CHAPTER-SIX

SOCIO-RELIGIOUS LIFE AND DEPICTED IN THE
TEMPLES OF SOMESHWARA PERIOD

The students and the scholars of Indian history are well known about the Hoysala dynasty. This Hoysala dynasty is well flourished in South India especially in Karnataka region and also some parts of Tamilnadu from the beginning of 11th century to the middle of the 14th century A.D.¹ and they were overthrown by the Mohammadan rulers of North India. Nearly 400 years continuous administrative and political rule of Hoysalas² is remarkable one with their Hindu culture and also to Jaina culture, perhaps no other dynasty of South Indian history has contributed³ to the development and achievements in the field of art and architecture, literature, social and economical growth of the country in general and South Indian particular.

In Southern Karnataka after the downfall of Gangas of Talakad major changes have been taken place.⁴ In the Northern Karnataka after Rastrakutas, Kalyana Chalukyas came to power and they ruled for nearly 250 years and built many Dravidian and Vesara style temples. One have to remember that the influence of Badami Chaluykyas style of architecture for the growth and development of different tradition of temple art and architecture in Karnataka as well as in South India.⁵ The
another important contributions of Kalyana Chalukyas to the Karnataka temple art and architecture is the change of material or introduction of soap stone for the construction of good temples. Hoysala dynasty rulers also adopted same material for the construction with some modification and improvement in the style of temple construction as well as in the minute details of carving in the temple art. For the construction of classical style of temples by the Hoysalas also taken some important architectural elements from Nagara style of temples from North India and some important elements from Dravidian style also. With the introduction of star shape on the outer walls of garbhagriha and sukanasi, more space is also provided for the sculptures to do good carving of sculptures ornamental carvings, wall decorations with minute carvings, particularly of ornaments and jewels.

That means, the evolution of temple construction activity is a continuous process from the period of Gangas in South Karnataka and Badami Chalukyas in North Karnataka. Dravidian style of construction of temples introduced in South India by Chalukyas of Badami with small temples like Bananthi Gudi at Mahakuta and near Ravanapadi, rock-cut temple as the Chikka Devalaya at Aihole. This particular style of temple construction is a major contribution for the development, evolution and unique style of architecture is also continued in Tamil Nadu during the
Chola period. In Karnataka it continued from Badami Chalukyas to Rastrakuta, Nolamba, Kalyana Chalukyas, Hoysalas, Vijayanagara and even during the time of Mysore Wodeyars also. Simultaneously the construction of Vesara style of temples also continued from Badami Chalukya period to Kalyana Chalukyan period and also during the Hoysala period. After Hoysalas the use of soap-stone or chloritic-schist and also this Vesara style of construction of temples almost completely ceased in India.

From the beginning almost all the kings of the Hoysala dynasty have constructed many temples in Karnataka and few temples also in Tamilnadu. But from Hoysala Vishnuvardhana’s (1108-1142 A.D.) onwards the construction of Vaishnava, Shaiva and Jaina temples in Vesara style got great momentum and continued till the end of the dynasty. That means during the 11th, 12th and 13th century A.D. great activity of art and architecture of special style with special stone is continued especially in old Mysore state up to Shimoga. Probably Hoysals after becoming strong in administration, political, economical conditions, they started using more and more time and money for social, cultural and religious activities in the time of their reign. Usually if a dynasty or a country gets stability in Politics, Economics, and Social activities then only they can concentrate more on religious activities like
art and architecture and do good experiments in the construction of temples. The best examples for this are the golden days of Badami Chalukya, Ganga, Rastrakutas, Kalyana Chalukyas, Hoysalas and also Vijayanagara period. Karnataka is rich in art and architecture today just because of the contributions of these dynasties to our culture, heritage, religion and to art history.

When we come to Vira Someshvara’s period of these kinds of cultural and social activities, it is not inferior to any rulers of Hoysala period. Someshvara or Sovi-deva succeeded after the death of his father Narasimha-II in 1234 A.D. Before that in the year 1229 A.D. Someshvara was in Kannanur and he was called as “Maharajadhiraja”¹³. In the same year Someshvara was in Dwarasamudra after his successful war against the Yadavas of Devagiri and again he was also called Maharaja¹⁴. That means the King Someshvara was called as Maharaja or crowned him as King or Maharaja during his father’s time¹⁵. The Hoysala territory in the Tamilnadu with Kannanur as his capital this was also called as Vikramapura which have been identified by Hultzsch named a village Kannanur, eight kilometers from north of Srirangam¹⁶, which is now completely ruined and difficult to identify anything.

Vira Someshvara was a contemporary king for Singhana (1210-1247 A.D.), Jaithuga, Krishna Kandhara, Yadavas of Devagiri, Rajaraja-
III (1216-1243 A.D.) and Rajendra Chola of Chola dynasty\textsuperscript{17} and some kings like Sundara pandya and Jatavarma, Sundara pandya I of Pandya dynasty in the years of 1243 to 1267 A.D.

To know the administrative, political, cultural, social and religious achievements of King Someshvara good number of archaeological, epigraphical and literary sources are available. Many of important achievements of Someshvara is recorded and studied here with the help of original sources and also conducting periodical field study of temples constructed during the time of King Someshvara.

Hoysala temples are known for their contribution to cultural life, social life and religious life of human being from the period of Hoysala time to till date. That is way the term Hoysala temple called as “Socio-Economical and Religious institution by itself”. It can be justified by means of studying each temple for the better understanding of social life depicted in the temples through the sculptures\textsuperscript{18}. To construct such kind of temples one dynasty has to do lot of expenditure for many years and that can be seen in this period. Though, as such, there is no evidence, that how much of amount have been spent for the construction of such a socio-economic-religious institutions, but there are many inscriptions available as primary sources for the maintenance, annual festival, annual repairs the land has been gifted in the names of the temples and the
products from the same land is used for the purpose and also it is accountable. Either the Village Head or Ministers or Dandanayakas will systematically carry out the work and spent the money properly. This system is perfectly worked out and maintained the temples in good conditions. After the downfall of Hoysala dynasty this system completely collapsed and nobody was there to take care of temples. Even after complete collapse of Hindu, Jaina or Buddhist supported kingship in the country the religious sentiment of the people is also collapsed and temples have been neglected and most of them either ruined or completely collapsed\(^\text{19}\).

The main intention of constructing temples for Buddhism, Jainism or for Hinduism is religious purpose and also with sentimental feelings. Though Hoysalas have not constructed any temples for Buddhism or not continued any rock-cut architecture during their reign, but they built good number of temples for Shaivism, Vaishnavism and for Jainism. For various other regions many Jaina temples either ruined or internally converted into other sect of temple later on\(^\text{20}\). Our ancient people including the time of Hoysalas have given much more importance to our religion, culture and social life and temples have been used for this purpose completely.
The social life of Hoysalas including Vira Someshvara’s period is nothing but a continuation of the past. The Institutions like the Village assembly and the contributions to the temples is not a little to the high degree of the civic sense public co-operation and corporate activity of the people in socio-economic and religious life. The keen interest in the growth and development of such institutions was an important factor in the continuity of social life. The family was a basic unit in the society during the period with which we are dealing. Hoysala Vishnuvardhana and the King Someshvara had taken firm roots in South India. The royal family and the middle class people consisted of a group called wealthy class of people and can have more than one wife.

During the Hoysala period women also enjoyed freedom of expression. Great queens involved in many social activities including construction and restoration of temples and lakes. In the field of literature also they had their names even in art also. Kanti was a poetess, and one of the earliest to do so in the history and Kannada literature. The queen Shanthaladevi has been described as jewel lamp in the house of Bharatagama. Even women can also own property or sell and buy.

In most of the temple sculptures which are the best visual evidences to know cultural activities during the Hoysala period in general and King Someshvara in particular. In the classical style temple three
friezes from the bottom or above the raised jagati (Platform) is best example for an aquatic life and sports, particularly like wrestling, gambling, music, dancing and dramatics etc.,

In almost all temples constructed during the time of King Someshvara in the first and second friezes from the bottom represented with animals like elephants and horses with few camels here and there. Both elephants and horses have been decorated with good number of jewels, cloths and other things. On the back of most of these animals Kings, Princess, War leaders, Soldiers and others are riding. These riders can be identified only on their dresses, headgears, weapons, ornamentation etc...

The flora and fauna of the Hoysala period, aquatic animals in some of the pedestals of sculptures of the temples like Kedareshvara and Keshava at Nagalapura of Tumkur district and Keshava temple at Nuggehalli of Hassan district are the best living examples for the wall sculptural representation of natural, culture and life of plants, animals and eco-system of the water.

Another important sociological life representation of women in the wall sculptures. Usually we see Madanika sculptures in the form of brocket figures in the four central lathe-turned pillars of Navaranga or in Belur and Halebid below the upper eave of temple. But some temples
wall sculptures also represented with bracket figures. But here these sculptures are in high relief. A lady probably a dancer has kept her left leg on throne and was hurt, but an attender or an assistant is helping her by trying to remove the throne. This depicted in the outer wall of Sadashiva temple at Nuggehalli. In some of the examples of Someshvara’s period and in most of the Hoysala temples a nude lady is carved as wall sculpture and this is very attractive and also best example of symbolic art. Both the hands of the lady is lifted above her head and holding a three hooded snake and another snake entangles here both the legs and twisted its hood and the tail in the front portion of the nude lady. Her anklets and high healed well decorated slippers are very attractive. This sculpture is well depicted in the Kedareshvara temple of Nagalapura. Some scholars called this sculpture as Mohini and some of them identify this as ‘Vishakanya’.

In most of the Hoysala temples including King Someshvara in the pedestals of the wall sculptures the name of the sculptors has been carved in Kannada of Hoysala period. Some of the important temples of Someshvara like Panchalingeshvara at Govindanahalli and other temples the name of the great sculptor Mallithamma’s name is engraved. Mallitamma was a prime sculptor during the period of Someshvara, most of the temples are constructed during his period only, two dwarapala
sculptures have been carved with his initial and erected in front of two main doorways of Panchalingesvara temple at Govindanahalli. Channakeshava temple at Aralaguppe has got the sculptors name as “Honoja”, in between sculptures and in some sculptures pedestal only “Ho” is engraved. In the Nuggehalli temples the name of the Hoysala period sculptor “Baichoja” and in some sculputure only his initial “Bai” is engraved. That means, there was full freedom for sculptors to write their names on the pedestals of the sculptures even they have marked their initials also. It is clear that there is full freedom to the sculptures during Hoysala period, as we know, no bonded labour is allowed to write his name.

When we see the religious aspects of the Hoysala temples built during the time of King Someshvara are also similar to other temple wall sculptures and also sculptures in the garbhagriha. There are good number of sculptures of both Vaishnavism and Shaivism is carved on the outer walls of the Keshava temples as well as Shaiva temples. There will be Keshava standing in Somabhanga, Venugopala standing in Threebhanga and Narasimha or Lakshmi-Narasimha if the temples constructed as Thrikutachala. If it is a Shiva temple there will be Shivalinga in the garbhagriha. In the navaranga or either sides of all the sukhanasi door ways there will be two big devakostas with miniature terrated sikharas. In
the right hand side of the main Sukhanasi devakosta there will be a sculpture of Ganesha inside and in the left hand side devakosta there will be a beautiful sculpture of Mahishamardhini. It is almost like a rule in most of the classical style Hoysala temples these two sculptures will be kept inside the each devakosta. But now, in most of the temples some sculptures are missing.

In the temples built during the time King Someshvara two temples are very important with wall sculptures. One is Panchalingeshvara temple at Govindanahalli and Keshava temple at Nuggehalli there are 24 forms of Vishnu sculptures in the outer wall and all these Vishnu types are labeled below. At Panchalingeshvara temple they are in small size and carved without regular friezes. Where as in the Keshava temple at Nuggehalli the wall sculptures are normal in size with labels in the below.

The other religiously important sculptures of wall is the fourth friezes of the temples of the King Someshvara period except the temples at Nuggehalli, there will be no carving of complete Ramayana, Mahabharata, Bhagavata and other Jathaka stories in the small frieze all round the temple. Other important religious wall sculptures are Natya Ganapathi, Natya Sarswati, Nataraja, Venugopala, Govardhanagiridhari, Kalinga Mardhana, Gajasuramardhana, Kubera, Indra, Vishnu in different
forms, Mahishamardhini, Sridevi, Bhudevi, Shiva-Parvathi, Arjuna
shooting the fish, Garuda carrying Lakshmi and Vishnu on his shoulders,
Garuda in Veerasana, Shree Rama flanked by Lakshmana and Sita with
Hanuman in Veerasana folding his two hands for doing namaskara,
Lakshminarasimha, Ugranarasimha, Yoganarasimha with Yoagapata,
Gopalakrishna, Rathi and Manmatha, Surya on his seven horsed chairate
loose sculpture in Navaranga, three legged Bhrungi and many other
Vaishnava and Shiva sculptures have been carved as religious cultural
representation. The minute carvings ornamentation with different types
of jewels even most of the semi nude sculptures are covered with good
number of ornamentation. Art critics like Prof.A.V.Narasimha Murthy,
Prof.H.R.Raghunath Bhat and others says that the natural beauty of the
sculptures partially covered with these overcrowded ornaments. These
sculptures of Hoysala temples are beautifully carved and well executed
with religious sentiment and attractive. To see and enjoy the beauty of
these wall sculptures raised jagati have been provided. These religious
wall sculptures including friezes with epic and other religious stories are
carved in single row without any break. In some pedestals of the wall
sculptures name of the sculptors or their initials are clearly carved in old
Kannada of Hoysala period. Among these sculptors the names of
“Honoja” and “Baichaja” are very important which are not seen in all
other Hoysala temples, particularly the name of Honoja is seen only in
two temples like Keshava temple at Arlaguppe and Sadashiva temple at Nuggehalli. We can see the name of Mallithamma also. But, interestingly no temple were built during the period of King Someshvara has shown the name of Jakanachari. It is quite interesting to note that the name of the sculptor Jakanachari is house hold name but it has been seen in these temples.

In the social aspects of the Hoysala dynasty, particularly, during the period of Vira Someshvara, encouraged a policy of progressive reclamation of land and offering inducement by way of exemption of taxes. During the period of Hoysala king Someshvara Kunjanambi Setti, is said to have supplied the wants of the great Chola, Kalinga, Malva and Pandya rulers. This Kunjanambi Setti not only a merchant prince but a great diplomat and best person, who got the credit in negotiating for peace and war as an embodiment of perfect truth and of the mercy.

Another important factor is that, the educational system during the period of Hoysalas is also an interesting social aspect of this dynasty. There was an existence of both Hindu sect, as well as Jaina sect of religious kind of education and continued throughout the Hoysala period. But it is interesting to note that after the migration of Ramanujacharya along with his good number of followers from Tamilnadu to Karnataka during the time of Hoysala Vishuvardhana has made some important
impact on culture, religion, education and art and architecture. Vishnuvardhana himself embraced Jainism to Vaishnavism and slowly the Jainism is sidelined and Vaishnavism gained momentum in Hoysala period. Its impact on education was more and Hinduism has become popular. Probably, this same system also continued during the period of Hoysala king Someshvara and during his period either good or better Jaina temples have not been constructed.

As like any other ancient dynasties of Karnataka here also during the period of Hoysalas the education is provided in learning, centers like Agraharas, Ghatikastanas, Matas, Brahmapuris and also in temples. For the study of history, culture, economics, administration, politics, religious activities and architecture of the dynasty we all are depending on original source materials as epigraphical sources. These epigraphical sources give good information about Hoysala dynasties also. A study of these inscriptions enables us to get the complete idea of the above said activities of the Hoysala kings in respect of the creation and maintenance of works of public utility like construction of tanks, reservoirs, irrigation, roads and relief of the indigent, unemployment and suffering and the protection afforded to men and the cattles. Invariably, the inscriptions allude to the protections given by the Hoysala rulers to
their people is very important. The kings have fully understood the implications of different types of taxation as designed primarily for the welfare of the people of their dynasty. Including the King Someshvara all the Hoysala rulers showed a keen interest in the field of industry also. The merchants and traders had formed some trade unions of their own and guilds were also formed, they are namely traders of grains, dealers of cloths, dealers of horses and cattles and dealers of elephants, jewels and so on.

So the contributions of Hoysala king to Culture, Religion, Society, Education, Taxes, Art and Architecture, Administration, Flora and Fauna and other things have been studied properly by many scholars, even the mode of transportation during Hoysala period depicted in temple sculptures, including the period of King Someshvara is also studied and research papers have been published by Dr.T.Dayananda Patel. The chariots pulled by horses, bullock-carts, carrying things on the shoulders of men with the help of bamboo and wood, animals used for carrying things and materials etc. are very important. The temples constructed during the period of Vira Someshvara at Hosaholalu, Govindanahalli, Nuggehalli, Nagalapura, Aralagupppe are best example to the social activities of the human being during this king through the sculptures are very important. That means these Hoysala temples are constructed during
the Kings of Hoysala period, including the King Someshvara are very important and almost all the sculptures have been carved with some particular intention which may be of religion, social life, nature like flora and fauna, dress materials of male, female and animals, jewels ecosystem and things can be understandable with these sculptures. Another important contribution of the kings is the different types of musical instruments like Drums, Flutes, Mrudanga, Veena, Nagari, Damaru and many other musical instruments made by using animal skin, wood and other things are very useful to know the cultural importance given to dance and music can be understandable through these musical instrument along with the sculptures of male and female gods and goddesses. Some of the musical instruments are carried by back of the animals. After studying some of the important inscriptions of Someshvara’s period I felt that, one of the inscriptions of Someshvara’s period published in Epigraphia Carnatia Volume-VIII (Revised) Hassan district dated February-March, 1258 A.D. Page No.612 is having some important information and here, I am including the translation of the original inscription, as it reads like this.

Though there was provision made in the four central pillars top of the Navaranga for the Dancing Madanika sculptures in the temples constructed during the time of the King Someshvara like Aralaguppe,
Hosaholalu Nuggehalli and Nagalapura navaranga pillars for these madanika sculptures or bracket figures are now missing. Not even single madanika sculpture is visible in these temples. But the sockets made in the capital of the pillars and above are clearly visible. In the close observation of these pillars I can say that in all these temple navaranga four pillars provisions were definitely made for these kinds of bracket figures and today not even a single bracket figure is visible for the study.

That means during the period of King Someshvara the dance and music are part of the culture as like the same culture during the time of other Hoysala kings. With this, the proper cultural, socio-religious encouragement given by the king Someshvara can be understandable through these temple art and architecture of his period.
REFERENCE AND NOTES


15. Ibid, P.No.185, 1950.


17. Ibid, P.No.185, 1950.

18. If you study any temple in detail for that matter it is one or the other way it gives complete social and cultural aspects of human beings. For that matter almost all the temples constructed during the time of Vira Someshvra are best examples.

19. Because of this region Jain temple of Arakalagud and their places of temples are not visible. But our Archaeological Survey of India, Karnataka State Archaeology, Museums and Heritage Department, Dharmastala Dharmothana Trust, Jindal, T.V.S. and Infosys people with the permission from government of Karnataka they are doing proper scientific conservation and restoration of most of the temples in Karnataka.

20. Hampa Nagarajaiah has made an attempt to understand the original Jaina temples which have been converted into other sect temple and wrote a book on that aspect.


22. The temple architecture explained in the chapters of three and four protographs represent this attributes.
23. Observation made during the field study that in both the temples of Nuggehalli in the third friezes. It is already discussed in the chapters three and four with photographs.

24. Most of these wall sculptures are present in almost all temples either it may be shaiva temples or Vaishnava temples.