



Vaishanava Sculptures of Gadag Region

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Abstract: The original city of Gadag and its sister city Betageri (or Betgeri) have a combined city administration. It is a region of Great historical importance. It is known for its important monuments. Gadag Taluka is full of ancient sculptures and temples. The Trikuteshwar Veeranarayana, Sarswathi and Someshwara temples of Gadag and temples of Lakkundi are known for their architectural and sculptural granduer. Most of the temples of Gadag belong to Kalyana Chalukyan style of architecture, representing a grand style of art and architecture. A few temples and sculptures belong to Hoysala and Vijayanagara period. Even today sculptural art enjoys encouragement in this region.

Key words: Karnataka, Trikuteshwar Veeranarayana, Sarswathi and Someshwara, Matsya, Kurma, Varaha, Narasimha, Vaman Parasurama, Rama, Krishna, Buddha and Kalki etc.

Introduction

Gadag-Betageri is a city municipal council in Gadag district in the state of Karnataka, India. It is the administrative headquarters of Gadag District. The original city of Gadag and its sister city Betageri (or Betgeri) have a combined city administration. The municipality of Gadag-Betageri has a population of 172,813 and an area of 54.0956 sqkm It is a region of Great historical importance. It is known for its important monuments. Gadag Taluka is full of ancient sculptures and temples. The Trikuteshwar Veeranarayana, Sarswathi and Someshwara temples of Gadag and temples of Lakkundi are known for their architectural and sculptural granduer. Most of the temples of Gadag belong to Kalyana Chalukyan style of architecture, representing a grand style of art and architecture. A few temples and sculptures belong to Hoysala and Vijayanagara period. Even today sculptural art enjoys encouragement in this region. Though much work is done on the architecture and inscriptions of Gadag region, it seems that sculptural art is neglected. I have tried to present in this paper the results of my study of the Vaisnava sculptures in the Gadag region.

Vaishanava Sculptures:

As the Preserver and popular God of Hindus Vishnu is worshiped in many forms; The usual sculptural form of vishnu are - vishnu (Common form), Yogasana Murti, Bhoga Shayana Murti, Virasthanka Murti and Abhicharika-Shayana Murti, In addition we also find sculptural forms of Vishnu's various incarnations. e.g Matsya, Kurma, Varaha, Narasimha, Vaman Parasurama, Rama, Krishna, Buddha and Kalki.

Important Vaishanava Sculptures Of Gadag Region :

Narayana Sculptures:

Lord Vishnu is depicted in many forms. One of them being Narayana konographic sculptures. The most important Narayana of Gadag are:

(a) Veeranarayana:

The famous Veeranarayana temple attracts thousands of devotees throughout Karnataka. The attractive and artistic statue of Veeranarayana is installed in the garbhagriha of the temple. Dr.Sundara opines that this image was installed during the reign of vijayanagar emperors. The statue of Veernarayana stands on a panipitha in the centre of which there is a small figure of lotus. The sculpture is adorned with a crown necklace, and earrings. In one of his right hands a shell. In the other right hand he is holding a mace. In one of his left hands a conch and in the other left hand a padma. On his right side we find a small sculpture of Garuda and on the left is a small sculpture of Lakshmi. The icon is very big and beautiful and it is a rare example of virasthanka type of icon in North Karnataka.

(b) Lakshmi Narayana:

Another important Narayana sculpture is Lakshmi Narayana which is found in the grabhagriha of the Lakshmi Narayana temple situated near greate tank of Gadag

The statue of Lakshmi Narayana is installed on panipitha. Both Lakshmi and Narayana are in seated posture. Narayana is seated with his left leg pendant and right leg bent to rest on the seat. Lakshmi is also in a seated posture. Her right leg is bent and rested upon the left lap of Narayana.

Her left leg is pendant. Both Lakshmi and Narayana are decorated with crown necklace bracelet etc. Narayana is holding chakra in one of his right hands. His another right hand is in abhaya mudra. In one of his left hands he is holding a conch and his left hand is on the waist of Lakshmi. Lakshmi holds a lotus bud in her left hand, her right hand is on the shoulder of Narayan. The sculpture is important for its beauty and proportionate treatment of the images. The length of the sculpture is 90Cms. and its width is 65Cms.

(c) Yoga Narayana:

A very attractive icon of Yoga Narayana is installed on the pitha in Yoga Narayana temple at Hombal. On the pitha is carved sculpture of Garuda

Narayana in Yoga posture is seated in padamasana. His eyes are half closed and beautifully carved. The two hands of Yoga Narayana are placed on the lap, right hand on the left with figures fully extended and palm facing upwards (yogamudra). In one of his hand he holds a wheel and in another left hand he holds a conch. He wears a sacred thread necklace and earrings.

It is a splendid example of yogasana Murti in the whole of Northern Karnataka

(d) Shankaranarayana:

The sculpture of Shankaranarayana is found in the right side of the Pradakshinapath of the Trikuteshwara temple in Gadag. The Sculpture is decorated with necklace and crown. The sculpture is in seated posture. In his right hand he holds a akshamla. In his left hand he holds a conch. The length of the sculpture is 98 Cms. and its width is 63 Cms. The sculpture is unique because it is a rare combination of Shankar (Shiva) and Narayana (Vishnu) in one statue and hence the statue is called Shankaranarayana.

(e) Keshava:

The sculpture of Keshava is found on the platform of the Ishwara temple at Kurthkoti. The sculpture is very beautiful. It is four handed. In his right hand is a conch and in the left hand is a wheel. The sculpture is adorned with a crown, necklace earrings and other ornaments. The length of the sculpture is 98 Cms and width is 47 Cms. The other hands are broken.

(f) Venkateshwara:

Venkateshwara icon is found in the temple of Venkateshwara in Mulgund. According to its priest the icon of the Venkateshwara was found at Hirekerur. It was brought and installed in this temple. The statue of the Venkateshwara is marvellous. It is in standing posture. The statue is decorated with crown kanthahara. In one of his right hands he is holding a conch and another right hand is in Varadhmudra. In one of his left hand he is holding a wheel and another left hand is in katyavalambita mudra. The length of the sculpture is 85 Cms. and its width is 55Cms,

(g) Narayana:

A beautiful Narayana sculpture is found in the Narayana temple at Soratur. The sculpture is in standing posture. The statue is installed on Garuda Pith. The sculpture is adorned with a crown, necklace and ear rings. In one of his right hands he is holding a wheel. His another right hand is stretched. In one of his left hands he is holding conch and his another left hand is kept on his waist. The length of the sculpture is 90Cms. and its width is 57 Cms. According to a inscription icon was installed in the regime of Kalayana Chalukyas..

(h) Surya Naryana:

Surya Naryana sculpture belonging to 11th and 12th century is the main attraction in the Antur village which is 20 Km. away from Gadag. The sculpture is found in the garbhagriha of the temple. It is installed on the surya pitha with seven horses. The sculpture is in standing posture. In one of the right hands is the conch and in another right hand is the padma. In one of his left hands too there is the conch and in the another left hand he holds mace. The sculpture is decorated with Bracelet, necklace and ear rings. On the left and right sides we find small sculpture's of Bhudevi and Sridevi. We find Prabhavali of Dashavathara around the sculpture. The sculpture is enchanting.

(i) Narasimha Sculptures:

We find many excellent Narasimha sculpture in Gadag region. In Narasimha Avatar" took the form of half man and half lion to destroy the demon Hirankasipu. The artists have depicted Narasimha in various inconographical forms.

(j) Ugra Narasimha:

We find a very special and rare specimen of the sculpture of Ugra Narasimha temple at Kurtakoti. The sculpture is kept on the pitha. We find the small sculpture of Urga Narasimha seated on padma or lotus. The sculpture of Narasimha is eight handed. It is depicted as tearing the entrails of Hiranyakasipu. In one of right hand he is holding a wheel and in another right hand he is holding mace. In one of the left hands he is holding something which is broken. His other two hands are also broken and with his another two hands he is tearing entrils of Hiranyakasipu. who lying on his lap. Blood stains are found in the stomach of Hiranyakasipu. The Sculpture is adorned with necklace, bracelets, and a crown. The importance of this sculpture is that the ferocious expression is realistically depicted. The length of the sculpture is 60 Cms. and width 48 Cms. It is a unique and outstanding sculpture. It seems that the sculpture installed in 12th century. (11) Lakshmi Narasimha:

Lakshmi Narasimha temple is situated at the south side of the Veera Narayana temple in the complex. The sculpture of Lakshmi Narasimha is found in the garbhagriha of the temple. The statue is in seated posture. The Narasimha is seated with right leg folded and left leg bent to rest upon the seat. The sculpture of Narasimha is adorned with necklace, crown etc. In one of his right hands he holds wheel and other is in abhayamudra. Lakshmi is sitting on his left lap. In her left hand she holds a lotus bud and she rests her right hand on shoulder of Narasimha. On either side we find the small sculptures of Chamardharinis. According to Dr. A. Sundara the statue was installed in 11th or 12th century.

(k) Ananthapadmanabha:

Among shayana murtis of Vishnu the Ananthapadamanabha icon of Shankarlinga temple at Hombal is important. The beautiful statue is found at left side of the navaranga. He sleeps on serpent bed. Bhū sits near his head and Sri sits near his feet. His one foot is held by Sri on her lap and another foot rests on serpent. His first right hand supports his head. His another right hand is held in Chinamudra, he holds a conch in one of his left hands. Another left hand is rested on his knee. We find Brahma on Lotus springing out of naval. The length of the sculpture is 50 Cms and its width is 120 Cms.

(l) Varaha:

Varaha icons are rare in North Karnataka. But we find a small beautiful Varaha (boar incarnation) of God Vishnu. There is a small temple of Varaha to the left of the Venkateshwara temple at Mulgund. The statue of Varaha is in garbhagriha which is the sole component of the temple. The statue is in standing posture. It is wearing a crown and sacred thread. The Prabhavali of the statue is beautifully decorated with designs of different types. The upper left hand of the statue is holding a wheel and upper right hand a conch. The lower right hand is in Varahamudra and lower right rested on waist (Katyavalambita Mudra). The length of the statue is 65 Cms. and its width is 40 Cms.

(m) Garuda:

The sculpture of Garuda in the Antarala of the Lakshmi Narayana temple is simple but beautiful. He is shown in a standing posture with two wings at the back. The hands are in adoration (Namsakar) Garuda wears a crown ear rings and necklace. The length of the sculpture is 47 Cms. and its width is 28 Cms. My research work mainly consists of the description of various Vaishnava icons found in Gadag Region. In my opinion these icons need further research and detailed study on Vaisnavism which was one of the popular religious sects of early medieval Karnataka.

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