

# Rudreswara (Ramappa) Temple as 39th UNESCO World Heritage Site

July 27, 2021

In yet another landmark achievement, India's nomination of Rudreswara Temple, (also known as the Ramappa Temple) at Palampet, Mulugu district, near Warangal in the state of Telangana has been inscribed on UNESCO's World Heritage list. The decision was taken at the 44th session of the World Heritage Committee of UNESCO.

**In news:** India gets its 39th World Heritage Site

**Placing it in syllabus:** History

**Dimensions**

- What is WHS status?
- What is the procedure for inclusion of a site?
- Key features of Kakatiya Architecture
- Features of Ramappa Temple
- Brief on Kakatiya Dynasty

## Content:

### What is WHS status?

- A **World Heritage Site** is a **landmark or area which is selected by** the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (**UNESCO**) as having cultural, historical, scientific or other form of significance.
- What makes the concept of World Heritage exceptional is **its universal application**.
- World Heritage sites **belong to all the peoples of the world**, irrespective of the territory on which they are located.

- The WHS Status **aims at protection and preservation of cultural and natural heritage** around the world that are **considered to be of outstanding value to humanity**.

***UNESCO's World Heritage mission is to:***

- Encourage countries to sign the World Heritage Convention and to ensure the protection of their natural and cultural heritage;
- Encourage States Parties to the Convention to nominate sites within their national territory for inclusion on the World Heritage List;
- Encourage States Parties to establish management plans and set up reporting systems on the state of conservation of their World Heritage sites;
- Help States Parties safeguard World Heritage properties by providing technical assistance and professional training;
- Provide emergency assistance for World Heritage sites in immediate danger;
- Support States Parties' public awareness-building activities for World Heritage conservation;
- Encourage participation of the local population in the preservation of their cultural and natural heritage;
- Encourage international cooperation in the conservation of our world's cultural and natural heritage.

**What is the procedure for inclusion of a site?**

***Selection Criteria:***

- To be included on the **World Heritage List**, sites must be of **outstanding universal value** and meet **at least one out of ten selection criteria**.
- These criteria are explained in the **Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention**.

## **The Selection Criteria are as follows:**

- represent a masterpiece of human creative genius;
- exhibit an important interchange of human values, over a span of time or within a cultural area of the world, on developments in architecture or technology, monumental arts, town-planning or landscape design;
- bear a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilization which is living or which has disappeared;
- be an outstanding example of a type of building, architectural or technological ensemble or landscape which illustrates significant stage(s) in human history;
- be an outstanding example of a traditional human settlement, land-use, or sea-use which is representative of a culture (or cultures), or human interaction with the environment especially when it has become vulnerable under the impact of irreversible change;
- be directly or tangibly associated with events or living traditions, with ideas, or with beliefs, with artistic and literary works of outstanding universal significance. (The Committee considers that this criterion should preferably be used in conjunction with other criteria);
- contain superlative natural phenomena or areas of exceptional natural beauty and aesthetic importance;
- be outstanding examples representing major stages of earth's history, including the record of life, significant on-going geological processes in the development of landforms, or significant geomorphic or physiographic features;
- be outstanding examples representing significant on-going ecological and biological processes in the evolution and development of terrestrial, fresh water, coastal and marine ecosystems and communities of plants and animals;
- contain the most important and significant natural

habitats for in-situ conservation of biological diversity, including those containing threatened species of outstanding universal value from the point of view of science or conservation.

Until the end of 2004, World Heritage sites were selected on the basis of **six cultural and four natural criteria**.

With the adoption of the revised Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention, only one set of ten criteria exists.

### ***Nomination and Evaluation:***

- Only countries that have signed the **World Heritage Convention**, pledging to protect their natural and cultural heritage, can **submit nomination proposals** for properties on their territory to be considered for inclusion in UNESCO's World Heritage List.
- The **nomination is submitted to the World Heritage Centre for review** and to check it is complete. Once a nomination file is complete the World Heritage Centre sends it to the appropriate Advisory Bodies for evaluation.
- A **nominated property is independently evaluated by two Advisory Bodies** mandated by the World Heritage Convention: the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), or International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM),

### ***Selection:***

- Once a site has been nominated and evaluated, it is up to the **intergovernmental World Heritage Committee** to make the **final decision on its inscription**.
- Once a year, the Committee meets to decide which sites will be inscribed on the World Heritage List.

- It can also defer its decision and request further information on sites

## **Key features of Kakatiya Architecture:**

- The temple complexes of Kakatiyas have a distinct style, technology and decoration exhibiting the influence of the Kakatiyan sculptor.
- Kakatiya Temples are **characterized and evolved from later-Chalukyan style** of temple architecture and decoration
- Trikutaalyas and the sculptural art and decoration specific to the time and Kakatiyan Empire stand outstanding

### ***A blend of north and south Indian designs:***

- The Kakatiya temples, **dedicated mostly to Siva**, reveal in their construction a happy blending of the styles of North India and South India which influenced the political life of the Deccan.
- They adopted both the North Indian **Nagara Bhumija style** and the South Indian **Dravida style**.
- The most important of these temples are those at Palampet (Ramappa temple), Hanamkonda (Thousand Pillared temple) and the temples in the Warangal fort including the big ruined temple complex – Swayambhunadha temple.

### ***Keerthi Thoranas at Gateway:***

- **Keerthi Thoranas** is another example of a distinct style of Kakatiya's for the gateways to temple complexes, unique only to this region.



### **Earthquake-Resistant structures using Sandbox Technology & Iron Dowels:**

- Almost 800 years back, Kakatiya's built great constructions that can **withstand severe earthquakes**.
- The 1000 Pillar temple, Ramappa Temple are some of such great earthquake resistant constructions that were **built using sandbox technology**
- Kakatiya's have used Sand in the foundations of the constructions. Depending on the size, Foundations were filled with sand and powder mixture of **Granite, Jaggery ( Bellam in Telugu), Terminalia Chebula ( Karakkaya in Telugu)** for the sand mixture to become strong.
- Only on this **Sand Mixture foundation**, they have built huge and heavy constructions.
- They also secured the stones of walls pillars, rooftops of the temples with **Iron dowels** to mitigate the effects of earthquake vibrations
- These dowels were constructed by pouring melted iron through small tunnels / holes made in all the rocks used for construction.
- As a result these dowels hold the rocks together strongly making the total construction fit like a frame and stronger.

### **Elaborate Carvings:**

- The temples have multi carvings of different themes from

upana to the prasthara.

- There is a lattice window and the doorframes, and the elegant open works by which the bracket-shafts are attached to the pillars are the other most interesting features

### ***Close Proximity of Tank, Temple and Town:***

- Another distinct feature of Kakatiya Architecture is the common linkage characteristic of Tank, Temple and Town.
- They built the temples close to the water bodies (such as lakes and tanks) that they had created
- Invariably the water tanks (water conservation structures) resulted in the rise of flourishing Towns with temples and knitted to each other.



Step well (Pushkarani) on the North East corner of Hanamakonda temple.

### ***Nandi Mantapa:***

- As in the case of any Shiva temple, there is a huge Nandi situated at the entrance of the Shiva shrine.
- The colossal structure of Nandi is carved out of a single piece of black basalt.



### **Shiva Shrines Facing East:**

- Shiva's shrine has been positioned facing the east while other shrines face south and west.
- This was so, because the Kakatiya's were great devotees of Lord Shiva and wanted early morning sun rays to fall directly on Shiva Lingam

### **Star Style:**

- All the Kakatiya temple structures are in star style and the Ramappa temple is also in the same shape.

### **Features of Ramappa Temple:**

- The temple was **constructed in 1213 AD** during the reign of the Kakatiya Empire by **Recharla Rudra, a general of Kakatiya king Ganapati Deva.**
- The presiding deity here is Ramalingeswara Swamy (Shivalingam).
- It is also known as the Ramappa temple, after the sculptor who executed the work in the temple for 40 years.
- It is the only temple that has been named after its sculptor.
- The works of the temple, in which the Ramalingeswaram is



enshrined, began in 1173 AD and were completed 40 years later in 1213 AD.

### **Materials Used:**

- The **temple is made of stone**. But the **Sanctorum was built of lightweight brick** to reduce the weight on the temple according to the nature of the soil.
- These **bricks float in water and are smaller than the ones used today**. Nowhere in the country have such bricks been used and how these were made is still a mystery.
- Inside the temple, the mahamandapam and some of the sculptures are made entirely of **black stone** while the **outside of the temple uses red and white stones**.

### **Sculptures / Motifs:**

- Beautiful sculptures depict Shivatandavam, Sivakalyanam dance forms, Ramayana and Mahabharata.
- The sculptures also tell the important events of the Ramayana, the Mahabharata, the Ksheera Sagara Mathanam, and the Sivaparvati kalyanam. It also features dance and martial arts.
- The temple is surrounded by **12 Madanikas, Nagini and Koyastri sculptures** in various poses. Some of the statues symbolise the priority of women in the Kakatiya dynasty and also their ornaments.
- The **Nandi idol faces the sanctum**, the Kameshwara temple on the right and the Kateshwara temple on the left.
- The Perini Shivatandava were the main subjects of the sculptures in the temple.

### **Drainage and Lakes:**

- The technical mastery of the Kakatiyas can be understood by the **rainwater drainage system** that was set up around the temple.
- The **Ramappa Lake, which is a short distance from the temple**, is always filled with water.

- The lake was **built with sluices and a levee between the two mounds.**
- It has a storage capacity of 2,912 TMC and a water level of 35 feet. The pond is 610-meters long.
- Farmers cultivate two crops a year on about 10,000 acres with two sluices. This is still the main pond in the area.

### ***Earthquake Technology:***

- The 800-old Ramappa temple is still intact today because the temple was constructed in sandbox technology.
- A three-meter-deep foundation is dug at the temple construction site and filled with sand. Take care to keep it moist.
- The temple was built by stacking stones on the sand.

### ***Other Features:***

- The Shivalingam is visible even without electric lights in the Sanctorum. The mahamandapana in front of the Sanctorum has four large black stone pillars. The lingam looks brighter as the outer light falls on it.
- In some places, pictures of Egyptian and Persian people can be seen. It is known that they had relations with foreigners during the Kakatiya period. There are also some sculptures of Jains and Buddhists.

### **Brief on Kakatiya Dynasty:**

- The Kakatiya dynasty was a South Indian dynasty that ruled most of eastern Deccan region comprising present day Telangana and Andhra Pradesh, and parts of eastern Karnataka and southern Odisha between 12th and 14th centuries.
- Their capital was Orugallu, now known as Warangal.
- Early Kakatiya rulers served as feudatories to Rashtrakutas and Western Chalukyas for more than two centuries.

- They assumed sovereignty under Prataparudra I in 1163 CE by suppressing other Chalukya subordinates in the Telangana region.
- Ganapati Deva (1199–1262) significantly expanded Kakatiya lands during the 1230s and brought under Kakatiya control the Telugu-speaking lowland delta areas around the Godavari and Krishna rivers.
- Ganapati Deva was succeeded by Rudrama Devi (1262–1289) and is one of the few queens in Indian history.
- Marco Polo, who visited India in 1289–1293, made note of Rudrama Devi's rule and nature in flattering terms.
- She successfully repelled the attacks of Yadavas (Seuna) of Devagiri into the Kakatiyan territory.
- In 1303, Alauddin Khilji, the emperor of the Delhi Sultanate invaded the Kakatiya territory which ended up as a disaster for the Turks.
- Another attack by Ulugh Khan in 1323 saw stiff resistance by the Kakatiya army, but they were finally defeated.
- The Kakatiya era also saw the development of a distinct style of architecture and notable examples are the Thousand Pillar Temple in Hanamkonda, Ramappa Temple in Palampet, Warangal Fort, and Kota Gullu in Ghanpur.
- Much of the information about the Kakatiya period comes from inscriptions, including around 1,000 stone inscriptions, and 12 copper-plate inscriptions.
- A 1978 book written by P.V.P. Sastry on the history of the Kakatiyas, published by the Government of Andhra Pradesh also constitutes one of the sources.

**Mould your thought:** The art, architectural and engineering marvels of South Indian Kakatiya dynasty are not remnants of the past alone but provide a lesson or two on ancient Hindu architecture. Evaluate.

***Approach to the answer:***

- Introduction

- Write about the Kakatiya Dynasty
- Give examples of temple architecture
- List the major features of Kakatiya Architecture
- Conclusion