

Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts

Eastern Regional Centre, Varanasi

A Brief Account of 27th Kalākośa Foundation-Day Programme

31st July, 2015

27th Kalākośa Foundation Day Programme was celebrated by Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, Eastern Regional Centre, Varanasi on 31.7.15 in the Library hall of office premises. On this occasion a special lecture was arranged on "*Munis & Mathas : Perspectives of Art in Vindhyaṭāvī*" delivered by Prof. R.N. Mishra, an eminent Art-Historian and Ex-Head, Department of History of Arts, Jivaji University, Gwalior. This programme was chaired over by Prof. P.K. Mukhopadhyay, Ex-Head, Department of Philosophy, Jadavpur University, Kolkata.

On the auspicious day of Guru-Purnima, programme of Foundation Day was started at 3 p.m. with Vedic chanting rendered by Dr. N.D. Tiwari. After completion of formal rituals, Prof. K.D. Tripathi gave a brief welcome address to the learned gathering. Next to it, Dr. Pranati Ghosal presented a brief note on IGNSA, ERC and its activities during last working year. Prior to the actual lecture, Prof. M.N.P. Tiwari introduced the speaker before the audience.

Main attraction of the day was special lecture on "*Munis & Mathas : Perspectives of Art in Vindhyaṭāvī*" by Prof. R.N. Mishra. Prof. Mishra started his lecture by defining *ṭāvī* meaning 'forest' and *ṭāvikas / ṭāvayas* 'the residents of forest'. In course of his speech he mentioned different nomenclatures of '*ṭāvī*' e.g. *araṇya*, *kāntāra*, *mahāraṇya*, *mahākāntāra* etc. which were full of dangers. By showing a series of maps he illustrated actual geographical site, i.e. forest area of Vindhya region and its adjacent places, the concerned location of his lecture. It was the home land of *ṭāvayas*, where two kinds of people were main residents, (i) *munis* (monks) a class of retired people who went there at their old age, and (ii) *ṭāvikas* the actual sons of soil. Both these sections controlled the forest area, they built up *matha*-s, which they called '*tapovana*' penance-forests and residents of the place were called '*prāṇī*'. In spite of being forest-dwellers they were neither dullards nor illiterates. They were learned and strong as well; the texts describe them '*śastra-śāstra-viśāradāḥ*' 'expert in the art of war and scriptures equally.' They acquired power over this region and its wealth. For the purpose of their security they wanted to institutionalize the entire thing; hence they built up *matha*-s.

With the aid of a slide-show Prof. Mishra gave a vivid description of this wood-land called *ṭāvī*, its residents i.e. *ṭāvayas*, and threw ample light on their culture and lifestyle. According to the **Mahābhārata**, **Arthāśāstra**, **Purāṇas**, **Harṣacarita**, and **Mālatīmādhava**, etc. home-land of *ṭāvaya*-s was this Vindhya region, and they formed some *ṭāvika* regions. Prof. Mishra narrated that existence of at least 18 *ṭāvika* regions has been traced even up to Gupta period. These *ṭāvika* -s were tribes or so-called out-castes, because *varṇa-jāti* (or caste system based on *guṇa-karma vibhāga*) were not traced here till 10th century CE. No imperial rulers were there; on the contrary names of seven ephemeral ruling houses were traced.

Both these *munis* and *ṭāvaya*-s occupied the forest area (both the land and its products) and constructed *matha*-s or monasteries and made the places luxuriant with beasts, *dhana*, *dhānya* and *ratna*. They constructed roads, water-bodies and temples. They also controlled trade, routes

and *maṇḍapika*-s. Traders dominated few existent towns like Gwalikera (modern Gwalior). As a result they had acquired mastery over the economics of this region.

Through another series of slides Prof. Mishra focussed on their art of making monuments in Gopachala region. These works entirely depended on ascetics' patronage and independent of dynasties of royal personages. These ascetics practised acquisitive monasteries; they figured themselves as *pati*, *nātha*, *pāla* etc. Their monastic art repleted with *āṭavika* motifs/elements, e.g. (a) penance-related images, (b) images of Saivite pantheon and motifs, (c) images of battle-worthy warriors like Kārttikeya and even female figures in combative mode like Cāmuṇḍā, (d) hero stones, etc. All these are specimens of their high-standard architectural and sculptural skill. In some of the monasteries names of rulers of the day were seen, e.g. Avantivarman Cālukya (c. 825 CE), Nṛpa Cakravarti and Dharmāśiva (c. 984 CE), Yuvarājadeva and Prabhuśiva (c. 1188 CE), etc.

He also showed us illustrations of Kadewaha Maṭha, its interior parts, Surwaya Maṭha, Terahi Maṭha where *maṭha*, mosque and temple existed in parallel. Structure and aesthetics of different parts of these monuments were commendable. The scene of Kodal monastery and its vault was found with underground cell most probably which was used as treasury and granary. In this context most noteworthy point was, these temples or *maṭhas* were not built by engineers nor by artists but the *muni*-s and their disciples themselves. In some cases, they took help of local people. Prof. Mishra presented the scene of temples of Thubon, Notha and Sohagpur, where images of *bhairava*-s, *vetāla*-s, Kārttikeya, Pārvaṭī performing *pañcāgni tapasyā*, even some *preta/pretaṇi* were found. These are examples of co-existence of gods and demi-gods in their pantheon. Images of dance of *preta* and Cāmuṇḍā, Devī Vikatañjā, Devī Ooma, Dayāvātī and Taralā are other instances which were inscribed on the wall or the interior part of *maṭha*-s or temples. From this it can be safely deciphered that these were images of tribal deities. Because names of these deities are not testified by any classical Sanskrit text nor their figures are matching with features of classical iconography. Since these figures are traceable in the inscriptions, their existence cannot be denied.

After completion of this discourse, Prof. Kamal Giri and Prof. Vidula Jayaswal took part in discussion (over the lecture). As Chair person of the session, Prof. P.K. Mukhopadhyay offered some illuminating comments. The programme ended with vote of thanks rendered by Prof. K.D. Tripathi, Advisor, IGNC, ERC, Varanasi. Entire programme was co-ordinated by Dr. Pranati Ghosal.

(Pranati Ghosal)