TWIN TEMPLES OF

ಶಿವಮಲ್ಲಿಕ್ಕಾರ

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INTRODUCTION

The twin temples of Keladi and Ikkeri stand as architectural marvels in the heart of Karnataka, India, echoing the rich cultural and religious heritage of the region. Located in the Shimoga district, these temples are revered for their historical significance, intricate craftsmanship, and spiritual ambiance.

The Keladi temple, dedicated to Lord Rameshwara (Lord Shiva), was constructed in the 16th century by the Nayaka rulers. Its architecture showcases a fusion of Dravidian and Vijayanagara styles, characterized by ornate carvings, towering gopurams (gateway towers), and intricately adorned pillars. The temple complex encompasses various shrines, mandapas (pillared halls), and a sacred tank, offering devotees a serene space for prayer and meditation.

Adjacent to Keladi, the Ikkeri temple dedicated to Lord Veerabhadra, another form of Lord Shiva, complements its counterpart with its architectural grandeur. Built by the Keladi Nayakas in the 16th century, the Ikkeri temple exemplifies the Vijayanagara style, featuring a majestic entrance, elaborately sculpted walls, and a central sanctum adorned with a magnificent shikhara (spire).

Both temples serve not only as places of worship but also as repositories of history and art, attracting tourists and devotees alike. The serene surroundings, coupled with the spiritual aura, offer visitors a glimpse into Karnataka's rich cultural tapestry and architectural brilliance. The twin temples of Keladi and Ikkeri stand as testaments to the enduring legacy of Karnataka's heritage, inviting all to immerse themselves in the divine and the sublime.



Keladi Village, nestled in the verdant countryside, is a serene hamlet known for its tranquil ambiance and rich cultural heritage. Situated amidst lush greenery, it offers a picturesque setting with sprawling paddy fields and quaint cottages dotting the landscape. The village is renowned for its traditional architecture, vibrant festivals, and warm hospitality of its residents. Visitors can immerse themselves in the local way of life, exploring age-old temples, bustling markets, and scenic walking trails. Keladi exudes an old-world charm, making it an idyllic retreat for those seeking a peaceful escape from the hustle and bustle of city life.

On entering inside the complex you notice transformation into a very old structure. The temple houses three deities, Lord Rameswara (Linga and Nandi),Lord Ganesh and Lord Veerabhadra. The pillars are superbly adorned with legendary gods as well as animals. At the ceiling you can find the legendary (imaginary) two headed bird called Gandaberunda.













The Ramesvara temple consists of a Garbhagriha, Pradakshina patha, Antarala a Navaranga and a Mukhamantapa in east west axis. The square Garbhagriha has no decorations it has a Ramesvara linga of black stone on the Peetha. Garbhagriha doorway has Ramesvara with other decorations. The Antarala provides space for circumambulation and pillars which have bas-relief sculptures of lotus, lion-face etc.



The outer walls rise over the horizontal friezes or round moldings and the uppermost one is decorated. The walls and plain expect for a pilaster and a bas-relief sculpture. This is repeated on all the sides. Over this is broad eave at angle over which is a molding with a parapet. Over and above is the Sikhara of the Chalukya -Vesara type. The architecture of the temple is unique and has influences of Kadamba, Hoysala and Dravidian styles. Stupi is slightly elongated.





The interiors of the Keladi temple can surprise the visitor as it looks rather nondescript from outside. Popularly known as the Keladi Rameshwara Temple, the temple complex encloses a Parvati shrine, a Rameshwara shrine and a Veerabhadra shrine. The roof and pillars of the Parvati Temple have intricate carvings on wood. Thus the Ramesvara temple is a structure built at the beginning of the Nayak rule and hence it occupies an important place in understanding the Kealdi style of architecture. This is a popular temple and attracts devotees from all over Karnataka.









Style of architecture. Intricate and exquisite wooden carvings inside and outside the temple depicting various stories will leave in spell bound. Carvings of a woman paying homage to the deity Ganesh on a 24 feet high pillar in the backyard are believed to be of Keladi queen Chennamma who bravely fought Sultan Aurangzeb Popularly known as Rameshwara Temple, the temple showcases the glorious past of the empire depicting the rich heritage, culture, and art from the era.















There are many sculptures which adorn this temple among which mention should be made of Bedara Kannappa, Garuda, amorous couples, Harihara,musicians playing on instruments, animals like monkey,camel,elephant,serpent, and dancers etc. At the back of the temple complex that is more or less facing the entrance a picture of Vaastu sketched on full wall panel. There exists a massive Manasthamba at the back yard of temple. This indicates the temple could have been altered subsequently in accordance with Vaastu guidance.



Temple has some astonishing works of craftsmanship with structures of various animals like lions, tigers, elephants, horses, and many other birds. The sanctum ceiling has a beautifully carved Gandaberunda. These types of symbols are carried on most of the heritage buildings and monuments in Karnataka. Although the temple is still active, it is protected and maintained.









The importance of Ikkeri is the Aghoreshwara (Shiva) Temple in the centre of the village. It was built by Keladi Nayakas. Incidentally, Ikkeri was the capital of Keladi Nayakas for few years. The Temple architecture is influenced by both Hoysala and Vijayanagar styles.

Ikkeri was made the capital by Sadashiva Nayaka during mid Sixteenth century. After nearly 100 years, Bijapur Sultans plundered Ikkeri. The palaces where Kings used to stay are all gone now. The only remaining structure of old times is Aghoreshwara Temple, which is maintained well.





Nandi idol is approximately 6 feet tall. Its made of granite, almost mirror like finish. One can describe this Nandi with the word caparisoned - be decked out in rich decorative coverings. Nandi is sitting looking towards Aghoreshwara with left eye and the right eye is towards Parvati temple which is right next to the main temple.

The bell chain around its body is magnificent. Every little detail is perfect. The three hanging bells are almost real. The jewelry could be made of brass, silver or gold too in olden days. Such was the respect oxen had. Same with elephants and horses.



Looking back towards the entrance for a moment. A simple rectangular arch to mark the entrance. The ornate structure in the foreground is about 5½ feet tall. I have no idea what its purpose is. I sometimes feel its akin to Buddhist Stupas which are usually much bigger. Nandi Mantapa as seen from Aghoreshwara temple steps. The flight of steps leading in are flanked by ornate balustrades (Khatanjali in Kannada).

