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THE HISTORICAL BEHIND OF SHRAVANA BELAGOLA: AN OVERVIEW



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ABSTRACT

Shravanabelagola is a Jain pilgrim destination located in the Hasasan District of Karnataka state. Southern India, at an attitude of about 3350 feet above sea level. Shravanabelagola is the seat of the ancient Bhattaraka Matha, belonging to the Desiyagana lineage of MulaSangh, from the Digambara Monastic tradition. This paper revealed that historical prospective of Shravanabelagola.

KEYWORDS : Digambara, Jains, Gommata etc.

INTRODUCTION

Shravanabelagola is a city located near Channarayana of Hassan District in the Indian state of Karnataka and is 158 km from Bangalore. The statue of Gommateshwara Bahubali at Shravanabelagola is one of the most important tirthas (pilgrimage destinations) in Jainism, one that reached a peak in architectural and sculptural activity under patronage of Western Ganga dynasty of Talkad. Chandragupta Maurya is said to have died here in 298 BCE after he became a Jain monk and assumed an ascetic life style.

Shravanabelagola is located at 13 KM to the south east of Channarayana in the Channarayana taluk of Hassan district of Karnataka. It is at a distance of 51 Km south east of Hassan Karnataka the district centre, it is situated at a distance of 12 Km to the south from the Bangalore Mangalore road (NH- 48) 78 Km from Halebidu, 89 km from Belur, 83 km from Mysore, 233

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km from Mangalore, 17 km from Hirisare and 157 km from Bangalore , the capital of Karnataka.

ETYMOLOGY OF SHRAVANA BELAGOLA

Shravanabelagola white pond of the Shravana is named with reference to the colossal image of Gommata the prefix Shravana serves to distinguish it from other Belagolas with the prefixes Hale and Kodi, white Belagoala white pond is an allusion to the pond in the middle of the town, the Sanskrit equivalent Svetasarovara, Dhavalasarovara and Dhavalasarasa used in the inscriptions that support this meaning. Some inscriptions mention the name of the place as Belgula which has given rise to another derivation from the plant solanumferoxchairy fruited Eggplant) this derivation is in Allusion to a tradition which says that a pious old woman completely anointed the colossal image with the milk brought by her in a gullakayi or eggplant place is also designated as DevanaBelagola white pond of the God and Gommatapuram, city of Gommata in Some epigraphs. The Epithet Dakshinakasi , Southern varanasi, is applied to it in some modern records.

HISTORICAL PROSPECTIVE OF SHRAVANA BELAGOLA

Shravanabelagola has two hills Chandragiri and Vindhyagiri Acharya Bhadrabahu and his pupil Chandragupta Maurya are believed to have meditated there. Chandragupta Basadi, which was dedicated to Chandragupta Maurya, was originally built there by Ashoka in the third century B.C. Chandragiri also has memorials to numerous monks and Sravakas who have meditated there since the fifth century AD, including the last king of the Rashtrakuta dynasty of Manyakheta. Chandragiri also has a famous temple built by Chavundaraya, who was a disciple of Nemichandra.

The 58 feet tall monolithic statue of Gommateshwara is located on Vindhyagiri Hill. It is considered to be the world largest monolithic stone statue. The base of the statue has an inscription in Kannada as well as the oldest evidence of written Konkani, i.e. Devnagari script, dating from 981 AD. The inscription praises the king who funded the effort and his general, Chavundaraya, who created the statue for his mother. Every twelve years, thousands of devotees congregate here to perform the Mahamastakabhisheka, a spectacular ceremony in which the statue is covered with milk curds, ghee, saffron and gold coins. The next Mahamastakabhisheka will be held in 2018. The statue is called as statue of Gommateshwara by the Kannada people of Karnataka, but the Jains refer to the same as Bahubali.

INSCRIPTIONS OF SHRAVANA BELAGOLA

More than 800 inscriptions have been found at Shravanabelagola, dating to various times from 600 to 1830. A large number of these are found in the Chandragiri and the rest can be seen in the Indragiri and the town. Most of the inscriptions at the Chandragiri date back before the 10th century. These inscriptions include texts in the Kannada , Sanskrit , Marathi, Konkani, Tamil, Marawadi and Mahajani Languages. The second volume of Epigraphiacarnatica, written by B. Lewis Rice, is dedicated to the oldest Konkani inscription found here. It is said to be the oldest Konkani inscription. The inscriptions are written in various Halegannada (Old Kannada) and Purvahalagannada (Ancient Kannada) Characters. Some of these inscriptions mention the rise and growth in power of the Western Ganga Dynasty, the Rashtrakutas, the Hoysala Empire, the Vijayanagar empire and the Wodeyar dynasty. These inscriptions have helped modern scholars to understand the nature and development of the Kannada and its literature. On August 5, 2007, the statue at Shravanabelagola was voted by the readers of Times of India and English daily as the first of the Times of India's list of seven

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wonders of India , 49% Votes went in favour of the statue.

OTHER NOTABLE THINGS IN THE SHRAVANA BELAGOLA:

Shravanabelagola is the seat of the ancient Bhattaraka Matha, belonging to the Desiyagana lineage of MulaSangh, from the Digambara Monastic tradition. The Bhattarakas are all named Charukeerti, Bahubali College of Engineering is an Educational Institute at Sravanabelgoala

PROMINENT PERSONALITIES

His holiness ShriShriRharukeerthiBhattarakaSwamiji (PoOntiff Shravanabelagola Jain Mutt) The Matha and Jain temple are situated at base of Vindhyagir hill. Shravanabelagola is a Jain pilgrim destination located in the Hasasan District of Karnataka state . Southern India, at an attitude of about 3350 feet above sea level. The town is wedged between two rocky hills, Vindhyagiri and Chandragiri it is at a distance of it is 11 km from Hassan town the headquarters of the Hassan District and 157 km from Bangalore.

There is a tank in the midst the state language. Bela means white and Kola means the pond, an allusion to the beautiful pond in the middle of the town . Shravanabelagola is a holly place for Jains, there Guru is residing here in a mutt. There is a Sanskrit patashala to study Sanskrit and shastras. This town has got some historical reference, which add to the importance of this place according to the tradition of the Jain BhactraBahu one of the Sritakavalli as the successor of Vardhamana (Mahaveera) passed away here in a care on chandrabetta or Chandragiri hill. While leading a migration to the south form Ujjain due to a 12 year famine, which he had predicted. A number of languages are spoken around here that reflects the cultural diversity of Karnataka, Kannada is the official state language but English is also widely understood, so communication should not be much of a problem.

MAHAMASTHAKABHISHEKA

Mahamasthakabhisheka or the head anointing ceremony of the lord Gommateshwara BahagawanBahubali have been performed once in Every twelve years , In Jain Dharmic Cycle is part of ancient and India tradition . Today the ritual Mahamasthakabhisheka of Gommateshwara statue of Shravanabelogola is in memory of the first consecratory bath Prathishaabhisheka performed to the statute by the Ganga Prime Minister Chavundaraya and his guru Achalya Sri Namichandra Siddhartha Chakravarthi, under the inspiration of Charundarayas mother Kalala Devi, the Ceremony last here in February 2006 is the 87 of the series that commenced in the year 981 AD. Dating back to the Indus valley civilization. The next Mahamasthakabhisheka will be held in 2018 A.D. Just on the eve of the event scaffolding is constructed to help the priests and devotees to go up and offer worship. Worship is done in accordance to Jain Agama. Hundreds of people and tourists participate in the rituals statue over a period of twelve days. The statue of lord Gommateshwara gets poured by 1008 Kalashas painted earthen pots coloured colourfully in ceremonious style) of water milk, butter, ghee, curd, sugar almonds tender coconut, sugarcane, juice, rice flour, turmeric paste, Jaggery, banana paste, KashayaCherbal concoction) Shrigandha (sandal paste) , Chandana (coloured sandal paste) saffron, marigold flowers, and precious stones, culminating in a spectacular shower of flowers from a helicopter, the wealthy devotees offer bids for the kalashas, to obtain them and perform abhisheka. It has become customary to offer the first opportunity of worship reverence . this done for the peace and prosperity of mankind.

CHANDRAGIRI:

Shravanabelagola occupies a significant place in the Jain legacy of Karnataka, for being the place where Chandragupta, the founder of the Mauryan dynasty became a Jain ascetic after relinquishing his throne. The place where Chandragupta breathed his last is named Chandragiri (Chikkabetta). It is a small hill located just opposite to the Vindhyagiri hill. It has memorials to numerous monks and Shrivastavas who have meditated there. Chandragiri also has the tomb of Chandragupta Maurya. Steps have been cut out in this hill and ascent is not different from Vindhyagiri, it is steep and hard to climb.

CONCLUSION

There are ancient monuments in and around Shravanabelagola. There are monuments of rare excellence and skill got executed by the illustrious Gangas/Hoysalas who had profound sense of duty and ardent devotion to religion. The finest monuments are found in two sacred hills, Vindhyagiri and the Chandragiri.

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