
Significance of Faunal Representations in Temple Architecture: A Case Study of Yadava Temples of Maharashtra

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Abstract: *Animals have played diverse roles in human societies from being destructive feared beasts in jungles to loyal companions of household and farmlands. They were valued as food resource, sacrificial victims, totems, protectors and wealth of society. This close man animal relationship has been depicted in all forms of art. Prehistoric rock paintings, terracotta figurines, seals and amulets and zoomorphic deities all testify the immense importance of animals in human lives. The spiritual and cultural significance was rendered to the animals as totems or vāhanas by mankind. They are represented in plastic art with delicate craftsmanship since the beginning of temple architecture. Apart from common Indian fauna like cattle, horses, elephants; mythical composite animals like vyālas and Shārdulas are also depicted on temples. With evolution in the styles of temples; animals got their special place on various temple elements. They are seen as guardians of entrance of the stairways, elements of Jamghātharas or as parts of sculptural panels. The cognitive meanings behind these depictions are ambiguous and evolved over time. The study of Yadava temples of Maharashtra would shed some light on the origin and regional development of faunal depiction in temple architecture. Temples of Bhumij style built in late medieval period like Ambernath shiva temple (Thane), Balsane temple 1 (Dhule), Gondeshwar temple (Nasik), Lakshmi Narayan temple at Methi (Dhule), Lakshmi Narayan temple (Pedgao, Ahmadnagar), Bhavani temple (Tehkari, Jalgaon) have been visited, studied and compared with literary references for temples at Devlane, Kukdeswar, Sangameswar, Dighi, Ghotan, Ganjibhoire, etc.*

Keywords: Faunal Representation, Temple Architecture, Yadavas, Śilāhāras, Late Medieval Period, Deccan, Maharashtra

Introduction

Faunal representation in art forms can be traced right back to the earliest depictions of fauna in the prehistoric rock paintings. Since that time animals have formed integral part of humans as major food resource. Stone Age man might have observed the animals from their surroundings and made them the subject of their paintings. Closeness to nature and hunting gathering mode of subsistence has been reflected in their naturalistic depictions of animals. World heritage rock painting site of Bhimbetka

in Madhya Pradesh has shed light on the wide range of faunal assemblage of contemporary period. The Mesolithic phase paintings at Bhimbetka show diverse faunal species including cattle, buffalo, boar, tiger, leopard, bear, elephant, rhinoceros, nilgai, blackbuck, sambar, cheetal, four horned deer, fox, jackal and monkey. Grazing animals, community rituals and hunting scenes are common themes of these paintings. They reveal life of cave dwellers and also supplement knowledge derived from the excavations (Misra et al. 1977: 24). Detailed archaeozoological studies have been carried out to understand the relation between art and subsistence. In one such study of Upper Palaeolithic of Western European rock art it was found that the animals which were most frequently depicted in art were not those abundant in contemporary faunal assemblage (Leroi-Gourhan 1982: 45). Similarly, though tropical forest animals dominate the Chavín Art in the Early Horizon of Andes, staple meat source is camelids (Miller and Burger 1995). Thus, choice of animals depicted and hunted may not be same. However, the origin of the thought process to depict animals in art can be traced in the prehistoric paintings all over the world. In the Neolithic culture of India domestication of animals is well documented from sites like Burzahom, Gufrakal dated to 2800-2500 BC. Stylized form of animal motifs is observed painted on the pottery from Burzahom (Singh 2008). Bone antlers, ivory, needles and tools have been found at Neolithic site of Chirand, Bihar.

Like the two-dimensional arts, animals have formed significant theme in the three-dimensional plastic art forms in later period. First urbanization in the cultural horizon of India is the phase of Harappan civilization. Harappan culture was rich in arts and crafts. Their seals show realistic depiction of animals like humped bull, rhinoceros, elephant, tiger, and deer (Figure 1). They also have a single horned animal which is related to mythical unicorn. A few seals are depicting hunting or ritual scenes with animals. There are large numbers of animal motifs used in the paintings on the pottery. Large repertoire of animal figurines from Harappan sites includes species like cattle, buffalo, elephant, ram, bear, tortoise, monkey, etc. crafted in different materials like terracotta, glass, faience. They may be toys or votive offerings in rituals. Later on, we find such faunal motifs in the early historic art with continuous change in the style and placement of motifs. In Mauryan period when Buddhism was flourishing certain animals were given auspicious value and thus venerated by placing them on pillars and *Stupas*. Elephant, lion, horse and bull are the animals which have special significance and symbolic value in Buddhism. Apart from them deer, geese, swans, monkeys, crocodiles are also depicted on the Buddhist *Stupas*. Depiction of *jātaka* stories on *Stupa* decoration and cave paintings shows large repertoire of animals. Some are characters of the stories like the monkey in *Mahākapijātaka* or elephant in *Śaddantajātaka*. Some are simply forest elements. In *Stupas* of Sanchi, Bahrut and Amaravati animals are widely used as decorative elements (Figure 2).

At the beginning of temple building activity, temples were simple and modest without elaborate decorations. Earliest reference of shrines is found in Panini's *Aśtadhyāyī*, dated to 4th century BC. The temples of the early period were modelled after timber

built domestic structures, square or circular with conical or wagon vaulted roof. Bas reliefs from Sanchi, Bodhgaya, Bahrut, Mathura and Amaravati depict these shrines. These shrines lack animal motifs in decoration but some shrines were dedicated to *Yakṣas* and *Nāgas* (Krishna Deva 1996). However, animals form prominent element in decoration of the Buddhist art in the later period. *Toraṇas* of Sānchi stupa which was added in Sātvāhana period show delicately carved animal figurines like horses, elephant, and rams with their riders and other animals like peacocks, monkeys, winged lions. The same trend continues in the cave architecture of western India. Bedse caves (Pune, Maharashtra) have mythical winged animals with riders as pillar capitals (Figure 3). Caves of Pitalkhora in Aurangabad have rows of elephant as platform as if the elephants are bearing the load of cave complex. The single and double arched *toraṇas* springing from the mouths of *makaras* are commonly found in the temple architecture of Chalukyas, Rashtrakutas and Pallavas. *Makaratoraṇas* were used in the cave architecture of Deccan at least from 4th Century CE (Naik 1947: 210). They are found in the Karla caves (4th Century CE), Cave no. 24 of Ajanta (550-600CE), Cave no. 3 of Aurangabad (700 CE) and later in cave no. 20 of Ajanta (450-550 CE) and Ellora cave no. 6 (550-600 CE) (Naik 1947: 210).



Figure 1: Harappan seals (Courtesy: Internet Archives)



Figure 2: Torana at Sanchi (Courtesy: Internet Archives)

Animals in Temple Architecture of India

Depiction of animals on the temples can be seen from the earliest temple at Mathura dated to 2nd Century CE where fanciful animals are depicted on outer walls. Temple of Gupta period belonging to 3rd to 4th Century CE like Temple no. 17 of Sanchi and Kankalidevi temple at Tigawa have brackets with seated lions. Doorjambs have figures of river goddesses Ganga and Yamuna with their vehicles crocodile and tortoise respectively (Krishna Deva 1996). Iconography of the images in the Gupta period shows the expertise of the craftsmen which must have been acquired over years of development of the craft.

Structural temple activity in Deccan is scarce in early mediaeval period (500-1000CE). Group of earliest Brahmanical temples at Ter are only examples of ancient temples dated to 7th or 8th century by Cousens and suspected to be earlier by other scholars like

A. V. Naik. Badami Chalukyas started experimenting with different plans of structural temples and excavated cave temples in the hills of their capital city Badami in 7th Century CE. The narrative panels in the caves of Badami have artistic excellence in depicting animals. The craftsmen might have had the advantage of acquired knowledge of excavating in the cave temples in deliberately chosen soft rock like sandstone, trap or limestone. Such excavation skills were practiced by craftsmen in north and western India for nearly a millennium (Srinivasan 2014: 7). Though such exquisite art is evident in the rock cut monuments of Badami Chalukyas their records do not mention any temples built in Deccan. But the Chalukyan style of architecture is represented at Aeshwar temple at Sinnar (Nasik district); the capital of Yādavas till 12th century. *Lalātibimba* of the doorway flanks *Gajalakṣmi* and the ceiling of the *garbhagriha* has *Aṣṭadīpāla* panel which are characteristic features of the Chalukyas. The shafts of octagonal pillars in front of shrine have small bands with dancing women and Vishnu *avatāras* carved on them. The entrance of *antarāla* has ornamental *makaratorāṇa*.

Another artistic excellence in depicting fauna is found at the monolithic bas reliefs of Mamallapuram. They were constructed by the great Pallava ruler Narasimhavarman I Mamalla (630-668 CE) and his successors for two generations. The monolithic rocks depicting scenes of Arjuna's penance and *Govardhana-Krishna* scene are very realistic. The Arjuna's penance is depicted based on the description in *Bharavi's Kirātaraṇiya*. Artist has used the rock creatively and depicted the forest beasts around Arjuna to give visual of forest scene with divine figures and *Nag devatas* watching over the penance. The *Govardhana* scene shows Krishna holding the hill *Govardhana* to protect the *Gopājanas* and cattles from the wrath of Indra. This rich architectural tradition was carried forward in the south by the successors of Pallavas, the Cholas and also the contemporary rulers Pandyas. Number of Chola and Pandya temples were erected till the brief disruption brought about by Muslim invasion but the activity sprang again under Vijayanagara rule. As the rulers fought for expanding their dominions the architecture got influenced by the regional styles brought by the rulers. Thus the stylistic tradition of any temple is not exclusive or unique but has influence from the surrounding areas, political powers and trade relations. Sometimes animal motifs appear as royal insignia like wild boar for Chalukyas which appears on their seals. Zenith of stylized faunal representation could be seen in Hoysala architecture with numerous temples like Channakeshwara, Hoyasaleshwara, Somnath temples where the plinth of the temple has exquisite bands of decoration like *Gajathara*, *Ashvatharavyālthara* and *Narathara*. This artistic excellence in style has not been observed in the temple architecture of Deccan confining to Maharashtra. However late medieval temples of Maharashtra have used animal motifs for veneration and decoration.

Structural Wealth of the Deccan Under the Śilāhāras and Yadavas

A. V. Naik (1975: 211) has taken a broad overview of the temple architecture of Deccan in late medieval period. In his view: "*Structural architecture in Deccan revived in the Deccan in 11th Century and was fostered throughout the late medieval period (1000-1350 CE)*

by the dynasties of the Śilāhāras and Yādavas. Of the temples which are known from the records to have been built by the Calukyas of Kalyāṇa, not one is situated in Deccan. Moreover, the few examples of the Calukyan style which have crept into that region appear to have been erected by the Yādavas and the Śilāhāras during their feudal tenure under the Calukyan suzerainty”.

Table 1: Animal motifs from Temples of Deccan

No.	Temple	Animal Motifs	Position
1	Ambernath Shiva temple, Thane	<i>Gajathar</i>	<i>Adhishtan</i>
		<i>Hansa</i>	Door lintel
		<i>Ashtadikpalas</i>	<i>Karnas</i>
2	Balsane Shiva Temple, Dhule	<i>Gajathar</i>	<i>Adhishtan</i>
3	Lakshmi Narayan Temple, methi	<i>Gajathar</i>	<i>Adhishtan of Narayan temple [locally known as Balaji temple]</i>
		<i>Dashavatar</i>	In the <i>prabhavalaya</i> of Vishnu image in main shrine
4	Gondeshwar Shiva temple, Nasik	<i>Gajathar</i>	<i>Adhishtan</i>
		<i>Makar Pranal</i>	<i>Adhishtan</i>
		<i>Lions and griffins</i>	Pillar brackets
5	Lonad Surya temple, Thane	<i>Gajathar</i>	<i>Adhishtan</i>
6	Ayeshwar temple, Nasik	<i>Ashtadikpalas</i>	Ceiling of <i>Antarala</i>
7	Devi temple patane	<i>Makarmukha</i>	<i>Kapotali</i>
8	Mankeshwar temple zodge, Nasik	<i>Ashtadikpalas</i>	<i>Karnas</i>
9	Koppeshwar temple, Kolhapur	<i>Ashtadikpalas</i>	<i>Stambhahast of swarga mandapa</i>
		<i>Gajathar</i>	<i>Adhishtan</i>
		<i>Vyalas</i>	<i>Base of swarga mandapa</i>
10	Vishnu Temple, Anjaneri, Nasik	<i>Varah</i>	<i>East Bhadra</i>
11	Lakshmi Narayan Temple, Pedgao	<i>Gajathar</i>	<i>Adhishtan</i>
		<i>Lion and elephant</i>	Doorjambs
12	Dighi temple, Jalgaon	<i>Hamsa</i>	Vestibule
13	Dashavatar temple, Balsane	<i>Yajnya Varah</i>	In premises
		<i>Hamsa</i>	Above the niches in the <i>mandapa</i>

On the basis of inscriptional evidence on the temple the earliest temple is Ambernath Śivālaya that was completed in 1060 CE. It was constructed under reigns of the Śilāhāra kings Mummuṇi and Chhittarāja (Kanitkar 2013: 48). Many other temples are recorded in the period they are lost to the wrath of time. Moreover, lack of inscriptional or

literary evidence leads to more reliance on the dating based on stylistic grounds. Some of the temples attributed to Yadava and Śilāhāra period include Vishnu temple, Anjaneri (Nasik), Gondeshwar temple, Sinnar(Nasik), Lonad Surya temple (Thane), Balsane temple no.1 and 4 (Dhule), Zodge Shiv temple (Nasik), Khidrapur Shiv temple (Kolhapur), Ratanwadi Amruteshwar temple (Ahmadnagar), Bhavani temple Patne (Jalgaon), etc. These temples are built in dry masonry *Bhumij* style and scholars like G. B. Deglurkar, S. B. Deo have referred their style as Deccan Nagar style (Jamkhedkar 2008). In this study Ambernath shiva temple (Thane), Balsane temple 1 (Dhule), Gondeshwar temple (Nasik), Lakshmi Narayan temples at Methi (Dhule), Amruteshwar temple (Ratanwadi, Ahmednagar), Kukdeshwar temple (Pur, Nasik) were visited and compared with literary references for temples at Devlane, Kukdeshwar, Sangameshwar, Dighi, Ghotan, Ganjibhoire, etc. (Table 1).



Figure 3: Bedse Pillar capital (Courtesy: Daidipya Ghodnadikar)

Purposes of Animal Motifs in Temples

Decorative: Many times, animals were used simply for decorative purpose to display the fine skills of craftsmen and to enhance artistic wealth of the temple in turn glorifying the patron of temple. In such cases the animals depicted might not have any auspicious value. Commonly the artists have chosen animals like elephants, horses, swans, lions and mythical *vyālas*. The choice of animals for the depiction is also significant. The elephant symbolizing wealth and prosperity, horses and lions symbolizing virility, strength and royalty whereas swans symbolizing delicate beauty. Mythical composite animals like *Vyālas*, *Śārdula* signify the doubled strength and qualities of both the animals for example *Gājashardula* signifying supreme strength, wealth and royalty.

On the exterior side animal motifs are commonly found on the *pīṭha* or *adhiṣṭhana* moldings. They are in series of rows. A row of elephants called *Gajathara* is the lowest among such fauna depicting bands. In the late medieval temples of Deccan *Gajathara* is observed in several temples including the Gondeshwar temple at Sinnar (Figure 4), Maheśvar temple at Patne, Śiva temple at Methi, Lakśmi Narayan temple at Methi (Figures 5 and 6), Shiva temple no.1 at Balsane and Ambarnath temple. The *Gajathara* here has row of elephants facing in front. Whereas the Lakśmī Nārāyan temple at Pedgao in Ahmednagar has *Gajathara* where elephants are carved following each other or fighting each other thus they can be seen only inside view.



Figure 4: Plinth of Gondeshwar Temple, Sinnar (Courtesy: Amar Reddy)

Apart from the elephants, rows of horses are used on *adhiṣṭhana* and the band is called *aśvathara*. It is comparatively rarely found in Deccan temples. One such example is found on the *adhiṣṭhana* of the Lakśmī Nārāyan temple at Pedgao which has human and horse figurines.

Harṁsaṭhara another decorative band on *adhiṣṭhana*. It is found on the Kukdeswar temple at Pur, Pune. Basement of the temple at Devlane has broad band of *harṁsas* running around the temple.

Apart from these, sometimes animals are randomly used on temple exterior. Maheśvar temple at Patne has *Kakśasana* with panels carved with erotic scenes, dancers and

animals. On the *adhiṣṭhana*, above *Kīrtimukha* band, there is design of alternated vertical scrolls and pilasters. Between superstructures of pilasters are carved lions and elephants.



Figure 5: Plinth of Lakshmi Narayan temple, Methi, Dhule (Courtesy: Amar Reddy)

In the *Garbhagrha* animal motifs are rarely found for decorative purpose. Doorjambs of the late medieval temples of Deccan flaunt ornate multiple bands '*Dwārśakhas*'. Each of the '*Dwārśakha*' has different carving like that of scrolls, lozenge pattern, couples, musicians, dancers and also animals like lions, *haṁsa* and *vyāla*. Mahādeva temple at Sangameshwar in Khandesh and Lakṣmī Nārāyan temple at Pedgao have lions and elephants on the *Dwārśakha*. At the temple at Deothan in Nasik district hallway has six *śākhas* on the door. They are decorated with floral, scroll design, rows of male female dancers, musicians, *mithūnas* in erotic postures and rows of lions and peacocks. The door lintel of the Ambernath temple has image of Ganeśa in centre and pediment above is decorated with lions and elephants. On the front step *haṁsa* are carved.

In the *aṅtarāḷa* and *maṇḍapa* animal motifs are found mostly on the pillar or pilaster brackets which support the ceiling. *Maṇḍapa* ceiling of temple at Dighi is one such fine example where ceiling is supported by carved pillars and pilasters having divine figures on them. Ceiling of the *aṅtarāḷa* or vestibule of temple at Dighi has lotus in relief with flying *gandharva* at the centre and on the four sides runs bands of *haṁsas*. Similarly ceiling of the *aṅtarāḷa* of Kashivishveswar temple at Ghotan and ceiling of the *mandapa* of Devi temple at Tehakari are supported by pillars with alternating *kiṇṇaka* and lion brackets. The three porches of Gondeshwar temple in Sinnar have two pillars

and two pilasters each. The pillar brackets have alternating lion and griffin figurines and pilasters have females. Pillars of Aeshwara and Gondeshwara temples in Sinnar have *makaratoranas*. Small *harṁsa* sculptures are used over the niches in the mandapa of the *Daśavatar* temple at Balsane.



Figure 6: Dashavataras around Vishnu Image in Narayan Temple, Medhi, Dhule
(Courtesy: Amar Reddy)

A peculiar design of inverted cobra bands is found on the pillar and pilasters of temples of late medieval Deccan. The earliest example of Yadava temple with the inverted cobra bracket on side pillars might be the Siddheshwar temple at Vaghili built by Govindaraja, a feudatory of Yadavas in 1069 CE. Later on, it is commonly found on

the temples like Sinnar, Zodge, Patne, Mandavgao, Anjaneri, Ganjibhoire, Bhuleshwar and many others. The design is also taken in later period Maratha temples.

Apart from this, some temples have small miniature animal figurines placed at different positions for decoration.

Functional and Decorative: The *tīrthodaka* from the śaiva shrine often passes out in the *tīrthakūṇḍa* below through a channel called *praṇāl* which is shaped in form of animal mouth like crocodile or cow. At the Gondeshwar temple Sinnar it is ornately decorated in shape of crocodile (Figure 7).



Figure 7: Makarpranal, Gondeshwar temple, Sinnar

Venerative: Animals are worshipped by mankind since beginning of human civilization, sometimes for protection from the wild beast or for granting good hunts. Some animals are used as totems as the group of people might have belief that they have descended from that animal or they worship that animal due to dietary dependence on it (Russel 2012: 25). In India cattle killing is taboo as there was need for their secondary products like milk, dung and traction. In Harappan times cattle were meat source (Thomas 1984; Meadow 1996; Joglekar and Goyal 2015), but in Vedic period they were used for sacrifice (Bedekar 2014). In period of state formation cattle was considered to be wealth of the state. In such way, significance of cows has changed over period of time.



Figure 8: Yajnya Varah at Balsane

Animals are worshipped either in their natural form or in the form of therianthrope deities. Example of the former is the *nāga* or snake worship which was prominent in south India. Where *nāga* signifies male element and the earth is female element (Mate 2013). The therianthrope figurines of divine or mythical animals are commonly found in the ancient Greek architecture. Centaurs, Minotaur, harpies, medusa are such magical creatures. Indian counterparts of these could be the mythological animals like *Gajaśardūla*, *Gaṇḍabherūṇḍa* or composite *vyālas*.

One of the most important deities of therianthrope nature in Hindu pantheon is *Gaṇesh*. Rise of *Gaṇapati* worship is considered to be from the cults of *Nāga* and *Yakṣa* worship (Joshi 2013: 336). Most of the *śaiva* temples in Deccan have the image of *Gaṇesh* on the lintel. Another set of therianthrope deities are few incarnations of *Viśṇu* like the *Matsya* or fish incarnation, *Kūrma* or tortoise incarnation, *Varaha* or boar incarnation, *Narasimha* and *Hayagriva* (Joshi 2013: 135). The *Daśhāvataras* or ten incarnations of *Viśṇu* are depicted on *Vaiṣṇava* temples commonly. The incarnations are separately depicted or in a panel. At the Lakṣmi Nārāyan temple at Methi, main image of *Viśṇu* has an aura or *Prabhāmaṇḍala* on which ten incarnations are depicted (Figure 6). The open mandapa of Nārāyana temple has an antechamber before garbhagruha which has deep niches in each side of the wall. The north niche has effigy of *Varāha* and south has *Narasimha*. A separate temple dedicated to *Daśhāvataras* has been found in Balsane, Maharashtra. It has Śivalinga in the main shrine currently but the original affinity is *Vaiṣṇava* as evident from the other images in the temple. Around the sides of the mandapa of the temple are ten small shrines dedicated to ten incarnations of *Viśṇu* (Naik 1975: 261,262). Currently the images of incarnations are not in their original place. The boar incarnation in *Yajnya Varāha* form is sometimes found in front of temples like the *Daśhāvātara* temple at Methi (Figure 8) and the Temple at Loni Bhapkar.



Figure 8: Dwarshakha Bhawani temple Methi, Dhule (Courtesy: Amar Reddy)

Animals are depicted as vehicles or symbols of divinities. It has made depiction and identification of different divinities possible. Sometimes due to weathering or rock fault temples have deteriorated. Many attacks by iconoclastic Muslim rulers have destroyed the idols on the temples. In such cases, small *vāhanas* at the feet of the main icon have survived and made the identification of image easy. Garuda as *vāhana* of Viśnū and Naṇḍī as *vahana* of Śiva are venerated with separate mandapa in front of the shrine. Ruins of Garuda Mandapa have been found in front of Vishnu temple at Methi which currently has shivalinga in main shrine and also in front of Lakśmi Nārāyan temple at Methi. Elaborately decorated Nandi mandapa is found in front of Gondeshwar temple at Sinnar but the Nandi placed in it is of later period and original broken icon of Nandi is lying in temple premises. Panels of *Navagrahas* are found from early Gupta or late Kuśana times. Kukadeshwar temple at Pur has depiction of *Navagrahas* on door lintel of *Garbhagrha*. On the exterior wall of the Kopeswar temple at Khidrapur Sūrya or the sun god is shown riding a chariot with seven horses signifying seven days of the week and Āndra the moon god is shown riding chariot with eight horses. Different animals are found as vehicles of *Aṣṭadikpālas* (Table 2). There are some variations in vehicles of these guardian gods (Gupte 1972: 50-52).

Table 2: Aṣṭadikpālas and their Vāhanas

God	Direction	Vehicle
Indra	East	Elephant
Agṇi	South East	Ram
Yama	South	He buffalo
Varuṇa	West	Crocodile
Nirrūti	South west	Man or ass or lion
Vāyū	North west	Deer or Antelope
Kūbera	North	Man or ram or elephant

They are found on the ceiling of main shrine of Aeshwar temple in Sinnar, and on the pillar capitals of star shaped detached hall of Kopeswara temple in Kolhapur. At the Mallikarjun temple in Nagasur the mandapa is supported by four pillars with two rows of human riders. In lower row, they are riding on Garuda, bull, sheep and deer whereas in upper row riding on the crocodile, ass, elephant and goat. These might be *Aṣṭadikpālas*. The porch in front of the mandapa has low walls carved with animal figurines like horses, lions and elephants. At Ambarnath temple they are found on the central offsets or *Karṇas* of the exterior wall (Kanitkar 2013: 108). Apart from these, animals are also part of narrative panels on the temples which depict scenes from Rāmayaṇa and Mahābhārata. Such panels are found on the Aeshwar temple, Gondeshwar, Bhuleswar and Lonibhapkar temples.

Conclusion

Animals are integral part of human life and what started as hunter and the prey relation turned to raising animals for their secure meat and secondary products eventually giving way to the domestication. Once animals entered the daily lives they

became friendly companions and gratitude for their usefulness in life was shown by worshiping them in different forms. Animals were also used as sacrificial victims and the Vedic literature like *Aitareya Brahmana* and *Shrautasutras* gives elaborate details of animals to be chosen for sacrifices (Kane 1974; Bedekar 2014). With the rise of *Mahājanapadas* and in later political dynasties importance of the horses and elephants as beasts of battle increased many folds. In historical period hunting of wild beasts was a social sport and it was practiced by the royals and elites to display wealth, power and prestige. As role of animals in human life became more and more complex and important their depiction in art and architecture was inevitable.

From the overview of the depiction of animals on the temples of late medieval Deccan which are stylistically and on inscriptional base dated to *Yādava* period, we find that there is very much influence of *Chalukyan* style on the overall architecture of the temple except the *śikhara* which is *Bhūmija* style very similar to the temples of Parmaras in north. The early phase of late medieval temples that is roughly 1060 to 1100 CE including temples of Ambernath, Balsane temple no.1 and 5 have more ornate decorations and animal figurines are boldly used. But in later phase the exterior becomes plain and images are limited to the main deities in principle niches. The design on the plinth also gets simple geometric like lozenge designs and the floral scrolls. However, a few temples from 1100-1150 CE like Gondeshvar temple, Maheshwar temple at Patne, Lakṣmi Nārāyaṇ temple at Methi are decorated but the designs are less ornate. Few narrative panels and *Nītikathas* including animals are also depicted. In next phase (1150-1200 CE) temple no. 2, 3, 5 at Balsane, Methi śiva temple, Devlane, Zodge temples are almost completely devoid of animal figurines on exterior. The only faunal representation is in form of *Vāhanas* of deities or decorative figures on pillar brackets and doorjambs. Same trend continues 1200 CE onwards with plain exterior and well carved ceiling, doorframes and pillars but the ornamentation is no match to that of earliest phase of temples. Though depiction of animals in temple architecture is bound by the limits of the craftsmanship, tractability of the rock and availability of time and funds, artists have produced some fine artworks like the majestic Nandis in front of śiva temples or highly stylized images like the lions on the doorjambs (Figure 9). This small overview of the temples of Deccan from Yadava period is nowhere complete but will shed light on the social, symbolic and auspicious significance of animals that has led to their prominent use in temples.

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