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REVIEWER'S REPORT

Manuscript No.: IJAR-57061

Title: Art and Architecture of the Rashtrakuta Dynasty

Recommendation:

Accept after minor revision

Rating	Excel.	Good	Fair	Poor
Originality		✓,		
Techn. Quality		✓,		
Clarity	✓,			
Significance	✓,			

Reviewer Name: Abdul Haseeb Mir

Detailed Reviewer's Report

The article titled "Art and Architecture of the Rashtrakuta Dynasty" provides a comprehensive, albeit predominantly descriptive, overview of the cultural and aesthetic contributions of one of the most significant dynasties in early medieval Indian history. Covering the period from the 8th to the 10th centuries CE, the work seeks to illuminate how the Rashtrakutas, centered at Manyakheta, utilized art and architecture as a medium for religious expression, royal prestige, and cultural integration. The author successfully frames the Rashtrakuta era as a pivotal moment in the Deccan's history, characterized by a unique synthesis of engineering prowess and spiritual devotion.

The primary strength of the manuscript lies in its broad thematic scope, which encompasses not only the well-known religious monuments but also hints at the dynasty's less-studied secular and hydraulic engineering projects. By addressing the transition of the Ellora site—from its initial Buddhist origins through its Hindu rededication and eventual Jain expansion under Amoghavarsha I—the article highlights the religious plurality that defined the era. This narrative of "religious tolerance and pluralism" is central to the author's argument, suggesting that the coexistence of Hindu, Jain, and Buddhist caves at Ellora reflects a broader state policy where monarchs served as guardians of dharma rather than adherents of a singular sect.

Central to the discussion is the Kailasa Temple at Ellora, which the author rightly identifies as the dynasty's most massive and opulent creation. The analysis of this monolithic structure touches upon the "sophisticated engineering" required to carve such a gigantic feat from a single rock. The paper provides

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a useful summary of the temple's architectural features, noting the "tasteful fusion of regional and Dravidian architectural features". However, the analysis could be deepened by exploring the specific stylistic links between the Kailasa Temple and the Virupaksha Temple at Pattadakal, which served as a significant prototype. While the article mentions the influence of Dravidian styles, a more rigorous academic inquiry would benefit from a comparative study of the "top-down" excavation technique versus the structural advancements occurring simultaneously in the Pallava and Chalukyan territories.

The sculptural analysis within the article focuses on the dynamic forms and rich narratives found at Ellora and Elephanta. The mention of "magnificent sculptures from Hindu mythology," including depictions of Shiva, Parvathi, and Ravana, serves to remind the reader of the dramatic and emotional intensity characteristic of Rashtrakuta art. The author notes that these sculptures are renowned for their "intricate decoration and rich narratives," which effectively communicated the power and divinity of the royal patrons. Yet, the review of these sculptural programs remains somewhat superficial. To achieve a more narrative and comprehensive analysis, the author might consider how these reliefs—such as the iconic Ravana shaking Mount Kailasa—functioned as political allegories for Rashtrakuta dominance.

One notable inclusion in the study is the mention of secular architecture and civil engineering, specifically fortresses and hydraulic projects. This is a promising area of research, as scholarly attention is frequently dominated by religious monuments. By acknowledging these achievements, the paper suggests that Rashtrakuta "vision and inventiveness" extended into the practical domains of military defense and resource management. However, this section feels underdeveloped compared to the religious sections. The manuscript would be significantly strengthened by citing specific examples of Rashtrakuta-era fortresses or surviving hydraulic systems in the Deccan to provide tangible evidence for these claims.

From a methodological standpoint, the article adopts a "precise methodology" that integrates historical context, site observation, and architectural analysis. While this interdisciplinary approach is commendable, the execution reveals certain scholarly weaknesses. A major concern for a journal-level submission is the reliance on secondary and tertiary sources. The citation of "Wikipedia" as a primary source for the empire's history and architectural descriptions is problematic in an academic context. To meet the standards of a high-impact journal, the author must replace these references with primary epigraphic data or peer-reviewed monographs by established historians of Indian art.

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Furthermore, while the article provides a solid introduction to the "Objectives of the Study," such as demonstrating royal power and prestige, the "Result and Discussion" section often slides into a repetitive description of the same sites rather than offering a critical evaluation of the data. For instance, the discussion on Jainism and royal patronage mentions Caves 30-34 at Ellora but fails to discuss the unique aesthetic transition toward the more rigid and formalized style that would eventually influence later medieval Jain temple architecture. The conclusion of the paper summarizes the "lasting impression" of the Rashtrakuta era on India's cultural milieu, but it misses the opportunity to discuss the legacy of the "Rashtrakuta style" in the later monuments of the Kalyani Chalukyas or the Hoysalas.

The language of the manuscript is generally clear and accessible, though there are instances where the narrative flow is interrupted by fragmented sentences or incomplete citations. The inclusion of high-quality visual documentation is mentioned as part of the methodology, and this will be essential for the final publication, as the nuances of Rashtrakuta sculptural relief cannot be fully grasped through text alone. In its current form, the article serves as a good introductory survey but lacks the analytical depth and bibliographic rigor required for a specialized research journal. By shifting the focus from a purely descriptive "site assessment" to a more interpretive "stylistic and political analysis," the author could elevate this work into a significant contribution to the field of medieval Indian studies.

In conclusion, the manuscript "Art and Architecture of the Rashtrakuta Dynasty" captures the grandeur of a transformative era in Indian art. It successfully synthesizes the multifaceted nature of Rashtrakuta patronage, which balanced religious pluralism with imperial ambition. With substantial revisions to its bibliography and a deeper engagement with the symbolic meanings behind the architectural and sculptural forms, this article has the potential to become a valuable resource for students and scholars of Deccan history.

Recommendations:

- Replace all citations from non-academic websites (such as Wikipedia) with primary sources, epigraphic evidence, or authoritative academic monographs to ensure scholarly rigor.
- Expand the analysis of secular architecture and hydraulic engineering by identifying specific sites or archaeological remains that corroborate the claims of Rashtrakuta "sophisticated knowledge" in these areas.
- Deepen the discussion on the stylistic synthesis of the Kailasa Temple by providing a comparative analysis with contemporary structural and rock-cut traditions in South India.

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- Address the transition in artistic style during the later Rashtrakuta period, particularly in the Jain caves, to offer a more chronological view of the dynasty's aesthetic evolution.
- Refine the narrative structure to ensure a seamless transition between the historical introduction and the specific site analyses, avoiding descriptive repetition.
- Ensure all figure captions and source references are complete and properly formatted according to the journal's style guide.

Recommendation: Recommend for publication with minor revision.