



Art and architecture of the Chalukya period

(Academic Script)

Hello everybody and welcome to today's episode. In this episode you will study the development of art and architecture which took place during the Chalukya period. Here we will focus on the characteristic features of art and architecture that flourished during this period. Also we will discuss the influences of other art schools on Chalukyan art and architecture. The Subject expert is Ms. Shilpi who is visiting faculty at World School of Design.

Introduction:

The Chalukya Dynasty was the prevailing royal dynasty that ruled on the large parts of southern and central India between the 6th and the 12th century C.E. The Chalukya Dynasty was not a single kingdom instead there were three different empires ruling under the same name. The first one was the Badami dynasty who ruled from Vatapi. The Badami Chalukyas became prominent during the reign of Pulakesi II. After his death the Eastern Chalukyas emerged as an independent kingdom and ruled eastern Deccan. **The Western Chalukyas ruled from Kalyani.**

Chalukya Dynasty Art and Architecture:

The Chalukyan rulers were great patrons of art and architecture. **The rule of the Chalukyas left a significant landmark in the history of South India and it saw the golden age of trade,**



commerce and the development of new style of architecture named "Chalukyan architecture". The Chalukya architecture was a blend of the Northern and Southern style of architecture. The Nagara style of Northern Indian architecture got mixed with the Dravida Style of the Southern India. **They developed Vesara style and this style reached its peak under the rule of Rashtrakutas and Hoysalas.**

The Badami Chalukyas also known as the Early Chalukyas, ruled from Badami and created the Vesara style called Badami Chalukya Architecture. The finest examples of their art are seen at Aihole, Badami and Pattadakal in northern Karnataka. The Chalukya temples may be grouped into three stages. **The first phase is represented by the temples at Aihole and Badami.** Among the seventy temples found at Aihole, four are most important. They are Ladh Khan temple, Durga temple, Huchimalligudi temple and the Jain temple at Meguti. Among the temples at Badami, Bhutanatha Temple Group and Mallikarjuna Temple Group is the most remarkable. A group of four rock-cut temples at Badami are noticeable by high draftsmanship. The walls and pillared halls are decorated by striking images of gods and human beings.

The second stage is represented by the temples at Pattadakal. During the middle of the 7th century, temple building activity shifted from Badami to Pattadakal. There are 10 temples at Pattadakal, four in the northern Nagara style and remaining six in the Dravidian style. The Papanatha is of vesara style and the Galaganatha temple is the most notable in the northern style. The Sangamesvara temple and the Virupaksha temple are prominent for their Dravidian style.

The third stage can be seen as Western Chalukya architecture. The Western Chalukyas also called the Kalyani Chalukyas or Later Chalukyas ruled the deccan from 973-1180AD. The major temples of this stage are Kasi Vishveshvara at Lakkundi, Mallikarjuna at Kuruvatii, Kalleshwara temple at Bagali



and Mahádeva at Itagi are the finest examples produced by the Later Chalukya architects. Apart from temples Western Chalukyas are also well known for ornate stepped wells (Pushkarni) which functioned as ritual bathing places and few of these are well conserved at Lakkundi

Major Chalukyan temples:

The Chalukyan style originated at Aihole around 450AD and was perfected in the nearby villages of Badami and Pattadakal. Chalukyan architects experimented with various styles. As above we have discussed that they combined the Indo-Aryan Nagara and Dravidian styles, and developed their own distinctive style. This distinctive style can be seen in their earliest works at Aihole, Badami and Pattadakal.

We will start with the major temples at Aihole erected during Chalukya Dynasty. Among the seventy temples found at Aihole, four are most important.

- **Ladh Khan temple :**

The Ladh Khan Temple at Aihole is the oldest structure and has a special architectural feature. Its remarkable features are its enormous pillars with bracket capitals and flat roofs. This temple doesn't have shikhara. It start off with a rectangular arrangement and ends with a square. The wooden structure has been imitated here. The temple consists of two-tiered roof, which imitates wood construction. It is furnished with logs made of stone that cover the joints between the roofing slabs. Ladh Khan has an upper hall with images of Vishnu and Surya carved on its walls. The sculpted Nandi faces the temple's shrine. It is supposed that this structure was not designed to be a temple but was a royal assembly hall.



- **Durga temple:**

One of the most notable temples at Aihole is the Durga temple, which dates back to the 7th century A.D. The Durga temple of Aihole is constructed like a Buddhist temple and is apsidal in plan. It has the straight front and circular back design alike a Buddha Chaitya temple. Generally there would be a portico in the front of the temple, but the unique element of this temple is that the entire construction is surrounded by a corridor. The temple is full of fascinating carvings and elevated plinths. The stone carvings are almost life-size and reflect the glance of early Chalukya sculpture. These sculptures include Shiva with nandi, Narasimha, Vishnu with Garuda, Varaha etc. One of the magnificent sculpture here is depicting Durga in the Mahishasuravardhini form.

- **Huchimalligudi temple**

Huchimalligudi temple at Aihole was probably built in the 8th century. A uniquely slanted roof covers the circumambulatory passageway around the temple shrine. It shows a progression in the temple plan, as it shows an ardha mandapam or an ante-chamber positioned next to the main shrine. The tower of this small separated shrine appears to be formed in pyramidal style, dissimilar to the curving tower of the main temple. The pierced stone panel between porch and shrine seems to be a later addition.

- **Meguti Jain temple**

Meguti Jain temple at Aihole is a great example of Chalukya architecture. The only dated monument according to inscriptions at Aihole is the 634 AD Meguti Jain temple, built on a hilltop. The inscription which exactly dates this temple can be seen on one of the outer walls of the temple and



records its construction to be made by a Ravikeerti, who was a commander & minister of Pulakesin II. The circumambulatory corridor around the sanctum is made up for connecting assembly room. The temple is now in ruins and it was probably never completed

Another striking architecture we need to have a look at Aihole is Ravana Phadi cave. It is one of the oldest rock cut cave temples. The temple is dedicated to Lord Shiva and the walls of the caves are carved with various sculptures including the dancing figures of Shiva,

Next we will focus on the temples at Badami. **Bhutanatha Temple Group and Mallikarjuna Temple Group is the most remarkable at Badami.** There are also four rock-cut temples at Badami all carved out of sand stone on the cliff of a hill.

Now coming to the Bhutanatha Temple Group, the stage of the temple extends toward the east end of the tank and creates a delightful pictorial sight. The sanctum and inner hall are of Early Chalukya period and the outer hall is of the Later Chalukya period. All the temples of this group are dedicated to lord Shiva. The inner hall consists of huge pillars and the bays in the ceiling of the nave are decorated with lotus motifs. On one side of the doorway of the shrine Goddess Ganga is depicted riding the vehicle makara, whereas on the other side goddess Yamuna is depicted riding the tortoise. It is supposed that the Shiva linga in the shrine was added later on after the original deity in the sanctum was removed. On the other hand the Mallikarjuna Temple lies at the north-east side of the lake certainly belong to the later Chalukyas, the Chalukyas of Kalyani. It has the tiered pyramid composition which is characteristic of Western Chalukya



Architecture. The features of Western Chalukya Architecture can also be seen in plain walls and angled roof space over the open hall.

Badami is actually famous for its four cave temples that date back to the 6th and 7th centuries and all are hewn out of sand stone on the cliff of a hill. The first three caves are Vedic caves as they are related to the ancient Hindu scriptures and the 4th cave is a Jain temple.

The first and the foremost cave are known to be built in 578 A.D. The first cave temple is dedicated to Lord Shiva. It has massive and perfect carvings of Shiva in his various incarnations. The Nataraja sculpture depicting Shiva's cosmic dancing is magnificent. The cave has an open porch, a hall with numerous columns and a chamber. The ceilings and pillars are ornamented with paintings of passionate couples.

The second cave is located at the top of a sandstone hill. This Cave Temple is dedicated to Lord Vishnu. In this temple Lord Vishnu is presented in his incarnation of 'Trivikrama' where his one foot is commanding the Earth and with the other he is mastering the sky. Vishnu in this temple is represented also in his Varaha and Krishna incarnations. Entrance is adorned with reliefs of dvarapalas that is guards and smaller female attendants. **The largest and most famous cave temple in Badami most probably is created in 578 – 580 AD.** This cave temple dwells Lord Vishnu. Whole cave is covered with wonderful adornments, including paintings on ceiling. This temple is a fine paradigm of the artistic quality and sculptural genius. The sculpture depicting Lord Vishnu in the company of a serpent is most noteworthy. Here, Lord Vishnu is represented in his different incarnations including Narsimha, Varaha, Harihara and Trivikarma.

The fourth cave is the single Jain temple in complex and also the newest cave in complex, completed between the late 6th



century – 7th century AD. This temple is devoted to Lord Mahavira, the 24th Tirthankara of the Jainas. If compared to the three earlier caves, this cave is less elaborate and is smaller. It encloses carving of the Tirthankara Parshavnatha with a serpent at his feet.

After the temples at Aihole and Badami now we will focus on the major temples at Pattadakal temples of Chalukya Empire.

The total numbers of temples at Pattadakal is ten. Among these four temples are in Northern Nagara style which includes Papanatha temple and Galaganatha temple. The rest of the six temples are in Dravidian style which includes Sangamesvara temple and Virupaksha temple. Sangamesvara Temple is the oldest in the complex and Virupaksha temple is the largest and best known of all.

- **Papanatha temple**

The Papanatha temple of Pattadakal erected in the vesara style is a combination of both Dravidian and Nagara style of architecture. The structure of the temple was started in Nagara style but was later on changed to Dravidian style. Sculptures of Papanatha temple represent the richness in architecture. Various beautiful carvings can be seen on the walls of the temple, including depictions of the Ramayana and Kiratarjuniya. The most noteworthy element here is that the names of the characters have also been etched out along with the characters. An additional major feature of the sculpture of Papanatha temple is the well engraved doorframes.



- **Galaganatha temple**

The Galaganatha temple is dedicated to lord Shiva and is in the Nagara style of architecture. Galaganatha Temple is situated in the north of the Virupaksha temple and faces the west. The temple is built on a platform with three highly ornate moldings representing dwarfs in playful mood and chaitya-arch motifs. The temple has the usual intricate structures and elaborate stone work and carvings that are typical to the Chalukya tradition. This temple has a sculpture of Lord Shiva killing the demon Andhakasura. In some of the niches small figures of Gajalakshmi and Kubera are found in the temple.

- **Sangamesvara temple**

The Sangamevara temple is the earliest temple of Pattadakal and is built in the Dravidian style. The implementation of two tier Dravidian type sikhara started here which was also executed in temples of Virupaksha and still being followed in South India. The temple has two entrances on north and south. The large rangamandapa with 20 pillars is to some extent ruined and there are two sub shrines for Mahishasura Mardhini and Ganesha. There is a ruined Nandi mandapa in front of the temple. The sanctum has a circular path for pradakshina.

- **Virupaksha temple**

The Virupaksha temple is dedicated to Lord Shiva and was erected in 740 A.D. It very much bears a resemblance to the Kailasanatha temple at Kanchipuram on plan and elevation. It is a perfect example of fully developed and perfected stage of the Dravidian architecture. It is constructed with a series of terraced roofs above the sanctuary, dominated by the characteristic stupika of the Dravidian style. This temple



consists of main shrine, an assembly hall and a small veranda. There is a large nandi mandapa opposite to the main shrine with black stone monolithic nandi. The walls of the nandi mandapa are adorned with beautiful carvings of female figures.

The whole of the interior of this temple is embellished with elegant carvings and aesthetically modeled sculptures. Episodes from the Ramayana, Mahabharata and Bhagvata are depicted on the pillars of the assembly hall. Doorways are adorned with delicate carvings, pillars and pilasters with various types of capitals.

One of the attractive sculptures of this temple is of God Surya with his consorts riding a chariot. Other famous sculptures of Virupaksha Temple include Ravana lifting Mount Kailash, Narasimha killing Hiranyakasipa, Kurukshetra War view and large dwarapalas. The outer walls of the temple too consist of few great sculptures - Hanuman carrying Sanjivani hill, Gajendra mochas

Now moving toward the third stage we will discuss about the Western Chalukya architecture. Temples of all sizes were built by the Chalukyan architects during this phase. The major temples of this stage are Kasi Vishveshvara at Lakkundi, Mallikarjuna at Kuruvatii, Kalleshwara temple at Bagali, Siddhesvara Temple at Haveri, Amrutesvara Temple at Annigeri, Dodda Basappa Temple at Dambal and Mahadeva at Itagi are the finest examples produced by the Later Chalukya architects.

Kasivisvesvara Temple at Lakkundi

Kasivisvesvara Temple at Lakkundi is one of the most elaborated temples in Karnataka. This temple was originally built in the Western Chalukyan Empire and later embellishments were done



by the great Hoyasala King Veera Ballala II. Kasivisveswara Temple is the wonderful example of artistic zenith. The main deity is Lord Shiva in the form of a Shiva Linga. One of the interesting features of this temple is that this is double shrined temple. The main shrine is dedicated to Lord Shiva and opposite to that there is small shrine dedicated to Lord Surya - Sun God. Both the shrines share a common hall. The inspiration derived from contemporary North Indian Sekhari and Bhumija styles is evident in Kasivisvesvara Temple. The both sides of the southern doorway are covered in nice scrollwork, This temple is a highly detailed and decorative. The carvings on the pillars, towers and doorways are superb. One of the amazing sculptures in this temple is of Surya in the chariot driven by horses but the figure of Surya is heavily damaged. The artisans completely availed the effective properties of finely grained soapstone to create polished pillars whose beams have a rounded appearance obtained by using lathe. The ornamentation on the outer wall of the shrine has prominent central niche above which is a miniature tower which is purely nagara in style. The decorative arch above the miniature tower is a noticeable ornamental feature of the superstructure.

- **Mallikarjuna temple at Kuruvatii**

The Mallikarjuna temple has a single shrine with a superstructure with covered entrances from three sides. The sanctum is a square room with no ornamental element in the interior. It enshrines a Shiva Linga which rests over a large platform. The outer walls of the shrine and mandapa have been provided with projections. The sculptures of Hindu gods and women displaying stylized feminine features adorn the temple. The temple is bordered by a looped pattern whose roots can be traced back to the Kashivisvesvara temple at Lakkundi.



- **Kalleshwara temple at Bagali**

The Kalleshwara temple of 9th century is situated at Bagali showcases the Chalukyan period architectural style. The temple plan comprises a sanctum facing east, an antechamber, a main closed hall that is the mahamandapa with an entrance in the south and east. The temple comprises a main shrine for the Hindu god Shiva and the temple complex dwells carved statue of Lord Ugra Narasimha too. Outside the main temple complex, an open hall that is nandi mandapa is present containing a sculpture of Nandi. Projections and niches enclose relief of Hindu deities depicting the gods Indra, Shiva, Parvati, Lakshmi and others. The sabhamandapa or the mahamandapa is recognized for its fifty ornate pillars supporting the highly decorated ceiling. The temple is also well-known for ornately carved doorways. The outer walls are covered with beautiful sculptures and carvings.

- **Siddhesvara Temple at Haveri**

Siddhesvara Temple is a classic example and one of the most ornate temples of the Chalukyan architecture. The elaborate temple contains sculptures of a variety of Hindu gods and goddesses. The huge mandapa consists of beautifully carved figures of Uma and Mahesvara, Vishnu and Lakshmi and others. The sanctum of the temple enshrines a Shivalinga. The interior walls are covered with figurines and floral scrolls. The pillars are lathe-turned and it is decorated with various sculptures and motifs.

- **Amrutesvara Temple at Annigeri**

The Amruteshwara temple is a beautiful black stone temple built by the Kalyani Chalukyas at Annigeri and



is another wonderful example of Chalukyan Architecture. This is considered to be the first soapstone temple during Western Chalukyas. The external portico of the temple is lacking of much sculptures. The sculptures on upper level of the vimana is only existing but the lower level sculptures are missing. All the three major niches on three directions are empty at the present.

The temple is devoted to Lord Amruteswara or Shiva. There is a huge stone slab with old Kannada inscriptions describing the stories of Chalukya kings and their heroisms. As many other Chalukya temples the most impressive feature of this temple is the door frame of the main temple. The carving here includes flora, fauna, human figures, abstract motifs and mythological figures. A carved panel of entangled vines with birds and flowers is remarkable. The panel with the dancing women is magnificent. The temple was principally patronized and expanded during the Hoysala rule.

- **Dodda Basappa Temple at Dambal**

The Doddabasappa temple is built at Dambal in Karnataka. This temple is built on a raised platform and has a unique shape. It is built in stellate plan with 24 points but it does not have the common projections created in other star shaped temples. Due to the absence of projections, this temple comes out almost circular in shape. This stellate shape begins from the bottom and continues up to the tower. The main deity of this temple is Lord Shiva in the form of a Shiva Linga. The interior of the temple has a



sanctum and a mandapa with a passageway connecting the both. The door on the eastern side leads inside to an open hall with a huge figure of Nandi, in front of the Shrine.

The interior of the temple is simpler in style in comparison to other Chalukyan temples. The pillars of here are intricately carved. The elaborate carvings in this temple include creepers, dancers and musicians and Mithuna Couple. It can be said that from this temple the architectural style started to achieve maturity and finer delicacy. The doorways are significant perfection of the expertise of the artisans. The doorway is elaborated with the carving of flowers, animals and dancers and singers and is carved delicately out of the soapstone. Above the frame of the door are horizontal spaces for idols which are no more present.

Mahadeva temple at Itagi

The Mahadeva Temple at Itagi was built same as the general plan of the Amruteshwara Temple at Annigeri. The temple is dedicated to Lord Shiva. The delicately executed sculptures, finely crafted carvings on walls, pillars and the tower make this temple a good example of complete Western Chalukyan art. The mastery of the sculpture here articulates about the taste of the Chalukyan artisans. The temple plan consists of a shrine which is connected to a closed mandapa that is the main hall and with an antechamber. The ceiling here has been chiseled into a decorative flora and makara is depicted coming out from the mouth of a Kirtimukha. The closed mandapa has entrance on each side. The eastern doorway leads to the open mandapa and the western doorway to the sanctum. The door panels are well shaped and the ceiling of the



veranda has a ribbed design in them. The adornment of the outer walls follows the similar pattern as that of the sanctum. The great open mandapa has 64 pillars. 24 of these pillars are full pillars which start from the floor and sustain the main ceiling. The remaining are half pillars which start from the parapet wall that surrounds the mandapa and support the sloping roof space. The pillars in this hall bear resemblance to the portico pillars at the Dodda Basappa Temple and the lathe-turned pillars at the Kasivisvesvara Temple at Lakkundi.

Apart from temples Western Chalukyas are also well known for ornate stepped wells called Pushkarni which functioned as ritual bathing places and many of these are well conserved at Lakkundi. One of the best examples is the stepped well at the Manikesvara Temple in Lakkundi

Characteristics of temple architecture of Chalukya:

- The pillars of Chalukya temple are monolithic beam and height of it determines the height of mandapa and temples.
- In case of ornamentation of temple walls and pillars, Chalukya temple shows indigenous quality.
- Chalukya architects perfected the art of stone building and did not use mortar.
- The Chalukya architects maintained features from both northern and southern styles. The best example is the Papanath temple.
- The doorway panels of Chalukya temples are highly decorated that consist of pilaster, scroll, and cornice top. The paintings executed on the walls and the ceiling of the



temples included not only the religious subjects but also the secular themes.

- The use of soapstone for projection in walls carvings is frequent feature in Later Chalukya temples. The Chalukya temples are mainly dedicated to different hindu deities like durga, shiva, vishnu and few are also dedicated to jain tirthankaras.
- Chalukya architecture included both cave temples and structured temple plan. Later Chalukya architects also used stellate plan or northern stepped diamond plan for architectural plan. The decorative pillars with its elaborate design of western Chalukya architecture is also known to Gadag style of architecture.

The tradition of architecture initiated by Chalukya of Badami was matured under the reign of Hoysala. The fine ornamentation of walls with projection and niche was followed by Hoysala artist. Chalukya architecture is also identified as the originator of Hoysala art.