

Marvellous Huntresses sculpture at Kolaramma temple

- Deepthi Hathwar P V, Bengaluru.

The very first gigantic monument that is visible for us when we see a temple is its Gopuram, just before we enter any temple, we are greeted by Dvārapālike sculptures, which are a beauty in their own right. It is always nice to see them welcoming everyone before we enter temple premises. I saw an astonishing and surprising sculpture recently on a trip to Kolar. Yes, I'm referring to the big Huntress sculpture as Dvārapālike facing the main Gopuram dwara at Kolaramma temple, Kolar. Normally in temples, we see Alaṅkarika sculptures like Śilābhañjike as Dvārapālike but this was a new experience where I saw such an extraordinary sculpture of a huntress as Dvārapālike.

It is said that Vijayanagara rulers, queens and princely class's favourite hobby or pastime was hunting. We can see hunting sculptures in many Vijayanagara temples but this one was artistically amazing.

Image 1



Aharaya to Angika of these sculptures are perfect. Image 1 is of the huntress sculpture on the left side of the entrance that has an elaborate detailing. One would easily get lost seeing her extraordinary beauty. She is standing gracefully in a Swastika pāda a cross legged posture, she is wearing an anklet with no bells (similar to a Khaḍga) which doesn't make noise, this shows the detailing of thought gone into sculpting this, since when the huntress goes hunting in a forest the Khaḍga doesn't make any noise whereas an anklet with bells does create sounds. The exuberance and the confidence embodied by the sculpture is eye catching. Holding a peacock on the left hand with a smile suggests she has captured the bird and kept it as if it is

her pet. It can also be suggestive that she is as elegant, beautiful, and gorgeous as a peacock.

We can observe her skirt costume and headgear is designed with leaves. As mentioned earlier, the sculpture could also be of a queen or royal family member dressed for hunting. Generally, they wear green or mud-colored clothes to create camouflage to hunt in the forest and be one with nature, so it becomes difficult for a predator to find them.

This incredible female sculpture is adorned with lovely jewellerys like necklaces, belts, earrings. Her hair is tied by multiple hair partitions which gives an astonishing look. We all know about French braids and think they originated from French but looking at this sculpture we get to really ponder on the origin of these styles!! One could easily say these thousands of years old sculptures gave us our hairstyle, jewellery designs as well!! One could understand that huntresses generally do pleating or tie their hair, so it doesn't disturb them during the act. Next, the resting bow suggests that she is done with hunting and even one can notice on the left side of her leg, a man sitting and helping her to remove a thorn which is stuck to her feet. Isn't this sculpture a bliss to the eyes!?

Image 2

One more aww inspiring sculpture of a huntress (Image 2) can be seen standing just in front of the Image 1 sculpture. She is clothed in a costume made of leaves. Her skirt is designed with leaves and her head gear is like a small tiara made of leaves. One can notice that she is carrying a bow and arrow. She has a good physique, has strong arms, and looks hefty. One can imagine that these females, even though hunting being their favourite pastime, were trained and skilled at it. She is decorated with jewellerys and beautiful hair plates as well. We can notice that she has a monkey as a pet which is sitting beside her left foot, and we can see an attendant on her right side holding her leg and plucking a thorn using a needle. She is tapping on his head as a gesture of gratitude. Isn't the work on this sculpture an exhaustive one!?



One must not miss these stunning beautiful sculptures at Kolaramma temple. This temple was built thousands of years ago by the Chola dynasty and later was under Vijayanagara dynasty. Goddess Kolaramma is the deity of the temple and is worshipped here. When we went inside Garbhagrha, first we saw her through a mirror, it is believed that goddess has to be seen through a mirror. It is also known that the name Kolar which is the name of the town in which the temple is situated, has its origins to this deity. One more deity, Goddess Chelamma is worshipped here as well.

Some of the Hunters and Huntress sculptures found in Vijayanagara architecture temples



These are the few hunter and huntress images found in Bengaluru Ulsoor Someshwara temple which is built based on Vijayanagara architecture. These depictions further suggest that hunting used to be a favourite pastime for the royal family members apart from it being a

living for hunters and huntresses. These sculptures are portraying a series of hunting actions, right from preparing the bow and arrow to taking home the bounties. We can see the hunter/huntress carrying his instruments on his shoulder and in the next sculpture a hunter is correcting the bow and planning for the hunt. Then he is aiming for the hunt and after that he is lifting the dead animals which can be found in two successive sculptures. Finally, he is carrying home the animals on his shoulder. Isn't it mesmerising to see these hunting sculptures depicting the entire hunting game and intern educating the viewers in the process of hunting!? Also, we can see several sculptures like these which portray hunting or some aspect of hunting in Vijayanagar temple and other temples which are based on Vijayanagar architecture. Some of them are Lepakshi temple, Bhoganandeeshwara temple and as mentioned Someshwara temple of Ulsoor.

One can extract enormous information and stories of the history and the origins through these sculptures. Isn't it amazing to know apart from actual huntresses, even kings and queens who considered hunting as a pastime and a hobby were also well trained in all these activities. These elegant and beautifully adorned huntresses could be experienced as a real living person only because of the artistic mastery of the sculptors. These artistic works reinstate the claim that our history is filled with rich culture and our society was flooded with extraordinary artistic prowess.



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 Nrityashilpa Yatre 2022.**