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CULTURAL HERITAGE OF WATER KACHCHHAPAGHATA PERIOD ASHOKNAGAR AND SHIVPURI DISTRICTS



(Special Reference to Kadwaha, Thoban, Surwaya and Rannod)



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Tank
Kadwaha



Tank
Rannod

Save Water & Cultural Heritage

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INTRODUCTION

Since time immemorial water has been considered as an auspicious element in Hindu mythology. Water as a basic need of human life also played a vital role in Hindu and all other religious rituals. Water has been recognized as a primordial spiritual symbol. In RigVeda, water is referred as *Apah*. It has been used for purifying in spiritual context. It has been a practice in India to take a dip into the water before entering the temple. There are several myths and legends on water in Indian context. One such myth is a dip in to sacred water of Koti Tirth Tank of Kalinjar fort which is equivalent to ten million places of pilgrimage. The *Kumbha snana* in every 12 years denote the importance of water in every Hindus' life. Ancient Indian traditions and rituals have been substantiated in Hindu temple architecture by carving beautiful images of river goddesses Ganga-Yamuna and Varuna the God of water as one of the Dikpalas of western side. If we look into the nature of early human habitations they have been evolved near water prone areas or where proximity of water was feasible. Such instances may be taken up from Harappan as well as Nile valley Civilizations. Gradually, water management became the integral part of fort building and town planning during the time of contemporary rulers.

The tradition of erecting religious structure along the water tanks or wells is still continuing. The Indian rulers of different periods constructed great temples along with various water bodies. In central India Kachchhapaghata rulers during 10-11th c.A.D.

MAP SHOWING KACHCHHAPAGHATA TEMPLE SITES IN
DISTT. ASHOK NAGAR AND SHIVPURI (M.P.)



constructed temples in various places like Kadwaha, Thoban in Ashoknagar district and Terahi, Rannod, Surwaya in Shivpuri district, Mitawali, in Bhind district, and Padawali in Morena district. In Kadwaha region, most of the temples are provided with a tank nearby and the village contains a large number of wells and tanks in and around.

HISTORY

According to the verbal tradition the Kachchhapaghata dynasty is said to have been come from *Kusha*, the son of lord Rama, who belongs to the solar clan of Kshatriyas. They also used to attack their enemies in the manner of *Kachchhapa* (tortoise) hence they were traditionally called Kachchhapaghata and similarly they used to hunt tortoise as their hobbies. There is no any story of the family's mythical origin, but we do get the information from the Dynastic History of Northern India written By H.C. Ray on the genealogy of Kachchhapaghata rulers. The epigraphic records which show that in 10th-11th century A.D. at least there were three branches of Kachchhapaghata rulers existed in Gwalior, Dubkund, and Narwar.

The existence of Gwalior branch is known from a number of records, the most important of which is the Sas Bahu temple inscription of Mahipala, dated V.S. 1150 (Indian Antiquary, Vol. XV, pp. 33-46). This inscription is the main source to know the genealogy of Kachchhapaghata rulers. They were the subordinate to Pratiharas. In 950 AD., the victory over Pratiharas by Vajradaman was an important event of early medieval history of North India.

Kachchhapaghata temples mainly built during the tenth century in places like Kakan Math, Pathawali, Mithawali, Bateshwar, Naresar etc. districts of Gwalior, Morena, Shivpuri, Guna and Vidisha in Madhya Pradesh carry forward the Pratihara legacy and employ several typical motifs, of the Pratihara art in a stylized form. All of these are *Nirandhara* temples, comprising a *garbhagraha* and a short *kapili* (wall projecting in front of the sanctum framing a vestibule connecting with the hall) preceded by a *mukhacatuski* (pillared entry porch). The *prasada* generally stands on a low height *padmapitha* (Deva, K., Encyclopaedia of Indian Temple Architecture,

North India, Beginning of Medieval Idiom, A.D. 900-1000, 1998, pp.15). The temples of Kadwaha group though small are in no way less than Khajuraho in the matter of the elegant edifices and graceful statuary embellishment. Garde had described Kadwaha as Puri of Gwalior region (Garde, M.B. Archaeology in Gwalior, 1934 pp.95).

Cultural Heritage Associated With Water

Stepped Water Tank near Hindu Monastery, Rannod, District Shivpuri

Rannod (25° 08'N. & 77° 55'E.) a large village was once a centre of Siva worship and seems to have possessed number of temples and at least two monasteries of the medieval period. Rannod is away from Shivpuri by 74 Km. It is about 20 km, away from a well known archaeological temple site *Terahi*. The site is covered with Hindu and Muslim ruins surrounded by tamarind and mango trees. The most remarkable structure of this area is a stepped tank



Stepped water tank, Rannod

made of carved stone blocks. This tank may be compared with that of Hampi in Karnataka. It is one of the rare examples of central India of Kachchhapaghata period. Series of steps are provided in all direction to go down, and a well also connected to this tank. The construction of this water structure indicates that the people were aware of

water storage and its importance. It is also a tropical region hence this type of traditional water saving techniques and rain water harvesting systems meticulously followed.

There is a Hindu monastery built in sand stone blocks without mortar and roofed with series of huge stone slabs of the same material.



Stepped water tank, Hampi



Hindu Math, Rannod

Presently, this building is locally known as Khokhai Math. There is an inscription in Sanskrit referring to king Avantivarman (Gazetteer of India, Shivpuri, pp.361). The inscription may be assigned to 10-11th c. A.D. Monastery is a double story building provided with a central courtyard along with open verandahs on all sides. Roof of the verandahs is supported by plain square pillars with simple cushion brackets. These verandahs are provided by small cells probably constructed for the purpose of monk's meditation. On the roof, deep grooves have been provided to drain out the rain water. It is dateable to the medieval period. According to the inscriptional records the Mattamayura Saiva monks might have been played an important role in the construction of this monastery.

Baoli at Garhi, Surwaya, District Shivpuri

Surwaya (25° 20'N. & 50° 77'E.) once an important place is located at a distance of about 20 kilometers from Shivpuri. There is a Gari a small fort like structure made of dressed sand stone blocks.



Baoli & Group of Temples, Garhi, Surwaya

The Garhi is approachable through a series of three zigzag entrances, having Mughal arches, and is surrounded by a rampart wall and moat. There are three temples and a monastery which bears *Sarvotobhadra* miniature temple on

roof. The temples bear the elements of Kachchhapaghat art and architecture. They are smaller in size but in two temples images are carved in exuberance. All temples are of *pancharatha* and closed to each other.

There is a rectangular baoli in front of the temple No.03 which is quite deep and made of dressed sand stone blocks. Steps are made downward to approach to the water at the southern side.

Wells, Tanks and Baolis at Kadwaha, Dist. Ashoknagar

Kadwaha (24° 50'N. & 77° 57'E.) a small village is located about 16 kilometers away on northern direction from Isagarh Tahsil and about 40 kilometers from Chanderi on northwestern side in district Ashoknagar (24° 34'N. & 77° 46'E.) of Madhya Pradesh. It



Well near Ekla Temple, Kadwaha

is very well connected with Ashoknagar, Guna, Shivpuri, by motorable road. Village Kadwaha contains various water bodies all around. They include wells, tanks and baolis and some of them are too deep. They are made of dressed sand stone but at the base level

undressed stones were used. However, renovation works have been observed in some water bodies. Water tanks are noticed at the premises of Temple Group-7, Ekla, Pachali Marghat-A, and a baoli has also been noticed at Garhi area of Kadwaha.



Entrance of Baoli, Garhi, Kadwaha

Structures at Kuti Area, Thoban, District Ashoknagar

Kuti area expanded along the river Lilut at Thoban is much popular for its Baradari, temples and some cells. There are five Vaishnav temples and various cells because of which the area has been considered as Vaishnav monastery. The area has beautiful picturesque location and presently it is locally popular as picnic spot. The temples and other structures are described as under:



Kuti area along with river Lilut, Thoban

Baradari

It is basically a long pillared corridor with cells and the back part of which is attached with a small hillock. At both the corners (east- west) there is a small temple. It is locally named as baradari. The roof of the building is flat and the corridor between the two temples serves the purpose of joint *mandapa* probably used for congregational worship.

Cells

There are six flat roofed small cells each one has very small entrance, hardly, one person can enter into it. These cells might have been used for meditation by those monks.

Group of Temples

There are total seven small temples having a *garbhagraha* and a *mandapa* dateable to 10-11th century A.D. Five temples are dedicated to lord Visnu and remaining two are of Saiva cult. Presently, in most cases *sikhara* is missing and all are of *mandapika* type. These particular temples of Kuti area situated along the river Lilut are considered to be a (*thirtha*) holy place or the centre of pilgrimage.

God and Goddesses related to water

Ancient Indian traditions indicate the worship of various gods and goddesses on many occasions. Varuna a God of water has been described in Rig-Veda as well as in many Shilpa texts. The sculptors of ancient India followed the instinct of such traditions and carved beautiful sculptures of Ganga-Yamuna at the door entrance and Varuna as *dikpala* the guardian on western side of the temples.

The temples of Kachchhapaghatas at Kadwaha and Thoban (district Ashoknagar), Surwaya (Shivpuri district) preserve the figures of Ganga- Yamuna and Varuna in almost all the temples predominantly.

Varuna

As a water god the reference of Varuna finds in Rig Veda. In the beginning he was the main god of water but during Pauranic period he became the guardian deity of western side. From the iconographical point of view, he holds *pasa* in his hand and adorns with jewellery along with *hara* of gold *niskas*. He is the master of water animal and lives in sea. According to the Vishnu Dharmottara Purana he holds lotus and *pasa* in both lower and upper right hands and Conch and bowl of jewel in both lower and upper left hands. However, at Kadwaha temples he is shown *pasa* & lotus in his upper right and left hand respectively. Generally a *makara* is depicted as a mount at the lower end. Temples at Kadwaha i.e. Ekla temple, Marghatiya temple, Pachali Marghat temple ('A','B') preserve the beautiful specimens of Varuna.



Varuna, Kadwaha

Ganga - Yamuna

The earliest reference of Ganga comes from Rig Veda. However, the image of Ganga seems to be displayed in temples from Gupta period onwards. Gradually, river goddess Yamuna has also been depicted with Goddess Ganga. In temple, river goddesses are shown at the pedyas of the door entrance. Perhaps denoting the symbolic bath in pious water indicating the holiness and purity of human beings by washing their feet before entering into temple. In the beginning river goddesses have been shown on both the sides of *lalatabimba* of the door entrance but in course of time they have been placed at the base of the door entrance. Temples at Kadwha show profoundly the figures of Ganga -Yamuna. Siva temple at Garhi, Temples of Talao Group are good examples of them. According to Shilpa text Ganga-Yamuna are shown over makara and Kurma respectively. Depiction with their attendants enhances their value, thus received deep devotion and faith on them.



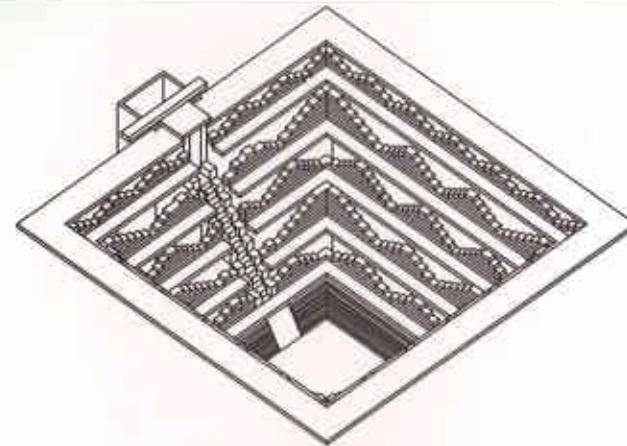
River Goddess Yamuna, Kadwaha



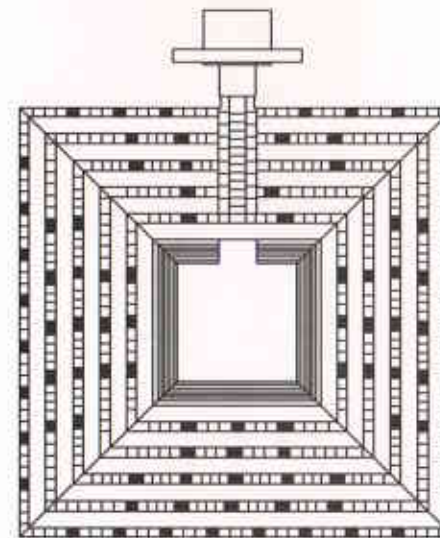
River Goddess Ganga, Kadwaha

Wells, tanks, baolis etc. are found almost in and around Thoban, Kadwaha, Surwaya, Rannod, Terahi and Mahua of Ashok Nagar and Sivpuri district which indicates that the ancient rulers have given great importance to these water heritages along with temples and monasteries, in order to make life easier for day to day needs. In addition, these wells, tanks, *baolis* are used for ritual purpose also. The ancient wells and tanks in and in around the village are still used for irrigation.

STEPPED WATER TANK NEAR HINDU MONASTERY, RANNOD DISTT. SHIVPURI (M.P)



ISOMETRIC VIEW



PLAN



Photograph :
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