

New Dimensions of Sursundaries

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Abstract:

The sculptures are very important part of architecture. They are of two types. One is religious and the other is non-religious. The icons of god and goddesses, Lord Budhha and those of Jain Teerthankaras fall in religious form, whereas those of geometrical, non-geometrical forms and the animals, birds, sursundaris fall in non-religious category. Sursundaris are found on most of the mediaeval period temples. The ancient scripts like 'Shipla prakash' and 'kshirarnav' throw light on sursundaris. They are named on the basis of various things they are holding in their hands.

However, the available information and scholars speaks only about the beauty, proportionate body of surasundaris.

The present study is aims to project the other dimensions of these sculptures. Some of the sursundaris are holding 'Lekhani' in their hand and this reveals that they were literate. Some are holding arms like sword, khadga, bow and arrow etc. This leads to the conclusion that they knew science of battle. It is also seen that some sculptures have shown them fighting with wild animals and poisonous species like scorpion and snakes. This shows brevity of ancient women. It is also seen that some of them were working as spies for their kingdom.

Apart from this, the present study aims at identifying sculptures of surasundaris at village Varkute, Tahsil Karmala District Solapur.

Key words: surasundaris, Varkute, Shipla prakash, 'kshirarnav', other dimensions, sculptures, architecture.

Introduction-

Sculptures play important role in ancient architecture. They add value to the architecture . Sculptures are of two types. One is religious and the other is non-religious. The icons of God and Goddesses fall in religious form, whereas those of geometrical, non-geometrical forms and the animals, birds, sursundaris fall in non-religious category. Sursundaris are found on most of the late historic period temples. The ancient scripts like 'Shipla prakash' and 'kshirarnav' throw light on sursundaris. They are named on the basis of various things they are holding in their hands.

However, the available information and scholars speak only about the beauty, proportionate body of surasundaris.

Objectives-

Objectives of this paper are

- 1) To show literacy status of women from ancient & medieval period in the form of Sursundaris
- 2) To show brevity of women from ancient & medieval period in the form of Sursundaris
- 3) To identify the sculptures of Sursundaries at village Varkute district Solapur

Discussion-

The apsaras & sursundaries are supposed to have sprung from the waters when the ocean was churned for obtaining ambrosia (Deglurkar G.B 2004 :104) Sursundaris appear generally on the exterior walls of the temple or on the pillars, They are also called as 'Apsaras' or 'Devanganas' (Sompura 1975:64) These

Sursundaries are carved on the walls of temples to raise architectural beauty of temple.

These religious structures gradually became the centers of all cultural activities of the village community. It became the onus of temples to promulgate among the devotees, while the apsaras attract ethical values which would propel them towards final release (moksha). The danseuse, the musicians etc. entertain the devotees, while the apsaras attract them towards the temple & the Sursundaris with their various moods, attributes & cognizance prepare them to discard desire, lust, temptation & passion & become virtuous so that they can accrue punya which leads them to moksha (salvation) (Deglurkar 2004:105)

The SilpaPrakasa mentions 16 Sursundaris whereas Kshirarnav mentions 32 sursundaris. Some Sursundaris are musicians, some are doing their personal work like make-up etc. and some are under the tree like Shalbhanjika. Some are busy with day to day work. And some are depicted in the form of dancers. We can observe educated & brave Sursundaris but these qualities are hardly discussed by any of the scholars.. Available information speaks only on the beauty i.e. the proportionate body of the Sursundaris. This paper tries to throw light on the brevity & literacy status of Sursundaris as well as some ancient & medieval women.

Sursundari Writer (Patralekha)

दक्षिण हस्तकमले ताडपत्रम च धरित्री

ललाटे चंद्ररेखा च सनाम विस्तरे सदा II १२१ II . (Kshirarnav 308)(Sompura 1975:69)

She holds pen in her right hand & she writes on 'Tadpatra' i.e. the palm leaf .She has crescent moon expanding day by day, on her forehead

1. Lekhika (Writer) from Koravali, Dist : Solapur



She is standing in tribhanga position, with a bend in her right knee turning behind. Her left hand is on palm leaf & with her right hand she is writing. She wears ornaments like kankana (bangle), keyura (armlet), griveeka (neckless), mekhala (girdle), Nupur anklet, etc.

2. Lekhika (Writer) from Khidrapur Dist:Kolhapur



Sursundari is standing in tribhanga position, turning towards back with her right hand she is writing, her left hand is on the waist. She wears ornaments like kankana (bangle), keyura (armlet), griveeka (neckless), mekhala (girdle), Nupur anklet, etc.

3 Lekhika (Writer) from Latur



She is standing in tribhanga position , turning behind with twisted legs. She is writing with her right hand, and left holding pamleaf. She have various ornaments.

Discussion: From Rigvedic period women were educated. Some women devoted their life for education & they were known as Brahamavadini. The Brahamavadinis were the products of the educational discipline of Brahamacharya. Women sages were called Rishikas & Brahamavadini.

The Rigveda known following Rishikas :

1. Romasa
2. Lopamudra
3. Apala
4. Kadru
5. Vishvara
6. Ghosha
7. Juhu
8. Vaghambarini
9. Paulomi,
10. Jarita (Mookerji 1989:51)

In later vedic period education was not denied to women. The Upanishada mentions several women as teachers. The Brihadaranyaka Upanishda mentions an interesting ritual by which a person prays for the birth to him of a daughter who should be a 'Pandita' or a learned lady. (Mookerji 1989:105). During Sutra period, vedic tradition was continued as regards education of women. Yama said "1. Girls were eligible for Maunjibandhana (Upanayana) 2. Study of veda 3. Savitraivachana (Use of Savitri mantra). The Grihasutra mentions that vedic mantra being uttered by the wife along

with her husband during religious ceremonies. (Mookerji 1989:208)

Education in the Epics: In Ramayana Shabari is described as Chira-Krishnainambara, Jatila, Siddha, Tapasi. In Mahabharata the daughter of Shandilya was also the Bramacharini as that of Rishi Gargya. Janaka has philosophical discussion with Bikshuni Sulobha. (Mookerji 1989 :203) Draupadi is also called as Pandita. In Buddhist period Theri-Gatha which is believed to be the collection of verses of the women who were the first to join the Buddha's order in his very lifetime. In historic & medieval times women from royal families use to get education in their homes.

असिपुत्र धरा नृत्या शोभते शत्रू मर्दिनी (*khirarnav 122 -308*) (Somapura 1975:69)

1. Shatrumardini from Varkute Dist: Solapur



Sursundari stand firmly on her right leg & lifted her left leg in her hand, she holds knife in her right hand, her facial expressions are very confident. She wear ear-rings, grivika (neckless), Keyura (armlet), Kankana(bangle)



Manjughosha from Koravali Dist: Solapur

हस्ताद्वयेन खड्गोच नृत्यवरच कुर्वीत

भुजघोषति नामासा नृत्य करोति सर्वदा

(kshirarnav129:310)Somapura1975:70)

She holds dagger in her both hands, she stand on her left foot & bent her right foot from knee. Her left hand is rest on her stomach, she rests her right hand upon her head. She has hairdresser& wear ear-rings, bangle, keyura(armllet), mekhla(girdle), anklet, necklace etc.



2. Shatrumardini Varkute Dist,Solapur –

She is in tribhanga position with bend in her knees. Holding dagger in her right hand, her left hand is broken. Expressions are as if she would attack enemy at any time. She wear big earring. Keyura (armlet), mekhla(girdle), anklet, necklace etc.

3. Sursundari as hunter from Varkute Dist: Solapur



This Sursundari is in tribhang position, stand on her left leg & she put her right leg on the tiger. She has one weapon in her right hand & she is trying to kill tiger with her weapon, we can see her bravery from this, she does not fear to this wild animal, her face is very confident.

4. Surasundari as a Hunter, Varkute Dist: Solapur



This Sursundari stand on her right leg & she bent her left leg, she raised her left leg bending from knee. She has one bow in her left hand & arrow in her right hand & trying to kill one wild animal in front of her. She wear various ornaments

vaiksha, ear-rings, Bangle, Keyura (armlet), mekhala(girdle), necklace etc.

5. Gouri Pangaon Dist Latur



Kshirarnav describes Gouri as a Sursundari in the role of Simhamardini.("गौरिच सिहमर्दिनी"). She is standing on her left leg with a sword raised in her right hand while holding a tree branch. A lion is depicted near her right feet. She is wearing various ornaments. She looks very confident.

During the rule of Satvahanas, Vakatakas, Guptas, Chalukyas etc , seven women are known for their best governance. Prabhavati Gupta, Chandragupta's daughter who got married with Rudrasen II of Wakatak, ruled Vidarbha. After the demise of her husband, she ruled on behalf of her minor sons Diwakar Sen and Damodar Sen very confidently. On the seal of Pune copper plate it clearly shows this and it reads in Sanskrit that "जनन्या युवराजास्य शासन रिप् शासनम्".It means the mother of prince who orders to punish the enemies.(Mirashi 1957:182)

The other popular women rulers were Naganika, Dhruvadevi and Vijay Bhattarika. Apart from politics, there are referances of women who were expert in many walks of life. Like wife of Mandan Mishra had a debate with great Indian scholar Shankaracharya. Avantisundari, wife of Sanskrit poet Rajshekhar, was a renowned poetess. The ancient literature like Gatha Saptashati reveals that Madhavi, Shashiprabha and Anulakshi were among the known Sanskrit poets of that era. Kaumudi Mahotsava, a popular play was written by Vijji Kishorika, Ketladevi from Chalukya dynasty was known as Abhinav Saraswati (new goddess of knowledge).

They were also expert in the field of science. Rusa wrote a book on women related diseases.

Inscriptions found in Naneghat near Pune show that the image of queen Naganika is carved along with the king. The silver coins had image of queen Naganika along with king Saatkarni. This shows the importance of queen in the government. After the demise of her husband king, she ruled quite efficiently. She is one of the ancient female rulers of Indian continent.

Conclusion-

The temples built during 9th to 13th century AD have Sursundaries on their outer parts in various forms which clearly leads to the conclusion that some women of that period were literate and not only that but they contributed a lot to the literature produced during that period. The renowned books like Kshirarnav and Shilpaprakash recognised these women as Patra lekhika. It proves that the women were not only beautiful but were intelligent also. Such Sursundaries are seen on the temples located at Pangaon Dist Latur, Koravali Dist Solapur, Dharmapuri Dist Beed and Khidrapur Dist Kolhapur etc.

The facts discussed in the foregoing paragraphs clearly leads to the conclusion that the some of the ancient and medieval women were not only literate but were brave, had scientific approach and they were competent rulers. they use to wander very confidently in all walks of life.

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