

Representation of Elephant in Hoysala Temples: with Reference to Hoysaleshwara Temple of Halebidu

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ABSTRACT

The temples built between 11th and 14th centuries by the Hoysala rulers exhibit intricate sculptures and freezes in stone as a part of its architecture. Being extremely stylistic, they belong to Karnataka a state in the southern part of India. Some of the temples of this period include the temples at Belavadi, Amruthapura, Hosaholalu, Mosale, Arasikere etc. Some of the important ones are marked as Chennakesava Temple at Belur, the Hoysaleswara Temple at Halebid and the Keshava Temple at Somanathpura. The temples dedicated to Shiva or Vishnu the two main deities of the Hindu pantheon placed in the sanctum sanctorum with a circumambulatory passage, the outer portion unfolds on a unique plan with projections and recesses in the external walls. The temple walls are richly covered with intricately carved sculptures with themes of different forms of the Hindu gods and goddesses, along with stylised animal figures and exquisitely decorative patterns of flora and fauna. The Hoysaleswara temple is well known for its sculptures that run all along the outer wall, starting with a dancing image of the elephant god Ganesha on the left side of the south entrance and ending with another image of Ganesha on the right hand side of the north entrance. There are also good examples of the elephants sculpted on the walls, represented as the vehicle of Indra and as the demon Gajasura who is slayed by Shiva. Other interesting representations of the elephant are elephant flanked by the steps of parapets that lead to the temple as also represented as part of the freezes of the temple walls.

The present paper proposes to study the elephant images presented in the Hoysaleshwara temple of Halebidu, along with its characteristic form, and it would also analyse the symbolic representations.

Keywords: *Elephant, Ganesha, Gajasamhara, Hoysala, Hoysaleshwara, Halebidu*

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