

Vāsakasajjika nāyika portrayed in sculptures : **Identification in two Vijayanaga era Temples**

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As soon as one enters a temple he/she will be struck by the astounding and magnificent figures and sculptures found on pillars and walls of the temples. Each and every sculpture makes us gasp and our heart skips a beat or two.

We find several sculptures in temples like Halasuru Someshwara temple and Bhōganandiswara temple. Both these temples belong to the Dravidian style of architecture. The Halasuru temple is one of the oldest temples that was built by the King of the Vijayanagar empire, Nada PrabhuKempe Gowda. The Bhōganandiswara temple was built during 9th or 10th century under the Nolambas located in the foothills of the Nandi hills.

The purpose of a sculpture was to document the lifestyle, beliefs and stories of the people who lived in the past. Sculptors used their skills to describe the beauty and the simplicity of the people around them. They carved all the major events, important figures and everyday activities taking place in the world at that time.

Among thousands of informative sculptures that we find in these temples, we find several sculptures that portray Vāsakasajjikanāyika.

In dance, female characters are divided into many divisions based on nature, marital status, age, plot etc. One of the divisions is done based on the situation or Avasthā under which there are eight types of Nāyikas. This includes Vāsakasajjikanāyika, one who decorates herself and her surroundings, eagerly waiting for the Nāyaka's arrival.

Vāsakasajjikanāyika sculptures are found on the pillars around the GarbhaGrahain both the temples. We get to see different features of Vāsakasajjikanāyika in every sculpture. Their hairstyles, clothing the jewels they wear are all carved in detail. The following are some of the most explicit sculptures I found in the temples.



Sculpture 1 :

In this figure the sculptor has beautifully carved a woman seated on the floor applying Bindi. In her left hand she bears a mirror. Her right hand is over her head. She is grandly dressed with multiple necklaces, earrings, bangles. When we look at her left leg, we also get to observe her anklet.



Sculpture 2 :

In this figure we get to see similar features. She is applying a Bindi and is seated in Padmasana. But we see that she has let her hair free. Another unique observation that can be made is her saree. When we look at the sculpture, we can

observe that her saree is so sheer that we can see thought, we can clearly observe the pleats of the saree. This shows that the sculptor had given so much thought to bring out the beauty and the elegance of the saree. We can see how skilled he was to depict such delicate details on a stone.



Sculpture 3:

Unlike all the other sculptures we have seen, this picture shows a woman standing in swastika and keeping her Bindi. We can see how graceful she is by the position of her hip. Again we get to see a different hairstyle which that cannot be seen often. We can see the complexity of the clothing piece worn around her waist.



Sculpture 4:

In this figure we see that the woman has braided her long hair but it's not a regular braid. It's a four plait braid. Due to the grand jewels she is wearing like several anklets, her braided hair and the pleats of her saree being neat and stiff we can say that she is getting ready for a performance or a special occasion.

Just like this sculpture, in all of the above sculptures the woman is keeping the Bindi with her hand over the head but usually a woman doesn't keep a Bindi in that way. This makes me wonder if it can be considered as Natyadharmi and makes me wonder if the sculptor was trying to portray a dancer getting ready for a performance.



Sculpture 5 :

In this picture a stout lady is seated on a platform and unlike the other sculptures she is applying Kajal. One of the important and distinct features of this sculpture is the hairstyle. This hairstyle is not seen in any other sculpture. It looks like a unique low bun. She has also worn an intricate waist belt. If we observe her left leg carefully we can also see the details of her saree. Here, we can probably say that the woman is a commoner because the way she is applying Kajal is regular and her hairstyle is also casual. We can say that she is getting ready for her Nāyaka.

In all of these sculptures we see a lot of differences, not just in their jewels, hairstyles and their clothes but the woman itself is different. The sculptor has carved a different body structure in every sculpture. Some women are stout, some are curvy and some are thin. But each of these women are depicted gorgeously.

It is astonishing how sculptures carved into pillars hundreds of years ago can still be looked at in awe and can still be admired. The skill of the sculptor who carved these must be appreciated. Looking at sculptures like these gives me pure joy and witnessing the way it creates room for in mind to concoct any kind of scenario out of it. It helps me explore emotions in myself and helps me express better. One who wishes to see real art and wishes to experience the beauty of sculptures must definitely visit these temples as they have explicit sculptures that take one's breath away.



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