

## Reflections of the past: Foot prints of the *Deśī* tradition in dance sculptures of Karnataka

**Vidya Kumari Shimladka,**  
Research Scholar, Department of Cultural Studies,  
Jain University, India.

**Choodamani Nandagopal,**  
Dean, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences,  
Jain University, India.

---

### *Abstract*

*Ancient and medieval period temples of India are replete with dance and dance-like sculptures. The temple dancing rituals in ancient times might have influenced sculptors to integrate dance sculptures in temple architecture. Now, these sculptures stand as a testimony in the process of reconstruction of classical dance movements. This paper examines the role of dance sculptures in the reconstruction of Indian classical dance postures and movements. The focus is on the reconstruction of the elements of the Deśī dance tradition of Karnataka. Karnataka has hundreds of ancient temples with exquisite dance-sculptures which have frozen the myriad movements in stone. Dance is a visual art; the visual impression of this dynamic art is seen in dance sculptures of ancient and medieval period temples. In India, the art of dance and sculpture are interlinked, especially in temple architecture. The dance sculptures and dance-like sculptures are important primary sources in the process of reconstruction. This paper deals with the process of reconstruction of sthānas, cāris and karaṇas of the Deśī tradition with the evidences collected from select temples of Karnataka. Indian classical dance can be broadly divided into two traditions- Mārga and Deśī. The first category strictly follows the rules of the Nāṭyaśāstra and hence called as the Mārga which means the 'established path'. The transitional forms created by blending of the Mārga and the regional variations are called as the Deśī. . The Deśī tradition occupies an important stage in the development of Indian dance. Karaṇas are the harmonious combination of postures, leg movements and non-representational hand gestures and movements. Temples of Karnataka are decorated with the sculptures portraying both the Mārga and Deśī traditions. The sculptures representing the deśī karaṇas in these temples have been identified, documented, carefully studied and analysed. The data collected from these temples are analysed to check the authenticity of reconstruction of deśī karaṇas.*

---

## 1. Introduction

India is home to one of the most ancient civilisations. The art of classical dance in India symbolises the peak of evolution of one of the greatest civilisations in the world. Extensive representation of dancing is seen in the classical, medieval and modern literature, sculpture, iconography, inscriptions and painting. Dance like any other aspect of Indian culture and tradition has developed over thousands of years. History of Indian dance can be traced to pre-Vedic period. The first concrete evidence of dance in India can be traced back to the period of the Indus Valley Civilization, where beautiful bronze sculptures of a dancing girl were found. The *Nāṭyaśāstra* is the earliest extant literature in Sanskrit on dance which is believed to be written by Bharata. This encyclopaedic work deals with various topics that are necessary for the production and presentation of the drama before the spectators. While the *Nāṭyaśāstra* (henceforth to be mentioned as NS) primarily deals with stagecraft, it lays down rules for dance, music and literature as *Nāṭya* consisted of acting, dance and music (Raghavan 1965:45).

### 1.1 Mārga and Deśī

Indian classical dance can be broadly divided into two categories- *Mārga* and *Deśī*. The first category was widely practised till 10<sup>th</sup> century AC and the other category was popular between 10<sup>th</sup> century and 17<sup>th</sup> century AC. The first category strictly adhered to the rules of the NS and hence called as the *Mārga* which means the ‘established path’. The transitional forms created by the blending of *Mārga* and the regional variations were called as the *Deśī*. After 10<sup>th</sup> century, when regional languages developed, then came several regional adaptations and ramifications of *Mārga* style. This gave rise to a new style of dance which was named by *Lākṣhanikās* of later centuries as ‘*Deśī*’ as they represented regional style of dance.’ (Devi 1990: 24) In the later centuries with the development of regional languages, change in the social, historical and religious factors, deviation has taken place in the principal tradition of dance. Regional influence grew more and more in and thus changed form of dance in terms of regional variation is considered as *Deśī*. Etymologically ‘*Deśī*’ is derived from the word ‘*disya*’ which means ‘a particular region’. *Deśī* in dance means ‘the dance that is in practice in a particular region’. This is in contrast with the central tradition of dance which followed the tenets of NS.

The *Deśī tradition* plays an important role in the evolution and the development of classical dance in India. Indian dance history cannot be understood in its true sense without the knowledge of the *Deśī* style of dance. This paper is based on the research study that has been taken up to understand the theoretical and practical aspects of *Deśī* tradition that was prevailing in medieval Karnataka. This study has the base- line period of 10<sup>th</sup> century AC and end-line period of 17<sup>th</sup> century AC.

## 2. Dance and sculpture

Dance and sculpture are two different art forms yet they are interlinked in social, cultural, historical and religious streams. These two art forms are developed and nurtured by temples in India. Sculptural representations of dance have preserved beautiful movements and striking moments of the ancient dance traditions. Both of them are used as vehicles to express human emotions and aesthetic achievement. But these two arts have chosen human body as the means for their exposition. Evoking *rasa* or *rasotpatti* in the minds of onlookers is the ultimate aim of a dancer and a sculptor. The institution of temple dancing from the earliest times perhaps inspired the sculptors to create dancing sculptures. Any attempt at reconstructing a history of the classical dance in India, therefore would rely not only on dance texts and commentaries but of necessity delve deep into what was preserved in the practicing tradition of preceptors as well as dancers. Continuous cross references to sculptural material would be absolutely necessary for understanding the dance. (Nandagopal 1990:80).

**Terminology:** For a better understanding of the subject some of the terms which are of particular importance to this research paper are explained here. They are *caturvedha abhinaya*, *karaṇa*, *cārī*, *sthāna*, *recaka* and *ṛtta hasta*.

**Caturvidha abhinaya:** The *nāṭya*<sup>i</sup> can be communicated to the spectators in four ways through four types of *abhinaya*<sup>ii</sup> which is termed as *caturvedha abhinaya*. The entire technique of Indian dance is described within the framework of *abhinaya* or histrionic representation. These are technicalities of acting like gestures (*āṅgika*), vocal (*vācika*), costume and make up, ornaments (*āhārya*), and the temperament or emotional (*sātvika*).

### 2.1 Karaṇa, Cārī, Sthāna and ṛtta hasta

A *karaṇa* in dance is the harmonious rhythmic movements of the hands, feet and other parts of the body. *Karaṇa* is a combination of static and dynamic aspect of dance i.e., a *karaṇa* involves *sthāna* (static posture), *cārīs* (leg movements), *ṛtta hasta* (non-representational hand gesture) with a graceful and appropriate connecting movements called as *recaka*. ‘*Tāṇḍava Lakṣanam*’, the fourth chapter of NS, defines *karaṇa* as ‘*Hasta pāda samāyogāḥ ṛttasya karaṇam bhavet*’ (NS, chapter 4-35) *Karaṇa* is a beautiful combination of static and dynamic aspect of dance. *Nāṭyaśāstra* has enumerated 108 *karaṇas* which are known as *Mārga karaṇas*. *Saṅgītaratnākara*, a mile stone treatise of medieval period, which has given elaborate description of the *Deśī* tradition, has recorded 36 *Deśī karaṇas*.

*Sthāna-s* are the postures or stances from where stylised movements emerge. It denotes the ‘*sthithi*’ or static aspect of dance. A movement in dance begins and ends with a posture suitable to the situation in dance. This stance or posture is known as *sthāna*. There are six *puruṣa sthānas* (posture for men) and three *sthūrī sthānas* (posture for women) according to NS. However medieval authors on *Deśī* tradition have recorded many more *sthānas* in their

treatises. *Cārī* is predominantly the movements of the feet involving movements of shanks, thighs and the hips. The word '*cārī*' is derived from the root '*char*' meaning 'to move' or 'to walk'. The eleventh chapter of *Nāṭyaśāstra* explains 32 *cārīs*. They are classified into *bhūmi* (earthly) and *ākāśa* (aerial) *cārīs* on the basis of the nature of the movement. *Nṛtta hastas* are non-representational hand gestures which involve the movement of the entire arm and not just the static gestures.

## 2.2 Sculptural depiction of the *Deśī* tradition in Karnataka

Dance is a visual art, the visual impression of this dynamic art is seen in sculptures, literature and painting. In India, the art of dance and sculpture are interlinked, especially in temple architecture. The temple dancing rituals and dance during religious ceremonies in ancient times might have influenced sculptors to incorporate dance sculptures in temple architecture (Kothari 2001:43). Karnataka has hundreds of ancient temples with exquisite dance-sculptures which depict the fabulous moments of myriad movements in dance. Karnataka region played a key role in the evolution and development of Indian dance. Distinguished Art historians like Percy Brown ('*Indian Architecture: Buddhist and Hindu*'), Kapila Vatsyayan ('*Arrested Movements- Sculpture and Painting*') place Karnataka high in the evolution and development of temple architecture and historical sculptures. The temple sculptures stand as a testimony for the dance tradition that was prevalent during their respective periods of construction. The sculptural representations preserve the ancient tradition be it the hair style or costume or the musical instrument or even the *karaṇas* (Nandagopal 2011:10).

Dance sculptures and dance-like sculptures are abundant in temples of Karnataka. The temples belonging to the medieval period are decorated with sculptures reflecting both *Mārga* and *Deśī* dance movements. In the present research work, the dance sculptures in medieval temples of Karnataka are closely examined for the representation of *Deśī karaṇas*. The field work was carried at select temples belonging to Hoysala and Vijayanagara period.

The Hoysala kings were great patrons of art, architecture and literature. Hoysala dynasty ruled much of modern Karnataka and parts of Tamilnadu between the early 11th century and 1346 AC. They have built several hundred temples but only few of them are in good condition now. Renowned archaeologist S R Rao says Hoysala temple architecture occupies a special place in the history of Indian art because of the exquisite carvings and sublime thoughts expressed through the medium of plastic art. All the Hoysala temples are filled with the figures dancing and playing on musical instruments. Dance has influenced Hoysala sculptures so deeply that even ordinary scenes like pulling out a thorn from the sole of the foot, writing a letter or applying a *tilaka* on the forehead are all portrayed in a dance-like attitude in these sculptures. The Hoysala style emphasised the bending of waist and limbs

which can be seen in the bracket figures of Hoysala period, known for their tri-flexion bending. The glory of the fine arts of medieval Karnataka is fairly reflected in the cultural wealth of Hoysala temples. Hoysala temples appear as though they are the embodiment of dance and musical forms. The regional variations of dance form and musical instruments are very well represented throughout the Hoysala complex. The dancing icons, celestials and *madanikas* are chosen to decorate the inner and outer parts of the temple (Nandagopal, 1990:8)

### 2.3 Vijayanagara Temples

Vijayanagara served as the capital of a vast Hindu empire from its foundation in 1350 AC to its destruction in 1565 AC. The Vijayanagara rulers encouraged art and architecture to a large extent. The contemporary performing arts were ably reflected in the sculptures of Vijayanagara temples. Pillars of Virupaksha and Achyutaraya temples have some exquisite dance sculptures including both *Mārga* and *Deśī karaṇas*. The outer wall panels of Hazara Rama temple is known for its dance sculptures depicting Kolata, Holi dance sequences. The sculptures of Achyutaraya temple, Vijaya Vithala temple and Krishna temple have some rare and charming dance images and include different *sthānas*, *cārīs* and *karaṇas* both belonging to *Mārga* and *Deśī* tradition. The dance sculptures in these temples show a wonderful symmetry of their forms.

The Hoysala and Vijayanagara temples selected for this research are; 1. Chennakeshava Temple, Belur, 2. Hoysaleshwara Temple, Halebidu, 3. Kedareshwara Temple, Halebidu, 4. Veeranarayana Temple, Belavadi, 5. Virupaksha Temple, Hampi, 6. Hazara Rama Temple, Hampi, 7. Krishna Temple, Hampi, 8. Achyutaraya Temple, Hampi, 9. Vijaya Vittala Temple, Hampi, 10. Mahanavami Dibba, Hampi.

The dance sculptures in the above listed select locations were studied for correlating *Deśī* dance elements and *Deśī* dance varieties.

### 2.4 Viṣama, Vikata and Laghu- Deśī dance categories

Medieval period treatises such as Saṅgīta Ratnākara, Mānasollāsa, Nṛtta Ratnāvali, Saṅgīta Samayasāra, Lāsyā Ranjana etc. have given elaborate description about *deśī* tradition. Many of these treatises recognise three categories of *Deśī* dance and they are *viṣama*, *vikaṭa* and *laghu* (SR 7.31-32). *Viṣama* involves dancing with ropes and sticks which also involves acrobatic movements. *Vikaṭa* is ludicrous in form, dress and movement and *laghu* is the one which constitutes minor *karaṇas* such as *añcita*. The examples for all three categories can be seen in temples built during Vijayanagara period.

The dance sculpture in Pl No 1 can be seen on the pillar of Vijaya Vithala temple. Similar sculptures are there in Virupaksha and Achyutaraya Temple also. Here a female dancer is holding a long stick and about to delineate a tough jump (similar to that of pole vault) while

dancing. The sculpture is clearly representing *Viṣama* category of dance. PI No 2 belongs to the second group of dance, that is *Vikata*, where in the dancer is moving like a clown. Inward turned knee and outward turned feet, and outward turned hands indicate he is behaving in a ludicrous way like a comedian. It is clearly visible that the charming dancer in PI No 3 is delineating a graceful *karāṇa*. This sculpture is on one of the pillars in Virupaksha Temple. This elegantly dressed dancer is in the intermediary movement of the *lalita karāṇa* which is a *Mārga karāṇa*.

Figure 1:



PI No 1 *Viṣama* dance, Hampi



PI No 2 *Vikata* dance, Hampi



PI No 3 *Laghu nṛtya*, Hampi

It is also observed that the Hoysala and Vijayanagara temples have a number of sculptures correlating with the description of *Deśī sthānas*, *cārīs* and *karāṇas* given in the texts of medieval period. Here are some of the examples of dance sculptures that are in accordance with the description given in *Saṅgīta Ratnākara*, one of the important texts on the *Deśī* tradition

### 2.5 Dancer in *Svastika sthān*:

SR describes 23 *Deśī sthānas*<sup>iii</sup> and *Svastika* is one among them. *Svastika sthāna* is done by keeping two feet in *saṃhata* posture and then bending them and crossing them so that the two little toes touch each other. (SR 7.1073-4)



PI No. 4 Dancer in *Svastika sthāna*, Halebidu

As observed, the list of *sthānas* in *Mārga* does not include *svastika*. However it mentions ‘*svastika*’ named *samyuta hasta*, *nṛtta hasta* and a *karaṇa* and whenever *svastika* name appears, NS suggests crossing of feet or hands. In case of *svastika Mārga karaṇa*, NS does not mention precisely the distance between the feet when they are crossed. It just says hands and feet have to be crossed in *svastika karaṇa* (NS IV- 75). The *Deśī* tradition also mentions *svastika karaṇa* and says that the foot has to assume *svastika* form. (SR 7.994). But in case of *Deśī svastika sthāna* the distance between the crossed feet is precisely mentioned. This *sthāna* is attained by crossing the *kuñcita* feet in such a way that the two little toes touch each other.

The dancer in Plate No 4 is accompanied by a set of musicians who are engrossed in playing the percussion instrument. This sculpture is a part of wall frieze of the Hoysaleshwara Temple in Halebidu. The dancing figure has a slight bending of *kati* (*udvāhitā*) and head (*añcita*) which are enhancing the beauty and charm of the sculpture. The flat feet in *svastika* position indicates that she has just concluded a movement and about to assume the *svastika sthāna*. Her raised left hand appears to be in *alapadma* gesture and the right hand is gracefully kept in the shoulder level in *dolā*. Facial features of this dancer and the musicians are not clearly seen as the sculpture is unfortunately not in good condition. A variation of the *Deśī svastika sthāna* is analysed with legs crossed and feet placed in flat position, which can be observed in the above sculpture.

**The dancer and the ascetic in *Ekapāda*:** One foot is in the *Sama* position and the other foot touches its outer side above the knee on its outer side. (SR 7-1078). Above the basement friezes of the Chennakeshava Temple there are miniature *sālabhanjikas* in attractive dance postures. One of them is the beautiful and charming *sālabhanjika* in Pl No 5, which is adorning the northern wall of the temple. She seems to be busy adjusting her ear ring by looking at the mirror, but unfortunately the forearm and the mirror of this sculpture is damaged. The mood of *vāsaka sajjikā nāyika*<sup>1</sup> has been captured by the sculptor through this graceful stance, with an emphasis on *kati* bending. Her left foot is in exact *Sama* position and right foot is raised and placed on her left knee. It looks as though this charming *madanika* is checking whether her big ear ring is in place or not by looking at the mirror.

---

<sup>1</sup> Bharata describes eight types of heroines who are known as ‘*Aṣṭa nāyikas*’ in NS. One of them is *Vāsaka sajjikā nāyika*, who gets dressed in anticipation of her lover’s arrival.



PI No 5 Dancer in *ekapāda sthāna*, PI No 6 Ascetic in *ekapāda*

Her *udvāhitā kati* (hip raised on one side) and *parivāhita shira* (head turned to one side) have enhanced the beauty of the sculpture. Plate No 6 is a sculpture of an ascetic in the Achyutaraya temple, Hampi. Here the sculpture is effectively depicting that the sage is in a mode of penance by standing in *ekapāda*. These two sculptures are the appropriate examples for the possibility of using the same *sthāna* to communicate different expressions.

**Dancer in *Parāvṛtta*:** The big toe and the little toe are in level with the heel of the other foot (SR 7-1084). The sculpture in PI No 7 is yet another dancer adorning the Chennakeshava temple. Unfortunately her right hand is broken and she is holding her cloth in her left hand. Her turned left foot is almost in contact with the big toe of the right foot. The deep curve of her *udvāhitā kati* and tilted *añcita* head has given a tri-flexion effect to the sculpture. Thus by giving life to this dancer in *parāvṛtta*, the sculptor has immortalised this *sthāna*.



PI No 7 *Parāvṛtta sthāna*, Belur



### 3. *Deśī cārīs* in sculptures

A *cārī* represents the dynamic aspect of a *karāṇa*. *Sthāna* is a static posture and the two are closely connected. NS describes *cārī* as delicate movements of one leg or the coordination of movements of the feet, shank and thighs. It is also stated that *cārī* is one form of the *vyāyāmas* or exercises.

**Male dancers in *Rathacakrā cārī*:** The two feet are kept on the ground in *caturaśra Deśī sthāna* and then slipped forward and backward. (SR7.971-2). Other texts such as *Mānasollāsa*, *Nṛttaratnāvali* agree with this description. In addition to the above description, *Nartana Nirṇaya* also says that even if one foot slides, that is also *rathacakrā*. (NN 4.463)



Pl No 8 Male dancers in *rathacakrā cārī*, Vijaya Vittala temple, Hampi

The dancers in Plate No 8 are present on the friezes of Vijaya Vittala temple in Hampi. They are in *caturaśra sthāna* and sliding their feet resulting in *rathacakrā*. Both the dancers have kept their hands in *ardharecita hasta*. Their head dress and costume look funny. Such dance sculptures are commonly seen in Vijayanagara temples. With their big tummy it is probable that they are performing *vikaṭa* category of dance.

***Kulīrikā*:** Oblique movement with the feet kept in *nandyāvartā*<sup>iv</sup> posture. (SR 7.978) The dancer in Pl No 9 is on the wall frieze of Hoysaleswara temple. The dancer has moved his left leg in oblique direction from *nandyāvartā* stance. The multiple anklets, jewellery, head dress and costume of the male dancing figure indicate that he is performing '*Perāṇi*', a type of *Deśī* dance which was popular during medieval period in Karnataka. Senior researcher Tulasi Ramachandra in her book '*Gauṇḍali-Perāṇi*' writes that a *Perāṇi* dancer paints his whole body white in bells till his knees (as style of dance which



in Pl No 9). It is an *uddata* involves vigorous movements.

PI No 9 Male dancer in *Kulūrikā*

*Sālabhanjika*

and drummer in *Viśhliṣṭā*:

The feet in *pārṣṇividdha sthāna* are separated and made to approach each other or move away from each other. (SR 7.979, Mānas 6.4. 1343, LR 6.67-68, NN 4.470). The charming *sālabhanjika* in PI No 10 portrays the lady in a movement mode with a lifted hand. This exquisite sculpture is one of the famous *madanikas* bracket figures in the Chennakeshava Temple, Belur. In the sculpture, a monkey is pulling her dress and the lady chasing it with a twig. The sculptor has frozen this *sālabhanjika* in *viśliṣṭa cārī*. The turned right knee (*vivrta*) indicates the dynamic approach of the sculpture. The feet are moving away from the *pārṣṇividdha sthāna* (feet one behind the other with heel touching the big toe of the other foot.) and thus resulting in the *viśliṣṭa* mode. The *cārī* is done by separating the feet from *pārṣṇividdha sthāna* and bringing them back to the original position.



PI No 10 Sālabhanjika in *Viśhliṣṭā cārī*, Belur



PI No 11 Musician-cum-dancer in *Viśhliṣṭā*, Halebidu

The beautiful sculpture of a female drummer in Pl No 11 is adorning the walls of the Kedareshwara Temple. She is forcefully moving back and forth while playing the percussion instrument. She is enjoying the rhythm played out by her and dancing powerfully which is very well reflected in the movements of her costume and jewellery



Pl 12 *Nṛtya Gaṇapa in Khuṭṭā cārī*,  
Halebidu.



Pl 13 Male dancer in *Khuṭṭā cārī*, Hampi

*Nṛtya Gaṇapa in Khuṭṭā cārī*: Striking the ground with the tip of the foot (SR 7.993, LR 6.82, NN 4.485). Gaṇapati is the presiding deity for any auspicious celebrations. Being the son of divine dancers Śiva and Pārvati, he is often represented in dancing form. The *Nṛtya Gaṇapa* or dancing Ganesha of Halebidu (Pl No 12) is in '*khuṭṭā*' mode. He is in a joyful mood of dancing on the lotus pedestal. His kati is slightly bent to the left while his right foot is busy striking the ground. The sculptor might have thought that *khuṭṭā* (striking the ground with the tip of the foot) is the appropriate *cārī* to portray pot-bellied dancing Ganesha, as this *cārī* does not require vigorous movement of the body. *Khuṭṭā cārī* is evident in another dance sculpture (Pl No 13) which is in the hundred pillared hall of Hampi Virupaksha temple. He is striking the ground with the toes and his raised hands and the bent waist are indicating the action.

#### 4. Sculptures correlating with *Deśī ākāśa cārīs*

The main feature of *ākāśa cārī* is that it involves jumps and leaps covering the *ākāśa* or space. In the process of doing so one or both the feet are lifted above ground. SR gives a list of 19 *Deśī ākāśa cārīs*.

**Dancers in *Purahkṣepā*:** *Purahkṣepā* is done by throwing up *kuñcita* foot and stretching it forward quickly, place it on the ground (SR 7.1002).



PI No 14 *Purahkṣepā*, Hampi

The dancers (PI No 14) on the wall friezes of the *mantapa* of Vijaya Vithala temple have lifted and stretched their legs by keeping pointed toes. It is evident that they are executing *purahkṣepā ākāśa cārī*. They are doing '*kolata*' or stick dance which was a popular dance during Vijayanagara times. SR and NN mention a *Deśī* dance sequence named '*Daṇḍa rāsa*' which has similarities with *kolata*.

#### 4.1 Male dancer in *Utkṣepā* and *Prṣṭhokṣepā*:

*Utkṣepā* and *prṣṭhokṣepā* are two *Deśī ākāśa cārīs*. The throwing up of the *kuñcita* forward and backward up to the knee is *utkṣepā*. (SR 7.1012). Same is done backwards alone is *prṣṭhokṣepā*. (SR 7.1012-13) The sculpture of a male folk dancer playing the 'duff' shown in PI No 15 from Vijaya Vithala temple is a clear depiction of *utkṣepā* and *prṣṭhokṣepā*. After throwing his left leg he has bent his knee and taking his left foot backwards. The upward thrust in the jumping movement can be seen in the sculpture.



Plate No 16 *Kapalacurṇana karaṇa*, Hampi

### ***Deśī karaṇas* in sculptures**

*Deśī karaṇas* are more acrobatic in nature compared to *Deśī cārīs*. Many of them are small units of movements compared to that *Mārga karaṇas*. SR mentions 36 *Deśī karaṇas*<sup>v</sup>

#### **4.2 Male dancer doing *Kapālacūrṇana*:**

Standing with the feet in the *sama* position, touching the ground with the head by bending backwards and returning to the normal position is described by scholars as *kapālacūrṇana*. (SR 7.979). The male dancer in Pl No 16 is adorning one of the pillars in the hundred pillared hall of Virupaksha temple at Hampi. He must be a very flexible performer. His perfectly balanced back bending movement is a part of *kapālacūrṇana karaṇa*. He is on his way to keep his head on the floor. This demanding *karaṇa* is done by standing in the *sama* position of the feet and touching the ground with the head by bending backwards and returning to the normal position. This could be a popular *karaṇa* of *Deśī* tradition which was prevalent during Vijayanagara rulers.



5. Dancer  
*Chattrabhramarī*

Pl No 17 Chattrabhramarī,

performing

After assuming a posture like that of *Trivikrama* (one foot on the ground and raising the other), one turns round to the left then that *karaṇa* is called *chatrabhramarī*. (SR 7.777). The female dancers during Vijayanagara times were skilled both in graceful and acrobatic movements. The dancer on a pillar at Hundred Pillared Hall in Virupaksha temple, Hampi (Pl No 17) is taking a turn with her right leg raised high. She has achieved perfect balance while doing this difficult and demanding movement. After standing like *Trivikrama* she is all set to take a turn confidently to complete the *chatrabhramarī*. She exudes confidence which is evident in her poise, slightly lifted head and completely extended leg.

## **6. Observations**

It is observed that the *Deśī sthānas*, *cārīs* and *karaṇas* are adequately applied in the sculptures of the temples surveyed. Out of 23 *Deśī sthānas*, sculptures correlating to 19 *sthānas* were found in the temples and sites selected for this research. This is a credible proof that the *Deśī sthānas* were predominantly practised during medieval period in Karnataka. Out of 35 clearly described *Deśī bhūmi cārīs*, the field work yielded sculptures correlating with as many as 30 *cārīs*. Some *cārīs*, such as *kulīrikā*, which was a predominant movement in *Deśī* dance '*Perani*' is seen more in Hoysala temples. Likewise *cārīs* involving delicate movements of the feet such as *pārṣṇirecitā* and *ūrūveṇī* are well represented in beautiful bracket figures of Hoysala temples. It may also be noted that *deśī ākāśa cārīs* are represented more in Vijayanagara temples than in Hoysala temples. There are several sculptures in Vijayanagara temples depicting acrobatic *karaṇas*. One interesting phenomenon is that the sculptures in Hoysala temples include more *Deśī sthānas* and *cārīs*, whereas the Vijayanagara sculptures involve *ākāśa cārīs*, *karaṇas* along with *bhūmi cārīs* and *sthānas* of the *Deśī* tradition.

## **References**

- Bharatamuni. *Nāṭyaśāstra*. ed. Manmohan Ghosh. Vol I and II, 1950, Calcutta: Asiatic Society
- Bose Mandakranta. (2001). *Speaking of Dance*. New Delhi : D.K.Printworld Ltd
- Bose Mandakranta . (1970). *The dance vocabulary of Classical India*. New Delhi: D.K.Printworld Ltd.
- Brown Percy. (1942). *Indian architecture (Buddhist and Hindu Periods)*, Vol I. Charlottesville, VA : University of Virginia.
- Devi, Ragini (1990). *Dance dialects of India*. New Delhi, India: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Pvt. Ltd
- Khokar Mohan. (1979). *Traditions of Indian Classical dance*. New Delhi: India Library.
- Kothari Sunil. (2001). *Bharatanāṭyam: Indian Classical Dance Art*. New Delhi: Mārg
- Nandagopl Choodamani. (1990). *Dance and Music in Temple Architecture*. Delhi: Agam Publications.

- Nandagopl Choodamani. (2007). *Shile- Kale*. Bangalore: Sundara Prakashana.
- Raghavan, V. (1965, 2004). *Splendors of Indian Dance*. Chennai: Dr V Ragahavan Centre for Performing Arts
- Ramachandra Tulasi. (2001). *Pada Gati- Paada Gati*, Hampi : Kannada University Prasaranga
- Simhabhūpāla. *Lāsyā Rañjana*. ed. Rangaswami Iyengar H.R and Krishna Jois S N. (1966). Mysore: Mysore University
- Śārṅgadeva. *Saṅgītaratnākara with the commentaries of Kallinātha and Simhabhūpāla*. ed Subramanya Sastri, S. Vol I-IV. (1943, 1944, 1951, 1953), Madras: Adyar Library Series.
- Śārṅgadeva . *Saṅgīta Ratnākara*. Translation by Kunjunni Raja AK and Radha Burnier. (1976). Madras : Adyar Library Series.
- Vatsyayan Kapila. (1968). *Classical Indian Dance in Literature and Arts*. New Delhi: Kendra Sangita Nataka Academy.
- Vatsyayan Kapila. (1996). *Bharata: The Natyasastra*. New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi
- [yabaluri.org/TRIVENI/.../DanceTraditionsofSouthIndiamay35.htm](http://yabaluri.org/TRIVENI/.../DanceTraditionsofSouthIndiamay35.htm) referred on 01.11.2011

---

<sup>i</sup> Nāṭya- Indian dance can be divided into three categories and they are *nṛtta*, *nṛtya* and *nāṭya*. *Nṛtta* corresponds to pure dancing performed rhythmically. In *nṛtya*, meaning is conveyed through the facial gestures and emotions. *Nāṭya* corresponds to drama. This category combines both *nṛtta* and *nṛtya* elements of dance. *Nāṭya* means dramatic representation involving all the three aspects- speech, music and dancing.

<sup>ii</sup> Abhinaya- In *Nāṭyaśāstra* Bharata describes histrionics, which is called as *abhinaya*.

<sup>iii</sup> 23 Deśī sthānas mentioned in SR are Svastika, Vardhamāna, Nandyāvarta, Saṃhata, Samapāda, Ekapāda, Pṛṣṭhottānata, Chaturaśra, Pārṣṇividha, Pārṣṇiparśvagata, Ekaparśvagata, Ekajānunata (Ekajānugata), Parāvṛtta, Samasūcī, Viśamasūcī, Khaṇḍasūcī, Brāhma, Vaiṣṇava, Śaiva, Gāruda, Kūrmāsana, Nāgabandha, Vṛṣabhāsana.

<sup>iv</sup> Nandyavarta *sthāna* is done by by keeping the two feet oblique with a distance of 6 or 12 *angulas* between them (SR 7.1074-5)

<sup>v</sup> The 36 *deśī karanas* according to SR are *Añcita*, *Ekapādañcita*, *Bhairavāñcita*, *Daṇḍaprañmñcita*, *Kartaryāñcita*, *Alaga*, *Kūrmāḷaga*, *Ūrdhvāḷaga*, *Antarāḷaga*, *Lohaḍī*, *Kartarīlohaḍī*, *Ekapādalohaḍī*, *Darparasaraṇa* *Jalaśayana*, *Nāgabandha*, *Kapālacūrṇana*, *Natapṛṣṭa*, *Matsyakarāna*, *Karasparāsana*, *Enapluta*, *Tiryakkarāna*, *Tiryagāñchita*, *Tiryaksvastika*, *Sūcyānta*, *Bāhyabhramarī*, *Antarbhramarī*, *Chattrabhramarī*, *Tiripabhramarī*, *Alagabhramarī*, *Cakrabhramarī*, *Añcitabhramarī*, *Śirobhramarī*, *Dikbhramarī*, *Samapādāñcita*, *Bhrāntapādāñcita* and *Skandabhrānta*