

RASASIDDHAS OF ALAMPUR

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ABSTRACT

The *Navabrahma* temple complex at Alampur in Andhra Pradesh has been a riddle. The history of Alampur is lost in great antiquity entwined in mythology and legend. Historical evidences date from 8th century A. D. The background of *rasavidya* is essential to unravel the riddle. *Rasavidya* has its origin in *saiva* cult treating mercury as the semen of *Shiva* and sulphur as the menstrual blood of *Parvathi*. The *Rasa* (mercury) undergoes eighteen *samskaras* (purifications) with continuous chanting of *aghoramantra*. The *Rasalinga* formed thus from the processed mercury is placed in the eastern part of *rasashala* and worshipped. Other metallurgical operations are to be undertaken at the other parts within *rasashala*. The *rasashala* is to be located in a proper place with abundant water source. River *Thungabhadra* flows by the side of temple complex and the *Balabrahmeswara* temple is on the eastern part where the *rasalinga* was established. The word *Bala* might be the synonym of *Paravti*. The other eight temples might be the sites for the eight metallurgical operations. *Nagnakabandha* was perhaps used for *yonipuja*, which is the *tantric* practice linked with *rasavidya*.

Siddhanagarjuna and others mentioned this place with its relation to *Vada Vidya Siddhi*. *Kalanatha* and other teachers of *Kalamukha* sect have taught *Rasavidya* at this centre. This place deserves better attention and deeper probing by medical historians.

Alampur, renowned as *Dakshina Kasi* (Varanasi of South) is situated on the west bank of the river *Thungabhadra*, in the *Mahaboobnagar* District of *Andhra Pradesh*. Here *Thungabhadra* takes a northward direction from its usual west to east direction. This *Uttaravahini* aspect is considered sacred¹. There are nine temples, called *Navabrahma* temples which are enclosed in a fortification surrounded by a moat on three sides and the river flowing on the eastern side. The Government of *Andhra Pradesh* constructed a protection wall on this side also in order to protect this ancient monument from inundation on the completion of the *Hydroelectric Project* at *Srisailem*.

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The Navabrahma temples at Alampur have been a riddle and the place itself has a mystique antiquity not clearly expounded so far. These Navabrahmas are named as *Bala Brahma*, *Kumara Brahma*, *Arka Brahma*, *Veera Brahma*, *Visva Brahma*, *Taraka Brahma*, *Garuda Brahma*, *Swarga Brahma* and *Padma Brahma*. These aspects of the deity have no parallel anywhere in India and bear no relation to the *Navabrahmas*-Marichi, Bharadwaja, Angirasa, Pulastya, Pulaha, Kratu, Daksha, Vasistha and Vamadeva². Names of *Navabrahmas* at Alampur are not found in any *Puranas*³. The *Rasalinga* at Balabrahmeshwara temple; the *saktipeetha* of *Jogulamba*-the presiding deity of the place; the *Nagnakabandha* statue; and the peculiar topography of the Navabrahma complex continue to be riddles. The history of Alampur is lost in great antiquity which is entwined in mythology and legend. The recorded historical evidences date only from 8th century A. D. The earlier part of the history could be gathered from *Sthalapurana* as contained in *Skandapurana* and the references made to the place in the literary work—*Panditharadhy Charitam* of *Palkuriki Somanatha* and in *Rasatantra* works such as *Rasa Ratnakaram* and *Ananda Kandam* Books written on archaeological aspects of the Alampur temples have, understandably, their reservations to speak on legendary and mythological aspects. Perhaps this hesitation of historians and archaeologists to speculate on mythological aspects is one of the reasons for not solving the riddle. A bold attempt is made here to reconstruct a historic theory on this temple complex based on certain suggestive clues from ancient *Rasatantra* texts in order to solve the riddles.

For a clear understanding of this temple a general background knowledge of *Rasavidya* becomes essential. *Rasavidya* is an ancient school of learning dealing with metallurgical chemistry, medicine and metaphysics. This has origin in the earliest of *saiva* cult. Mercury is considered to be the very semen of *Shiva*. This thought is reiterated not only in *Rasa Shastra* literature but also in literary works such as *Kumara Sambhava*. The sulphur is considered to be the menstrual blood of Parvathi. These are esoteric interpretations and therefore the modern mind may not be able to comprehend it unless initiated into Tantric philosophy. The worship of phallus-*linga* and *yoni* are *tantrik* in character. Some of the sculptures such as *Lingodbhava Murty* and *Nagnakabandha* are meant for such purpose. The *rasa* undergoes eighteen *samskaras* and during this period, continuous chanting of *ahoramantra* is considered to bestow the requisite power to mercury. From such mercury *Rasalinga* is made and placed on a pedestal in a *Rasa mandapa* facing east in the eastern part of *Rasashala*⁴. *Rasa Sadhakas* conceive this *Rasalingam* as *Shiva* having eighteen arms, white complexioned, five faced, three eyed, mounted on ghost and blue-throated.

On his lap is seated the great Goddess having one face and four arms with a garland of lotus seeds and trident in the right hand and an emblem of assurance of protection in her left hand, of a complexion resembling gold in the furnace and dressed in yellow⁵. These are the concepts about the parents of the Universe, who are to be meditated by the student initiate. The devotee has to recite *Rasankusi Mantra* in worshipping the Goddess and the students are instructed about the details of worship by the teacher. The *Rasankushi Mantra* states as follows. "The Goddess of beauty is in the form of speech or word, is the root cause of the energy of the greatest object of desire (i. e. God himself) and is sovereign force behind *rasa* (mercury). She is equal to mercury"⁶. The sacrificial fire is to be made in a triangular hole, called *yonikunda*, characterised by good features and offerings are made chanting *rasankusi mantras* and *aghoramantras*. After the *Purnahuti* one or more virgins are to be worshipped⁷. After the *rasalinga sthapanam* on the east other metallurgical operations are undertaken as follows with relevance to the topographical disposition of *rasa shala*. Metallurgical operations requiring the use of fire (*vahnikarmas*) are to be taken up on South East quarter, grinding operations (*Peshana karma*) on the southern quarter, surgical procedures (*sastra karma*) in the south-west quarter, washing operations (*kshalanadikarma*) on the western side, drying up operations (*soshana karma*) on north-west side, alchemical (*Vedhakarma*) on the north side and the storing of finished products (*Siddha Vasthu Sthapanam*) on north east side. The storage of raw material is done in the centre. The *Rasalinga* is prayed every day.

It is seen from this that there are nine gross operations in a *rasa shala* and *rasa shala* is suitably divided accordingly. The location of *rasa shala* should be at a proper place where a wide and beautiful garden is laid, with all sorts of medicinal plants being cultivated. This must be in a beautiful town where the deities *Hara* and *Gauri* are worshipped and where there is nothing to be feared from cheats, ignorant people and thieves etc. The laboratories should have sufficient number of doors and windows and should be within the reach of sufficient supply of pure water (*nirmala nira sannidhau*). It is in such a place that the intelligent should carry on their metallurgical operations in seclusion⁸. Against this background the Alampur temple complex is to be visualized. The land around Alampur must have been a verdant forest. The soil is rich for vegetation as it is in a river basin. The river *Thungabhadra* provides pure water. The river and the fortification provide protection. The *Rasalinga* was established on the eastern part facing east and is called *Bala brahmeshwara*. Here the word *Bala* must have been used as a synonym for *Kumari*, a name of *Parvathi*. The other eight temples might be the sites for the other eight operations in

a *Rasa shala*. *Nagnakabandha* perhaps was used for *yonijuja*. *Jogulamba* was the *Yogeshwari* mentioned in scriptures and was subsequently called *Jogeshwari* and *Jogulamba*.

Siddhanagarjuna, Nityanatha Siddha and Bhairava mention about this *Brahmeshwara Kshetra* and its relation to *Vada Vidya Siddhi* in their treatises viz. *Rasaratnakara* and *Ananda Kanda*, thus establishing the connection between *Rasa siddhas* and the *Brahmeshwara Kshetra*.

Rasa Vidya has its origin in the earliest of the *Saiva* cults. In the south it is believed the *Rasa salas* existed in *Sri Lanka* even during *Paulastya Brahma's* time. Kubera, the *Paulastya* might have made *Lanka* a rich place by his knowledge and skill of alchemical practices. Ravana, the other *Paulasthya* and the step brother of Kubera, expelled Kubera and usurped *Lanka*. Kubera went northward and sought the friendship of *Shiva*. *Shiva* provided him a place near his abode⁹. *Sthalapurana* of *Srisailam* states that Lord *Shiva* decided to stay with his entire retinue on *Sripurvatha*.¹⁰ Therefore it is quite reasonable to postulate that *Kubera* also had his settlement in a near about place. The *Sthala Purana* of *Brahmeshwara Kshetra* states that the *Raja Rajeshwara Tirtha* near it was the place where *Kubera* used to bathe and do penance¹¹. A large retinue of loyal servants must have accompanied *Kubera* in his exile and his skilled metallurgists must have come to *Brahmapuri*. 'Alam' means enough and so *Alampuram* means source of enough wealth. The other name for this is *Hemalapuram*. *Hemala* means touch-stone¹². *Rasa Ratnakara* mentions about the occurrence of *sparshavedhi* in *Srisailam* area. The sites of *Srisailam*, *Alampuram* and other areas in between *Krishna* and *Thungabhadra* as well as *Nallmalai* forests of *Kurnool* and *Cuddapah* region must have been the dense *Dandakaranya* providing a good habitat for *gandharvas*, *yakshas*, *kiratas* and *vanaras* and other early inhabitants of the area. *Kubera* was lord of *Yakshas* and *Sugreeva* was lord of *Vanaras* in this area.

Kubera's metallurgists having come from *Sri Lanka* must have carried names which were typically *Dravidian* in character. *Rasa Ratna Samuchchaya* mentions names of (27) *Rasasiddhas* who were considered to be preceptors of *Rasasastra*. They are (1) *Adima* (2) *Chandra Sena* (3) *Lankesha* (4) *Visharada* (5) *Kapali* (6) *Matta* (7) *Mandavya* (8) *Bhaskara* (9) *Shura Senaka* (10) *Ratna Kosha* (11) *Shambhu* (12) *Satwika* (13) *Nala Vahana* (14) *Indrada* (15) *Gomukha* (16) *Kambali* (17) *Vyadi* (18) *Nagarjuna* (19) *Surananda* (20) *Nagabodhi* (21) *Yasodhana* (22) *Khanda* (23) *Kapalika* (24) *Brahma* (25) *Govinda* (26) *Lumpaka* (27) *Hari*.¹³

Since *Kubera* being a *Paulastya* and descendant of *Brahma* lineage, it was but natural for him to have prefixed name of "Brahma" to "Iswara"

the deity of *Lankadhipatis*. *Kubera* must have found this area near Alampur very convenient for his metallurgical operations. *Srisailam* is said to contain *Rasa Kundas* i. e. mercurial wells. The mineral and herbal resources of *Srisailam* and its peripheral area must have provided *Kubera* adequate source material for alchemical processes. Recent archaeological finds give out the name *Hiranya Rashtra* to the area corresponded by the present day Cuddapah-Kurnool territory and its environs¹⁴. The Ravalakota in Kurnool district is close to Alampur.

Another interesting mythological fact in the story is that of Rama having learnt *siddha vidya* during his exile is *Dandakaranya*. He was called *Dandakanatha* by *rishis*. In *Bhava Prakasha* it is said that "the true process of incinerating iron as experienced by the great yogis, is now described by *Rama Raja*, who learnt it out of curiosity from those Yogis". *Bhudeb Mookerjee* in his introduction to the Volume V of his "*Rasa Jalanidhi*"¹⁵ identifies this *Rama Raja*, as *Sri Rama Chandra*. He further mentions about a book named *Rama Rajiya* and in this book it is mentioned that *Ramachandra* learnt *rasa vidya* from two sages named *Kalanatha* and *Laksmishwara*. This *Kalanatha* might have been a preceptor of later *Kalamukha Siddhas* of Alampur. While *Rama* stayed at *Kishkindha*, planning his offensive on Lanka, the *vanaras* might have advised him to acquaint himself with *siddhatantras* so that he will be better equipped to attack *Ravana* who was an adept in *Siddhatantra*. They must have directed him to the nearby *Brahmeshwara Kshetra* of *Yaksha Kubera* (*Kishkindha* was also on the banks of *Thungabhadra* near *Pampasarovar*, the modern *Hampi* in *Karnataka*). *Kubera* was a natural choice as he had his own grouse against *Ravana*. He must have provided the necessary hospitality to *Rama* and entrusted the responsibility of teaching *Sri Rama* this *Sivokta Rasavidya* to *Kalanatha*. As *Sri Rama* was initiated into *rasalingapuja*, he got used to *lingarchana* and at *Rameshwaram* he performed *saikatalingarchana* before he crossed the *sethu*.

Kalanatha and other teachers continued to teach *Rasa vidya* at this centre. An undated inscription from the village of *Itikala* in the vicinity of Alampur registers a gift of land by *Iruguna Chola* for the feeding of *Kalamukha Siddhas* in the monastery of *Someshwara*.¹⁶ The word "*Iti*" in *Itikala* may be the corrupt form of "*ishti*" meaning ritual or "*ishta*" meaning desire and which is achieved by worshipping through sacrifices. The *Siddhas* observed many *tantrik* rituals.¹⁷ So this place *Itikala* might be a place of *Kalamukha Siddhas* for their *ishtis* or sacrificial rituals. Thus Alampur continued to be a seat of learning and the seat of the famed University of *Brahmapuri* (the city of *Brahmas*).¹⁸ Subsequently the scholarly *Kalamukha siddhacharyas* had took the suffix *rasi* to their names and *Brahmeshwara* was administered by distinguished *Dharmendra Rasi*, *Vaitaranendra Rasi*, *Brahma Rasi*, *Someshwara Rasi*, *Kesava Rasi*, *Soma Rasi*, *Isana*

Rasi and Vidya Rasi.¹⁹ This word Rasi as such has no relevance here. It means only a heap. But as observed earlier all of them are *rasa vidya gurus* and are adepts in mastery over mercurial preparations through *Aghora* and *Rasankusi mantras*. So this *Rasi* may be a shortened for *Rasankusi* and therefore it will be apt, if they were called as *Rasa Bhattarakas* instead of *Rasi Bhattarakas*.

Thus in entire country we have here a unique temple complex structured on the tenets of *Rasa sastra* and continued to impart *Rasa Vidya* to many eminent disciples, till the time *Vilasaraja* damaged the temples.²⁰ We have not only excellent treatises written by these *Rasacharyas* but a number of medicinal preparations prepared exactly according to these formulas and used by *vaidyas* even today throughout the country. This famous centre of learning has left a rich legacy to the posterity. This place deserves a better attention and a deeper research probing.

I am extremely grateful to Dr. K. Krishna Murthy, Ph. D., F. R. A. S., Superintending Archaeologist, Archeological Survey of India, for the encouragement and co-operation he extended to me in this work.

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सारांश

आलमपुर के रस सिद्ध

आई. संजीवराव

आंध्र प्रदेश में आलमपुर में स्थित नवब्रह्म मंदिर सम्मिश्र एक रहस्य है। आलमपुर का इतिहास दन्त कथा तथा पुराण के महान् पुरावशेष को गूँथने में समाप्त हो गया। ईसवी सन् की आठवीं शताब्दी से उसके ऐतिहासिक प्रमाण हैं। उस रहस्य को सुलझाने के लिए रस विद्या की पृष्ठभूमि आवश्यक है। शैव सम्प्रदाय रस विद्या का उद्गम है जिसमें पारद (पारा) को शिव का वीर्य तथा गन्धक को पार्वती के मासिक रक्त के रूप में माना जाता है। अघोर मन्त्रों के लगातार जप से रस (पारद) अठारह संस्कारों की प्रक्रिया से गुजरता है। उस प्रकार की पारद की प्रक्रिया से निर्मित रस लिंग को रसशाला के पूर्वी भागमें रखा जाता है और पूजा की जाती है। रसशाला के भीतर अन्य धातुकर्मी क्रियाओं का प्रचालन किया जाता है। प्रचुर मात्रा में पानी के उपलब्ध होने के स्थान पर रस शाला को {स्थापित किया जाता चाहिए। मंदिर काम्प्लेक्स के साथ तुंगभद्रा नदी बहती है और पूर्वी भाग में बालब्रह्मेश्वर मंदिर है जहाँ पर रस लिंग स्थापित किया गया है। बाला नामक शब्द सम्भवतः पार्वती का पर्याय है। अन्य आठ मंदिर सम्भवतः आठ धातुकर्मी प्रक्रिया के लिए स्थान होंगे। नग्नकबन्ध शायद योनि पूजा के लिए उपयोग किया जाता है जो कि उस विद्या के साथ जुड़ा हुआ तांत्रिक अभ्यास है।

सिद्ध नागार्जुन तथा अन्यो ने इस स्थान का उल्लेख वाद विद्या सिद्धि के सम्बन्ध में किया है। उस केन्द्र पर कालामुख सम्प्रदाय के कालनाथ तथा अन्य अध्यापकों ने रस विद्या का अध्ययन करवाया। चिकित्सा इतिहासकारों द्वारा यह स्थान उचितध्यान और गहरी जाँच पड़ताल के योग्य है।