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The Royal Tombs of Coorg

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Royal families in all parts of the world have always had their share of luxurious palaces and finely architected tombs. So did the Kings of Coorg – they have had regal palaces, hunting lodges, worship houses and tombs.
'Gaddige' or 'Gadduge' are the Royal Tombs of the Kodava royalty that stand tall even today. On a trip to Coorg during the festival of 'Puttari' last year, I stopped by the 'Gaddige'. Situated towards the northern part of Coorg, there is an array of three gaddiges of the Kings along with those of a few courtiers, royal priests and the royal bulls. It was interesting to note that even bulls had royal tombs in the days of yore!



Gaddige: Remnants of the Kodava Royalty

Sitting on the stairs by the tombs, I observed that the 'Gaddige' were situated on a small hillock in the grassy plains with a good view of a bit of the city. The tombs look rather grand and beautiful from the outside, built in Indo-Saracenic architectural style in the 1820s. Speaking to the local people seated beside me, I got to know that these were in the style of the Muhammadan edifices with domes in the centre and turrets at the edges.

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Seated by the Gaddige

The interiors were however, simple and plain, perhaps to compensate for the grandeur displayed on the outside.

Even as I was lost in observation, a group of Kodava men and women came around marching with little drums. And my long lasting desire to see the Coorgs in their traditional attire came true. Dressed in typical Kodava attire, some of them got themselves seated on the stairs while many went to the grounds in front and performed a joyful dance of 'Kolatta'. Their performance was fascinating to watch in the evening light. Combined with their colourful attire, the shine of their turbans and the 'Peeche Kathi' (knife), they exuded a lot of charm indeed!

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The 'Kolatta'

It was a delight photographing the Coorgs in the backdrop of the Royal Tombs – tombs that were the graves of King Dodda Veerarajendra, his queen and his brother Lingarajendra along with other dignitaries. Also called the 'Raja's Tomb', this place has high historical relevance for the local people. Every visitor must certainly visit this colossal monument to absorb its beauty, as it's merely 1.5 km from the Madikeri city.

As the sun set over the Gaddige, I decided to take one last walk inside the tombs, and to my astonishment, noticed something of great significance. There was the Shivalinga inside the tomb, perhaps because the King was a Hindu. This feature certainly distinguishes the Gaddige Royal tombs from the other tombs found in India – as most of the tombs belong to Muslim Kings. I walked out wondering how the Kodavas managed to maintain their uniqueness right from that time up until today!

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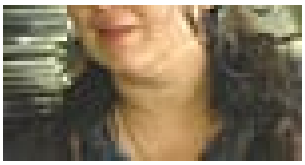
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Hema Narayanan

Hema is an avid Photographer, a Travel Writer and a Technology Consultant in Bangalore. Her images and articles are published in leading Indian Dailies and Travel magazines. Widely traveled across the world, she has photographed many genres. Her photography and experiential workshops in the city are popular. One of her pictures recently bagged a position on the Canon Calendar, 2010-11. Visit her website at www.hemanarayanan.com

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