

## **Chapter- 5**

### **Conclusion**

Humans have consistently recognized the presence of certain components which were more influential and overpowering since prehistoric times, leading to the establishment of essential representations, embodied in the form of symbols or icons. The continuous development of human cognition and the expansion of their culture, brought about various ideas of desire for inner and outer advancement. Gradually various myths of spirits and sprites were interweaved, eventually creating a pantheon of many spiritual powers for personal adoration. The divinities which appeared in the beginning, are the nature divinities and the mother goddess which was the source of life and the creator of the earliest known tale of the civilizations, depicted by all early civilization.

The ancient India society represents the knowledge of its thinking and literatures in the form of art and iconography. The traditions of ancient Indian art have been continuous with the assimilation of new elements and religious thoughts retaining the core concepts. With the expansion of the societies and the development of the belief system, several divinities were introduced related to different difficulties of the people and the communities. During this phase of the beginning of religious arrangement, there arose many mythical beings like Yaksa, Gandharva, Naga, and other hybrid forms with different philosophical along with the mainstream gods and goddesses. These divinities had their own spiritual practices and iconographic representations.

Yakṣa occupies a unique place in the Indian art and literary traditions and has fascinated several scholars. Several attempts have been done to understand the concept and role of the Yaksa. The Yaksa served a dual role in its religious concept, the core belief was that of being a benevolent deity, worshipped with independent methods. However, over time the notion of being a

malevolent being was associated. Yakṣa is one of the most eminent celestial beings with a fluid nature, who acquired a tangible representation with attributes transforming in the historical process.

In the literary references like the Vedas and Upanishads, Yakṣa is identified as a *Devata* and other Vedic divinities are honoured with the term '*Yakṣa*' itself. However, the Epics and Purana portrayed the Yakṣa in malefic and benefice characteristics. Such references signify a shift in perception and concept of the society.

With the advent of Buddhism and its widespread, the concept of Yakṣa underwent immense transformation in the Buddhist literature. The transformation or more specifically the incorporation of these divinities was through the literature primarily and later sculptural depictions. The Buddhist literature depicts Yakṣa as negative character creating commotion and distressing people. Their eventual adaptation in this religion at a later stage, they were depicted as a benevolent divinity by Buddha and sometimes as an attendant to Buddha. Similar methods of conversion and incorporation were adopted by Jainism too. This transformation of core beliefs of the Yakṣa was a strategic move towards the integrating of the pre-existing divinities into the larger pantheons. This procedure not only amalgamated but also depreciated the status of Yakṣa as subsidiary within the religious framework.

The Yakṣa originated as a personification of the unknown elemental power against the mishaps which was not under the control of the humans. They came into prominence not only as a protector or guardian of a specific region but also as a conviction to be motivated and encouraged to take up impossible tasks. These divinities brought about positiveness in the thoughts of the people and helped them to be resilient and nurture in the society. Thus, Yakṣa being a demigod was adapted in the other pantheons, did not lose their importance, and continued to be worshipped.

The sculptural representation of the Yaksa provides a comprehensive understanding. The physical depiction initiated under the Mauryans with massive sculptures with indigenous drapery and symbols. The Sunga period produced figures but in relief or 2D depiction. The original iconographic features introduced under the Mauryans were retained throughout the historical process. The Kushana marked a significant change in the iconography. Now the sculptures were portrayed in squatting and crouching postures with grotesque imagery. By the advent of the Gupta and Post-Gupta phase the Yaksa were transformed as decorative motifs in the temple architecture. However, this transformation into a subsidiary deity, Yaksa was worshipped independently as Śāsanadevatā under the Jain pantheon since the early medieval period.

Thus, the literary traditions provide a much more extensive understanding of the Yaksa cult. Even though they were discussed multifariously, the references about their status and role are fragmentary. However, the sculptural depictions provide a better understanding, as the initial depiction and its gradual transformation can be traced.

Though the Yaksa declined to secondary ranks in the religious pantheons, they still had their stronghold among regional communities and continued to be adored as an independent divinity. Hence, the ethnographic survey was undertaken by the researcher to understand the continuation of Yaksa and its practice among the regional communities. This survey sheds light on the evolution, transformation of the Yaksa and still enduring with the original core symbolism and meaning.

It was observed that the practice is not only prevalent in the study area i.e., North India, specifically the Ganga Valley, but among the regional communities of Rajasthan, Gujarat as *Jakkha Dada*, *Jakh baba*, *Jakh botera*. However, in the south Indian states of Kerala, Tamil Nadu the Yaksini are famous for their maleficent character.

Therefore, the research concludes that the Yaksha were independent divinities since the beginning. The study highlights that how a divinity changes through literature and sculptural representations, from being a central divinity to serving as decorative motifs of the temple, Yaksha's journey is a proof of the continuity of the archaic and diverse cultural heritage of ancient India.