

# Who are Yakshas?

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**Please read Analysis of Yaksha Prasna –Parts 1, 2 and 3 posted earlier.**

There are various interpretations on the words 'Yaksha' and 'Yakshi'. No one can tell us for sure. The Rig Veda still remains a mystery to scholars. Yaksha and Yaksu in the Rig Veda are not interpreted correctly yet. Foreign scholars tried to interpret RV in different ways but yet they failed. They added in every page of their commentaries, the words are 'uncertain', 'obscure', 'not clear' etc.

Some 'scholars' interpreted Yaksha as Chinese or people of Mongoloid origin. But they are wrong. It is very clear that they are Indian in appearance in the statues and sculptures which are at least 2300 years old. Many scholars don't know either Sanskrit or Tamil. So they can't see the whole picture of Indian (Hindu) culture. In Tamil Yakshas are called 'Anangu'. In Sangam literature they are projected as beautiful women occupying natural spots and temples. There are 23 interpretations in Sangam Tamil literature. They include goddesses and ghosts.

Following interpretations are gathered from various sources:

1. Yaksha is masculine and Yakshini or Yakshi is feminine.

Yakshas are a class of supernatural beings attendant on Kubera, the God of wealth. Authorities differed as to their origin. They have no special attributes, but they are generally considered as inoffensive and so are called Punya-janas, good people, but occasionally they appear as imps of evil. It is a Yaksha in whose mouth Kalidasa placed his poem Megaduta (Cloud Messenger).

2. Born of night like their blood thirsty brothers, the Rakshasas, the Yakshas are the attendant spirits of Ravana's half brother Kubera, the god of wealth. They live in the Himalayas and are the guardians of hidden treasure.

Though sometimes pictured in grotesque form, they are not usually enemies of mankind and are sometimes seen as graceful, otherworld figures like this (see the picture) balustrade figure from Barhut. (Calcutta Museum)

3. Yaksa : Pre-Brahmanic divinities of the ancient people of the country, replaced by Vedic and Puranic gods and fitted into the pantheon in subordinate positions; originally forces of nature and indwelling spirits of trees and pools they were associated with fertility and plenitude. They were worshipped as givers of life and riches. Kubera was their overlord, lord of all the earth's treasures; later assigned the position of regent of north. Siva himself was invoked as the lord in Yaksha form (Yakshamurti). The Puranas place Kubera's kingdom in the Trans Himalayan region; he is sovereign over many Yaksha rulers whose cities are wealthy, possessing splendid mansions and beautiful gardens—a kind of earthly paradise.

4. Mahavamsa, chronicle of Sri Lanka history, says that Yakshas occupied part of Sri Lanka. They were there even when Vijaya came from India. According to Hindu mythology Ravana and Kubera were half brothers. They were born to Pulastya.

## **5. Bhima Vs Yakshas**

As the chief of the Yakshas, Kubera lived on the top of Gandamadana Mountain which was prohibited to humans. From time to time he visited the earth to see the work of his disciples and punished those who misused their powers like the unfortunate Sthunakarna. Once his friend Manimana insulted Agastya, as a result of which the great saint cursed that the Yakshas would one day be killed by a human and that only when they surrendered to this human that the curse would end. Thus it was that Bhima in search of a divine lotus

flower to please Draupadi, came to the lotus lake and killed the Yakshas who were protecting it. Kubera then appeared before the Pandavas and blessed them. (Mahabharata 3/153-4, 161-2)

6.Yaksa is found several times in the Rigveda and the Atharva Veda in passages in which Ludwig sees the meaning of a feast or holy practice in accordance with the native commentators. It is, however, very doubtful whether this sense ever occurs

RV 1-190-4; 4-3-13; 5-70-4;7-56-16;7-61-5;10-88-13.

AV: 8-9-25;10-2-32;10-7-38;108-43;11-2-24.

7.Yaksu is mentioned, once in the singular and once in the plural, in the hymn of the Rig Veda which celebrates Sudas battle with the ten kings. Who they were and what part they played in the conflict is quite uncertain. They seem to have taken part in two conflicts, one on the Parusni (Ravi), and on the Yamuna with the aid of the Ajas and Sigrus, under the leadership of Bheda.

8.Yakshas are always portrayed as dwarfish and pot bellied figures but their consorts are portrayed as beautiful and voluptuous women. They have big breasts and lot of jewelleries.

## **Tamil Literature**

9.Anangu in Sangam Tamil Literature: 2000 year old Tamil literature has over 100 references to Anangu. It is a feminine spirit equivalent to tree nymphs and water nymphs in Greek mythology. Anangus mainly occupy temples, hills, water sources and royal objects. Purananuu verses say (299 and 247) the Anagus were in the grove where Skanda was. So it was prohibited for women. The same thing was told by Kalidasa in his Vikramorvaseeyam (Act 4)

Another verse in Pathtrup pathau says it was in the royal totem tree.

Other references give the meaning of reverential fear and trouble giving spirits. It resides in the breasts of women, horn of sharks, head of an elephant, Totem trees etc.

When women were longing for their lovers, they behave strangely and become pale according to Tamil literature. Immediately their mums used to call oracle or divine men to drive away the Anangu spirit. There is one verse about a woman laughing to her friend about her mum's ignorance.

One Tamil reference (Perumpanatrup patai) means a ghost for Anangu. Mostly it is projected as a tormenting element or a troubling thing. It is concrete and abstract as well.

My earlier posts on the same subject:

1. Ghost That Killed 72 Tamil People
2. Most feared Numbers 666 and 13
3. Aladdin's Magic Lamp and Tamil saints
4. Mysterious Messengers for Ajanta, Angkor Wat and Sringeri
5. Largest Story Collection in the World
6. Mysterious disappearance of Great Hindu saints
7. Time Travel by Two Tamil Saints
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