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# Aarsha Vidya Bharati - Feb 2022

*Magha-Phalguna 2078*

A monthly newsletter that will bring you more happiness, more wisdom and more freedom



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## Visit to Badami-Aihole-Pattadakallu

By Varsha Shankar, Bengaluru

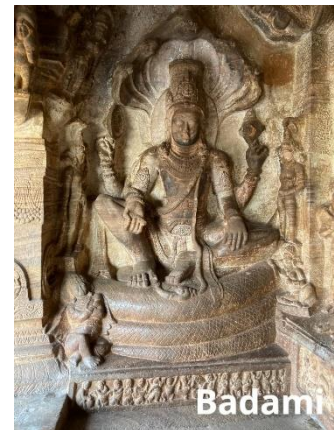


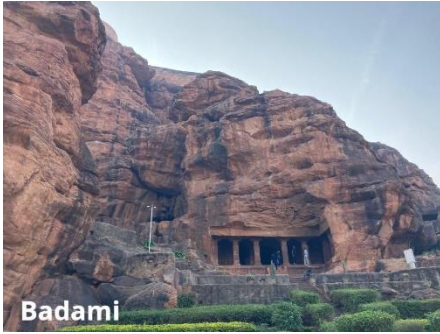
The Badami-Aihole-Pattadakallu area is called the **cradle of Indian Temple architecture**. This region in North Karnataka is dotted with ancient sculptural marvels, ensconced within an expansive sandstone backdrop. This reddish pink rock was the perfect material for the “temple laboratory”

that flourished here. Here we can see the earliest examples of the South Indian “Dravida” temple architecture, the North Indian “Nagara” style as well as hybrid temples that took elements from both. The results of these experiments carried out over 1500 years ago are still standing here for us to see and experience. They are among the oldest stone temples of India. The temples constructed prior to this period were possibly made of bricks, wood, metal and so on and are no longer standing in original form.

The temples were mainly dedicated to various forms of Shiva and Vishnu (and others to Jain Tirthankaras). Today worship is carried out only in a handful of these ancient structures. The rest stand tall reminding us of the devotion and dedication that created them.

After the *Purāṇā-s* and *Itihāsā-s*, the first surviving records of kings and kingdoms of this region starts with coins from the Satavahana kingdom. They were followed by the Kadambas and then the Chalukyas. The Chalukyas set up an impressive empire that covered the deccan plateau. Over 2 periods (6-8<sup>th</sup> century CE Early/Badami Chalukyas, and 12<sup>th</sup> century CE Kalyani Chalukyas), various kings of this empire were also strong patrons of the arts and supported the building of magnificent cave temples as well as free standing stone temples. The walls of these temples are filled with stories from our *Purāṇā-s* and *Itihāsā-s*. Intricately carved Harihara statues tell us that Vishnu and Shiva were not considered separate from each other. In addition to Hindu temples, there are Buddhist viharas and Jain temples as well. The Chalukya kings leave this evidence of a sophisticated culture that valued mutual respect.





For those who like to step off the beaten path, the sandstone mountains around these temples provide ample opportunities to rock climbers and hobby trekkers alike. The spectacular sunsets seen from these colourful cliffs reminds one of the brilliance, and generosity of Surya Devata. And of course, there are carved temples and caves everywhere to keep you company.

Up atop a windswept mountain, next to possibly the oldest dated temple in India (7<sup>th</sup> Century CE from an inscription in the Jain structure), one can see a field of megaliths that tell a story of an even older time. These are rough rock arrangements that are seen all over the world and are believed to be from the iron age (1200 BCE – 500 BCE). They take various forms like stone circles, dolmens (table like structures) and menhirs.

Our pitrs lived and walked and worshipped here. Their attendance records can be seen in the rocks adjoining the temples that are filled with their art. Their drawings can be seen among the megaliths. It was both a humbling and an energizing experience to stand among them and imagine my place in the timeless flow of humanity.



For more on these temples and a taste of the glory of temple architecture of South India, [here is Dr Chitra Madhavan's talk](#) from our recently concluded [Vedic Wisdom Festival](#).

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