



Research Paper

Shakta Temples and Sculptures of Sorab Taluk

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Abstract: *Shakta is one of the most famous sects in Hinduism. The goddess worshipped in this sect is 'Shakti' or 'Devi'. Since ancient times, the goddess has been worshipped in various forms. From the 6th to the 14th centuries AD, Shakta was very influential in India. Scholars are of the opinion that Shakta has influenced all religions of India. The most important goddess worshipped in this sect is 'Kali' or 'Durga', who is a 'form of Parvati'.*

Key Words: *Shakta, Shakti, inscriptions, Temples, Buffalo head Sculptures, Saptha Matrikas, Goddess Balari, Mahishamardini.*

I. Introduction:

This research article sheds light on Shakta Temples and Sculptures of Sorab Taluk. The Shiva Shaktis (Devine power) are different powers of the same origin. A Shakta worships a Shakti or Goddess and seeks to obtain supernatural powers through her grace. In Karnataka, the Shakta religion influenced Buddhism, Jainism and the Vedic religion in the tenth century A.D. It is known from inscriptions that the pundits Sankama and Lakhana, the dictators of the Sevuna king Singhana, made donations to the gods and also to Chandikadevi. Several inscriptions from the Soraba taluk mention donations made to Goddess Durga. In this article, I explain some important Goddesses temples of Soraba taluk, which are Renukadevi, Kalikamba of Bennur, the Saptha Matrikas, Mahisha Mardhini Sculptures, Indrani, Chamundi, Vaisnavi and Mahadevi. In this area so many local and major kingdoms ruled here which had given their own contribution to built some Shakta temples in this area. Middle and north part of this taluk includes some Shakta power centers where some goddesses were worshiped by the native people.

The Goddess Renukadevi temple of Chandragutti

The inscriptions and monuments here testify that Chandragutti in Sorab Taluk was originally a center of Tantric, Shakta, and Kalamukh traditions. The Renaka Devi Temple is the most attractive of all the temples here. The Renuka Devi Temple faces east and is built on a high platform. The gatekeepers, steps, Mukhamantapa, Sukhanasi, Navaranga, Garbhagudi and a shikhara on the hill are built. The Navaranga has four circular pillars. The temple has an open Mukhamantapa. This temple has 16 beautiful and smooth pillars. There is a rectangular sanctum. There is a one and a half feet high face of Renaka Devi in the sanctum. Inside the sanctum, there is a Nisarga. There are huge boulders built. On the left side of the temple, there is a small tabular shrine, which does not have any sculptures. The exterior of the temple is not very attractive; it is in a simple style with strips.

It is built inside a naturally formed rock cave and Renukamba is locally called Chandraguttyamma. A high hill to the west of Chandragutti village, on the hill, there is a large boulder. At the bottom of this is a large cave created by nature, inside which is a bedrock in the shape of two female buttocks. In the middle of this rock is a lingam one and a half inches high and three inches in circumference.¹ When Renuka was chased by Parashurama's father to kill her, she ran and hugged the Shivalingam in this cave and became Shiva. Therefore, Renuka is also called Shiva Swaroopini, Guhamba, Gutyamma, and Guttikannamma.

The Goddess Kalikamba of Bennur

Bennur is a small village in Chandragutti hobli of Sorab taluk, which is mentioned in inscriptions as "Binakali" 'Binakalli'. About nine inscriptions of the fourteenth century A.D mention Bommagouda, the sons

of Benavur Ramegowda. There are abundant mastic stones and hero stones in the area of Bennur village. There is a fourteenth-century A.D. idol of Goddess Kalikamba, and the Kalikamba temple has idols of Kali, Parvati and Lakshmi. These idols are about three feet tall and are attractive. The style of the Banni Hakali of Talagunda is similar to the Kalikamba idols of Bennur.

The Goddess Banashankari (Balari) in Barangi

There is an important Banashankari (Balari) temple in Barangi village of Sorab taluk. Next to the temple is 'Banamatti'.² The lake next to it is also called 'Balagatti' (same). The temple is built of rough bedrock. In its sanctorum, there is a group of idols on a pedestal of wild bedrock. If you look at these idols from left to right, there are idols of 'Vaishnavi, Balari, Brahmini'. (same) While the height of these idols is about three feet, the Balari idol in the middle is slightly taller. The goddess Balari is seated in a Lalitaasana and has four hands. The scene of Kiratarjuna from the Mahabharata is shown here with slight changes.

The symbols of Goddess Balari are a gourd at her feet, a human being trampled by the goddess at her footstool, and a wolf and a dog eating him at her feet. But there is no evidence of a googe being found at the feet of the Balari Devi in the barangi. Considering this, it seems that the googe is not an indispensable symbol for the Balari. The goddess Balari is a Shakti goddess and may have been the worshipped deity of the Kaulas. In ancient times, 'Balari' was one of the folk Shakti deities of Karnataka.³ Balari is another name for Kali. This Balari Devi is one of the Banadevas. Hence the name 'Balari of Banad'. There is a ritual of sacrifice for the goddess Balari. There is a ritual of offering meat and liquor to this Shakti goddess, and M. M. Kalaburgi believes that the devotees may have installed this deity in the Banadeva, thinking that the forest is better than the land. He has concluded that this is the goddess of the Kaulas.

The Saptha Matrikas

The Saptha Matrikas, who were considered to be different forms of Parvati, were worshipped by the public.⁴ As mentioned in the Durga Saptashati, when Kaushik Durga fought against Rakta Bijasura, seven forms emerged from her to kill him. All these seven forms are called Sapta matrikas.⁵ In ancient times, the Sapta matrikas were worshipped as attendant deities of Shaiva temples. Sometimes they were worshipped as independent deities. Brahma, Vaishnavi, Raudhri, Kaumari, Aindri (Indrani), Yami, Varuni, and Kauberi are called Sapta matrikas. These deities are Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva, Skanda, Indra, Yama, Varuna, Kubera and the powers of these deities.⁶ These deities are carved in a row on a single stone. For example, such Sapta matrukas are found in places like Kubatur, Kotipura, Udri, Kodakani etc. Some

These Saptha Matrikas are carved separately in the region. These idols are usually found carved in one or one and a half feet in height and size. The stone slabs of these Saptha Matrikas seem to have been carved in the framework of Tantric rituals. In the Markandeya Purana, it is mentioned that when the goddess stood to fight the demons, powers emerged from Brahma, Vishnu, Kartikeya, Indra, etc. The seven matrikas, who were considered the daughters of Rudra, were Kalamukhis, maids of Shiva, and Shaivite beauties. These Kanais were skilled in the tantric and philosophical arts. Like Parvati, they were also of the sacred caste.

Sculptures of these seven goddesses are found on the banks of lakes in many places. For example, they are found on the banks of lakes in Kodakani, Kubatur, Basur, Kuppagadde, Bilagi, and near the Kaitabheshwara temple in Kotipura. These deities are called by different local names. Sculptures of these seven goddesses are found in the Navaranga or Sukhanashi in the temples of the Kalyana Chalukya period.

Brahmi: The goddess Brahmi has four faces, is a swan-like figure, and has four arms, holding a book, alphabet, hook, and kamandal in each hand.⁷ She is the goddess of sound, the origin of creation. Creation was revealed through her.

Vaishnavi: This goddess is seated on the Garuda vehicle. She is four-armed and has a wheel, conch, mace, and abhaya hands. She was created by Brahmi and looks after the orderly form and supervision of the world.

Indrani: This goddess has three eyes and holds a vajra and a shakti in her back hands. Her front hands are in the Varada and Abhaya mudras. She is crowned and sits on an elephant.

Chamunda: The goddess 𑀓𑀺𑀭𑀺 also has three eyes and is four-armed. In her hands are a skull, a spear, and a boon in the Abhaya mudra. She sits on a lotus seat and wears a tiger skin. The body of a dead man is her vehicle.

Maheshwari: This goddess has five faces, with three eyes on each face. She holds a drum, a spear, and a bell in her hands. The other two hands are in the boon-giving and abhaya mudras. Her vehicle is Nandi.

Kaumari: This goddess is four-armed and holds Shakti and Kukkhata in two hands. The other two hands are in the boon-giving and abhaya mudras. The vehicle of this goddess is the peacock.

Varahi: This goddess sits on Mahishi. She has six hands. She has the Abhaya Mudra, the hand of blessing, a

sword, a tusk, and a drinking vessel. She is the one who gives every goddess the power to eat and digest food. It is said that in the list of the Sapta Matrikas, Veerabhadra and Ganapati should be placed on the left and right.⁸

The Mahishamardhini sculpture

Mahishamardini is depicted in many forms in sculpture. She is the fierce form of Parvati. She is identified with one face and twenty hands.⁹ Mahishamardini is the one who has taken the power of Brahma, Shiva, Vishnu, Indra, Chandra, Yama and other gods and goddesses to defeat Mahishasura.¹⁰ There is a tradition of worshipping her in the form of a sculpture of a Kona's head. Another way is to kill Mahisha in the form of a Kona with a trident. In many places in my study area, there are Shiva temples Mahisha Mardini is carved on a stone slab in the Devako sthakas. Generally, in many temples of this region, Mahisha Mardini can be found in the Navaranga, on the koshtakas to the left of the sanctorum. The sculpture of the goddess standing on the head of the cone is also known as 'PrasannaVanadurge'.¹¹ Vanadurge is also one of the nine Durgas found in the Shaiva Agamas. (*Neelakanti, Kshimankari, Harasa Rudramsha Durga, Vanadurge, Agni Durga, Jayadurga, (Jaladurga) Vindyavasini Ripumari, these are the Agamoksha Devis*)

There is a statue of Mahishamardini in the Rameshwara temple in Kubatur. It is 6 feet tall and she is seated on her vehicle, a lion. this statue has sixteen hands carved in it, and each hand holds a different type of weapon. That is, she is seen holding a conch, a wheel, a mace, a sword, a fire, a spear, an arrow, etc. Mahishasuramardini is seen killing the demon in a furious form, and the trident in her right hand has pierced the demon, Mahisha. Blood is coming from Mahisha's neck. The statue is carved in such a way that the lion, which is Mahishamardini's vehicle, is advancing and looking at the demon. Scholars are of the opinion that the head of the cone is the footstool of these goddesses. There is a stone tablet of Mahishamardini on the Otoor and Negevadi lake basins.

Buffalo's head (Konanatale) Sculpture

In the ancient Shakta tradition, the main tenet is "The world is a powerful scholar, Shiva is the inspirer of power." From here, Shakti worship developed in many forms in India. The Saptha Matrikas. many village deities and virtuous deities were created. The responsibility of destroying evil and protecting the disciples became the responsibility of the goddess.¹² The goddess killed the demons. It is mentioned in the Puranas as protecting the gods and humans. The purpose of creating the sculpture of Bison' head (*Konanatale*) is a symbol of the worship of the goddess Shakti. The goddess who killed the evil demons has hundreds of names such as Durge, Kali, Adi Shakti, Mahakali, Chandi, Chamundi, Rudre, Bhadre, Bhairavi, Shambhavi. On the left side in front of the Ishwara temple of Kodakani, there is a sculpture of Bison' head (*Konanatale*) facing west on a stone slab. A relief sculpture of Bison' head (*Konanatale*) with a tongue sticking out and a lotus blooming between the lines can be seen on a large stone slab. Usually, the head of Bison' (*Konana*) is placed on the stone slab, touching the ground. These sculptures are found in places like Kupattur, Kachavi, Kodakani, Bharangi, Gumana etc.

A.Sundar, who saw the sculpture of Kona's head in Kubatur, opined that it must have been related to Mahishasuramardini. Could it be that the custom of placing such sculptures separately in front of the sculpture of Mahishamardini existed long ago? He **opined**. (*Krishna Murthy. P. V.- 'K.Sa. P. P.' No. 73:1 June 1978 Page-109. 'Hebbalda Durgikallu Sangha'*) If, as A. Sundar said, the sculpture of Bison (*Kona*)'s head is understood to be a symbol of Mahishamardini, then why is there a difference in the beliefs, practices and worship of the present people? There is a practice of worshipping this sculpture as a symbol of Bhootaradhan. Goddesses like Durga and Chamundi are especially worshipped in various forms. The goddess killed Mahishasura in the form of a bison (*Kona*). This Mahishamardini is a lioness and is the confluence of immense powers and is worshipped as a village deity in many villages. Konanatale

The worship is also called the worship of the Bison's head in my study area. This worship can be included in the place of Shakta and village deities. The Bison's (*Kona*) head is carved on a stone slab and has not been found in a shrine anywhere. The practice of worshipping and offering sacrifices on the festival of Diwali is found in some places. It is noteworthy that many of our rituals have a symbolic form. These sculptures are considered to be the 'guardian of the treasury', 'the bringer of wealth'.¹³ There is another reason for installing this Bison (*Kona*) head sculpture in the garden. Forest. In ancient times, Durgi was equated with Lakshmi.¹⁴ There is a folk tale about this. It is believed that the head of the Bison (*Kona*) may have been installed in a forest or garden as a symbol of Durga, who looked after the gardens of Ayyappa Shasta.

Sculpture of Banadevi

Rachamma, Rajeshwari, Bellary, Banadevi, and Banashankari are all Banadevatas (Forest Gods), and Huligemma and Huliappa come in place of Vanadevatas. The Kaulas were worshippers of Shakti or the

Goddess. The symbols of the Balari Devi are a gourd at the feet of the Goddess, a human being trampled by the Goddess at the footstool, and a wolf and a dog eating him at his feet. However, there is no record of a gourd being found at the feet of the Balari Devi in the Barangi. Considering this, it seems that the gourd is not an indispensable symbol for the Balari. The goddess Balari is a Shakti goddess and may have been the worshipped deity of the Kauravas. 'Balari' was one of the folk Shakti deities of Karnataka in ancient times.¹⁵ Balari is another name

There is a ritual of sacrifice for Goddess Balari. There is a ritual of offering meat and food to this Shakti Goddess and the devotees may have installed this deity in the forest, thinking that the forest is better than the river, according to Kalaburgi M.

M. In front of the Kaitabeshwara (Kotinath) temple in Kotipura, there is a pedestal on the right side, in which a man is oppressed, a wolf near this man, and a dog with its head raised are standing in an eating posture. Perhaps the idol of Goddess Balari in the standing posture has been destroyed (*Kalaburgi M. M. 'Goddess of Balari'. Marga- No. 2. Page-365-370*). In the central part of Kachavi village, there is an idol of Goddess Balari sitting in the Lalita posture at the bottom of a palm tree.

II. Conclusion:

Overall, there is power in Sanatan Hinduism, Puranas, and Tantras. Depicted in the form of a female goddess.¹⁶ Without any extraordinary power or virtue, even a god becomes inactive. All gods without power are incomplete. The Shakta tradition considers power as their foundation. In sculptures, Shakti is seen in both peaceful and fierce forms. She is shown with her husband or in a peaceful form, with two hands and a smiling face. In a fierce form, Shiva is seen in the form of Kali, Mahakali, Durga. When in this fierce form, she is shown with four, six, or eight hands, holding weapons in all those hands. She is shown in an angry form. The history of Indian architecture, even before the Gupta period, began with wooden structures or wooden materials. Over time, the art of building temples using stones, as per Indian tradition, began and early rock-cut caves dominated. In some places, bricks and stone slabs were used in the construction of temples, but no elaborate structures were built initially. The foundation of Hindu temple architecture was laid during the Gupta era. A temple is a spiritual center for Indians, a cultural center and some pilgrimage sites. Along with this, ancient inscriptions from Karnataka make it clear that temples emerged as social, administrative and economic centers. Moreover, the temples of that time are evidence that they were a masterpiece of art in terms of architecture, sculpture and other aspects

End Notes

¹ Abhishenkar K., 1975, Shimogga District Gazetteer, Govt. of Karnataka Publication, p-636

² Bhojaraja Patil. (2018) 'Nagarakhand-70 Ondu Adyayana ' Suvvi Publication, Shikaripura. Page-352

³ Kalaburgi M. M 'Balari Devta', Marga- No. 2. Page-365-370

⁴ D. G. Kulkarni, *Trikuta Temples of Haveri District*. Page No. 244

⁵ Mishra, O. P. *Iconography of the Sapta matrikas*. Page-2

⁶ Mishra, O. P, *Iconography of the Sapta matrukas*. Page-2 ⁷Mishra, O. P, *Iconography of the Sapta matrukas*. Page-2 ⁸Mishra, O. P, *Iconography of the SaptaMatrikas*. Page-3

⁹ Gopinathrao, T. A., *op. cit.*, vol. 3, p. 72

¹⁰ Rajeshwari, P. R., *Shakti Iconography*, p. 53-54

¹¹ A. Sundara. 'K. Bharathi' 8-2 *Some Recent Major Archaeological Discoveries*. P. 17

¹² Seemoge' Editor-in-Chief. Srikantha Kudige, page 167

¹³ Bhojaraj Patil. (2018) 'Nagarakhand-70 Ondu Adyayana, Suvvi Publication, Shikaripura page-395, 396

¹⁴ Seemoge' Editor-in-Chief. Srikantha Kudig Page 168

¹⁵ Kalaburgi M. M 'Balari Devta'. Marga- No. 2. Page-365-370

¹⁶ Swami Harshananda, 'Hindu Gods and Goddesses,' p. 78

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