CHAPTER – II

NARRATIVE ART AND SOCIETY
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The art of any region reflects the political, socio-economic and cultural conditions of the contemporary society. The artist is invariably influenced by the society in which he is an integral part. Sculpture as well as narrative sculpture also reflects the conditions of the society of its times. “The socio-economic, religious conditions play an imminent role in shaping the cultural life of a particular region or community. No development, be it cultural or aesthetic, can afford to ignore the existing social norms such as customs and manners, beliefs and superstitions, tastes and preferences, thought and philosophy of the people inhabiting a particular locality or region. The sculptural art of Andhra is no exception to it.”

Similarly the narrative art of Rāyalaseema is also not an exception to it. In this chapter an attempt is made to discuss and prove the impact of political, socio-economic and cultural conditions prevailing in the society on narrative art of India in general and that of Rāyalaseema in particular.

Narrative art in India started with Buddhism. When there was a strong need to propagate Buddhist mythology among the people, most of whom were uneducated and illiterates, narrative art was thought of as a solution. It served as a vehicle of communication in the service of religion. With the growth of Mahāyāna sect narrative art became very popular. The Jātaka tales and incidents from the life of Buddha were visibly translated on the railings and slabs around the stūpas and in caves.

All the scholars agreed that the art of Sātavāhanas reflected the contemporary affluent society. “It is clear that the socio-religious conditions of the Deccan during early centuries of Christian era were greatly influenced by alien cultural contacts and such a cultural infusion and material prosperity of the people at large resulted favourably
in developing new outlook, forms and motives in the field of art and architecture of Andhra country.”

The Gupta age represents the classic phase of Indian art. It is so because “the Gupta age represents the classic phase of Indian civilization in so far as it aspired to create a perfect unsurpassable style of life.” J.C. Harle discusses the quality of Gupta sculpture, praises the elegance, and the stylishness of the art and finds a reason for such classic style. He observes “the reason is probably the quality of the civilization it reflects.” Under the Guptas we find for the first time extensive use of narrative sculpture depicting Hindu mythology. In this period Hinduism-revived, reformed and rejuvenated – staged a come back. Hindu mythology developed in leaps and bounds. Incidents from Rāmāyana and Bhāgavata were depicted on the plinth of the Dasāvatāra temple, Deogarh and on the walls of many Gupta and post Gupta temples. The peaceful and contented society under the Guptas led to the birth of the best sculpture and some of the best narrative panels.

More or less similar socio-religious conditions prevailed in south in post Gupta period. “Hinduism emerged as the most popular cult which influenced the art and architecture of subsequent periods”. Various iconographic texts and treatises on silpasāstras came into existence. The brisk trade and cultural contacts of South India under the Pallavas and the Chālukyas with South-East Asia led to the emergence of narrative sculpture depicting Hindu and Buddhist mythology in Java, Cambodia and other countries. The patronage to Saivism resulted in numerous panels depicting Saivite mythology. The exterior walls of the Kailāsanādhā temple, Kanchi offer such an example.
The stable political conditions, resulting in an unprecedented growth of trade and commerce, created a hub of all-round cultural development in the fields of art. "It appears that the aura of Saiva mythology was woven based on the needs of different sections of early medieval society. The aggressive and pacific forms of divinity were worshipped by kings and business community respectively. Mythological stories such as Kirātārjunīyam etc. must have been a source of enjoyment and inspiration to the devotees of Hinduism." Hence such forms and stories were narrated in sculpture.

The emergence of Vīrāsaivism in South India brought many changes in society. It tried to abolish caste differences. All devotees of Siva, especially jangams, were held in great reverence irrespective of their castes. The lives of 63 Nāyanārs, most of whom belonged to the lower strata of society were described in Periyapurāṇam, Basavapurāṇam, Panditārādhya Charitra and others. Songs were composed on them. Their lives were even narrated in sculpture adorning the temple walls. At the same time Vaishnavism was also spreading throughout South. Different sects of Hinduism were flourishing side by side without interfering with each other. This type of social and religious harmony created a congenial atmosphere for an all-round development of art and architecture of Deccan.

During the medieval period Andhra witnessed a rapid growth of Telugu literature. So far the epics and purāṇas were inaccessible to the common people as these works were in Sanskrit. People out of their love to the epic stories, created many incidents to suit their tastes, which were not found in original works. The poets of this time while translating the epics and purāṇas into Telugu interpolated all such variant versions in their works. Ranganādha, Bhāskara, Torave and other Rāmāyanas had many such episodes not described in Vālmīki Rāmāyana. But these episodes became so
popular that the sculptors while narrating the epic themes depicted many of them. We find all such local variations of Hindu mythology in Āndhra especially in Rāyalaseema, which was socially and educationally backward.

In the medieval times, Bhakti movement popularized Bhāgavata cult. The teachings of Rāmānuja and Madhvāchārya were popular. As a result the worship of Ānjaneya, Draupadi and Pāṇḍavas became popular. The purānic and epic themes entered into the folk songs and the folk art. Devotion to god attained more importance with the onslaught of the Muslims on Hindu kingdoms. Temple building and other such religious activities increased. There was a greater need to educate the people in Hindu religion. Narrative sculpture on temple walls and pillars satisfied the enthusiasm of the uneducated masses. The Rāyas of Vijayanagara encouraged narrative art, which was extensively used in all their temples.

Even the paintings are influenced by the contemporary society. Jaipur paintings of the later medieval period offer such an example. “It was the period of decline of Moghul power, the time of general lawlessness, insecurity and of the laxity of morals and immense luxury. It therefore gave rise to a new approach to religion for easing a conscience in turmoil. For instance the Rāslīla of Krishna became an “earthly erotic amusement” for which the myth offered a mere pretence.”

The same may be noticed in Pahāri paintings of the Himalayan region. “The people here were simple folk, gentle, gay and pleasure loving. They had peace and joy in their lives. Their surroundings were full of the most picturesque aspects of nature. Their literature was the expression of a passionate sincere religion.... All this found repose in their art which was described by the generic name of Pahāri art.”
Similarly the Guler or pre-kâṅgra style was the outcome of chaotic conditions of northern plains. Even the Kâṅgra paintings were thoroughly influenced by the socio-religious and economic conditions of their times.

Thus we notice the art in India coming under heavy influence of the society at every stage. So it is said "Indian art is an immediate expression of Indian civilization as a whole." 8

RÂYALASEEMA - POLITICAL CONDITIONS:

Râyalaseema formed part of the Mouryan Empire and was later ruled by the Sâtavâhanas. The Hiranyakas and the Pugiyas ruled over the eastern part of Cuddapah district as subordinates of the Ikshvâkus. With the emergence of the Pallavas of Kanchi and the Châlukyas of Bâdâmi a long drawn conflict started in this region. Narasimha Varma I fought with Pulakâsin II at Manimangalam, Pariyâla and Sûramâra in Cuddapah and Kurnool districts. This conflict destroyed the peace of this region. During 600 A.D.-1000 A.D. many local dynasties such as the Rênâti Chôlas, the Bânas, the Vaidumbas and the Nôlamba Pallavas dominated the political scene. These minor powers and often indulged in a number of wars. They often changed their loyalties to one or the other major power as demanded by the prevailing political conditions.

The Rênâti Chôlas ruled over Rênâdu – 7000 i.e., parts of Cuddapah and Chittoor districts from 6th to 9th Century A.D. Their capital was at Chippili. The early rulers had close connections with the Pallavas but shifted their allegiance to the Châlukyas during the time of Pulakâsin II. Punyakumâra married Vasanta Pôri of the Bâdâmi royal family. This marriage cemented the relations between the two dynasties. He and his successors assumed Châlukya titles. Their inscriptions at Dommara Nandyâla and
Peddachappali prove their continuous hold on parts of Rayalaseema until they were driven out by the Vaidumbas.

The Bānas, originally emerged as feudatories of the Kadambas of Banavasi, ruled over Perumbanappādī which some times extended from parts of Chittoor district to the Śrīparvata hills in the Kurnool district. They were never independent and changed their masters as often as the political exigencies required. They swore allegiance successfully to the Chālukyas of Vātāpi, the Rāṣṭrakūṭas of Mālkhed and the Pallavas of Kanchi till they were wiped out as a political power by the Chōla king Parāntaka I. Their inscriptions, generally engraved on hero-stones, often refer to lifting of cattle by the enemies followed by wars between the parties. Their kingdom was often invaded by the Gāṇgas and the Rāṣṭrakūṭas. The Vaidumbas were their vassals. Together these two powers constantly fought with their neighbours.

The Vaidumbas ruled over Madanapalli region and later occupied Rēnādu – 7000. They were a race of war-like chiefs who were frequently at war with their neighbours, the Lonkulas, the Rēnāti Chōlas, and the Nōlambas as their records testify. Their records were mostly found on hero-stones erected in memory of their warriors died in the battles. Ganda Trinētra, the best of the line, figure in many battles such as Mudumaṇuvu, Sōremati, Tumbavādi, etc. In the battle of Sōremati (878 A.D.) virtually every minor power in Rayalaseema was involved. The Bānas and the Vaidumbas became victorious. The Vaidumbas later served the Rāṣṭrakūṭas and the Chōlas.

The Nōlambas were another local dynasty who ruled over Nōlambavādi – 32000 during 8th to 10th centuries A.D. They claimed the coveted ancestry of the Pallavas of Kanchi. Hēmavati was their capital. Their history is full of their incessant conflicts
with the other local dynasties. They were often ranged against the Bānas. Thus the history of Rāyalaseema from 600 A.D. to 1000 A.D. is the history of these minor powers who were subordinates to the major powers in south India. They often indulged in wars with one another thus shattering the peace of the area. The deaths of the warriors in these battles were even narrated in many inscriptions and sculptures found on the hero-stones of the Vaidumbas and the Nōlambas.

Later this region became a battlefield for the Chōlas and the Kalyāṇī Chālukyas. During the 11th and 12th centuries Āndhra was under the rule of the Chālukya-Chōlas as a result of the fusion of the two crowns—the Eastern Chālukyas and the Chōlas. Many inscriptions of this time refer to the practice of death by jumping into fire to attain liberation. Such blind belief in god and total disinterest in mundane life were the results of political anarchy and misery.24 Rāyalaseema was later ruled by the Kākatiyas. Rudradēva occupied Śrīśailam in 1162 and marched up to Tripurantakam.25 Ganapatidēva occupied Cuddapah and appointed Gangaya Sāhini, a Kāyasta chief as governor.26 But the revolt of Ambayadēva led to a series of battles in eastern Rāyalaseema from 1272 to 1304.

The Reddis also ruled a part of Rāyalaseema before it became a part of the Vijayanagara empire. Parts of this region became a bone of contention between the Vijayanagara and the Bahamanis during the rule of Sangama and Sāluva dynasties. Not less than 34 battles were recorded in Rāyalaseema during the rule of Āravīdu dynasty.27 Revolts by local chiefs, wars of succession and Muslim raids shattered the peace and prosperity of the area. Penukonda and Chandragiri became capitals of Vijayanagara when the Bahamanis occupied parts of this region. The Kutub Shāhis, Moghuls, Nizams and others ruled this region later before it went into the hands of the East India
Company. Except the Kākatīyas and the Rāyas of Vijayanagara others could not establish peace for a considerable time in this region.

ECONOMY:

Rāyalaseema had been neglected by nature, the native chiefs and their over lords. It is devoid of much fertile lands, perennial rivers and good grazing grounds. It is full of hills, hillocks, bushes and barren lands. The peasants often loose their crops for want of rains, as the monsoon is irregular.

AGRICULTURE:

Paddy is a rare item here. Mostly millets are grown here even from the ancient period. Attempts to improve its agriculture were never sufficient. Karikāla Chōla said to have cleared the forests around Cuddapah to extend agriculture. Some of the inscriptions of Rēnati Chōlas and the Vaidumbas refer to grants made to promote irrigation and agriculture. But such records mostly refer to Adlu or Ārikalu (millets), Ragi (natcheny), Jonna (jowar), Sajja (a kind of millets) etc.

SCARCITY OF WATER:

Water is precious in Rāyalaseema. Construction of tanks or wells is considered as one of ‘Sapthasantāna’ (seven types of progeny). The Kākatīyas showed more interest in this field. Two canals at Lembāka and Tādlapāka villages in Cuddapah district were recorded in their epigraphs. Another from Attirāla dated 1272 A.D. refers to the repairs to the tank bund of Cheyyēru river. A few T.T.D. inscriptions also refer to digging of canals to Swarnamukhi river.

Under the Rāyas of Vijayanagara Rāyalaseema received better attention. "Investment, particularly in small-scale irrigation was the hallmark of the Vijayanagara
economy. From 1350 to 1750 through the energy and vision of Vijayanagara investors, arable land was massively extended in non-riverine areas where agriculture depends on tank (and well) irrigation.” A dam called Anantasētu at Chennarāyapattanam, a tank at Pōrumāmilla in Cuddapah, a check dam at Dēvarakonda a lake known as Bukkāryasamudram near Penukonda, two tanks at Dharmavaram and Gotturu another known as Narasāmbudhi in Madakasira (all in Anantapur district), tanks at Gopasamudram in 1390, Timmasamudram in 1518, Lebāka, Chilamakuru, Vempati, Kōdūru (Cuddapah district) and Ahōbilam (Kurnool district) were recorded in the epigraphs. Muddanāyaka, a general under Krishnarāya constructed 10 check dams under which 900 acres in Ādoni and 2300 acres in Bellary taluks were irrigated. Many more tanks known as “Rāyala Cheruvu” were built during the Vijayanagara times.

PRIVATE INITIATIVE:

The kings encouraged private initiative by giving ‘dasabhanda inam’ (exemption from 10 types of taxes) to individuals coming forward to provide tanks and canals. Indukūru (1386 A.D.) Pendlimarri (1413 A.D.) from Cuddapah district, Māreddipalli (1387 A.D.) in Anantapur district and other inscriptions record such works. Land was given as remuneration to such people. People benefited from these works either paid voluntarily to meet the cost of temple building or the rulers, perhaps, received more income from these areas, which they diverted to patronize the temple art. Hence many temples were built and many more were extended during this period. “It is in the Vijayanagara era that South Indian temples and irrigation technology become, in some special, if not essential, way linked one to the other.” Many such temples were adorned with narrative sculpture.
TRADE AND TEMPLE ART:

Such areas where water was sufficient became good centres of trade. Temple building and sculpture were encouraged at such places. The inscriptions of Attirāla and Penukonda, which were good business centres, record such liberal donations to the temples. Similarly Tāḍipatri, near the confluence of Penna and Chitrāvati rivers, had more water, fertile lands and was known for its production of food grains, betel leaves and fruits. It is 274 mts from the sea level, the lowest in the entire district. This prosperity may be the reason for producing the best Vijayanagara art outside Hampi and the most elaborate narrative panels of Rāmāyana in the region.

Śrīkālahasti, Timmāpuram, Animela, Lēpākshi are situated close to rivers and were good centres of trade in the medieval period. Śrīśailam, Ahōbilam and Pushpagiri temples received liberal donations from the wealthy merchants of the surrounding areas. Hence we find good temple art, especially narrative sculpture at these places. Donations by business guilds to the temples were also recorded in three inscriptions of Animela and in copper plate inscriptions of Lēpākshi. At both the places we find narrative sculpture as the donations met the cost of the services of sculptors. Moreover the kings of Vijayanagara spent 20% of their income on temples alone, which resulted in the patronage of narrative sculpture.

BUSINESS GUILDS:

During the medieval period many craft organizations arose. Panchānamvāru is one such, which claimed their origin from Visvakarma. They developed their own deities named after the implements of their craft. At some places in the region we find a sculpture of Visvakarma often shown as weighing a balance. Other merchant guilds such as 'Pekkandru', Nakarālu, etc., were also recorded in the epigraphs. Many temples
owed their origin to the munificence of these guilds. The ‘Mahājanulu’ often figure in the records of this period. They were involved in the erection and maintenance of temples. Thus the corporate activity during the age centred round the temples, which by now became wealthy. This in turn created avenues to the employment of the artisans. The Kākatiyavas established several villages in Rāyalaseema and as a sequel many temples were erected here. “When it is a royal foundation or a prestigious one of the merchant guild the temple acquired monumentality and exhibited perfect carvings.” The temples at Hēmavati, Atirāla, Pushpagiri, Animela, Lēpākshi etc., were linked with such merchant guilds. Hence we find perfect carvings depicting the epic or Bhāgavata themes.

SCARCITY OF COWS:

In Rāyalaseema goats, sheep and buffaloes outnumber cows and oxen. Cows are scarce and hence are considered precious. Stalapurānas of many temples in this region are associated with cows as people think that they have a special talent of locating the hidden deity images, especially Sivalingas. Temples at Chilamakuru, Animela (Cuddapah dist.), Tādipatri (Anantapur dist.), Mahānandi (Kurnool dist.), Kapilēśvara temple (Tirupati), Venkatēśvara temple (Tirumala) have a common story about their origin. A cow of a local landlord or king sheds its milk on a snake hole everyday. The cowherd watches it and informs the king. The king in a fit of fury throws an axe or a stick at the cow, which misses it and wounds the deity inside the snake hole. He raises up and curses the king but forgives him on the latter’s request. The king builds a temple at the site. Sculptures in such temples show a cow emptying its milk on a Sivalinga.

As cows are precious even taxes were collected on good cows (nalla), good buffaloes (nallerumai) and tax on cow heads (idaipūcci). As cows are rare attempts of
cattle lifting are numerous. Many such gōgrahanas were reported in the inscriptions. A majority of the Bāna inscriptions refer to the lifting of the cattle by the enemies, which was followed by wars. Cattle lifting was done in an organized way and on a large scale.⁴⁸ Ganda Trinētra’s inscription of Kalakada record the death of a hero named Ajala in a cattle raid.⁴⁹

Though ghee prepared from cow’s milk is preferred to light the lamps in temples gifting cows to temples was recorded only a few times. Two inscriptions from Tripurāntakam,⁵⁰ a few from T.T.D. records,⁵¹ inscriptions of Kulōttūnga Chōla from Jōgimallavaram,⁵² Śrīkālahasti,⁵³ and few others record such donations. Cows gifted to temples were stamped with identification marks so that they cannot be stolen.⁵⁴ There was a special tax on good varieties of cows. At the same time hundreds of inscriptions refer to donation of goats, sheep and buffaloes to temples. In South Indian inscriptions such references are many.⁵⁵ Rājarāja Chōla I gifted five she buffaloes for a perpetual lamp in the Siva temple, Gudimallam.⁵⁶ The Melpadi inscription of the same king registers a gift of 96 sheep to a temple.⁵⁷ Many inscriptions of this region refer to gifting of exactly 96 sheep to the temples.⁵⁸

Killing a cow was considered as one of the five heinous crimes. So when land grants were made to temples the donors took special care to mention in the record that the violators of the grant would accrue the sin of killing a cow in Vāranāsi. The numerous images of Vēnugōpāla flanked on either side by cows in this region also, perhaps, reveal the importance of cows. The story of Krishna who lived the life of a cowherd is very popular in this region as we see abundant Krishnalīla panels all over Rāyalaseema. Nandi or Ox is also respected. Devotees first worship Nandi image before they enter a Siva temple.
TAXATION:

People were always burdened with heavy taxation. Taxes on all dry crops were collected mostly in cash, which aggravated the problems of peasants. *Pannu, pangamu* (land taxes) *nīrvidhi* (water tax), *puttipahindi* (tax on every putti of grain) were some of the taxes on the peasants. The Vaidumba inscriptions refer to many more taxes. *Darisenamu, appanamu, upakriti* etc were customary taxes paid by all to the king. *Illari* (house tax), *pullari* (grazing tax), *madigasunkamu* (tax on shops) are a few of the long list of taxes paid by the people.

During the Vijayanagara period taxation became heavier. Nuniz and Paes reported the cruelty of tax collectors. People migrated to distant lands to avoid taxation or resorted to non-cooperation. The Chyābala inscription dated in the reign of Sadāsiva states that the people of Chyābala, not capable of bearing the enhanced taxes, had deserted the village. There were many taxes even on the poor such as dommaras, bōyas, mangali and vipravinodins. The Gaḍekallu inscription of Sadāsiva mentions taxes on barbers such as *kānika, bitti, biruda, kappa* and others. The marriage tax and *gudikalyāna ūrēgimpu sunkamu* (tax on marriage processions) were hated by the people. Dēvarāya II abolished them. But they appeared again during the reigns of Krishnarāya and Sadāsiva as their inscriptions mention these taxes. Even *ganāchāri pannu* (tax on beggars) was collected. 44 different taxes were recorded in the inscriptions. The burden of taxation was more on the peasant. "Although agriculture continued to be the basis of the economy, ideologically (and politically) the economy was organized for warfare. The state emphasized the development of peasant economy which could sustain warfare." Thus whatever the people produced was taken away as taxes, which resulted in economic and social backwardness of the region.
On the whole people lived simple lives. They ate mostly millets used coarse cotton cloth and had jewels made of inferior metals. Footwear is generally not used. Even in the sculpture of this area footwear is not usually shown. Even the brahmins struggled to make both ends meet. They resorted to many odd jobs for living. Nārāyanāmatya in his work *Hamsavimsati* describes the way of life of the brahmins. “Reading almanac, begging, receiving dāna on the days of eclipse and carrying the dead bodies” are some of them.

**SOCIETY:**

Not much is known about the society in Rāyalaseema under the Mauryas and the Sātavāhanas. Merger of Aryan and Non-Aryan cultures started in this period. The extension of agriculture and increasing battles for arable lands brought many tribes such as Pulindas into the fold of Hindu society during the post Sātavāhana period. Migration to other regions was another interesting social phenomena. All these factors resulted in the emergence of many castes.

**CASTE SYSTEM:**

In the Chālukya-Chōla period astūdasa varnas (18 castes) were mentioned in the epigraphs. The südras rose to prominence gradually. The Kākatīya inscriptions refer to *Panniddaru āyagāndru* (12 servants of the village belonging to different castes) and *Panchānnamvaru* (people of 5 castes). During the Vijayanagara period there were many more castes. Golla, dāsara, uppara, perikabalija, sāle, dommara, bōya, vpravinōdin etc., were some of the popular castes in this region. The brahmins were always limited in number but were held in high esteem.
EDUCATION:

The political uncertainty and the economic backwardness influenced the spread of education in Rayalaseema. The people were mostly illiterates though there are references about ghatikas and mathas. Nolambesvara ghatika at Hemavati, golakimatha at Pushpagiri and Ahobila matha at Ahobilam were educational centres even in the pre-Vijayanagara period. The temples associated with these mathas generally contain relief panels depicting rare themes. The scholars here, perhaps, guided the craftsmen in selection and execution of the themes in sculpture. The unique Gitopadesa panel from Pushpagiri stands as an example of such guidance. Tumbrila agrahara near Adoni and Abhinava golakimatha of Srivparvata (Srisailam) were referred to in the epigraphs of the Katakaiyas. The Rayas of Vijayanagara continued financial support to such mathas. They liberally donated land to brahmins who were learned in the vedas. Such donations were recorded in their epigraphs. But the education was mostly religious in nature and was limited mostly to brahmins or to the members of royal families. Mahendra varma I, a Renati Chola king, was described as well versed in grammar and sciences. Many kings and even queens of the Vijayanagara were poets and scholars.

GROWTH OF VERNACULAR LITERATURE:

The growth of vernacular literature is a striking feature of the medieval period. The Renati Cholas were the first to use Telugu language in the inscriptions. The Kalamalla inscription of Dhananjaya varma (585-595 A.D.) was the first of such inscriptions. Though Telugu language and literature flourished afterwards Rayalaseema could not produce either good number of poets and scholars nor many literary works when compared to the other regions of Andhradesa as its economic backwardness proved
a hurdle for men of letters to settle here. Nannechôda, the author of *Kumārasambhavam* (12th century A.D.) and Dhûrjati (16th century A.D.) were the best of the few poets of this area. Tarikonda venkâmamba, Kadiripati (*Sukasaptati*), Nārāyanâmātya (*Hamsavimsati*) and Pushpagiri Timmana (*Samīrakumāravijayam*) were other notable poets of the region. Tāllapāka Annamāchārya (1424-1503 A.D.) who composed 32,000 *sankīrtanas* (songs in praise of god) and others from his family produced many works in *dvipada* (couplets), which were meant for common people. The educational and economic backwardness and the scarcity of poets in this region kept most of the people ignorant of the religion, epics and mythology. Narrative sculpture educated them in these fields to a great extent. The craftsmen often had to sacrifice originality in depicting mythological themes so as to make the people recognize the characters carved in the relief panels.

**STATUS OF WOMEN:**

The women always had an inferior role in the society of the region. Social evils such as child marriage, polygamy, concubinage, reluctance to women's education etc., profoundly influenced the position of women in the society. But women of royal family played an important role in religious and cultural fields of Rayalaseema. A Pallava queen Sāmavai, the queen of Saktivitankan installed a silver image on the Vēngadam hills. Inscriptions of the Rēnāti Chōlas refer to the donations made by the queens. Some of the Chōla and Bāna queens even acted as regents or rulers. Kamaladevi and Hachalamba caused the construction of two shrines at Pushpagiri during the Kākatiya period. Vitthalāmba, the queen of Harihara II, Chinnādevi and Tirumaladēvi, the queens of Krishnarāya also made many gifts to temples. But such instances are rare.
DEVAHASI SYSTEM:

Devadasi system was prevalent even in Kākatiya times. They were known as *gudichēti* (*gudi* = temple, *chēti* = maid servant). Their position deteriorated rapidly and they were referred to as ‘Sāni’. The sānis attached to the temples had to perform religious and ritual duties such as bathing the deity in sacred waters, fanning the deity with chouries etc., besides dancing and singing in the temples. Land grants and donations were given to them for their services. The courtisans from royal service were sometimes transferred to the temples. Many sānis were reduced to the status of concubines of the wealthy and were referred to as ‘Bōgam Sāni’. It seems hazardous to put down all of them as prostitutes, which the word now indicates, in its degraded sense. Their number increased to such an extent that in the Vijayanagara period 12,000 soldiers were maintained in the capital with the taxes imposed on the bōgam women. This system naturally eroded the morality in the society. Perhaps to inculcate morality among the public Rāmāyana themes were widely depicted in the relief panels of this period.

MIGRATION AND CULTURAL CONTACTS:

Migration to other regions was a significant feature of the medieval period. Expansion of agriculture, Nāyankara system, pilgrimage and the freedom for people to reside and settle where they wished etc., contributed to migration. “New settlements were encouraged through migration and through the incorporation of hill – and forest-dwellers into settled agriculture.” The Tondathottam inscription of Pallava Nandivarman of 9th century refers to large-scale migration of brahmins to Tamil country. Some of them might have settled in Rāyalaseema. The Chālukya-Chōla relationship widened the intercourse between Rāyalaseema and Tamil areas. Many of
the priests came from the Tamil country to Rayalaseema. The activities of Rāmānuja in Rayalaseema, especially in Tirupati, brought many more Tamil brahmins to this region. During the Kākatiya period Saivāchāryas belonging to gōlakimathas from Madhyadēsa and Bengal migrated to Andhra desa. During Vijayanagara period, “the scale, pace and social depth of migration vastly increased.” It is so because the rulers created a feeling that the Hindus had the freedom to reside where they wished. The influx of Tamil brahmins considerably altered the form of worship in the Tirupati temple.

The interaction with the migrants from Tamil area influenced the narrative art of Rayalaseema as themes from the Tamil country found place in the panels here. Jalamāyaṁūrti, the stories of nāyanārs like Sundara, Manuchōda, Siriyāla etc., Siva and Kāli competing in dance, Sundara and Čhēraman rushing to witness the dance of Siva and others are some such Saiva themes. The ālvars who toured Rayalaseema popularized Vaishnava themes such as Gajēndramōksha, Narasimha etc., which entered the narrative sculpture of this region at many places.

Similarly, the contacts with the neighbouring Kannada region also influenced the narrative art of Rayalaseema. Vīrasaivism brought many themes such as the Siva devotees offering their life or limbs to please Siva. Such themes are depicted on the prākāra of Śrīśailam temple, which was visited by the people of Kannada region in large numbers. Hanumān subduing the pride of Nārada and Tumburu, Krishna killing a lion, Bhima facing Bhagadatta in the battle and other themes found depicted in Hoysala temples were also depicted in the region. Similarly even in the depiction of Kirātārjunīyam story a common variation of the theme is found both in Rayalaseema and Karnataka.
AMUSEMENTS:

Hunting and dance were popular amusements. Hunting was vividly described in many literary works such as Śrīkālaḥastimahatyām. It was even narrated in sculpture in the temples. Kōlātam, a group dance, was one of the folk dances. It was popular in this region. Bharatāntyām, performed in temples during festivals, was greatly appreciated. The relief panels of the temples at Hēmavati, Śrīśailam, Ahōbilam and Dēvunicuddapah narrate these dances.

FOLK ARTS:

A close look at the folk-arts of the region reveals the intense passion of the people for religious knowledge. Vidhinātakālū (street plays), Bommālātā (puppet show) are popular here. They contain epic themes. The puppets of Hindupur (Anantapur district) and other places have striking similarities with the figures in the paintings of Lēpākshi.

BALLADS:

The Ballads and folk songs of Rāyalaseema have many themes based on the epic and puranas. But they were different from the literary description and reveal the educational backwardness and tastes of the people. Some of them even entered the narrative sculpture. The childhood pranks of Krishna and gōpikas complaining to Yasōda form the subject matter of the Chittoor district ballads. The story of Rēnuka, the mother of Parasurāma and Parasurāma subduing the thousand armed Kārtavīryārjuna are popular in the Anantapur and Kurnool districts. Parvatāla Mallayya Katha (sthala purāna of Śrīśailam), Chandrāvati presenting garlands to Mallikārjuna are popular
themes in Kurnool district ballads. All these themes were also narrated in sculpture in these districts.

FOREST TRIBES AND THE NARRATIVE ART:

The geographical and ethnological conditions of Rāyalaseema also influenced its narrative art. Extension of agriculture and the Hindu religion in and around Śrīśailam and Ahōbilam led to temple building and worship in those areas. It was impossible to reach those places, which were inhabited by the Chenchu tribe who were once known for robbery. A myth solved the problem. According to it Narasimha at Ahōbilam married a chenchu girl (Lakshmi) and Mallikājuna married another at Śrīśailam. It instantly turned these gods into tribal gods. So the Chenchus welcomed the pilgrims and even helped them to reach the temples through the dense forests. The myth at both the places was narrated in sculpture and sthala purāṇas.

RELIGION:

Rāyalaseema is situated in a strategic place in south India. With the Tamil region to its south, Kannada region to its west and the fertile Telugu areas to its north and east it became a merging ground for different religions. It embraced every new ideology or religion that came its way and retained at least part of it in its culture. Buddhism flourished here during the Mouryan and the Sātavāhana times but later it disappeared. Jainism had a longer life. Konakondla, Pātasivāram, Gangapērur and Peddamudiyam were important Jain centres in the medieval period. But it also fell out of favour gradually and Jains embraced Hinduism in large numbers.
SAIVISM:

Saivism was followed and patronised throughout the history of Rayalaseema. The Sivalinga at Guḍimallam, the temple built by the Pallavas around it, the Siva temples at Alampur, Mahāṇandi etc., built by the Chālukyas, the Rēnati chōla temples at Chilamkūru, Attirāla etc., the Siva temples of Hēmavati built by the Nōlamba Pallavas, the imperial Chōla temples at Śrīkālahasti, Tondamanādu, Laḍḍigam, Punganur and at other places, the Vaidumba temple at Kalakaḍa, and the Trikūta, Rudrapāḍāla temples at Pushpagiri built during the Kākatīya period reveal the importance given to Saivism during pre-Vijayanagara period. The early rulers of Vijayanagara carried their administration in the name of Virūpākṣha Siva. Temples at Pushpagiri, Śrīsailam, Śrīkālahasti, Animela, Penukonḍa, Lēpākshi etc., were built by them. To many more temples they made structural additions.

Śrīsailam had been an important centre of Saivism even from a very early date. Vāsavadatta, Mālatimādhavam and other works refer to Śrīparvata. All Saiva sects such as Pāsupata, Kālāmukha, Kāpālika etc., had their centres at Śrīsailam. During and after the Kākatīya period Vīrasaivism propogated such a jealous faith in Siva that people did not hesitate to offer their lives or limbs to please Siva. Vīrasirōmaṇḍapa built by Anavēma Reddy at Śrīsailam and the Karmahāri or Kanumāri peak at the same place witnessed many such scenes. Gōḷakimātha under the patronage of Kākati Ganapatidēva firmly established a nexus between matha and royalty. Visvēṣvara Siva initiated Ganapatidēva into Sivadīksa. Gōḷakimathas were established at Śrīsailam, Tripurāntakam and Pushpagiri. During the Vijayanagara period worship of Mallanna or Mallikārjuna, originally a tribal deity and Vīrabhadra increased. Temples for Vīrabhadra were built at Lēpākshi and Rāyachōṭi in Rayalaseema.
The influence of Saivism on Rayalaseema also influenced its narrative art. The activities of the militant sects of Saivism at Śrīśailam resulted in depiction of many scenes on the prākāra of the Mallikārjuna temple describing Saiva devotees offering their lives to please Siva. The interaction with the Tamil region resulted in the depiction of nāyanār themes in the region. The wide knowledge of the Saiva teachers of gōlakimathagā at Pushpagiri was, perhaps, the reason for the depiction of rare Saiva themes in the temples at that place. Kirātārjunīyam, Śrīkālahastimahatym and Sivarātrimahatym etc., were narrated at many places. In the Kirātārjunīyam panels at Lēpākshi Arjuna is shown as worshipping Virabhadra though such worship is not recorded in any literary work. Ādisankara wrote Sivānandalahari at Śrīśailam. His association with Śrīśailam resulted in the depiction of an incident from his life on the prākāra of the Śrīśailam temple.

VAISHNAVISM:

Rāyalaseema contains two important Vaishnava centres located at Tirupati and Ahōbilam. Tolikkāpiyam92 and Silappadikāram, the ancient Tamil books refer to Tirupati. Poygai ālwar, Kulasēkharā ālwar praised the deity at Tirumala. Tirumangai ālwar was associated with the Ahōbilam temple. The ālvars often quoted Gajēndramoksham episode. It became so popular that it was narrated in sculpture at many places in this region. It was even celebrated as a festival in Tirumala in Š146193. The ālvars also praised Narasimha or Singaperumāl in their songs. The story of Narasimha was also depicted in sculpture at many places. The Chennakēsava cult was popular here even from 6th century A.D. There are plenty of Chennakēsava temples in this region. Ramanuja was closely associated with Tirupati. He installed the Gōvindarāja idol in the present Gōvindarāja temple in 1135 A.D. and started a colony
known as Gōvindarāja puram around it, which gradually became Tirupati. He started many rituals in Tirumala and Tirupati temples as per *Vaishnavāgama*. Inscriptions of this place mention *Tiruvārādhana* (resiting the thousand names of god), *Bālabhōga* (offering pāyasa to the deity), *Tirumanjanamvāru* (temple servants appointed to bath and decorate the deities), *Tōmālasāva, Sattumurai* (special worship) etc. A person was appointed in Vaishnava temples to recite *Tiruvāimoczi* (verses related to *Visishtādvita*). The migration of many Tamil brahmins and temple servants to Rāyalaseema altered the mode of worship in the temples.

The foundation of Vijayanagara empire heralded a new era. Vaishnavism attained a pre-eminent position here. The growth of Rāma cult, the special reverence of the kings towards Narasimha and Krishna resulted in unprecedented growth of temples for these deities. The growth of Telugu literature also influenced the growth of Vaishnavism in this region. *Ranganāḍha Rāmāyana* and *Āndhramahābhāgavatam* became very popular by now. The narration of themes of Rāmāyana in sculpture tally more with *Ranganāḍha Rāmāyana* than Valmiki version. The Bhāgavata and Krishnalīlā panels reveal the influence of *Āndhramahābhāgavatam*. Temples became the centres of religious and cultural education. The epic and puranic themes were freely narrated in sculpture on temple walls and pillars. These sculptures and paintings attracted the masses and practically imparted audio visual education. The political conditions also influenced the religious art of the times. “The beleaguered art of Vijayanagara had to make strong, immediate expressions on the populace as to keep them heartened... Religious art had to play its part in steeling the hearts of the multitude. It had to be bold and magnificent, even overwheening. If it had not been it would have been untrue to the spirit of the times.” So we frequently see in the
sculptures of the times the emotional involvement of the gods in protecting dharm. Varāha rescuing the earth, Narasimha killing the demon king, Trivikrama trampling down Bali, Rāma and Krishna killing various asurās are some such examples. The exploits of Arjuna, Bhima and Anjaneya narrated in sculpture might have developed a martial spirit in the people.

The Rāyas of Vijayanagara were conscious of the fact that they were the last bulwarks of Hinduism against muslim inroads. They encouraged temple building initiated many new festivals such as Dōlamahōtsava, revived many old festivals, made arrangements for recital of holy texts and patronised religious literature and art. Narrative sculpture received special attention now. The people on their part made liberal grants to the temples. Even the poor such as dommaras, vipravinodin etc., donated their income to the temples. On the whole there was a feverish religious activity in this region during the Vijayanagara period.

MEDIEVAL SCULPTURE AND NARRATIVE ART:

Finally one can notice the influence of the general qualities of medieval sculpture on the narrative art of this region. During medieval times a general decline in the quality of art started all over the country. "The iconographic norms were systamatised into definite canons. It resulted in loss of freedom to craftsmen, which was so emotional and valuable for the production of creative art. The individual artist was drowned in the sea of iconographic canons. He still craved for freedom and originality." He showed it in the representation of human and animal figures and in decorative design. Narrative art satisfied his thirst for creativity. It was in this style of sculptural art the classical flavour continued to be seen especially in south. Hence he resorted to narrative sculpture.
The medieval craftsmen had thirst for elaboration, ornamentation and grandeur.\textsuperscript{103} Even in narrative art this elaboration and ornamentation are seen. The popular themes so far narrated briefly were now elaborately depicted. Ornamentation appeared where there was no need at all. For example Rāmāyana, Krishnalīla and Kirātārjunīyam are some such themes noted for their elaborate narration. In the panels depicting aranyakāṇḍa, Rāma, Sīta and Lakshmana are shown wearing many ornaments and intricately designed dress which sacrifice originality.

At the same time the medieval craftsmen were not wanting in imagination. Fresh decorative elements were incorporated. In Rāyalaseema such imagination is seen at many places. Panels depicting Rāmāyana at Tādipatri, Kirātārjunīyam and marriage of Pārvati at Animela exhibit such imagination and fresh decorative elements, which will be discussed in the next chapter. \textquoteleft The figures in medieval period show violent emotion and super natural passion.\textquoteright\textsuperscript{104} It is true in the case of narrative art of this region. Many figures in Rāmāyana and Krishnalīla panels exhibit such violent emotion.

Finally in the medieval conception \textquoteleft architecture is but sculpture on a colossal scale and the whole temple begins to look like a giant carving with its surface covered and differentiated by ornamentation.\textquoteright\textsuperscript{105} The temples of this region look the same way with all the walls, surfaces and pillars decorated by narrative panels. Narrative sculpture was employed as a decorative ornamentation to the structural body of the temple. Thus we see many factors-political, social, economical, religious, geographical and cultural-influencing the narrative art of this region.
FOOT NOTES

5. Santi Swaroop, *5000 years of Arts and Crafts in India and Pakistan*. p. 158.
13. *E.I.* vol. XXVII, p.268


35. *E.I.* XIV, No.4.


44. *A.R. Copper Plates* – 16,17,18,19 of 1937-38.


55. *S.I.I.* IV, 671,728,804,945; *S.I.I.* X, 8, 532.


60. *S.I.I.* IX, 681.


74. V. Kameswara Rao, *Select Temples of Rayalaseema*, pp. 6-8.
76. *I.A.P.C.* – 1, 58, 239 & 244.
77. *I.A.D.* p. 81, 141 of 1922.