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attempt involves study at two levels namely: (1) conceptual and (2) representation. In the former textual references would be included. A unique representation of the latter level is provided by the I.ākṣaraśāstra temple at

## The Consorts and Off-springs of Garuḍa : An Analysis

as textual sources so I have taken in to account the epics, Mahābhārata and Vālmiki

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The motif of Garuḍa, the *vāhana* of Viṣṇu has received elaborate treatment at the hands of many a scholar, perceived from more than one angle. The evolutionary aspects<sup>1</sup>, the developmental trends in art forms<sup>2</sup> and other areas of interest<sup>3</sup> have formed the subject of study. Nevertheless the one area which has not received adequate attention that it deserves, is that pertaining to his consorts and offsprings. Hence, I have taken up the above theme for survey and analysis.

It is in *Mahābhārata* we hear for the first time as to what led to his becoming Viṣṇu's *vāhana* and the emblem on His *dhvaja*. Garuḍa is returning with *amṛta* to release his mother Vinatā from slavery to Kadrū, the other wife of Kaśyapa, and mother of snakes. He meets Viṣṇu on the way. As Garuḍa does not drink the *amṛta* himself Viṣṇu is pleased with him and so asks him to choose two boons. Garuḍa asks for permission to remain as His own above (*Vaikunṭha*) and that he should remain immortal even without drinking *amṛta*. Garuḍa in turn asks Viṣṇu to choose a boon and which he would grant. Viṣṇu asks him to become His *vāhana*<sup>4</sup>. As per the *Śrīvaiṣṇava* tradition he is also accorded the status of 'Nityasūri' (eternally liberated soul) who is constantly attending on Viṣṇu in *Vaikunṭha*, ever ready to receive orders from Him. In a broader perspective, *vāhanas*, the carriers of gods and goddesses, are rarely conceived with their respective spouses. That being the case one does wonder whether Garuḍa possesses consorts and offsprings. Hence, this article proposes to cull out references pertaining to Garuḍa's marital status and examine them. The

As for the dating of Purāṇas, no definite date can be assigned. However, I

attempt involves study at two levels namely: (1) conceptual and (2) representation levels. In the former textual references would be included. A unique representation from my point of view during the field trip to the Lakṣmīnarasimha temple at Nuggihalli in Karnataka on 14<sup>th</sup> November 2002 would form the latter part. As far as textual sources go I have taken in to account the epics *Mahābhārata* and *Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇa*, *Purāṇas*, the *Āgamas* such as *Vimānārcanākalpa* of Marīci (*Vaikhānasa*) and the reference found in *Vihagendra Samhitā (Pāñcarātra)*, *stotra* literature comprising of *Śrīraṅgarāja-stava* of Parasarabhaṭṭa (born in Śaka 983)<sup>5</sup>, a younger contemporary of Rāmānuja, *Garuḍa Daṇḍaka* and *Garuḍa Pañcāśat* of Vedānta Deśika (1268-1369AD) and dictionaries. The concluding section would comprise some observations based on the above references.

#### (1) Conceptual level :

As far as textual sources regarding Garuḍa's consorts and offsprings go, the earliest references which I have come across are in *Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇa* and *Mahābhārata*. In the former (cr.ed) Tāmra who was one of the daughters of Dakṣa is mentioned. According to it Tāmra's daughters were (1) Krauñcī (2) Bhāsī (3) Śyenī (4) Dhṛtarāstri and (5) Śukī, who gave birth to a number of birds and other creatures.<sup>6</sup> We find more or less the same names occur in the *Purāṇas* and even mentioned as Garuḍa's consorts. However, I could not find any specific mention of them becoming Garuḍa's consorts in *Valmiki Rāmāyaṇa*.

One more reference in the same text which appears interesting is that Śukī's daughter was Natā and Vinatā was the daughter of Natā *Śukī natām vijaṇe tu natāya vinatāsutā*.<sup>7</sup> And the same text in another context clearly states that Vinatā was Śukī's granddaughter.

*Vinatā ca śukī putrī kadruśca surasāsvarā/*

*dvo putrau vinatāyāstu garuḍo'ruṇa evaca*<sup>8</sup>

Now in the *Purāṇas* Śukī is mentioned as a consort of Garuḍa. Hence, it is a little intriguing as to how Garuḍa could be associated with Śukī who if taken as Vinatā's grandmother could be treated as Garuḍa's consort. The only explanation would be perhaps Śukī of *Purāṇas* is different from Śukī of *Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇa*.

As far as *Mahābhārata* goes Tāmrā brought forth five daughters who were known throughout the worlds. They were - (1) Kākī, (2) Śyenī, (3) Bhāsī, (4) Dhṛtaraṣṭrī, (5) Śukī and that they brought forth various birds<sup>9</sup>. Instead of Krauñci as stated in *Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇa* it is Kākī here. But here again I did not find a specific reference to their becoming the consorts of Garuḍa. However, it states that Aruṇa's (Garuḍa's brother) wife was Śyenī and Jaṭāyu and Sāmpāti were their off-springs (*aruṇasyaa bhāryā Śyenī... ..sāmpāti janayamasa tathaiva cajatayusam//*).<sup>10</sup>

In *Mahābhārata* itself, we find that at one point of time Nārada narrates about the *loka* inhabited by the birds. And that these possess excellent feathers and they live on snakes, and that the race is said to have multiplied from six sons of Garuḍa<sup>11</sup>

*Vainateyasutaiḥ sūta śadbhistatamidam kulam/  
sumukhena sunāmna ca sunetreṇa suvarcasā//  
surūpā pakṣirājena subalena ca mātale!*

That they possess auspicious marks. And, by their act they are *kṣatriyas* and are without compassion, live on snakes, they all worship Viṣṇu and He is their protector. Viṣṇu lives in their hearts and Viṣṇu is their refuge. Further descendents are also mentioned.<sup>12</sup> Thus, the text provides the names of the six sons of Garuḍa who are Sumukha etc.

Coming to the *Purāṇas* we have taken in to account *Vāyupurāṇa* (VP), *Matsyapurāṇa* (MP), *Viṣṇupurāṇa* (VisP), *Mārkaṇḍeyapurāṇa* (MarP), *Brahmāṇḍapurāṇa* (BrhdP), *Kūrmapurāṇa* (KP), *Padmapurāṇa* (PadP), *Brahmapurāṇa* (BP), *Liṅgapurāṇa* (LP), *Agnipurāṇa* (AP) and *Garuḍapurāṇa* (GP). As for the dating of *Purāṇas*, no precise date can be assigned. However, I

have tried to follow the chronology assigned by R.C. Hazra while placing them in order.<sup>13</sup>

The *Vāyupurāṇa* in *Anuṣaṅgapada-uttarārdha* discusses the names of the daughters of Tāmṛā and the wives of Garuḍa<sup>14</sup>

*Bhāryā garutmataścāpi bhāsī krauñcī tathā Śukī/  
dhrtarāṣṭrī ca bhadṛā ca tāsvapatyāni vakṣyate//*

Śukī bore six well-known sons to Garutmān. Sweet-faced Triśira-Bala-Prṣṭha of great strength, Triśaṅkhanetra, Sumukha, Surupa of good form, and Surasa the powerful<sup>15</sup>

*Śukī garutmataḥ putrān suṣuve ṣaṭ pariśrutān//  
triśiram sumukhañcaiva balam prṣṭham mahābalam//  
trisankhanetram sumukham surūpam surasam balam/  
eṣām putrāśca pauṭrāśca Garuḍena mahātmanā//*

And that the sons and grandsons of these ruthless descendents of Garuḍa, the noble souled, the serpent-eaters amounted to fourteen thousand. The text goes on to say the birds of different types which came out of the others such as Bhāsī etc. And that Śyenī who was the daughter of Tāmṛā became the wife of Aruṇa, and produced Jaṭāyu and Saṃpāti.<sup>16</sup>

The *MP* gives the names of the daughters of Tāmṛā who was the wife of Kaśyapa. They being: (1) Śukī, (2) Śyenī, (3) Bhāsī, (4) Sugrīvī, (5) Gṛdhrikā and (6) Śucī along with their respective offsprings. Śukī became the mother of Śuka, ulluka, Śyenī of Syena, Bhāsī of Kurara, Gṛdhṛī of Gṛdhra and Kapota, Śucī of Hamsa, Sarasa and Vaka etc., and Sugrīvī gave birth to goat, horse, ram, camel and mule<sup>17</sup>. Unlike the *VP* this does not explicitly call Śukī and others as Garuḍa's consorts but the names Śukī, Śyenī and Bhāsī are the same.

The *ViśP* also mentions the six daughters of Tāmṛā as Śukī, Śyenī, Bhāsī, Sugrīvī, Śucī and Gṛdhrikā and their respective off-springs which includes birds and other creatures.<sup>18</sup> But here again unlike the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* no explicit mention of them being Garuḍa's *bhāryās* is there.

*MarP* says Tāmrā bore daughters of whom Śyenī was the chief and of whom were born hawks, vultures, parrots and other birds<sup>19</sup>. In the same *Purāṇa* in another place it is said that the king of birds Garuḍa by name was the son of Ariṣṭanemi and his son was Sampāti whose son was Supārśva<sup>20</sup>. As per this account Sampāti was Garuḍa's son and not Aruṇa's as mentioned in the earlier references.

The *BrhdP* gives the names of the daughters of Tāmrā as (1) Gṛdhṛī, (2) Bhāsī, (3) Śukī, (4) Krauñcī, (5) Śyenī and (6) Dhṛtarāṣṭrikā and their respective offsprings.<sup>21</sup> It clearly names the wives of Garuḍa<sup>22</sup>

*Bhāryā garutmataścaiva bhāsī krauñcī tathā Śukī/  
dhṛtarāṣṭrī tathā śyeni tasyāpatyāni vacmi te//*

Śukī gave birth to six famous sons of Garuḍa namely Sukha, Sunetra, Viśikha, Surūp, Surasa, Bala and that their son and grandsons number fourteen thousand. Bhāsī's sons were Bāsas etc. Dhṛtarāṣṭrī gave birth to swans and Śyenī also gave birth to a number of sons. But from Aruṇa, Gṛdhṛī gave birth to Jaṭāyu and Sampāti unlike in *Vayu Purāṇa* where Śyenī is the wife of Aruṇa.

The *KūrmaPurāṇa* mentions the six daughters of Tāmrā namely, (1) Śukī, (2) Śyenī (3) Bhāsī, (4) Sugrīvā, (5) Gṛdhrikā and (6) Śucī<sup>23</sup> but no clear mention of their being wives of Garuḍa is seen.

*Padma Purāṇa* in *Sṛṣṭikhaṇḍa* lists the daughters of Tāmrā as being (1) Śukī, (2) Śyenī, (3) Bhāsī (4) Sugṛdhṛī (5) Gṛdhrikā and (6) Śucī and their offsprings which is more or less the same as the references noted above.<sup>24</sup> The same text in *Uttarakhaṇḍa* while describing the rise of Lakṣmi at the time of the churning of the milky ocean the text mentions that Vāruṇī came out after Jyeṣṭhādevī, Ananta, the Lord of serpents took her of beautiful eyes. Then *Surā* (spirituous liquor) appeared with all (auspicious) marks and became the wife of Garuḍa<sup>25</sup>

*Tataśca vāruṇīdevī samutpannā śubhānane//  
ananto nāgarājo'tha tam jagrāha sulocanām//  
Tataḥ surā samutpannā sarvābharaṇabhūṣitā//  
vainateyasya bhāryābhūta sarvalakṣṇa śobhitā//*

The *Brahma Purāna* also gives the daughters of Tāmṛā as being (1) Krauñcī, (2) Śyenī, (3) Bhāsī, (4) Sugrīvī, (5) Śuci and (6) Gṛdhrikā and their off-springs which are different kinds of birds and animals<sup>26</sup>

The *Liṅga Purāna* also gives the names of Tāmṛā's daughters as being (1) Śukī, (2) Śyenī (3) Bhāsī (4) Sugrīvī (5) Gṛdhrikā, and (6) Śuci.<sup>27</sup> The AP also talks of the six daughters of Tāmṛā namely (1) Kākī, (2) Śyenī, (3) Bhāsā, (4) Gṛdhrikā, (5) Śuci, and (6) Sugrīvī<sup>28</sup> The *Garuḍa Purāna* mentions the names of six daughters of Tāmṛā namely: (1) Śukī, (2) Śyenī, (3) Bhasī (4) Sugrīvī, (5) Śuci, and (6) Gṛdhrikā and their off-springs.<sup>29</sup>

Coming to the *Āgamas* the *MVak* gives a reference, which can be taken to imply the name of Garuḍa's consort. While discussing the *sthāna* of Garuḍa in the second enclosure of the temple (*dvitīyāvaraṇa*) it describes the manner in which Garuḍa has to be represented and in so doing addresses Garuḍa as "Viśokeśa" (*Viśokā+Īśa*)<sup>30</sup> which can mean to imply that he is the Lord of *Viśokā*. (the terms *Īśa* and *Pati* are synonymous). In other words, *Viśokā* can be taken as his consort. The second reference is from *VihS* quoted by Daniel Smith in his book *Vaisnava Iconography*.<sup>31</sup> The *Āgama* mentions about Vainateya who may possess 4/ 8/16/ 22 arms. In that connection it says as far as the eight-armed is concerned, that there are eight *devīs* on either sides of the wings and out of them Kīrti and Smṛti are on his body (lap) and the others above the wings.<sup>32</sup>

*Aṣṭadevyorubhau pārśvau tārksyapakṣe vyavasthitah/  
kīrti smṛtiyaṅkamarropya sesah paksopari sthitah//*

The reference though may not appear to be very clear I have taken them as implying the consorts for the main reason that the *Stotra* literature which we are going to refer in the next paragraph mentions Sukīrti as one of his consorts and here it is Kīrti. If we take it as eight goddesses it seems inappropriate as the two of them are stated as seated on his body (lap).

As far as the *Stotra* literature is concerned, two references can be cited here. One is from *SRS*. Here in the *Pūrvaśataka*, Bhattar worships Garuḍa's consorts Rudrā and Sukīrti (st.54a: *Tārksyapakṣtivadasya vallabhām rudrayā saha sukīrtimarcaye*)<sup>33</sup>. Looking at the English translation of the stanza it seems he worships the two consorts "who (seated on either side of him) look like his two wings. Through these two may Kamalā bless her suppliants with fame and tears of joy."<sup>34</sup>

Garuḍa's consorts are noted in *Garuda Daṇḍaka* and *Garuḍapañcāśat*. In the former (stanza1) Vedāntadeśika worships Garuḍa as the one residing in the nest of Vedas and goes on to say that he carries Viṣṇu on exploits to destroy enemies and when Garuḍa returns home he is tightly embraced by Rudrā and Sukīrti with their voluptuous breasts. The excitement that is caused in Garuḍa is exhibited in certain movements of the body and which in turn creates fear in the Nāgas that adorn his body (... .. *skandamiḍe svaniḍhagati prīta rudrā sukīrti stanābhoga gāḍhopagūḍha sphuratkaṇṭhakavrāta vedhavyathāvepamāna... .. //*)<sup>35</sup>

In *GPS* the author mentions the consorts, names twice. In st. 38 he worships the Nāgas that adorn Garuḍa's body. Here he explains as to why the Nāgas have clung to Garuḍa's body. It may be due to fear because of the heavy breathing of Garuḍa as a result of the excitement, when he is tightly embraced by Rudrā.

*Rudrāgāḍhopagūḍhocchvasananibiḍitasthānayogadivasmad*

*bhadrāyasyurbhajanto bhagavati garuḍe gāḍhatām gūḍhapādah//*<sup>36</sup>

In the same text in stanza 43 he prays to the Nāga which adorn the arms of Garuḍa. In that connection he says that the Nāga raises its circular hood to experience the fragrance of the saffron which has been applied on the breasts of Rudrā and Sukīrti (the consorts of Garuḍa) as they embrace Garuḍa.

*Śliṣyad rudrā Sukīrtistanatata ghusrṇā lepa samkrāntasāra*

*sphārā modābhilaṣonnamita prthuphaṇa cakravālābhirāmah//*<sup>37</sup>

In one of the secondary sources it is said that at the time of the marriage of Garuḍa, the serpents got scared about the off-springs that might emerge and which might kill them and so attacked him ferociously.<sup>38</sup>

Some dictionaries give the names of wives of Garuḍa. For instance *Unnati* is mentioned in one<sup>39</sup>, *Vināyikā* in another one.<sup>40</sup>

What follows from the above references it is clear that Garuḍa does possess consorts at the conceptual level. However, one has to find out whether there are representations of Garuḍa with consorts.

## (2) Representation Level

So far, I have not come across references about Garuḍa being shown with his consorts. He is mostly shown carrying Viṣṇu and hence showing him with his consorts would be impractical. But even in the independent shrines where Garuḍa is installed he is not shown with his consorts as he is either standing or kneeling, at times seated giving the impression that he is ready to carry his Lord or receive orders. In any case this does not rule out the non-existence of such a representation because the texts do mention about his consorts.

In one of my field trips, I had visited the Laksminarasimha temple at Nuggihalli in Hassan district in Karnataka. This temple was built by Bommananandanayaka under the Hoysala rule, who, also established an *agrahāra* at Nuggihalli in 1249 AD. It was built under the supervision of one Mallitamma.<sup>41</sup> In this temple I came across a unique representation. It is a wall figure on the outer northern wall (close to the eastern corner) surrounding the shrine. He appears to be Garuḍa. He is shown in human form (except for the wings) with the two hands joined together in the front (*añjali*?) in a running posture with wings spread out. However, the most intriguing factor is that he is flanked by two ladies. A doubt arose in my mind whether they could be the two consorts of Garuḍa (*Rudrā* and *Sukīrti*?). If we link the *Stotra* references (SRS and GPS) to the above representation perhaps yes! The idea of Garuḍa having two consorts may have been transported by followers of Rāmānuja and translated through the above representation. Now, the question likely to be posed is: why, are there no such representations reported? Needless to say, at

this juncture Nuggihalli specimen is more an inference. This could be supported by textual references of Garuḍa having two consorts.

After a perusal of the various references the following observations can be made: (1) It appears that the epic references to the off-springs of Garuḍa, similarly the Purāṇic references to his consorts and off-springs seem to have stemmed from the objective of explaining away the creation and origin of various species of creatures. Though the Purāṇas are not consistent with all the names of his consorts and even clear as to their being his consorts, the two *VP* and *BrhdP* by using the term 'bhāryā' make it clear that Tāmra's daughters are his wives. But all of them mention six daughters for Tāmra unlike the epics which give only five (2) As far as the *āgamic* literature goes the idea seems to be more visual representation. The *MVak* reference is based more on inference, where as in *VihS* the term 'devyoh' is used and eight are noted though only two names Kirti and Smṛti are mentioned. (3) The *Stotra* literature employs two names namely Rudrā and Sukīrti, which seem more specific and definite and there is consistency too. This shows that the idea had crystallized even for visual representation. The reason perhaps could be that Garuḍa was just not a *vāhana* alone but came to occupy an independent status also. Moreover lending him human form could have also helped to conceive him with consorts. As the representation at Nuggihalli is the only one so far where one can relate to Garuḍa being shown with consorts, the issue is open to scholars to try and locate more such ones. In addition, it is hoped that one day the 'concept' would become 'actual' and the textual 'fact' would evolve in to something 'concrete'!

[The author has prepared two papers (unpublished) on Garuḍa: (1) "Garuḍa in Traditions from Tamilnadu-A Study" presented at the Second Conference of Bṛhan Maharashtra Prācyavidyā Pariṣad held at Thane (26Dec.-28Dec, 1997). (2) "Garuḍapañcami Vrata-An Appraisal" for the All India Oriental Conference held at Chennai (May,2000)]

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