



GAJAMUKHĪ ŚAKTĪ AT BHULESHWARA MAHĀDEVA TEMPLE – A STUDY

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Abstract:

Gajamukhī Śaktī, the name itself describes the female form with elephant head. The sculptures of female form with elephant head can be seen in the worship of Indian tradition. It can be seen in some temples from India.

Bhuleshwara Mahādeva Temple is one of the temples having Gajamukhī Śaktī sculptures.

KEYWORDS :

Gajamukhī Śaktī , Bhuleshwara Mahādeva Temple , iconographic scheme.

INTRODUCTION :

Bhuleshwara Mahādeva Temple near Yavat in Pune District is a temple situated on hill. It is the temple of around 12th century AD and is richly decorated by sculptures. The deities regarding worship of Śiva are placed with many sculptures of *yogi* on the upper inner part of *maṇḍapa*. The sculptures and their positions on temple form an iconographic scheme. Here three images of Gajamukhī Śaktī are



arranged in the group of goddesses in triad panels arranged in *pradakṣiṇā patha*. The panels are on higher level as the sculptures of *yogi* in *maṇḍapa* and *bhairava* at upper level on pillars in *pradakṣiṇā patha*. Three sculptures of Gajamukhī Śaktī are in triad panels particularly on 4th panel, 5th panel and 9th panel. In all three panels, Gajamukhī Śaktī is on extreme left from viewer's perspective. The height of every image is approximately 45 cm, which is smaller than the central image of goddess but is equal to the goddess at extreme right. Each panel is decorated with *kirtimukha* at centre on upper side, a creeper in semicircular

form and two *makara* at both ends totally forms *makaratoraṇa*. The creeper has round forms with a *yogi* sitting in meditating pose. All goddesses are sitting in *ardhaparyāṅkāsa* or *sahajāsa* with *vāhana* (the vehicle) at its base. The *vāhana* (vehicle) of Gajamukhī Śaktī is *mūśaka* (mouse) and can be easily identified. Every image of Gajamukhī Śaktī is finely carved with ornaments and feminine features. The *mukūṭa* of all Gajamukhī Śaktī images are of *kiṅṭa* type. The trunk of every image turns to left and is broken in 9th panel image. The attributes of Gajamukhī Śaktī (starting from lower left in clockwise

direction) are as follows :

on Panel 4 : *danta*¹, *paraṣū*, *mukula*, (broken) (tooth, battle axe, lotus bud,

on Panel 5 : *danta*, *paraṣū*, *mukula*, *bījapūraka* (tooth, battle axe, lotus bud,

on Panel 9 : *danta*, *paraṣū*, *mukula*, *bījapūraka*² (broken). (tooth, battle axe, lotus bud,

The forehead has slight round mark which could be the third eye. The sculpture of Gajamukhī Śaktī is found very rarely. Sometimes it is found separately with Gaṇapati and sometimes it is in female form having features of Elephant headed God.

The present paper tries to find out and study texts as well as sculptural representations of Gajamukhī Śaktī and its context with the temple. It was the sculpture mainly shows its rare existence during 1st century BC to 13th century AD. The worship of this

4th panel5th panel9th panel

Gajamukhī Śakti in Bhuleshwara Temple

(on triad panels in *pradakṣiṇā* path)

goddess was in tradition but no similarities regarding its iconography are found. Also she was not worshipped separately but its worship was done in a group of goddesses. The sculptural evidences or names of some images are found but its textual explanations are absent.

Elephant headed Goddess sculptures and her different names discussed in texts

An elephant headed goddess (1st century BC-1st century AD) sculpted in terracotta plaque was found by K.N.Puri³. The text Baudhāyana Gr̥hyaparīśiṣṭa describes Jyeṣṭhā-kalpa with Hastimukhā as elephant headed goddess.

ityāvāhya

ihalokakīrtaye namaḥ, parālokakīrtaye namaḥ, jyeṣṭhāyai namaḥ, satyāyai namaḥ, kapilapatnyai namaḥ, kapilahṛdayāyai namaḥ, kumbhāi namaḥ, kumbhinyai namaḥ, prakumbhai namaḥ, jyāyāyai namaḥ, vardāyai

¹ *danta* (the tooth) and *karāṭa* for Gaṇeśa is the attribute given in Maitrāyaṇī Saṁhitā of Yajurveda noted by Prithvikumar Agrawal.

² Gajamukhī from Hingalājgadh, District Mandson, Madhya Pradesh is holding this attribute.

³ p5, p20, Goddess Vaināyikī The Female Gaṇeśa, Dr. Prithvikumar Agrawal. The author has noted details with the reference of book Excavations at Rairh by K.N.Puri.

*namaḥ, hastimukhyāyai namaḥ, vighnapārsadāyai namaḥ, iti tarpayanti*⁴

Elephant headed *Mātrkā*, Mathura 2nd century AD⁵ is a fragmentary relief of late Kushana period shows three horizontal bands. The band on lower side contains five figures. At extreme right elephant headed female figure (among seven *Mātrkā*). The tusk turned to right.⁶ The sculpture is partially damaged.

Vināyakā, the goddess with elephant- proboscis (*hastākārasamāyuktam*) and one toothed (*ekadantām*) is stated in Buddhist Āryamanjuśrīmūlakalpa of 2nd century AD⁷. Vindhya region was considered as appropriate region for *siddhi* of Vināyakā.

Gaṇapati -Hṛdayā is a feminine aspect of Gaṇapati from Vajrayāna pantheon of Buddhist divinity. Dharma-kośa-saṃgraha denotes her features. The elephant headed youthful female is a personification of the Buddhist tantric *mantra* 'Gaṇapati hṛdaya' and known as Gaṇapati hṛdayā.⁸ Textual details and exact period are not given yet the goddess is given as in late Buddhist iconography.

For **Gaṇeśāni**, there are no textual references for this image but some iconic images are available in the northern as well as the southern parts of India. The emergence and worship of this form is assumed from concepts Tantrik ideas of Gaṇapatya Cult.⁹

Vaināyakī- Liṅga Purana has mentioned with this name in the list of divinities as *āvaraṇadevata*.¹⁰ Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa , Matsya Purāṇa, Vāyū Purāṇa, Skanda Purāṇa, Harivaṃśa have listed Vaināyakī as Mātṛkā created by Śiva. This Mātṛkā form is emerged from the religious myths like folk goddesses.¹¹ Some Jaina texts like Vidhimārgaprapā (1306 AD) has

⁴ p5, Ibid, This verse (4) is noted from Baudhāyana Gṛhyasūtra

⁵ p ix, image, Goddess Vaināyakī The Female Gaṇeśa, Dr. Prithvikumar Agrawal

⁶ p21, Ibid

⁷ p12, Ibid

⁸ p2, Goddess Vaināyakī The Female Gaṇeśa, Dr. Prithvikumar Agrawal. The author discusses as Gaṇapatī-hṛdayā is described in Indian Buddhist Iconography by B.Bhattacharya

⁹ Ibid

¹⁰ p8, Ibid

¹¹ p9, Ibid

mentioned the form with the name Vaināyakī.¹² Here she is mentioned on 14th place among 64 yogini list.¹³ This female form is also given in Agni Purāṇa and Āryamanjuśrīmūlakalpa. In many texts attributes of Vaināyakī are absent. Skanda Purāṇa concerning the meditation of Mahāvidyās, listed Vaināyakī in Aṣṭmātṛkā.

Vināyakī sculpture from Hingalājgarh, the fort of goddess Hiṅgulāja, District Mandasor¹⁴ is considered as a yogini from list of 64 yoginis. **Gaṇeśvarī** is mentioned on 4th position among 64 yogini list in Jaina text manuscript Harṃsavijaya. In Jaina iconography her position is on 4th position. Gaṇeśvarī name is given as Mātṛkā in Padma Purāṇa and Vanadurgopaniṣad.¹⁵ In Vanadurgopaniṣad Gaṇeśvarī is described as Śaktī associated with Śiva. She is worshipped to protect the devotee on all sides with her *paraśu*. The purpose of her worship with *paraśu* (battle axe) is given as *Om namo bhagavati Gaṇeśvari paraśu-hastena sarvato mām rakṣa rakṣa*¹⁶

Gajamukhā is mentioned in the list of 1008 names of goddess Lalitā in Lalitāsahastranāma of Nārada Purāṇa. **Gajamukhī** is discussed as Mātṛ (mother goddess) in Skanda Purāṇa. It has the story telling how the goddess Lakṣmī was rendered elephant headed by the curse of a Brāhmaṇa.¹⁷ **Lambodarī** is mentioned in the list of 50 Śakti of Rudra in Iśānaśivagurudevapaddhatī. In Śrikanṭhaḍī-nyāsa of Brahmāṇḍa- Purāṇa she is associated with Śiva's Eknetra.¹⁸

Gaṇendrī is described as Mātṛkā in ritual text called Vedaparikramā, from Islands of Bali¹⁹

Gajānanā with elephant face among the sixty four yoginis is mentioned in Skanda -Purāṇa (Kāśī-khaṇḍa,45,34). Here yoginis are with many animal-

¹² p159, Pratima Kosh, Volume 1, S.K.Ramchandra Rao

¹³ p13, Goddess Vaināyakī The Female Gaṇeśa, Dr. Prithvikumar Agrawal

¹⁴ p13, Goddess Vaināyakī The Female Gaṇeśa, Dr. Prithvikumar Agrawal

¹⁵ p13, Goddess Vaināyakī The Female Gaṇeśa, Dr. Prithvikumar Agrawal

¹⁶ p14, Ibid

¹⁷ p7, Ibid

¹⁸ p14, Ibid

¹⁹ p14, Goddess Vaināyakī The Female Gaṇeśa, Dr. Prithvikumar Agrawal

headed damsels. Thus Gajānanā mentioned here, may be is with different concept than Gaṇeśāni.²⁰

Mālinī, the elephant headed Rākṣasī is mentioned in Haracarita (13th century AD) of Jayaratha from Kashmir. Her presence is to drink bodily impurities during the birth of five headed Gaṇapati.²¹ Vratakanda of Chaturvarga Chintamani has given the explanation of 64 *yoginī* but has not mentioned the name Vaināyakī in 64 *yoginī*. Also it could not be found in explanation of Saptamātrkā. Kashyapashilpa *mātrkā* has not mentioned Vaināyakī image.

SCULPTURES OF ELEPHANT HEADED GODDESSES

The inscribed yoginī sculpture in Chatuḥ-ṣaṣṭhī-yogini temple at Bherāghāṭ (known as Gauri-Śaṅkara temple near Jabalpur 1000 AD) does not include Vaināyakī. However, one of the sculptures there called **Ainginī** is identified with Vaināyakī.²² She is identified as Śri-Ainginī with the inscription written on the pedestal of the sculpture at 41th position measures approximately 117cm X 181cm.²³ The elephant faced deity is sitting on higher place with left leg folded and right leg opened has four hands broken with *śiṅhakaṭī* with various ornaments. Another elephant faced deity at the base is supporting her.²⁴ Four hands and proboscis are damaged. The special feature third eye on forehead is of contemporary feature in Northern India.

Chatuḥṣaṣṭhī-yogini temple at Hirapur(10th century AD) is with Gaṇeśānī. The sculpture is in black stone in standing position(1'9" X 9") with two hands. Here this is identified as Mātaṅgī or Shitalā or Vaināyakī. In clockwise direction this is 38th form standing on *mūṣaka vāhana* (rat). She is with features of Elephant headed God with trunk, elephant ears and big stomach. Her trunk is broken but is in straight direction. She is with two

²⁰ p157, Ibid

²¹ p15, Goddess Vaināyakī The Female Gaṇeśa, Dr. Prithvikumar Agrawal

²² p159, Ibid

²³ p1, Goddess Vaināyakī The Female Gaṇeśa, Dr. Prithvikumar Agrawal. The author has given details referring the book The Haihayas of Tripuri and Their Monuments by R.D.Banerji. Measurements of sculpture given on p28.

²⁴ p46, Shri Ganesh Kosh

broken hands, fewer ornaments with fine suggestion of cloth. Her hairstyle is decorative (*jaṭājūṭa*) with hanging ornaments.²⁵

Fragmentary sculpture from Śiva temple (Purāṇa Mahādev- 10th century AD) at Harshagiri, near Sikar, Rajasthan is with thick vermilion red coating, left turned trunk, bulging belly, only one hand with bowl, lotus halo on back of head, *karaṇḍa mukuṭa*, garlands and ornaments are some existing features.²⁶

Vināyakī from 64 Yogini Temple, Rānipūr Jhariyāl, Dist.Bolangir, Orissa (900AD) is in dancing pose (*catura*) on toes. She in a rare dance pose is wearing serpent as sacred thread and ornaments. She is wearing *jaṭāmukuṭa*, the characteristic of eastern Indian sculptures of Gaṇeśa and Śiva. Attributes in four hands are not clear but the marks show battle axe in her upper left hand.

Vināyakī sculpture from Hingalajgadh,²⁷ Dist. Mandasor, Madhya Pradesh (10th century AD) is finely carved but her hands, proboscis and right leg are damaged. She is wearing *karaṇḍa-mukuṭa*, a lotus halo is at back of head. Her left leg is crossed and right (broken) leg is suspended. The depiction of vehicle is not as rat, it is with features (paws and nails) of wild animal. Two female

attendants are on both sides and two are on lotus seats flanking the halo. Goddesses at upper side are with four arms (lower right is *abhaya-mudrā*). The left figure is holding *bījapūraka* and *trīśūla*. These features are with Śaivite context.²⁸ The temple does not exist today however she is identified as Yogini from 64 Yogini.

The elephant headed goddess from Giryek, District Patna, Bihar (11th century AD) is a Pāla sculpture with mouse on pedestal. She is seated in *padmāsana* on lotus seat wearing sacred thread (*yajñopavīta*). She has four arms with staff, vase (*kamaṇḍalu*), battle axe (*paraśu*), conch shell (*śankha*). The textual reference or purpose could not be identified.²⁹

²⁵ Clear images of all 64 yoginis are available on www.onedrive.live.com

²⁶ p23-24, Goddess Vaināyakī The Female Gaṇeśa, Dr. Prithvikumar Agrawal

²⁷ The sculpture is in State Archaeological Museum, Bhopal

²⁸ p27, Goddess Vaināyakī The Female Gaṇeśa, Dr. Prithvikumar Agrawal

²⁹ p24-25, Ibid.

The four armed goddess with elephant head is dated around 800AD. She is sitting in *lalitāsana* with suggestion of clothes and beaded ornaments on wrist, neck, and head. The proboscis is turned to left reaching to the bowl of sweets in lower left hand. Upper left hand carries mace (*kuṭa*), *paraśu* (the battle axe) in front right and a serpent in upper hand. Here her *vāhana* (her vehicle) is mentioned as mouse.³⁰

The elephant headed goddess on slab (10th century AD) from Suhania, Morena District, Madhya Pradesh is in the frame of two pilasters. The goddess is standing in *tribhaṅga* pose with clothes and ornaments. In her four arms she carries *paraśu* (the battle axe), lotus bud, dagger, bowl of sweets. The proboscis turned to left. Musicians and dancers are placed in surroundings.³¹

CONCLUSION

Though the goddess is mentioned with elephant head in previous texts, all forms are not given with its attributes. She is neither mentioned as wife of Gaṇeśa in texts nor is worshipped as a separate goddess. Śakti image refers to feminine form of the ultimate power or deity. In other words these may be called as sub-powers of the one universal power. Usually its connection is considered to Goddess Pārvatī in Hindu religion or Parāśaktī (the ultimate divine power) in *yoga* or Mahātripurasundarī in Tantrism. The concept *yogini* refers to women who have achieved the powers in universe while practicing *yoga*. She mainly shows the ultimate stage achieved by human body. Śakti or Goddess is considered as self divine power.

Śakti images of Gajamukhī in the Bhuleshwara Mahādeva Temple stylistically differ from **Yogini** image of elephant headed God from Bhedaghat, Hirapur, Bihar. Their iconographical depiction mainly differs with *lānchana* and *āsana*. Śakti images of Gajamukhī in the Bhuleshwara Mahādev temple is on the upper level like *yogi* sculptures on pillars of *maṇḍapa*. Here they are mainly meant to offer blessings and to help in meditation process. This

³⁰ p22, Ibid

³¹ p23, Ibid

placement may suggest the role of divine powers in the process of meditation and worship of Śiva.

In Bhuleshwara Mahādeva temple, all three Śakti images of elephant headed God are not depicted as *mātrkā* form. It could have function as Śaktidevatā worshipped during meditation and worship of Śiva. Here Śakti images with its attributes show its connection with Śiva. These images with their attribute could have their existence as *yuddha devatā* (the warrior deity) to help and protect *sādhaka* practising meditation for *jñānasiddhi*.

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