



## Yogini Sculptures of Baghelkhand: An Iconographical Study

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**Abstract:** The Yogini holds significant importance in the Tantra, Shaiva, and Shakta traditions. They embody various manifestations of divine feminine energy and are worshipped through spiritual practices to attain supernatural powers. In the Baghelkhand region of Madhya Pradesh, numerous Yogini sculptures have been discovered in the districts of Rewa, Shahdol, Satna, and Umariya etc. These sculptures are currently housed in temple premises and museums, including those in Dhubela, Kolkata, Rewa etc. Apart from Shahdol and Gurgi Yogini in Baghelkhand, the primary focus of this research is the study of the known sculptures from Mau (Shahdol), as well as other sites such as Harra, Amartala (Shahdol), Pathrahata (Umariya) etc. The sculptures of Yogini are beautifully carved and have human and animal faces. Each Yogini has a different symbol, as does Vahana. These sculptures are inscribed, which helps in identifying the name of the Yogini. The notable thing is that Sculptures start with a Sri inscription. The present paper intends to discuss the prominence of Yogini worship in Baghelkhand. An analytical study with a detailed description of the iconographic and artistic features of the Yogini has been done. The majority of sculptures found in Baghelkhand belong to the period from the 10<sup>th</sup> to the 12<sup>th</sup> century CE and are mainly carved in Red and Brown Sandstone. The authors have relied on inscribed labels found on the pedestals of the sculptures to identify the names of the Yoginis. In cases where clear inscriptions are absent, identification has been based on iconographic features, including attributes or associated mounts (vahanas). This study also includes discussion of their religious significance.

**Keywords:** Baghelkhand, Iconographic, Inscribed, Sculptures, Shaktism, Yogini.

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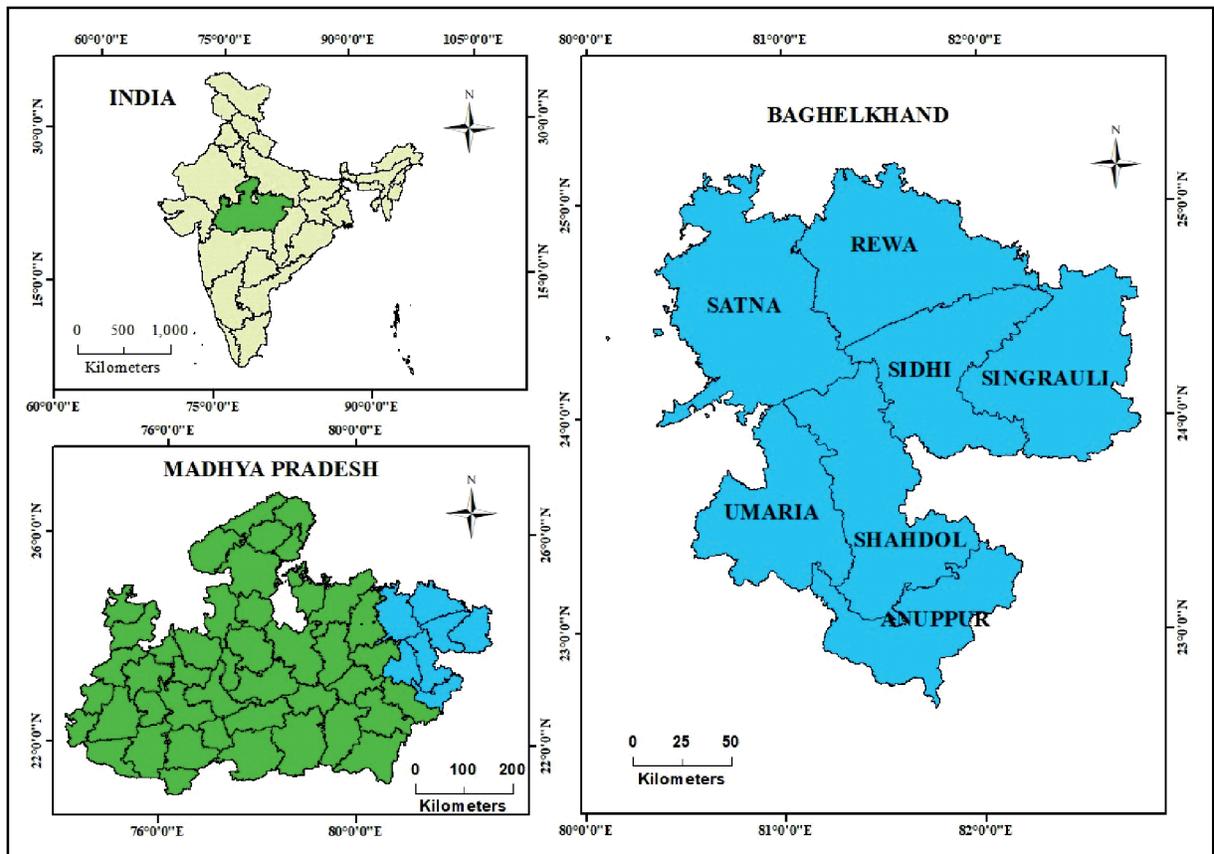
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## Introduction

Baghelkhand lies between 22°3' to 25°02' North latitude and 80°21' to 83°51' East longitude, is the North:Eastern region of Madhya Pradesh and is spread across the districts of Rewa, Satna,

Sidhi, Singrauli, Shahdol, Umaria and Annapur. It has a rich cultural heritage in the form of caves, pillars, sculptures, stupas and temples, suggesting a religious and political importance of this region throughout the Ages. This paper focuses on Yogini sculptures that primarily belongs to the Kalchuri of Tripuri. “The Kalchuri dynasty began its rule in the latter half of the 7<sup>th</sup> century, with its capital at Tripuri. Over time, through the efforts of rulers like Kokalla, Yuvrajdeva I, Lakshmanraja II, Gangyadeva and Lakshmikarna, the Kalchuri influence expanded northwards to Allahabad and Varanasi, Southwards to the Narmada River and eastwards to Rewa. The Kalchuri’s political interactions with the Chandelas and Parmaras led to mutual cultural exchanges, evident in the architectural and artistic developments of the region” (Mishra, 1978: 232).

Yogini worship was notably widespread in Baghelkhand, evident from various Yogini sculptures preserved in Museums and the temples. These sculptures were primarily constructed during the reign of the Kalacuri dynasty. The Kalchuris were strong supporters of Saivism and Sakta:tantrism, and they established temples to reflect and promote these religious traditions. However, Yogini temples in the Baghelhand region are absent. But sculptures of yoginis suggest the prominence of Yogini worship in this region. According to Desai, “Under the Kalacuri:Chedi rulers, several Yogini temples were established in Madhya Pradesh, specifically at Bheraghat, Gurgi, and Shahdol” (Desai, 1996: 81). The yoginis are mentioned as “the attendants or aides of Goddess Kali or Durga. In the Prabodha:Chandrodaya, it is noted that these skull-bearing yoginis perform dances and remain present on the battlefield. When demons attacked



Map 1: Baghelkhand

Goddess Durga, these yoginis manifested as *Shakti* (power) to destroy the demonic forces. This account is also found in the Durga Shaptshati, where they are described as a manifestation of the powers of the gods” (Ahirwar, 2004: 96). Apart from this, various other literary sources also provide details of the Yogini.

### Previous Work

The Yogini sculptures discovered from Baghelkhand, mainly preserved in the Indian Museum, Kolkata, and Dhubela Museum in Chhatrapur, have received significant scholarly attention. Rajendra Prasad Singh, in his thesis *Chausath Yogini Evam Unke Mandir*, has discussed Yogini idols from Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, and Odisha. His work provides detailed information on the Yogini sculptures of Shahdol (Singh, 1982: 127-134). Vidya Dehejia in her work *Yogini Cult and temples*, provided a comprehensive account on Yogini Sculptures, highlighting their characteristic features such as the Lalitsana posture, flying *vidydhara*s in the background, the presence of four-armed forms etc., thereby situating them within the wider tantric tradition of Central India. *Dhubela Museum's catalogues* record the transfer of these sculptures from Shahdol, further underlining their Kalachuri-period provenance (Dehejia, 1986: 97:102, 145:147). Anamika Roy has written a chapter named '*Golaki Math: Vamdev and Shahdol Yogini Images*' in Dupuis Stella's book '*Experiencing the Goddess on the Trail of the Yogini*' (Roy, 2019: 37:59). Between 2019 and 2021, Yogini sculptures were also uncovered during debris cleanup work at the ancient mound located in the Khermata Temple complex in Mau village, Block:Beohari, District Shahdol, MP, (Mahoviya, P.C, 2019:2020: 8:9, 2020:21: 18:19). These sculptures are mentioned in the report of the Office of the Curator, District Archaeological Museum, Shahdol (MP). Several other studies have been carried out on Yoginis, underscoring their cultural and religious significance. In this research paper, the authors not only examine the Yogini sculptures from Baghelkhand region but also analyze those identified from sites such as Gurgee, Mau, Harra, Patharhata, Amartala, Khajuha, and others, based on fieldwork.

### Research Methodology

The research methodology is primarily based on extensive fieldwork undertaken throughout the Baghelkhand region. Primary data was obtained through the systematic observation and documentation of sculptures located in museums, temples, and other local sites. To support the analysis and interpretation of the iconographic features, a no. of literary sources: including previous scholarly works and classical iconographic texts: were critically examined. Additionally, QGIS software was utilized to develop digital maps of the Baghelkhand region. Collectively, these methodological approaches provided a systematic, credible, and interdisciplinary foundation for the study.

### Yogini sculptures of Baghelkhand

During the Early Medieval period, the cult of Yoginis emerged as a significant feminine divine tradition found across multiple religious sects. Yoginis are a group of female deities whose identity varies—they are seen as magical spirits, fairies, witches, sorceresses, attendants of the goddess Durga, or even as Durga herself (Brighenti, 2001: 293). Many Yogini sculptures

have been identified through research work. Each Yogini possesses unique powers and characteristics, which manifest different aspects of life for the practitioner. Yogini have been discovered in both *Sthanik* (standing) and *Aasanasth* (seated) forms. These Yogini sculptures often bear names that start with the prefix “Sri,” indicating reverence and divine stature. Yogini sculptures with animal faces have also been found in the research work. Yoginis are true to the Kalchuri art, heavily ornamented with a variety of armlets, bracelets, ear:rings, necklaces and garlands. “Yogini sculptures also have a halo” (Dehajia, 1986: 128:129) and multiple arms reinforcing their divine status. Sculptures of Baghelkhand have a Saumya or Rudra look and an inscribed label along the base, which demarcates the name of the divinity. Some Yoginis are shown with human features, while others have animal heads, including those of elephants, horses, cows, lions, boars, etc. “The Skanda Purāṇa (Kāśī Khaṇḍa, Ch. 45) includes a list of Yoginis sent to Varanasi by Siva, with names suggesting animal:headed forms—such as *Gajanana* (elephant:headed), *Simhamukhi* (lion:faced), *Hayagriva* (horse:headed), and *Sarabhanana* (bull:headed)—indicating a connection between textual descriptions and temple imagery” (Menka, 2021: 83).

The following is a brief description of the Yogini sculptures identified during the field survey:

#### **Sri Tarla** (Fig. 1)

**Place of Receipt:** Dhubela Museum, Chhatarpur

**Dimensions:** 55 × 47 × 18 cm (Approx.)

**Material:** Brown Sandstone

**Time period:** c. 10<sup>th</sup>:11<sup>th</sup> century CE

The sculpture of ‘*Sri Tarla*’ Yogini was discovered in Shahdol and it is preserved in the Dhubela Museum, Chhatarpur. The sculpture was probably eight armed, but its arms are damaged due to the damage, her weapons are not clearly visible. The goddess is seated in the *Lalitasana* posture on a double lotus pedestal, with one of her feet resting on a human Fig.. The goddess's facial expression is gentle, and she is adorned with a crown, necklace, *kundal* (earrings), *stanhaar* (breastband), *keyur* (armlets), *kankan* (bracelets), transparent *adhovastra* (lower garment), and other ornaments. At the lower part of the pedestal, there is an inscription which mentions the goddess's name as 'Sri Tarla'. Near the goddess's feet, attendants, worshippers, and lion:serpents are depicted. Based on the artistic style, this sculpture belongs to the Kalachuri period.

#### **Sri Tarani** (Fig. 2)

**Place of Receipt:** Dhubela Museum, Chhatarpur

**Dimensions:** 75×55 ×18 centimeters (Approx)

**Material:** Brown Sandstone

**Time period:** c. 10<sup>th</sup>:11<sup>th</sup> century CE

This *dasbhuj* idol of ‘*Sri Tarani*’ Yogini was discovered in Shahdol and it is preserved in the Dhubela Museum, Chattarpur. The Yogini is seated in *Lalitasana* posture on a double lotus

pedestal and a male Fig. is carved beneath one of her legs. She is adorned with a crown with a skull, earrings, necklace, waistband, anklets, and is draped in a transparent upper garment and other ornaments. In her hands, the goddess is depicted holding a snake, a chakra, and a bell. Due to damage, the identification of the remaining attributes is unclear. Below the pedestal, 'Shri Tarani' is inscribed as the name of the goddess. Near the feet of the goddess are the corpses or dead bodies, devotees, female Figs in various postures, and lions. Based on stylistic features, this sculpture is considered to belong to the Kalachuri period.

**Sri Bhanava** (Fig. 3)

**Place of Receipt:** Dhubela Museum, Chhatarpur

**Dimensions:** 75×45×15 centimetres (Approx)

**Material:** Brown Sandstone

**Time period:** c. 10<sup>th</sup>:11<sup>th</sup> century CE

This idol of 'Sri Bhanwa' Yogini was discovered in Shahdol and it is preserved in the Dhubela Museum, Chhatarpur. The idol was possibly eight-armed, but the arms are damaged, due to which the weapons are not clearly visible. However, she is depicted holding a *Khetaka* (shield), *Pasha* (a noose), and *Mund* (a severed head). The rest of the weapons are unclear. The yogini is seated on a lion in a *Lalitasana* posture. She is adorned with a crown on the head, earrings, a necklace, breast ornaments, bangles, armlets, a transparent lower garment, and other decorative attire and jewellery. An inscription is engraved on the lower part of the pedestal, in which the name of the goddess is mentioned as "Sri Bhanava." The sculpture also features carvings of attendants, devotees, *simhavyalas* (lion-like creatures), etc. Based on its artistic style, this idol appears to belong to the Kalachuri period.

**Sri Basava** (Fig. 4)

**Place of Acquisition:** Dhubela Museum, Chhatarpur

**Dimensions:** 70 × 45 × 20 centimetres (Approx)

**Material:** Brown sandstone

**Period:** c. 10<sup>th</sup>:11<sup>th</sup> century CE

This idol of 'Sri Basava' Yogini was discovered in Shahdol and is preserved at the Dhubela Museum in Chhatarpur. In the sculpture, she is seated in the *Lalitasana* posture on a peacock mount and has a canopy of snakes. The idol is adorned with various ornaments, including a crown, earrings, necklaces, armlets, and a transparent lower garment. Originally an eight-armed Fig., only two arms are currently intact. One of the preserved hands holds a bell, while the others are damaged. An inscription is carved at the base of the pedestal, mentioning the name of the goddess as 'Shri Basava'. The sculpture also features depictions of attendants, devotees, and mythical *simhavyalas* (lion-like creatures). Based on its artistic style, the idol appears to belong to the Kalachuri period. Snake and peacock are enemy animals and are depicted here, suggesting the superiority of the goddess.

**Sri Badari** (Fig. 5)**Place of Acquisition:** Dhubela Museum, Chhatarpur**Dimensions:** 70 × 50 × 20 centimetres (Approx)**Material:** Brown sandstone**Period:** c. 10<sup>th</sup>:11<sup>th</sup> century CE

This idol of '*Sri Badari*' Yogini was discovered in Rewa and is preserved at the Dhubela Museum in Chhatarpur. The Yogini is depicted in a dance posture. She is adorned with various ornaments such as a crown, earrings, necklaces, breast ornaments, bangles, and a transparent lower garment. The sculpture was originally eight:armed, but all arms are now broken. An inscription is engraved at the lower part of the pedestal, mentioning the name of the goddess as 'Shri Badari'. The sculpture also features carvings of women playing musical instruments, attendants, devotees, garland:bearing *Gandharvas*, and *Simhavyalas* (mythical lion:like creatures). Based on its artistic style, the sculpture is believed to belong to the Kalachuri period.

**Sri Chapala** (Fig. 6)**Place of Acquisition:** Dhubela Museum, Chhatarpur**Dimensions:** 80 × 45 × 20 centimetres (Approx)**Material:** Brown sandstone**Period:** c. 10<sup>th</sup>–11<sup>th</sup> century CE

This idol of '*Shri Chapala*' Yogini was discovered in Shahdol and is preserved at the Dhubela Museum in Chhatarpur. The goddess is seated in *Lalitasana* posture on a double lotus pedestal, with one foot resting on the back of a lion. She is adorned with a crown, earrings, multiple necklaces, a breast ornament, bangles, and a transparent lower garment. The sculpture was likely eight:armed, but only two arms are currently preserved. The idol features carvings of the goddess's attendants, devotees, garland:bearing *Gandharvas*, and mythical lion:like creatures (*Simhavyalas*). An inscription is engraved at the lower part of the pedestal, where the name of the goddess, 'Shri Chapala', is mentioned. Based on its artistic style, the sculpture is attributed to the Kalachuri period.

**Shri Tamana Yogini** (Fig. 7)**Place of Acquisition:** Dhubela Museum, Chhatarpur**Dimensions:** 70 × 40 × 20 centimetres (Approx)**Material:** Brown sandstone**Period:** c. 10<sup>th</sup>–11<sup>th</sup> century CE

This idol of '*Shri Tamana*' Yogini was discovered in Rewa and is preserved at the Dhubela Museum in Chhatarpur. The goddess is seated in *Lalitasana* posture on a double lotus pedestal, with one foot resting on a human Fig.. She is adorned with a crown, earrings, necklaces, breast ornaments, bangles, and a transparent lower garment. The sculpture was possibly ten:armed, but only three arms are now intact. One of the goddess's hands is depicted in the *Varada Mudra* (gesture of blessing). The upper part of the sculpture features garland:bearing *Gandharvas*, while the lower part depicts devotees of the goddess. An inscription is engraved on the lower part of the

pedestal, mentioning the name of the goddess as 'Shri Tamana'. Based on its artistic features, the sculpture is attributed to the Kalachuri period.

**Sri Vanaprabha** (Fig. 8)

**Place of Acquisition:** Dhubela Museum, Chhatarpur

**Dimensions:** 75 × 45 × 19 centimeters (Approx)

**Material:** Brown sandstone

**Period:** c. 10<sup>th</sup>–11<sup>th</sup> century CE

This idol of '*Sri Vanaprabha*' Yogini was discovered in Shahdol and is preserved at the Dhubela Museum in Chhatarpur. The goddess is depicted seated in *Lalitasana* posture on a double lotus pedestal, with one foot resting on the back of an animal (a Jackal). She is richly adorned with ornaments including a crown, earrings, necklaces, breast ornament, bangles, and a transparent lower garment. The sculpture was likely eight-armed, but only one arm remains intact, holding a vase. An inscription is engraved at the lower part of the pedestal, mentioning the name of the goddess as 'Shri Vanaprabha'. The sculpture also features carvings of garland-bearing *Gandharvas*, attendants, devotees, and *Simhavyalas* (mythical lion-like creatures). Based on its artistic style, the sculpture is believed to belong to the Kalachuri period.

**Sri Jauti** (Fig. 9)

**Place of Acquisition:** Dhubela Museum, Chhatarpur

**Material:** Brown sandstone

**Period:** c. 10<sup>th</sup>–11<sup>th</sup> century CE

This idol of '*Sri Jauti*' Yogini was discovered in Rewa and is preserved at the Dhubela Museum in Chhatarpur. The sculpture was likely eight-armed, but all the arms are now broken. She is seated in *Lalitasana* posture on a lotus pedestal with a lion base, with one foot resting on the lion's back. The Yogini is adorned with elaborate ornaments, including a knotted crown, necklace, earrings, breast ornament, bangles, armlets, and a transparent lower garment. Due to the broken arms, her weapons are not clearly identifiable. An inscription is engraved at the lower part of the pedestal, mentioning the name of the goddess as 'Shri Jauti'. The sculpture also includes carvings of attendants, devotees, garland-bearing *Gandharvas*, and *Simhavyalas* (mythical lion-like creatures). Based on its artistic features, the sculpture is attributed to the Kalachuri period.

**Sri Itarla** (Fig. 10)

**Place of Acquisition:** Dhubela Museum, Chhatarpur

**Dimensions:** 55 × 43 × 23 centimeters (Approx)

**Material:** Brown sandstone

**Period:** c. 10<sup>th</sup>–11<sup>th</sup> century CE

This idol of '*Sri Itarla*' Yogini was discovered in Rewa and is preserved at the Dhubela Museum in Chhatarpur. The sculpture was likely eight-armed, but the arms are broken. The Yogini is seated

in *Lalitasana* posture on a lion, with one foot resting on the lion's back. The goddess has the face of a horse and is adorned with a knotted crown, earrings, necklaces, breast ornaments, bangles, armlets, and a transparent lower garment. Due to the broken arms, the goddess's weapons are not clearly identifiable. An inscription is engraved at the lower part of the pedestal, mentioning the name of the goddess as 'Shri Itarla'. The sculpture also features carvings of attendants, devotees, and *Simhavyalas* (mythical lion:like creatures). Based on its artistic style, the sculpture is attributed to the Kalachuri period.

### **Sri Bhanwa** (Fig. 11)

**Place of Acquisition:** Dhubela Museum, Chhatarpur

**Dimensions:** 75 × 48 × 20 centimeters (Approx)

**Material:** Brown sandstone

**Period:** c. 10<sup>th</sup>–11<sup>th</sup> century CE

This idol of '*Sri Bhanwa*' Yogini was discovered in Rewa and is preserved at the Dhubela Museum in Chhatarpur. The goddess is depicted with a serene expression, seated in *Sthanasana* posture. She is adorned with a decorated knotted crown, earrings, necklaces, breast ornament, bangles, armlets, and a transparent lower garment. The sculpture is eight:armed. Among her weapons, a *chakra* (discus), a *damru* (small drum), and a *khetak* (a type of weapon) are clearly visible. The remaining weapons are not clearly identifiable due to the broken arms. It is possible that the goddess is also holding a *gada* (mace) near her feet, though its upper part is damaged. An inscription is engraved at the lower part of the pedestal, mentioning the name of the goddess as 'Shri Bhanwa'. The sculpture also features carvings of attendants, devotees, garland:bearing *Gandharvas*, and *Simhavyalas* (mythical lion:like creatures). Based on its artistic features, the sculpture is attributed to the Kalachuri period.

### **Sri Ramani** (Fig. 12)

**Place of Acquisition:** Dhubela Museum, Chhatarpur

**Dimensions:** 75 × 50 × 20 centimetres (Approx)

**Material:** Brown sandstone

**Period:** c. 10<sup>th</sup>–11<sup>th</sup> century CE

This idol of '*Sri Ramani*' Yogini was discovered in Shahdol and is preserved at the Dhubela Museum in Chhatarpur. The goddess is seated in *Lalitasana* posture on a lotus pedestal, with one foot resting on a human Fig.. She is adorned with a crown, earrings, necklaces, breast ornament, bangles, and a transparent lower garment. The sculpture originally had eight arms, of which only three remain intact. As for her weapons, the goddess holds a *khetak*, a *mund* (skull) and a *pātra* (vessel). The upper part of the sculpture depicts garland:bearing *Gandharvas*, while the lower part shows devotees of the goddess. Based on its artistic features, the sculpture is attributed to the Kalachuri period.

**Garudasina** (Fig. 13)**Place of Acquisition:** Harra**Dimensions:** 81 × 43 × 13 centimetres**Material:** Brown sandstone**Period:** c. 10<sup>th</sup>–11<sup>th</sup> century CE

This idol of '**Garudasina Yogini**' was discovered in Harra, Shahdol. The goddess is depicted seated in *Lalitasana* posture on a lotus pedestal, with her vehicle, Garuda, also represented in human form, adorned with all kinds of jewellery. The goddess is richly decorated with a crown, earrings, necklaces, breast ornament, armlets, bangles, waistband, lower garment, and ankle ornaments. The sculpture has ten arms. In her left hands, she holds a *ghanta* (bell), a *parashu* (axe), a *mundmala* (garland of skulls), and a *khetak* (weapon), while in her right hands, she holds a *chakra* (discus), a *danda* (shaft), and an *akshmala* (rosary). The upper part of the sculpture shows her in a *Vega Mudra* (gesture of speed), with garland-bearing *Vidyaganas* (celestial scholars), while the lower part depicts devotees. An inscription is engraved at the lower part of the pedestal in Nagari script, it can be read (Shree Jhula?). Based on its artistic style, this sculpture is attributed to the Kalachuri period.

**Indrani** (Fig. 14)**Place of Attainment:** Antara**Dimensions:** 40×48 ×24 centimetres (Approx)**Material:** Brown Sandstone**Time Period:** c. 10<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> century CE

This idol of '**Indrani Yogini**' was discovered in Antara, Shahdol. The idol is eight-armed, with the goddess seated in *lalitasana* posture on an elephant. The sculpture was rejoined later using cement, and parts of the hands and face are broken. The face of the Yogini resembles that of an animal. The goddess is adorned with a *jata:mukuta* (matted hair crown), necklace, *vanamala* (garland), *nupur* (anklets), and a lower garment. The sculpture also features female devotees in *anjali mudra* (a posture of reverence). At the top part of the idol, garland-bearing *gandharvas* are depicted. The elephant is shown with its trunk raised upwards. Based on its artistic style, the idol belongs to the Kalachuri period.

**Varahi Yogini** (Fig. 15)**Place of Attainment:** Antara**Dimensions:** 118 ×60 ×26 centimeters (Approx)**Material:** Brown Sandstone**Time Period:** c. 11<sup>th</sup> century CE

This idol of '**Varahi Yogini**' was discovered in Antara, Shahdol. The ten-armed goddess, in human form, is seated in *Lalitasana* posture on a lotus pedestal. Her face is that of a *varaha* (boar), while

the rest of the body is feminine. The boar face of the goddess is in a damaged condition. Only two hands on the left side of the goddess are intact; the others are broken. Of the two preserved hands, one holds *Khetaka* (a shield) and the other *Ghanta* (a bell). Her flowing *Jata* (matted hair) is sculpted as cascading down to the shoulders. She is adorned with a single:strand *ekavali* (necklace), breast *stanahara* (ornament), *vanamala* (forest garland), *galahara* (regular necklace), and *adhovastra* (a lower garment). The upper part of the sculpture features garland:bearing gandharvas and devotees in dynamic poses. On either side of the goddess, decorative lion:vyala Fig.s are also carved. Based on its artistic style, this sculpture is attributed to the Kalachuri period.

### **Ambika Yogini** (Fig. 16)

**Place of Attainment:** Antara

**Dimensions:** 33 × 50 × 17 centimetres (Approx)

**Material:** Brown Sandstone

**Time Period:** c. 10<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> century CE

This sculpture, discovered in Antara, depicts the goddess seated in *Lalitasana* posture on a lotus placed over a lion. The idol is four:armed, and it is in a worn or eroded condition. In her left hand, the goddess holds *Sanala:Kamala* (a lotus with stalk) and a child, while in her right hand, she holds *Nagapasha* (a serpent:noose), and the other hand rests on her thigh. Behind her head is a *Prabhamandala* (ornamented halo). She is adorned with a single:strand *Ekavali* (necklace), *Galahara* (necklace), *Stanahara* (breast ornament), *Keyura* (armlets), *Bhujabandha* (upper arm bands), and *Adhovastra* (a lower garment). To the goddess's right, a devotee is sculpted in a posture of reverence. In the upper section, garland:bearing gandharvas are depicted in dynamic poses. Additionally, lion:vyala Fig.s are ornamentally carved on both sides of the sculpture. Based on its artistic style, the sculpture appears to belong to the Kalachuri period.

### **Simha Vahini Yogini** (Fig. 17)

**Place of Attainment:** Antara

**Dimensions:** 76 × 57 × 26 centimeters (Approx)

**Material:** Brown Sandstone

**Time period:** c. 10<sup>th</sup>:11<sup>th</sup> century CE

This idol of the Singh Vahini Yogini was discovered in Antara, Shahdol. The goddess is depicted seated in *Lalitasana* posture on a lotus that rests atop two lions. The sculpture is twelve:armed and is in a worn and damaged condition. The lions are sculpted in the *Utkutasana* (squatting posture). The face of the goddess and the portion behind her are broken. Devotees are also carved into the sculpture in *Abhivadan Mudra* (a gesture of reverence). The goddess is adorned with *Ekavali* (a single:strand necklace), *Stanahara* (breast ornament), *Vanamala* (forest garland), *Galahara* (necklace), and *Adhovastra* (a lower garment). Of her twelve arms, only two on the left side and one on the right side are preserved. In the left hands, she holds *Ghanta* (a bell) and *Kamandalu* (a water pot), while the right hand is shown in *Varada Mudra* (the gesture of blessing). Based on its artistic style, this sculpture is attributed to the Kalachuri period.

**Narmada Yogini** (Fig. 18)**Receipt Place:** Patharhata**Dimensions:** 91× 53×10 centimetres (Approx)**Material:** Brown Sandstone**Time Period:** c. 11<sup>th</sup>:12<sup>th</sup> century CE

Narmada, Gauri, and Parvati idols often appear very similar, making them difficult to distinguish from one another. According to mythological beliefs, Narmada is considered the daughter of Lord Shiva, which implies that Narmada, Gauri, and Parvati are related as mother and daughter. In the Early Medieval period, similar to the way Ganga was depicted in sculpture, Narmada was also represented in artistic form. In Narmada sculptures, she is portrayed adorned like Gauri, often wearing an ornate matted *Jatamukuta* (hair crown). In her hands, she typically holds lotus flowers, and in some depictions, also *Trishula* (a trident) and *Akshamala* (a rosary). Like Ganga sculptures, Narmada idols are also marked by symbols like *Purnaghata* (a full pot) and a lotus. Her vehicle, the *Makara* (mythical aquatic creature), and the sage Markandeya, receiving her blessings, are also often depicted.

This idol of ‘Narmada Yogini’ was discovered in Patharahata. The sculpture is four-armed, with the Yogini seated in *Lalitasana* posture on a lotus pedestal. She is beautifully adorned with *Jatamukuta* (a matted hair crown), *Karnakundala* (ear ornaments), *Kankana* (bracelets), *Adhovastra* (a lower garment), and *Galahara* (a neck ornament). In her upper two hands, she is depicted holding *Shankha* (conch shells). In her lower left hand, she holds a water pot (kamandalu), and the lower right hand is shown in the *Varada* (gesture of blessing mudra). Based on its artistic style, this sculpture is attributed to the Kalachuri period.

**Narmada Yogini** (Fig. 19)**Place of Attainment:** Amartala**Dimensions:** 137 × 80× 20 centimeters (Approx)**Material:** Brown Sandstone**Time Period:** c. 11<sup>th</sup>:12<sup>th</sup> century CE

This idol of ‘Narmada Yogini’ was discovered in Amratala, Shahdol. The sculpture depicts the goddess standing in *Sthanaka Mudra* on a lotus pedestal. The idol is four-armed, and *Prabhamandala* (a halo) is carved behind her head. The face and arms of the goddess are damaged, making it difficult to identify the attributes she once held. She is richly adorned with *Mukuta* (a crown), *Karnakundala* (ear ornaments), *Galahara* (necklace), *Stanahara* (breast ornament), *Keyura* (armlets), *Kankana* (bracelets), *Adhovastra* (translucent lower garment), and *Paijaniyan* (anklets). Her mount, the *Makara* (mythical aquatic creature), is sculpted beneath the lotus pedestal.

The upper panel of the sculpture features garland-bearing gandharvas; the middle section includes depictions of five lingas, female attendants, devotees, and animals such as lions (vyala), horses, and deer. Based on its artistic style, this sculpture is attributed to the Kalachuri period.

**Narmada Yogini** (Fig. 20)**Place of Attainment:** Antara**Dimensions:** 80 × 46 × 20 centimeters (Approx)**Material:** Brown Sandstone**Time period:** c. 10<sup>th</sup>:11<sup>th</sup> century CE

This idol of '*Narmada Yogini*' was discovered in Antara, Shahdol. The goddess is depicted seated in *lalitasana* posture on a lotus pedestal, which rests on a *Makara* (mythical aquatic creature). The face portion of the idol was repaired using cement in later times. She is beautifully adorned with *Jatamukuta* (a matted hair crown), *Karnakundala* (ear ornaments), *Ekavali* (single-strand necklace), *Galahara* (necklace), *Stanahara* (breast ornament), *Keyura* (armlets), *Bhujabandha* (upper arm bands), and *Adhovastra* (a lower garment). The idol is eight-armed. Three of the left arms and one of the right arms are intact. In the left arms, she holds a *Pasha* (noose), *Chakra* (wheel), and *Kamandalu* (water pot), while the right hand is shown in the gesture of blessing (*varada mudra*). In the upper part of the sculpture, garland-bearing *gandharvas* are depicted. In the lower section, the devotees of the Yogini are shown in *Anjali Mudra* (a gesture of reverence). Based on its artistic style, this sculpture is attributed to the Kalachuri period.

**Parvati Yogini** (Fig. 21)**Place of Attainment:** Antara**Dimensions:** 40 × 47 × 16 centimeters (Approx)**Material:** Brown Sandstone**Time period:** c. 10<sup>th</sup>:11<sup>th</sup> century CE

This idol of 'Parvati Yogini' was discovered in Antara. The sculpture is eight-armed, but all the arms of the goddess are in a damaged state. The goddess is depicted, seated in *Lalitasana* posture on a lotus pedestal, with a lion (*Simha*) beneath her. The upper portion of her shoulder was repaired using cement in later times. The goddess is adorned with *Vanamala* (garlands), *Galahara* (necklaces), and other jewellery. Near her right foot, Lord Ganesha is depicted in the *anjali mudra* (gesture of reverence). The devotees of the goddess are also depicted in the *anjali mudra* on the sculpture. Based on its artistic style, this sculpture is attributed to the Kalachuri period.

**Gauri Yogini** (Fig. 22)**Venue of Receipt:** District Museum, Rewa**Dimensions:** 51 × 33 × 15 centimeters (Approx)**Material:** Brown Sandstone**Time Period:** c. 11<sup>th</sup> century CE

This four-armed idol of '*Gauri Yogini*', originally discovered in Madai, Satna, is currently preserved in the District Museum, Rewa. The goddess is sculpted in a *Samabhanga* posture (a

balanced, upright stance). Due to damage, the upper part of the sculpture from the shoulders upwards, as well as all the arms, are missing. The goddess is adorned with parts of *Karnakundala* (ear ornaments), *Ekavali* (a single-strand necklace), *Galahara* (necklace), *Stanahara* (breast ornament), *Keyura* (armlets), *Kankana* (bracelets), *Nupura* (anklets), *Kamardhani* (waist chain), and a *Dhoti* as her lower garment. On the pedestal, the mount of Gauri Yogini—a monitor lizard (*Goh*)—and her attendants are sculpted. Based on its artistic style, this sculpture is attributed to the Kalachuri period.

**Ashvamukhi Yogini/Haygriva** (Fig. 23)

**Place of Acquisition:** Mau, Beohari

**Dimensions:** 27× 15 × 5 centimetres (Approx)

**Material:** Brown sandstone

**Period:** c. 10<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> century CE

This sculpture of ‘Ashvamukhi Yogini’ was discovered in Mau, Beohari, District:Shahdol, M.P. Information about this Sculptures is mentioned in the report of the Office of Curator, District Archaeological Museum Shahdol (M.P.) for the year 2019:20, regarding the cleaning work of the debris of the ancient mound located in Khermata Madhiya Complex, Mau, Block:Beohari, District:Shahdol, M.P. In the *Padapitha* (pedestal), she is seated in *Lalitasana posture* (a graceful seated posture). The goddess is adorned with a crown, a single-strand *ekavali* (necklace), *kankan* (bracelets), *keyur* (anklets), and *adhovastra* (a lower garment). The sculpture is quadrangular, with the goddess's upper left hand holding a broken bell and the lower left hand holding her child. In her upper right hand, she holds a *trishul* (trident), and in the lower right hand, she holds a vessel. Based on the artistic style, this sculpture appears to be from the Kalachuri period.

**Varahi Yogini** (Fig. 24)

**Venue of Receipt** – Mau, Beohari

**Material:** Brown Sandstone

**Time Period:** c. 11<sup>th</sup> century CE

The image of Varahi Yogini, presently enshrined in a modern temple at Mau, Beohari (District Shahdol, Madhya Pradesh), is carved in a four-armed form. The two left arms of the deity are damaged. The goddess is depicted in a dancing posture and is adorned with feminine ornaments and attire. She is adorned with a crown, earrings, necklaces, breast ornament, bangles, and a transparent lower garment. Among the attributes, a damaru is held in the upper right hand, while the remaining weapons are broken. On the lower right side of the sculpture, the vehicle of the goddess, a mahishi (buffalo), is represented. Additionally, a garland-bearing Gandharva is depicted on the upper portion of the sculpture, and a devotee is carved on the lower part, both of which reflect the prevalence of religious faith and the tradition of worship associated with this image.

**Yogini** (Fig. 25)**Venue of Receipt** – Mau, Beohari**Material:** Brown Sandstone**Time Period:** *c.* 11<sup>th</sup> century CE

Another Yogini sculpture from the same site is found in an eight-armed form. The image is also carved in a dancing posture, with the goddess depicted holding a child. She is adorned with feminine ornaments and attire. She is adorned with a crown, earrings, necklaces, breast ornament, bangles, and a transparent lower garment. In the left hands, a lotus (padma), a child (shishu), and a kamandalu are clearly represented, while in the right hands a sword (khadga), a bell (ghanta), and the abhaya:mudra are depicted. The remaining attributes are damaged. Due to local religious beliefs and the sacred status of the sculpture, its measurement could not be taken, and the upper portion of the image has been covered with modern decorative lighting.

**Singhvahini Yogini** (Fig. 26)**Place of Acquisition:** Mau, Beohari**Material:** Brown sandstone**Period:** *c.* 9<sup>th</sup>:10<sup>th</sup> century CE

The sculpture of Singhvahini Yogini was discovered during the excavation conducted in 1920–21 by the Directorate of Archaeology, Archives, and Museums, Government of Madhya Pradesh. At present, it is preserved in the mandapa chamber at Mau. The sculpture was unearthed at Mau itself and is found in a fragmentary condition. The upper portion of the torso, the right leg, and the arms are completely broken. The left leg of the Yogini rests upon a lotus pedestal, with the sole of the foot turned downward, which suggests that the Fig. was originally depicted in lalitasana posture. Due to its damaged state, the attributes of the deity remain indistinct. The Fig. is adorned with a lower garment and a vanamala (garland of forest flowers). Two lions are carved on the right and left sides below the pedestal as the vehicle of this Yogini.

**Kaumari Yogini** (Fig. 27)**Place of Acquisition:** Mau, Beohari**Material:** Brown sandstone**Period:** *c.* 9<sup>th</sup>:10<sup>th</sup> century CE

The sculpture of Kaumari Yogini was discovered during the 1920–21 excavations conducted by the Directorate of Archaeology, Archives, and Museums, Government of Madhya Pradesh, Bhopal. It is currently preserved in the mandapa chamber constructed at Mau. The Yogini is depicted in a dynamic dance posture (nṛitya mudra), although the upper portion of the sculpture above the waist is now broken. The surviving lower part of the sculpture clearly shows a lower garment (adhovastra), an ornate waistband (kamardhani), part of a forest garland (vanamala), and anklets (payala). Her vahana, the peacock is shown near her right foot, reinforcing her identification

as Kaumari, a Yogini traditionally associated with the peacock as her mount. Additionally, an inscription is engraved on the lower part of the sculpture, adding epigraphic importance to the artifact.

### **Yogini (Fig. 28)**

**Place of Acquisition:** Mau, Beohari

**Material:** Brown sandstone

**Period:** c. 9<sup>th</sup>:10<sup>th</sup> century CE

The sculpture of the Yogini, discovered during the 1920:21 excavation by the Directorate of Archaeology and Museum, Government of Madhya Pradesh, Bhopal, is preserved in the mandapa chamber constructed in Mau. This is an eight:armed Yogini sculpture depicted in a dvibhanga postures. The lower portion of the elongated face, especially the nose, is damaged. The Yogini's head is adorned with a crown, and her ears are shaped like animal:like structures, making it uncertain to identify her as belonging to a particular Yogini form or name. The Yogini is depicted wearing ornaments made of Rudraksha beads, indicative of her association with Shaktism. In her right hands, she holds a sword (khadga), a skull cup (kapala), and a damaru. In her left hands, she holds an ankush, a bell (ghanta), a shield (dhal), and a broken lower left hand that may have once held a bow (dhanush). The sculpture's feet are also damaged. The upper back of the Yogini is embellished with a floral:patterned aureole (halo), while two four:armed Yoginis are depicted seated on either side of her head.

### **Yogini (Fig. 29)**

**Place of Acquisition:** Patharahata, Umariya

**Dimensions:** 48× 32×17 centimetres

**Material:** Brown sandstone

**Period:** c. 10<sup>th</sup> :11<sup>th</sup> century CE

The sculpture of the Yogini obtained from Patharhata is in a damaged condition at the upper part. The face, both hands on the right side, and the right leg are broken. She is seated in the Lalitasana posture on a pedestal and is adorned with a one:stringed necklace, a garland, bangles, anklets, a waist band, and transparent lower garments. In her upper left hand, she holds a wheel (chakra), and in the lower left hand, there is a noose (pasha). Due to the damage to the right hand, the weapon is unclear.

### **Conclusion**

Research indicates that a variety of idols associated with the Shakta sect were created in this region. Among these, the emergence and evolution of the Yogini tradition is particularly evident through the sculptural remains. In the previous scholarly works, the Yogini sculptures known from Mau, Harra, Amartala (Shahdol) and Pathrahata (Umariya) were not mentioned in the list of Shahdol Yogini sculptures. These have also been included in the present research. Six Yogini sculptures have been discovered from Mau, three of which are fragmented and three are in a preserved

state. Among the sculptures from Mau, there are representations of Ashtabhuji (eight:armed) and Chaturbhuj (four:armed) Yoginis. Generally, Yogini sculptures are depicted with eight, twelve, or sixteen arms, but Mau also yielded a rare Chaturbhuj Ashvmukhi (four:armed, horse:headed) Yogini sculpture. Among the Yogini sculptures found in Mau, inscriptions have been found on the Varahi and Kaumari sculptures, while no inscriptions have been found on the other sculptures. Based on these sculptures, it can be inferred that Yogini worship was prevalent in Mau village in ancient times. Even today, Devi worship is practiced in the village and a modern Devi Ashram has been established there. These findings suggest that in ancient time Mau village may have been a centre for Yogini worship. Mau village is approximately 90 kilometers from Antara, Shahdol and these locations are situated along the same route. This proximity suggests a historical connection between these sites. Mau village is also a state:protected site and around 24 (approx)mounds have been identified there. If these mounds are excavated, further information regarding the temples, sculptures, and rituals related to Yogini worship may be uncovered. In addition to the Yogini sculptures found in Mau, individual Yogini sculptures have also been discovered at Harra, Amartala (Shahdol) and Pathrahata (Umaria) etc. It is likely that besides these temples, Yogini sculptures were also installed at general locations in ancient times. Yogini idols of Shahdol and Rewa are especially noteworthy, in the 64 Yoginis: Saptmaatrikas, rivers, face of yogini with some of the important animals and birds have been depicted as Yoginis. Thus, it can be said that these were worshipped in the clans among the tribal farmers and other communities living in this region and they considered the goddess as adorable. On the basis of various Yogini idols found from Baghelkhand, it can be estimated that there must have been a temple related to Yogini worship here and Yogini worship must have been prominent in this region. The Yogini Fig.s are not solely depicted as divine embodiments or companions of a goddess but also as women engaged in aspects of daily life. Their expressions, clothing, the objects they hold, their mounts, and postures all convey varied meanings about their presence. Through these depictions, the Yoginis embody multiple facets of femininity—both divine and human. Furthermore, the portrayal of Yoginis with both animal and human faces highlights the dynamic interplay between pan:Indian traditions and local cultural influences.

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Fig. 1: Sri Tarla



Fig. 2: Sri Tarni Yogini



Fig. 3: Sri Bhanava Yogini



Fig. 4: Sri Bhanava Yogini



Fig. 5: Sri Badari Yogini



Fig. 6: Sri Chapala Yogini



Fig. 7: Shri Tamana Yogini



Fig. 8: Sri Vanaprabha Yogini



Fig. 9: Sri Itarla Yogini



Fig. 10: Sri Jauti Yogini



Fig. 11: Garudasina Yogini



Fig. 12: Sri Bhanwa Yogini



Fig. 13: Indrani Yogini



Fig. 14: Sri Ramani Yogini



**Fig. 15: Varahi Yogini**



**Fig. 16: Ambika Yogini**



**Fig. 17: Narmada Yogini**



**Fig. 18: Singhvahini Yogini**



Fig. 19: Narmada Yogini



Fig. 20: Narmada Yogini



Fig. 21: Gauri Yogini

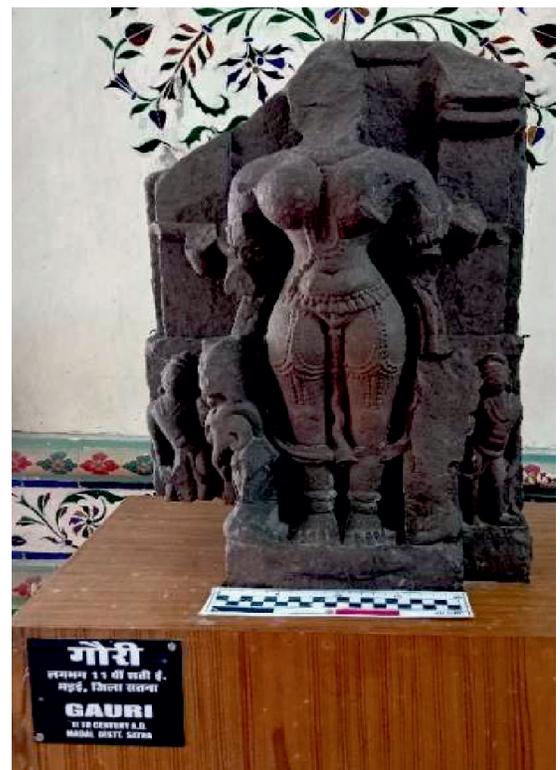


Fig. 22: Parvati Yogini

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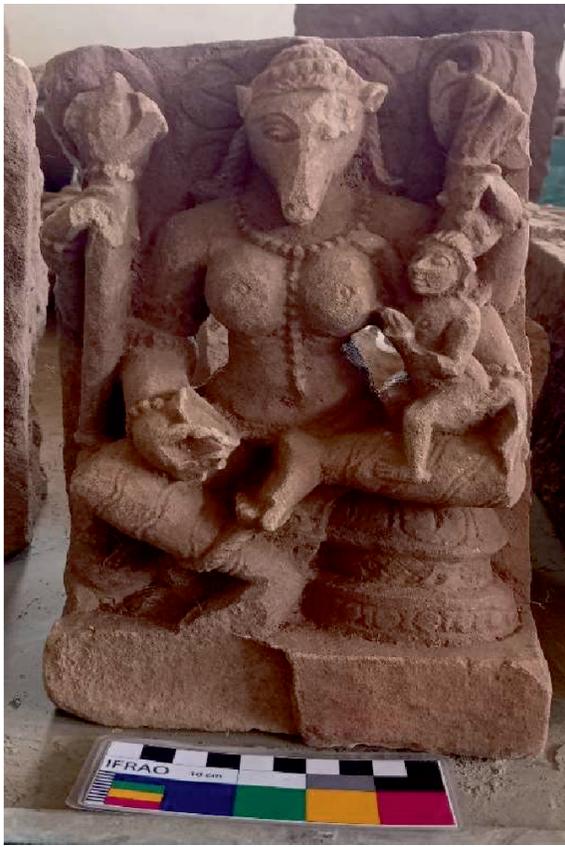


Fig. 23: Ashvamukhi Yogini



Fig. 24: Varahi Yogini



Fig. 25: Singhvahini Yogini



Fig. 26: Yogini



Fig. 27: Kaumari Yogini



Fig. 28: Yogini



Fig. 29: Yogini