

A Study of the Costumes and Ornaments of Shakti Sculptures from the Paramara Period

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Abstract: *This research paper examines the artistic depiction of various goddesses from the Paramara period, focusing on the costumes and jewelry adorned by these sculptures. The study analyzes sculptures displayed in the State Museum and Birla Museum in Bhopal, including representations of deities such as Gauri, Chamunda, Saraswati, Simhavahini, Indrani, Vinayaki, Gajalakshmi, and Khemkari Durga. By detailing their style, attire, and religious - cultural significance, this paper aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the diverse sculptural traditions of the Paramara period and their religious importance in Indian art.*

Keywords: Indian Sculpture, Goddess Sculptures, Gauri, Chamunda, Durga, Saraswati, Simhavahini, Indrani, Vinayaki, Gajalakshmi, Khemkari, Religious Significance, Cultural Heritage.

1. Introduction

The Paramara period, notable for its significant contributions to Indian sculpture art, witnessed a proliferation of Shakti (goddess) depictions. The sculptures of this period, housed in the State Museum and Birla Museum in Bhopal, provide a rich canvas for analyzing the artistry, symbolism, and religious - cultural significance of the goddesses depicted. This study aims to explore the stylistic elements, costumes, and ornaments of these sculptures, revealing insights into the social and cultural dynamics of the period.

2. Literature Review

Previous studies on Paramara - period sculptures have largely focused on their architectural and iconographic elements. However, the detailed examination of costumes and jewelry has been relatively understudied. This paper builds on existing literature by emphasizing the sartorial and adornment aspects of the sculptures, integrating interpretations of their religious significance and cultural contexts.

3. Methodology

The study employs a qualitative analysis of selected sculptures from the State Museum and Birla Museum in Bhopal. The research involves a visual and descriptive examination of the sculptures, focusing on their attire, ornaments, and stylistic attributes. Comparative analysis with textual references from historical and religious scriptures provides further context to the findings.

4. Analysis of Selected Sculptures

4.1 Gauri¹ Sculpture

Provenance: Haripura, dist Mandsour
Period: 10th century A. D.;
Measurement: 66x31x19 cm



Located in the State Museum, Bhopal (Reg. No.1517 E), the Gauri sculpture represents the divine form of Goddess Gauri, richly adorned with elaborate lower garments², Yognapatta, waistbands, and a variety of ornaments including a crown, earrings, necklaces, armlets, bracelets, and anklets. The 10th - century AD style portrays Gauri with four arms, emphasizing divine power and grace. This sculpture reflects the goddess's association with strength, beauty, and prosperity, underscoring her religious significance in Indian spiritual traditions.

4.2 Chhemkari Durga Sculpture

Provenance: Hinglajgarh, dist Mandsour
Period: 11th century A. D.;
Measurement: 109x61x20 cm



The Chhemkari Durga sculpture, housed in the State Museum, Bhopal (Reg. No.816 ACC), depicts the goddess in a lotus position with multiple arms, a significant representation in the "Durga Saptashati" and "Devi Mahatmya (8/14 - 21) " texts. The attire includes finely crafted lower garments with intricate designs and various ornaments³ such as a high crown, circular earrings, necklaces, armlets, and waistbands. Dated to the 12th - 13th century AD, the sculpture illustrates the detailed craftsmanship of the period, representing Chhemkari Durga as a fierce protector and destroyer of evil.

4.3 Chamunda Sculpture

Provenance: Hinglajgarh, dist Mandour
Period: 11th century A. D.;
Material: Balua Plaster;
Measurement: 86x47x25 cm



The Chamunda sculpture, located in the State Museum, Bhopal (Reg. No.435), presents the goddess in a fierce form, symbolizing the destruction of evil forces and negative energies. The attire consists of a skull crown, garlands, and other ornaments that highlight her terrifying nature and Chandika's deress is made of tiger skin⁴. Dating back to the 11th century AD, this sculpture portrays a powerful and intimidating presence, which is central to her worship as a deity who eradicates negativity and protects her followers.

4.4. Saraswati Sculpture

Provenance: Samashgarh, dist Bhopal
Period: 10th - 11th century A. D.;
Measurement: 64x42x9 cm

Displayed in the State Museum, Bhopal (Reg. No. ACC 734), the Saraswati sculpture represents the goddess of knowledge, music, and arts. The figure is adorned with a decorated saree, a crown, necklaces, and anklets, which emphasize her role as a patroness of learning and creativity⁵. Belonging to the 12th - 13th century AD, this sculpture captures the divine attributes of Saraswati, highlighting her cultural significance in promoting wisdom and artistic pursuits.

4.5 Simhavahini Sculpture

Provenance: Hinglajgarh, dist Mandour
Period: 10th century A. D.;
Material: White sandstone;
Measurement: 94x52 cm



The Simhavahini sculpture, located in the Birla Museum, Bhopal (Reg. No. BM 169), depicts the goddess seated on a lion, a symbol of strength and victory. The figure is richly adorned with traditional jewelry and sari⁶, reflecting her divine status and courage (by Mr. Lokhande Sir, in charge Birla Museum, Bhopal) this sculpture, characterized by traditional motifs, embodies the themes of protection, valor, and triumph, which are central to her worship and symbolic representation.

4.6 Indrani Sculpture

Housed in the Birla Museum, Bhopal (Reg. No. BM 171), the Indrani sculpture shows the goddess in a relaxed seated pose, regarded as one of the principal goddesses. The sculpture features a headdress with intricate designs, Kirita Mukuta, ear - rings, Kanthi - sutra, multiple necklaces, armlets, anklets, vanmala and a decorated waist chain, reflecting high social status and religious reverence⁷. Besides, she is shown with a kuca - bandha consisting of a knot in the middle of the upper garment, while her lower garment consisting of a sari indicated by wavy lines.⁸ The early medieval style of the sculpture highlights the divine beauty and importance of Indrani, who is worshipped for prosperity and well - being.

4.7 Vinayaki Sculpture

Provenance: Hinglajgarh, dist Mandour
 Period: 10th century A. D.;
 Material: White sandstone;
 Measurement: 89x48 cm



The Vinayaki sculpture⁹, located in the Birla Museum, Bhopal (Reg. No. BM 168), depicts the goddess seated in a lotus pose, considered a female counterpart of Ganesha. The sculpture is adorned with a five - layered crown, large circular earrings, necklaces, waist chains, anklets, and other ornaments that signify her divine status. The intricate ornamentation and stylistic features reflect the Paramara period's characteristic artistry. Vinayaki symbolizes both material and spiritual prosperity and is often invoked for blessings of wealth and well - being.

4.8 Gajalakshmi Sculpture

Provenance: Ashapuri, dist Raisen,
 Period: 9th century A. D.;
 Material: Dark brown sandstone;
 Measurement: 67x71 cm



The Gajalakshmi sculpture¹⁰, housed in the Birla Museum, Bhopal (Reg. No. BM 19), depicts the goddess with four arms, a prominent figure in Hindu worship. The attire includes a crown, earrings, necklaces, waistbands, and anklets, with motifs that signify prosperity and divine wealth. This sculpture, dated to 1151 AD (Samvat 1208), exemplifies medieval Indian sculpture art and reflects the

grandeur and divine beauty associated with Goddess Lakshmi, who is worshipped for wealth, prosperity, and success.

5. Discussion

The analysis reveals that the sculptures from the Paramara period are not only artistic masterpieces but also significant in understanding the religious and cultural fabric of the time. The detailed depiction of costumes and ornaments suggests an emphasis on portraying the divine attributes and roles of these goddesses. The variation in styles across different sculptures illustrates the regional diversity and the influence of contemporary socio - religious dynamics.

6. Conclusion

This study highlights the intricate artistry and religious - cultural importance of the Paramara period's Shakti sculptures. The diverse representations of goddesses in various forms and styles reflect the multifaceted nature of Indian art and its deep connection with spiritual beliefs. These sculptures serve as critical cultural artifacts that offer insights into the period's aesthetic preferences, religious practices, and societal values.

References

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