

The Double Headed Eagle

After Garuda (Giva) grabbed the soul of Narayana (Vishnu), the latter in his fury created a two-headed bird called Garuda, which deflected Saranga. That is how more or less the story of the fight between Vish and Vishnu ends in Saranga Saranga of the Isha Purana. (Purana, 2002: The Isha Purana, 11-12)

The story of Garuda-vishnu is interesting. The bird is immortalized in innumerable sculptures and paintings, and is today the prominent symbol of Karnataka identity. A sculpture depicting the bird is found on the roof of the Kalyaneshwara temple in Srirangapatna. The ceiling painting of the Hanthi Mahaprasad of Thanjavur Garuda-vishnu temple also features it. Garuda-vishnu has been on the official seals and coats of arms of many Karnataka kingdoms, from the Kadamba, Chalukya of Vatapi, Hoysala of Halebidu, Nayaka of Srirangapatna, Vijayanagara, Kote of Channarayana, Vijayanagara, the Vijayanagara of Mysore. It now finds place in the state emblem of Karnataka, and on the proposed state flag.

What Garuda-vishnu is, the bird native of the Karnataka domain or Decan? In the Karnataka folk traditions or traditions accounts we do not find any reference to a real bird – some large eagle or so – all which the bird is said to have been modeled. It is difficult to say why Garuda-vishnu came to occupy such an important place in Karnataka mythos.

But there is a strong reason to believe that Garuda-vishnu was not of Karnataka origin, for that matter of Decan origin. The oldest double-headed eagle representation in India was found at Sirap, Taurus, on a supposed early Buddhist stupa dating back to around 300 BCE to 60-CE, now named The Shrine of the Double-Headed Eagle. The discovery is made by Sir John Marshall (Marshall, 1923 & Guide To Taurus, 76) & similar motif is also found in Buddhist caves at Junnar, Maharashtra, dated between the 2nd and 3rd century CE.

ing support and a royal capital. The double-eagle motif is also found on the early kery of the Geometric period circa 500 BCE – 700 BCE in Sparta, Greece, after that it seems to have been specifically associated with the Lybians (8th century BCE). This led Marshall to conclude that it was Scythians who introduced the double-headed eagle at Taurus, and that from there it found its way to Decan. (Marshall, 1923: 76)

Junnar has been an important trading and political center for the last two millennia. The town is on the trade route that links the Arabian ports like Kalyana (Kalyan) and Coala (Kash) with Decan via the Marathwada pass. (Dix, 1994: The Geometric of Maharashtra History and Culture, in Bulletin of The Decan College Research Institute, Vol.43, 283) One can see abundant traces of Greek-Roman art and culture in the trading towns of the Decan, as indicated by a 1st century BCE depiction of a Greek couple with distinctive dress can be seen. Similarly at Junnar some of the rock-cut art depicts have Greek features. Roman art decorations (Dix, 1994: 283) a bronze figure of a Persian king has been found at Kollhapur. Thanks to countless dishes of Marathi origin or variation have been found at Banashankari in the Chhatrapati district of Karnataka. Marathi in Karnataka and Marathi in Telangana, have also predicted similar stories, and at Amaravati in Andhra Pradesh more realistic primary has been explored. Again at Durgam Cheruvu in Chhatrapati district, beyond of Augustan and Tiberian have been found. (Pillai, 1993: Rome beyond the Imperial Frontiers, 151)

Gecko-Roman influence has been found at many locations, as well. Roman amphora and coins have been found at Chhatrapati and Chhatrapati, Junnar, Haveli, Pithavara, Kumbhari, etc. It is notable here, that the architectural objects built at the multifunction of the rich Greek and Roman traders, should carry a strong stamp of their culture.



The Gecko-Roman influence on the art and architecture could have been extensive because of the factor we have considered before: the very rich Greek and Roman merchants – the people – at the ports and trading hubs at this time, must have spent a good deal on construction of public utilities and places of worship. (The Lybians Story – A Sequel, June 11, 2018) This is testified by the inscriptions at Hanthar, Junnar, Haveli, Pithavara, Kumbhari, etc. It is notable here, that the architectural objects built at the multifunction of the rich Greek and Roman traders, should carry a strong stamp of their culture.

It is obvious from the above discussion and the details map (Pillai, 2011: Early Buddhist Transmission and Trade Routes, 22-28), that the trade route from the Mediterranean to the Decan was most likely through the Konkan ports, rather than through the north-western trading hubs like Taurus. Therefore Marshall's hypothesis of the double-headed eagles flight from Greece to Decan via Taurus is rather weak. Back in seventh centuries, when Marshall wrote, Decan and the Konkan ports were hardly studied, and it is natural that Marshall should not have thought of an alternative possibility. As the double-headed eagle

seemed to have landed in Decan via the Konkan ports. But why it came to occupy such an important position in Karnataka psyche still remains a mystery. After all, could the Garuda-vishnu have flown from the tropical forest of Decan to Abu Taurus in the Taurusian desert, which in the 19th century was a barren place? It is a fascinating con on the banks of a river (Euphrates) (Dagoberto, 2004: Abu Taurus, Hanthar, Junnar, Gouthan Iraq – Preliminary Report On The 2003 Excavation Campaign). The Semetic city of Luxor, where the 14th century with the motif of the double-headed eagle has been found, is at a short distance from Abu Taurus.