

CHAPTER - VI

**DEVANGANA SCULPTURAL IMAGE STUDY PART-II - POST GUPTA AND  
MEDIEVAL DEVANGANAS : THEIR INDIVIDUAL MOTIF ANALYSIS**

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CHAPTER - VIDEVANGANA SCULPTURE IMAGE STUDY PART - II :

## VI.1

## POST GUPTA AND MEDIEVAL DEVANGANAS :

## THEIR INDIVIDUAL MOTIF ANALYSIS

The overlapping of meaning in the imageries of Salabhanjika, nadi devis, nayika-kutilaka group, mithunas, aquatic motifs, varuna etc., implicit in their representation on religious architecture now lead us to the study of individual devangana imageries. In doing so our attention will focus on their varied representations and the contexts in which they have been placed on temple architecture. The aquatic connection emerges as major connecting link between the graceful imageries of celestial women, often interpreted by scholars as representations of nayikas in stages of love and exhibiting their charms. Often looked at by scholars as apsaras, those infamous alluring 'snare'-like characters of the Puranas, who when depicted on the temples, perform their graceful charms on the spectators. The antithesis between woman and wisdom, sorrow lurking behind the sensual, are observed by some as the reasons why the so called apsaras are carved in profusion on the temple walls.<sup>1</sup> This does not appear convincing.

The intention with which I have built up the base, bridging the Salabhanjika, yaksini, nadidevis and apsaras, is to unravel the more chthonic level of meaning which can be traced back to the Vedic sources. The presence of the woman is ever auspicious and protective, her nourishing aspect and the sensual aspect fuse together or imply fertility, and these concepts have remained in the Indian human psyche

perenninally. It is only the contemporary representation which changes the form and hence, Khajuraho devanganas appear over sensuous than Jagat or Matnura yaksis. In my view there is no difference in the conceptual motif, only its imagery differs now and then. It will be demonstrated in the following sections that even visually, in terms of postures, actions and the attributes, there is a continuity in the imageries of many devanganas which are conceptually characterized in Vedic literature or early yaksi images. The devangana imagery identified earlier and freshly identified by the <sup>present</sup> author<sup>86</sup> are cited as darpana, alasa vasanabhransa, markatachesta, vira, nati, prasadhika, nupurapadika, nalini kamaladharini, sangitavadini, svastana sparsa, kesanistoyakarini, alabhanjika, putra vallabha, kanduka krida,

#### SVASTANA SPARSA

The motif of the 'lady touching her own breast' has been represented in various ways from the prehistoric times, till the time this motif became popular on temple architecture. The distinct variations of this imagery are :

- (1) Woman squeezing her breast while holding the branch of the shala tree (Ajanta, Cave 19) (Fig. 125)
- (2) Putra vallabha offering the milk from her own breast to the child (Sanghol pillar upright (Fig. 126)
- (3) Keshanistoya karini offering water droplets from her freshly washed hair and squeezing her breast at the sametime (Sander, Rani ki Vav), (Fig. 145)
- (4) admiring one's own sensual charm (Gurgi, Jagat, (Fig. 130, 134) Khajuraho),
- (5) Sadyasnata covering her open breasts and slipping wet garment (Khajuraho, Lakshmana temple) (Fig. 135, 170)
- (6) Paribhogadarsini enjoying the nail marks after love-making around the breast (Khajuraho),
- (7) touching the breast with one hand and the sole

of the foot lifted behind, near the hip, in pristhasvastika pose, which appears more of an acrobatic dance pose (Gwalior, Sas temple, (Fig.

) Gurgi wall fragment (Fig. 131) The various connotations implied by these actions evoke an idea of the layers of meaning that are hidden in these motifs.

Our visual conditioning of the action of woman touching her own breasts goes back to the prehistoric mother goddesses, who are represented with large procreative organs. The same action is repeated on a pillar from Sanghol of the Kushana period. Further, on a Mathura pillar, the lady holding a flower and squeezing her own breast by slightly bending on one side, has been placed on a water pitcher with creepers sprouting out of it. Here the nourishing and fertility aspects are combined. She has been identified as Sri Lakshmi by Sivaramamurti, but the identification of Prithvi would be more appropriate. For her roles as the mother, milk bearing and mother of the mankind, this goddess has been extolled in Rigveda and Atharva veda as the one who is asked to 'duh' (AV, 12.17.45), she holds the world in her womb (visva garbha) (AV 12.1.43), she is the Visva-dhaya (nurse) (AV, 12.1.27). The non-existent (asat) came into existence from her (AV. 4.19.6) and everything that has been (bhuta) and that is to be (bhavya), is said to have been born in her. (AV. 13.1.54), The Vedic earth goddess is conceived anthropomorphically as possessing a body (tanu) (AV 12.12.30), head (murdha) (RV, 10.88.6), chest (baksha) (AV. 12.1.6, 26), hand (hastam) (AV, 14.1.48), back (pristha) (AV. 5.20.6), arm (bahu) (AV 13.3.25-28) and breast full of milk (12.1.59). The earth goddess is said to have many streams (AV 12.1.9) and is asked to suckle 'payas'.<sup>3</sup> The Prithvi is also conceived as a mother and a youthful

maiden and sajosa (RV 8.34.23)

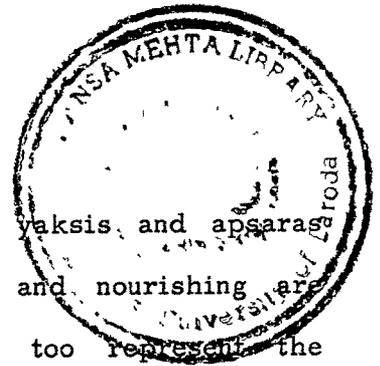
This imagery is very important for the later yaksis and apsaras also, because the aspect of youthfulness, fertility and nourishing are implied in their actions. Some of the devanganas too represent the continuity of this notion.

(AIIS 440-62) The Ajanta cave 19 shows the salabhanjika standing in svastika pada holding the branch of a tree with one hand and her own breast with the other. Here the tree connects her with the vegetal force of nature.

The Gurgi torana detail of the kumbhika of about 10th *century* (Reva Maharaja's Palace) represents the lady pulling an amralumbi with the out-stretched left arm, while touching the breast from the right. She stands bending forward her head with down cast eyes. (AIIS 58-46)

In case of Jagat, Ambika temple devanganas, two of them are represented standing next to each other. One is in sama while the other in swastika pada. There is no symbolic allusion to aquatic or vegetal aspects of nature. The lady in swastika mandala actually strikes a stylized posture.

The combination of woman wringing out water from her hair and simulataneously squeezing her breast is found at Badoli, Kiradu, Rani ki Vav, Sander etc. O.C. Ganguli observes that the imagery of the earth and her tresses of hair saturated with water, can thus be independently derived from the Vedic sources without reference to the Buddhist tradition - which itself may have borrowed the imagery from the original Vedic source<sup>4</sup>. From the Vedic point of view, it may be suggested that



the Earth Goddess will carry in her tresses all the water that descend from the air clouds, and she could easily wring out any amount of water from her flowing tresses.<sup>5</sup> This imagery connects the earth goddess with rivers of the country and the same imagery can be extended to the devanganas holding the breast, wringing hair, holding a water pitcher or a lotus with the later so called river goddesses. Since the concept of Laksmi is Puranic, the identification of a certain motif of abundance, prosperity fertility and vegetation could be more suitably identified as Prithvi or Ila, Puramdhi, Dhisana.

On Sacchiyamata temple at Osia, (Fig. 136) the devangana is shown standing in the gatagata pose while touching her breast. She is attended upon by a rishi holding a plate and a dwarf, almost pulling at her sari. This seems to imply some ritual and indicates the most unique example.

The action of squeezing one's own breasts while swaying gracefully, has a clear erotic connotation which is greatly explored by the Khajuraho artists. They not only depict women observing the nail marks of love play, but shyly enjoying one's own sensual charm. Some are depicted revealing boldly their charms, while others are shown from profile or back view as if hiding or partially revealing themselves. Stella Kramrisch calls this tendency of revealing-hiding as 'vyakta-avyakta'<sup>6</sup> (Kandariya Mahadeva temple, N.Wall) (Fig. 164)

The motif of woman watching the nail marks after love play has fascinated Indian poets from a very early period, and this motif actually bridges the link between poetic and artistic imageries; e.g., lady observing the nail marks around the breast from Visvanath temple (Fig. 135) (Khajuraho, Vidya Prakash, pl.79). A verse from Subhasita Ratnakosa-

615 refers to this charming act of the lady 'Now she opens, now she covers, her hard and full grown breasts. She looks, gazing on the nail marks he had made, like a begger who did find a gem'.<sup>7</sup>

Two verses from Kalidasa's *Rtusamharam* 4.12, 5.15<sup>8</sup>, refers to the nayikas watching the fine nail inscriptions on breasts which reveal the passionate enjoyment, relentless of women in the first flush of youth. These coveted signs of love's fulfilment are rejoicing, and women decorate themselves again as the sun rises.

But the pearl necklace resting on the breasts of the nayika delights in "It is punya that might help, that man may be born again as rain drop and ride a cloud so as to reach an oyster's mouth. May his virtue then serve to turn him into lovely form,"

Which would play upon your rising breasts', (S.R. 408)<sup>9</sup> a form which the lover would want to take."

Rajasekhara voices his poetic admiration of the women whose attributes besides round breasts and triple folds, are the crescent moon shaped nail marks.<sup>10</sup> (SR. No.623, p.213)

The intense kama has over-taken the nayika in another verse of Rajasekhara, the cut of lover's nail upon her breast shows drops of blood as red as lac, as if of Kama's fire, grown strong within, the sparks had burst forth through her heart'. (S.R.No.612)

What better example suited to illustrate this aspect of feminine charm than Khajuraho surasundari sculptures be cited? Thus there are various shades of interpretations and representations possible to

comprehend the act of svastana sparsa which evolve from human imagination and experience, ranging between generative fertility and consummate eroticism.

### KESANISTOYAKARINI

The visual representation of the lady bathing under a water stream (sadyasnata) and squeezing her freshly bathed hair, whose droplets are held by the eager swans (Kesanistoyakarini), are first carved on Mathura stupa pillars. The above term is found in Matsya Purana while the same action is described in Sringara Manjari of Bhoja as kabarinischyotana<sup>11</sup>

The slight variations that the sculptors have made in the representation of this imagery are :

- (1) Woman standing in a gently swaying pose holding the wet hair under a foliated tree bearing fruits, accompanied by an eager swan catching the droplets, (Mathura, Cleveland Museum, Sanghol, National Museum, (Fig. 137) Roda, pillar capital, Temple No.6 (Fig. 138) Sander, Osian, Harihara group I)
- (2) While engaged in this act she is accompanied by a male companion who holds her by the waist, (Nagarjunakonda, ayaga relief) (Fig. 52)
- (3) While squeezing the hair the devangana also squeezes her breast as if implying nourishment, (Jagat, Rani ki Vav) where the foliage, fruits and wet drapery enhance the eroticism and fertility (Fig. 145)
- (4) While engaged in the act of kesanistoya the lady's wet garment slips down revealing her vulva and she stands shyly in baddhachari to cover her shame, while the hand touches the breast in vain

to cover them. An element of surprise and coyness are intermingled in this representation of the erotic motif.

The 'bathing' motif is connected with erotic attraction and impregnation. But here the woman herself is a personification of the waters and the woman<sup>a</sup>/swan pair find its origin in the Apsara - Gandharva pair. (refer Apsara in the chapter<sup>on</sup> Vedic literature). This imagery also represents the idea of earth drenched with rain water which supplied nourishment to the mankind and the nature. The placement of the Rani ki Vav devangana sculptures, in the niches of the buttressing walls of a subterranean architecture, juxtaposing the various forms of Vishnu (residing in waters), represents the spirit of the water reservoir which sustains human life.

The fertility or impregnation aspects are alluded to suggestively by the exposure of the vulva, which implies the tertiary connotation of the present motif. This also implies the iconological continuation from sensual charm to implicit procreativity of water and vegetation symbolised by woman.

The devangana Kesanistoyakarini is generally represented frontally with slight or exaggerated bend from the waist. The legs are either placed in sama, swastika or baddhachari. Very often the gatagata position is also favoured. But some interesting postural configurations are also tried by the sculptors from Badoli, Ghateshvara Mahadeva temple, mandapa pillar, (Fig. 235) and (Gurgi, Rewa kotwali wall fragment, (AHS 129-98) (Fig. 146). In both the sculptures the legs are in extreme swastika, upon which the torso is bent and stretched, twisting around the axis as if reminding us of the Mannerist sculpture.

Yet another unusual representation is from Jabalpur (Rani Durgavati Museum AIIS 79-55), (Fig. 144) where the devangana is shown in complete profile, bending forward with the weight of her full bust and drenched hair.

#### PUTRAVALLABHA

The imagery of putravallabha is most auspicious and pleasant in which the concepts of eroticism and fertility culminate into a happy maternity. The representation of the imagery is most natural and reveals a proud mother firmly holding her baby. Here the mother principle which develops from Aditi into Durga, the highest goddess of feminine energy to create, sustain and destroy, is not implied. Rather it reveals a more chthonic earthy spirit of mother, appealing to the masses benevolently, assuring, inviting and nourishing.

The iconography of the great goddess is highly complex and refers to all her attributes, while the imagery depicting a putravallabha in contrast, requires just <sup>the</sup> baby held by the woman, who is often shown holding an amralumbi from the tree above her. This juxtaposition makes the fertility-maternity commonly shared by nature and mankind as cognate phenomena. Sachiymata temple, Osia, also contains this imagery on the north wall of its eastern devakulika. She stands next to Varuna. (AIIS 490.10) (Fig. 155)

Putra vallabha holding child and Amralumbi are also found from Alwar, Nilakanth Mahadeva temple, on the pillars of the mandapas, Gurgi Rewa kotwali, (Fig. 133) and Modhera, Sun temple (Fig. 153) where it is represented next to Indra on the mandovara.

The Vedic goddesses, the apsarases, the yakshis, are known mother concepts and hence the Indian psyche from early on was habituated with this imagery and widely represented it. Either in poetic imagery or in visual imagery, the mother as youthful, bountiful and cajoling, has remained unchanged.

The Sanghol mother is represented from her back lifting the child aloft, as if swinging him. The representation of her taught body stretching forward is unique (Fig. ) Another sculpture of mother and child playing with a rattle are depicted at Sanghol, an imagery which repeats again after a long gap on Aurangabad Cave-1 pillar bracket. The putravallabha is standing under a tree with the child and a dwarf nidhi. It has been identified as Hariti by some scholars. (Fig. 149)

At Tusa, Sun temple, Ranga Mandapa (AIIS 582.8), the mother and child are accompanied by attendants holding toys etc. The amralumbi from the tree behind hangs forward. The vitana is often adorned by the devanganas but the placement of putra vallabha here is unusual. (Fig. 150)

The mother from the Jagat Ambika temple, holds the baby aloft and looks adoringly at the child. There is no amralumbi indicated, but the dwarfish attendants holding kutlilaka draw our attention. Next to her is kubera in the bhadra niche on the north wall, who also has a similar attendant.

A matrika from Jhalarpatan (Jhalarpatan Museum, No.15 AIIS 88.1) represented on a pillar, is also accompanied by a similar dwarf with a bent stick and resting one leg on it. Since the matrika has no vahana, it would be more appropriate to call her putravallabha. The question

is what do<sup>e</sup>s the dwarf do here, with Kuttilaka, who has been identified earlier in section 2 of chapter 4 as a Vita? (Fig. 151)

Thus the motif of woman holding a child, touching a fruit, squeezing her own breasts, holding a branch of a tree or fruits, bathing in waters, are analogous principles of fertility, which revolve round the aspect of sensual beauty and eroticism. Here the difference lies in the supression of sexuality and seduction, which also emerge out of the erotic. Thus the erotic imagery has the potency to develop into sexual and seductive. The following five imageries of kanduka krida, darpana, alasa, vasanabhrmsa and markatachesta conform with the latter tendency.

#### KANDUKAKRIDA

The imagery of kandukakrida is found in Mathura (Kota, U.N.Roy Fig.46) (Fig. 156) which implies that perhaps this motif was adopted by the artists of the Kushana period as a profane motif of social past-time. The Sanghol sculpture shows a kalasha instead of a ball acrobatically balanced on the nayika's bent elbow. But, this motif is not without its sensuous overtones and could have emerged as a result of an influence of poetic imagery of a woman's beautiful, charming movements. While playing with the ball, the woman's body bends, twists, turns, and this spontaineous gesticulation allures the onlooker. Hence like the interest generated in the movements of a nati, the scūptors also began to explore to create virtuos representations of the woman in admiration of her graceful actions, Kanduka krida is a mundane activity which has found currency on the temple architecture whose origin is in literary imagination. The alluring element of feminine beauty are cited in Rsisringa/Apsara and Shiva/Mohini stories. In the

Aranyaka Parva of Mahabharata, the prostitute assumes the sensuous postures while playing with the ball. Like a creeper she keeps clinging to Rsisringa. She also bends the branches of the shala, ashoka and tila, and poses to be shy and engrossed, hangs on to the bent branches or plucks flowers from them! (3, 111, 15-16) Here the salabhanjika motif is also implied. In the 8th skanda of Bhagavat Purana, the Mohini form of Visnu playing with the ball, displaying her grace, bewitched even Shiva, the most steadfast of the yogis.

The kanduka krida of Mrigankavali in Viddha Salabhanjika has been beautifully rendered by Rajasekhara, creating a beautiful picture of the beauty of the woman's body in movement and concentration which steals the heart of the king. It is called kanduka keli - tandava. He observes that the mark of the tilaka has got washed off by the drops of perspiration on the forehead. She was exhibiting wonderful agility in course of the repeatedly quick beating of the ball (varam varena vinata drisah), in accordance with the manner of the movement of the ball falling down (pata) and then jumping up (utpata) time and again. At ever step, she is gratifying her spectators by her lovely display (lilalalitya) of striking (tadana) and throwing the ball in the air (uttala). Viddha Salabhanjika, (Act II, 6,7,8). Even from Padmaprabhritakam, one of the Chaturbhani plays, an instance of kanduka krida of Priyangu yastika is known, which is staged to show her nritya kausalyam.<sup>12</sup>

In Dasakumara Carita of Dandin, princess Kandukavati of Damalipta, propitiated goddess Vindhyavasini by performing before her on the day of the kritika every month, the kandukanritya. She adopted the three

tempo of madhya, vilamba and druta, She displayed rapid to and fro movements, plied both her hands, sang and sent the ball in all directions. She executed a number of karanas and moved in mandalas, wavy lines (gomutrika) and other movements referred to as gitamarga and panchabindu prasrita. The commentary refers to a text on ball playing as an art, called kandukatantra. Jayappa refers to kankuka nritta as a group dance in which the women, besides beating it on the ground threw and exchanged the ball and ran to catch it.<sup>13</sup>

Roda probably is the first site where this imagery is found on the pillar capitals of temple 6. (Fig. 158). It is the only site where this imagery is found and not repeated again on any other temples of Roda. The nayika has lifted one leg and placed it in svastika, while the body bends diagonally opposite. This gives an effect of gay abandon and the raised arms in uromandali hold the ball in one hand. She is accompanied by a dwarf who tries to catch the ball and in unison this composition creates a dynamic effect.

The Jagat, Ambika temple (Fig. 159) and Tusa, Surya Temple (Fig. 160) the lady is more articulate, her posture being represented in some kind of pristhasvastika pose. The carving of this image is superb for its firm bends and soft flexions are highly graceful. But the figure appears at rest as she drops down the ball from behind her head. The fluttering garments add dimension and breadth to the figure. The Khajuraho lady holds the ball in such a stylized way that one wonders whether she is playing or just displaying her charm. The vivrta kati bend is extremely difficult and carved with precision. The kandukakrida from Rani ki Vav is too stiff and static. (Fig. 161)

The artist's imagination reigns supreme in praising the charm and beauty of the woman. When this praise turns into a visual configuration of the woman either playing with a ball or squeezing the wet hair soon after bath, the artist articulates the postures of the female form by swaying or twisting it.

#### VASANA BHRAMSA

The instances of representation of the 'woman exposing her vulva' by untying her lower garment or by lowering it suggestively in an act of self exhibition, provoking erotic feelings, are found from the Kushana period onwards. But the veneration of the female generative organ goes back to the prehistoric period, represented by the mother goddess figurines with large pudendas, broad hips and heavy bust. The cult of the Aditi uttanapada, the faceless or lotus headed goddess (remember Venus of Willendorf) represented in the birth-giving posture, exposing the full vagina for ritual worship. This cult was prevalent from the earliest times right into the medieval period. Anterior to the Aditi Uttanapada is the ritual worship of the ring stones on which the representation of the nude goddess with tree and lizard is found in profusion. (Fig. 52 ) This then hints at the elemental female power or energy to reproduce, to enhance productivity and to assure off-springs. This fecundative power shared commonly by animal and nature are supportive and coexistent. Hence the act of vasanabhramsa is a sringaric representation of the exposure of nudity, which was more crudely and spontaneously depicted in early Indian art.

There is yet another way of representing this imagery, in which a scorpion is shown perched on the lady's thigh, due to which out of

fear and haste, her clothes seem to loosen and fall. But the auspiciousness of this concept seems to be very strongly favoured, and so in my observation the first or one of the early representations of devangana imagery on temple architecture is found at (1) Parshuramesvara temple, Bhubanesvar (mid 7th cent. A.D.) on the doorway along with amorous mithunas, (2) Temple - 6 Roda ((c. 8th cent. A.D.) on the pillar capitals. (3) Gadarmal Temple, Badoh - Pathari, (c.9th cent. A.D.) on the north wall of the mandovara.

This points to the conclusion that the chthonic principle of the female creative power was not only worshipped independantly, but became part of the architectural fabric since the very early period, in the form of symbols of auspiciousness. Buddhist and Hindu art both welcomed this imagery and gave it a prominent place on their religious architecture. But in terms of iconography not enough data is found, however, there is no denial that this imagery stems out of folk cults and gets absorbed into higher religions without losing its identity.

The Bhutesvara yaksi standing in contraposto presses below her weight dwarf, and opens the lower garment by holding its hem near the waist. This full-bodied voluptuous Kushana lady has been identified by V.S.Agrawala as Maha Nartaki, the textual source of which has not been mentioned. Above the yaksi stand two men on a balcony, one of whom holds a stick. Such an image is found for the first time from Mathura and hence it gives rise to a number of questions. Does it symbolize sexuality, fertility or auspiciousness? (Fig.165)

The motif of vasanabhramsa is not found so far, on the cave temples of Ajanta, Ellora, Aurangabad etc., but suddenly, reappears on the Roda

temple 6 (Fig. 91 ) along with the other devanganas, prominently placed on the pillar capitals. The same motif is also found gracefully standing on the same architectural juncture on Nilakanth temple, Abaneri (Fig. 167 ) The Roda devangana is also accompanied by a Vidusaka or Vita-like character holding a stick, Kutilaka.

The Gadarmal devangana (Fig. 166 ) (AIIS 81.10) C. 9th cent. A.D., placed in one of the niches of the north wall seems to imply sexual implications with her exposed pudendum and the baddha chari posture.

At Kekind, on the Nilakantha temple, 9th Cent. A.D., (Fig. 139 ) one observes that eroticism is the commonly shared component of the avasthas or situations of most of the devanganas. The overlapping shades of imagery of revealing one-self, are gracefully concealed with inherent eroticism. The wet drapery seems to cling to the limbs revealing the nudity, where as the end of the drapery is held by the nayika in the grace, langour and elegance of a dancer. Their stances too denote the sprightliness and repose of a dancer. The partial exposure of the nude figure is also found in Markatachesta and kesanistoya karini representations. But for vasanabharamsa, the baddha chari posture maintains the auchitya of its situation while more virile and animated stance of urdhvajanu is employed for the markatachesta. (Sacchiyanata temple, Osia, Fig. 183). The kesanistoyakarini appears agile only for the slightly lifted heel of her right leg in gatagata posture.

The Kekind lady seems to be freshly bathed and is seen arranging her wet drapery. The Jagat devangana appears to begin untying and her erotic fervour rising. Its location on the temple wall next to Chamunda and Yama also seems to be purposeful, since they preside over the

southern side. The friezes of couples above them on the pratiratha and salilan̄ara depict the couples in modes of passionate kissing. The other devanganas near her are svastanaspara (fertility) and khadgaadhari (vira).  
(Fig. 172)

The representation of this imagery in the decorative schemes of temple architecture are significant. Mandovara, entrance doorways, mandapa pillars, interior walls of the sandhara temple, are generally the favoured placements for these imageries.

The pillars from Doni, Damoh dist. M.P. (Rani Durgawati Museum NO.107, AIIS 298.38) (Fig. 175) and pillar reinstalled at Rewa Kotwali (58.41) (Fig. 233) both represent this imagery. At Doni, the devangana has been lifted up on a pedestal supported by the bharaputra. She stands in baddhachari revealing herself, while below her another lady stands in gatagata posture, whose body is turned in vivrta, with one arm lifted up and caressing a boar like animal with the other.

At Rewa Kotwali the typical swastika posture holding the border of the cloth and shy bend of the head is noticeable. Each figure is placed in pillared niches all around the pillar base.

The most unique feature of the Khajuraho devanganas is the addition of the scorpion, kharjuravahaka symbol, to the imagery of the devanganas, which intensifies the erotic aspect of the present imagery. The coy lady gracefully holds the hem of her lower garment while a scorpion perched on her thigh heightens the erotic sensation. It appears that this is just a 'concealed metaphor' of sexual excitement, or rather a sophisticated version of the Mathura yaksi, who unselfconsciously exhibits her nudity. They are found on the jangha of

the mandovara and the interior walls of the sandhara pradakshinapath~~e~~. Even on the garbhagriha walls in the interior they are placed prominently.

The case of <sup>the</sup> Sas temple at Gwalior (Fig. 42) brings to notice a different placement programme. The mandapa walls from the interior are also carved with single niche images of devanganas, especially on the conjoining of the subsidiary directions. It has been found that the imagery of vasanabhramsa is repeated at three out of four corners, which are concealed from general notice of the spectator. Does this refer to a special ritually offered to them in secrecy or they are placed here for the appreciation by the rasika? Their proximity with the small devi shrines inside the mandapa also imply the fertility connotation.

The Rani ki Vav architecture is a class by itself, unmatched in size, architectural intricacy and profusion of sculptures on both the sides of its bultress walls and in the circular interior of the shaft. It has the maximum number of devanganas placed in niches which alternate with the various forms of Visnu, Dikpalas, Durga, Parvati etc. One is even tempted to call it a Vaisnavite monument because of the predominance of the Vaisnava iconography. But the association of Visnu with an aquatic subterranean architecture is not surprising, because he is the lord presiding over the Ksirasaagar. But the Cardinality accorded to the devanganas in numbers and placement, suggests the fertility connotation connected with water and vegetation. The symbolism of the Vav is therefore not very obscure and suggests the continuity of thought from the Vedic apsaras to representations of yaksis to river goddesses and finally to devanganas. The continuous chain of analogous

representation of cognate principles, is the fundamental base upon which the approach to the study of the devanganas has been fixed.

The entire galaxy of vasanabhramsa images found at Rani ki Vav (Fig. 168) fall broadly under 2 types, a prototype standing for each type. The one placed on the kunda wall of the southern side stands in baddha chari, while the manner in which she holds her garment reminds us of the Bhutesvara yaksi. It is a singular representation of its kind which has never been repeated. The scorpion is shown very realistically clinging to the hem of the cloth.

The other type of devangana is standing in baddhachari, but sensuously enhancing the tribhanga by lifting her shoulder to bend the torso and the head sideways. The lifted foot of the leg which crosses in swastika, remains slightly raised above the ground. This lends agility to the whole posture. The lady is accompanied by a dwarf. The scorpion now appears on the thigh while the folds of the garment suggest that it is on the cloth. She gently lowers the garment to expose the pudenda.

(Fig. 171)

This posture is not only repeated at Rani ki Vav itself, but even at Sunak, (Fig. 173, 174), Gorad, Sander etc. in Gujarat. The motif and its postures were profusely used at Khajuraho before they travelled to Gujarat. The association too is unique to these two regions. It is difficult to assume that this imagery could have developed at the hands of Khajuraho masters.

As regards to the terminology, the term skhalita vasana has also been used by scholars (AIIS 240.79 Catalogue) for describing the same imagery. There is a subtle difference in the sense of both these words,

one is denoting the slipping of the garment unawares while the other is denoting a purposeful intentional action.

### MARKATACESTA

The motif of woman harassed by monkey, is a motif very much in use from the medieval period but its associations with literature or earlier sculptural traditions of Kushana period, have not come to my notice. Since it is not found along with the typical yakshi sculptures from Mathura (and now from Sanghol), there is no mention of this motif in V.S. Agrawal's work.<sup>14</sup>

The motif of woman harassed by a monkey can be interpreted as an erotic motif of seduction for which the Gandharvas are considered responsible. From T.A. Gopinath Rao, it is learnt that the Gandharvas are semi divine beings. Atharva veda calls them as hairy like monkeys or dogs, they assume at will handsome appearances to seduce the females of this earth. They are the knowers of the secrets of the divine truths and reveal them to the world. They are included in the class of Parjanyaas. Sayana links them with the Apsaras while the Agamas do not mention them.<sup>15</sup>

The swiftly moving posture of the lady whose soft curves revealed by the falling garment, suggests a discerning ability of the artist to carve the female figure in complicated postures. The Badoli Ghatesvara Mahadev (Fig. 176) temple mandapa pillar suggests the mastery and virtuosity of the early medieval sculptors in depicting the markatachesta. The stance is alidha while the kati is vivrta. The sculpture in parts is quite mutilated but still appears magnificent. Pillar base, probably, is the original place of devangana imagery, whose prototype came from

its wooden architecture background. The devanganas are placed one next to the other in a circular fashion which are not separated by smaller pillars. This allows an interplay between the devanganas and their imageries appeal to the viewer in unison. Even in their formal arrangement these figures imply the three dimensionality.

The monkey is often shown clinging to the lady's leg or literally pulling her garment off. Here many devanganas of vasanabhramsa and markata chesta seem to look alike. It seems that this imagery is pretty playful and does not seem to have any specific connotations of fertility. The idea of a mischievous animal like monkey harrassing women, seems to have been used as a similie of erotic pleasure obtained by a male in irritating a female, chasing her and forcing upon her his love. The restrained reaction of the lady by gently lifting her hand above holding a branch of a tree to drive him away, is invariably pretended and not natural as seen at Jagat. But the anger on the face of the nayika is distinct. Khajuraho has amply represented this motif. (Fig. 177, 178, 179)

Similar posture in baddha chari is found from <sup>Abaneri</sup> ~~Abaneri~~ as well as Gurgi (Fig. 133, 167).

But the sculptures from Osia, Sacchiya mata temple, (Fig. 183), and sander (Fig. 184) represent the nayika in urdhvajanu, whose ardha mandali posture often makes the vagina visible. The monkey placed in the centre bending towards her, pulling at her lower garment makes a very dynamic pose. The dress has already been lowered while the devangana grips the folds of the cloth together. The artist represents the volume of the cloth in a subtle manner.

The Sander temple repeats this posture on both its temples. The temple 2 shows a small frieze of seated group of rishi and kanya. Could it indicate some tantrik ritual in progress or just a group of guru-shishyas?

The dancer-like stance enhances the grace and postural flexibility in the representation of this imagery. Yet another type found from Osia Sachi Yamata temple is represented in alidha posture (Fig. 38) while looking backwards at the monkey pulling her garment. The posture is similar to the alter urdhvajanu posture of the vira nayika.

### VIRA

What an exhilarating change from the self-indulgent representation of sringaric nayikas and devanganas for a dynamic, self-asserting, weapon-wielding vira nayikas? Under this heading I will be discussing here the devangana sculptures represented on the temple architecture as personifications of strength, courage, and fierce aspect of the feminine power. The temple thus adorns itself with the devanganas of all types, erotic, sensuous, motherly and terrible.

Under the classification of its types (1) khadgadhari, one holding a sword, khadga, khatwanga, bow and arrow (2) sarpadhari, holding entwining snakes (3) yogini or tapasi, one who practices asceticism and appears austere or ferocious.

Mention of vira nayikas in Ksirarnava are Urvasi, Rambha, Gauri etc., who are weapon wielders.

About half a dozen images of women holding khadga or a broad sword, have been conceived first by the Mathura artists of the Kushana

period. According to V.S.Agrawala they may be Amazonian guards of the royal palaces. In later art, the lady with sword or bow and arrow, came to be known as Menaka or Urrvasi.<sup>16</sup>

One lady with sword in the right hand, has kept the other hand in katisama and stands with her legs apart in sama, while the other two who are standing in swastika and holding the sword in the left hand, have kept the other arm above the head in uromandali. The rich foliage at the back, is the recurrent salabhanjika motif. <sup>(Fig. 184, 185)</sup> There are no vira nayika at Roda and Chittor etc., but at Jagat the same type of khadgadhari in swastika pada is found. (Fig. 186) One more nayika holding a curved long knife and a kapala, is shown standing in a trisra pose, she is accompanied by a dwarf. But the strength, vigour and animation is absent.

At Osia (Fig. 3) there is a bold representation of a devangana holding a bow. She holds the hansasya hasta and is not actually releasing the arrow. The transparent fluttering garments thrown around the lady and the upper part of the body gently bent backwards, make the figure look charming and graceful. Could she be Rati or Urvasi?

The most dynamic images of lady aiming an arrow at the crouching animal, is a feature of Maru Gurjara temples, because this posture began to occur only from this age onwards. Both the devanganas stand in the bhujangatrasita or alidha posture, a posture very appropriate to depict Gajasura Samhara murti in south India. The upper torso stretches and curves in the direction opposite to the bow, which is powerfully aimed at the crouching animal below. <sup>(Fig. 190)</sup> The expression of tension and force is fully explored here. One more lady with a bow is found from Kiradu,

although she is not in action but stands in atibhanga, the bow fitting into the curve of her waist. She too is accompanied by dwarf figures.

There are two khatvangadhari devanganas represented at Osia on Sachiyamata and Rani ki Vav. (Fig. 187, 188). The former holds the khatvanga, damaru and a cup in one hand, while the other hand is lifted up in uromandali. A dog is also seen accompanying her. The jatabhara has skulls for decoration. The lady stands slightly swaying herself to one side. But for this action there is no movement in this sculpture.

The Rani ki Vav (Fig. 187) image of the devangana holding the khatvanga stands in an urdhvajanu pose bending to the side the leg is lifted up. She is accompanied by a drummer, which suggests that probably this lady is engaged either in a performance or a ritual.

The imagery of the sarpadhari is most unusual and difficult to explain. This particular nayika is depicted completely nude with serpents entwining around their legs. She holds a dish with a fish on it to feed the snake. The other hand is lifted up. There are owls and a peacock placed in this composition, probably to suggest a nocturnal ritual of some sacred fluvial rites? The same motif is repeated inside the shaft portion also of Rani ki VaV. (Fig. 192)

The category of vira nayika also includes the tapasi and yogini, because their austerity is itself an act of bravery. The Rani ki Vav and Sander are the only two sites from where tapasi or lady mendicants are represented holding tongs, wearing simple costume devoid of jewellery but rudraksa malas. Their ears are elongated. They are also accompanied by a dog. (Fig. 194, 195, 196).

The vira quality of strength and power do not reveal through completely in the postures and gestures, but the very act of indulging in playing with such dangerous objects, qualifies these images as vira, a class apart from the erotic objects of enjoyment the other devanganas were made to represent.

### DARPANA

Darpana is the lady with mirror and one of the most vital imageries of feminine beauty found in Indian art and literature. The imagery is often represented by woman putting a bindi or adjusting her earring while looking into the mirror. This act could be classified as prasadhana and therefore the nayika - prasadhika. Thus within the motif of darpana, there are three distinctions, (1) the woman admiring herself by looking into the mirror (2) engaged in make up (3) looking at the nail marks made by the lover and recalling the love play.

The motif of darpana goes back to Barhut (Fig. 198) and Mathura stupa railing sculptures, where this motif is represented with clear allusion to the darpana paribhoga darshini and prasadhika (Darpana from Maholi, U.N.Roy, Fig.26, Barhut, Barua Pl.LIX, 68, XXXI, 25) (Prasadhika, Sanghol, S.P.Gupta, 8, 68) (Paribhogadarsini, Sanghol, S.P.Gupta 1, 61) (Bhutesvara, U.N.Roy, Fig.54, Govindnagar, Fig.58)

There are other reliefs also found from Mathura where in the nayaka-nayika are engaged in dressing up each other, attended upon by dwarfish attendants holding the mirror before them. The popularity of this motif is unquestionable and can be measured by the repetitions to which its imagery has been subjected to. After Barhut and Mathura this motif is seen on the doorways of the temples of Gupta period (e.g.,

Tigowa, Kankali Devi Mandir, garbha griha doorway) where at one time salabhanjikas were placed, for example on Sanchi stupa gateways. The motif of darpana is not only significant for having an uninterrupted usage through-out, but also because it is one of the first imagery types to be represented on the temple pillars, capitals, ceilings and finally the jangha of the mandovara. (Fig 243, 244)

At Roda temple-6 on the pillar capital the motif of darpana occurs (Fig. 230) so also on the devakulika of the Harihara group I at Osia, a largish figure of a lady (river goddess or nagini) holding a mirror is to be seen (Fig. 2 ). Hence in the Pratihara architecture the presence of darpana is probably the earliest, which gradually towards the tenth century finds its place on the corners of the temple doorways, e.g. (AHS 232-48). Both the prasadhika and the darpana, are the favourites of the sculptors. On Sander ceiling, as well, this motif is included. (Fig. 257), Khajuraho, Devi Jagdambi temple (Fig. ) Kadwaha-Toteshtar temple, Sohagpur - Virateshtar temple, Patan - Rani ki Vav (Fig. 199 ) are some of the best examples representing the darpana and prasadhika.

In Sanskrit Kavya literature the connotation of woman looking into the mirror is not only restricted to admiring one's beauty or being made up, but also to admire the marks of love-making impinged by the lover. Thus mirror acts as a stimulant to relive the moments of conjugal bliss by mirroring it to the nayika after the union is over. Kalidasa in Ritusamharam, Canto IV, Hementa ritu, describes a certain young woman's mental state -

'Sharp imprint of love-bites on bruised lips, the lover's fine nail inscriptions on breasts, these clearly reveal the passionate enjoyment relentless, of women in the first flush of youth'. (IV, 12)

A certain young woman, mirror in hand, decorates her radiant face, basking in the gentle warmth of the mild morning sun, and gazes with interest pouting at the love bites her beloved left when he drank his fill of the nectar of her lower lip!<sup>7</sup> (IV,13)

Philosophically darpana could be identified as a mirror of the human soul-the conscience or the sub-conscious, which is metaphorically cleansed by entering the temple and concentrates upon the 'brāhman'. This motif is often found on the garbhagriha doorways. This mode of presentation could be too idealistic and moralistic and such a view has no literary support and so it fails to develop further. Paribhogadarsini type is more popular because both the expressed and the suggested senses are equally engaging.

#### PRASADHIKA

This category hardly refers to an imagery which can have a scope beyond the denotive, and hence the women engaged in toilet, adjusting their earrings, tying the hair, flowers, painting the lips, feet or applying bindi and kajal, are highly graceful activities of women, that one generally comes across in every day life. The connotation of laksana or Vyanjana are absent in these motifs, which do not elevate beyond the mundane. The indirect suggestivity of fertility in salabhanjika or vasanabhrmsa elevate the female motif beyond its physical form into a metaphorical sphere. Where as in prasadhika, such a transformation does not occur. The prasadhika frankly evokes desire in the hearts of the on-looker .

"Swaying hips, soles tinted deep rose, anklets with tinkling bells, imitating at each step the cry of the wild goose, men's hearts are churned by desire". (I, 5 Kalidasa, Ritusamharam).<sup>18</sup> Darpana indicates sringara rasa and both the types of situations viz. sambhoga and vipralambha are implied.

### ALASA

This erotically motivated devangana is found to illustrate that aspect of feminine charm and grace by which even the greatest seers and ascetics could be distracted from their path of concentration. The alasa nayikas stand in baddhhachari or swastika sthana, while their arms rest lifted above their heads in uromandali hasta. Their posture itself has an evocative tinge which takes a recourse to sensual movements, seductive glances and body flexions. Such a devangana has much closer links with (1) Nati, as a dancer, because of its physical disposition on one hand while (2) On the other it also continues the fertility - eroticism dialogue further. (3) The element of sringara and nayika bhava is also denoted by the alasa imagery which convincingly displays one such nayika in utkanthita condition, the erotic fervour rising. Both prasadhika and alasa can be classified as those nayikas (distinct from devanganas) which represent one instance from the psychological stages of the Ashtanayikas, performed by dancers today. (4) Their postures also denote their expectation in awaiting their lovers. The Sangita Ratnakara calls the posture of alasa type nayika as aotita, which is employed by women in all the stages of love, and it tallies exactly with the alasa in medieval sculptures. (5) The generic term alasakanya or alasa kanya has found currency in Orissan temple architecture and text. This denotes that the entire category of such

women are referred to as *alaskanyas* while consciously or unconsciously they may not indicate celestial women. Thus *devangana* is a more acceptable term since it indicates the celestial semi-divine nature of these female divinities, which share a relationship with the earlier *apsara* concept.

The *alasa* or the indolent type is represented at Sanghol (Fig. 203) in the *motita hasta* crossing the palms behind the neck in an act of yawning or shedding laziness. The posture is almost the same, save for the slight bend at the knee shifting the weight to the single leg. Such a *contraposto* is a typical feature of Kushana *yakshis*.

The Roda temple-6 *alasa* (Fig. 204) is a dreamy one, who is almost lost in her youthfulness. The exaggerated *tribhanga* of the waist and arms thrown backwards is accentuated by the *pratyakha* face and *baddhachari* posture. She is also accompanied by the *Kutilaka* a dwarfish *Vita* who is a companion of *nayaka-nayikas* in Sanskrit Literature. The aquatic vegetation suggest the emergence of this *nayika* from aqueous source.

A slightly stiff but interesting representation of *alasa* is found from Sacchiyamata temple, Osia. The *motita hasta* and *baddhachari* are neatly struck, but the whole figure is frontally positioned, that leaves the movement static.

A highly mutilated image of a *devangana* in *motita* pose is seen at Kekind, Nilakantha Temple, whose body bends in a gentle *tribhanga* while legs are firmly placed in *svastika* (Fig. 205). The long single chained necklace hanging in front leans gently towards one side. Such a swaying *alasa* pose is not seen before. As in Roda she too is accompanied by a *Kutilaka-Vita* character.

The Jagat, Ambika temple (Fig. 205) and Tusa, Surya Temple (Fig. 207) have representation of two alasa sculptures, which excell as the best specimens of poise and balance. The devangana stands in baddha chari without accentuating the tribhanga and hence the torso remains straight. But the head and arms lifted above bend gently, implying the devanganas's pose to be that of a celestial nymph in an amorous act.

#### NATI-NARTAKI

She could be a dancer and an acrobat, but what she could be doing on the mandovara of the temple architecture is a question. The legendary Indrasabha is endowed with such veteran beautiful apsaras, who are ace dancers and bless the major celestial and earthly festivals. The earthly abode of all the gods are also endowed with the devadasis, the nityasumangalis, who are expected to participate in all the major rituals of the temples. They perform dance, in the form of 'sevan', inside the garbhagriha, as well as outside, during the procession of the 'utsavamurti'. Could the nati sculptures be inspired from the dance movements of the devadasis? The sculptor's answer in stone to the virtuoso display of the dancer's movements? Or are they purely imaginative? The subject of nati-nartaki, the dancer, has to be dealt with more from the point of view of dance analysis than from the fertility-eroticism-asceticism - vira dialectic point of view. The motif of the woman as a dancer can either be interpreted as the celestial dancer or as devadasi of the temple, beyond which the attention has to concentrate on the postures of the arms, legs, waist, hasta and so on. Our tendency is to very keenly tally the postures and gestures with Natyasastra or Sangita Ratnakara and thus essentially technical. While doing this our attention rests more on the physical than on the

metaphorical meaning, emerging out of this imagery. The motif of nati, therefore, is radically opposite to the motifs of putravallabha, salabhanjika, svastanasparsa etc. which has abhidha, laksana and vyanjana levels of interpretation. It leads the attention of the onlooker from its physical charm and titillating presence even in stone, beyond the physical plane to the symbolic, of which, the sculpture is only a pregnant signifier. Very often people have got stuck at the physical element and not been able to transcend it and have interpreted the apsaras, devanganas and mithuna sculptures, as though they bear testimony to the degradation of the general moral values of the Indian society. This falacy has gone too far, especially in the case of mithuna-maithuna groups at Khajuraho, with which even some of the devanganas are clubbed.

The nati-nartaki sculptures of Barhut and Mathura seem like court dancers in the case of the former and acrobats in the case of the later. The famous relief sculpture with inscribed names of some of the apsaras from Barhut <sup>is</sup> well-known and often discussed. The scene appears to be placed along with the party of musicians inside a chamber, while the movements of the dancers seem to be broadly classical. The nati-nartaki of Mathura pillar is balancing a water pot on her elbow, and this alludes more to acrobatic skill rather than performing any form of classical dance.

The representation of nati-nartaki on the temple mandovara appears to be ninth century phenomenon, but prior to that a number of dancing scenes have been portrayed at Ajanta, Aurangabad, Deogarh etc. in which classical dance postures can be identified.

On the temple stambha, mandovara, vitana etc, the nati-nartaki sculptures are shown in ardhmandali posture with one leg lifted up, either in urdhvajanu or bhujangatrasita and the foot will be either in sama, kunchita, anchita, swastika or agratalasancchara. Even urdhvangustha position is quite well known. The preference for baddhachari and gatagatta sthana, are also every eminent in the case of feminine postures. Very often the use of kati movements that lead to sensuous bends are found leading to vivrta position. Of course, the tribhanga is the hall mark of the kinasthetics of Indian Classical dance and sculpture, which gets revealed on every devangana sculpture of the medieval period. Infact the more the exaggeration in the posture, the more medieval in character the sculptural style. Kushana and Sunga images of yaksis are not images of dancers, but their postures conform to the Natyasastra tradition. Acrobatic feats are usually displayed by men and women together or by women alone. The nati-nartaki of Sanghol is seen balancing a water pot on her elbow in the same manner in which kanduka is balanced by the Mathura nati.

In the post-Gupta era the delineation of nati-nartaki figures adhering to some basic principles of balance and the deviation from the centre of gravity'. 'shift of weight', 'faithfull representation of hastas and sthanakas', grows, and more and more dancing images of devanganas and other divinities come into practice.<sup>19</sup> The Vadaval matrikas (Fig. 221) and Karvan (Fig. 222) matrikas are cases in point from Gujarat of the seventh and eighth century. The postures are delineated with firmness and classical balance, which controls the accentuation of bends and contortions. By tenth century the postures employing ardhmandali, urdhvajanu, bhujanagatrasita, alidha, dandapada chari, baddha chari

will become the preferred postures with the sculptors who excel in their attempts with each sculptures. The frontality is often dropped for profile views, three quarter views, back views and circularly turned (vivritta) views in which the figure is turned almost half a circle from the waist, It has been observed that post tenth century sculptures of devanganas are more dynamically oriented with accentuated bends, and covering more planes of space around them. This is a medieval character which will slowly get degenerated toward acrobatic movements, devoid of suppleness and classical restraint.

Note Abhapur, Saraneshvara temple dancer in uromandali -urdhvajanu pose (Fig. 213) (AIIS 13-17) pristhasvastika pose, Udayapur, Udayeshwar temple, shukanasa figures of dancers in bhujangatrasita (Fig. 212 AIIS 424-84, 424-82), two figures of devanganas in vivritta kati posture in atibhanga, revealing their back and profile from Khajuraho, Vishvanath Temple (Fig. — ) and Sachhiyamata temple, Osia (Fig. 216)

Some dynamic postures of vira nayikas combating with the opponents in alidha and bhujangatrasita, are common in the twelfth century sculpture of Gujarat, such as the one found at Abhapur, Ghumli and Sejakpur (Fig. 42, 43)

#### NUPURAPADIKA-SANGITAVADINI

The nati-nartaki classification also include the nupurapadika and sangitavadini category, because one is employing a dance-like posture lifting the leg in urdhvajanu or dandapaksa, while the other represents the woman playing on musical instruments like drums, cymbals, ektara etc. Even women involved in singing are sometimes represented (viz. Jagat) as it appears from their expression. (Fig 214, 215, 217)

There are different references found from texts mentioning the use of drums for accompaniment and for solo dancing, while playing on them. \*Abhinavagupta refers to it several times and quotes from a composition called Chudamani Dombika by poet Ranaka, and perhaps from another composition also, called Gunamala. The dombi is a type like the dance performed by a single nartaki, songs are sung by accompanying singers, and the dancer, the dombi, dances. The difference is in the person of the dombi and the nature of the theme. Dombi is a kind of drum and also a class or community of people accomplished in music and dance. The Rajatarangini refers to dombagayanas and a domba-mandala consisting of one Ranga and his two daughters called domba-gayikas. The dombankuttadis were till now found in the country-side of south India. The dombi dance also involves abhinaya in a crude way, they also strike poses in between dance movements, a hudukka drum is played as an accompaniment which Abhinavagupta says is called 'chillimarga' in vernacular.<sup>20</sup>

Another mention of dancing with a drum is mentioned by Sayappa, whose correct name is not recovered but seems to be Chatisiri (sani) in which a Chandala woman dancer sings philosophical songs, Charya geetas to the accompaniment of a hudukka drum hanging from her shoulder. She is also accompanied by male and female singers and players of flute, horas, cymbals and drums, while the subject of the songs is Siva and Parvati in their appearance as the 'hunter' and 'huntress'. As these songs are sung and instruments played, she dances in the delicate style with graceful movements.<sup>21</sup>

Some other examples of sangitavadini are flutist (Khajuraho), ektara player (Harshagiri, Jagat (Fig. <sup>219</sup>220) who drape the body of the temple

as if resounding and revelling in music. They also represent the playing of the 'mangala vadya', which constitute the string, wind and percussion instruments.

A significant aspect of the inter-pretation of the nati-nartaki sculptures which have evolved in the Nagara temple architecture from tenth century onwards, has an interesting angle to its study in the light of the then existing devadasi system attached to the temple. It was more regorously practiced in south India, since agamas and epigraphical sources mention profusely about it, but the north was no less deprived. It is interesting to note that north Indian temple sculptural programming was so evolved that many interesting forms of nartaki-sangitavadini type of devanganas found a prominent place on the pratirathas of the jangha. Even devanganas holding a chamara, kumbha, dipa etc., are also shown attending upon the deities of the bhādra kostha. It is quite intriguing to unravel the role of these devangana-surasundaris on the Nagara temple architecture, since the Dravida architecture does not have this imagery type at all on the jangha section (i.e. bhita) of the garbhagriha or mandapa (but on doorways and pillars they occur occasionally). But in the ritual worship of the presiding deity the 'rajaganikas' etc. have quite an important role. Their auspicious intervention has also been noted by agamic texts, which confirms the religious sanction. Our question is-are the nati-nartaki sculptures inspired from the dance of the 'rajaganikas?' If they are, then how is it that this tradition got almost wiped out from north India, both in terms of its ritual practice and the practice of the dance tradition? Are the sculptures merely superficial depiction of the dances, ritualistic and popular, or do they also have a deeper suggestion?

The most characteristic task of the devadasi in the ritual of 'nityarcana' is 'diparadhana'. Devadasi should offer the kumbhadipa and either recite or perform 'puspanjali'.<sup>22</sup> Due to her role as a 'nityasumangali', she is not only involved in removing the evil, but also the task of lingalayam (reabsorption of the linga) which connects the devadasi with Tantrism, especially with Kundalini yoga. When the 'kundalini' which lies asleep in the individual 'muladhara' is awakened, it is slowly brought to the sahasrara chakra, where Cosmic Energy, the aggregate of all kundalinis, resides in inseparable union with Paramasiva, and by merging with it the yogi obtains spiritual release. In this process there is reabsorption of the world into undifferentiated unity. This process is known as laya. Thus the devadasi not only offers the arati, naivedya, flowers and nritya, but cools off the energy produced during the arti. For this purpose she is required and has been proclaimed as nityasumangali,<sup>23</sup>

The role of devadasi in the procession of the utsavabhera is also described by various agamic texts such as Kumaratantra, Ajitagama, Kriyakramajyoti of Aghorasivacarya etc. The Sriprasna Samhita advises that "dasis, instrumentalists and musicians must dance before the deity on earth". (Ch. XXXIV, 42)<sup>24</sup> According to Kriyakrama jyoti the idol in the palanquin, should be accompanied by rudraganikas on both the sides, while Vedic scholars and servants follow at the back. In front of the palanquin should stand the king, dance master, flutist and other musicians. While still further ahead Saiva devotees, subsidiary gods, bull and drummer should walk. The Sriprasna Samhita mentions along with many other details of musical instruments, about nartaki the female dancers, who should perform abhinaya with an abundance of rasas, like

sringara, while singing etc. After the procession returns back to the prakara of the temple, the rudraganikas should perform the misra nrttam and Saiva gaindharvyam in the mandapa. For misra nrttam they should wear silver or bronze anklets. In the prakara of the mahamari temple, rudradasis should perform kevala nrttam, while gramadasis and rudradasis perform natakam (dance - drama) in the temples of the goddesses, Kali and Durga, says Sadyojata Sivacarya commenting on Kamikagama.

As found from the survey report by Saskia, one observes that the devadasis were required to perform at the 'cayaratcai' (dusk puja), by doing 'kumbharati' at the time of 'sandhis' of dawn and dusk. This is an auspicious moment as well as potentially dangerous. They should wear black beads to remove the effect of the evil.<sup>23</sup>

Kamikagama distinguishes three types of devadasi - rudraganika, rudrakannikai, and rudradasi, who should perform suddha nrttanam, employing karanas belonging to Shivajnana and misram, to which puranas are added and kevalam, which is secular version (lokavrttanama) of this dance, respectively.<sup>26</sup>

Having brought to light the above data, one begins to look at devangana sculptures as possible reflections of devadasis, who are not only the dancers but an integral part of the temple ritual. The devanganas holding kumbha, dipa and such other imageries could be seen in the new light.