Chapter XXIII

Temple and Matha

Worship of images is a natural corollary of devotion. Even as early as the 4th century B.C. Jains had images of their Tirthankaras1 and probably had temples2. Among the Hindus and especially among the higher sections of the orthodox people, the image-worship was popularised by the Bhagavatas or Pancaratra3. Devakulas or Deva-ghara are mentioned in the North Indian inscriptions of about the 3rd century B.C. The Gathasaptasati makes many references to temples.

In Andhra, temples were built from early times. A proverb in Telugu says that one finds greater safety in the temple than in his own house. Archaeological evidence to the existence of temples in Andhra comes from the 11th year of the Ikshvaku king Bhuvala’s chief Talavara built in his eleventh regnal year the temple of Sarvadeva. In the 16th year of the same reign Maharaja-kumara Virapurisadatta built the Devakula of Puspabhadrā and erected a Devajastambha. Recent archaeological excavations have brought to light the basements of these temples and of many other on the site of Vijayapuri. The inscriptions found in the

1. Vide Supra, P. 260.
2. Ramachandra and Gravely, Three Main Styles of Temple Architecture, P. iii.
5. Gathasaptasati, I, 64; II, 72; II, 90.
7. Ibid. XXXIV, PP. 17-22.
valley refer to the Devakula of Nodagiriswamy, God of Malampura, and Goddess Hariti. The temple of Astabhuja-Narayana was built in the 30th regnal year of Abhira Vasusena. An inscription recorded in the Ikshvaku period from Velpur mentions the temple of Bhutagrahaka. The Manchikallu inscription of about the same time mentions the temple of Jivasivaswamy. Thus, from about the middle of Eruvala’s reign, there was a tremendous temple building activity in the Sriparvata region.

The temples in the Nagarjunakonda valley reveal certain important points. They were of different shapes — circular, apsidal, square and rectangular. Each temple had a Prakara, at times, decorated with more than one entrance and the main entrance facing the east. Connected with the temple, there were Kandepas, intended for festivals like Abhiseka, Vasantotsava and Kalpam. The Pradaksinapatha around the temple is often paved with slabs. The uniformity in the plan of temples suggest that the Sthapatis followed the Sastras, then in vogue.

The pond of water in the Hariti temple gives rise to the idea that the devotees were expected to wash their feet and hands before entering the temple. Before the sanctum, Dhvajastambha was erected. The purnakalasas were used in the place of Dwarpalas. The image of the deity was made either of wood or of stone. The

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1. E.I., XXV, PP. 4-7.
2. Ibid. XXIV, PP. 120-125.
3. Ibid. XXXIV, PP. 127-204.
4. Ibid. XXII, P. 32 ff.
5. Ibid. P. 27 ff.
7. This information is obtained from Dr. R. Subrahmanyan, who excavated the site.
8. R. Subrahmanyan, Nagarjunakonda Souvenir, P. 63.
image of Astabhuja-Narayana was of Audumbara wood whereas the images of Skanda and Sakti were of stone. People made gifts to the temples. They included bangles in the case of Hariti, conches to Narayana, money, gardens and land and villages as permanent endowments to temples.

The finds in these ruined temples indicate the growth of complexity in worship. The Manochikallu inscription of Simhevarman mentions priests and it shows that there began to develop the class of temple priests.

Temple-building continued with unabated vigour and the Ananda-gotra kings and the Vismukundins claimed to have built numerous temples. A reference is already made to the Chojerla temple of Kapotesvara, patronised by the Kandara II. The Vismukundins not only built temples but excavated the cave temples of Undavalli and Mogalrajapuram. The records of the early Pallavas mention the Kulimehataraka temple of Narayana at Dalura and the Vismukhera temple in the village of Kundukuru. Trilocana Pallava to whom reference is made more than once is credited with the construction of numerous Siva temples. The temples of Alampur were very much improved and added to by the Early Calukyas. The Eastern Calukyas were highly pious and Vijayaditya II is credited with the construction of 103 temples. The famous Pancanamas were associated with

1. R. Subrahmanyan, op. cit.
2. Two inscribed conches were discovered in the temple of Astabhuja-Narayana.
4. E.II., VI, No.
7. E.II., VIII, PP. 143-146.
Shims 1. The Vassals of the Galukyas, the Codas of Radau, the Kolambas, the Galukyas of Vemulavada built and endowed temples.

Temple-building came to be regarded as one of the seven great meritorious deeds. This faith was mainly responsible for the erection or installation of monolithic votive temples at important kastras such as Alompur, Chejorla, Daksarama and others, which practice reminds us of the Buddhist practice of votive stupas and the Jain practice of Caumukhas. The Kakatiya rulers and their generals and ministers built or enlarged and richly endowed temples all over the empire. In comparison with the Eastern Calukyan shrines, the Kakatiya temples are much larger in size and magnificent in architectural and sculptural wealth. They were probably made to commensurate with the size and grandeur of the empire.

The Saivite sculptures included different conception of Siva as Nataraja, Somaskandamurty, Bhikshatanamurty, Alingamurty, Lingodbhavamurty, Daksinamurty, Ardhanarsvaramurty and so on. The Vaisnavite themes included the Ten Avatars of Visnu and the episodes in the epics, especially of Ramayana. The thousand pillared temple at Anumakonda, and the temples of Pallalamari and Palampet though in a dilapidated condition, are living monuments to the aesthetic sense and artistic skill of the sculptors of the age.

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1. See above, p.
2. An inscription dated in A.D. declares:
   Tana pendasamanta tanasattanambu gurtiyu dayanadillun
   Vanamunu jeryvun gudiyun janevuntamulina septasantanam bul.
   Corpus of Telangana Inscriptions, No. 52.
3. See Pl. IX, Fig. 3.
4. Pl. XIV, Fig. 1. This is a bronze image of Nataraja of about the 15th century.
5. Pl. XII, Fig. 2.
7. Pl. XI, Fig. 2.
8. Pl. XI, Fig. 1.
From the Calukyan times, temple grew up into an amazingly important institution that dominated social life in the land. It engrossed the pious attention of the people throughout the year by frequent celebration of festivals such as Damasapunnami, Dolotsava, Kathakamahotsava, Kramastami, Srijayanti and so on. The most important was the annual festival known as Brahmothsava as at Tirupati which was spread over a number of days. In other temples it was called Tirunala — the sacred days — and Vallabhamatyaa gives a graphic description of the Tirunala of Lord Andhra Visnu of Srikakulam. The Village Goddesses had their celebrations known as Kolupula. In those functions, generally the entire village used to take part.

Each temple of considerable size and resources had its Stanapati or Mahasthanapat. Under him there a large number of employees who included Brahmans to recite the Veda and other scriptures at the Abhiseka or worship or any other festive occasions; servants, attending to the menial duties such as sweeping the floor; musicians and dancing girls. In the Telugu inscriptions we come across the term Sani Munnuvuru which means 300 dancing girls, attached to temple. This gives us an idea about the size of the temple retinue. Besides, some of the important temples

1. S.K. Aiyangar, History of Tirupati, PP.
2. Ibid. No. 1368.
3. Ibid. VI, No. 843.
4. Ibid. No. 696.
5. S.K. Aiyangar, History of Tirupati, PP.
7. It was this God, who asked Sri Krsnadevaraya to compose the famous Telugu Kavya, Amuktamalyada.
8. Ibid.
9. Alampur Inscriptions, Tel. Ins. VI.
10. No. 851 of 1922.
monasteries or Mathas and Sattras attached to them. The Sattras served as rest-houses as well as feeding houses of the pilgrims. The divines of the Sect to which the temple belongs resided in the monasteries and gave instruction in the Sectarian canon. It may be said that the monasteries served as the training schools to the temple priests. In the words of K.A.N. Sastry the "Hindu temple attained the zenith of its influence on the social life of the country. It ceased to be a small structure of brick and mortar providing a centre of simple worship attended by the villagers. The new idea of the stone temple found room for the employment of much skill and taste in its planning and decoration. With its rise, there came up also a varied complex routine in each temple sustained by the rich accumulations in land and gold, the result of pious gifts, offered with a generosity and administered with a care to which we have long become strangers. Each generation husbanded with caution, what was handed down to it, and by means of fresh additions managed to leave a richer heritage to its successor. The vast and growing wealth of the temples brought them into more and more intimate business relations with the neighbourhood." In further remarks that "As landholder, employer, and consumer of goods and services, as bank, school and museum, as hospital and theatre, in short, as a nucleus which gathered round itself all that was best in the arts of civilised existence and regulated them with the humanness born of the spirit of Dharma, the medieval Indian temple has few parallels in the annals of mankind."

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1. See Next Section.
2. The Colas, P. 654.
3. Ibid.
Sext to the temple, the Hatha played an important part in the socio-religious life of Andhra during the medieval period. The Hatha roughly corresponded to the Buddhist Vihara, but its origin is shrouded in obscurity. The lexicographer Amarasimha, who belonged to the Gupta age (about 5th century A.D.) used the word Hatha as a place where the Perivrajaka and his disciples resided. Tradition would have us believe that Acarya Sankara found the Hindu ascetic order in confusion, reorganised it and established the five great Mathas to propagate his Advaïta, mentioned earlier. Gradually, the Sastra, Saíva, Vaisnava and Vaïtha Mathas came into existence, propagating their respective faiths.

In medieval Andhra, we rarely hear about the Sastra, Vaisnava and Vaïtha Mathas. As Vaisanavism was moderate in practising the ascetic ideal, they had only a few Mathas.

It was under the Saivites, the Hatha became popular and influential in Andhra. Especially, the Kalamakhas and the Vaïsaíivas established their Mathas at many places. The Takhlkonda inscription of Amaraja says that Prabhutarasai of the Kalamaha school built a stone Hatha of three cells at Vijayawada attached.

3. K.A.N. Sastri, op. cit.
4. Ibid.
5. There was one Paramahi Hatha at Simachalam. S.I.I., v, p. 1083.
   Another is mentioned in the Lingegiri inscription (Eensa district).
   The Hatha was known as Raja Hatha established by Vakrataben.

to the Samastabhuvanasraya temple. At places like Alampur and Srisailam also they had their Mathas. Vaishnavism was associated with the five great Mathas supposed to have been established by their five legendary leaders. Of all the Saiva Mathas, the Colaki Matha was the most important and influential during the later part of the Kakatiya period.

The Mathas were generally connected with big temples. They were not merely the residences of ascetics and the halting places of mendicants. They served as centres of learning and education catering to the intellectual and spiritual needs of society. Some of the big Mathas promoted arts and letters. The staff of the Colaki Matha at Mandadam included ten dancing girls, 14 drummers, two players on the Mukhrari, one Kashmiri songster and fourteen Gayakis (songstresses). It is not out of place to say that later, in the 16th century, the Ehksavrtti Matha at Srisailam encouraged the famous Telugu poets, Srinatha and Gaurana to compose SivaratriMahatmyam and Navanatha Caritra respectively.

Every Matha was an educational institution. It maintained generally a School and a Sattra. Students, the intercessory ascetics and the needy poor were given food in the Sattra. The instruction in the school was not exclusively sectarian. In the Colaki Matha,

2. At Srisailam there were the following Mathas: Kali Matha, Arasa Matha, Ganta Matha, Gana Matha, Vichhuti Matha, Virabhadra Matha and Ehksavrtti Matha.
3. The Alavandpall Inscription mentions the Panca Mathas of Kodur.
   Tel. Ins., II, pp. 57-58.
4. It is found out that generally Mathas were established at important Ksetras like Srisailam, Alampur and Vijayawada.
5. Kalkapuram Inscription, op. cit.
instruction was given in all the four Vedas, the Agamas, logic and literature.

It is interesting to note that the Golaki Matha maintained a Maternity Home and a General Hospital also.

Thus the medieval Matha concerned itself with the material, intellectual and spiritual welfare of the people in general.

1. Malkapuram Inscription, op. cit.
2. Ibid.