

An overview of architectural temples under the Kadamba dynasty in Karnataka

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ABSTRACT

The Kadambas were an ancient Karnataka royal dynasty that controlled northern Karnataka and the Konkan from Banavasi in the present-day Uttara Kannada district. Mayurasharma established the kingdom about 345-525 C.E., and it later showed the capacity to grow to imperial dimensions. The dynasty then ruled as a feudatory of the bigger Kannada empires, the Chalukya and Rashtrakuta empires, for about 500 years, during which time they expanded into Goa and Hanagal. The contribution of the Kadambas to the architectural heritage of Karnataka is certainly worthy of recognition. The Kadamba style can be identified but has a few things in common with the Chalukyan and the Pallava styles and some architectural tradition of the Satavahanas. The most prominent feature of their architecture is their Shikara, called Kadamba Shikara. The Shikara is pyramid-shaped and rises in steps without any decoration, with a supika or kalasha at the top. The architecture of Shikara is used several centuries later in the Doddagaddavalli Hoysala temple and the Mahakuta temples at Hampi. Temples use perforated screen windows, which are pointed out in architecture and sculpture, which Kadambas contributed to the foundation of the later Chalukya-Hoysala style. This paper attempts to study the architectural contributions of the Kadamba Empire.

INTRODUCTION

The **Kadamba Dynasty** (Kannada: ಕದಂಬರು) (345–525 C.E.) designates an ancient royal dynasty of Karnataka that ruled from Banavasi in present-day Uttara Kannada district. The dynasty later continued to rule as a feudatory of the larger Kannada empires, the Chalukya and the Rashtrakuta empires, for over five hundred years, during which time they branched into Goa and Hanagal. The Kadamba Dynasty was an ancient South Indian dynasty that ruled from the 4th to the 6th century CE, with their capital at Banavasi, in present-day Karnataka. They were one of the earliest ruling dynasties in the region, and their influence is still felt in South Indian culture and history today. The Kadambas were originally a tribal community that lived in the western coastal region of present-day Karnataka, and their rise to prominence can be attributed to the leadership of Mayurasharma, who established the Kadamba Kingdom.

Mayurasharma founded the dynasty in 345 C.E., showing at times the potential of developing into imperial proportions, an indication provided by the titles and epithets assumed by its rulers. One of his successors, Kakusthavarma, ruled as a powerful sovereign, and even the kings of the imperial Gupta Dynasty of northern India cultivated marital relationships with his family, giving a fair indication of the sovereign nature of their kingdom. Tired of the endless battles and bloodshed, one of the later descendants, King Shivakoti, adopted Jainism. The Kadambas lived contemporaneously with the Western Ganga Dynasty of Talakad, and together they formed the earliest native kingdoms to rule the land with absolute autonomy. The Kadambas emerged as the first indigenous dynasty to use Kannada, the language of the soil, at an administrative level. In the history of Karnataka, that era serves as a broad-based historical starting point in the study of the development of the region as an enduring geopolitical entity and Kannada as an important regional language.

The Kadamba dynasty collapsed before Mohammed and Islam appeared on the scene in the 600s. Even though the great Hindu empires would fall to the Muslim states, the powerful influence of Hinduism and Jainism would carry on. Much of that strength traces back to the Kadamba dynasty. The decline of the dynasty after less than 200 years appears to have been triggered by disputes in the ruling family and conflicts with the Gangas and Pallavas. Ravivarman, who ruled from 485, stood as the last ruler to expand the kingdom. Although a dynasty short in duration, less than two centuries, the Kadamba influence passed on to dynasties that followed, making its presence felt even today. Two theories to the origin of the Kadamba dynasty exist, one of native Kannadiga origin and the other of a north Indian origin. Mention of the north Indian origin of the Kadambas appears only in their later records of their offshoot descendant dynasty, deemed legendary. The

earliest record making that claim came from the 1053 and 1055 inscriptions of Harikesari Deva, copied in inscriptions thereafter, describing Mayurasharma as the progenitor of the kingdom who established his might on the summit of Mount Himavat. But that theory has little popular support, as early records lack the myth. Royal families of the Deccan in the eleventh-century period often concocted northern origin theories. On the contrary, the family derives its name from the Kadamba tree, common only to the South India region.

The Kadamba dynasty is one of the most ancient and long-serving royal dynasties of Karnataka. Apart from the Banavasi Kadambas, who were the first to use that name, different branches have ruled from variant places such as Goa, Hanagal, Karadikallu, Bankapura, and Nurambada. However, the Kadambas of Banavasi, who ruled approximately during the interval between 345 A.D. and 525 A.D., is perhaps the most important and ancient.

The mythological explanation that links the dynasty to Shiva and Parvathi may be dismissed easily as a figment of imagination. Banavasi is now a small town in the North Canara district of coastal Karnataka. Kadambas are given the distinction of being the first indigenous dynasty from Karnataka, with Kannada having the prime place in administration. It is documented that they belonged to 'manavya gotra' and they were 'hariti putra's. There are amorphous speculations that the Kadambas were descendants of some North Indian king. However, it has not found favour with important historians. The caste of these kings is also disputed. Some say that they were Brahmins who became militant and took up arms due to some insult meted out to Mayurasharma, a member of their clan. The talagunda inscription narrates how Mayurasharma proceeded to Kanchi in 345 along with his guru and grandfather Veerasarma to prosecute his Vedic studies at a Ghatika (school). There, owing to some misunderstanding between him and a Pallava guard or at an *Ashvasanstha* (a place of horse sacrifice), a quarrel arose in which Mayurasharma was humiliated. In high rage, the Brahmana discontinued his studies, left Kanchi, swearing vengeance on the impudent Pallavas, and took to arms. He collected a faithful group of followers and routed the Pallava armies near Srisailam region. Others contend that they were from some tribal group called 'kadamabu' who worshipped the Kadamba tree, which is endemic to that region. It is said that 'kadambu's are mentioned in the ancient Sangam literature of Tamil and that they were totemic worshippers of Lord Subrahmanya. Sangam literature documents the fact that Kadambas were marine pirates and that they were defeated by the Chera and Chola kings. It is argued that the dynasty might have linked itself to the Brahmin community more as a matter of prestige.

Almost all the information that we have about the early history of Kadambas is gleaned from inscriptions, particularly the famous pillar inscription that was found in Talagunda. (450 A.D.) This inscription installed by Shanthivarman gives abundant information about his father Kakusthavarma and his ancestors. The approximate lineage of this dynasty is as follows:

1. Mayurasharma
2. Kongavarma (Kongunivarma).
3. Bhagiratha
4. Raghu
5. Kakusthavarma (Raghu's brother)
6. Shanthivarman
7. Krishnavarma-1 (Shanthivarman's brother)
8. Mrugeshavarma
9. Shivamandhatruvarman (Mrugesha's brother)
10. Ravivarman (Mrugesha's son)
11. Harivarman

Krishnavarma-1, who ruled from 430 A.D. to 460 A.D., formed a separate branch that started ruling from Tripurvata. Their lineage is documented as follows:

1. Krishnavarma-1 .
2. Vishnuvarman .
3. Simhavarma
4. Krishnavarma-2
5. Ajavarma
6. Bhogivarman.

This branch came back to power in Banavasi itself during the regime of Krishnavarma-2, who defeated Harivarman, the last king of the original Banavasi branch. Kadamba dynasty was liberated from its feudatory affiliation to Pallavas and became an independent kingdom during the regime of Mayuravarma. 'Gudnapura inscription' and 'Talagunda inscription' throw light on these occurrences. One finds exaggerated remarks that he conquered many subsidiary kingdoms, including a few in North India.

Kakushtavarma is ranked among the more famous kings of this dynasty. He extended his kingdom by defeating the Pallavas and by entering into marital relationships with the guptas, vakatakas, alupas, and gangas. Mrugeshavarma extended the kingdom even further, and 'halasi' in Khanapaura talluk, Belgaum district, became the second capital. Ravivarma was the next important king, and he defeated the king of Kanchi, and Uchangidurga in Bellary district became yet another capital city. Krishnavarma-1 and Krishnavarma-2 belonging to the Tripurvata branch fought many a war and controlled vast reaches of land. Gradually, Kadambas lost their identity against the mighty insurge of the Chalukya dynasty. Kadambas followed the Vedic religion quite scrupulously, and the caste system was ironclad. However, there is much evidence to prove that they supported other religions, such as Jainism and Buddhism. Education was regarded highly, and places such as Talagunda were great centres of learning.

Administration was properly streamlined, and the state was subdivided into smaller units such as Visayas, Rastra, and Nadu. Inscriptions mention many officials, such as Mahattara, Rajapurusa, Gramabogika, Visayapati, Manevergade, Tantrapala, etc. Many taxes were levied, and agriculture was the main profession. However, there is evidence of trade and trans-oceanic business relations. Quite a few towns, such as Banavasi, uchangidurga, talagunda, and halasi, came up during this period.

The most prominent feature of their architecture, basic as it was, is their *Shikara* called *Kadamba Shikara*. The *Shikara* is pyramid-shaped and rises in steps without any decoration, with a *supika* or *kalasha* at the top.

Many inscriptions belonging to this period are copper plates. They are found in various places of Karnataka, such as Shivamogga, Kaduru, Hasana, and Mysore. Most of them use the Sanskrit language and the Brahmi script.

Stone inscriptions installed during the regime of the Kadambas are very important. Chandravalli, Malavalli, Talagunda, Banavasi, Gudnapura, and Halmidi have housed very important inscriptions. Halmidi is the oldest Kannada inscription. The Talagunda inscription is the oldest Sanskrit inscription of Karnataka. We do not have concrete evidence to prove conclusively that any coin found in Karnataka was minted during the regime of the Kadambas.

Kadamba dynasty, originating from Banavasi, found its extensions in other parts of Karnataka and outside, and those branches are dealt with separately.

Objectives of the Study

1. To describe the architecture of historical temples in the Kadamba dynasty
2. To find out the significance of the architecture of Kamala Narayana Temple
3. To analyse the various styles of Kadamba dynasty architecture
4. To describe how Madhukeshwara temple turned into an architectural marvel

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research is based on secondary data. It's exploratory and descriptive in nature, and given the nature of the present study, it was required to collect information from secondary sources. Secondary information was collected from various reports, books, journals, newspapers, ongoing academic working papers, and websites of the Government of Karnataka State.

Kadamba architecture has some similarities to the Chalukyan and Pallava styles of architecture. They were inspired by the architectural tradition of the Satavahanas. The Kadamba Shikara was the most prominent feature of their architecture. The shikara is pyramidal and rises in steps without any decoration, with a stupika at the top. Some of their temples use perforated screen windows. It is considered that the Kadambas contributed to the foundation of the later Chalukya-Hoysala style.

Kamala Narayana Temple: History

Kamala Narayana Temple was built by the Kadamba queen, Kamaladevi, in the 12th century. The sculptures are breathtakingly beautiful. Lions and floral motifs vie with dancing girls for attention. The temple is rectangular in shape and consists of three cells, with the pillared hall running from north to south in front of the shrines on the west side. Each of these shrines is divided into two parts, Garbhagriha and Sukhanasi. The frames of the doorways of the Sukhanasi are carved with creepers. The pieced stone windows that surround the doorways are more ornamental than in any other Kadamba temple. The Garbhagrihas have, as in other Kadamba temples, the dedicatory block with the image of Gaja-Lakshmi.

Kamala Narayana Temple: Architecture

Kamala Narayana Temple at Degaon was built by the Kadambas of Hangal, which shows the perfection of Kadamba architecture. It was built in the middle of the twelfth century and is one of the latest temples built by Kadambas. It is rectangular in shape and has three pillared. It has the influence of Hoysala architecture too. Varaha Narasimha shows development in Kadamba architecture. The parallel pipes are more in number than any other temple. The towers are arranged in eleven tiers. There are four panels on the tenth tier that are crowned by a Kiritimukha. The roof resembles that of a terrace. The shrines are divided into garbhagriha and sukhanasi. The frames of the sukhanasai doorways are carved with creepers. The door frames have a dedicated block with the Gaja Lakshmi image and two pendants on either side of the block. One can spot a new feature in these doorways, and those are the five nails on the torana. The temple walls are surrounded by niches that have plasters surrounded by gopurams in the Kadamba style.

The Kadamba style of architecture is unique for its tapering, tiered superstructure. Their style seems to have reached its peak at this beautiful temple. This style of architecture impressed the Hoysalas, who built many monuments based on this model.

The Kamala Narayana temple has a rectangular shape.

- It has a pillared hall in front of the shrines, and the pillars are covered in beautiful decorative carvings.
- The hall in front of the shrines, called the Sukanasi, has doorways decorated in creeper designs, surrounded by ornamental windows. There are three shrines here:
- The first cell has a statue of Narayana.
- The second has a statue of Lakshmi Narayana, with the goddess Lakshmi seated on Lord Vishnu's lap.
- The third cell has a statue of Queen Kamaladevi with her attendants.
- The ceilings are covered in lotus motifs.
- The pillars and the spaces between them are covered with various decorative friezes—roaring lions, dancing girls, and scroll work.



Sri Kamala Narayana Swamy Temple, Degaon/ Deganve

The sabhamandapa is sufficiently ventilated with short walls separated by pillars creating huge openings between them. The temple is surrounded by a clean and well maintained green lawn which make the temple premises even more attractive.



Kadambas were an ethnic Kannada royal dynasty established by Mayurasharma in the third/fourth century. They were vassals of the Chalukya kings and later the Rashtrakutas. They came to rule vast tracts of land in North Karnataka(Banavasi, Hangal, Halasi) and Goa.

The temple is located in a obscure village Degaon, around 10km from Kittur, Dist Belgaum, Karnataka (north) state in southern India.



It was said to have been constructed by the architect Tippoja for the Kadamba king and is a testament to his architectural genius.

The temple consists of mainly three cells.



Lakshmi Devi Garbhagriha

Sri Lakshmi Narayana

Sri Lakshmi Devi

One houses the idol of Lord Narayana, the other has Lord Narayana with Goddess Laxmi seated on his lap and surrounded by statuetes of Garuda and Hanuman. The third cell houses an image of Kamaladevi who patronised this temple and is flanked by two attendents in stone.



Beautiful Central Floral Decorated Ceiling



The entire temple is replete with polished pillars, intricately carved walls, ornate lotus designed ceiling, floral motifs, figurines of animals, reptiles, deities, nymphs et al.



The slanting roof has a hemispherical dome over it and below it is the entablature, the ceiling, supported by columns. Carved pilasters, gavaksas-aedicules have also been used generously in the temple design.



Similar Kadamba temples can be found around Belgaum district, in north Kanara and Goa, though the Kamala Narayana temple is unique in its own right. The Hoysalas too seem to have borrowed heavily from this Kadamba style of construction and is evident from their temples located around Mysore.



Naga - Nagini Stone

One can say with conviction that one just cannot walk away from this temple without falling in love with its artistry and harbouring a desire to visit again.



Krishnaleela and Vishnu Avataras
Source :Text and Photographs : Abhijit Rajadhyaksha .

Banavasi Madhukeshwara temple

The name Banavasi is derived from the words (bana means forest and basi means spring). In ancient times, the place was known by other names such as Jayanti, Vaijayanti, Sanjayanti, and Kanakapura (not the Kanakapura near Bengaluru). The now sleepy village of Banavasi was the rich capital of a mighty Kadamba Dynasty. This dynasty was the first royal one of Karnataka. The Empire of Kadamba was established during 3435 AD. The village is on the banks of the River Varada. This place is located on the border of the districts of Uttara Kannada and Shimoga. The village is sleepy now, but it has a rich past, being the grand capital of the first and one of the mighty royal dynasties of Karnataka. The main attraction of this place is the Madhukeshwara temple. This temple was built during the rule of the Kadamba Dynasty, and the temple will give a glimpse of the grandeur of Kadamba architecture. The place had Buddhist and Jain influences in the olden days. The old Banavasi is about a kilometre away from the present village, and the same is having 2–3 old temples. Hardly anybody visits the place during the trip to Banavasi. It is believed that the Vijayanagar kings had been patronising the Madhukeshwara temple. Eminent Kannada poet wrote his poems here.

Madukeshwara Temple is the most important monument. The temple is a synthesis of several schools of architecture. The innermost sanctorum is built in a plain style with minimal carving on the door and the lintel. The Sankalpa Mantapa has been influenced by the Chalukyas. The temple also has a seven-foot huge Nandi idol. During the Hoysala rule, the dancing hall was added. This is the spot where the legendary Natarani Shantala challenged the famed musician Allama Prabhu.



Madukeshwara Temple

The Shanta Narasimha temple, the Uma temple, and the Madhukeshwara temple are of primary importance here. In sanskrit, "Madhu" means honey. The shivalinga colour resembles that of honey, hence the name of the temple. Apart from primary temples, myriads of shrines surround temples. The pillars are strong and quite artistic. Here is a picture that depicts the complete history of the temple. I hope you read through it.



The Madhukeshwara Temple at Banavasi

The vimana in a Kadamba temple is square in plan. It has its tower in a pyramidal shape and is composed of several horizontal step-like stages. These steps are decorated marginally with a uniform series of quadrangular vertical projections. There are several stages and are less elevated than in temples of southern India. They have no ornamentation in the pavilion.

The east-facing temple has a square garbha-griha with a pradakshinapatha around it. There are sub-shrines dedicated to Mahishasuramardini and Ganesha. The garbhagriha is attached to a large pillared hall and a navaranga. Both these are attributed to the Kalyana Chalukas. There are two niches on either side of sukhanasi in the navaranga hall. There is an image of Adi-Madhava in one of the niches; many believe that this might be the original image of this temple. The sculpture depicts features and style that may be attributed to the Kadamba period. The superstructure above the garbhagriha is a later renovation in Vijayanagara times, which is carried out in the Kadamba stepped shikhara style. During the period of the Sonda chief Sadashiva, the Parvati temple was added.

Possibly this is the only temple where there are separate shrines for each of the eight Ashtadikpalakas along with their consorts and their vahanas in the respective directions. The Nandi, the stone cot, the stone triloka mantapa, and a five-hooded Naga sculpture dating back to the 2nd century that has an inscription in Prakrit are some of the interesting features of the temple. Banavasi is a small town today but was once an important capital city. It is steeped in history and has been home to poets and writers. The Madhukeshwara Temple has the signature of every dynasty that managed to rule over Banavasi and is hence a visual lesson in history.

Banavasi, an ancient city surrounded by the Varada River on three sides and dense forest, was once the capital of the mighty Kadambas. Maharaja Mayurasharma, considered to be the greatest king of this dynasty, is venerated for his incredible contribution to literature, art, architecture, and the Kannada language.

Architecture of Madukeshwara temple



Kadamba *shikara* (tower) with *Kalasa* (pinnacle) on top, Doddagaddavalli

The Madhukeshwara temple, dedicated to Lord Shiva, was built for the worship of the mighty rulers of the Kadamba dynasty. After building the temple, there were additions, alterations, and renovations by the later dynasties that occupied the seat of power in the area. Hence, it is a mixed blend of various styles of architecture. Due to the passage of time, weather, neglect, and vandalism, it is not having the grandeur it had once. The temple is built in a vast area, as was the custom of those days. The sprawling compound houses several structures of the temple complex, with different architectural styles testifying to the various dynasties that ruled the area. The sanctum sanctorum is a plain and simple structure without any carvings except only for a little on the lintel and door. This might have been built by the Kadamba Rulers. But one can witness the remains of the Hoysala architecture with its incredible carvings on the pillars and ceiling in the Nritya Mantapa (dance hall) and the Chalukya style in the Sankalpa Mantapa, and also the Sonda Rulers' exquisite carving of the monolithic (huge, massive e-walled) structures. What is left of the ravages is the grand old temple of Madhukeshwara temple. The temple was completed in the 9th century.

At the top of the stairs to the entrance, there are 2 images of carved elephants. As one enters the huge temple courtyard, the dwajasthamba is seen standing tall. In the main temple, there is a huge 7-foot black single stone-carved Nandi idol installed facing the sanctum. As the name suggests, the presiding deity is the Madhukeshwaraswamy in the sanctum sanctorum. The idol is in the form of a honey-coloured lingam. It was consecrated during the ruling period of the 1st King of Kadambas, Mayura Varma. The temple has other deities of Lakshminarasimha and Parvathi Devi. The outside wall of the temple has the carved decorative panels depicting Ganesha, Brahma, Vishnu, Maheswara, and Mahishasura Mardhini. The gopura of the temple has the figures of various gods and goddesses. For the entry of light and air, there are stone lattice windows on the outer walls. There is a small, pleasing garden in the compound. There is a stone cot delicately carved and fixed outside the courtyard. The cot is supposed to have been made about 1500 years ago and was used by the kings. It is worth seeing this as it is an artistic evidence of the ancient art in stones. It is fully decorated with carvings. The cot is in an enclosure for protection from vandals and tourists.

The Madhukeshwara Temple built by Mayura Sharman, the first Kadamba Ruler, is the only reminder of the glory of Banavasi, which flourished under the Kadamba rulers. The temple has undergone many additions and renovations by consequent rulers, from the Kalyani Chalukyas to the rulers of Sonda. The temple currently houses a honey-coloured linga in the main shrine, but it is believed that it was originally dedicated to Madhava, a form of Lord Vishnu. The colour of the linga is the reason for the name Madhukeshwara.

In fact, the earliest inscriptions in Kannada are largely attributed to him and his successors. Maharaja Mayurasharma, a devout Hindu, enthusiastically participated in Vedic rituals, feeding of Brahmins, charitable acts and donations, and building stunning edifices that have survived the ravages of the weather and time.

One such splendid structure is the Madhukeshwara Temple in Banavasi, which has been revered for centuries. Legend has it that this temple was established by Lord Vishnu in the *Treta Yuga*.

During the 1st century BCE–early part of the 2nd century CE, the Chutu dynasty (whose capital was also Banavasi) built some portion of the temple, as their crest of the cobra hood is found in several parts of the temple. There is even a five-hooded *Naga* of this period with an inscription in *Brahmi* script and *Prakrit* language stating that the Princess Sivaskanda Nagasri, daughter of Maharaja Haritiputra Vishnukada Chutukulananda Satakarni, has donated this sculpture along with a *kund* and a *vihara*.

Maharaja Mayurasharma is credited with the construction of this temple complex in the 4th century, with additions made by the Kalyani Chalukyas, the Hoysalas, and others. A pair of delicately carved elephants and soldiers stand at the gate. Two *sthambas* are seen in the entrance courtyard, one of the 17th century and the other used during the *Karthika Deepam*. This east-facing temple built by the Kadambas has a *mandapa*, an *antarala*, and a *garbha griha* in which a honey-hued Shiva Linga has been consecrated by Maharaja Mayurasharma. There is a *pradikshana* path around the sanctum sanctorum. The typical ornamentation of the Kadambas, particularly in the proportion, symmetry, shape, motifs, and decoration of the pillars, their insignia of the lion (Bhuvamaha Narasimha), two coiled serpents, an array of sculptures of gods and goddesses in the parapets of the *mandapa*, and the repetitive patterns are seen inside and on the *gopura*.

The profusely decorated adjoining pillared halls and *navaranga* were built by the Kalyani Chalukyas, while the richly embellished *nriya mandapa* was built by the Hoysalas. The temple dedicated to *Mahishasuramardini* and Lord Ganesha was added by the Kalyani Chalukyas. The *navaranga* has exquisite lathe-turned pillars and a massive Nandi sitting majestically, turning slightly to the right, with the left eye looking at Lord Shiva and the right looking at Parvati Devi.

The sculptures of Adi Madhava and Lord Kartikeya suggest that these were there even before the temple was commissioned by Maharaja Mayurasharma. The *gopura* has intricate carvings of Lord Nandi in the corners, *Dasha Avatar*, Twelve Adityas, *Ashtadikpalakas*, *Nagabanda*, and gods and goddesses. There are smaller shrines dedicated to Lord Narasimha, Lord Ganesha, Lord Veerabhadra, and others within the premises built by the Soundekar dynasty or Sonde Rajas, who also built the existing roof and some portions of the main temple.

The *Triloka Mandapa* built in the 17th century depicts the heavenly world, earthly world, and nether world with utmost precision. A spectacular sculpture of Lord Shiva and Parvati Devi seated on the throne has been placed in the middle of the *mandapa*.

Kallina Mancha (stone cot) is one of the most extraordinary pieces of artistic excellence and craftsmanship ever seen. The stone cot is an assembly of individual sculptures (four pillars, a platform with fifteen lotuses, four pillars with peacocks, lions, and elephants, and a ribbed, sloping canopy) put together to look like it was carved from a single large stone. There are two chariots of wood dating back to the 2nd century in the courtyard. A *panchaloha* bell donated by a Maharashtrian queen in the 5th century is also interesting. There is an Ardha Ganapati with a split in the middle, whose other half is said to be in Varanasi.

The architecture of the Madhukeshwara Temple





A pair of stone elephants greets visitors to the temple. The main shrine of this temple, or the Garba Mandapa, has a very simple structure. It has minimal ornamentation in terms of carvings on pillars and walls. A honey-coloured Shiva Linga is placed in this shrine. Under the reign of the Chalukya dynasty, a Sankalpa mandapa was added on to the temple.



The construction of the Nritya mandapa is attributed to the Hoysala rulers. The Nritya Mandapa is a sharp contrast to the Garba Mandapa in terms of ornamentation. This ceiling, walls, and pillars of this mandapa are exquisitely carved. The pillars bear the Hoysala trademark of reflective convex and concave carvings one below the other. This goes to prove the expertise of the stone carvers of that time. The temple also has 8 separate shrines for the Ashtatikh Balahas, their consorts, and vahanas. It is probably the only temple where this is seen.

Highlights of the Madhukeshwara Temple



Inside the Nritya Mandapa is a 7-foot-tall monolithic statue of the Nandi Bull. This is positioned in such a way that the left eye seems to be looking at Lord Shiva and the right eye is directed towards Parvati. What is interesting to note is that the line of sight has been created in such a way that the pillars do not intersect it.

One of the highlights of this temple is an intricately carved stone cot and a triloka mandapa. This was made by the Sonda rulers. The cot sits in a separate mandapa within the praharam. This is not made with soft stone but with granite, which is much harder to carve.



Triloka Mandapa

The cot is made up of ten separate pieces. It is used during the Rath Yatra festivals for the Ashtavathama poojas. The triloka mandapa depicts Shiva and Parvathi in the centre, surrounded by the Kailasa Sikara, Sesha Lok, and Bathala Lok. Another unique attraction of this temple is a vertically sliced Ganesha idol. It is believed that the other half of this stone idol is in Varanasi.

<p>Named after its honey-hued Shiva Lingam, the Madhukeshwara temple, dating back to the 9th century, stands as one of Karnataka's oldest temples. Commissioned by Mayura Sharma of the Kadamba dynasty, it holds significant historical and cultural importance.</p>	
<p><i>Fun Fact:</i> An interesting attraction of this temple is a vertically sliced Ganesha idol. The other half of this stone idol is believed to be in Varanasi.</p>	

Source: <https://shlokapneurdivyaa.com/temples-by-dynasty-karnataka-series/>

The Madhukeshwara temple (temple of Shiva) still exists in Banavasi, which was built by Kadambas in the 10th century and renovated many times. It is a very good piece of art. The stone cot with wonderful carvings is one of the main tourist attractions in the temple. Doddagaddavalli Hoysala temple, the Mahakuta temples in Hampi, and the Madhukeshwara (Lord Shiva) temple in Banavasi are noteworthy.

Festivals of Banavasi Madhukeshawara Temple

On the Ugadi day, the temple jatres will be held with an ancient wooden chariot, which is a major attraction. It is believed that this chariot was donated by the Sonda king in 1608. The jatres consist of the grand procession with the chariot drawn through the broad street in front of the temple. The utsava murthis are carried in the chariot during the jatres. On all other occasions, a smaller chariot of the temple is used.

Another festival is Navarathri, when the idol of Devi is decorated with different dresses on each of the nine days. As the name suggests, this is a 9-day festival.

Apart from the temple festivals, one major event is the yearly Kadambotsava in December, attracting a large number of visitors. For this event, various troupes will be performing yakshagana, music, folk dances, art exhibitions, and many other cultural activities. People from all over the state and from all over south India participate and perform in this event. It is also attended by literary and other well-known personalities.

Legend connected with Banavasi temple and Kadamba Dynasty

It is believed that the legendary dancer Shanthala challenged the musician Allama Prabhu and made an inspiring and excellent performance. I believed that till today no one could do a performance better than that. She became famous and was married by King Vishnu Vardhana, the first king and founder of the Hoysala dynasty. She is the inspiration and model for the world-famous dancing sculptures on the Halebeedu and Belur temple walls. The legend also has it that Vishnu Vardhana was originally a Brahmin by name Mayura Sharma. He was studying in Kancheepuram. During his stay there, he was humiliated by the Pallava princes. Then he took up the study of the warfare of the Kshatriyas. With this training he became a valiant king and established the Kadamba dynasty, the earliest royal dynasty of Karnataka in 345 AD.

CONCLUSION

The Kadambas were an ancient Karnataka royal family who ruled from Banavasi in the present-day Uttara Kannada district over northern Karnataka and the Konkan. They belonged to the Manavya Gotra and Haritiputras (lineage), which connects them to the Banavasi Chutus, a feudatory of the Satavahana dynasty. Talagunda and Gundanur's inscriptions attest to this. Mayurasharma is also named as the kingdom's founder in the Talagunda inscription. Kadamba style of architecture contributed to the development of the Dravidian temple architecture style, which is prominent in the South Indian states of Tamil Nadu and Karnataka.

The commitment of the Kadambas to the structural legacy of Karnataka positively merits recognition. The Kadamba style has recognising qualities, incorporating a couple of things in the same manner as the Chalukyan and the Pallava styles. They drew from the structural custom of the Satavahanas. Shikara, called Kadamba Shikara, comprises the most conspicuous component of their design. The Shikara has a pyramid shape and ascends in ventures, with no design, with a Stupika or Kalasha at the best. That style of Shikara had been utilised a few centuries later in the Doddagaddavalli Hoysala sanctuary and the Mahakuta sanctuaries in Hampi. A portion of their sanctuaries additionally utilised punctured screen windows. In engineering and figure, the Kadambas added to the establishment of the later Chalukya-Hoysala style. The Madhukeshwara (Lord Shiva) sanctuary worked by despite everything that exists in Banavasi. Worked in the tenth century and revamped commonly, the sanctuary speaks to the apex of their craft. The stone cut with awesome carvings draws in numerous who acknowledge great craftsmanship to the sanctuary.

Though the Kadambas ruled for only around 400 years, they sowed the seeds for a distinct Kannada identity, which blossomed in later centuries under the patronage of dynasties like the Chalukyas, Rashtrakutas, and Hoysalas. Through their temples, sculptures, inscriptions, and literary works, the Kadamba rulers left behind an invaluable legacy that enriches our understanding of the cultural heritage of Karnataka even today.

Kadambotsava ("The festival of Kadamba") represents a festival celebrated every year by the Government of Karnataka in honour of this kingdom. A popular Kannada film of yesteryear, *Mayura*, starring Dr. Raj Kumar, celebrates the creation of the first Kannada kingdom. On May 31, 2005, Defence Minister Pranab Mukherjee commissioned India's most advanced and first dedicated naval base, named INS Kadamba after the Kadamba dynasty, in Karwar.

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