

**Impact
Factor
3.025**

ISSN 2349-638x

Refereed And Indexed Journal

**AAYUSHI
INTERNATIONAL
INTERDISCIPLINARY
RESEARCH JOURNAL
(AIIRJ)**

UGC Approved Monthly Journal

VOL-IV

ISSUE-IX

Sept.

2017

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The Contributions of Gadag to Cultural Heritage

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The twin town of Gadag-Betgeri (Pop:1,34,051) is the head quarters of a revenue sub-division (presently a district headquarters) about 76 km from Dharwad. It constitutes a single municipality. This ancient town is qualified in every respect to be developed as a tourist destination. Tradition has it, that Narayanappa of Gadag, also known as Kumaravyasa, composed his most celebrated work '*Karnataka Bharata Kathamanjari*' or '*Kumaravyasa Bharatha*'. Huyilgola Narayana Rao, composer of the famous song 'Udayavagali Namma Cheluva Kannada Nadu' which was a great source of inspiration during the Movement for the Unification of Karnataka, hailed from this place. The place name Gadag is variously analysed. Inscriptions refer to it as 'Guladuga', 'Kaldugu', 'Garaduga', 'Karaduga', 'Karttuga', 'Krutapura', 'Karadugu' and 'Gadugu'. An A.D. 1002 inscription of Ahavamalla, found in the Trikuteshwara temple uses the term 'Kardugu' with reference to Gadag. The place appears to have already come into prominence by the time of Chalukyas of Badami. An A.D. 918 epigraph of Rashtrakuta emperor Indra III refers to Betageri, presently a part of Gadag town, as 'Battkeri' (a prakrit author named Vattakera is believed to have belonged to Betageri). This epigraph is now seen fixed in the northern prakara wall of the Veeranarayana temple at Gadag. In an inscription of the Chalukya king Iriva Bedanga Satyashraya, dated A.D. 1008, the place is named as 'Kaladugu' agrahara. According to Dr. A.Sundara, the Trikuteshwara temple here was originally built during the Rashtrakuta period and extended during the Kalyana Chalukya period. Gadag was an important town comprised in the Belvola-300 country as attested by early inscriptions. During the period of the contest between the Seunas of Devagiri (Daulatabad) and the Hoysalas, Belvola-300 occupied a strategic position. Traditional accounts attribute the establishment of this maha agrahara to the legendary emperor Janamejaya. As many as 34 epigraphs have come to light from this place, a large number of which are found in the Trikuteshwara and Veeranarayana temples; a few of these have been brought from Betageri and Lakkundi.

Betgeri, generally suffixed to Gadag, is called by the name of 'Battakere' in an inscription of the reign of Rashtrakuta Krishna II; the word Battakere denoting a circular tank. Several inscriptions say that Betageri was an agrahara with 200 mahajanas, and Gadag was an agrahara with 72 mahajanas. An inscription located in the outskirts of the town dated A.D. 1072, informs that this area was administered from Mullagunda by Kanchaladevi, queen of the Kalyana Chalukya King Someshwara II. Under the Chalukyas of Kalyana, Gadag was an important cultural centre. Someshwara IV of the Kalyana Chalukyan dynasty successfully foiled (A.D. 1185) the efforts of Yadava Bhillama V and Hoysala Ballala II to wrest control of Kalachuri territories. A copper plate inscription of Harihara II of Vijayanagara of A.D. 1379, registers the grant of 66 villages to the Trikuteshwara and Veeranarayana temples of Gadag which was then comprised in Toragallu Nadu. An inscription of the reign of Krishnadevaraya (A.D. 1519) also mentions several gifts made to Lord Veeranarayana. Another Vijayanagara inscription (A.D. 1539) claims that Kumaravyasa became a favourite of Lord Veeranarayana and that here emperor Achayutaraya performed a ritual called '*Anandanidhi*'. This is the first known epigraphical reference to Kumaravyasa. Gadag was occupied by Bijapur in A.D. 1763. It was governed by an officer named Abdul Kasim Khan, Dharwad and Bankapur too were under his control. In A.D.

1799, the fort of Dambal was wrested from Dhondia Wagh by Col.Arthur Wellesley who made it over to an officer of the Peshwa along with Gadag.During the last Anglo-Maratha war.Sir Thomas Munroe captured Gadag(A.D. 1818). Thereafter this area came under the British.

The principal temples at Gadag are those of Trikuteshwara and Saraswathi. The Trikuteshwara consists of *garbhagriha* and an *ardhamantapa*, both in the Rashtrakuta style, and the later additions of *navaranga* and other *mantapas* in the Kalyana Chalukyan style. The temple is believed to have been under some restoration during the Vijayanagara period.The *garbhagriha*, on the western side, has a squarish ground plan and upon a high *panipeetha* three Shiva lingas are placed, from which circumstance it is called Triuteshwara.A reference to Traipurusha temple is made in an A.D.1037 inscription at the Veeranarayana temple.Dr.A.Sundara opines that the present Trikuteshwara temple with Shiva. Suryanarayana and Brahma, may perhaps be the Traipurusha temple mentioned in the inscription.He further thinks that the damaged Brahma image now in Betgeri was originally in the *Trikuteshwara temple*. A large *rangamantapa*, supported by 42 pillars, is built in front of the *navaranga*. Between these two halls at a narrow point open out two doors on the north and south. The northern door leads to a small *garbhagriha* where, upon a single pedestal three Shivalingas are placed in a row.Clearly, this *garbhagriha* has been a later addition.On the eastern end of the spacious *navaranga* is another *garbhagriha* containing a pedestal showing seven horses but without any image. It is this shrine which Dr.Sundara has identified as that of Suryanarayana. In a *mantapa* on the eastern side several beautiful stone sculptures are found. The *mantapa* edges have *kakshasanas* and in the niches on the exterior walls are attractively designed relief sculptures representing gods and goddesses drawn from the mythological stories.The upper portion of the *kakshasanas* show miniature *shikharas* in the Chalukyan style.The door frame on the southern side is decorated with fine carvings.Along the eaves overhanging from the lower edge of the roof are seen a variety of sculpted figures like Shiva and Parvathi.Ravana lifting the mountain Kailasa. Gajalakshmi, Surya, Parvathi, Bhairavi, Vishnu, a dancing girl, a woman holding a mango fruit, couples taking intoxicating drinks, a royal officer surrounded by body guards, a lady holding a mirror a lady with a pet parrot, and so on. On the exterior wall of the *garbhagriha* relief sculptures of the dikpalas and a Vishnu image in a niche are found. The attractive individual sculpted figures stand out as proof of the high standard of Chalukyan style of art. After viewing the Trikuteshwara temple at Gadag in 1870, the renowned art critic James Fergusson observes that “The carving has been exceedingly good, but the figures have been much defaced by violence and the whole, overlaid by successive coats of whitewash”. Epigraphs which refer to several grants made to the Trikuteshwara temple, also make references to repair works carried out between the 11th and 16th centuries A.D. (upto Vijayanagara times).

The Saraswathi temple closely is a fine example of Chalukyan style of art. Both the principal temples are located within the *agrahara* fort. It is pointed out that as the chief deity of traditional learning, a temple to the goddess Saraswathi was raised. The Traipurusha temple probably also served as a centre of higher education or *ghatikasthan* which further strengthen the above presumption.The Saraswathi temple has a *garbhagriha*, an *ardhamantapa* and a *navaranga* with the main entrance on the northern side. The *navaranga* in somewhat unusual design resembles an open *mantapa* with pillars. On the western side of it are two spacious halls which were probably used for purpose of teaching. According to Ferguson “The sculptures executed with par artistic excellence here are the best examples of their arististic splendour.” The finely polished columns employed in this temple are the best specimens of the Chalukyan sculptural art and are known for their minute and gently carved figure.

The pilasters on the exterior walls with *architraves* and miniature *shikharas* of varied patterns in the background captivate the visitors.A special feature of this temple are the fascinatingly engraved circular medallions interspaced on the exterior walls. The *bhuvaneshwari* overlooking the dancing dias in the centre of the *navaranga* is covered with beautifully carved figures. The bracket figures projecting from the capitals of squarish columns supporting the ceiling of the *navaranga* are very charming. Such

display of skill on the part of the sculptors in this part is considered to be rare as observed by Campbell. The surface of the columns and the detached miniature pillars of the niches are filled with beautifully carved relief figures. These figures of 8 to 10 cms high have been executed very skillfully by expert Chalukyan sculptors. On the upper part of these columns different models of miniature *shikharas* have been carved. The floral designs decorated on the lintel are attractive. Its exterior walls adorned with pilasters and devokoshtas, decorated with beautifully carved figures of dancing damsels, flying horses etc. The Saraswathi image housed inside the garbhagriha is an outstanding art piece of Chalukyan period. Although the image is mutilated. Its facial expression is eye striking. Scholars opine that this goddess, seated in *padmasana* posture, wearing a richly designed saree with minute details, perhaps is a rare feature not found in other sculptures of the period. The Goddess having curly and smooth hairs, wearing armlets, wristlets, richly ornated crown and other ornaments gives her a majestic appearance. Its pedestal has miniature carvings of dancers in vivid postures. Commenting on this, further Campbell observes thus: "perhaps of all Dharwad Buildings, the little temple of Saraswathi takes the first place for delicacy and beauty of detail. The richness and grace of some of its columns are not surpassed. The whole temple, even to the figure of Saraswathi in the shrine has been wrought with immense care and elaboration. "As the old image of Saraswathi is damaged. It is being replaced by a new sculpture of the goddess Saraswathi in padmasana and Dhyanamudra, sculpted by one Somanna Shilpi, a famous sculptor of Gadag.

Notable among the other temples at Gadag is the Someshwara temple in the Chalukyan style which comprises of a *garbhagriha*, an *ardhamantapa* a *navaranga* and a south facing *mukhamantapa* and on the eastern side too formerly there was a *mukhamantapa* but which no longer exists. The two door-frames of the *navaranga* are covered with a variety of carved with a variety of carved figures and *dwarapalas*. Along the plinth are a few friezes of elephants, *yalis* and floral designs of various kinds. In the exterior walls are bas-reliefs of Varaha, Surya, Kali, Shiva, Natya Ganapathi, Parvathi, Veerabhadra, Bhairava, Venugopala and others. In the *lalata* of the *garbhagriha* is Shiva in *dhyanamudra*. According to Dr. A.Sundara such a *lalatabimba* of Shiva is hardly to be met with in any other temple. He further observes that this temple must have belonged to the Kalamukha sect.

To the south of the Someshwara is another temple in the Chalukyan style, namely, Rameshwara. It comprises of a *garbhagriha*, an *ardhamantapa* and a *navaranga*. The ceiling of the *navaranga* has a dome-shaped *bhuvaneshwari* with an inverted lotus medallion in the centre. There are four central pillars in the *navaranga* which are in the Chalukyan style, upon one of which may be seen four slender line drawings. This temple is in a ruined condition; but some of the stone sculptures and other relics brought from different places to Gadag are stored in a room of this temple.

According to Dr. A.Sundara the temple of Veeranayana at Gadag was built approximately during the 10th century A.D. Reference to the construction of a Bara Narayana temple is made in an A.D.1037 lithic record which says that, this temple was constructed by an officer named Doyiyappa Pergade. Dr.A. Sundara observes that Bara Narayana temple mentioned in the record is the same as the existing Veera Narayana temple, and he further holds that the original 10th century structure was extended during the Vijayanagara period by the addition of a *Rangamantapa* in the front, and enclosure and a *Rayagopura*. As recently as in 1962, the *Rayagopura* has been renovated by using brick and mortar. On that occasion a replica of India's national emblem was inserted among the images mounted on the gateway. As commonly seen, the erotic sculptures are present upon the gateway even now. While the traditional view is that Hoysala Vishnuvardhana built this temple. A.M. Annigeri holds that Ballala II was its real builder. Dr. A Sundara is of the opinion that the structure was not only extended during the Vijayanagara period but a new image of the principal deity was also installed. The renovated *shikhara* over the *garbhagriha* is in the *kadamba nagara* style. Epigraphical sources elude that the *rangamantapa*, the high walls of the outer enclosure and the *rayagopura* over the principal entrance were the additions incorporated during the Vijayanagara period. The pillars of the *rangamantapa* are covered with bas-relief sculptures

representing *dashavatara*. It is believed that Narayanappa (better known as Kumaravyasa) composed his celebrated version of the Mahabharata *Karnataka Bharata Katha Manjari* also known as '*Gadugina Bharata*' sitting in front of a pillar of the *navaranga* of this temple. Within the precincts of this temple are shrines like the *Raghavendra Brindavana*, Anjaneya etc.

The Tontadarya Siddhalingeswara Mutt is an old and reputed Veerashaiva Mutt at Gadag. The original headquarters of this Mutt is at Dambal. On a large site at Gadag the Mutt has erected its original structure with huge doors, and recently a spacious *kalyana mantapa* is added to it. The Tontadarya Mutt is actively engaged in editing and publishing the literature on the varied aspects of Veerashaivism. Presently a programme of study and publication of the ancient manuscripts in the Mutt is making progress. The Mutt also manages some educational institutions, a programme called 'Shivanubhava', conducted every Monday here is very popular and has been attracting huge gatherings.

The place has several Mosques and *dargahs* of which the most outstanding is an attractive Mosque built of black stone by a General under the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb named Dilerkhan. The place has a Jumma Mosque also. The Basel Mission and the Catholic Church are also found here. Gadag is famous centre of cultural activities besides being a centre of trade and commerce. Noted personalities like Bhimasena Joshi, N. Kulkarni (Enkay), Hoyilagola Narayana Rao, Panchakshari Gavai, T.P. Akki, M.A. Chetty and several others have enriched this place by settling down here. Moreover it is also a famous centre of cotton trade. This was the headquarters of Belvolanadu and is referred to as "Battakere" in inscriptions. During the reign of Rashtrakuta Krishna II, when an officer named Tungatorana was administering the area, a hero named Kalegall was killed (A.D. 893) while fighting an enemy named Nagadhora. There are several hero stones at a spot known as Mallayyana Katte. Of the 15 Veeragals found in this spot. 14 are of interesting dimensions between 12-13ft. high, 4 ft. broad and 6" thick. The upper portion of these are shaped like *dravida shikharas* and terrible battle scenes are depicted upon them. Some of the Veeragals belong to the Shaiva and some other to the Vaishnava persuasion. A particularly striking feature of these hero-stones is the vigorous depiction of an elephant and a bull being conveyed. It is noteworthy that since the Rashtrakuta times Gadag and Betgeri had a separate and independent existence. Now, however, there is a joint municipality here. At Betgeri is a Church of the Basel Mission and educational Institutions run by them. Betgeri is a reputed centre of the weaving industry. **Binkadakatti**; situated four km west of the taluk head quarters town of Gadag, on the Gadag. Hubli Road has a Zoo garden spread over an area of 12 hectares although in its beginning stage is suitable for week end picnic.

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