

Depiction of Ganga and Yamuna on The Temple Doors of Central India

Abstract

River goddess Ganga and Yamuna often engraved on the entrance of each temples constructed after the Gupta age. Ganga which sprang from the foot of the Vishnu flowed over the sky in the form of Milky way(mandakini), and then fell to earth from the matted locks of Shiva. Ganga was often personified as goddess in her own right like her great tributary Yanuna.¹

Keywords: Ganga and Yamuna River, Sculpture, Vedic Concept

Introduction

The river goddess Ganga and Yamuna, as frequently shown on the temple doors of the Gupta and the early mediaeval periods can justifiably traced to those prototypes, though they are not depicted in the dancing pose. Their generally standing figures are architectural decorations and afterwards endowed with the hieratic form of cult deities or exceedingly beautiful women of a voluptuous type. The Besnagar Ganga stands in very graceful pose on the back of makara, a mythical crocodile, with legs crossed.² her right elbow rest on the shoulder of an attendant, and a male figure on the left corner is striking a blow to the snout of the animal.(may be Bhagiratha).

The sculpture figure of Ganga and Yamuna occur frequently in the Gupta and mediaeval sculptures of northern and central India. we find the figures of Ganga and Yamuna on the Gold coins of Samudragupta.³ Generally the Sculptures of Ganga and Yamuna are used to be exhibited in standing posture upon their respective vahanas (viz makara and kurma). Usually they hold a pot in their right hand and attended by two lady attendants, shown in standing posture on either side. A sculpture of Ganga carved on the piece of sandstone was procured from Tumain and now displayed in Central Museum, Gujar Mahal Gwalior.(5th century A.D). Similar sculpture of Ganga has been noticed from the Siva temple at Bhumara(Panna) which belong to Gupta period.

Ganga sculptures has been procured from many places in central India. it is shown in tribhanga posture, on her vahana makara. she is holding a decorated pot. Her hair are done artistically. she wears beaded hara, kundala, keyura, kati mekhala and nupur. According to A.S.Altekar - "The two flanking scenes also are of unusual significance, representing the birth of twin river Ganga and Yamuna, their confluence at prayag and the final merging of the combined waters into Ocean."⁴

The whole scene is permeated with a lyrical feeling and probably conveys an ideal representation of the middle country or the Madhya desha, which was the heart of the wide culture empire built in this age. It is only in the Gupta art, as in the literature of this period, that the two rivers make their appearance for the first time in the scheme of temple architecture, and we cannot but infer that Kalidasa making a pointed reference to them as attendants of the deity, is referring to a principal feature of contemporary art.⁵

The Dasavtara temple at Deogarh is having a plain interior, but its doorway is exquisitely carved and decorated, the jambs showing the figures of Ganga and Yamuna carved on them. Altekar points out that- "this was a typically Gupta feature and it is possible that the two river goddesses occupying the upper corners of the door jambs were derived from the early salbhanjika figures which once festooned the architraves of the Buddhist torans."⁶

The Ganga on the doorjamb of Dasavtara temple Devgarh. U.P. This standing figure of Ganga is in Dwibhang mudra with an umbrella over

Neeta Yadav
Assistant Professor,
Deptt. of History,
Bundelkhand University,
Jhansi

Anthology : The Research

her head. She is holding a flower in her right hand and the left hand is in Katyavalambita pose. Her hair are well knotted and she is wearing kundalas in her ears. A girdle is fastened around her waist. She is also wearing a trivalli in her naval area. She is standing on her vahana makara.



The river goddess Yamuna is standing in tribhanga mudra on her vahana kurma. Her left hand rests on her thigh and the right hand is broken. Her hair are done properly and decorated with beads. Serpents are shown fastened around her legs. An umbrella surmounts her head.

This is the only temple in Bundelkhand region where Ganga and Yamuna are shown on the upper corners of the door jambs. This temple belongs to Gupta period and is the only surviving example of a beautifully carved Gupta temple in the region. The next temple is Jarai ka math temple at Baruasagar U.P. This temple is of Gurjara Pratihara period. The river goddesses are beautifully depicted on the entrance of the temple along with other attendant figures.





The river goddess Ganga is standing on her vahana makara on the left side of the door entrance. The hands are broken but she is shown standing in tribhang pose. the attendants are also depicted with her. The Yamuna on the right is standing on her vahana kurma. As her hands and face are broken nothing can be identified.

Another figures are from Devgarh Jaina temples of Chandella period. These temples also depict the figures of Ganga and Yamuna. In this entrance of the temple Ganga and Yamuna are standing with side postures and holding the pot or Kalasha in their hands. In place of umbrella serpents are shown.



Another figure of Yamuna is found from Lalitpur Devgarh where Yamuna is standing on her



Vahana Kurma and holding a pot in her hand. The other hand is resting on her thigh. An attendant is holding an umbrella behind her. Her hair is tied in a knot and she is wearing kundalas. Like wise Ganga is standing on her vahana makara. An attendant is holding an umbrella on her side. She is also holding a pot of water and the other hand is resting on her thigh.

Conclusion

The depiction of Ganga and Yamuna which started with the Gupta temples continued in the region of Bundelkhand till the rajput architecture. The beautifully designed Ganga and Yamuna on the door jamb of Dasavatra temple is the masterpiece of this architectural heritage. The Vedic concept of Ganga and Yamuna as the twin auspicious rivers are beautifully excavated in the temples of Bundelkhand.

References

1. A.L.Basham - *A Wonder that was India*, p 322
2. J.N.Banerjea- *the vidgala pose as described in Vishnudharmottara*, p 354
3. *Catalogue of the Gupta Gold coins in Bayana hoard*, p.6
4. cf. *Raghu* .XIII, v.58
5. *Kumarsambhava* VII v 42
6. Altekar A.S, R.C.Majumdar- *The Vakataka Gupta Age*,