

The walls convey - ‘*Bhakti* is the easiest way for *Bhagavat Sākṣātkāra*’

- Nagashree Narayan, Bengaluru.

When one thinks of ideal and different kinds Bhaktā-s, great people like Meera, Draupadi, Arjuna and Ajāmiḷa are remembered. The great Bhakta, Siriyala also joins them. His story is the best example where the lord himself is so devoted to his bhakta, who has surrendered oneself to the lord with undoubted trust and love. The very story which represents the qualities of an ideal bhakta is being represented in the form of Sculpture.

Lepākṣi is a small town near Hindupur and is 120kms from Bengaluru. The famous Vīrabhadra temple was built by the brothers Viranna and Virupanna, it is an example for Vijayanagara style of Architecture. It is famous for its hanging pillar, Nāgaliṅga, Nātya Maṇṭapa and others attractions. But I was mesmerized by seeing the series of sculpture on the same walls, which represented the story of Bhakta Siriyala. This is carved from the left wall to the front wall attached to the main entrance of the shrine. It was very interesting to see these sculptures, identify and relate to different scenes of the story.



Picture 1



Picture 2



Picture 3

The above three pictures are next to each other, where we see Śiva and Pārvati with Nandi in picture 1 and Bhiringi in the picture 2. Siriyala can be seen in picture 3 holding an axe.



Picture 4



Picture 5

In the picture 4 and 5 we can see the parents with child. Siriyala and his wife were blessed with a baby boy for their extreme bhakti. Picture 4 represents the child being carried on the father's shoulder, and we see the child with mother in picture 5, which can be considered as bathing the child.



Picture 6

In the above picture we see that child being put in the cradle. The picture is very next to the picture 4 and 5.



Picture 7

The picture 7 showcases the scene when Śiva and Pārvati come in disguise as Jaṅgamā-s for atithi svīkāra to Siriyala's home. Jaṅgamā-s mention that they are cannibals who feed on human flesh. When Siriyala thinks of offering himself to the guests, they stop him and inform that they feed on innocent young kids within the age of five to six. Listening to this Siriyala decides to offer his son.



Picture 8



Picture 9



Picture 10

The picture 8 indicates chopping of the kid's head and picture 9 showcases a pestle where two ladies are crushing a head. Picture 10 describes offering the cooked meat to the Cannibal guest. These pictures are in the same order.



Picture 11

The picture 10 represents where the Jaṅgamā-s reveal themselves as Śiva and Pārvati and blessing them. This also showcases the level of bhakti both Siriyala and his wife had towards the almighty, that they even offered their own son to the guests, so as to keep up the vow they had taken in the name of Śiva.

One is the message of highest spiritual teaching offered by the story being carved on the wall of the temple. And the other is, the beautiful representation of the story in the form of sculpture which is there and will be there and preserved for many years to come.

It always amazes me with the thought of how intelligent and educated were these sculptors, who have produced these master pieces which have significance in depicting our rich culture and heritage. This classical glory of architectural marvels in sculptures illustrates the depth of Indian Aesthetics. It is our duty and responsibility to have an intense amount of love and attention in order to learn and appreciate the art.

About the author:



Ms. Nagashree Narayan is a Karnataka classical music vocalist and a researcher. Disciple of Karnataka Kalashree Vidwan Tirumale Srinivas. She is a proud Telecommunication Engineer, previously working for IBM India Pvt Ltd. She completed her Masters in Music and M.Phil under the guidance of Dr.Meera Rajaram Pranesh from Jain (Deemed to be University). Apart from performing concerts and teaching, she continues to be

involved in research projects and field trips with her Guide. She is also an Internee in Nrityashilpa Yatra – a temple study programme conducted by Noopurabhramari.