

Potbellied Ganas in a world of their own!

- **Anagha G S, Bengaluru**

What is it about sculptures in ancient temples that appeals to us? Yes, there are wonderfully etched sculptures of women, gods, ornaments, and mystical creatures, but next time you visit Halasuru Someshwara or Bhoga Nandishwara temples, be sure to search for small, round bellied Ganas that will make you go 'oh so cute' and occasionally give you a big chuckle.

Figure 1 Gana playing a musical instrument in Halasuru Someshwara Temple

Lord Shiva is the main deity in both of these temples. Bangalore's Halasuru Someshwara is supposed to have been built by the Kalyani Chalukyas and later refurbished by the kings of the Vijayanagara Empire. The Nolambas built the Bhoga Nandishwara temple, which is 60 kilometres from Bengaluru, with later renovations by the Hoysala and Vijayanagara dynasties.

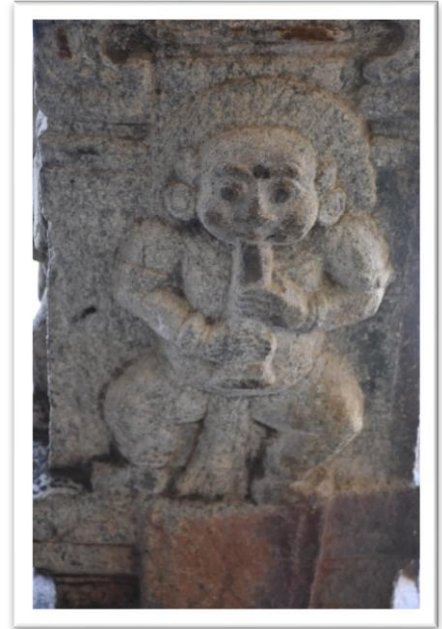


Figure 2 Ganas found in different places

Ganas are Shiva's attendants, and they can be found in large groupings. They're potbellied, chubby, and full of life, and they're often seen in humorous postures.

There is no single or one location where these Ganas may be found; they can be found everywhere, and I mean EVERYWHERE. On the walls, pillars, archway, and nooks, cracks and crevices.

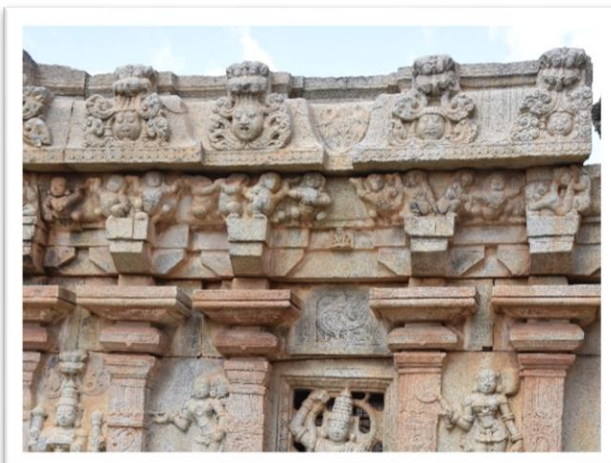


Figure 3 Group of ganas in Bhoga Nandishwara Temple

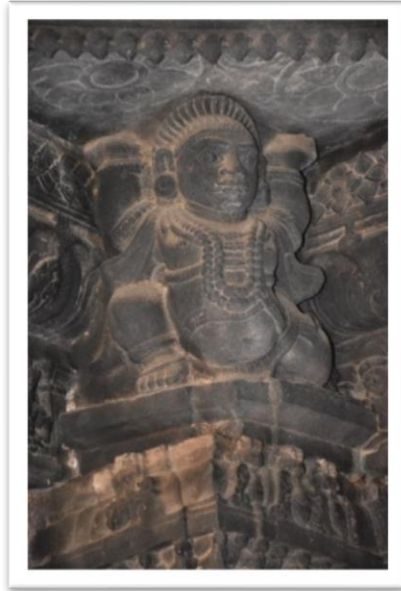


Figure 4 Ganas carrying the ceiling in Bhoga Nandishwara Temple

Some even appear to be carrying the weight of the ornately carved walls and pillars- the legacy of numerous dynasties and artistic labour through thousands of years.

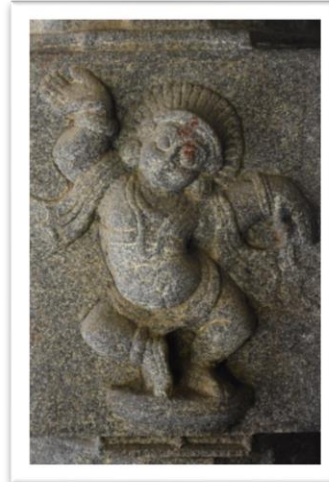


Figure 5 Gana dancing in Bhoga Nandishwara Temple

Figure 6 Gana with mouthful of air playing the conch in Halasuru Someshwara Temple



Figure 7 Gana playing the conch in Bhoga Nandishwara Temple

These Ganas will be dancing and joyful in their movements. Ganas can also be seen blowing into the conch-shell or playing other musical instruments like the mrdanga. Isn't it cute to witness a Gana with a mouthful of air prepared to play a conch? The realism of actions in what appears to be beyond reality is what makes it so entertaining.

Figure 8 Ganas in humorous positions





Figure 9 Ganas in humorous positions

Existing in their own little world- Ganas remind me of little puppies in the way they are seen practically anywhere and in the most comical positions.

Temples are places for profound contemplation, for going within oneself but finding infinity. And after only a few minutes of looking at these

sculptures, you'll feel as if you've been transported to another universe.

These are only a few examples. The rest is for you to discover! It is your world, my friend, because temples, as you may know, have a mystical quality about them. They pique your interest in the sculptor's thought process while also allowing you to be imaginative.

And you know what they say about imagination right? "The Power of imagination makes us infinite."



About the Author :

Anagha G S began her training in Bharatanatyam under the tutelage of Guru Dr Shubharani Bolar and is currently training under Guru Smt Shweta Prachande. She has completed her Masters in Bharatanatyam from Jain University, Bangalore. She has had the fortune of performing in dance productions and festivals. She has also been awarded a scholarship from Karnataka Sangeetha Nrithya Academy. **An internee in Nriyashilpa Yatra - a temple study programme conducted by Noopurabhramari**