



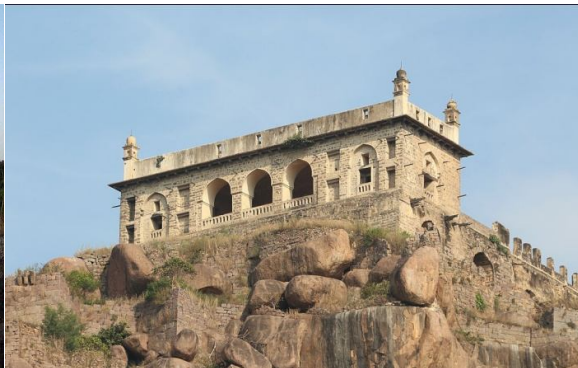
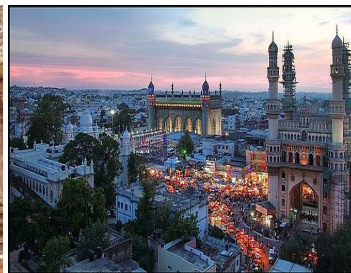
## Lecture Series on World Heritage and Culture

88<sup>th</sup> Lecture on “Sacred Geography of Telangana”

By

Dr.G.Sethuraman, Art Historian and Dr.V.Vedachalam Archaeologist

On 13<sup>th</sup> December 2020, Sunday, 5.00 pm -7.00 pm at DHAN Foundation, Madurai



## SACRED GEOGRAPHY OF TELANGANA

Telangana is a newly formed state bifurcating the erstwhile Andhra Pradesh in June 2014. Telangana is bordered by the states of Maharashtra to the north, Chhattisgarh to the east, Karnataka to the west, and Andhra Pradesh to the east and south. "A popular etymology derives the word "Telangana" from '*Trilinga Desa*' (land of three *lingas*), a region so called because three important Saivite shrines were located here: Kaleshvaram, Srisailem and Draksharama. According to Jayadhir Thirumala Rao, a former director of Andhra Pradesh Oriental Manuscripts Library and Research Centre, the name Telangana is of Gondi origin. Rao asserts that it is derived from "Telangadh", which according to him, means "south" in Gondi and has been referred to in "Gond script dating back to about 2000 years". Divided in to 33 districts, Telangana mostly consists of hills, mountain ranges, and thick dense forests covering an area of 27,292kms. The area of what is now Telangana constitutes the north-central and northeastern portions of Andhra Pradesh for almost six decades. It has a diverse population. Though Telugu is their official language, they variously speak other languages like Urdu, Hindi, Kannada, Marathi, Banjari, etc. Telangana was ruled by multiple major Hindustani powers such as the Mauryas, Satavahanas, Chalukyas, Cholas, Kakatiyas, Delhi Sultanate, Bahamini Sultanate, Golkonda Sultanate, Mughals, the Nizams of Hyderabad and the British. The region is known for its *Ganga – Jamuni Tehzeeb* culture. The cultural hearts of Telangana, Hyderabad and Warangal, are noted for their wealth and renowned historical structures – Alampur, Charminar, Qutb Shahi Tombs, Paigah Tombs, Falaknuma Palace, Chowmahalla Palace, Warangal Fort, Kakatiya Kala Torana, Thousand Pillar Temple, Ramappa temple, Bongir fort, etc. The sacred geography of these historic monuments is discussed in the present lecture.

### Alampur

Alampur is situated on the north bank of the river Tungabhadra. It lies some 30 km north of Kurnool. It formed part of the kingdom of the Early Chalukyas of Badami, and was probably a settlement of some importance judging from the many fine temples erected here in the 7<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> centuries. "These comprise the largest and the earliest surviving Hindu monuments in Andhra Pradesh. The group of nine temples at Alampur is known as the Nava Brahma, even though they are all dedicated to Siva. With the exception of Taraka Brahma, they conform to a standard scheme, each with an east-facing sanctuary surrounded by a passageway and preceded by a *mandapa*, contained with a rectangle of walls. The Northern Indian styled, curved towers that rise above the sanctuaries are divided into tiers adorned with horseshoe – shaped motifs and capped by circular ribbed elements". They contain some of the best examples of Chalukyan sculptures. These temples are located in the middle of the Alampur village, surrounded by houses and protected by ancient fort walls. A sixteenth century inscription calls these temples as *Nava Brahma* temples. The original names are not known. These post- Gupta temples have close affinities to Rajasthan and Orissa. To some extent the Alampur shrines resemble the early Karnataka *mandapa* temple, with its raised clerestory above the nave, its enclosed *garbhagrha*, and its fondness for windows, often triple, and for porches, although at Alampur there is no partial walling – up between the pillars.

Of these temples, the most beautiful is the Svarga Brahma temple. Four armed *dvarapalas* make their first appearance in the porch of this temple. "An inscription above one of the *dvarapalas* on the temple states that the monument was constructed in honour of a queen of Vinayaditya, an Early Western Chalukya king who ruled during the late seventh century (682-96 CE), by one of her sons. From the east the entrance side, the structure has a somewhat unusual appearance due to the projecting porch in front of the rectangular hall that constitutes the main body of the temple. This rectangle contains the shrine area, its surrounding circumambulatory passage, and the pillared *mandapa*, but in contrast to the usual northern and southern style conventions, these are not distinguished architecturally into separate units on the exterior, or, with the exception of the shrine itself, on the interior. A northern-style *sikhara* rises above the sanctuary". The temple, as said above, is notable for its elaborate sculptures. The main images include a complete series of of the *dikpalas* and *mithuna* sculptures. Susan Huntington says that all the carvings reflect great skill on the part of the artists, the *mithuna* couples being especially beautifully posed and softly modeled in a style derived from Gupta and post Gupta schools. The same graceful style is seen in a representation of Siva on the east façade of the temple that shows him as an ascetic. The temple also lodges the sculptures of Tripurantaka, Natesa, Biksatana, and Siva emerging from the *linga*. The tower has additional mouldings; the large front projection has an arched niche framing a dancing Siva image. The flying *vidhyatara* sculptures are seen in the Vira Brahma temple. There is a temple dedicated to goddess Jogulamba at Alampur. The principal deities at the Jogulamba temple are Jogulamba and Balabrahmeshwara. Jogulamba is seen seated on the corpse with scorpion, frog, and lizard on the head. She is fierce looking stretching her tongue outside. The original name of the goddess in

Telugu was Yogula Amma which means Mother of Yogis. Other temples are Padma Brahma temple, Vishva Brahma temple, Arka Brahma temple, Bala Brahma temple, Garuda Brahma temple, and Taraka Brahma temple. "The Vishva Brahma temple has lost most of the images from its twenty two niches, apart from *mithunas* and the occasional *murti* lower down on the walls, the sculpture is concentrated at the level of the niche pediments". The Bala Brahma temple has *matrika* sculptures. The Sangamesvara temple originally built in the eighth century was shifted and reconstructed using the same material due to the construction of a dam.

### Hanamkonda and Warangal

Hanamkonda and Warangal are twin cities with a 6 km distance. They preserve important remains of fortifications and Hindu temples dating from the 12<sup>th</sup>- 13<sup>th</sup> centuries. Both these cities served successively as capitals of the rulers and were the most important political and artistic centres of the eastern Deccan. In the fourteenth century, and after, they were incorporated into the Vijayanagar Empire and Muslim kingdoms. The famous Siva temple, called Thousand Pillared temple, was constructed by the Kakatiya ruler Rudradeva in 1163CE. In general, Kakatiya temples are either single shrine or triple-shrine (*trikuta*) in plan. The Thousand Pillared temple displays the *trikuta* format. The temple was dedicated to three deities- Siva (Rudresvara), Vishnu (Vasudeva) and Surya (Sri Surya Devara). It is attested in an inscription found on a pillar in the eastern gate. "The name Thousand Pillared temple is a misnomer, for the temple proper does not have this many pillars at all and the detached *mandapa* has only around three hundred. The exterior walls of the detached *mandapa* and the main temple proper are exquisitely carved with intricate mouldings and projections on both the plinth and walls. While not devoid of figurative sculpture, the main motifs consist of architectural forms including miniature temple spires, suggesting similarities to many other Deccan styles. Unfortunately, the superstructures over all three shrines are missing and their original appearance is not known. It is in the interior, however, that the carvings are richest, for there, virtually every stone surface has been carved and polished to create highly intricate and refined patterns". The *mandapa's* ventral ceiling panel is an elaborate composition with monster masks and scrollwork surrounding an image of Natesa. The doorways have cut-out lintels, with deities in the middle flanked by *makaras* and scrollwork; attendant figures are positioned beneath. The plinth of the *mandapa* extends southwards. A magnificent polished Nandi is placed here. There is a ruined *mandapa* in the further south. One of the interesting features of this ruined temple is the elaborate free- standing toranas marking the entrances. This temple shows well the transition from the late Western Chalukyan to the Kakatiya style.

The Warangal city is a unique circular one. It was founded by a popular Kakatiya ruler Ganapatideva in the 12<sup>th</sup> century. Prodyaksha, a powerful Kakatiya king, constructed a fort in the capital, as is known from the inscriptions on the eastern and western gates and pillars of the fort. The stone wall of the fort had a circumference of a little over four miles. "The defences of the Warangal fort were further strengthened by Rudramama, Prodyaksha's widow or daughter (there is no definite information on this); by building an outer mud wall enclosing an area of about two miles. These additions were designed by one of her relations Ganapathi. In 1294 when she faced attack from the Sultan of Delhi, Rudramama abductee in favour of her grandson Prataparudradeva". The first attack made by Chhaji, a general of Ala-uddin- Khalji, with a large force ended in futility. The second attempt was carried out in 1310 by Malik Kafur, another general of Khalji. Though the insiders of the fort defended the Muslim onslaught vehemently, the situation became worsened and Prataparudradeva surrendered with an indemnity of 300 elephants, 7000 horses, large quantities of coined money and jewels and assured payment of an annual tribute in future. The ruler of Warangal continued to pay tributes to the Tughlaq rulers also. But at one point of time he resisted them and finally Telangana came under the Delhi Sultans rule in 1323. However, there were continuous resistance from the Kakatiyas under the leadership of Kalyani Naik who established his rule in 1346. In 1424 Ahmed Shah Bahmani's general Khan-i-Azam attacked Warangal and captured it. On its ruins grew up the Muslim kingdom of Golkonda. By 1543 it had been absorbed by the Qutb Shahi dynasty of Golkonda. In 1688 Golkonda fell before Aurangzeb's armies and Warangal waned into insignificance. "The area contained within Warangal fort is now partly inhabited, with houses lining the axial east-west road. The archaeological zone in the middle coincides with the enclosure of a great Siva temple, of which only the free standing entrance portals in the middle of four sides still stand. Each portal consists of a pair of posts with angled brackets carrying a massive lintel, achieving an overall height of more than 10m. The treatment of the portals is elaborate throughout, with boldly carved lotus buds, looped garlands, mythical beasts, and birds with foliated tails. The absence of religious themes partly explains why the portals were spared by the invaders". There are about a dozen temples, not very outstanding, inside the Warangal fort. Many of them are only small structures like the Virabhadra, Mandalamma, Rama, Vishnu, Venkatesa, Svayambhu, Nelasambhu, Jangamesvara and Devi temples. The ruined

Siva temple within the enclosure shows abundance of fallen wall slabs, brackets and ceiling panels, now formally displayed in an outdoor museum. Several columns still stand, but these are actually redeployed as part of a mosque that was begun out of temple spoilia by the Bahminis, but never completed. The four faced Siva *linga* that was originally worshipped in the temple is now venerated in a shrine to the south of the complex. Excavations at the southeast corner of the complex have uncovered remains of a row of subshrines, each with a votive *linga*.

### **Ramappa temple- Palampet**

Palampet is located some sixty kilometers northeast of Hanamkonda. During the Kakatiya period it was a vital centre of considerable importance. . But today it is a small village. "An inscription dated in the year 1135 (Saka), equivalent to CE1213, on a pillar at Palampet reveals that the city was founded by Recerla Rudra, a general for the king, Ganapati (1198-1261)". The temples at Palampet form an interesting group of monuments. The main temple of the group, Ramappa temple (also called Rudresvara in inscription), constructed in 1215 by Rudra, stands on a high platform, with a Nandi- *mandapa* in front. It is enclosed by a massive wall. The main *vimana*, essentially square on plan, has its three sides offset prominently into five bays each, the central one of each side further offset forward and constituting a three tiered replica of the main *vimana* on a lesser scale. The other bays have tall close-set pairs of pilasters carrying on their tops shrine-motifs which are replicas of the superstructures of the southern-type *vimanas* and northern-type *prasadas* alternately. The entire superstructure is of brickwork. A *ardhamandapa* or *antarala* connects the *vimana* with a large *navranga* in front, which is surrounded by a peripheral platform with an outer series of thirty –two pillars and circumambulatory. The temple faces east with large projecting porches on three sides. From the exterior, the porches and *mandapa* appear sharply angular with their projections and flat roof, in contrast with the *vimana* with its brick tower on the west. One of the interesting features of the temple is the beautiful carvings on the exterior and interior of the temple. The Ramappa temple has a series of delicately carved, finely finished, and highly polished brackets with rampant lion and female figures. Many of these figures are nearly life-size. A female bracket figure shows the typical vitality of the figures, each of which is extraordinarily slender and has very smooth skin. "An interesting feature of the interior of the temple is the presence of benches with small shrines placed along them at intervals around the perimeter of the pillared *mandapa*". One of the miniature shrines contains a sculpture of Ganesa and another lodges the image of Durga as Mahisasuramardini. In the Mahisasuramardini panel the bull is shown as a minor element of the overall design, while the victorious Durga dominates the composition. The angular pointed arch seen behind Durga's head is a form which appears in a number of Kakatiya sculptures. The ceiling of the *mandapa* is also decorated with rich carvings. On the platform inside are a set of eight sub shrines in four pairs adjacent to each of the four corners of the *navranga*. While the main structure is of reddish sandstone, the decorations are of polished basalt.

### **Hyderabad**

Hyderabad, originally Bagnagar, founded in 1589 by Muhammad Qutb Shah's father, Muhammad Quli, became the seat of Mughal viceroys and later Nizam Asaf Jha, of a Persian family from Bukhara. The city plan was prepared when the stars were most auspicious and, according to Ferishta, the chronicler, it was to be 'a replica of paradise itself'. "Allegedly, the city was named after Haidar Mahal, a mistress of Muhammad Quli, but it was founded as Baghnagar, the city of gardens. It was laid out on a grid pattern with two main roads running north-south and east-west, at the intersection of which is the Char Minar. To the north lay the river Musi, to the south the Kohi-Tur- Hill, west the fortress of Golkonda and east the road to the coast". The Char Minar is a 16<sup>th</sup> century (1591) mosque with four arches supporting four towering minarets. The monument overlooks the city's long- running LaadBazaar. It is a master piece of the Qutb Shahi dynasty and was intended to mark the centre of the city. "Each of the four facades has a familiar ogee arch of 11-m (36ft0 span, above which are diminishing arcaded storeys and richly ornamented cornices. The four corner minarets are capped by domes and finials and contain spiral staircases which lead to the upper levels. The first storey has a small mosque where a *madrassa* was situated. The second storey has a cistern. Designed as a ceremonial gateway leading to the original palace complex, the Char Minar was the platform from which important proclamations were read". The Laad Bazaar lies between the Chowk and Char Minar. It is an old shopping area which has some fine examples of local vernacular architecture with carved wood and stone details. The Falaknuma palace lies on the Kohi0-Tur- Hills 1.5km south of Char Minar. This was one of the palaces of the Niams of Hyderabad. It literally means 'Mirror of the Sky'. To the west of the Char Minar is the Chowk, marked by a mosque and clock tower.

The Jami Masjid is located to the northeast of the Char Minar. It is entered through a narrow lane lined by shops, above which rise its whitewashed minarets. To the south of the Char Minar is the Mecca Mosque, which derives its name from the belief that the bricks inserted over the central arch were baked out of clay brought from Mecca. Its grandiose, but undecorated prayer chamber, the largest in Hyderabad, is 74m long and 59m deep. It is entered through five lofty arches carried on solid stone piers. The Salar Jung museum, named after the Prime Minister Yousuf Ali Khan Bahadur Salar Jung (1889-1949), accommodates a vast number of objects accumulated by him. This still growing museum is of very useful to the researchers and tourists. It has about twenty five and more galleries displaying sculptures, paintings, bronzes, textiles, *kalamkari* cloths, ivories, guns, daggers, etc. "Chinese and Japanese porcelain, statuary and other items are on display in the eastern bloc of the museum, while European paintings, bronze and marble sculptures and decorative arts are seen in the western block. Among the latter are oils by Calenetto and Guardi, and the English Victorian artists Frederick Leighton, George Frederick Watts and Lawrence Alma – Tadema". The State Archaeology Museum, located in new Hyderabad, houses an important collection of early Buddhist antiquities in a separate gallery.

The historic city Golkonda in Hyderabad established itself as a diamond trading center and, until the end of the 19th century, the Golkonda market was the primary source of the finest and largest diamonds in the world. Thus, the legendary name Golkonda Diamonds became synonymous with Golkonda itself. The Golkonda region has produced some of the world's most famous diamonds, including the colorless Kohi-Noor (United Kingdom), the blue Hope (United States), the pink Dana-i-Noor (Iran), the white Regent (France), the Dresden Green (Germany), and the colorless Orlov (Russia). Once the seat of the Qutb Shahi dynasty, the sprawling Golkonda Fort, is a former diamond trading centre. The massive and extensive fortress of Golkonda lies just to the west of Hyderabad. Originally known as Mangalwaram or Managal, the fort was built about eight hundred years ago by the kings of Warangal. In 1364 Kakatiya Naik Raja was compelled by circumstances to surrender it to Sultan Muhammad Shah Bahmani and for the next 150 years Golkonda formed part of the Bahmani kingdom, with its capital at Gulbargah. In 1518, after the demise of Muhammad Shah Bahmani, his governor of Telengana, Sultan Quli proclaimed himself independent of the Bahmanis and selected Golkonda as his capital. From 1591 onwards, the Mughal domination was felt here. In 1654, Aurangzeb, described it as 'a spacious kingdom, well cultivated, rich in mines of diamond, crystals, etc., a money yielding country unmatched by the imperial dominions'. Finally, in 1687, the fort fell to the Mughals. Later, it became the dwelling place of the Nizams of Hyderabad.

"The fortesss of Golkonda is located on a 400 feet elevation on a picturesque rocky ridge of granite. Its circumference runs into four miles and it contains 87 bastions built on 50 to 60 feet high blocks of granite, 52 windows and 8 gates. The Manju, Patta and Muse are the famous bastions. The Manju Burj is the loftiest tower. The Muse was built in 1642. The Bala Hisar gate leading to the royal apartment was massive, ornamented and well defended. During the war boiled oil was poured from its top over the enemy, thus preventing his approach to the gate. The massive cross walls of the gate are built in such a way that sounds in the interior of this gate echoed and resounded clearly on the 400 feet high summit which is adjascent to the royal apartments". The names of the eight main gates are Fateh, Makka, Patancheroo, Banjara, Jamal, Moti, Bahmani and New Fort. The gates were studded with iron spikes to protect them from the battering of the elephants. The other attractions of the fort are the Dad Mahal (court of justice), Silah Khana, the hanging roof gardens, a Balhoa tree and guns. The Dad Mahal faces on to the eastern half of the enclosure. This comprises a nine-domed hall flanked by residential quarters with small chambers at either side. The ruined tanks and water channels beside the steps form part of an elaborate hydraulic system, by which water was raised to the uppermost level of the fort. Immediately below the summit is the Mahakali temple, built up to a large boulder. Ibrahim's Mosque, named after the third Qutb Shahi ruler, stands nearby. Its modest triple –arched prayer hall is flanked by slender octagonal buttresses. The Darbar Hall of the Qutb Shahis occupies the highest point of Bala Hisar. The Fateh Darwaza (Victory Gate), on the east, through which the conquering Mughal army under Aurangzeb entered Golkonda city, is the one most often used by visitors arriving from Hyderabad. A 300 mt long Bazaar street connects this gate with the second ring of fortificationsthat contain, Bala Hisar or inner fort. The arched chambers lining the bazaar street, still used as shops and residences, served as the principal market of Golkonda. On the south side of the street is the khazana, or royal treasury, now the Golkond Archaeological Museumof interest for its collection of stone sculptures. The western terminus of the street is marked by a pair of Ceremonial Portals, each with a dome carried on two walls and two open arches. Almost all the Qutb Shahi rulers are buried in the Royal Necropolis outside Golkonda."The ensemble consists of seven royal tombs surrounded by subsidiary funerary structures, a mosque and a hammam, set in a formal garden

with water channels, fed by a deep step – well. As the suburbs of New Hyderabad extend steadily west, these monuments no longer enjoy their once splendid isolation”.

### **Bibliography**

1. George Michell, *Architecture and Art of Southern India*, Cambridge University Press, 1995.
2. George Michell, *The Penguin Guide to the Monuments of India*, Vol.1, Penguin Books, 1989, 1990.
3. Philip Davies, *The Penguin Guide to the Monuments of India*, Vol.2, penguin Books, 1989.
4. James C. Harle, *Art and Architecture of Indian Subcontinent*, Penguin Books, 1986.
5. A.L.Basham, *The Wonder that was India*, Rupa & Co, Delhi, 1989.
6. Susan L. Huntington, *The Art of Ancient India*, Weather Hill, New York, 1993.
7. Edith Tomory, *A History of Fine Arts In India and the West*, Orient Longman, Madras, 1989.
8. Forts of India, Publication Division, New Delhi,
9. K.R. Srinivasan, *Temples of South India*, National Book Trust, Delhi, 1972.



---

For further information: DHAN Tourism for Development, DHAN Foundation  
web: [www.developmenttourism.in](http://www.developmenttourism.in) Email [tourism@ghan.org](mailto:tourism@ghan.org);