

## PRĀSĀDA / TOWER

---

*Prāsāda* is defined as the upper storey or storeys of any building. It may be of a temple or a palace or a house. In the context of temple architecture, *prāsāda* refers to the upper storeys or the tower built above the sanctum or the gateway. The towers on the sanctum and on the gateway are also specifically named as *vimāna* and *gōpura* respectively. The definition of *vimāna*, according to the Texts, is that part of the structure starting from *upāna*, the lowest member of the plinth to the *stūpi*, i.e., the finial of the structure. *Upāna* is the moulding found throughout the temple building. But the *stūpi* is found only at the apex of the tower above the sanctum. Therefore, the definition applies to the sanctum part only, but the tower above the sanctum is also called by the name *vimāna*.<sup>1</sup> As the definition includes the part up to the bottom of the plinth, sometimes, the sanctum is also referred to by the name *vimāna*. According to the Texts, the temple should consist of six main parts (*sādhavarga*) in the elevation. They are, the *adhishāna*, the *bhitti*, the *prastara*, the *grīva*, the *śikhara* and the *stūpi*. The Texts refer to this part as *vimāna*. In the *sādhavarga*, tower consisting of tiers is not included. The tower is an optional member. Therefore, the use of the term *vimāna* for the tower is ambiguous. It may refer to the main shrine or to the tower above it. Hence, to avoid ambiguity the word ‘*prāsāda*’ is used for the tower above the sanctum as well as for the tower above the gateway. Even in *Mānasāra*, the tower above the sanctum is referred to by the term *prāsāda*.<sup>2</sup>

The following explains clearly what the words used in this study exactly mean.

*Vimāna*.: The part of the temple at the sanctum extending from *upāna* to *stūpi*.

*Prāsāda* : The part of the temple at the sanctum or gateway above the roof and below the *grīva* of the superstructure.

*Śikhara* : The coping or cupola of the superstructure separated by a prominent *grīva*.

Texts mention different types of *prāsādas* that were prevalent in different parts of the country. Mostly, these types are all based on geographical classification. The table provided below gives a clear picture of the different types of *prāsādas* mentioned in the Texts. It is interesting to note that almost all the Texts give an identical list of the types of *prāsādas*. They are nineteen in number. Of these, the type of *prāsāda* that was prevalent in south India was called by the name *drāvidīya*. But unfortunately none of these Texts give the description of any of these *prāsādas* to identify them with any existing *prāsādas* of the region of our study.

**TABLE**

Sl.No.	Name of the <i>Prāsāda</i> .	Śilparatna	Mayamata	Kamikāgama	Īśāna Guru Paddati	Śiva Deva
1.	<i>Vaidēham</i>	32- 3	18- 10a	57-4a	-	
2.	<i>Māgadham</i>	”	”	”	-	
3.	<i>Kauravam</i>	”	”	”	-	
4.	<i>Kausalam</i>	”	18- 10b	57-4b	-	
5.	<i>Śauarsēnam</i>	32- 4	”	”	-	
6.	<i>Gāndhāram</i>	”	”	”	-	
7.	<i>Āvantikam</i>	”	”	57-8a	-	
8.	<i>Vyāmiśram</i>	32- 6	18- 13b	57-8b	-	
9.	<i>Kalingam</i>	”	”	”	32-70	
10	<i>Kāśikam</i>	”	<i>Kauśikam</i>	”	”	

			18- 13b		
11.	<i>Vairātācam</i>	”	18- 14a	57-8a	”
12.	<i>Drāvidācam</i>	”	”	<i>Drāmidācam</i> 57-8a	-
13.	<i>Bāhlikam</i>	”	<i>Barbaram</i> 18- 14a	”	-
14.	<i>Kaullikam</i>	”	<i>Kōllakam</i> 18-14a	”	32-70
15.	<i>Śaundiācam</i>	32- 7	18- 14b	57-8b	”
16.	<i>Pāñcālam</i>	32-11	18- 10a	57-4a	-
17.	<i>Lupā</i>	32-7	18-14b	”	-
18.	<i>Kāśmīram</i>	32-14	-	-	32-70
19.	<i>Gāngēyam</i>	”	-	-	”

However, they give the following details about these *prāsādas* and say that all these are suitable for the temples. It further mentions that the number of faces, i.e. sides a *prāsāda* possesses can be up to sixty beginning from six.

There is one more classification of the *prāsādas* available in the Texts. This classification is also identical in all the Texts. They are:

1) *Nāgara*

2) *Drāvidā*

3) *Vēsara*

*Nāgara*<sup>3</sup> is a tower, which is curvilinear in its contour. It supports a huge monolithic coping. This coping is a flat, circular stone, the sides of which are deeply ribbed. Hence it is described as *āmalaśila* or *āmalaka*, a fruit (Indian gooseberry) well known in this continent.

*Drāvidīka* is a tower found in south India, where dravidian languages are spoken. Hence, it is called as dravidian. The dravidian tower is stepped pyramidal in its contour, the details of which will be discussed in detail.

*Vēsara* : *Vēsara* in Sanskrit means a ‘mule’, which is a hybrid animal. *Vēsara*<sup>4</sup> contains the important elements of *nāgara* and *drāvidīka* towers in plan, in elevation and also in section. Hence, it is a hybridized architectural form. *Vēsara* style is found in a limited region of southern Karnataka and in parts of Maharashtra. This hybridization of architectural features is found only in this region, because of the fact that the Badami Chalukyas experimented by mixing *nāgara* and *drāvidīka* forms of temples at Pattadakal. The result of this is the emergence of the *vēsara* style.

Few Texts give the definition of *drāvidīka vimāna*, but they are not clear in their description. All these details are very general and elemental in nature and they nowhere come near the existing forms of *drāvidīka vimānas*.

The descriptions are thus:

“*Drāvidīka vimāna* is one which is eight sided above the *grīva*”<sup>5</sup>

“*Drāvidīka vimāna* is a structure with six or eight sides”

“*Drāvidīka vimāna* is square at the base and eight sided above the *grīva*”

This classification is not universally applicable as it is based on the shape of the coping of the *prāsāda*. In case this coping is missing, it is not possible to identify the *prāsāda* as belonging to any of these types. Therefore, this classification cannot be relied upon. Hence the classification of *nāgara*, *drāvidīka* and *vēsara* class of *vimānas* is to be based on the total shape, constructional design and decoration of the entire body of the *prāsāda* from its base to the coping.

As *nāgara* and *vēsara* types of *vimānas* are not available in the region our study, details of their description are not dealt with in this study. Only the nature and description of the *drāvidīya vimāna* is given here.

Kāmikāgama to a certain extent, gives a clear idea about the *drāvidīya vimāna*<sup>6</sup>. It states that *drāvidīya vimāna* is a building, which possesses the *sādavarga*. As is known, the *sādavarga* comprises of the *adhisṭhāna*, *bhitti*, *prastara*, *grīva*, *śikhara* and *stūpi*. All these parts put together forms the *vimāna*. It further states “*upānāt stūpi paryantam vimānah*”.<sup>7</sup> The part starting from *upāna* to *stūpi* is considered *vimāna*. As both *upāna* and *stūpi* are to be seen only at the *garbhagrāha* part, the term *vimāna* refers to the entire *garbhagrāha* from the bottom to the top.

In the early temples, different *talas* were constructed with a function to serve, but in the later temples, they only became conventional. Because of the structural method followed, the contour of the *prāsāda* becomes pyramidal or tapering like a mountain peak. That is why it is also called by the name *kūtīya*. As it consists of several tiers, receding in size as they go up, it looks like a stepped pyramid. After reaching the required height, above the final *tala*, a *vēdi*<sup>8</sup> (platform) is constructed. *Vēdi*, on plan corresponds to the plan of the *grīva* and *śikhara*. Above the *vēdi*, the *grīva* (neck) is built. The *grīva* supports the *śikhara*. The *śikhara* may be monolithic or masonry in nature. *Stūpi* or *stūpis* are placed above the *śikhara*. The Texts mention up to fourteen *talas*.<sup>9</sup>

The pyramidal tower *prāsāda* may be solid or hollow in nature. In hollow *prāsādas*, two varieties are noticed. The first one is the *prāsāda*, which is hollow from the floor of the *garbhagrāha* to the *vēdi*, beneath the *grīva*. Good examples for this type are the Brihadishwara temple at Tanjavur and Ananthashayanagudi at Hospet in Karnataka. In the second type, a few or all the tiers (*talas*) are made hollow. Good examples for *prāsāda* with few tiers hollow are, the Chavundaraya

Basadi at Shravana Belagola and the Jaina Basadi at Pattadakal, in Karnataka. Examples in which all the tiers are hollow are, the Vaikunta Perumal temple at Kanchi and the *gōpurās* over the gateways of the temples.

Now coming to the surface treatment of the different *talas* of the *prāsāda*, it has been already stated that each *tala* should possess the first of the three *sādavargas*, viz., *adhisṭhāna*, *bhitti* and *prastara*. The *talas* of the upper storeys do not need the *adhisṭhāna*. Hence, only *bhitti* and *prastara* are constructed for each of the upper *talas*. All the *talas* may or may not have *hāras*. The *bhitti* of the *talas* should be decorated like the regular *bhitti* of the shrine below. It may consist of *bhittipādas*, *tōraṅgas*, *kōṣṭhas*, *kumbhapañjaras*, etc. The *prastara* part of the *tala* will contain *uttara*, *kapōta*, *vājana* and occasionally *hāra* also. All these are decorated similar to those found on the basal *tala*. The topmost *tala* usually will not have a *hāra* and will have only a *kapōta* and *vājana*. The reason for not providing the *hāra* for the final storey is that, it eclipses the details of the *vēdi* built above.

The *vēdi* of the *prāsāda* is just a platform. The plan of the *vēdi*, as said earlier, corresponds to the plan of the *grīva* and *śikhara*. The body of the *vēdi* may have *bhittipādas* and the top of the *vēdi* will have a stringcourse or a *vājana*. *Vēdi* will be distinctly smaller in size than the *tala* on which it stands. The four corners of the *vēdi* are left open, and normally provided with the sculptures of *vāhanadēvatas* or demi-gods.

The *grīva* of the *prāsāda* is a very important recessed part. The height of the *grīva* will be proportionate to the size of the *śikhara*. The shape of the *grīva* also corresponds to that of the *śikhara*. The sides of the *grīva* accommodate *grīvakōṣṭhas*. It is also provided with *bhadranīdas*, which are occasionally relieved like a pillaret. Generally the *grīvakōṣṭhas* enshrine *grīvadēvatas*.<sup>10</sup>

*Śikhara* is the most important member of the *prāsāda*. It corresponds to the ‘head’ of the body of the temple.<sup>11</sup> On plan, it may be *caturaśra* (square), *āyata* (rectangular), *asṭāśra* (octagonal), *vr̥tta* (circular), *vr̥ttāyata* (oval), *gajaprasṭā* (apsidal) or even *āyatavr̥tta* (rectangular with its two narrower ends made semicircular)<sup>12</sup>. *Śikhara* may be monolithic or masonry in nature. The bottom of the *śikhara* is always flat. The top is sloped, rounded and sometimes even made apsidal to suit the shape of its plan. The different sides of the *śikhara* are usually provided with *mahānāsis* and *alpanāsis*. The *nāsis* are supported by the *bhadranīdas* of the *grīvakōśtas*. The height of the *śikhara* is again proportionate to the size of the *prāsāda*. *Śikhara* may have a smooth surface on its top or a multiply indented surface. The summit of the *śikhara* is often scalloped with the design of the inverted lotus (*puskara*)<sup>13</sup>. The centre of this summit will have a vertical mortised hole (*brahmarandhra*), to which the pivot of the *stūpi* or *kalaśa* is fixed. The *stūpi* is generally round like a pot and that is why it is referred to as *kalaśa*. To the mouth of the *stūpi* a *mukula* (bud) is placed. The important parts of the *stūpi* described in the Texts are *padma*, *vājana*, *padma*, *ghatā*, *padma*, *phalaka*, *ambuja* and *mukula*.<sup>14</sup>

An additional architectural member of the *prāsāda* of the dravidian *vimāna* is the *śukanāsa*. *Śukanāsa* means a ‘parrot’s beak’. It is compared with a parrot’s beak because against the sloping contour of the *prāsāda*, the top portion of the *śukanāsa* projects forward horizontally with sloping sides. The *śukanāsa* will always have a gable end. The *śukanāsa* is built above the roof slab that corresponds to the *antarāla* below. That is why *antarāla* is also called as *śukanāsa*. The plan of a well-developed *śukanāsa* is rectangular. Its height goes up to the first or second *tala* of the *prāsāda*. The surface treatment of the sidewalls of the *śukanāsa* corresponds to that found on the body of the *prāsāda*. The roof of the *śukanāsa* is always shaped like a wagon vault. The gable end of this roof is often decorated with a *mahānāsi* supported on a framework of a regular *kōśtas*. The

central space of the *kōsītā* is often provided with a prominent sculpture of the cult deity of the temple.

The *śukanāsa* is not noticed in the early temples. However, some of the temples at Pattadakal, irrespective of the nature of the *prāsāda*, possess *śukanāsa*. Likewise, some do not have *śukanāsa*. But according to some art historians, the *śukanāsa* is an element of the *nāgara* (northern) architectural style, which was incorporated by the dravidian artists. *Śukanāsa* is not mentioned in the well-known Texts on Indian architecture. If *śukanāsa* were to have been a north Indian architectural feature, all the *nāgara prāsādas* of Pattadakal should have possessed a *śukanāsa*. But contrary to this, some of the *nāgara prāsādas* of Pattadakal do not possess a *śukanāsa*. It is even possible that, the construction of *śukanāsa*, perhaps, is an optional element of the *nāgara prāsāda*.

In the classification of the *prāsādas*, there are two sub-varieties.<sup>15</sup> They are:

- i. *Arpita*
- ii. *Anarpita*

*Arpita* is a type of *prāsāda* where the different storeys are built adjoining each other, without a gap in between. *Anarpita* is the type in which the different *talas* of the *prāsāda* are built with a small narrow gap in between, so that, one can walk around each of the *talas*.

Texts on dravidian architecture give an elaborate account of the different types of decorations for the *drāvidīa prāsāda*. Based on the nature, type of decoration, number of *talas* and the shape of the *grīva* and *śikhara*, the *prāsādas* have been classified as belonging to different types and each type of *prāsāda* is given a specific name. For the typological classification of the *prāsādas*, the main criteria taken into account are:



- i. Number of *talas*.
- ii. Number of *śāla*, *kūtā* and *pañjara* on the body of the *prāsāda*.
- iii. Number of *alpanāsis*
- iv. Shape of the *grīva* and *śikhara*.

The Texts, as said above, do mention the various types of *drāvidā prāsādas*. But they are not unanimous as far as the number of types, and their descriptions are concerned. Īśāna Śiva Guru Dēva Paddati neither mentions the names of the types nor the measurements. Śilparatna gives a list of different types of *prāsādas* and also gives measurements of the *prāsāda* but it does not bother to correlate the types with the dimensions given in it. Mayamata is the only Text, which gives the list of thirty types of the *prāsādas* and their specifications of *talas* and other decorative motifs along with measurements. Therefore, Mayamata is taken as the basis for the study of the *prāsādas* here. The following table gives the details of the *prāsādas* as provided by Mayamata.

### **ĒKA-TALA VIMĀNA / PRĀSADA**

Sl no.	Name	Shape of the <i>grīva</i> and <i>śikhara</i>	Number of <i>śālas</i>	Number of <i>kūtās</i>	Number of <i>pañjaras</i>	Number of <i>alpanāsis</i>
1.	<i>Vaijayanta</i>	Circular	-	-	-	-
2.	<i>Śrībhōga</i>	Circular	-	Four	-	-
3.	<i>Śrīviśāla</i>	Circular	Four ( <i>Bhadras</i> )	-	-	-
4.	<i>Swastibandham</i>	Octagonal	- Do -	-	-	-
5.	<i>Śrīkara</i>	Square	- Do -	-	-	-
6.	<i>Hastiprāsāda</i>	Apsidal	-	-	-	-
7.	<i>Skandakānta</i>	Hexagonal	-	-	-	-
8.	<i>Kēsara</i>	Circular or Square	Four	Four	-	-

**DWI-TALA VIMĀNA/PRASADA**

Sl no	Name	Shape of the <i>grīva</i> and <i>śikhara</i>	Number of <i>śālas</i>	Number of <i>kūtās</i>	Number of <i>pañjaras</i>	Number of <i>alpanāsis</i>	Number of <i>mahānāsis</i>
1.	<i>Swastika</i>	Square	Four	Four	Eight	Forty eight	Four
2.	<i>Vipulasundara</i>	Square	Four (with <i>upapūhas</i> )	Four (shorter than the <i>śālas</i> )	Eight	Forty eight	-
3.	<i>Kailāsa</i>	Square	Four (shorter than the <i>kūtās</i> )	Four (taller than the <i>śālas</i> )	Eight	Forty eight	-
4.	<i>Parvata</i>	Circular	Four	Eight	-	Fifty six	-
5.	<i>Swastibandham</i>	Square	-	Four	-	Forty eight	Four
6.	<i>Kalyāna</i>	Square	Four	Four	Eight (shorter than <i>śāla</i> and <i>kūtā</i> )	Seventy two	-
7.	<i>Pāñcāla</i>	Square	-	-	Four	-	-
8.	<i>Viśṅukānta</i>	Octagonal	-	-	-	-	Eight
9.	<i>Sumangala</i>	Rectangular (Three <i>stūpis</i> )	-	-	-	-	-
10.	<i>Gāndhāra</i>	Elliptical (three <i>stūpis</i> )	-	-	-	-	-
11	<i>Hastiprasātha</i>	Apsidal (three <i>stūpis</i> )	Two at the façade	-	-	-	-

Of the *dwi-tala vimānas*, four types are mentioned, in which the entire *vimāna* from the *adhisṅthāna* to the *stūpi* is considered for classification. If the *adhisṅthāna* is square and the *garbhagrāha* and the architectural members above are circular it is called by the name *manōhara*. If it is circular from *adhisṅthāna*

up to the *stūpi* then it is *Īśwarakānta*. *Vr̥ttaharmya* is the one in which the interior of the *garbhagr̥ha* is square and it is circular from the *adhis̥t̥hāna* to the *stūpi* in the exterior. The temple with a rectangular *adhis̥t̥hāna* and hexagonal *gr̥va* and *śikhara* is categorised as *Kubērakānta*.

### TRI-TALA VIMĀNA

Sl no	Name	Shape of the <i>gr̥va</i> and <i>śikhara</i>	Number of <i>śālas</i>	Number of <i>kūt̥as</i>	Number of <i>pañjaras</i>	Number of <i>alpanāsis</i>	Number of <i>mahānāsis</i>
1.	<i>Swastika</i>	Square	Eight	Eight	Eight	Ninety six	-
2.	<i>Vimalākṛ̥ti</i>	Octagonal	Twelve	Eight	Eight	Hundered and twenty	Eight
3.	<i>Hastipr̥s̥t̥ha</i>	Apsidal	As many as required	Eight	Twelve	Twenty four	-
4.	<i>Bhadrakōs̥t̥a</i>	Octagonal	- Do -	Eight	As many as required	Sixty four (arranged in <i>swastika</i> pattern)	-
5.	<i>Vr̥ttakūt̥a</i>	Circular	-	Twelve (circular)	-	-	Four
6.	<i>Gāndhāra</i>	Square or octagonal	Eight	Eight	Sixteen	As many as required	Four
7.	<i>Śrībhōga</i>	Circular	Eight	Eight	Sixteen	As many as required	Four

**CATUSŪTALA VIMĀNA:**

Sl no	Name	shape of grīva/ śikhara	Number of śālas	Number of kūṭās	Number of pañjaras	Number of alpanāsis	Number of mahānāsis
1.	<i>Subhadraka</i>	Square	Twelve	Twelve	Twelve	As many as required	-
2.	<i>Śrīvisāla</i>	Circular	- Do -	- Do - (circular)	- Do -	- Do -	-
3.	<i>Bhadrakōsṭa</i>	Octagonal	- Do -	- Do - (Octagonal)	- Do -	- Do -	Eight
4.	<i>Jayāvaha</i>	Octagonal (over a square <i>vēdi</i> )	- Do -	- Do -	Eight	- Do -	Eight
5.	<i>Bhadrakūṭa</i>	- Do -	- Do -	- Do -	- Do -	- Do -	Sixteen
6.	<i>Sukhāvaha</i>	Circular	- Do -	- Do -	- Do -	- Do -	Eight (+Eight <i>ksudranāsis</i> )

Mayamata gives the measurements for the *vimānas* with five and more storeys. The maximum numbers of storeys mentioned are twelve in number. However, no specific names for these varieties are mentioned in the Text.

Now coming to the region of our study, all the *prāsādas* found are of dravidian style. Though this region was under the control of the Hoysalas for over a century, no temple or tower in the *vēsara* style is built. Instead, two examples of *kadamba nāgara* or *phamsana* style are noticed. Therefore, only the dravidian towers and its different types found in the region are discussed.

Totally about thirty-seven *prāsādas* are noticed in the region of them twenty are original. About seven have been renovated. Ten *prāsādas* are renovated and conserved during the modern times, they are conserved in their original form. Such *prāsādas* are not taken for study here.

Of the thirty-seven *prāsādas* taken for study only nine *prāsādas* are of stone and the rest are of brick and mortar. A general trend seen in the construction of the *prāsādas* of the region is that the early *prāsādas* are built of stone. It is an established fact that the region of our study was politically a buffer zone and did not receive direct royal patronage or attention as far as the temple construction activity was concerned. Therefore, the dimensions of these temples are not very big. That too, the temples built in the early period (9<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> centuries) are very small structures and the *prāsādas* built above them are also very small. Of these structures, those that were built in 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> century have stone *prāsādas*, while those of the succeeding 10<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> centuries have *prāsādas* of brick and mortar. It is a known fact that the imperial Cholas extensively used brick and mortar for the constructions of *prāsādas* for the temples. During the Vijayanagara period, importance was given for the gateway towers. These temples of Vijayanagara period possess *prāsādas* above gateways that are significant, both in size and surface treatment.

Now coming to the types of *prāsādas* above the sanctums of the region, Ten types of *prāsādas* are found here. Of them the *swastika* and *śrīkara* are more in number. The statistics of their typology is as follows:

- 1) *Śrīkara*- 5
- 2) *Vaijayanta* - 4
- 3) *Śrīviśāla*- 3
- 4) *Dwitala swastika* – 5
- 5) *Tritala swastika* - 3
- 6) *Sumangala*- 1
- 7) *Vimalākṛti* – 1

8) *Mandaram* – 1(*From vimānārchanakalpa*)

9) *Manika* – 1(*From vimānārchanakalpa*)

10) *Kadambanagara* -2

The list of the temples given in the table below shows the type of *prāsāda* they possess over their sanctums.

*Śrīkara prāsāda (ēka-tala)*

- 1) Kali Kamatheshwara temple - Begur, Bangalore (Pl.-1)
- 2) Amrutheshwara temple - Malurpattana – Chanapattana (Pl. -2)
- 3) Someshwara temple – Kammasandra – Hosakote (Pl.-3)
- 4) Yoganandi temple – Nandi hills – Chikkaballapura (Pl.-4)
- 5) Someshwara temple - Gangavara (Pl.-5)

*Vaijayanta prāsāda*

- 1) Kashivishweshwara temple – Kadugodi (Pl.-6)
- 2) Amman shrine - Varadaraja Swamy temple – Tekal (Pl.-7)
- 3) Amman shrine – Swayambhuveshwara temple – Madivala
- 4) *Parivara ālaya* – Mahaganapathi temple – Kurudumale

*Śrīviśāla prāsāda*

Amman shrine - Rameshwara temple – Magadi (Pl.-8)

- 1) Amman shrine – Someshwara temple – Teruhalli
- 2) Ishwara temple – Vagata – Hosakote

*Dwitala swastika prāsāda*

- 1) Nagareshwara temple – Beguru (Pl.-9)
- 2) Bharateshwara temple – Avani (Pl.-10)

- 3) Amaranarayana temple – Kai vara
- 4) Champakadhama swamy temple- Bannerughatta (Pl.-11)

*Tritala swastika prāsāda*

- 1) Subramanya temple – Avani (Pl. -12)
- 2) Venkateshwara temple – Alambagiri
- 3) Shatrughneshwara temple – Avani (Pl. -13)

*Sumangala prāsāda*

- 1) Kolaramma temple – Kolar (Pl. -14)

*Vimalākṛithi prāsāda*

- 1) Rameshwara temple – Avani (Pl.-15)

*Mandaram prāsāda*

- 1) Choleshwara temple - Begur (Pl.-16)

*Manika prāsāda*

- 1) Ranganataha Swamy temple – Rangasthala (Pl.-17)

*Kadambanāgara prāsāda*

- 1) Dharmeshwara temple - Aiyagandapura (Pl.-18)
- 2) Ishwara temple – Kadanur, Doddaballapura (Pl.-19)

Except four, all the *prāsādas* in the region are of the *arpita* class. Three of the original *prāsādas* are confusing for identification. They are the *prāsādas* of Bhoganandishwara temple and Arunachaleshwara temple at Nandi, and Someshwara temple at Kolar (Pl.– 20).

In the region of our study, the earliest *vimānas* available are the *vimāna* of the Bhoganandhishwara temple and Arunachaleshwara temple at Nandi, both are identical in their size and design. Epigraphical evidence proves that the temple existed as early as 806 A.D. This *vimāna* has been identified as the variant of *vimalākṛithi* type of

*vimāna*. All the criteria mentioned in Mayamata are fulfilled except for the fact that it contains a *grīva* and *śikhara* which are square instead of being octagonal. If the *śikhara* and *grīva* of this tower had been octagonal, this *prāsāda* would have been a perfect example for *vimaṅlākrānti*. Consultation with the renowned scholars on *vāstuśāstra* has led this *prāsāda* to be taken as a variant of the *vimaṅlākrānti prāsāda*, the name and details of which, unfortunately, are not available to us.

The reasons for considering this *prāsāda* as a variant of *vimaṅlākrānti* is the arrangement of the pavilions of *hāra*, which is somewhat unusual. According to the tradition, followed in a number of *prāsādas* of the Badami Chalukya, Rashtrakuta, Gangas and others, the central part (*bhadra*) of the walls of the *garbhagrāha* will invariably be crowned by a *śāla* pavilion. The same is to be repeated in the centre of each of the succeeding *talas* of the *prāsāda*. But in the *prāsādas* of the Bhoga Nandi complex (Pl.-21,22), the arrangement of the pavilions of the *hāra* is differently treated.<sup>16</sup> The central part of the sanctum wall, on the three sides, has a *śāla* pavilion, while its corresponding part of the second *tala* has a *pañjara* pavilion flanked by two *śāla* pavilions, which is unusual.

In another similar instance of an earlier period as seen at the Sangameshwara temple at pattadakal, 730 A.D. the arrangement of the pavilions of the *hāra* is opposite to what is seen at the Nandi temples. In the former example, the central part of the *hāra* of the sanctum, on all its three sides has a *pañjara* pavilion. In the succeeding *tala* the same place is occupied by a broad *śāla* flanked by *pañjaras* on its two sides. The variations in the arrangement of *hāra* pavilions, it appears, was left to the discretion of the architect to adjust the length of the *hāra* through the arrangement of the pavilions, therefore such variations are noticed. It is a point to be noted here that the Texts do not mention anything regarding sequence of pavilions in the *hāra*. They sometimes refer to these pavilions as *bhadraśāla* and *karnākutās*, denoting that the corners should always be occupied by the



*kutās* and the *bhadras* with the *śālas*. The interspaces are normally carved with *pañjaras*. However, violation of this tradition is also not absent.

Another noteworthy feature of the *prāsādas* of the Sangameshwara and the Nandi temple is that none of these towers have *śukanāsas* built adjoining the *prāsāda*. While the same is found built for the Virupaksha and Mallikarjuna at Pattadakal and other later temples of the Rastrakutas. Later temples of the region of our study, such as those of the Gangas, Cholas also do not possess the *śukanāsas* built in front of the towers. This is a point to be noted. It is possible that, the school of architects who built the Sangameshwara temple at Pattadakal, were responsible for the construction of the temples in the region of our study also.

The next important *prāsādas* to be built in the region of our study are found at Begur,<sup>17</sup> now a part of Bangalore city. Two temples datable to the 9<sup>th</sup> century A.D. on stylistic grounds, are built side by side inside a large courtyard. These two identical temples remind us of similar structures built at Pattadakal, viz., Virupaksha and Mallikarjuna. The temples of Begur are called by the name Nagareshwara and Choleshwara and have identical *prāsādas* built out of stone. Both the *prāsādas* have retained their original form and are in good shape. Of the two *prāsādas*, the one on the sanctum of Nagareshwara is of the *swastika* variety, and the other one on the sanctum of the Choleshwara temple is of *mandaram* variety.<sup>18</sup> Both the towers are built as per the prescriptions of the Text.

The *swastika* type of tower above the Nagareshwara temple is about thirty feet in height. It is built out of granite in three tiers. The body of the *prāsāda* contains four *śāla* and *pañjaras*, *mahānāsis* and a notable feature of the decoration of the *hāra* of the *prāsāda* is that, it contains the reliefs of *vr̥ttasput̥ita* in the interspaces of the *hāra* pavilions. *Vr̥ttasput̥ita* is a decoration comprising of a thick cylindrical pilaster supporting a cushion capital. They are carved in pairs. A

pair of *nētranāsis* are also carved on the coping of the *hāra* corresponding to the *vr̥ttasput̥itas*.

This is a feature not noticed in any of the temples of the region of our study. But they are noticed in the *hāra* of the Virupaksha temple at Pattadakal. This rare feature suggests that these two temples were built by the architects trained in the same school of art. There is omission of the *bhadraśālas* of the second *tala* of the *prāsāda*, which is done deliberately to expose the corresponding *grīva* part of the *vimāna*. If the *bhadraśālas* are carved on the second *tala* also, it would completely eclipse the images of the *grīvadēvatas*. Therefore, the four *karn̥akut̥as* are provided in the second *tala* for symmetry and decoration, while *śāla* coping at that part of the second *tala* are omitted.

A neat domical masonry *śikhara*, having *bhadranīd̥as* on four sides and a *padmaśila*, is provided for the tower. The *kōs̥t̥a* having two pilasters supporting a *mahānāsi*, form the main decoration of the *bhadranīd̥as*. These are not provided with the images of the *grīvadēvatas*. The top of the *śikhara* is provided with a *brahmarandhra* to which a *stūpi* is fixed.

Majority of the *prāsādas*, though known to have been conserved and preserved scientifically, may be true to their original in so far as their architectural and decorative designs are concerned. But regarding the stucco sculptures of *prāsādadēvatas* they possess on them, it is difficult to state anything for certain. Therefore, not much attention is given to their study.

This statistical record given for the study of the *prāsādas* does not include the *prāsādas*, which are unorthodox in their restoration. Therefore, only twenty-nine *prāsādas* are taken into account.

The study and description of the *gōpurās*, which also come under the purview of the *prāsāda*, are not given here to avoid duplication of work. The same

is dealt with in detail in chapter IX *prākara* – Enclosure / *Gōpura* – Gateway Tower.

- <sup>1</sup> Kāmikāgama Ch-LI, *Ślōka* – 91-92.
- <sup>2</sup> Mānasāra Ch-IIXX, *Ślōka* – 2.
- <sup>3</sup> Suprabēdhāgama- *Kriya*30- *Ślōka*, 40, Pādmasamhita-Ch-IX- *Ślōka* 1-2, Mayamata- Ch-IXX- *Ślōka* 37 ISGDP- *kriya* 30, *Ślōka* 42, Kāśyaśilpa Ch-XXV- *Ślōka* 27, Mānasāra Ch- IIXX- *Ślōka* 93.
- <sup>4</sup> Ibid., Suprabēdhāgama- *Kriya* 30- *Ślōka*,41, Pādmasamhita- Ch-IX- *Ślōka* 3, Mayamata- Ch-IXX- *Ślōka* 38 ISGDP *kriya* 30 *Ślōka* 44-45, Kāśyaśilpa Ch-XXV- *Ślōka* 47, Mānasāra Ch-IIXX- *Ślōka* 47-48 Kāmikāgama Ch- LI, *Ślōka* -96.
- <sup>5</sup> Suprabēdhāgama- *Kriya*30- *Ślōka*,41, Pādmasamhita- Ch-IX- *Ślōka* 3, Mayamata- Ch-IXX- *Ślōka* 38 ISGDP *kriya* 30, *Ślōka* 44-45, Kāśyaśilpa Ch-XXV- *Ślōka* 47, Mānasāra Ch-IIXX- *Ślōka* 47-48 Kāmikāgama Ch- LI, *Ślōka* -96.
- <sup>6</sup> Kāmikāgama Ch- LI, *Ślōka* 95.
- <sup>7</sup> Kāmikāgama Ch- LI, *Ślōka* 91-93.
- <sup>8</sup> Kāmikāgama Ch- LV, *Ślōka* 1.
- <sup>9</sup> Mayamata Chs-IX-XXIII.
- <sup>10</sup> Mayamata Ch-IXX, *Ślōka* – 30-43.
- <sup>11</sup> Mayamata Ch-L, *Ślōka* – 206.
- <sup>12</sup> Mayamata Ch-IXX, Mānasāra, Ch-IIXX.
- <sup>13</sup> Mānasāra Ch-IIXX *Ślōka* – 163.
- <sup>14</sup> Mānasāra Ch-IIXX *Ślōka* – 193-201.
- <sup>15</sup> Mānasāra Ch-XXI *Ślōka* – 64b-65.
- <sup>16</sup> *Prāsāda* of Bhoganandishwara temple and Arunachaleshwara temple.
- <sup>17</sup> *Prāsādas* of Nagareshwara and Choleshwara temples.
- <sup>18</sup> Vimānārchanakalpa mentions *mandaram* variety of *Prāsāda*.