CHAPTER – VI

SECULAR & HISTORICAL THEMES
### SECULAR THEMES

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I. THE PARASURĀMĒŚVARA TEMPLE, ATTIRĀLA - KING EMBRACING VĀNAPRASTHA:

The panel is found on the northern outer wall of the sanctum of the Parasurāmēśvara temple, Attirāla. It depicts the renunciation of mundane life by a king and his subsequent penance along with his wife to attain liberation, which is known as vānaprastha. The panel is in two parts. The first shows three male figures. The central figure, taller than the other two, stands erect with folded hands. His hair is tied in a knot. He wears rosary beads as armlets and chains. His lower cloth is tied in front by another cloth. To his left stands another man with a crown slightly turning towards the other two. He holds in both hands the clothes, perhaps, those of the centre figure. He may be the prince or successor taking over the reins from the king.

In the second part a man and his wife are seated cross-legged and in folded hands on a rocky surface. They may be the king shown at the centre of the previous panel and his wife in penance. Above them Śiva and Pārvati are shown seated on a throne. Śiva is four armed. He keeps his lower hands in abhaya and varada. It indicates that the couple in penance has either attained salvation by the grace of lord Śiva or they are in penance on a mountain.

The king may, in all probability, be a famous Vaidamba king. He may be Gandā Trinētra vaidumba Mahārāja. Gandā Trinētra vaidumba, who belonged to the second half of the ninth century A.D., was the first important ruler of the Vaidumba dynasty. He occupied Rēnādu and founded the Vaidumba kingdom.1 An undated inscription at Veligallu (Chittoor Dist.) refers to Gandā Trinētra as ruling over Rēnādu - 7000 country.2
After him the Vaidumbas had to accept the suzernity of the chōlas and later the Rāṣṭrakūtas. The best of this dynasty was Bhuvana Trinētra who ruled about A.D. 970.

But the temple at Attirala figures, for the first time, in a copper plate grant dated A.D. 969 which states that Bhuvana Trinētra Vaidumba made a gift of a village to the temple. The inscriptive evidence does not refer to the construction of the temple but the temple was in existence by the year A.D. 969. Thus the temple in all probability was built during the second quarter of the tenth Century A.D.

So the king figuring in the panel cannot be Bhuvana Trinētra as he is still ruling as the king at the time of the above-mentioned inscription. The temple was constructed earlier than the date of the inscription. So the king must be Ganda Trinētra, the founder of the kingdom and the first important ruler of this dynasty. (Plate – 91A)

II. NARRATION OF A HISTORICAL EVENT IN SCULPTURE FOUND ON AN INSCRIPTION – VANDADI:

Inscriptions on stone slabs containing sculpture narrating the text of the inscription are very rare. One such is found in the Vandadi village near Rāyachōti, Cuddapah District.

The inscription belongs to Ganda Trinētra Vaidumba Mahārāja. It is in Telugu characters of tenth century. The top of the stone slab records a contemporary event and the bottom has a carving narrating the above event.

The inscription records the death of a hero named Ereyamma in a battle at Mudimaḍuvu while Ganda Trinētra Vaidumba Mahārāja was fighting with Nōlambas. The carving below shows Ereyamma mounted on a galloping horse. He holds the reins in left hand and a long sword in the raised right hand. He attacks another man mounted on an elephant, which is charging with raised trunk. Two soldiers, killed in the battle, are shown lying on the ground. Behind Ereyamma a soldier holds a flag post.
Eryamma is identified as the son of Rachamallu I, the Gāṅga king. Though in very low relief the carving brings out the intensity of the battlefield clearly. (Plate – 91B)

III. THE DODDEŚVARA TEMPLE, HEMAVATI-BHARATANĀTYAM:

In one of the stone windows of this temple a group of figures, obviously a dance troop, performing a classical dance or Bharatanātyam is depicted. A creeper occupying the space between the pilasters goes up in three delicate circles inside which four figures are shown. The male figure in the bottom circle plays on a mridanga with both hands. He is seated on a platform as his bent legs kept wide apart from each other suggest. The instrument is tied to a cord, which is put on his left shoulder. It is known as ankya mridanga. He bends his head to his right as he is strongly beating the drum with his right hand. It shows his involvement in the music. He wears kundalas and a hāra around his neck. His hair do resembles jatāmakuja.

In the middle circle there are two figures. The female dancer is enacting a delicate karana of Bharatanātya. Turning her head to left, she keeps her right arm in lōlahasta and left arm near her chest. Her legs are bent a little. Her right toes touch the ground and left leg, placed firmly on the ground, is bent a little. Her curly hair, ratnakundalas, necklace and the cloth with its central knot around her waist appear pleasing. Her limbs are naturally carved. To her left is a man playing cymbals. He turns to the dancer.

In the top circle a woman plays on vīna. She is standing in dvibhanga. She wears a pūrnōruka, kundalas, and chains. The four figures are, perhaps, giving a stage performance of Bharatanātyam. (Plate – 92A)
IV. THE PRASANNA VENKATÉŚVARA TEMPLE, DÉVUNI CUDDAPAH - WRESTLING SCENE:
Inside the octagonal band running around the southwest pillar in the 
mukhamandapa of this temple a wrestling scene is depicted on the east phase in two panels. In the first panel a pair of wrestlers are ready for a bout with raised fists. In the second panel they are locked in a wrestling post. They appear almost naked.

V. A BHajan GROUP:
A group of four men singing bhajan (worship accompanied by music) is depicted on the south phase of the same pillar. The first man holding a plate like instrument in left hand and a stick in right is the smallest figure with 5" height. The second is the tallest about 10" in height. He is beating the cymbals. He wears a short cloth around his waist, which is held tightly by another cloth. He may be the leader of the group and the singer.

The third one plays on a mridanga. He holds two small sticks ready in his hands to play on the instrument. He wears a yagnopavīta and is dressed in ardhōruka. The fourth is turned to his right. A musical instrument hangs from his neck. He plays on it with both hands. Each of the four figures, have different hair-do. They may be the temple musicians singing bhajans on the lord in the temple.

VI. KÖLĀTAM:
Inside the octagonal band of the northwest pillar in the mukhamandapa of the same temple a kōlātam dance is depicted in three panels. In each panel there are three female dancers. The progress of the dance is effectively described here. In the first panel the dancer in the centre dances with the one to her right. In the second panel she turns to her left and dances with the dancer to her left. In the third her kōlātam sticks are
interlocked with those of the two dancers on either side. She looks straight while the other two women turn to her. The panels thus clearly depict the progress of the folk dance and convey a constant movement.

VII. BHARATANĀTYAM:

The northwest pillar in the mukamandapa in this temple also contains dance scenes. There are five miniature panels of Bharatanātyam, each in a different style. In the first panel two dancers, dressed in a befitting Bharatanātyam style, hold a pot in one hand, which is held high, and the other hand on the knee. Their legs are wide apart. They may be dancing with a pot full of water held in one hand without letting out a drop of water on the ground. A rare feat in the dance is thus depicted here.

In the next four panels three dancers dance in different positions enacting various karanas or poses of dance with unmistakable energy conveying a constant movement. They may be dēvadāsis performing the dance during a temple festival. The inscriptions in the temple mention such dancing women employed in the temple.8

VIII. THE MALLIKĀRJUNA TEMPLE, ŚRĪŚAILAM - ROYAL HUNT:

On the south prākāra wall of the Śrīśailam temple is a detailed description of the royal hunt. Hunting is a favorite hobby of the kings. They make elaborate preparations to it. They take their womenfolk, many soldiers, drummers and trumpeters along with them. This theme is described even in epics. The literary works of medieval Andhra invariably describe the royal hunt. This theme is vividly described in five panels here.

In the first panel we find the people meeting the king in court to request him to protect them from wild animals. The king is shown seated cross-legged on a throne. He holds a sword with left hand. His upper cloth is twisted beautifully around him. He
listens intently to the four men standing with folded hands. His minister stands behind him assuring protection to the men. The four men are shown in different styles. The first may be the headman of a village as his turban indicates. The second one may be a sage disturbed by wild animals in the forest. The other two are common people. (Plate – 92B)

The second panel depicts the king’s soldiers armed with ropes and weapons getting ready for the hunt. The eight soldiers shown have different types of turbans, weapons and stand in various poses. They carry a long spear, clubs, curved swords and bundle of ropes to tie the hunted animals. (Plate – 93A)

In the third panel five men are playing drums and trumpets. The first two carry rectangular drums, the third small figure in the centre plays on a circular plate like instrument and the last two blow their trumpets. The fourth panel shows the marching of the hunting party. Two drummers in the front are seen followed by trumpeters. The last one depicts the real action i.e., the massive hunting. The hunting party must have made enough noise in the forest to disturb the peace. All the animals including birds are running helter skelter. The hunters face them bravely. Some of the cornered animals charge at them while the others meekly die at their hands. Ten members of the party are shown hunting. The man in the centre wrestles with a huge tiger bare handed while the one behind him kills a deer jumping above. The king has just killed a deer and receives another arrow from the quiver held by an attendant behind him. Two smaller figures shown at the bottom may be the queens or female bodyguards of the king. They also hunt with their bows.

Entire wild life is depicted in the panel. Tiger, bison, deer, wild boars, horses, peacocks, doves, eagles and cranes are moving towards the hunting party. The animals
are shown in their natural size. Proportion is maintained between the big and small animals and birds. The sculptor must have been an eyewitness to a royal hunt. (Plate – 93B)

IX. BIRD HUNTING:

A very rare scene of bird hunting is depicted in one of the panels on the southern outer wall of the Mallikārjuna temple, Śrīśailam.

Taming and training falcons or eagles to catch smaller birds is a practice known to the people all over the country since many centuries. This practice is described in many literary works whenever hunting is referred to. The panel shows a bird hunter standing with a falcon sitting on his right wrist. He supports his right hand on a shaft or a long stick. He wears a dhōti with a central knot, a chain, armlets, anklets and wristlets. His hair is combed backwards and is arranged like a bun.

He is shown again releasing the falcon from his left hand. The falcon is again shown as flying. The man is shown for the third time with a raised left hand approaching the falcon shown in front clutching a dove between two trees. The position of the hunting bird reveals the keen observation power of the sculptor. (Plate – 94A)

X. KING WATCHING WRESTLING IN COURT:

This is another panel, which exhibits the contemporary life. Kings and their subordinates encourage martial arts in their dominions as they promote bravery and courage in the general public. Wrestling is one such art, which is popular all over India. In medieval south India such encouragement was a necessity as the entire region was constantly troubled by wars. Sāluva Narasimha (1485 – 1491 A.D.) encouraged his generals and officials to settle their disputes in duels.9
On the south prākāra of the Śrīśailam temple such theme is found in one panel. Inside a pillared hall a king is seated cross-legged on a pedestal while his attendants stand behind him. In front of him two wrestlers are engaged in a wrestling bout.

XI. WOMEN HUNTING:

The royal women are known for their bravery and courage. They are even trained in warfare and hunting. Women hunting in a wild forest is depicted in two panels on the south prākāra of the Śrīśailam temple. In the first panel we see a woman, wearing many jewels, along with a few more women hunting with bows and arrows. Her arrows struck a few animals. In the second panel many wild animals, a lion, tigers, deer and wild boars are running towards the hunting party. A few birds are seen flying in panic.

XII. BHARATANĀṬYAM:

There are two exquisitely carved panels on the east prākāra of the Śrīśailam temple depicting the cultural life of Āndhra dēsa during medieval times. The first one shows Bharatanāṭya scene. The panel consists of five figures, a female dancer in the centre and two men on either side of her playing different musical instruments. The dancer shown in a graceful karana or pose of Bharatanāṭya is delicately carved. Her slightly bent right leg, raised left leg, left arm raised and kept on the head with its palm pointing upwards and stretched out right arm are natural. Her prominent earrings and hair-do add beauty to her figure. She wears necklaces, armlets, bangles, anklets and katibhandha. Her posture and her closed eyes reveal her involvement in dance. The four men play on trumpet, drum, cymbals and flute respectively. The hairstyle, ornaments, dress and pose of every musician are different from those of the other three.
ornaments and dress suggest that they belong to the upper class in the society. (Plate – 94B)

XIII. KÔLÂṬAM:

The next panel on the same wall depicts the more popular kôlâṭam or group dance. It consists of two pairs of female dancers in the centre and two men on either side playing drums and trumpets. Kôlâṭam is a folk dance. The dancers carry two kôlâṭam sticks and stand in a circle in pairs. When the music starts they move in a circle beating each other sticks in perfect rhythm. It is described in the Panditârâdyâ Charitra and other literary works in Telugu. Two pairs of female dancers in this panel dance rhythmically. They specially dress for the occasion. Their matted hairs fly as they dance. The men holding the drums and flutes wear fillets, chains and wristlets.

As in the previous panel, here too, the dress, hair-do, and ornaments of every figure are different from those of the others in the panel. When we compare this with the previous panel we notice that the artists in this panel wear fewer ornaments and simpler dress. It is so because they belong to the lower middle class or rural areas. Even the bands running around the drums in the two panels are different from each other. The two panels reflect two different groups of society in medieval Andhra and help us to understand the material culture of the region of that period. (Plate – 95A) Such panels are also depicted in the Râmachandra temple, Hampi.

XIV. STORY OF SĀRANGADHARA:

The story of Sārangadhara is first found in the Navanâdha charitra, written by Gourana in the first half of fifteenth century. The work describes the lives of nine Saiva devotees. One of them is Sārangadhara. This story finds place on the walls of the
Sriśailam temple because Sārangadhara was a discipline of a Saivaite teacher, Mīnaṇādha.

According to the story Sārangadhara is the son of Rāja Rāja Narēndra. The king had many wives, the last one being Chithrāngi. She falls in love with the prince Sārangadhara. Once Sārangadhara is playing with his trained doves in the garden. It so happens that one of them flies inside the chambers of Chithrāngi, the stepmother of the prince. When the prince enters the chamber to get his dove back the queen confronts him and pesters him to have conjugal bliss with her. The prince, being a highly righteous man, is shocked at the immoral proposal and rejects the offer. He says she is his father’s wife and hence a mother and a goddess to him. Chithrāngi replies that she is neither a mother nor a goddess to him but a woman who can be enjoyed by the kings.

\[
\text{Daivambu gānu, nee tallini gānu} \\
\text{Bhāvimpa nrupabhōga bhāmini gāni}
\]

chaturata neetōdi sarasa sambhōga \\
līla delaka vadali chanipōlēnu\textsuperscript{12}

Sārangadhara cannot bear this anabashed and amorous advances of the queen. So he leaves her chambers in a hurry.

The infuriated queen’s lust turns into vengeance. She complains to the king that the prince has tried to molest her. The king immediately orders that the limbs of the culprit should be cut off. After the order is executed the queen repents her mistake. Realizing what happened, the king duly punishes his queen.\textsuperscript{13} The story brings out the evil effects of polygamy and the marriage between a young woman and an old man. The story has been popular in Āndhra over centuries. It is performed as a play and finds place in “burrakatha” even now.

This theme is depicted in six panels on the southern prākāra of the Śriśailam temple. The first panel shows Sārangadhara and his friend Subuddhi playing with the
doves. In the next part they stand before the chambers of the queen. In the second panel queen Chithrāngi is sitting on a couch, cross-legged. An attendant holds the dove in her hand. Behind the queen two more attendants are, perhaps, informing the queen that the dove belongs to Sārangadhara. One of them holds a musical instrument in her left hand. The youth of the queen is emphasized forcefully by the contours of her body.

In the third panel Sārangadhara stands with the dove in his hands infront of the queen. She is keenly involving the prince in conversation. They are shown inside a room. In the centre the prince is seen with the dove, in a hurry to leave the place. At the other end, Chithrāngi is pulling the prince towards her bed. (Plate – 95B) In the next panel, the king is enquiring into the complaint made against the prince. The tarjani pose of the king seems to tell that he is convinced about the crime reported. He delivers his judgement. Three men stand beside the prince. The first of them points at the prince, while the two behind him, with their raised left hands seem to support the king’s order. They may be members of the jury. (Plate – 96A)

The next panel shows the prince, being carried away by two soldiers while one more in the front walks beating his drum. He may be announcing the crime and the judgement. The prince helplessly looks back at the king pleading his innocence. A man who looks like a sage sits cross-legged in front of the king and requests him to reconsider the decision. But the king’s angry face and the raised forefinger suggest that he is firm in his judgement. (Plate – 96B)

The last panel is in two parts. In the first part, the queen looks at the severed limbs of the prince placed before her and laments. In the next part she is rebuked by the king standing before her. (Plate – 97A) These panels clearly emphasize the human
emotions like lust, anger, mercy and grief. There is lot of action and graceful movement in the panels. The theme doesn’t find place in sculpture anywhere else in Rāyalaseema.

XV. THE LAKSHMINARASIMHA TEMPLE, LOWER AHÔBILAM - PORTUGUESE BRINGING THE HORSES:

On the adhishtāna of the rangamandapa in the Lakshmi Narasimha temple, lower Ahōbilam is a panel describing a contemporary event. It depicts the foreigners bringing horses for sale in Hampi, Vijayanagara. We know that the horses are in great demand in Vijayanagara kingdom. The kings of Vijayanagara paid heavy price for horses brought by Arabs and the Portuguese. A long panel on the basement here shows number of horses one after the other in galloping pose. Some of them have riders on their back. The rider’s attire indicates their foreign origin. All of them wear a headgear, which resembles a cap, a long gown reaching down their ankles, a broad sword and an upper cloth over their shoulders. All of them sport a small beard. Their right hands are raised. They should be Portuguese bringing the horses for sale in Vijayanagara. Similar scenes are noticed in the Hazāra Rāma temple, Hampi.

XVI. STARTING OF A CLASSICAL DANCE:

The pillars in the rangamandapa of the same temple contain a few figures in different poses indicating the starting of a dance by a troop of artists. There are four figures, one each on a pillar. Of them three are male while the fourth is a female. The first male figure holds mridanga and is ready to play. (Plate – 97B) The second one keeps time with cymbals. (Plate – 98A) The third one looks like a Haridāsa (common minstrel). He holds a tumbura in right hand and his left hand, slightly raised, indicates that he has started singing. The female dancer dressed in typical Bharatanātya style, holding flowers in her hands, is ready to start her dance with prayer. Her dress is
elegant. Her saree shows numerous vertical folds in the centre. She is profusely ornamented. Her pose is in tune with the classical Bharatanātya rules. (Plate – 98B)

All the male figures are well built and wear the right dress as per their importance in the team. The man with cymbals has an inferior role to play in the team. He wears a cloth around his waist, sports a vaishnava nāma (U shaped caste mark on forehead) and is scarcely ornamented. The other two male figures wear a lower garment in typical south Indian style, wear many chains, kundalas, wristlets, anklets and have prominent vaishnava nāma on their foreheads. They are all, perhaps, starting a stage performance, which is common in the Vijayanagara times.

XVII. THE VĪRABHADRĀ TEMPLE, LĒPĀKSHI - VĪRUPANNA & VĪRANNA VISITING THE TEMPLE:

Virūpanna was a loyal officer in the personal staff of Achyutarāya. One of his younger brothers is Vīranna. The brothers are devout worshipers of god Vīrabhadra of Lēpākshi and made several gifts to that god. One of the paintings in the natyamandapa in Bay number II depicts the two brothers worshipping Vīrabhadra. It shows god Vīrabhadra, Daksha, men and women and the Vīrpanna group. The brothers are shown receiving prasāda from the priest of their tutelary deity. The painting is much faded. But the figures of the two brothers are in better condition.

Here they are shown standing side by side with folded hands looking towards their left, obviously at the deity figure, which is beyond recognition. They wear long typical Vijayanagara caps, a long shirt almost touching their ankles, with a beautifully designed cloth tied around their waist. The taller figure is Virūpanna and the one to his right is Vīranna. The other figures are five ladies. Three are fair in colour and the other two are dark and hence may be the attendants. The fair ladies may be identified as women related to the Virūpanna group. The other figures are that of a male attendant,
Daksha, the god and a Devi. The other male figures by the side of Virūpanna and his brother may be attendants.

An attempt to show diversity in dress, its design is clearly seen here. The flaw in the painting is that the male attendants stand in a slanting position leaning towards their right, which is unnatural. The panel helps us to understand the dress and jewellery of Vijayanagara times. (Plate – 99A)

XVIII. THE CHENNAKESAVA TEMPLE, CHUKKALURU - ARRIVAL OF THE KING:

There are three interesting panels on the north outer wall of the mukhamandapa of the Chennakesava temple at Chukkaluru. They depict the arrival of a king on an elephant followed by another on a horse. The first panel shows a beautifully decorated elephant on which a king is seated. He wears a crown, holds an upper cloth on his left shoulder and keeps his right arm on the head of the elephant. An attendant holds an umbrella by his side. Behind him another man with a crown arrives on a beautifully decorated horse. He has a long sword or club like weapon in his left hand and waves his right hand. An attendant stops the horse by pulling its reins. He may be the prince who is popular among his subject as his smile and waving of the hands indicate. (Plate – 99B)

The second panel depicts two palanquin bearers taking away the palanquin obviously after the occupant got down. The man arrived is tall and strong. He stands erect holding the butt of a long sword, which is held down. His turban, coat, upper cloth and his posture, wielding authority, show that he is a top officer, perhaps a minister. To his left stands a soldier on guard holding a sword. (Plate – 100A)

In the third panel there are six male figures in different poses. The first three are of equal height. The next two are on a high platform and the last one holds two clublike weapons. (Plate – 100B) These panels perhaps depict the arrival of the king along
with the prince while the officers await their arrival. It may be the visit of the king to the Chukkaluru temple.

The king may be Vīra Narasimha Rāya of Tuluva dynasty and the prince may be his brother, Krishna Rāya. The man near the palanquin in the second panel may be the prime minister, Timmarasu. The sculptured panels on the outer walls of the Chennakesava temple, Chukkaluru clearly reveal an attempt to imitate the narrative sculpture at the Chintala Venkataramana Temple, Tādipatri. So this temple might have been constructed after the construction of the Tādipatri temple. The earliest inscription in the Venkataramana temple, Tādipatri belongs to A.D. 1507 (s.1429). It refers to Vīra Narasimharāya and records the remission of marriage tax collected in Guttirajya in favour of the god. Another inscription dated 1509 A.D. (s.1431) belonging to the reign of Vīra Narasimharāya mentions that Mahāpradāna Sāluva Timmarasu constructed the bhōgamandapa, gōpura and prākāra in that year.

So it is possible that the king Vīra Narasimharāya along with his brother Krishnarāya and Prime Minister Sāluva Timmarasu might have visited the Tādipatri temple some time in the year 1509 A.D.

The craftsmen of the Chennakesava temple, Chukkaluru, while imitating the sculptured panels of the Venkataramana temple, might have recorded this visit of the king, the prince and the prime minister in sculpture on the walls of the temple at Chukkaluru.

It may even be said that the king and the others might have actually visited the Chukkaluru temple, which is very near to Tādipatri.
FOOT NOTES

1. Dr. B.S.L. Hanumanta Rao, Andhrula Charitra (Telugu), p.171.


6. A. Umāmahesvara Sastri, Cuddapah Zilla Sāsanālu – Samskruti, Charitra (Telugu), pp.43-44.


10. Anna L. Dallapiccola and others, The Rāmachandra Temple at Vijayanagara, fig.51&53.


12. Ibid., p.61.

13. Ibid., pp.49-65.


15. V.Kamesvara Rao, Lepakshi Temple, p.41.

16. Ibid., p.42.
