



Historical and Cultural Heritage of Avathi and Yambrahalli-An Overview

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Introductions:

Avathi is a village in Devanahalli Taluk in Bangalore Rural District. It is located at the foot of a hillock and 5 km towards north of Devanahalli on the road to Chickballapura. It was a hobli headquarters. It was the headquarters of a major feudatory clan known in history as AvathiNadaprabhus. It was to this place the famous feudatory Ranabhairegowda belonged and tradition assigns Yelahanka NadaprabhuKempegowda's lineage to him. It is historically interesting as being the original settlement of the seven enterprising farmers from Kanchi, whose story holds so prominent a place in the annals of Bangalore. Kolar and Tumkur Districts.

The earliest reference of the place is found in a hero-stone from the same place seen amidst fields. (*EC IX, DV-20, 1133 A.D*) This Tamil record of Hoysala times states that during the rule of Tribhuvanamalla, while laying siege to Talaikkadu, a hero died in a battle and one Machchegavunda of Avattiyur in Sannainadu caused the hero-stone to be erected. There is a local belief that, the place name originated from 'HavuAtti' and a folk story is also narrated, During Vijayangara and post Vijayanagara times Avathinad was mentioned in inscriptions (*EC X CB-40 1428 AD., EC IX DB-5 A.D., Ec IX DV-30 & Dv-91*) and Avathi was a major feudatory during this period.

Pre-History and Antiquities:

On the Avathi hill, there are several ash pits containing huge bones and ancient pottery. In the valley between the Avathi hill and Kolugudda/Koligudda are several cromlechs, each situated within a circle of rough stones, the top slab being about one foot thick and nine or ten feet square. It is a wonder how these gigantic slabs were got to their place. It appears that during Arthur Cole's time a few of these cromlechs were opened by having the top slabs broken to pieces and the contents consisting of pots, iron sandals, spears and huge bones removed to Bangalore. The ash pits and cromlechs bear testimony to the great antiquity of the place. (*MAR 1, 914-15, P.No.19*) In between two tall rocks, in the plain valley, are big stone dolmens of the pre-historic period. **Avathi is famous for cultural heritage and have been discussed as below.**

Fort: The Avathi hill was once fortified. The top portion of the hill has remnants of a fort built by the local chiefs.

Temples: The place has temples dedicated to Channakeshava. Anjaneya and Ishwara. The Channakeshavatemple is an ordinary structure and the main image is said to have been installed by Ranabhairegowda after he found it together with pots of seven koppariges (or large metal boilers) of treasure which they were fortunate enough to unearth, and that they built this temple and set up the god. The image appears to be in early Vijayangara style. The god Channakeshava is about 2 feet high, flanked by consorts. There is a lofty four pillared



mantapa in front. The small Ishwara temple besides the road is built over a small rock, In a small cavern near this is the image of Vinayaka.

Rocky hill and its Heritage: To the west of the village is a hill almost encircling the village. Behind this is a series of rocky hill ranges forming valleys in between. A few boulders at the top are pointed out as the place where the Prabhus had their Karagada-devaru or gods in shape of earthen pots. These are said to be there even now. On another boulder is sculptured a female figure, about 1½ feet height, which is said to represent Vira Kempamma, a princess of the Prabhu family, thorough whom it attained great prominence. A portion of the hill is known as her bidu or residence. Another portion is called Dodda-bidu (or the great residence), where, it is said, the Prabhus once had their buildings, though a part of the village below the hill is shown as the site of their palace. A sloping rock at the foot of the hill on the west, which has a small hole with some water in it, is called Kannikalamma's rock and is worshipped on occasions of drought and at other times. It is believed that if the water in the hole, on any day, there will surely be rain that day. Kannikalamma means the goddess of the virigins, and it is only virgins and boys that are allowed to worship her and not adult men and women. The hill to the west is called Kolugudda/Koligudda, because it is said, koli or fowls were reared there during the rule of the Prabhus. There are many caves and cavern on the hill, described as connected with various devotes, A cave in the hill is known as Bhaktara-gavi or the Devotee's cave.

Cultural Heritage of Yambarahalli&Thimmarayaswamy temple:

Yambarahalli is a small village in Devanahalli Taluk of Bangalore Rural District. It is located 8 km towards north of Devanahalli. Behind Avathi, under the Yambarahalli revenue village is another small hillock traditionally called Gautama Girikshetra, the hill popularly known as YambarahalliThimmarayaswamy-betta. The place is considered very holy and several marriages are celebrated here every year. The hill called Gautamagiri is held in high esteem with the Saptagiris of the region viz., Nandigiri, Dibbagiri, Govardhanagiri, Kukketagiri, etc. There is a flight of steps leading to the temple constructed recently from the foot of the hill. There is a motorable road both from Avathi village and Nandi Hills road right upto the temple.

The temple is of Thimmarayaswamy. The deity is in Vijayanagara style, actually is Channakeshava and is believed to have been installed by Sage Gautama. The temple over the hill is built in Vijayangara style with specialities of the Avathirulers's buildings. The god, about 5 feet high, is a good figure with 4 hands, the right lower being in the abhaya attitude and the other three holding a discus, a conch and a mace. The navaranga pillars have many interesting relief sculptures. To the left of the main sactum is another cell having the image of Lakshmi. In the Ardhamantapa are seated statues of Alwars and Ramanuja over a platform. The Mukhamantapa entrance has Dwarapalakas with a Gajalakshmi over the lintel, the outer walls have, as in the Venugopalaswamy temple at Devanahalli, a frieze of large images illustrating scenes from the epics and the Puranas. The figures on the south wall and on a portion of the east wall delineate the story of the Kishkindha kanda of the Ramayana. Among the events illustrated may be mentioned Rama shooting the seven Sala trees, his alliance with Sugriva, the fight between Vali and Sugriva, Vali's death. Tara pacifying Lakshmana's anger. The west wall coronation of Rama and the north wall the ten



incarnations of Vishnu. The Narasimha incarnation is represented in some detail, showing also the events that led upto it. These friezes from a peculiar feature of some of the Dravidian temples in this part of the State. The outer walls have fine sculptures depicting episodes from Baghavata such as Gopika Vastrapaharana, Kurmavathara, Kallingamardhana, Govardhana, Prahalada Charitre, Vamana Trivikrama and also scenes carved from Ramayana. The Thimmarayaswamyhills has three ponds (theerthas) called Shanka Teertha, Lakshmi Teertha and Chakra Theertha. In between Shanka Teertha and the Chakra Teertha is a fallen building described as the Gauthama Ashrama. To the left of this is an image (two feet in height), carved over a piece of rock described as of Ahalya, At the foot of this rock is an image of Anjaneya measuring about two meters in height. Surrounded by natural hill range, the place is a fine picnic spot.

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