to the early Kadamba period. However, we feel that, for reasons explained elsewhere later, this temple should be ascribed to the time of the Chālukyas of Vatāpi.

The Period of the Chālukyas of Vatāpi and After:

The Madhukēśvara Temple Complex:

Of all the stone temples surviving in Banavāśi, today, undoubtedly the oldest is the Madhukēśvara temple. This temple has undergone numerous alterations from time to time. So much so that it may be more appropriately described as "a temple complex" with many smaller temples within its enclosure (Fig. 5).

The main temple (Pl. II), dedicated to God Śiva
under the name of Madhukēśvara, consists of an open pillared hall, a gūḍhamāndapa (closed hall) and a garbhagriha (sanctum sanctorum) with a pradakśināpātha (circumambulatory path) around it, all arranged on an east-west axis. The temple faces East.

The garbhagriha enshrines a huge linga on a pītha with multiple mouldings, stylistically assignable to 11th-12th century A.D. There are four heavy monolithic pillars in the garbhagriha, all square in section and without any mouldings. They carry simple rounded corbel capitals which support the beams. Between the garbhagriha and its doorway an antechamber (antarāla) is present. This feature is also present in the Saṅgamēśvara (Vijayēśvara) (C. 615 A.D.), the Virūpāksha (Lōkēśvara) and Mallikārjunā (Trailōkēśvara) temples (C. 633-44 A.D.) at Paṭṭadakal. The doorway of the garbhagriha has plain sākha while the architrave (uttarāṅga) carries the reliefs of sālā and kūta shrine motifs. They are decorated with simple chaitya kūḍas. There are two sub-shrines flanking the garbhagriha doorway which are later additions. The one on the left side shows features of about the 12th century A.D. (Pl. IX, 2).

The garbhagriha of the temple actually stands equidistant on south, west and north sides from the gūḍhamāndapa so that a pradakśināpātha is formed around sanctum. Here one can distinguish the features of the
exterior of the garbhagriha. The plinth of the garbhagriha (Pl. VI, 1) has prominent mouldings consisting of jagati, kantha, tripaṭṭa kumuda, grīva, padma and kapota elements from bottom upwards. On the three sides, viz., the south, west and north a prominent projection (offset, bhadra) is provided at the central part so that the garbhagriha has a triratha plan. The bhitti or the wall of the garbhagriha is plain except for the pair of half pillars standing over the ratha offset of the plinth. This feature of the wall has resulted in the formation of a devakōsththa (god's niche) on the south, west and north side of the garbhagriha wall. Each of the devakōsththas is surmounted by a pediment of the sāla shrine type with a chaitya kūḍu. The horizontal median band between the sāla sikhara and the beam of the devakōsththa has a series of projecting elephants. The frame of the devakōsththa has plain sakhās except that on the north side. Running along the top line of the bhitti is a frieze of haṁśas (swans) or parrots (?). The devakōsththa in the northern wall of the garbhagriha is somewhat different from the remaining two (Pl. VI, 2). The frame of this kōšttha has nāga sākha and at the lower portion of either side of the frame, there is a small seated pot-bellied figure similar to the ones of Vatāpi Chālukya temples. These figures probably represent the personified nidhis, viz., padmanidhi and saṅkhanidhi. The pediment of this devakōsththa has the sikhara motif with a horizontal median band. At the top
centre is a prominent chaitya kūdu while below is a sāla sikhara which has depictions of lions instead of kūdus. None of the kōśthas now has a figure of divinity.

As stated above, the walls of the āvadhatāmāṇḍapa run into a rectangular plan and enclose the garba-griha. Corresponding to each of the devakōśthas of the garba-griha, ventilation is provided through a grilled window in the āvadhatāmāṇḍapa wall. Two more grilled windows (jālavatāyanas) are also provided in the āvadhatāmāṇḍapa for letting light in the hall (Pls. X, 1; XI, 2; XII).

There are 12 free standing pillars in the āvadhatāmāṇḍapa arranged in four rows. The central bay has a raised ceiling. The beams supporting the raised ceiling, almost like a clerestorey, at the central bay have chaityakūdus, miniature shrine motifs, kūdus with peeping heads, fabulous animals like makaras, vālīs, hamsas, etc. The roof is flat over the central bay, but slopes gently over the side aisles and the pradakshināpatha.

The pillars of the āvadhatāmāṇḍapa are simple monoliths with a square section (ručaka) (Pl. VII, 1). There are semicircular medallions on the pillars (Pl. VII, 2). Sometimes these are decorated with lotuses, festoon bands, kirtimukhas, etc. at the upper and lower parts of the pillars. The capital resting over the pillar has mouldings and a median band. The mouldings look as if they
are imitations of wood work. It may be remarked here that the pillars, their decorations and capitals are comparable with those of the Jambulinga temple (699 A.D.) at Badami and Lāṅkhān temple (of controversial date) at Aihole.  

In the gūdhāmandapa, at the north-east and south-east are recently constructed niche/shrines enshrining the images of Vishṇu (Pl. XVII, 2) and Kārtikeya (Pl. XVIII, 1) respectively. Both seem to date from an early period, possibly later part of the Vātāpi Chālkūka period. They are separately discussed elsewhere in this chapter.

The doorway of the gūdhāmandapa is apparently a later addition and probably belongs to C. 12th century A.D. This is indicated by the type of the architrave as well as the Gaḷaḷakṣumī figure in the lāḷāṭa bimba. The original dvaraśālās (of C. 12th century A.D.) are presently hidden behind the later Śaiva dvaraśālās of the Vijayānagara times. To the left and right of the doorway are niches one on each side. Their pediments show that they have undergone alterations at a later period. The one on the left depicts a Nāgara Śikhara in the centre flanked by Drāvida śikhara on either side. Stylistically this may be assigned to C. 12th century A.D.

Except the alterations already mentioned and the resetting of the external wall of the gūdhāmandapa, first during C. 12th century and later during 17th-18th centuries (?) the garbhāgniha and gūdhāmandapa of the
Madhukēśvara temple represent the two surviving members of the original temple. Drawing parallels from the Early Chālukyan temple specimens, with which comparisons were made above, the original temple would have had an open porch with four free standing pillars of the ruchaka (square) order.

The open pillared hall (mandapa) is the most richly ornate part of the Madhukēśvara temple. Its central pillars are lathe-turned and polished with typical mouldings of C. 11th-12th century Kalyāṇa Chālukya temple pillars (Pl. VIII, 1). There are other types of pillars, such as faceted, fluted, etc., their total number being 48 (Pl. VIII, 2). The central part of the floor is slightly raised and the corresponding ceiling of the central bay is embellished with a lotus motif. The hall is entered from the east, south and north, but there are two more subsidiary entrances closer to the gūḍhamandapa wall, one from the south and the other facing it from the north. Entering from the main doorway, one first encounters a huge, beautifully carved Nandi, also of C. 12th century A.D. (Pl. XXV, 1). An inscription in Kannāḍa characters of circa 12th century, inscribed on a pillar base, mentions the embellishments carried out in the mandapa.12 Along the outerline of the pillared mandapa, kakshāsanas (back-rest seats) are provided (Pl. IV, 2).

The features of the exterior wall of the gūḍha-
mandapa show that they were first reset during C. 12th century and later probably during post-Vijayanagar period. Some of the bhadras (offsets) of the wall carry the pediments typical of 12th century while practically all over the wall are carved votive Nandi and Linga groups with label inscriptions mentioning their donors. The plinth of the gudhamandapa has the same features as that of the garbhagriha. The walls (Pl. X, 1) are relieved into bhadras formed by pairs of pilasters and recesses (sali-lāntaras), resulting in devakōṣṭhās at the offsets (Pls. X, 2; XI, 1).

The sikhara (superstructure) of the Madhukēśvara temple is of tiered pyramidal type, nick-named by some scholars as Kadambanāgara. It consists of horizontal tiers each pair separated by a grīva (neck) arranged in such a way that the superstructure assumes a tapering pyramidal shape as it goes up (Pl. III). Twelve such tiers are discerned, the last one carrying a seated bull, the vāhana of Śiva, at its four corners. A cupola square on plan and a smaller circular element surmount this in that order, ultimately topped by a kalaśa. The eastern face of the superstructure is partially covered by a śukanāsa (Pl. III, 1) with an ornate kīrtimukha and a figure of Ganeśa at the front. On the śukanāsa is a seated Nandi. Above the śukanāsa, a small shrine motif carries a figure of Garuḍa. Below the śukanāsa is 7-hooded Śesha (serpent) whose body encircles the lower part of
the superstructure, its tail ending up near the hood. The remaining sides of the superstructure have ṇāsikas. Practically the whole of the superstructure is covered with stucco and white-wash of Vijayanagara and later periods, which makes it difficult to distinguish the original features of the superstructure. In any case the present form of the superstructure seems to have imitated the original one if not enclosed it. Already during the Vatāpi Chāluṣya period, temples with such superstructures are noticed, as for instance, in the Mallikārjuna temple at Aihole (C. 8th century A.D.).

It becomes one of the most favoured superstructure types in the western part of Karnataka, the home region of the Kadambas, right upto Vijayanagara period. In fact, it is for this reason that this superstructure type was nick-named Kadambanagara. The medieval inscriptions of Karnataka refer to this type as Kalinga, probably because of its application to the Orissan temples. Perhaps it should be appropriate to describe this temple type as phāmsana, mentioned in the canonical texts on Indian architecture.

The impact of this sikhara type on the temple architecture of Banavasi was indeed great, to such an extent that all the surviving temples (e.g. Pl. V, 2) of the place including those of Vijayanagara period carry the same type of superstructure.

The exterior of the kakshasana is decorated with
miniature figures arranged between pillar motifs. They are listed below, commencing from the area closer to the gūḍhamāṇḍapa wall on the norther side, in clockwise fashion.

North Side:

Nāginīs, Śaiva dvarapālas; Bhairava; a female deity (holding akṣhamālā, chakra, śāṅkha, gada); Sūrya; a female deity (holding gada, śāṅkha, chakra, kalaśa); Pārvatī (holding khadga, triśūla, damaru, pātra); Lakṣmī (holding abhayahasta with akṣhamālā, chakra, śāṅkha, kalaśa); Gaṇeśa; standing saptamātrikas - Chāmuṇḍā, Indraṇī, Varāhi, Vaishṇavī, Kaumārī, Mahēśvarī, Brāhma, Viṇādhara Śiva; Śaiva dvarapāla; Kāma; Rati; Vishnu's forms - Janārdaṇa (PSCG)*, Keśava (PSCG); Āditya; Śiva (holding akṣhamālā, triśūla, damaru and phala); Ardhanārīśvara; Pārvatī; Śiva; Vishnu as Janārdaṇa (PSCG); Kirāta; Ekādaśa Rudras.

Front (East) Side:

Rati, Kāma and Prīti interspersed by Kalaśa motifs; dvarapāla, dvarapāla, dancing lady; two drummers (Pl. IV, 2).

* P = padma; C = chakra; S = śāṅkha; G = gada. Attributes in the hands of the deity in clockwise order from the lower right hand.
South Side:

Vishnu's forms - Madhava (GCSP); Trivikrama (PGCS), Madhava (GCSP); Adhoksha (PGSC); Kesava (PSCG), Adhoksha (PGSC); Hrisheka (GCPS), Varaha, Narasimha, Kiratas; Vishnu as Kesava (PSCG). From this point an original kakshasana slab has been replaced by one of post-Vijayanagara period. It carries Nandi-and-linga scheme running all along the slab. Thereafter the original slabs continue with following depictions: Dvarapala; lady (holding lotuses); Dikpala - Indra, Agni, Yama, Nirtuti, Varuna, Vayu, Kubera, Ishana; Daksha; Dvadasa Adityas.

Almost about the same time during which extensive additions and renovations were made to the Madhukeshvara temple, two gateways, one in front (Pl. IV, 1) facing the east and the other on the north, were introduced in C. 12th century A.D. This is proved by two pieces of evidence. Firstly, the gateways and the open pillared hall match in style. Secondly, the axis of the eastern gateway (mahadvara) corresponds exactly with the axial line of the main temple running east-west, while the axis of the north gateway corresponds exactly to axis running through the northern and southern entrances to the pillared mandapa.

The main gateway on the east (Pl. IV, 1) is a stone structure, square in plan. A flight of steps from the east leads up to this gateway. On either side, beautifully
sculpted elephants flank the stair-case (Pl. XXV, 1). Eight pillars in the front (four on either side) and eight in the rear (four on either side) support the beams and ceilings (Pl. IX, 1). All parts are beautifully and intricately carved.

The gateway on the north is now closed. Its plan is essentially the same as that of the eastern gateway. The outer half consists of a platform running on either side of the passage and there are indications that originally these served as kakshāsanas. There are sockets for fixing the back rest seat slabs which are now missing. The front row of pillars are fluted while the pillars of the second row are square in base, with lāṭe-turned shaft. Beams are decorated with rosettes. The doorway is flanked by lattice windows with rosette decoration. The architrave of the doorway has miniature shrine motifs, with śikhara of Kalinga type crowned by kalaśa. The central shrine motif is somewhat larger in dimension and flanked by lions, the lāñchana of the Kadambas.

Chronology of the Madhukēśvara Temple:

The date of the original parts of the Madhukēśvara temple is still debated. Taking into account the tradition behind the temple, it seems to have a considerable antiquity. As in the cases of most of the temples of Aihole and Paṭṭadakal and elsewhere, there possibly was
a preceding brick temple. Our discussion here, however, is confined to the existing stone structure.

The evidences for dating the temple are of two types: stylistic and epigraphical. For the earlier parts of the structure, essentially style has to be taken into consideration since direct evidences of other types are lacking. For later parts—additions and renovations, both stylistic and epigraphical evidences are helpful.

While describing the various parts of the temple earlier it was pointed out that there were some similarities with the early Chalukya temples of Badami and other nearby regions. These may be listed as follows: (1) Use of red sandstone for the construction of the temple (only for original parts). (2) The presence of nāgāsākhā on the frame of the northern devakōṣṭha of the garbhagriha. (3) Monolithic, square sectioned pillars in the garbhagriha and gūḍhamāṇḍapa. (4) Half-medallions as a decorative devise for the pillars. (5) The moulded capitals over the pillars in the gūḍhamāṇḍapa. (6) The mouldings of the plinths.

The use of red sandstone for the temple distinctly stands out in contrast to later additions, for which slate stone has been used. The red sandstone is not found in the region around Banavasi, while it is abundantly available around Badami. This provides the first clue for dating the temple. The presence of nāgāsākhā is the second
It has been convincingly suggested that the tradition of depicting the nāgasākha motif on the doorframes and the frames of devakāshas of early Chāluukya temples did not commence before C. 610 A.D. (i.e., the accession date of Pulakesi II). Its first occurrence is noted in the Malagitti Śivalaya at Badami (C. 625 A.D.). Accordingly, the lower limit of the date of the Madhukēśvara temple may be fixed as C. 610 A.D. if not later. The monolithic square sectioned pillars provide the third clue. They are a common feature of the early Chāluukya temples. Similarly, the half-medallion decorations and the capitals resting over the pillars also provide scope for a comparison. The capitals of pillars in the garbhagṛiha are of rounded type finding comparison, for instance, with those in the Malagitti Śivalaya at Badami. But the capitals of the pillars in the āudhamandapa have typical mouldings comparable to those of the Jambulinga temple at Badami (699 A.D.) built during the time of Chāluukya Vijayaditya and with those of the Laṅkhān temple at Aihole, whose date is controversial. But recently scholars seem to agree that the Laṅkhān temple as it exists today, may not be earlier than early 8th century. Hence, it is most likely that the temple of Madhukēśvara may belong to the period around 700 A.D. In this connection it is interesting to note that one of the records of Chāluukya Vijayaditya refers to his visit to Banavāsī, a provincial capital under Ālupa king, son-in-law of
Vijayaditya. From this and other corroborating stylistic evidence, perhaps we may say that Vijayaditya's visit to Banavasi was possibly at the occasion of the inauguration of the Madhukesvara temple. Therefore a date in the reign of Vijayaditya (697-733 A.D.) seems appropriate for the Madhukeshvara temple.

Regarding the additions to the temple made at a later period, both stylistical and epigraphical evidences are clear that the additions were done during C. 12th century A.D.

It is difficult to ascertain the original presiding deity of the temple. In any case the linga enshrined in the garbha griha is not the original. An image of Vishnu, now placed in a subshrine in the gudhamandapa, seems to belong to the early Chalukya or Rashtrakuta period. Some scholars have suggested that this may be the original presiding deity of the temple. In the collections of the museum there is a sculpture depicting the head of a male divinity, probably of Vishnu, which seems to belong to early Chalukya period. However, we cannot tell with total certainty about the original dedication of the temple. The present name of the deity Madhukeshvara and the local tradition connecting him with Vishnu, the slayer of demons Madhu and Kaitabha, perhaps faintly suggests a Vishnavite dedication.
The Fort at Banavasi:

Banavasi must have been protected by a fortification wall from very early times, since it was one of the most ancient cities and administrative headquarters in northern Karnataka. We cannot assume that the present remains of the fort wall at Banavasi are of the original fort of that place. It may have come down to us in the renovated form because, right through its history, it has served as a capital area, as an administrative headquarters.

Recently, there has been an attempt to describe the Banavasi fort. The study of the materials used in the construction of the fortification wall, has shown that, for want of the rock material the fort was built of mud-bricks, mud and laterite. The fort is situated on the left bank of the river Varada, in an area where the river takes a sharp bend from the north-west to east. The river flows in a zigzag manner providing considerable protection on the southern side (Pl. I, 1). The interior of the fort measures 850 x 600 mts. and the total length of the surrounding fort wall is 2,140 mts. The western wing of the wall is greater in width and height than the remaining three wings. Along the exterior slope of the fort a moat is still extant at many points. The fort wall is about 30 mts. thick at the base and 10 mts. at the top. The moat is about 12 mts wide at the base and about 22 mts. at the ground level. Presently there
mud. In the third stage, probably during the later Kadamba period, the fort was further extended on the northern side and was constructed exclusively of laterite blocks.

II. Sculptures:

Very few works of art in plastic form have come down to us from the Banavasi region. Most of them have been preserved in the Sculpture Gallery in the Madhukeshvara temple complex. The important specimens pertaining to our period of study are given below:

The Satavahana-Chuṭu Period:

1. An inscribed Nāga slab of the Chuṭu period. This consists of a coiled Nāga with five spread-out hoods. At the neck a band is tied with a prominent stone at the centre. The coils are arranged symmetrically into pairs, one below the other. The inscription is on either side of the frame which surrounds the Nāga sculpture. It belongs to the reign of Viṅhukaṇḍa Chuṭukulānanda Satākarṇi. The material of the sculpture is schist (Pl. XIII, 1).

2. An inscribed pedestal of a standing image, probably of the Buddha or Boddhisattva. Unfortunately the standing figure is totally lost except the feet. The
inscription is in similar characters as that of the Nāga inscription mentioned above. It mentions the person responsible for making the image as well as the person who sculpted it. Unlike that of the Nāga inscription, it has been chiselled out of sandstone (Pl. XIII, 2).

3. A beautiful female head made of sandstone. This represents the head of a woman, the remaining portion is missing. The image would have been of life size. The face, the eyes, the nose and the lips are very expressive. The hair is beautifully combed, and tied into a bun at the back. The bun carries beautifully carved chaitya facade decoration. It could be the earliest surviving specimen of plastic art in Banavasi, and may date from 1st or 2nd century A.D. (Pl. XIV).

4. A male head. It is also carved out of sandstone, but is smaller in size. The features are akin to the early sculptures of 2nd-3rd centuries A.D.

5. A Kubja Yaksha. This sculpture is small in size and comes from Guḍnāpur. It represents a standing Yaksha with pot belly and rather fleshy body. He is two-armed, but the attributes in the hands are worn out. The depiction of the eyes and the unique smile, are characteristic of the early Yakshas, dating from 3rd-4th centuries A.D. The ears carry kundalas. Other features are, unfortunately, worn out. (Pl. XV, 1).
The Kadamba Period:

6. **Lajja Gaurī.** This is a small stone slab with the carved relief of Lajja Gaurī. It depicts the Goddess in an awkward posture with exposed private parts. There are some ornaments at the belly. The breasts are not depicted clearly nor are the hands. The Lotus head is seen very feebly. The sculpture is in low relief. It may be placed about 4th or 5th century A.D. (Pl. XV, 2).

7. A small figure of a seated female deity. It is carved in limestone in round relief. The deity is seated on a low stool. The head and the hands are damaged. She wears a necklace and a hāra in Vajñopavīta fashion. Armlets and anklets are also seen. The depiction recalls the sculptures of 3rd-4th centuries A.D. In the absence of any significant clue it is difficult to identify the deity (Pl. XVI, 1).

8. An image of a Tīrthaṅkara made of sandstone. The head and the legs are broken. The modelling is very smooth and it may belong to about 5th century A.D. (Pl. XVI, 2).

The Vatapi Chalukya Period:

9. A head of a male deity probably of Vishnu (Pl. XVII, 1). It is made on blackish stone. The most outstanding feature is the rather long cylindrical kirīṭa.
with exquisite decoration. The face has beautiful eyes, but nose and lips are damaged. The kirīṭa recalls the early Chalukyan feature, particularly the one of Trivikrama in cave-3 at Badami. This sculpture, would perhaps have been more than lifesize, if complete. It may be placed in the 6th or 7th century A.D.

10. Vishnū.20 This image is kept in one of the niches of the Madhukēśvara temple and is worshipped as Ādimādhava. There can be hardly any doubt that it was meant for worship, as the main deity. The deity stands in samapāda posture with four arms. He wears a long kirīṭa, with decoration at the front. There is prabhāvalaya behind the head. In the ears are makarakaṅḍalas. There are also hāras, kēyūras, bhujaṅbandhās, bangles, mekhalā, vājayaṃti and anklets. The right lower arm holds a phalā and is placed on a ribbed gada. The remaining two upper hands carry Chakra and Śaṅkha, while the lower left hand is placed at kāti. The deity is surrounded by ten miniature figures of which the first five are easily identified as Matsya, Kūrma, Varāha, Narasiṃha and Vāmana. The remaining five are not distinguished by their attributes but should represent Pārāśurāma, Dāsarathirāma, Balarāma, Krishṇa and Kalki. Thus these figures represent the Daśavatāras of Vishnū. Of more interest is the presence of three seated female divinities flanking the God, in the lower part. Vishnū's feet are placed in what is apparently a lotus. To the right of this is the
flying Garuda with his hands folded in anājali mudrā. To the left of the lotus is a seated female who is two-armed. She holds phala and kalaśa. Possibly she represents Bhūdevī, the Earth Goddess, a consort of Vishṇu. To the right of Vishṇu is rather awkwardly seated female divinity, holding a lotus in both her hands. She apparently represents Śridevi, consort of Vishṇu. To the left of Vishṇu, is seated another Goddess who is also two-armed. She sits cross-legged and holds a phala and a pustaka. She may be identified as Sarasvatī, the Goddess of Learning. The presence of Sarasvatī makes this image unique in so far as no other image of Vishṇu has come to light in Karnāṭaka. It is only in the eastern part of India, namely Bihar and Bengal that the images of Vishṇu with both Lakṣmi and Sarasvatī, are found in good number. It is difficult to date the image precisely because of its odd features. However, it may belong to about 8th century A.D. (Pl. XVII, 2).

11. Kārttikeya. A broken image of Shāmkukha is kept in one of the small shrines in the гудхамаṇḍapa of the Madhukēśvara temple. It depicts the God seated in ardha-paryankāsana on the back of a peacock. The deity is three headed and attributes in his hands are not clear. The peacock bears a necklace. It may be dated to C. 7th-8th century A.D. (Pl. XVIII, 1).
The Later Chālukya Period

12. Seated Jaina Tīrthankara from Guḍnāpur. This image in round relief, is carved on bluish black stone and is defaced. The Jina is seated on a platform in padmāsana with his hands in yōgamudrā. The sculpture is made in right proportions and may belong to about 11th century A.D. (Pl. XVIII, 2).

13. A mutilated image of Vishnū. The hands, belly and legs are badly damaged. The deity stands in samapāda posture and is four-armed. The attributes in the hands are lost. However, the lower left hand seems to hold a mace, a part of which is visible. The person of the deity is decorated with various ornaments including kirīta mukuta, Makarakundalas, ḥāras yajnopavīta, kēyūras, etc. However, the body seems to be disproportionate. The lower half is rather too dwarf compared to the upper half. Two female deities, obviously Śrīdevi and Bhūdevi, flank the deity, one on each side. The image being smaller in size represents one of the 24 forms of Vishnū, probably Kēśava. It seems to have served as a subsidiary image in a temple. The probable date is c. 12th century A.D. (Pl. XIX, 1).

14. Śiva as Bhairava. The deity stands in dvibhaṅga in nude form but for a few ornaments. He does not have a kirīta, but his hair seems to be matted. Other ornaments on his person include chakrakundalas, kanṭhahāra, udara-
bandha, mēkhalā, a hāra of skulls arranged in yajñōpavīta fashion and a serpent tied at the thighs. The four hands respectively carry khadga, trīṣūla, đamaru, and pānapātra, the last of which is damaged. A dog is trying to reach the pānapātra. Below the dog, a couple of prētas are depicted. To the right of the God are a couple of devotees. At the top of the sculpture there is a kārtimukha from whose mouth a pair of beaded festoons creep out to form a prabhāmandala of the deity. The sculpture belongs to c. 12th century A.D. (Pl. XIX, 2).

15. A badly worn and mutilated image of Śiva as Bhairava. In this sculpture the matted hair of the deity is held together by a sērpent. The deity wears the kundālas, hāras, keīvūras, bhujabandhās, udarabandha and a garland of skulls in yajñōpavīta fashion. At the thighs a serpent is knotted. The four arms carry, the khadga, trīṣūla, đamaru and pānapātra, of which the last is missing. A dog is jumping to reach the pānapātra. To the left of the deity are a few prētas with a vessel in front of them. The deity wears sandals. The sculpture may be dated stylistically to c. 12th century A.D. (Pl. XX, 1).

16. A sculpture of Gānēśa. Made of schist, the four-armed deity is seated on a lotus pedestal and is decorated with various simple ornaments. The four hands carry the bhagnadanta, paraśu, padma, and mōdaka. The trunk holds a sweet ball. The sculpture is expressive of dynamism.
It is customary to have an image of Gaṇḍesa and Mahishā- 
suramardini in the niches of a temple. This sculpture also probably served such a purpose. It may date from c. 12th century A.D. (Pl. XX, 2).

17. **Mahēśamūrti of Śiva.** This three-headed deity sits on a **padmapīṭha** in **padmāsana**. He is decorated with various ornaments, such as **hāras**, **kēyūras**, **udarabandhas**, etc. The hair is matted and held together by snakehoods over each of the faces. The hands carry the attributes of **akṣamālā**, **damaru**, **trīśūla** and **phala**. The **vāhana**, namely the bull, is depicted in front of the pedestal. Mahēśamūrti is supposed to have four visible faces and a fifth invisible face of the God Śiva. The visible faces represent, **Aghōra**, **Vāmadeva**, **Tatpurusha** and **Sadyōjāta**, while the last invisible face represents **Īśāna** form of Śiva. The concept involves Śiva as **Mahāyōgi**. The specimen under consideration is excellently executed with all the delicacies of later Chālukya-Hoysaḷa period. It may be placed in the 12th century A.D. (Pl. XXI, 1).

18. **Dancing Chāmundā.** This deity is four armed, perhaps in the **samāchatura** pose. She carries the attributes of **khadга**, **damaru**, the skull and **pānapātra** of which the last is totally damaged. Though her person is decorated with various ornaments, her emaciated body resembling skeleton is striking. She is flanked by a male **prēta** on her right and female **prēta** on her left. Like the Mahēśamūrti described above, this sculpture also bears
delicate features of the later Chālukya-Hoysaḷa style of c. 12th century A.D. (Pl. XXI, 2).

19. Sarasватि. It is probably unfinished. She is seated in padmāsana posture and only two of her hands have survived. She wears a karanda-mukuṭa, chakrākundalas, kaṇṭhahāra, stanaḥhāras, and expanded long garlands of beads arranged in yajñopavīta fashion. The two hands carry respectively akṣhamālā and pustaka. The lower right hand shows abhayamudrā gesture. If finished, this would have been an excellent example of the later Chālukya art in Banavāsi region of c. 12th century A.D. (Pl. XXII, 1).

20. A bust of Tārābhagavatī. It is a rare specimen of the Buddhist art from Banavāsi region. The left shoulder and arms, the right arms and the breasts are damaged. The mukuṭa on her head carries the figure of the Buddha seated in yōgamudrā, thereby revealing her identity as a Buddhist Goddess. She also wears numerous ornaments such as kundalas, hāras, etc. The depiction of hair on her right shoulder and garland probably of pārijāta flowers is a significant feature. A complete example of Tārābhagavatī comes from Ballīgāve, with which the specimen under consideration is comparable. It may be dated in c. 12th century A.D. (Pl. XXII, 2).

21. A damaged sculpture of a seated Yaksha. It is probably of Jaina affiliation. The Yaksha is seated in ardha-paryāṅkaśana and is pot-bellied. He wears a karanda-

mukuta, kundalas, haras, udarbandha, yajnopavita etc.
The right hand, partially damaged, is probably inabhaya-
mudra. The left portion is completely damaged. A creeper
design can be seen on the right. Behind the mukuta small
features resembling a hood of a serpent are seen. If
this is correct then the image represents Dharapendra,
the Yaksha of Parsvanatha Tirthankara. It may belong to
c. 12th century A.D.

22. A Fragment of a Jaina image. The image is that of
a Tirthankara, but only his left hand and Yakshi portion
have survived. The Yakshi is two-armed, wears a karanda-
mukuta, kundalas etc. and is seated in paryankasana. Her
left hand is damaged, while the right seems to carry a
flower. She is seated below a tree. To her right a
person seated on a lion is depicted. To her left a small
figure of a devotee or a child is depicted. In the absence
of a proper lanchana it is difficult to identify who
exactly this Yakshi is. This may also belong to c. 12th
century A.D. (Pl. XXIII, 1).

23. An image of Kama and Rati from Guptapur. This is
placed in the Virabhadra temple on the top of the Guptapur
mound. Both are two-armed and stand in dvibhanga. Kama
carries an arrow in the right hand and Ikshuchapa in the
left. Rati carries a lotus in the right hand and phala
in the left. The image is worn out, but the characters
of the style suggest a 12th or 13th century date (Pl.
XXIII, 2).
24. The bust of a female deity from Guđnāpur. This is a large-sized image but unfortunately the hands with lower part are missing while the face itself is greatly worn out. She seems to wear an ornate karandamukuta, one makarakundalas, and hāras. She seems to present one of the mātrikas. It may belong to about 11th or 12th century A.D. (Pl. XXIV, 1).

25. There are a few badly damaged sculptures of Jaina Tīrthāṅkaras and Yakṣīs in Guđnāpur which have lost their details. But the group stylistically belongs to 12th or 13th century A.D.

26. A Kīrtimukha from Banavāśi. This is considerably damaged but the face of the lion and the latās issuing from its mouth to form the Chaitya motifs are discernible. It served probably as a mukha-patā for the sikhara of a shrine. At the centre traces of an obliterated icon can be seen. It belongs to c. 11th or 12th century A.D. (Pl. XXIV, 2).

27. The large-sized seated Nandi. Placed in pillared hall of the Madhukeśvara temple, it is one of the best examples of c. 12th century A.D. It is decorated on its forehead, its neck, and on its shoulders with various ornaments. A bell is strung at the neck. The slightly bent face of the bull looks as though it is watching with humble eyes the deity in the garbhagriha (Pl. XXV, 1).
28. Two beautiful elephants at the main entrance of the Madhukeshvara temple are excellent examples of artist's ability to express action in stone. Apart from the ornaments, the very finish of these sculptures suggests a 12th century date for them. They depict enraged elephants charging at the persons who are dwarfed by their very size in front of the elephants. (Pl. XXV, 2).

29. On one of the pillars of the Madhukeshvara temple is carved the portrait of a Saiva ascetic with folded hands. The inscriptions above this sculpture in different scripts indicates the identity of this person as one Vibhuti Gaurayya. The significance of this sculpture in the religious context is pointed out elsewhere in this work. This sculpture may belong to c. 13th century A.D. (Pl. XXVI).

30. A few broken herostones are also preserved in the sculpture shed. One of them is better preserved and depicts three scenes one above the other. The lower depicts a hero attacking two soldiers one of whom is on the horseback. The identity of the hero is suggested by his size which is larger than the remaining persons. In the central panel the same hero is carried by two damsels by supporting him on their shoulders. In the top panel a linga and a devotee are represented; apparently the scenes depict respectively the fight of the hero and his death; his being carried to the world of the God by Apsaras and his enjoying the presence of the God in the heaven.
It may belong to c. 12th century A.D. (Pl. XXVII).

31. A fragment of a herostone. In this slab, only the lower scene and a part of the central scene can be seen. In the lower scene is depicted the fighting hero at the centre. He is shown killing a soldier in a battle. Other soldiers are around him while two are mounted on horses. An umbrella is held over the hero. The surviving part of the central scene depicts the hero in a shrine flanked by a pair of dancers on either side. This sculpture may belong to c. 12th century A.D. (Pl. XVIII).
NOTES AND REFERENCES


4. Some early scholars have attributed this temple to fifth century A.D. for instance, Coomaraswamy, A.K., *History of Indian and Indonesian Art*. However, recent scholars are inclined to place it in Seventh-Eighth century A.D. For instance Rajasekhara, S., *Op. cit.*, pp. 94-97.


12. SII., Vol. XX

13. This term has been used by scholars like Soundara Rajan (e.g., The Personality of Indian Temples) but recently Dhaky, M.A., has demonstrated that the term phāmsana mentioned in Indian canonical texts on architecture suits this temple form. See Indian temple forms in Karnataka Inscriptions.


18. Please see Sculpture No. 9 described below.


20. This sculpture has been discussed by Padigar, S.V., in The Cult of Vishnu in Karnataka.

21. This sculpture has been discussed by Bhat, H.R.R., "Tarābhagavatī images from Belligave and Banavasi", Journal of Karnataka University, Vol. XXII (1986).