

## Women in Chalukya Art: A Study

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### ABSTRACT

This research paper examines the depiction of women in the sculptural art of the Chalukya dynasty, which thrived in the Deccan region of India from the 5th to the 12th centuries AD. Focusing on key sites like Aihole, Pattadakal, and Badami, the study explores the aesthetic and iconographic sophistication of Chalukya sculptures. The paper highlights the symbolic and cultural significance of female figures, including deities like Mahishasurmardini, Saraswati, Parvati, and the Saptamatrikas, as well as secular representations. It discusses the idealized feminine form and elaborate ornamentation, emphasizing their symbolic and cultural relevance. Additionally, the research analyzes the artistic techniques and regional influences that shaped Chalukya sculpture. By examining these artworks, the study enhances the understanding of the Chalukya period and its cultural context, emphasizing their significance as masterpieces of Indian art and historical documents reflecting societal values and religious beliefs.

**Keywords:** *Chalukya dynasty, Sculptural art, Female figures, Iconography, Aesthetic sophistication*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Ellora has been an important art center in the early medieval period. This art center flourished during the period of Rashtrakuta rulers and here idols related to all three major religions- Brahmin, Buddhist and Jain were produced in huge numbers. These sculptures are a testimony to the love of art of the Rashtrakutas. At the same time, the religious situation of the time, the divine characteristics and various developed styles of architecture are also preserved in themselves. The Ellora Caves are located on the Ellora Mountains of the Western Ghats and are located 18 km north-west of Aurangabad. It can be reached by road from Aurangabad. On a large part of these caves, sculptures related to Brahmanical, Buddhist, and Jain religion have been engraved by the sculptors. These idols are visible continuously from north to south for about a mile. After that some gap comes. After this interval, it is a small island 11 km away from the 'Gateway of India' sea coast of Mumbai's 'Gateway of India', spreading towards the west. The Portuguese first saw this island among foreign visitors and named it Elephanta after a huge elephant statue standing here. Its original name was after a tribe that settled here. This cave, built by cutting the hill of a sea island, holds its own special place due to its unique sculpture and surrounding scenery. Rashtrakuta ruler Krishna-I made many conquests for the expansion of his kingdom, due to which he got immense wealth. To keep the memory of his victories everlasting, he built this wonderful and huge Shiva temple. Kailash Temple is the main attraction of Ellora. Every part of this temple is studded with stories from the Brahmin tradition and decorated with sculptures with deep metaphysical meanings. For example, the idols of Ganga, Yamuna and Saraswati before the entrance of the temple have serious meanings which are the embodiment of the confluence of purity, devotion and knowledge respectively.



**Image No.1.1 Mahishasuramardini, Ellora Cave No. 21, 7th century AD, Rashtrakuta**

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEWS

**"Iconography of the Chalukyas" by James C. Harle (1974)** James C. Harle's seminal work, "Iconography of the Chalukyas," offers an extensive analysis of Chalukya art, focusing on its iconographic elements. Harle meticulously catalogs various sculptures and inscriptions, providing a comprehensive understanding of the religious and cultural motifs prevalent during

the Chalukya period. His analysis of female figures, particularly deities like Mahishasurmardini and Saraswati, highlights their symbolic roles within the Hindu pantheon. Harle concludes that the Chalukya sculptures reflect a syncretic blend of indigenous traditions and external influences, emphasizing the dynasty's cultural richness and artistic innovation. **"Early Chalukya Sculpture" by Carol Radcliffe Bolon (1980)** Carol Radcliffe Bolon's "Early Chalukya Sculpture" delves into the stylistic and thematic aspects of Chalukya art, with a particular emphasis on the early phase of the dynasty. Bolon's research highlights the technical prowess and aesthetic sophistication of Chalukya sculptors. She provides detailed descriptions of various sculptures, noting the distinct features of female deities and their iconographic significance. Bolon concludes that the Chalukya artists achieved a remarkable balance between realism and idealism, creating figures that embody both spiritual and earthly beauty. **"Temple Architecture of the Chalukyas" by H. S. Gopal Rao (1983)** H. S. Gopal Rao's book, "Temple Architecture of the Chalukyas," explores the architectural and sculptural achievements of the Chalukya dynasty. Rao's work includes a detailed analysis of key sites like Aihole, Pattadakal, and Badami. He examines the depiction of female figures in temple sculptures, noting their intricate ornamentation and symbolic poses. Rao concludes that the Chalukya temples serve as enduring monuments to the dynasty's artistic and religious devotion, with the portrayal of women playing a crucial role in conveying spiritual and cultural narratives. **"Chalukya Art and Architecture" by George Michell (1994)** In "Chalukya Art and Architecture," George Michell offers a comprehensive overview of the artistic contributions of the Chalukya dynasty. Michell's research includes detailed studies of temple sculptures, focusing on the depiction of goddesses and secular female figures. He highlights the technical mastery and aesthetic elegance of Chalukya sculptures, noting their dynamic compositions and expressive detail. Michell concludes that the Chalukya art represents a pinnacle of South Indian sculpture, with female figures exemplifying the dynasty's commitment to artistic excellence and cultural expression. **"The Art of the Early Chalukyas" by John M. Fritz and George Michell (2001)** John M. Fritz and George Michell's collaborative work, "The Art of the Early Chalukyas," provides an extensive study of the early Chalukya period, focusing on the development of sculptural and architectural styles. The authors analyze the representation of female deities, such as Mahishasurmardini and Saraswati, emphasizing their iconographic and symbolic importance. They explore the fusion of indigenous and external influences in Chalukya art, concluding that the dynasty's sculptures reflect a unique artistic vision that combines spiritual depth with aesthetic beauty. **"A Study of Women in Chalukya Sculpture" by Padma Kaimal (2005)** Padma Kaimal's "A Study of Women in Chalukya Sculpture" offers a focused examination of the depiction of women in Chalukya art. Kaimal analyzes various sculptures, considering both religious and secular representations of female figures. Her research highlights the nuanced portrayal of women, noting the attention to detail in their physical forms and ornamentation. Kaimal concludes that the depiction of women in Chalukya sculpture reflects broader societal values and religious beliefs, serving as a testament to the dynasty's artistic and cultural achievements. **"Cultural and Artistic Heritage of the Chalukyas" by Meera Dass (2010)** Meera Dass's book, "Cultural and Artistic Heritage of the Chalukyas," explores the broader cultural and artistic contributions of the Chalukya dynasty. Dass examines the role of women in Chalukya art, focusing on their representation in temple sculptures. She provides detailed analyses of key figures, highlighting their iconographic significance and aesthetic qualities. Dass concludes that the Chalukya sculptures embody a rich cultural heritage, with the depiction of women playing a central role in conveying the dynasty's artistic and spiritual ideals. **"The Splendor of Chalukya Sculpture" by R. K. Dikshit (2015)** R. K. Dikshit's "The Splendor of Chalukya Sculpture" offers an in-depth exploration of the artistic achievements of the Chalukya dynasty. Dikshit focuses on the technical and stylistic aspects of Chalukya sculptures, providing detailed descriptions of various female figures. His analysis highlights the idealized feminine form and elaborate ornamentation characteristic of

Chalukya art. Dikshit concludes that the Chalukya sculptures represent a pinnacle of Indian art, showcasing the dynasty's exceptional craftsmanship and aesthetic vision

### 3. OBJECTIVES

1. To explore the aesthetic and iconographic sophistication of Chalukya sculptures at key sites like Aihole, Pattadakal, and Badami.
2. To analyze the symbolic and cultural significance of female figures in Chalukya art, including both deities and secular representations.

### 4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 4.1 Research Design

This study employs a qualitative research design, integrating historical, and descriptive methods. The research is primarily based on the examination of visual and textual sources, including sculptures, inscriptions, and scholarly literature.

#### 4.2 Data Collection

##### 4.2.1 Primary Sources

**Field Visits:** Conducting site visits to Aihole, Pattadakal, Badami, and other relevant locations to observe and document the sculptures in their original settings.

**Photographic Documentation:** Capturing high-resolution images of the sculptures for detailed analysis.

**Inscriptions:** Collecting and translating inscriptions related to the sculptures to understand their historical context.

##### 4.2.2 Secondary Sources

**Literature Review:** Reviewing existing scholarly work on Chalukya art, iconography, and cultural history to provide a foundation for the study.

**Historical Texts:** Analyzing ancient texts, such as the Mahabharata, Puranas, and Brihatsamhita, to understand the religious and cultural significance of the depicted deities.

**Museum Archives:** Accessing archival materials and previous research housed in museums and research institutions.

#### 4.3 Analytical Framework

##### Iconographic Analysis

**Identification of Figures:** Identifying the female figures depicted in the sculptures, including deities like Mahishasurmardini, Saraswati, Parvati, and the Saptamatrikas.

**Symbolic Interpretation:** Analyzing the symbolic meanings associated with each figure, drawing from religious texts and iconographic manuals.

#### 4.4 Stylistic Analysis

**Form and Composition:** Examining the physical characteristics of the sculptures, such as body proportions, postures, and gestures.

**Ornamentation:** Analyzing the types and styles of ornamentation depicted on the female figures, considering their cultural and aesthetic significance.

### 5. DISCUSSIONS

#### 5.1 Brahman Goddess Idols:

**5.1.1 Mahishasurmardini:** Rameshwar cave at Ellora depicts Mahishasurmardini's four arms. One holds the animal's trunk and the other the armour in the left arm. Buffalo back with right leg crushed. Kailash temple marks Mahishasurmardini idol. Mahishasurmardini Immunti describes the Devi-Asura conflict. The goddess wears different weapons on her eight arms, creating a circle of influence around her head. The goddess fights a buffalo-like evil. The goddess's lion is attacking the attackers, and her followers are helping. The Kailash temple inscription dates this goddess statue to the seventh century. The goddess holds several weapons in her eight hands. The goddess sits on a lion. Goddess's vehicle, the lion, symbolises goodness. Goddess attendants pose under the lion statue. This ninth-century goddess idol came from Ellora Cave No. 21. This idol depicts the Goddess in Alidha Mudra. The goddess holds a buffalo-like demon's snout in her left hand. The four-armed goddess holds a garland. One hand



holds the wheel, sword, and demon-like animal's mouth. This idol depicts a deity wearing a jatamukut and accessories. Not Ellora Cave. In the courtyard of 14, the first panel on the left shows a lovely Mahishasurmardini idol. The idol shows the goddess vs. Mahishasura. Because of his two horns, Mahishasura looks like an Asura. Human-shaped Mahisha's body and face. Asura's right hand holds a mace. The goddess rides a lion and has eight arms. Goddess holds trident, arrow, and arrow in right hand. Devi's left hand wields a bow and shield while her fourth hand is broken. Devi has an unclear object in one hand. Ashtadikpalas watch the attack above. In Ellora's cave, all Dikpals' cars were marked. The deity of Mahishasurmardini with four arms and all adornment located on the eastern wall of 15. A human asura emerges from Mahisha's head under the goddess's right foot. Mahisha's back faces the Goddess's right foot. Next to the right leg is a severed head. The goddess holds a trident in her right hand, attacking the devil. A human monster that emerged from Mahisha's severed head is struck in the neck by a right hand khadga. The goddess carries a bell in her left hand while Mahisha clutches an asura's hair in her left. Left leg of goddess is over severed Mahisha's head horn. Not Ellora Cave. The eastern wall of 27 depicts Chaturbhuj Devi. Right leg of goddess on Mahishasura's back, right upper arm with trident. Right arm with khadga striking Mahisha's neck. Devi has khetaks and Mahisha Mukhas in her left arms. This 10th-century AD Mahishasurmardini idol was etched by Rashtrakuta ruler Krishna-III. Octagons of the goddess are seen here. The demon holds Mahisha's neck in the goddess's lower right arm. The lion seated near the goddess is her vehicle. Durga can kill Mahishasura in this idol. The ten arms of Mahishasurmardini are shown in Ellora Cave 16. The goddess emerges from Mahisha's lips with her left foot on an asura's neck. Goddess's right arms hold Khadga, Trishul, and Chakra. The idol shows the goddess holding demon hair. The goddess' left weapon is unclear. A circular figure is left of the goddess. Gandharva and Riddhi-Siddhi appear in the goddess's background. Ellora Cave No. 16 (Lankeshwar cave) contains a relief panel of Mahishasuramardini touching the temple's right corner. Goddess's four arms are shown here. The goddess wears crown, necklace, armlets, and bangles. The goddess holds a sword in her right arm. Also shown is the lion's car. To the goddess's right is an armed human. The Durga Mahishasurmardini idol is described in Ellora Cave 16. The goddess's left leg hangs while her right bends. Asura lies down in this idol. He holds the mace. The Asura in this panel is human but has a buffalo face.



**Image No.1.2 Durga, Ellora Cave No. 14, 8th century AD, Rashtrakuta**

The Ellora caves feature numerous statues of Mahishasurmardini. In Rameshwar Cave, she is shown with four arms, holding an animal's trunk and armor, while crushing a buffalo with her right leg. The Kailash Temple houses an eighth-century statue depicting her battle with Mahishasura, with eight arms wielding various weapons, creating a circle of influence around her head. The goddess is shown riding a lion and attacking a buffalo-like demon, supported by her attendants. In Cave No. 21, a ninth-century statue shows Mahishasurmardini in Alidha Mudra, holding the snout of a buffalo-like demon. She has four arms and is adorned with ornaments. Another statue in Cave No. 14 shows the goddess in Pratyalidha posture, standing on a lion with four hands, one holding a trident. In Cave No. 15, she is depicted with four arms adorned with all ornaments, attacking a human form of an asura emerging from Mahisha's head. In Cave No. 27, a 10th-century idol shows Mahishasurmardini with eight arms, holding various weapons, and standing on Mahishasura's back. In Cave No. 16, she is depicted with ten arms, holding different weapons, emerging from the mouth of Mahisha, and standing on the neck of a human asura. The goddess is shown with a crown, necklace, armlets, and bangles,

with her lion vehicle depicted nearby. Non-Ellora Cave statues also feature Mahishasurmardini with multiple ayudhas, including a trident, comb, conch, chakra, and various other weapons. These statues often depict the goddess riding a lion and attacking Mahishasura, with her attendants and celestial beings watching the battle. These depictions highlight the goddess's power and the symbolic struggle between good and evil.

**5.1.2 Gajalakshmi:** Ellora Cave No. 14, Gajalakshmi is depicted as seated in Lalitasana posture on a two-petaled lotus flower. The goddess is adorned with a necklace around the neck, a coil in the ears, an armlet and a crown. Two celestial attendants with four hands are depicted holding pots around. The two yards above the attendants are shown showering water on Gajalakshmi.



**Image No.1.3 Mahalaxmi, Kailash Temple, 8th century AD, Rashtrakuta**

Ellora Cave No. 14. On the northern wall of 14 is the idol of Gajalakshmi. The right hand of the two-armed Devi, seated on the pedestal, is depicted in Abhaya Mudra. The goddess is shown being anointed with four yards. The marking of water below is clear from the figures of Kachchap and Nag.



**Image No. 1.4 Mahalaxmi, Ellora Cave No. 14, 8th century AD, Rashtrakuta**

Cave 14's Ellora Mahalakshmi statue is marked. Mahalakshmi sits on lotus. The Goddess plants her right foot. The lotus is in her right hand. Left hand is broken and marked. Water-jug-holding four-handed deities flank the goddess. Water falls from his trunk two yards above the goddess's head. Ellora Cave 15 counts two-armed Gajalakshmi. Goddess holds poetry in right arm and flower in left. Four-yard background figures anoint Goddess. Men with urns, conch shells, and chakras are carved nearby. A large Lakshmi Abhishek idol in Ellora Cave No. 16 shows the goddess resting on a lotus petal. All four directions have 4-yard figures. Two yards signify Lakshmi's consecration. An umbrella shields the goddess. Photos of Vidhadhar flights. This statue represents Rashtrakuta prosperity. The Lakshmi Abhishek idol is displayed in front of the gopuram to attract guests. Abhishek Ellora Cave In 16, another statue shows Lakshmi. This statue is Lakshmi's and Ellora's best due to its complex design. Meditation-seated Lakshmi has two arms. The goddess has two amputated arms. Abhishek by Lakshmi is double-gaja. Umbrella-shaped cover for water urn. A little garden is on the goddess's right. Three sacred Gandharva Gajas and above are left of Lakshmi. A small sand yard on the goddess's left holds a water urn. The cave represents Gajalakshmi in Paryankasana on a lotus. Each goddess side is four yards. The tiny yard is down and the big yard is up, holding small water boats in trunks. Right of the goddess are two preachers and attendants.



**Image No. 1.5 Lakshmi, Ellora Cave No. 22, 8th century AD, Rashtrakuta**

Ellora's 8th-century Kailashnath stone temple. The idol is deep-cut Gajalakshmi. The idol's bottom pond has foliage, buds, and flowers. Goddess sits on throne with blooms on each hand. Two snakes sit on lotus. The goddess has a crown and no companion. He consecrates Lakshmi from a vase two yards above the trunk. The water-born deity arrives. The Kailash temple

contains another fascinating statue. Goddess sits in Paryankasana. The goddess is anointed by two yards. The goddess features a four-handed woman on one side. Some women hold pots, others withered ones. Goddess has four hands. Lotus seas lie beneath the goddess. Goddess has crown and earrings. The water-born deity arrives. The Kailash temple in Ellora provided this Mahalakshmi idol. Goddess rests on lotus throne. The goddess sits yoga-style. Though veiled, the goddess' elbow appears bowed towards her chest. A goddess holds two lotuses. Four full-body Gajas appear twinned around the Goddess. The deity is receiving water from the pot while upper gajas open their lips. The Lakshmi crown in this statue represents kingship. Non-Ellora Cave. In 15, Gajalakshmi rests atop a two-petal lotus. Water falls from the goddess two yards. A celestial attendant holds a water pitcher. The goddess is saluted by two snake king and serpent queen five-hooded snakes. Non-Ellora Cave. A Gajalakshmi statue sits on a lotus petal in paryakasana with one leg on the other on wall 46. The goddess wears necklaces, crowns, garlands, and bangles. Goddess holds lotus in right hand. Goddess sits on pond lotus. Also, swans are marked. Four elephants flank the deity. Small and huge elephants hold tiny urns in their trunks. Left of the god are two Francharks and attendants. Ellora Cave No. 15 (Dashavatara Cave) has a Gajalakshmi deity with four yards of water pouring over her and men slaves holding water jars, conch shells, chakras, and lotus flowers right of the door The goddess holding lotus and sitaphal. The Ravana ditch Lakshmi idol has two arms; her attendants have four arms and hold water jars on either side. The Vishnu conch is on his right hand. Water comes from nearby jars for gajas. On Kailash's pylon, Gajalakshmi sits in Padma mudra. Two lotus-bud-inscribed hands belong to the deity. Pouring water and performing abhishekam carves gaja figures on the goddess's head. Ellora Cave 22 On the temple's left side, Savya Lalitasana's two-petalled lotus flower depicts the quadrilateral Lakshmi.<sup>48</sup> The right fore wall shows Gajalakshmi in paryakasana with a two-petalled lotus. Sat on a flower. He carries a vase of water over the goddess in two gaj pictures.

**5.1.3 Saptmatrikas:** Ellora Cave No. 14 A heavy and large panel of Saptamatrikas is depicted in which the goddesses are with their children. Brahmi has a deer skin on his left shoulder. A swan painted pillow has been placed under the seat of the goddess. After Brahmi, Goddess Maheshwari is accompanied by her vehicle, the bull. Kumari with her vehicle peacock, Vaishnavi with Garuda, Varahi with pig, Indrani with elephant and Chamunda with owl. All the matrikas are sitting in the Savya Lalitasana posture.



**Fig. 1.6 The Strip of the Saptamatrikas, Huchimalliguri, (Aihole), 7th century AD, Chalukya**

Ellora Cave 14 Akshamala is in the brahmin's upper right hand. Fixed Devi's broken hands. The goddess has deer skin on her left shoulder. The goddess holds a pedestal-bound infant in her lower right hand. Maheshwari holds a damru in her upper left. The Kumari's upper right hand holds a mirror, and the child sits on the Goddess's right side with the lower left. Vaishnavi holds a conch shell in her upper left. Varahi holds a mango branch and has a human face. On her right, the goddess caresses a newborn with her lower right hand. Beautiful four-armed Chamunda and the goddess had a baby. A malformed thing is in his grasp. Owl is the goddess's transportation. The deity of Ganesha with Ashtamatrika is fully relief-engraved on the southern wall of Ellora Cave 16. Varahi sits in Lalitasana. Indrani sits in Ardhaparyakasana. Quadrilateral Varahi. Below the goddess is a buffalo. Vaishnavi is in Paryankasana. Goddess wears two necklaces and a garland. The goddess sits on lotus. Garuda is humanised here. Kumari sits in Ardhaparyakasana. The goddess holds a baby on her right lap. Below the goddess is a peacock. Maheshwari has 4 arms. Devi's right hand holds a trident while the other is broken. The goddess holds a kid in Ardhaparyakasana. Aura surrounds the goddess. The goddess wears a crown, two necklaces, garlands, armlets, bangles, and anklets. Brahmi is



headless. Goddess has four arms. The goddess sits in Paryakasana on a lotus. The goddess wears armlets, bangles, necklace, and garland. The swan is the goddess's transport. Parvati sits in paryakasana on her vehicle bull.



**Image No.1.7 Saptamatrikas (Brahmin, Maheshwari, Vaishnavi), Ravanfadi (Aihole), 7th century AD, Chalukyas**

Non-Ellora Cave. The back wall of 16 features Saptamatrika with all the deities and babies. Left corners have Ganesha. Car of Varahi is Pig. Goddess Indrani rides an elephant. The next idol may be Brahmi. Vulture is Vaishnavi. Devi Kumari, swan, Maheshwari, buffalo, Chamunda, jackal, and Veerabhadra. Woknipeswari is Brahmani idol on Dwidal Padma in Ellora Cave 16. Only one of the Goddess's four hands holds the Akshamala. Her face is broken. On Dwidal padma, the Nandi-vehicle Maheshwari idol is smashed. The Goddess has four hands, but only one is safe. Trident-holding. The Vaishnavi bipedal padma-seated Garuda Vahana idol is broken. Broken goddess hands and face. Vahana Kumari's statue has shattered hands and mouth, but the peacock sits on her double wing. Broken bipedal padma-seated Varaha Vahana Varahi idol. All hands and mouth broken. Broken Dwidal padma-seated Gaja Vahana Indrani statue. Every hand and face is broken. Broken is Chamunda's two-party padma Siyaravhana statue. Goddess has six hands. 54 Chamunda's safe hands hold Khadga, Sarpa, and Modak. Crowned goddess. This cave shows Singhwahani Durga as Matrika. Four-armed goddess Chandi protects with a trident. Ellora Cave 22 has seven right-hand goddesses with Shiva and Ganesha on the left. Unlike the other deities, Chamunda has minors in Padmasana. Brahmani, Maheshwari are quads. However, most parts are broken. An infant sits on the goddess's left. Above the waist, Kumari, Indrani, and Chamunda break. Kumari has a child. Vaishnavi is OK despite losing her hand. Varahi leaders differ from Ellora. This marks Varahi's buffalo. Ellora Cave No. 22 depicts Abhaya Mudra with two Trimukh Brahmani right hands and Kalash and Varamudra left hands. Gokhal below has Hansvahana. A Brahmin does not carry a weapon here. One hand is on the breast, one near the left. Two-handed Chaturbhuj Garudavahana Vaishnavi holds the baby and chakra. The Mayurvahana virgin has three broken hands and one holding the baby. Varaha is a vehicle and Chaturbhuj Varahi holds a mace in his safe hand. A thunderbolt and vehicle are carved in the four-handed Indrani's protected hand. Four-armed Chamunda protects the breast with her right hand. Kailash's rear wall features Saptamatrikas with Ganesha and Veerabhadra. Car-bound Matrikas. Saptamatrika panels always show Ganesha. In four hands, Ganesha wields axes, laddus, broken teeth, and a garland. The goddesses Chamunda, Indrani, Varahi, Vaishnavi, Kumari, Maheshwari, and Brahmi flank Ganesha. All goddesses except Brahmi sit with one leg folded, one hanging. Each woman is adorned. Finally, Virbhadrar Goddess Vaishnavi sits in Lalitasana in Ellora's Kailash temple. The goddess's left hand may hold ashes and her right hand holds the groom. Goddess with intricate decorations. The goddess is under a poetic tree. The goddess' right leg has an owl. It may be her vehicle. Ellora Cave No. 14 shows the hostess flanking the goddess. The three-faced Brahmi idol shows the goddess holding an akshamala and child. Jewelled necklace, ring, coil, and bracelet of Goddess Jatamukut. Goddess vehicles are absent. Nandi is marked, but Maheshwari's weapons are unknown. Baby on Vaishnavi's lap. Weapon in hands is uncertain. The goddess's vehicle, Garuda, is engraved. Content of the four-armed virgin is uncertain. The child has only the left lower hand. Peacocks transport goddesses. Varahi Devi has four arms with unknown weapons, but Varaha is a vehicle. Chamunda's four arms have unknown weapons, but Wah Ulluka appears. Chamunda wanders. Akshamala, Shankh, Dhanush, and Kalash appear on Ellora Cave 21's four Brahmani arms. Swans transport the goddess. One of Maheshwari's four hands holds the child's head. Nandi is Goddess's vehicle. Four-handed

Vaishnavis carry chakras and conch shells. A child is on the goddess's left thigh. The virgin's four-hand weapon is unknown. Goddess places her lower right hand on the ground and her upper right on the bun. Uncertain Varahi four hands. Thunderbolts and a lower left hand near the child are among Indrani's four hands. Unknown weapons are in her hands. Numbers denote vehicle yards. The safe hands are on the thigh and upper right. Uncertain vehicle shape below. The goddess wears Kundal, mekhla, wristband, and necklace. In Ellora Cave No. 22 (Neelkantha cave), all Ashtamatrikas have four limbs and Brahmi has three faces.



**Image No.1.8 Saptamatrikas (Varahi, Kumari, Chamunda), Ravanfadi (Aihole), 7th century AD, Chalukya**

Ellora Cave No. 21's rear wall has a Saptamatrika panel featuring Ganesha and Veerabhadra. All goddesses sit on their vehicles. The Ganesha image features four hands, axes, laddus, broken teeth, and garlands. Goddesses Chamunda, Indrani, Varahi, Vaishnavi, Maheshwari, and Brahmi are carved next to Ganesha. All goddesses except Brahmi sit with one leg bent and one dangling. All goddesses are decked out. Ellora Cave No. 21 has a panel of Matrikas on the top right with Veena-dhari Shiva in Paryakasana. His upper left hand holds a snake and his other hand is broken. Shiva and Brahmani have decorated hair. Brahmin holds lotus flowers with both the upper hands. The goddess is unadorned, and the infant is affiliated with her. Maheshwari holds a youngster on her left thigh with her left hand. Other Devi hands are fractured. Kumari's body faces right. Grooming her hair with a shisha (mirror) in her upper right hand and the mirror in her left. She holds the infant with her left lower hand. In her upper right and left hands, Vaishnavi holds a conch shell and chakra. Vari has a human face and a child on her left thigh. Head inclined left, he has his second leg on top of one leg. His vehicle is pig. Goddess holds hair with upper right hand and body weight on left. Two hands are missing. In the left hand above Indri is the Vajra. Child on goddess's left thigh. Beautiful, kind Chamunda. The pillar post shows child's foot components. The goddess has a bell on her upper left hand and a malformed hand and vehicle. In Ellora Cave No. 21, Indrani is seen with maidservants under a mango tree. The attractive stance marks his eyes.



**Image No.1.9 Kumari, Ravanaphadi (Aihole) 7th century AD, Chalukya**

**5.2 Saraswati:** Ellora Cave No. 16's right panel depicts Saraswati in tribhanga on a lotus blossom, with fractured legs and missing arms. She wears a crown, necklace, and katisutra, with beautiful vines and a ray mark behind her head. In Cave No. 22, Saraswati is engraved in Padmasana with Chaturbhuj, holding Sanalpadma and Kalash, intricately decorated. The Kailash temple shows Saraswati in sambhanga, with a jatamukut on her head and no upper-body jewelry. Parvati's Panchagni-Idol in Cave No. 16 depicts her standing with four hands, holding a lotus and a yoni-ling, adorned with a crown, armllets, and bangles. In Cave No. 23, Parvati stands with all accessories, holding Akshamala. The Kailash temple shows Parvati admiring her reflection, holding a mirror with intricate bead embellishments. Cave No. 16 depicts Parvati in Chhanavira posture, with Vidyadharas. Elephanta features an eight-foot-six-inch Parvati statue with a chakra behind her head. In Cave No. 16, Gauri holds Akshamala and performs Vara Mudra, wearing kirtimakut and other ornaments. Cave No. 21 depicts a penitent Parvati in Katihasta mudra, surrounded by fire, with a woman in Anjali Mudra behind her. In the Kailashnath temple, Parvati is shown in Tribhanga, adorned with pearl necklaces, bangles,



and earrings. Cave No. 16's panel between deodar trees shows Parvati holding Ganapati and other symbols. Cave No. 21 features two-armed Parvati with Akshamala and Kamandal, conversing with celibate figures. In Cave No. 15, Chaturbhuj Parvati is atop a lion, holding a trident and Damru. The Yonipatta Kailash temple depicts Parvati in abhanga, with her torso nude and adorned with necklaces and yagyopaveet. The fourth left wall panel shows Parvati with a lotus flower and Ganesha, surrounded by fire. Kailashnath temple's marriage statues depict Parvati with a moon-like face, shy and bowed during the marriage ritual, adorned with a crown and necklace. The marriage is shown following Hindu customs.

**5.3 Kali:** Ellora Cave No. 16, Chaturbhuj is standing with a black rosary and a skull pot. In its lower left hand, the severed head of an asura is depicted. Ellora Cave No. On the western step wall of 15, the Khadga and Trishul are inscribed in the hands of Chaturbhuj Kali. There is a piece of mass in one of its left hands. The breath is seated near the left leg, which is displayed in the posture of eating a piece of meat.

**5.4 Ganges:** Ellora Cave no. 15 has **Whirling Ganga**. Ganga holds Padma. Chanwar and Chhatra crown the Ganges. 86 A two-handed Makarvahini Ganga figure stands on the east-west wall right of the entrance to Ellora Cave No. 16. Goddess' right hand is on figure's head. Cave 16's statue lies on the north-to-south wall right of the entrance's first step. A massive Ganga figure with two arms graces this Makar Vahana. Supporting figures stand. Above is a garland. Ganga's head is umbrella-topped.



**Image No.1.10 Ganga, Ellora Cave No. 21 (Ellora), 7th century AD, Rashtrakuta**

Not Ellora Cave. Ganga's idol is on wall pillar 16, where she's riding Makara on the left. The servants have umbrellas. The goddess holds a lotus flower 96 and swings her other hand. The goddess wears Yajnopaveeta and necklace. The Makarvahina Ganga stands on the Dwidal Padma on the eastern side of the Kailash temple shrine. Right hand katyavalambit, left hand chanvar. Ganges' head is umbrellaed. Ellora Cave 14 Further right, Ganga stands on Capricorn. A chhatra atop the goddess's head is held by one of her two attendants. Though Ganga's chest is larger than her, this idol is wonderfully sculpted. Goddesses' slim clothes are well represented. Ellora Cave 16 has a plank depicting Ganga standing on Capricorn with rays behind her head. She wears crown, necklace, armlet, anklet, and katisutra. Behind the goddess are flower and leaf vines. Devi's right hand is gone. At Ellora Cave No., his robe hangs between legs. Ganga stands on a slightly slanted crocodile on the left side of the entryway in 16.



**Image No. 3.11 Mahamuri (Buddhist Goddess), Ellora Cave No.6, 7th century AD, Rashtrakuta**

The goddess wears a crown, three necklaces, ear ornaments, armlets, bangles, foot ornaments, and rings. Not Ellora Cave. Ganga is depicted on a crocodile with a parasol on the left side of door 16. Ganga's face is hurt. His right hand is Katyavalambit. Her jewellery includes earrings, necklaces, garlands, armlets, bangles, and anklets. Not Ellora Cave. Ganga is seen riding Makara on the front wall outside 21. It's Ellora's best art. The goddess's full weight on her left leg makes this idol beautiful. Ganga's minor slant enhances the statue's beauty. Hands on top of each other appear to control his body. Not Ellora Cave. Early in 21, two large river goddess effigies appear. Ganga rides a crocodile in this idol. The goddess balances her body on her left

leg. His right hand breaks. She holds her son with her left. One hostess had her hands on her chest. The goddess wears a pillow-like outfit with adorned hair. A fluttering ghost near her head emphasises the Goddess's purity and divinity. Makara, the goddess's vehicle, is gorgeous. This statue represents Rashtrakuta art well. The double-armed Makarvahini Ganga statue on Ellora Cave No. 21's northern wall is a remarkable Indian sculpture. Ganges are carved on Chanvar Dharini. The diminutive Yaksha has Ganga's left hand on his head. Crown, necklace, ekavali, ring, ear ring, etc. embellished with Goddess Muktajal are ornamented. On the eastern wall of Ellora Cave 29, Ganga is depicted with four sadhus around her head. Three maidservants' portraits are engraved near his 98 feet. Ganga idol is half ruined.

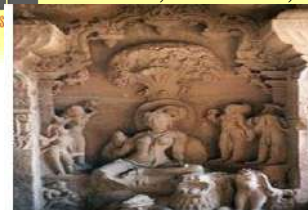
### 5.5 Buddhist Statues:

**5.5.1 Star:** On the left wall of Ellora Cave No. 16, a Tara idol stands with her right hand removed. His left hand holds a lotus bud. The goddess's beauty comes from garments and accessories. A deer is on his left shoulder. A man figure worships the goddess with folded hands to her left. The man's hairline is on the left. A maid idol with bangles in her right hand and a bent left hand stands to Tara's left. The Tara idol in Ellora Cave 10 is in Savya Lalitasana with a lotus flower in her left hand. A lotus-holding man is below the goddess's idol. The cave has another sitting Tara statue. The goddess wears a crown, 101 coils in her ears, a diamond necklace, wristband, and chest-inscribed necklace. Ellora Cave No. 12's Tara idol shows the goddess in Lalitasana on a double-leafed lotus. Goddess wears a crown. Right hand in groom's pose, left hand holding lotus flower. Ellora Cave No. The left sub-chamber of 6 has a female idol wearing a star Crown. Female and male hostesses flank her. Not Ellora Cave. Tara's right hand is in boar pose and her left hand is likely a lotus flower in the first panel of 10. The goddess wears a crown, bracelet, hero's necklace, lotus band, armband, and breastplate. Mammoths reach the goddess's chest. Not Ellora Cave. The left-side Tara idol at 12 has her right hand in the groom's position. The left hand has a lotus bud. The goddess wears a crown, earring, necklace, and armlet.



**Image No.3.12 Ambika, (Jain Devi) Ellora Cave No. 33, 9th century AD, Rashtrakuta**

**5.5.2 Mahamuri:** Ellora Cave No. In 6, the statue of Mahamuri is depicted in a standing posture on a lotus with petals. The goddess holds a peacock feather in her right hand while some oval object is held in her left hand. The clothes under the goddess are decorated. The goddess wore a crown, two necklaces, ear rings, waistband, armband and bangles. Which is very beautiful. Ellora Cave No. The statue of Mahamuri is engraved on the right wall of the temple in 8 AD. The goddess is holding a peacock feather in her right hand while the grapefruit fruit is held in her left hand. The clothes under the goddess are adorned with ornaments. The goddess is wearing a jatamukut, ear ornaments, necklace, armband and bangles.



**Image No. 1.13 Ambika (Jain Devi) Ellora Cave No. 33, 9th century AD, Rashtrakuta**

**5.5.3 Green:** In Ellora Cave 8, Hariti's idol is in Savya Lalitasana. Goddess's right hand is in abhaya mudra while her left hand carries a newborn on her lap. The goddess wears a waistline, crown, two necklaces, armlets, bangles, and ear rings.

**5.5.4. Saraswati:** Ellora Cave 10 depicts Saraswati's two arms. Right hand of goddess cocked to one side in boar pose. The goddess holds a shoulder-high flower in her right hand. The deity wears earrings and a jatamukut.



**Image No. 1.14 Saraswati, Gadag (Karnataka), 11th century AD, Chalukya**

### **5.6 Statues of Jain Goddesses: Chakreshwari:**

Not Ellora Cave. The wall right of the 30's gopuram depicts the 12-handed chakreshwari. The goddess holds the padma, mace, conch, chakra, and mace in her five intact hands. Goddess' six hands are wounded. Left hand of Chakreshwari with damaged hands on lap. This statue depicts the goddess with a crown, ear decorations, gem necklace, diamond necklace, armlets, and bangles. The goddess sits Padmasana. Garuda seems human below the goddess' vehicle. Another idol at Ellora Cave 32 represents Chakreshwari with her twelve arms on Garuda. All right hands save two are destroyed. Devi has a sword in one hand and a malformed right hand. Inscribed chakra and shield in left hand. One hand palm is malformed. Two women appear on the upper right. Ashtabhuji Chakreshwari sits in Ardhaasana in Ellora Cave 32. The upper two hold the wheel left and right. Vara and Abhaya Mudra show lower right hands. Rest of hand uncertain.

**5.6.1 Ambika:** Ellora Cave 32 has a bi-armed Ambika figure. Ambika's right hand holds a mango branch. When the goddess grabbed the mango branch, the mangoes fell. Some sculptures show the lotus flower instead of the mango branch, while others show it holding the infant in the left hand and the lotus in the right. Cave 32 Describes two-armed Ambika. Goddess appears to hold a lotus blossom in her right hand. Lotus flowers are used instead of twigs. The Ambika deity in Ellora Cave No. 33 sits in Lalitasana. A mango tree stands above the goddess, who holds a mango branch in her right hand. Left hand is broken to elbow. Naked kids with ornaments stand under the goddess's seat on either side. The goddess's vehicle, the lion, opens its mouth, revealing grandeur. Ellora Cave No. 33 contains the second image of Ambika, which is damaged from the chest and the child's head is placed in the left lap. Ambika's left leg is on the lion, her chariot, in this unusual pose. The lion wears the goddess' right leg. The goddess holds mango branches in her right hand. Ambika sits in Ellora Cave 33. The deity is on her lion. Unfortunately, the goddess' face is gone. Ambika's right leg is on a lion in Lalitasana. Right of the goddess is a hostess. The left side shows a sannyasin. Ellora Cave 33 An exquisite Ambika statue is shown. On his left is his fully dedicated devotee to the deity. The devotee (sage) wears a turban and lion costume. Also wearing a fat Yagyopavita. His right hand holds the umbrella and his left hand honours the goddess. Other male servants hold flowers in their right hands. A female servant is also depicted. The ninth-century AD metal statue of Ambika depicts her in Lalitasana. The goddess's right leg hangs while her left is ukdu. Inscribed flames surround the lion at the Gaja image on the pillar's outer side. Neminatha Tirthankar sits atop this Digambar Jain deity, commonly displayed in South India. The goddess's lion has luxuriant hair. A large forehead, small round eyes, and a little chin characterise the goddess. The National Museum in New Delhi holds this plaque.

**5.6.2 Saraswati :** Ellora Cave No. In the upper storey of 32, the door of Indrasabha and Jagannath Sabha are depicted Chaturbhuji Saraswati who is seated in Ardhapadmasana posture. The goddess holds a lotus flower in her upper two hands and a book in her lower left hand. The palm of the lower right hand is deformed.

**5.6.3 Padmavati:** Ellora Cave No. In 32 Ashtabhuji Devi is depicted in a standing posture. This idol of Padmavati is half destroyed. Chakra, lotus flower, sword and arrow are depicted in the right hand of the goddess. Shield and bow are held in two left hands.

**5.6.4 Siddhika:** To the right of the temple of 32 is a statue of Siddhika seated on a lion with a child in her lap. A hostess with an umbrella on the left flanks the deity. The goddess has leaves on her head. Not Ellora Cave. The Siddhika statue in 34 is well-maintained. The goddess has exquisite hair ornaments and leaves on her head. Left of the goddess is a bearded man with a



moustache. Not Ellora Cave. Right-hand Siddhika idol in 32. It has precious ornaments. One chakra is on the goddess's left hand and one on her right. A manuscript-holding left hand in his lap. A parasol covers the goddess's head.

**5.6.5 Other Miscellaneous Images:** It depicts the expressions and beauty of women. Nayika, Sursundari and Mithun couples are depicted in these idols.

**5.6.6 Apsara:** Ellora Cave No. 15 shows the Apsara's right leg folded backwards to the thigh. Her right arm is up and she grooms her hair. He holds a mirror with his left arm. Ellora Cave No. 15's heroine has padaswastik legs. Right arm hanging, left arm holding mirror showing heroine looking at herself. This Apsara idol is in Ellora's Rameshwar cave. Mango tree is famous in India. Fruit on the mango tree signals spring. Spring is grandly celebrated. The poet showed this in poetry. The mango flower symbolises a girlfriend's worry of her lover's arrival and timing, indicating her devotion for him. This idol shows the heroine waiting for her beau under a mango tree. The heroine is in Utkritikasana.

**5.6.7 Gemini pair:** Ellora Cave No. 15 depicts a male mithun (Gemini) pairings. In one panel, a man and woman stand in sambhanga stance with the woman's left arm hanging and her right on his shoulder. His right arm is bent and his left arm brushes the woman's elbow. Another panel depicts a medium-sized inebriated heroine statue with the man's left arm on her waist and his right arm on her left arm. The woman places her left arm on his waist. A hostess pose with her right arm on her hip and a flower on her left hand in the same cave. A female servant with a flower in her right hand and a kativastra on her left arm is also marked, with knee-length clothing. Another Gemini couple has the woman's right arm over the man's neck and shoulder and his left arm around her waist pulling her towards him. A dramatic image shows a huge Gemini couple with the woman unconscious on the man's back. The woman's right arm hangs around the man's body, her left arm is tropic, and her left leg is behind her right. Man supports her upper body, and lady has a circular coil and yagyopavita.

**5.6.8 Queens:** Cave of Ellora. The eastern wall of 16 has three ladies' statues. Each person has two hands. Middle-limbed woman sits on stone with shattered hands and feet. Possibly Cave no.'s queen. Three people with two hands and no car are sculpted on the western wall of 16. In all three idols, women sit in Ardhaparyakasana like deities. Currency reflects revenue. Three Rashtrakuta Govind III queens are on this idol. These idols must be kept close. Cave 32, Ellora One photo shows many women and men carrying various goods. Here is four flying Apsaras. Men wear lovely crowns. Women have earring, bangles, and anklets. The upper right corner shows a dwarf playing the flute. Additionally, some Apsaras wear crowns and armlets. Women wear choli and sari, men dhoti, crown, and necklace. A seated woman in a floral sari, earrings, and necklace sits on the man's lap. Woman hugged man's neck.

**5.7 Woman Idol Playing with Flute:** In Ellora Cave No. 15, a statue shows a lovely maid playing a flute with her right hand. A woman holds a child at the man's feet in another cave scene depicting a love story. Medium-sized female servant figures with vague features have lower clothes draped around their bodies and waving between their ankles. These characters' heads are lost, but their upper parts are clear. A sculpture of a chauri-bearer woman with dwarf maidservants twisting her hair is in Ellora Cave No. 26.



**Image No. 1.15 Saraswati, (Jain Devi) Ellora Cave No.32, 8th century AD, Rashtrakuta**  
Ellora Cave No. 15 depicts a woman holding a flower in her right hand and her left hand on her hip. She has a wavy ruffle between her knees and her shoulders and arms covered. She has no attendants. Dwarapalikas (female door guardians) reach the cave ceiling at Ellora Cave No. 29. They hold lotus blossoms in their right hands and lay their left hands on their waists while

wearing crowns, earrings, necklaces, and chest bands. Their attendants wear crowns, necklaces, armlets, and thin garments to their feet. In Ellora Cave No. 15, a woman holds a pot in her right hand and touches a Gana figure's head with her left. In Cave 16, a damaged statue of a mother with a child on a wolf is present. Two carved chavara dharini women wearing precious necklaces on a wall pillar and two brackets depicting homosexual men and women are in Cave No. 21. A woman tries to reject a loving man in one bracket. In Ellora Cave No. 6, six ladies play instruments including Manjira, Banshi, and Mridang while the seventh dances expressively. Indian dancers and ladies wear hefty, creative crowns to emphasise dance.

## 6. EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

- The study examines Chalukya art's depiction of women, including deities like Mahishasurmardini, Saraswati, Parvati, and the Saptamatrikas and secular female figures. This analysis shows Chalukya sculptures idealised female form and ornate decoration.
- The research examines how Chalukya female figures reflect societal ideals, religious beliefs, and ancient Indian women's duties. **WIKIPEDIA**  
**The Free Encyclopedia**  
Chalukya sculpture's aesthetic and iconographic complexity and its regional influences. The combination of rock-cut and freestanding sculpture and Vengi tradition are discussed.
- Examining Chalukya art in its historical and religious context helps explain its achievements. It reveals how the Chalukya emperors' religious and political ambitions influenced their art and architecture patronage.
- Chalukya art improves art history, interdisciplinary learning, and critical thinking, according to the research. It also shows how these sculptures inspire students and art lovers to be creative and culturally aware.

## 7. FUTURE SCOPES

The future scope of the study on "Women in Chalukya Art: An Exploration of Sculptural Excellence and Iconography" offers a rich tapestry of potential research directions. Future scholars can delve deeper into the comparative analysis of Chalukya art with other contemporaneous dynasties to highlight unique features and influences. Interdisciplinary approaches combining art history, archaeology, and gender studies can further illuminate the socio-cultural contexts that shaped these representations. Technological advancements, such as 3D scanning and digital reconstruction, could provide new insights into the original aesthetics and techniques used by Chalukya artists. Additionally, exploring the role of women in the patronage and creation of art during this period can shed light on their agency and influence in historical narratives. This study can also contribute to the broader discourse on the representation of women in Indian art, inspiring contemporary artists and scholars to reinterpret these themes in modern contexts. Furthermore, educational programs and public exhibitions based on this research can enhance awareness and appreciation of Chalukya art, promoting cultural heritage preservation and tourism.

## 8. CONCLUSION

The exploration of women in Chalukya art reveals a profound appreciation for feminine beauty, symbolism, and cultural significance in ancient Indian society. The Chalukya sculptures from key sites like Aihole, Pattadakal, and Badami showcase an intricate blend of artistic techniques and iconographic sophistication. Depictions of female deities such as Mahishasurmardini, Saraswati, Parvati, and the Saptamatrikas highlight the religious and cultural values of the time, reflecting the elevated status and divine association of women in society. The study also underscores the artistic excellence of Chalukya craftsmen, whose work in stone captures both the idealized feminine form and the emotional depth of their subjects. This art not only served religious and cultural functions but also stood as a testament to the technical and creative prowess of the Chalukya period. Through detailed examination of these sculptures, the research provides insights into the gender roles and societal norms of the era, illustrating the interconnectedness of art, religion, and daily life in Chalukya society. The rich ornamentation and balanced compositions of these artworks highlight the Chalukya dynasty's contribution to

Indian art history and their enduring legacy. Ultimately, the study enhances our understanding of Chalukya art's historical and cultural context, emphasizing its significance as both an artistic achievement and a historical record. This exploration serves as a valuable resource for students, historians, and art enthusiasts, fostering a deeper appreciation for India's rich artistic heritage and the nuanced portrayal of women in ancient Indian art.

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