

**Śukha bhāṣini (Parrot Lady) Sculpture in Halsur Someshwara  
and Bhogha Nandeeshwara Temple**

- Deepthi Hathwar P V, Bengaluru.

Connoisseur of art, stalwart of Kannada literature, philosopher and a poet, DVG, in awe of Belur's Madanika's sculptures, has penned down 60 poems in Antaḥpura gītegaḷu. In this legendary work, Śukha bhāṣini is one of the poems which is on Śṛṅgāra bhāva. It starts like this -

Ēnē śukha bhāṣini - idu |  
ēnē śukha bhāṣini suddi |  
ēne manōllāsini ||

The poet says, sakhis of Śukha bhāṣini are questioning her - oh my beautiful lady! The one who shares her emotions with a speaking bird, what's happening ? What secrets have you shared with your little pet parrot lately ? Is it your desire for someone, please let us know ...

Isn't it so exciting to know how these birds were kept as talking pets even during those days ! Imagine these cute little intelligents ones flying around with colorful feathers, sharing our messages, stories, emotions and being part of our everyday life ! ah ! lovely to imagine isn't it !!?

Most of our childhood would have been filled with stories and imaginations right !!? Especially for me, right from eating to playing to studying, till the body craved for sleep, my days were filled with stories and imagination that too with lots of animals and birds as my close buddies. Generally for most of us, since childhood, we would have been taught to worship, respect and honor nature, animals and birds. Almost all the animals in our culture have been vāhana to our Gods and Goddesses.

Considering our red sharp beaked parrot, it is said that great saint Vyasa's son Shukha Brahman (Parrot Saint) carried out the monumental work of reciting 'Puranas'. Madurai Meenakshi and

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Andal Devi carry a parrot on their right shoulders which is a symbol of divine love. Parrot has also been the vāhana of Lord Manmatha (God of Love). The elegant white Swan is considered to be a vāhana of Goddesses Saraswati. These birds have a special place in the heart of Gods and Goddesses alike. They're also part of Epics, Puranas, Vedas and Upanishads. Among all of these, one of my all time favorite stories since childhood has been the love story of 'Nala Damayanti'. My favorite supporting character in the story is the glowing, graceful and intelligent bird, swan, who plays the role of a messenger. This bird, I would say, is the main reason for this divine couple to unite. I guess there's no one who doesn't love the masterpiece, Damayanti conversing with Swan painting, painted by none other than Raja Ravi Verma. Not just as a kid, even today as an artist I dream about talking and dancing with these beautiful loving birds !!

Recently I got an opportunity to be part of a temple visit as a part of Nriyashilpa Yatre, organised by Noopura Bhramari. I got to explore two temples, Halasuru Sōmēśvara temple and Bhōga Nandīśvara temple which are close to Garden city of Karnataka, Bengaluru. Here, I could witness exquisitely carved sculptures which speak about the history of a specific kingdom, its glory and also the art forms that thrived during the kingdom's rule. The visit was an immersive experience. One of the specialities of these temples is that they sport multiple architectural forms, from Kalyāṇa Cālukya, Cōḷa Dynasty, Hoysala and Vijayanagara. One must visit these exquisite temples to know its divinity and experience blissfulness.

Being a Dancer, it was an immense joy to observe the sculptures of these temples in detail which has always been a source of inspiration for me. Every sculpture has different stories with different interpretations. Among the hordes of sculptures, Śukha bhāṣiṇi (Parrot and Lady) in both the temples is what attracted me and the beauty of it is still etched in my memory. It was my Ahhhaa !! moment. Maybe because the sculptures aptly depicted my childhood fantasies of befriending a speaking bird. It helped me reminisce and get back to my childhood imaginations.



**Image 1: Someshwara temple**



**Image 2: Bhoga Nandeeshwara**

Image on the left is from Someshwara temple. Look at her, adorned with ornaments, a delicate saree with a flying pallu and a side bun, isn't she gorgeous !? According to Nāṭyaśāstra standing posture is in Avahita sthāna i.e left foot is in Samā and the right foot is obliquely placed and the left waist is raised. From her hand gestures one can observe, her left shoulder is loose, her left hand is gracefully let off and her palm is facing towards the thigh (Pataka hasta), this is called Dōla hastā. In her right hand one can clearly see a parrot lovingly biting or licking her forefinger. We can see her eyebrows uplift with broadly opened eyes and crescent smile which projects excitement and cheerfulness. Through their actions, one can interpret and experience both the bird and the female sculpture seem to be on cloud nine. To me, the lady and the bird seemed like a reflection of each other !!

Image on the right is from Bhoga Nandeeshwara temple. Isn't she flawless !! Āhārya is almost similar to that of the previous sculpture but the bird's and the lady's expressions are different. The parrot is sitting on her right shoulder with an upturned face and it is calm and pleasant. The female sculpture looks majestic with a serene and moderate smile on her face. As the proverb

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goes, ‘Show me your friends, I will tell you who you are’ ! Maybe the sculptor’s point of view would have been the same, the parrot and the lady seem to reflect similar emotions.



**Image 3: Bhoga Nandeeshwara**

Above image is from Bhoga Nandeeshwara temple. Sitting with one leg crossed, keeping her left hand on her thighs and looking at her pet with a gentle smile on her face. Whereas the parrot is biting her thumb with love. The sculpture looks confident, proud and bears a demeanor of a princess. One can interpret, she has earned her pet’s love and feels confident about their relationship. As she is looking at the parrot and smiling, it seems that she is conversing with her pet bird through her mind.

All three female sculptures have similar Āhārya. Her pallu is flying suggesting she is either out in an open area with the bird or near a window where air is blowing towards her. Also, one can also observe that the sculptor wants to display the lady’s delicate saree and pallu. These commendable artistry from sculptors give us open ended stories with suggestions.

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The architecture and the aura around these Temples subtly pushes everyone inward and allows them to experience the spiritual aspects of life. Observing these breathtaking and magnificent sculptures can surely make people lose track of time, get them lost in contemplation and ultimately they would come out on the other end hopefully developing a new found love towards Sanātana Dharma, its tradition and culture.



**Author: Deepthi Hathwar P V** is a Bharatanatyam and folk dancer. Disciple of Dr. Shobha Shashikumar. A Biotechnology Engineer, she has worked at Biocon briefly and currently consults with start-ups. She completed her Masters in Bharatanatyam from Jain (Deem to be University). She has given several group productions and solo performances. Apart from dance she has interest in painting, playing veena and is passionate about research, especially on arts and culture. **She is also an internee in Noopura Bhramari Nriyashilpa Yatre 2022.**