THE BODHISATTVA IMAGERY IN MATHURĀ: FROM THE BEGINNINGS TO APPROXIMATELY 3rd CENTURY A.D.

Dissertation submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University

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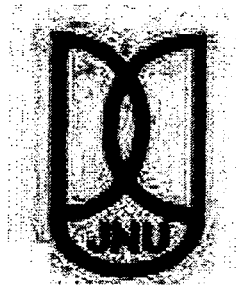
MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

SHIRLEY KHOIROM



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CERTIFICATE

Certified that dissertation entitled '**THE BODHISATTVA IMAGERY IN MATHURA: FROM THE BEGINNINGS TO APPROXIMATELY 3rd CENTURY A.D.**' submitted by **Shirley Khoirom** in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy of this University. This dissertation has not been previously submitted for any other degree of this University or any other University and is her own work to the best of our knowledge.

We recommend that this dissertation be placed before the examiner for evaluation.

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Declaration

I declare that the dissertation entitled 'The Bodhisattva Imagery in Mathura: From the Beginnings to Approximately 3rd Century A.D.' submitted by me for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy of Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi is my own work. The dissertation has not been submitted for any other degree of this University or any other University.

Shirley Khoirom

Shirley Khoirom

Dedicated To My Family

Contents

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Shirley Khoirom

Abbreviations

1.	ASIAR	Archaeological Survey of India, Annual Report.
2.	ASRI	Archaeological Survey Reports of India, Reports.
3.	BEFEO	Bulletin de l'école francaise d'éxtrême Orient.
4.	BMA	Bulletin of Museums and Archaeology in Uttar Pradesh.
5.	CII	Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum.
6.	EI	Epigraphia Indica.
7.	GMM	Government Museum, Mathura.
8.	IA	Indian Antiquary.
9.	IAAR	Indian Archaeology- A Review.
10.	JASB	Journal of Asiatic Society of Bengal, Letters.
11.	JISOA	Journal of Indian Society of Oriental Art, Calcutta.
12.	JRASB	Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal.
13.	JUPHS	Journal of United Provinces Historical Society, Uttar Pradesh.
14.	SML	State Museum, Lucknow.

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INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

Mathurā becomes the site of every art historical investigation due to the large corpus of art production unearthed over a period of time. It also paved way to political positioning of the art historical discussions. Emergence and continuity of iconic representations of many deities are studied in the context of rise of Buddha images However, the emergence of Buddha images remained the central issue at the cost of the Bodhisattva images being subjected to lesser inquiries, thus making it important to shift the focus from macro analysis to micro analysis within the ambit of regional dynamics.

Art historical enquiries emerge through documentation to the formalistic and religion studies. Also a sense of regaining the lost pride gives impetus to the study of historical art traditions. More recently, studies on a particular site have shifted from the singular assumptions to a multicultural understanding of the material past. An attempt has been to understand how new conventions are developed as a power of signification based on the earlier pictorial vocabulary for giving rise to certain iconic representations in the context of the Bodhisattva images.

The present study endeavors to understand the imagery of Bodhisattva in Mathurā from its beginnings to approximately the 3rd century A.D. It attempts to see the iconographical and stylistic development of the icon in the light of the emerging notion of the Bodhisattva. Many works have been carried out with regard to Buddhist art in Mathurā. However, when it comes to the figure of the Bodhisattva, only monumental figures of the Śākyamuṇi, Maitreya and Avalokiteshvara Padmapāni are briefly mentioned without any attempt as such at exploring the implications of these images. Attention is also directed towards the representation of these images in small sizes in architectural reliefs, in the front of the pedestals of Buddha figures, pillars etc. which point to the fact that the Bodhisattva imagery is not limited to the monumental iconic figures usually discussed and hence receives a wider scope of representation which definitely has its own implications. Discussions on the Bodhisattva imagery at Mathurā so far have not taken this into account and are mostly limited to plain description of the monumental representations.

While the primary objective of this dissertation is to look into the Bodhisattva imagery of the aforementioned period, this forms the last section of my work. The

entire work is divided into four chapters. The first chapter looks into the nature of earlier scholarship on understanding of the Mathurā school of art so far. It brings to light the biases underlying the earliest studies by the colonial archaeologists, its refutation by the so-called nationalist writers and a kind of balance achieved in the writings of the later scholars. The earliest studies on the Mathurā school of art were mostly a colonial exercise and not really a genuine interest in the study of the art works. This is reflected in the nature of the works produced by them. They mostly consist of a generalized treatment of the bulk discoveries of the art works and are more or less documentations of the works rather than a discussion of their implications. These early works saw the art products of the Mathurā school in the light of the art of the Greco-Roman world. The refutation of this kind of outlook has been discussed. The so-called nationalist writing brought to the fore the ancient Indian art tradition tracing almost every art motif to the art tradition of the Indian soil. With these two clashing perspectives as the backdrop, the later works achieve and reflect a kind of balance in their study which acknowledged both the degree of Hellenistic influences as well as the pre-existing Indian art tradition. Even much later, works carried out by scholars take up different aspects of the school of art.

The second chapter looks into the Bodhisattva doctrine in general. It discusses the origins and development of the ideal, relationship between the Mahāyāna Buddhism and the Bodhisattva ideal. It brings to light the shortcomings in the early studies of Mahāyāna Buddhism. Certain underlying biases in the earlier scholarship on the Mahāyāna have been brought to the fore. For, instance only a few texts were taken into account while defining the Mahāyāna. These texts also happen to be those that were most widely known in the West or in Japan. It also brings to light the excessive importance given to Sanskrit or Pāli scriptural texts and the neglect of texts in Tibetan, Chinese, Mongolian languages etc. This is seen as reflecting the Western pre-occupation with historical origins. Also the baseless divide of the Hinayāna and the Mahāyāna as though two opposite poles of thought has been pointed out. Recent scholarship on the Mahāyāna Buddhism has scrutinized such a binary. The issue of how different the various sects were from each other has been addresses. The most common assumption that results from the acceptance of such a binary is the equation of the Bodhisattva ideal with the Mahāyāna Buddhism. Till very late the Bodhisattva ideal was considered as a novelty of the Mahāyāna Buddhism. However, this sort of perception has been critiqued and the presence of the ideal, though with lesser

importance attached, in Theravada philosophy has been brought to light. Several historical factors to have given rise to the following of the Bodhisattva doctrine have also been discussed. The divide between the lay Bodhisattva and the monastic Bodhisattva in Buddhist literature and the nature of their practice have been also been discussed.

The third chapter looks into the archaeological excavations carried out so far, the history, society and the pre-existing visual traditions of Mathurā. Certain landmark discoveries in the course of excavations and otherwise have been discussed. The account on the history of Mathurā brings to light the number of invasions faced by Mathurā which also brought along with it a wave of artistic influences. The co-existence of various sects in Mathurā and the production of various artworks corresponding to the ideologies of the different sects have been discussed. The use of similar art motifs by all the sects to represent their icons has been noted which also reinforces the view that Indian art is not sectarian in nature. This chapter forms the backdrop in which the Bodhisattva imagery in Mathurā can be contextualized.

The fourth chapter deals with the Bodhisattva imagery in Mathurā. It begins with an account of Buddhist legends that associate Buddhism with Mathurā. With regard to the earliest representations, the standing and the seated types of Bodhisattvas are dealt with. It is noted that the issue of the earliest iconic representation of the Śākyamuṇi is intimately connected with the earliest representation of Bodhisattva images. A gradual development in the Bodhisattva imagery has been traced along with its socio-political implications.

The last chapter is the conclusion where observations in each of the three chapters have been summed up in a synoptic manner.

CHAPTER I

LITERATURE REVIEW

CHAPTER-I

LITERATURE REVIEW

Several scholars have carried out various kinds of studies on Mathurā school of art. Mathurā being a place with diverse subjects and consequently diverse art practices it has given scope to various scholars to approach it in many ways. Moreover, its position in the Indian art scenario is such that no book on Indian art can afford to ignore it.

The credit for the first discovery of the richness of this place would go to Colonel Stacy who was the first person to pick up antiquarian remains from Mathurā. This event is marked by his discovery of the so-called Silenus, now preserved in the Indian Museum, Calcutta. He has discussed about it in his article called "Note on the Discovery of a Relic of Grecian Sculpture in Upper India"[1]. However, the identification of this piece has been debated by many. Stacey was followed by Alexander Cunningham who, between the years 1853 to1882, identified several spots and monuments, and explored and excavated various sites acquiring a large number of sculptures and architectural fragments. He also deciphered some inscriptions and published them in his reports[2]. F.S.Growse, who was the Collector of Mathurā District, is another person with extremely significant contributions to the study of Mathurā art. He was responsible for the founding of the Mathurā Museum in 1874 to preserve the antiquities from Mathurā and its neighborhood. He was also an enthusiastic archaeologist. Apart from stray articles[3] on archaeological discoveries of Mathurā in different journals, his most significant contribution has been his *Mathurā Memoir*[4] which is revered for its account of the history and the culture of the region.

Regarding Mathurā inscriptions, it is important to mention certain people who have contributed to its study. Buhler's contribution to the study of Jain inscriptions is well known[5]. Fleet incorporated a few Buddhist inscriptions of Gupta period from Mathurā in his study[6]. Pandit Bhagwan Lal Indraji[7], Sten Konow[8], F.W.Thomas[9], R.D.Banerji[10] and Daya Ram Sahni[11] deserve mention for their contribution towards deciphering Mathurā inscriptions. As we all know, Heinrich Luders has made laudatory contribution to the study of Mathurā inscriptions[12].

Regarding early studies on Mathurā sculpture, Vincent Smith's work on Jain antiquities is an important one[13]. It is a result of information supplemented by Smith to some Jaina photos prepared by Dr. Fuhrer who worked as Archaeological Surveyor and Curator of the Lucknow Provincial Museum several years before. Smith's work is a concise descriptive text. He makes clear that in his work no attempt has been made to discuss the many questions of interests that the sculptures might suggest. Most of the illustrations discussed in this work belong to Kankālī Tīlā. Smith gives an account of the number of archaeological excavations that were carried out in Kankālī Tīlā. As seen in other early writings, Smith complains how the collection in the Mathurā Museum was neither catalogued nor arranged properly and also how no record was kept regarding the findspots of objects in excavations. Regarding the era followed by the Kushāna kings Kaniṣka, Huviṣka, and Vāsudeva in their inscriptions, Smith holds it probable that they followed the same era as used in the Kharoshti inscriptions in Peshawar which is supposed to be either identical or nearly coincident with the era of 57 B.C. known as the Mālwa or Vikramāditya era. Following numismatic evidences Smith opines that accession of Kaniṣka cannot be placed earlier than the A.D.30. He acknowledges the general view at that time that the Kuṣāṇa era, which dates from the accession of Kaniṣka, cannot have begun later than A.D.78, nor earlier than B.C.57. Being a typical imperial scholar, Smith highlights Hellenistic influence as visible in these Jaina works in the form of motifs like vines, harpies, centaurs, winged lions etc. In addition to these, he also observes Persian influence in the pillar capitals. He comes to the conclusion that Indian art is not sectarian acknowledging the problem of identifying a sculptural or narrative fragment as Buddhist or Jaina. Smith's work primarily consists of description of sculptural fragments, Jina images, ornamental railing bars, Jaina deities, āyāgapaṭṭas etc. His work is confined to descriptive documentation and does not address any art historical issues as such. His attribution of the images to Jaina faith is solely based on their find spot. Smith's work establishes certain important points, for instance, that the tradition of stūpa worship was not unique to Buddhists as the general assumption goes but was also equally important to the Jains. This he deduces from the inscription on the surviving base of a supposedly large standing image of arhat Nandyavarta which says that an image of Arhat Nandyavarta donated by a female lay disciple was set up at the Vodva stūpa built by the gods[14]. We also find here Smith's oft quoted saying that the Vodva stūpa of the Jains was so ancient that it was regarded as the work of the gods.

J.Ph.Vogel has also worked extensively on the images of Mathurā[15]. His essays on the Mathurā school of sculpture in the Annual Report of Archaeological Survey of India is of great importance in understanding the circumstances of scholarship during that time, and also the western understanding of Indian art and their underlying prejudices[16]. Vogel's essays give a good account of the nature of excavations and the state of preservation of archaeological antiquities at that point of time. Vogel regrets that explorations could have been carried out in a more systematic manner. He complains that though nearly every mound was examined, hardly any one of them was completely explored and excavated. He points out that excessive importance was attached to inscriptions whereas the architectural interest was wholly neglected which led to the loss of valuable information that the remains of buildings and in some cases even the architectural members that were found *in situ* could have provided. Consequently, while a large number of Mathurā sculptures are available in museum collections, due to absence of excavation plans and the findspots of the images in the trenches it has become very difficult to ascertain their actual placement in the scheme of a site. Vogel also expresses dissatisfaction over the fact that a large number of Mathurā sculptures are distributed over various museums. Vogel's imperial perception has also gone in the interpretation of Mathurā sculptures as he highlights Greek or Hellenistic influences betrayed by Mathurā sculptures. He regards Mathurā sculptures as classical in character receiving inspiration from Gandhāra and which, however, did not reach even the lowest standard of Greek or Hellenistic art thus indicating that he was seeing the tradition of Mathurā sculpture against the Greco-Roman perspective. He supports Foucher's contention that the Graeco-Buddhist school of Gandhāra influenced all the later Buddhist sculpture presupposing that the Gandhāra school of sculpture existed before the Mathurā school which drew its inspiration from the former. Vogel describes the Mathurā school as being a direct continuation of the old Indian art of Bharhut and Sānchi but also adds that Mathurā sculptures were inspired by Hellenistic Gandhāra tradition. Chronology is not Vogel's area of concern and all his observations are drawn from the images that are found in bulk. This is apparent when he declares that both the Buddha and Bodhisattva images from Mathurā are imitations by Indian sculptors of the prototypes created by the Hellenistic artists of Gandhāra. In a continuation of the same essay in the 1908-1910 issue, he also takes into account the image tradition of Amarāvati. Comparing Gandhāra, Mathurā and Amarāvati sculptures, Vogel concludes that the Mathurā

figures represent an intermediary stage bearing a character far less classical than their "parents" of Gandhāra, but at the same time much less Indianised than their "degenerate descendents" at Amarāvati. Imperial arrogance is visible in Vogel's writings which also reflect the mindset that the power of choice belongs to the European continent. Vogel represents the views of classical archaeologists according to whom Gandhāra is the mother school from where every other school in India has derived inspiration. Later, Vincent Smith wrote a book on the history of fine art in India where he attempted to organize the vast amount of art material in a historical perspective of development where Mathurā becomes a part of a very brief discussion[17].

On the other hand, writing exclusively on the Buddhist art, Foucher in his famous work[18] stresses that the Buddhist art that has been spread in Central, Far East and the Malay Islands have their roots in the Hellenistic art of Gandhāra. In other words, the Buddhist art of Gandhāra provided inspiration for the Buddhist art in the rest of the world. Even regarding the Buddhist art of Mathurā he holds that they have descended from the Gandhāra Buddhas. He does not engage himself in socio-political and iconological issues and is mostly concerned with establishing the role of the Hellenistic art of Gāndhara in giving rise to Buddhist art in India, Central Asia, Far East and the Malay Islands. Such unilinear narratives were received as an imposition of imperial scholarship than critical understanding. There have been strong reactions to such imperial narratives. But these reactions have been mostly understood in the light of emerging nationalism and revivalist tendencies. Foucher's work is an epitome of classical scholarship. Because of Hellenistic features in the sculptures of Gandhāra to which the Europeans could easily relate, Gandhāra was deemed as an extension of Greek culture while at the same time it was also regarded as an inferior version of its source. Mathurā was also viewed from the same perspective and therefore, comparisons were made based on the same standard. Imperial scholarship failed to see Mathurā as a different cultural zone.

Coomaraswamy strongly protested this outlook. This is best reflected in his work *The Origin of the Buddha Image*[19]. Coomaraswamy's work is focused on proving that the Buddha image had its origins in the Indian soil. His basic contention is that the pre-existing visual culture in ancient India provided the prototype and the indigenous sculptors did not have to look for it towards Gandhāra as believed by Foucher and

others. Bringing to fore the notion of spirituality as unique to the India, Coomaraswamy opines that the figure of the Buddha represents a conception of spiritual attainment which is altogether foreign to European mind. Coomaraswamy highlights the existence of the concept of *bhakti* from a time much earlier than the beginnings of anthropomorphic representation in principal sects so as to see the formulation of the Buddha image as a natural outcome of it. Coomaraswamy suggests that it was the Bhāgvata cults of Yakshas and Nāgas that yielded gradually to the Bhāgvata cults of Vishṇu and Buddha. He sees the demand for a Buddha image as a natural outcome of these circumstances and also the availability of suitable types to have provided model on which the Buddha image was made. Yakshas and Nāgas of Mathurā, Patna and other places are noted as having played a very significant role in their contribution to the making of the standing Buddha figure. Regarding the debate between the Mathurā Buddha figures and the Gandhāra Buddha figures, Coomaraswamy clarifies that he does not mean to assert that Buddha figures were first made in Mathurā and afterwards copied in Gandhāra though he thought that is also possible. What he states definitely is that almost every element essential to the iconography of Buddha and Bodhisattva figures appears in early Indian art before the figure of Gandhāra or Mathurā is known. Coomaraswamy opines that though available evidences are not enough to form a theory as to the priority of either school, he is inclined to presume a priority for Mathurā. What he affirmatively asserts is that the earliest Buddha types in each area are in local style and latter on mutual influences were felt and there was a stylistic Indianisation instead in Gandhāra which was one of adherence to the Mathurā type in the Ganges valley. Coomaraswamy's work is centered on highlighting ancient Indian art practices which provided prototypes to different sects later in time. He has neither engaged himself much with chronological development of the images nor with socio-political circumstances in which the images must have been produced. Mathurā also forms a part of Coomaraswamy's *History of Indian and Indonesian Art*. This work is his last and most authoritative discussion of the history, especially early history, of Indian art. As the title suggests, the work locates Indian art in the context of south, south-east and far-east Asia. He takes into account the art of India from the pre-Mauryan times to the medieval period, art of Nepal, Tibet, Chinese Turkestan, Indonesia, Ceylon, Burma, Siam, Cambodia, Campa, Sumatra, Java and Far East. By clubbing all of them together with India art, Coomaraswamy has attempted to trace Indian influences in the art of these countries,

thereby establishing a certain zone in the world map with similar art practices. Coomaraswamy traces Indian art motifs and imagery to their mention in literature like Vedas, Purāṇas, Brāhamaṇas, Samhitās etc. Mathurā finds mention in his section on the Kuṣāṇa art. He highlights the eclectic nature of Mathurā art. He, however, deals with them in bulk, as belonging to the Kuṣāṇa period as a whole and does not address the chronological development of the icons and iconological issues.

Stella Kramrisch is another significant figure who contributed to the early studies of Indian art. Her *Indian Sculpture*[20] is regarded as a significant contribution to the study of Indian art. As we know, Kramrisch's views are dissimilar to those of the classical archaeologists in many ways. She romanticizes on the unique quality possessed by Indian sculpture to which western methods of art criticism cannot be applied. She accepts naturalism as intrinsic to Indian culture. Being a formalist, she poeticizes the modeling of human body in Indian art. In Kapila Vatsyayana's words in the foreword to the book, Kramrisch's work brings to fore the crucial role that sense perception plays in Indian aesthetic theory and practice. Kramrisch divides her work broadly into three main sections namely: Ancient Indian Sculpture; Classical Sculpture, and Medieval Sculpture. Mathurā is dealt with in the second section in a sub-section called Early Maturity from the period of first century A.D. to third century A.D. Kramrisch deals with Mathurā along with Gandhāra, Vengi(Amarāvati), Western Deccan, Central India and Orissa of the same period. She holds that while artistic activities of the former period had been diffused through the country till now, by this period they become concentrated in Mathurā and Vengi (Amarāvati). Kramrisch is of the opinion that though Mathurā has given to Indian imagery its pantheon of Buddhist, Jaina as well as Brāhamanic icons, it has however failed to create the spirituality of any. According to her the Mathurā school has only inherited the Mauryan massiveness whereas the dignity and civilized bearing of Mauryan sculptures are seen to have been replaced by a crude and sturdy feel in Mathurā sculptures. Kramrisch holds that anthropomorphic images as an essential part of the ceremony of worship in any form of cult as recorded in scriptures does not seem to have been in vogue in India prior to its contact with Hellenism. However she acknowledges the existence of Yaksha worship among the masses as having continued from early days. She believes that the early Buddha/ Bodhisattva images have the Indian sculpture as its background as they have been given the appearance of a Yaksha. While she accepts that in Gandhāra the Buddha was shown in human shape

at an earlier date, she asserts at the same time that it may as well be due to the accident of preservation and that in no case priority establishes a claim of the Gandhāra type as origin of the Buddha image. She holds that the Mathurā type is totally different also as it is an outcome of an aboriginal attitude of the masses towards image worship. While Gandhāra images are a resourceful adaptation of Indian notions by syncretistic craftsmen. At the same time Kramrisch also holds that the Gandhāra Buddha type has been purposely copied. She highlights the sensuality of Mathurā school. Kramrisch in her work beautifully interweaves the visual impression of the sculptural form, technique and material with information from Indian religious texts and philosophy. It is pointed out that her understanding of Indian art as reflected in her writings, is a result of her training in Vienna School of art history during the second decade of the twentieth century[21]. Kramrisch's vocabulary is seen as strongly rooted in German sources. It is observed that her models had been the writings of Alois Reigl, H.Wolfflin, her immediate teachers Max Dvorak and Josef Strzygowski[22]. It is also observed that Kramrisch was strongly influenced by Hegel[23]. Hegel's notion of the 'classic' as a result of the merger of 'spirit' and 'form' is seen in Kramrisch's description of Gupta art. *The Indian Sculpture* is an extremely significant piece of writing as it serves as the first insight into the qualities of Indian sculpture. Kramrisch deals with Indian art in a way never done before and with a lot of confidence. However, the work contains little data. She does not engage herself with the issues of chronology and hence does not deal with the chronological development of images. She also does not engage herself much with socio-political, socio-religious issues. Her division of the book in the sections mentioned earlier attracts attention especially because of the classification of Gupta art as Classical sculpture as though Gupta art represented the pinnacle of Indian sculpture, while the art of the remaining periods were either approaching it or were degraded versions of it.

V.S.Agrawal's contribution to the study of Mathurā art has been laudable. He availed full advantage of his tenure as a Curator of the Mathurā Museum and thoroughly studied the collection. He produced many essays on various aspects of the Mathurā school which were published in different issues of the Journal of Uttar Pradesh Historical Society. Unlike Vogel, Smith or Coomaraswamy he is not pre-occupied with the idea of seeing Mathurā and Gandhāra as two binaries. Instead he traces the history of image traditions in Mathurā right from pre-Kuṣāṇa times and places Mathurā's importance in the context of the development of other sites in Gangetic

Valley and outside. His works reflect Coomaraswamy's basic contention with regard to Indian art as and when he proves the historicity and ancientness of Mathurā images tracing them to the ancient Indian tradition of Yaksha/Nāga imagery. His notable contribution was to update the Mathurā Museum Catalogue of Vogel which was also published in the journal just mentioned in parts between the years 1948 and 1953. His *Pre-Kuṣāṇa Art of Mathurā*[24] is a concise study of the pre-existing visual imagery in the time before the advent of the Kuṣāṇas. Agrawal holds that the image traditions of the Mathurā school were already of respectable antiquity when the revival of art took place under the Tigra-khaudas. He calls Mathurā an important outpost of the early Indian school of Sānchī, Bharhut and Bodh-Gayā with remarkable parallels of the Yakshis and Vṛkshākās, dwarfs and fantastic animals. Agrawal considers the earliest extant specimens of sculptures at Mathurā as a product of the Ancient National School which arose side by side with and possibly even prior to, the Ashokan school. Agrawal extensively discusses the cult of worship of Yakshas of colossal sizes, the earliest extant pieces belonging second century B.C. These colossal Yakshas are seen to represent the Ancient National School. He too opines that these big statues have been adopted in representing the Bodhisattvas and deities of other sects. Therefore, he concludes that at least in the third century B.C. there flourished a school of art, wholly the result of indigenous traditions and possessing a separate individuality of its own creating the colossal images of Yakshas. Apart from this tradition, Agrawal brings to light the existence of various architectural fragments of the pre-Kuṣāṇa times. He also establishes the antiquity of Jaina art traditions and brings to notice the large number of Jaina artworks. He sees the advent of the Kuṣāṇa s as bringing along with it a flourishing school of art production of various sects. In his *Masterpieces of Mathurā Art,* Agrawal[25] gives a general overview of Mathurā sculpture until the Gupta period highlighting the unique characteristics of the school. He describes Mathurā as the famous birthplace of Krishna, a seat of Bhāgvata religion, a flourishing centre of the Jaina and Buddhist religions where the religious zeal of all these communities found a concrete expression in the creation of a great school of art. He talks about the eclectic nature of Mathurā art as reflected by the production of images of Yakshas, Yakshis, Nāgas, Nāgis, Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, Tīrthaṅkaras, Kubera, Bacchanalian groups, Śivalinga and anthropomorphic Śiva, Vishṇu, Sūrya, Kārtikeya, Saptamātṛkas, Mahishāsurmardinī, Śrī-Lakshmī, Saraswati, Āryāvatī, Durgā, etc. He highlights the geographical position of Mathurā as being responsible for the meeting of traditions of

early Indian art of Bharhut and Sānchī together with the strong influences of the Iranian and Indo- Bactrian or the Gandhāra art from the North-West as reflected by the free use of Hellenistic motifs. Regarding the Buddha/ Bodhisattva images he holds that the figure of the Yaksha along with the Yogi and Chakravarti formula provided a suitable type on which the Buddha/Bodhisattva figure was modeled. He points out that a complete formula of an anthropomorphic representation of a divine being had been practiced by the Mathurā sculptors several centuries before the Christian era as illustrated by the early Yaksha images, the statue of Balarāma (2nd century B.C., from Jānsuṭī Village), and statues of Vṛishṇi heroes found in a shrine at Morā authenticated by the Morā well inscription. While Agrawal's work is historically an extremely significant piece of work as it is one of the earliest works to exclusively deal with the pre-Kuṣāṇa art of Mathurā, its drawback lies in the fact that it is again a bulk treatment of the art objects with no attempt as such to work out a chronology. Agrawal has also dealt with the terracotta products of Mathurā in his *Mathurā Terracottas*[26]. He deals with terracotta figurines found in Mathurā from Pre-Mauryan period to the Gupta period. Agrawal brings to notice the hundreds and hundreds of terracotta figurines that have been discovered from Mathurā like archaic tutelary female divinities, detached heads, circular and rectangular plaques, moulds, toy-animals, Brahamānical gods and goddesses, secular scenes and decorative panels. He divides the history of Mathurā terracottas roughly into five periods namely primitive and pre-Maurya, late pre-Maurya and Maurya, Śunga, Kuṣāṇa and Gupta based on the evidence of style and the technique evolved for making them. He traces the change in the methods of making the figurines as well as the subject matter as time passes. Agrawal notes how, apart from figurines of goddesses, secular scenes drawn from daily life come to be made with the passage of time. Agrawal has tried to identify the early figurines of goddesses by referring to the Vedas and the Purāṇas as they supply ample material regarding the origin and prevalence of belief in mother cult. However, apart from the knowledge that terracottas were popular among common people and the goddess figurines represented popular worship, much remains to be dealt with. Agrawal has given due recognition to Mathurā school in his other works on Indian art[27].

J.E.Van Lohuizen-de- Leeuw's work *The Scythian Period,* is a commendable contribution to the study of Mathurā art[28]. She has taken into account both Mathurā and the North-West. She holds 78 A.D. as the year of Kaniṣka's accession to the

throne. She is of the opinion that Kaniṣka instituted the Śaka era of 78 A.D. She holds that before the accession of Kaniṣka, only one era was in use and that this era was used by the Yueh-chih alias Asii—Tochari—Tushara, in which the greater part of the Śakas was absorbed. She establishes that this era began in 129 B.C., and that not long after the year 200 of that era, i.e. shortly after 71 A.D. and before 86 A.D., Kaniṣka ascended the throne. On the basis that the era used for more than 300 years by the Western Kshatrapas, residing at Ujjain—who were the true vassals of Kaniṣka's dynasty, was the Śaka era of 78 A.D. and that Kaniṣka began to reign shortly after 71 A.D., Van Lohuizen concludes that the so-called Kaniṣka era, which began in the first year of Kaniṣka's reign is no other than the Śaka era of 78 A.D. Regarding the art of Gandhāra, she discusses various scholars' take on the Golden period of Gandhāra. She also points out how the classical archaeologists have stressed so much on the Greek, Hellenistic or Roman influence on the origin of Gandhāra art. She is of the opinion that the ideas in the art of Gandhāra originate from native Indian art as we see in Bharhut and Sāṇchī. She stresses that in this way ancient Indian art forms the base of North-West Indian art. Van Lohuizen's work reflects the understanding that every region has its own dynamics of historical development which needs to be mapped within the art traditions of the region alone. She warns us from following the maxim "the better the style, the earlier the date" which was followed by most of the nineteenth century archaeologists. She takes note of the fact that the Greek ideal was so celebrated that some scholars even went so far as to not even appreciate artworks not showing western influence. Van Lohuizen describes Gandhāra art as an art with genuine Indian elements originated in a country where strong Hellenistic influences had been active, and began building a life of its own with native Indian ideas and assimilating foreign influences as well. She has attempted to date the Gandhāran sculptures stylistically as well as in comparison with dated Mathurā sculptures. She deduces the Golden age as starting from mid-2nd century A.D and reaching the climax in 3rd century A.D. Regarding Mathurā art Lohuizen deals mainly with the Buddha and Jina images. She traces the presence of Jainism and Buddhism from at least the mid 1st century B.C. She highlights the pre-existing Yaksha cult in Mathurā. She agrees with Coomaraswamy in deriving the standing type Buddha/Bodhisattva images from the pre-existing Yaksha images or figures of Royal kings while she derives the seated types from images on Bharhut railings and more importantly from the seated Jina figures on the āyāgapaṭṭas. She opines that the Jina figures have not drawn from

the Yaksha-King figures at all. She holds the view that at Mathurā the community of Jainas was probably larger than that of the Buddhists as indicated by the fact that until now, especially from Kuṣāṇa and Post-Kuṣāṇa periods, more objects of art and inscriptions originating from Jaina sanctuaries have been preserved for us. Regarding the date of origin of the Buddha image, Van Lohuizen has favored the Mathurā school as she holds the view that the Buddha images are found at least half a century, if not a whole century, earlier at Mathurā than Gandhāra. Van Lohuizen traces a chronological development of the images and points to an increasing Gandhāra influence on the images as time passes. She uses Jina and Buddha images comparatively in tracing a chronology of stylistic developments. She calls the period after the reign of Vāsudeva as Post-Kuṣāṇa period. She deals with the images bearing inscriptions with very early dates but with characteristics clearly pointing to a late style. For this problem she comes up with the solution that once having reached the year 100 in the Kaniṣka era, people counted steadily on, even after Vāsudeva's death, but the figure of 100 was omitted. This is seen to solve problems that arose regarding the stylistics of the image and the palaeography of the inscriptions on them. Lohuizen produces a number of Jina images with inscriptions with such dates. She holds that after Vāsudeva I all cultural life does not suddenly break off and begin again quite as suddenly with the arrival of the Guptas. She explains the intermediary stage by the crumbling of the large Kuṣāṇa kingdom after Vāsudeva I into a number of smaller independent states, mostly reigned over by dynasties originally of foreign descent. However, she points to a continuity in political life as well as cultural life, the latter being said to be proven by the unbroken sequence in art. Van Lohuizen has dealt with only the Buddha and Jina imagery in Mathurā of the Scythian period and left behind the plethora of images belonging to other sects of the same time. Consequently, the interactions between different sects and their impact on their visual imagery have been left unaddressed.

Benjamin Rowland has briefly discussed some Buddhist sculptures from Mathurā in his work without going into deeper issues[29]. Codrington's essay on Mathurā art consists of a general overview of the Mathurā school of art[30]. He considers Mathurā school as in line with the tradition of Bharhut and Sānchī. He throws light on Mathurā sculptures found in Sārnāth and Sānchī dating from Kuṣāṇa times, and in Osia of works dating from medieval period. He gives a concise account of the art works encountered in Mathurā ranging from railing-pillars with sensuous female figures

carved on them, cross-bars, medallions, colossal Yaksha and Yakshi figures which he considers as wholly Indian, to the Mat portraits to the Jaina and Buddhist works of art along with their iconographic details. He also throws light on the enormous amount of Jaina art works found in Mathurā. While he takes into account the Gandhāra influence on Mathurā art, he opines that the Greek origin of the Buddha image is doubtful on grounds of the clumsy handling of Indian motifs by the artists of the Northwest. However he holds that Mathurā sculpture is smaller and more confined than that of Gandhāra. He sees a decadence of Mathurā school with the passage of time. Codrington's work is again more of a general overview of the school and does not go much beyond it.

K.D.Bajpai, as the Curator of Mathurā Museum, had the opportunity to deal with art works of Mathurā and give an overview of it in his essay on the Kuṣāṇa art of Mathurā[31]. Bajpai too traces the antiquity of Kuṣāṇa art of Mathurā to pre-Kuṣāṇa times, mapping the sculptural tradition of the Kuṣāṇa art of Mathurā as a continuation of a tradition akin to those flourishing in Sānchī and Bharhut. Bajpai, at no point of time, displaces the view that Mathurā art developed in full swing during the supremacy of the Kuṣāṇas producing scores of images pertaining to Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, secular ones, and also observes that it became a centre from where images were exported to far off places like Sārnāth, Śrāvastī, Kushinagar, Kauśāmbi and Sānchī. This becomes an important observation for establishing Mathurā as a centre of art production from where images were dispersed to a number of places. Bajpai holds that Kaniṣka, being a Buddhist king, patronized the establishment of various statues, stūpas, chaityas and vihāras. Regarding the problem of the region of origin of Buddha image, Bajpai opines that the case of Mathurā claiming the origin is strong in view of the earlier tradition of making free-standing statues which are clearly the precursors of the Buddha images in similar postures. He also throws light on the vast amount of Jain finds, colossal figures of Yakshas and Nāgas, several goddesses and architectural fragments. Bajpai's work is also a bulk treatment of all the art finds. There is no attempt to arrange them chronologically.

Prithvi Kumar Agrawal deals with the surviving embellished stupendous railing pillars in his study[32]. Bringing to notice a flourishing school of art before the Kuṣāṇas set in, Agrawal presents to us a study of the exquisite figure- sculptures on these pillars. He highlights the beauty of these railing pillars with nude female figures richly

adorned standing on a crouching dwarf or demon in various poses. Apart from the description of these pillars there is little attempt to examine their place in time and their socio-political context.

N.P.Joshi is one art historian who had command over the sculptural material as well as the vast amount of textual data. Being employed in the State Museum services, his catalogue of Mathurā museum marks a very significant contribution tracing the historical development of the images. Joshi's work on Mathurā sculptures[33] is extremely significant as it marks a turning point by giving an overall account of the works of the Mathurā school from the beginnings to Post-Gupta period. He divides the art works into periods marked by the dynasty in power and formulates characteristics unique to each of them. His study encompasses art products of various sects that comprise Mathurā across many centuries. Hence he deals with Jaina, Buddhist and Brahamānical imagery along with the images of Yakshas, Nāgas etc. belonging to very early periods. Unlike earlier studies that mostly gave a general overview of the artworks, Joshi divides the works into different periods thereby roughly putting them in a chronology. It can, however, be said that he does not go deep into the iconographical development of icons of the different sects and thus remains at the level of a simple period-wise classification of images.

J.M.Rosenfield's work on Kuṣāṇa art is a laudable contribution in the study of Kuṣāṇa history and art[34]. As suggested by the title, Rosenfield takes into consideration art works produced in the entire Kuṣāṇa empire which, thus, bear a syncretic character reflecting influences from both East and West. A large number of coins, some sculptures, and inscriptions have been studied in this work. Rosenfield gives an extensive account of Kuṣāṇa history ranging from the legends associated with the rulers to their conquests for the extension of the empire. Deities on the coins of Kaniṣka and Huviṣka have been exclusively dealt with. Origins of the Śakas and Parthians have also been exclusively dealt with. The tradition of royal portraiture in the Kuṣāṇa empire has been discussed taking into consideration the Mat shrine and the temple at Surkh Kotal. The stylistic and iconographic aspects of the Mathurā imperial portraits have been extensively discussed. Rosenfield highlights the appearance of Kuṣāṇa figures as donors and devotees in the sculptures. The cult of the Bodhisattvas has also been briefly dealt with. Regarding the year of Kaniṣka's accession he believes that Kaniṣka acceded to the throne sometime between the years

110 and 115. He holds that sometime after Kaniṣka's death in about the twenty-third year of his era, a period of difficulties arose for the Kuṣāṇas. He points out that Rudradaman's Jūnagadh inscription of 150 A.D. that indicates that the Yaudheyas had driven across the main line of Kuṣāṇa communication from Peshawar to Mathurā gives a hint of a time of troubles for the Kuṣāṇas. He supports this with certain peculiarities and barbarisms in Huviṣka's coinage, and evidences that the Kuṣāṇa royal shrines at both Mat and Surkh Kotal were allowed to fall into despair before a period in Huviṣka's reign. He also takes into account the information found in *Hou Han-Shu*, a Chinese chronicle, that between A.D.107 and 113, the king of Kāshgar sent his uncle and retainers to the (unnamed) king of the Yueh-chih as hostages which he relates to Hsuan-Tsang's tale of hostages being sent to Kaniṣka of Gandhāra from tribes west of the Yellow river. After putting these stray evidences together he concludes that Kaniṣka would have ascended to the throne somewhere between A.D.110 and 115. Rosenfield's work focuses on the international nature of the Kuṣāṇa empire and therefore deals which art works from the point of view of establishing this status. He does not go into the regional impact of the Kuṣāṇa rule. He mostly deals with coins. The sculptures dealt with are mostly Buddhist and not many. The enormous wealth of sculptures of different sects in Mathurā is totally unacknowledged, let alone the chronological development of these images.

S.K.Saraswati's *A Survey of Indian Sculptures* deals with Mathurā school of art in the context of a chronological development of Indian sculpture[35]. It, however, does not go into much detail and gives a broad account of image traditions of Mathurā. P.D.Mittal's Hindi book *Braj Ki Kalaon Ka Itihaas* is a valuable contribution to the study of Mathurā art[36], however, again it does not go into the detail of tracing iconographic development of the images. Grittli Von Mitterwallner has also contributed certain writings on Mathurā art. Her work on Kuṣāṇa coins and sculptures of Mathurā is a significant one[37]. As the title suggests, Mitterwallner has dealt with both the coins and sculptures of the Kuṣāṇas. Regarding the coins, she looks into the coins of each king with an attempt to trace the political situations and changes as reflected with the change in the ruler. As far as sculptures are concerned she deals with them one by one or in groups going chronologically, analyzing the stylistics, inscription, language, iconographic details etc. with certain information. She does not seem to have attempted to contextualize them and study them thoroughly in relation to prevailing circumstances. Regarding the first year of Kaniṣka's accession,

Mitterwallner puts forth approximately143 A.D. as the possible year. She proceeds with the supposition that under the earliest Kuṣāṇa kings, Kujula Kadphises and Vima Kadphises the "Bactrian Era" or "Eucratides Era" of ca.171 B.C., and the Azes Era or Vikrama Era of 57 B.C. were used. The Dewai inscription in Kharoshthi of the year 200 referring to the Azes Era[38] is of primary importance in her deduction of ca.143A.D. as the period of Kaniṣka's accession. The year 200 of Azes era would correspond to 143 A.D. She holds that several observations support the creation of this inscription in the time of Vima, among them being its palaeographic character which seems to be earlier than that of the dated Kharoshthi records of the time of Kaniṣka. Moreover, she points out that it is the last known suitable record with high numbers of years whereas the dated inscriptions of the reign of Kaniṣka are all characterized by strikingly low years. Therefore, taking into account this Dewai record of the year 200 (A.D.143) and the translation of one of the works of Sangharaksha into Chinese between A.D.148 and 170, Mitterwallner concludes that Kaniṣka must have ascended the throne in or very soon after A.D.143. As mentioned earlier, the drawback of Mitterwallner's work lies in the way she has singularly dealt with the iconic images. Therefore, her work lacks a thread binding the images she has very well discussed.

Prudence Myer has studied the Buddha and Bodhisattva images in Mathurā[39]. She primarily deals with the earliest representations of Śākyamuni as a Bodhisattva or Buddha and the issues related to them. She has taken into account the both the seated type and the standing type together with the sources from which their iconography is derived. She also looks into the possible early representations of Maitreya in a similar scale as the Buddha. However she has not attempted to contextualize the images into a chronological study and confines herself to mainly iconographic characteristics of the images. D.M.Srinivasan's edition *Mathurā: The Cultural Heritage* is an extremely significant collection of essays[40]. This publication is a result of a seminar entitled 'The Cultural History of Ancient Mathurā', sponsored by the American Institute of Indian Studies and held in Delhi, January 7-15, 1980. It focused on almost all facets of life within the town from earliest time up to and including the third century A.D. The book is divided into sections dealing with the historical geography, the political, socio-economic conditions, religious sects in Mathurā, archaeological finds, inscriptions, language etc .Scholars who have contributed their essays to this

publication are Roshan Dalal, Romila Thapar, B.D.Chattopadhyaya, R.S. Sharma, Richard Salomon, Shiva G. Bajpai, B.N.Mukherjee, J.E. van Lohuizen-De Leeuw, John C.Huntington, Alf Hiltebeitel, Kendall W.Folkert, A.K.Narain, A.K.Srivastava, Parmeshwari Lal Gupta, Sunil C.Ray, Jai Prakash Singh, D.W.MacDowall, M.C.Joshi, Jim G.Shaffer, Herbert Hartel, Gerard Fussman, C.Margabandhu, Umakant P. Shah, Ernest Bender, Padmnabh S.Jaini, Norvin Hein, Alex Wayman, M.A.Mehendale, D.C.Sarkar, T.P.Verma, Th.Damsteegt, R.C.Sharma, Ajay Mitra Shastri, Joanna G.Williams, Neelkanth Purushottam Joshi, Gritli.V.Mitterwallner and Doris Meth Srinivasan.

R.C.Sharma is another figure with laudatory contributions to the study of Mathurā art. He has produced many studies on the art of Mathurā. One of his significant works is that on the Buddhist art of Mathurā[41]. It has been considered as the first comprehensive account of the Buddhist art of Mathurā. It presents an overall perspective of archaeology, history, numismatics, epigraphy, literary traditions and foreigners' records. This publication incorporates several new interpretations and identifications of architectural terms and iconographic complexities. Sharma provides the readers with remarkable information in the form of a detailed chart of Buddhist establishments with relevant references along with a history of Buddhism in Mathurā as reflected in the Buddhist literature. He gives an account of the archaeological campaigns that have taken place in Mathurā. He also discusses significance of the pre-existing school of art before the advent of the Kuṣāṇas. The issue of the origin of the Buddha image has been discussed afresh with new facts. He also contextualizes Mathurā as a school of art and highlights its relation to other contemporary schools of art like Gandhāra, Amarāvati and Sārnāth. Sharma exclusively discusses the rare sculptural wealth of Govindnagar which is also the biggest known deposit of sculptures treating Buddhist themes yielding hundreds of Buddhist sculptures apart from others. A very significant contribution is Sharma's framing of the chronology of the plethora of Buddhist images in Mathurā from 1st century B.C. to late Gupta period. He takes into account stylistic, palaeographic and epigraphic analyses along with socio-religious, political and economic factors while working out a chronological development of the Buddhist images. As appendices to the book, Sharma also deals with the representation of jatakas in Mathurā art and the Kuṣāṇa art of Sanghol. Sharma's work is a remarkable contribution to the study of Buddhist art of Mathurā

and is one of its kind. However, Sharma's study is mostly centered on the figure of the Buddha and its chronological development. The development of the Buddhist pantheon could have been elaborated on more.

Usha Rani Tiwari has dealt with Mathurā school of art in her comparative study of Mathurā art with that of Sārnāth[42]. Tiwari's work is an outcome of her Ph.D thesis. This study claims to be the first serious attempt to present a comparative study of the sculptural art of Mathurā and Sārnāth, the two very important art schools of Northern India. The commendable contribution of these two art schools to the development of plastic arts has been valorized in this work. She has looked into the historical backdrop of the two centers, the development of the religious cults in the two centers, a comparative study of the development of art forms in the two centers in different periods along with a comparative estimation of the images of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas and narrative themes as produced at both the centers, the technique of works in both the centers, and the geographical expansion of both the schools from the Mauryan period upto the Gupta period. She highlights a number of facts. She points out that while Mathurā has been a religious and cultural centre since time immemorial, Sārnāth came into prominence because of its Buddhist association by being the place for the first sermon of the Buddha to take place. In Mathurā existed a number of religious sects like Brahamānism, Buddhism and Jainism, while Sārnāth was prominently a Buddhist seat. Mathurā also flourished as a centre of trade and commerce due to its advantageous location on the junction of important land routes of early India. Mathurā was also a meeting place for several stocks of people and being the eastern headquarter of the Kuṣāṇa Empire and nearer to Gandhāra it had a certain degree of alien influx whereas Sārnāth is devoid of such privileges. Origin of both the schools are also dealt with in her work. While Mathurā is known for its Yaksha/Yakshi cult from a very long time, vouchsafed by a good number Yaksha-Yakshi images, the Sārnāth School emerged with the court art of Ashoka characterized by the lofty monolithic pillars with surmounting animals or Dharmachakra. Tiwari limits herself to the Gupta period. Her work establishes the uniqueness of each of these two schools of art while at the same time brings to light the tendency of mutual borrowing of style between the two centers. Tiwari's study does not go much into the issue of iconographical development of the images.

Sandrine Gill has come up with a very interesting study on Mathurā art[43]. Gill has approached Mathurā sculptures from a formalistic perspective. She primarily deals with the dynamic nature of the anatomies of the sculptures. She points out how the multiple aspects of the deities are reflected by the "phantasmic" anatomy into which they are moulded. She notes how in order to represent the gods as superior and different from ordinary beings the sculptors gave them forms not constrained by the laws of human and animal anatomy resulting to images of gods with multiple arms, heads, fusion of two bodies, replacement of human head by animal etc. Gill's work is an appreciation of this sense of freedom seen in sculptures of Mathurā. She takes into account sculptures from the beginnings until the Gupta period. She divides her work into sections such sculptures with multiple arms, multiple heads and bodies, fusion of two bodies and replacement of human head by animal head. She has attempted to trace the beginnings and development of each category. She has also dealt with the reaction of European travelers when they first encountered such images. Gill confines herself to a formalistic analysis of the images and does not go much into the socio-political circumstances which would have lead to the making of such images.

One of the latest works on Mathurā art is that of Sonya Rhie Quintanilla[44]. She has dealt with stone sculpture from at Mathurā from 150 B.C. to 100 A.D.As suggested by the time bracket, the bottom line of Quintanilla's massive work is that Mathurā was already a flourishing centre of art production much before the Kuṣāṇa s came into the picture. Quintanilla directs our attention to the nature of scholarship on Mathurā so far and its tendency to sideline the period before the Kuṣāṇas especially Kaniṣka. She complains that although the importance of Mathurā as a prominent and influential religious and artistic centre from the time of the Kuṣāṇa period onward is universally attested by scholars, its status as such long before the beginning of the Kuṣāṇa rule has not been demonstrated. It is treated as if the art practices before the entry of the Kuṣāṇa s were either minor or no longer extant. Only disparate and preliminary studies of the earliest known works from Mathurā have been undertaken. Therefore Quintanilla in her book examines architectural fragments, bas reliefs, and figural images that she considers to have been produced before the reign of the Kuṣāṇa kings, spanning a time of nearly two hundred years from ca.150 B.C.E to 100 CE. She holds that Mathurā emerges as the most prolific region of sculptural production in early India producing large scale icons carved in the round, architectural pieces of various sizes and of various sectarian affiliations unlike any other site in the same period.

Regarding the beginning of Kaniṣka's era, Quintanilla refers to the recent works of Harry Falk and Richard Salomon which have come to the calculation that the first year of Kaniṣka's reign is likely to have been 127 C.E. Salomon attributes the year 279 of the Dast-e Navur trilingual inscription to the newly identified Yavana Era of 186/5 BCE, which yields a date of 92 or 93 CE as a year during which Kaniṣka's grandfather, Vima Takto was reigning. Therefore, by these calculations Kaniṣka's reign could not have begun before 92 or 93 CE. Instead the year 127 CE calculated by Falk using evidence from the astronomical text *Yavanajataka* has been considered plausible for Kaniṣka's accession. While she acknowledges the historical uncertainty of first century BCE to first century CE and the inability to postulate a coherent dynastic chronology of rulers from extant evidences, she has tried to trace a chronological development of art works that fall within her period of concern mainly on the basis of stylistic analysis and inscriptional evidences. The Jain āyāgapaṭṭas have been of considerable help in her exercise. As she establishes the existence of stone sculpture at Mathurā before the mid- second century B.C., she then goes ahead with its chronological development. The immediate beginning of her time frame i.e. circa 150 B.C.E is marked by similarities of the Mathurā school with the "Bharhut style". She has attempted to date the Bharhut style on the basis of which she would arrive at a comparative date for the Mathurā works. Her reference point is a significant piece of epigraphical evidence that might indicate that Buddhist monuments were constructed in Mathurā at approximately the same time as at Bharhut. She suggests that if the inscription carved on a railing post from Mathurā recording the donation of a railing with gateways by Dhanabhūti for the sake of honoring all the Buddhas (Fig.1; Appendix I.1) can be equated with the donor also named Dhanabhūti in two or three inscriptions mentioning the Śunga reign in Bharhut, then we would have evidence for a connection between Mathurā and Bharhut. From this, along with other evidences, Quintanilla proposes that Mathurā rose to some prominence during the time of the Sungas, namely ca.150 BCE. With a comparison with the Bharhut style she goes ahead tracing a chronological development in the stylistics of Mathurā art. Quintanilla's work is a significant contribution to the study of pre-Kuṣāṇa Mathurā art which had been more or less neglected so far. Her attempt to date the pre-Kaniṣkan art works is laudable. However, depending mostly on stylistic comparisons for dating these works renders the base of her entire exercise a little shaky.

Sima Roy Chowdhury and Shivani Agarwal have done interesting studies on Mathurā art as their M.Phil dissertations. Sima Roy Chowdhury's study[45] takes into account visual imagery in Mathurā from the second century B.C. to third century A.D. It takes into consideration the enormous terracotta finds, images of popular cults and the demotic art of Mathurā like the Mother goddesses, Yakshas, Nāgas etc., and imagery of the formal religious systems in Mathurā like Buddhism, Jainism and Vaishnavism. Roy Chowdhury's study establishes the existence of a diverse range of popular folk cults before they come to be subordinated by the formal religious systems. She has attempted to show the process by which the formal religious traditions gradually assimilated and marginalized the popular cults. She notes that when the formal religious traditions introduced image worship they usually used the images of the popular cults as their models which also helped them in getting supporters from among the popular cult adherents. She highlights the fate of these popular cult icons which once provided the prototype to the formal religions when the latter began to gain grounds. She brings to light that in such a situation a simultaneous process sets in where the popular cult deities are generally reduced to subordinate figures in visual representation. Therefore Roy Chowdhury's study is an attempt to reveal the richness and complexity of the character of the art of Mathurā in the period of her concern. She has aimed at showing the simultaneity of the operation of various factors in the visual culture of Mathurā, for instance, the use of same set of conventional motifs and motifs by both popular and high cultures, the incorporation of elements of the popular cults within the framework of the formal religious traditions, the subsequent tension between the two as reflected in art and the nature of patronage of the two groups. Roy Chowdhury looks into this simultaneity of these factors and at the same time the marginalization of the popular culture by high culture.

Shivani Agrawal's work is an archaeological study[46]. Shivani Agarwal's study takes into account the archaeological excavations in the concerned areas and the nature of utilization of the archaeological data in the deriving historical information from them. She gives an account of explorations and excavations in Mathurā and Ahichattra, terracotta figurines obtained from them and structural remains and other finds from these places. In her study Agarwal has explored the methodology through which archaeological data can be approached from different perspectives. She has argued that the earlier studies regarding the terracotta figurines have been one sided and therefore do not fully explain the nature and function of these figurines. She argues

that from the beginnings the studies in religion have been largely based on the religious textual sources whereas the role of archaeology has been almost negligent. She points out that archaeology was mainly utilised to corroborate the information that the texts provided and therefore was fitted into the scheme of events presented by literary sources. She brings to notice that the female terracotta figurines from the various sites of the Ganga valley suffered this fate as most them were considered as pre-historic manifestations of divinities that later emerged as Brahamānical goddesses in keeping with the celebration of the goddess cult in the Purāṇic literature. She also notes that in most of the archaeological reports these objects are not reported in association of their position at the site or region, but are grouped separately and discussed in isolation.

A brief overview of studies carried out on Mathurā school of art so far would be as follows. It is evident that the earliest works on Mathurā school of art was more of a colonial exercise than a genuine interest in knowing the art products of the school. It is apparent that much of the earliest works were carried out due to the need of documentation of the vast art materials that were being discovered. There is no doubt about the fact that there was also the interest in studying these works. However, the interest was rather one of studying the art of the Orient. It was from this perspective that the artworks of Mathurā were interpreted in the earliest studies by the colonial scholars. Therefore, the studies carried out were rather from a subjective than an objective point of view. The Hellenistic influence seen in the art works of Mathurā simply added fuel to fire. Because they could relate to the Greco-Roman influences visible in the artworks, every work was judged with the art of the Greco-Roman world as the yardstick. From this point of view, the art of Mathurā was considered plainly as a degraded version of Hellenistic art. They failed to regard Mathurā as a totally different cultural zone with its own art traditions going back to ancient times. With such a prejudice in the head of the colonial art historians, we could not have expected a sound study of the Mathurā school of art. However, at the same time, it is important to acknowledge the fact that the documentation, organization and preservation of the art works by the colonialists are an extremely invaluable contribution on their part.

Vincent Smith, J.Ph.Vogel and Alfred Foucher are the arch-colonialists who interpreted the art works in the light of the art of the Greco-Roman world. Euro-centricism is clearly reflected in their works. Therefore, it only seems natural that

their works are mostly bulk-treatment of the finds with certain general conclusions. Their works do not address the issue of chronological development of images, iconological issues etc. There is a preoccupation with tracing every motif to the Greco-Roman world, thereby totally ignoring the regional art traditions.

The above perspective has been completely rejected by Anand Coomaraswamy. Coomaraswamy brings to fore the ancient Indian art traditions which evidently provided the prototypes when there was need. He establishes certain unique qualities of Indian art which are alien to the outsiders. Stella Kramrisch also represents a similar school of thought, though both of them can be differentiated in certain other ways. The works of these two scholars formed the base for the later scholars to come who also focused on the ancient Indian traditions. V.S.Agarwal, K.D.Bajpai and the likes brought to the fore the eclectic nature of the art of Mathurā and traced their prototypes to the ancient Indian art traditions. Ever since, we have different kinds of studies on the art of the Mathurā school. While the art works of Mathurā tend to be seen mostly as products of the Kuṣāṇa period, recent studies have brought to light a rich visual culture in the pre-Kaniṣkan times.

Regardless of the drawbacks pointed out in the studies on Mathurā art so far, it is doubtless that all of them have brought to light many aspects of the school. The present study attempts to look into the Bodhisattva imagery in Mathurā from the beginnings to approximately 3rd century A.D. Before coming to it, the discussion first will be dealing with the origins and development of the Bodhisattva ideal and the issues around it. The discussion will further go on to the historical developments in Mathurā, its society, and the pre-existing as well as simultaneously existing visual tradition. With these background conditions, the Bodhisattva imagery in Mathurā until approximately the 3rd century A.D. will be analysed in order to understand the micro-developments at Mathura itself.

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CHAPTER II

THE BODHISATTVA DOCTRINE

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An inquiry into the origins of the Bodhisattva ideal necessarily leads us to the complex issues surrounding the origins of the Mahāyāna Buddhism itself. The Bodhisattva ideal is considered as fundamental to the very nature of Mahāyāna and in fact the very purpose of its existence which is also why the Mahāyāna is synonymously also known as Bodhisattvayāna. Therefore, it is important to engage ourselves with studies on Mahāyāna Buddhism and the problems encountered in it.

It is generally believed that Mahāyāna Buddhism appeared as a new phase of the religion about 2nd or 1st century B.C. Mr.Masao Shizutani[1], basing himself chiefly on epigraphical records and the dates of translations of Chinese versions, proposes to make a distinction between the proto-Mahāyāna, which did not claim the appellation of the "Mahāyāna", and the early Mahāyāna. He places proto-Mahāyāna in its incipient stage between100-1 B.C, the proto- Mahāyāna in its developed stage in 1-100 A.D, the early Mahāyāna in its incipient stage between 50-100 A.D. and early Mahāyāna in its developed stage between 100-250 A.D. It has also been suggested that the Nikāyas, dated about 487 B.C. and compiled from Buddha's discourses in the First Buddhist Council has definite traces that Buddha at the back of his mind, had the philosophical outlook of the Mahāyāna Buddhism[2]. The occurence of "Mahāyānic" terms like *sunnatā* (voidness, devoid of all attributes), *animitta* (devoid of characteristics) and *apanihitta* (absence of desire for wordly objects) in the Digha Nikāya and the Majjhima Nikāya and other instances are seen as reflecting "Mahāyānic" tendencies in the Nikāyas[3].

It is important, at the very outset, to look into the nature of scholarship carried out with regard to the Mahāyāna Buddhism. Jan Nattier brings to notice the biases that underlie the early scholarship on the Mahāyāna[4]. She notes that only few texts have been considered in defining the Mahāyāna while many other influential texts have been neglected and that an observation of the overall religious and intellectual framework in which the Mahāyāna Buddhist scriptures have been received in the West brings to notice that the "Mahāyāna Buddhism" has been interpreted and presented to the western audience on the basis of the few Sūtras that are the most widely known in the West such as the Lotus Sūtra, the Heart Sūtra, the Diamond

Sūtra, certain other Perfection of Wisdom Sūtras, the larger and smaller Sukhāvativyūha Sūtras and the Vimalakīrtī[5]. These texts are either among the handful of Mahāyāna Sūtras which are still extant in the Sanskrit, or they are extremely popular in contemporary Japan, or both. Nattier also brings to light the hegemony that Indic language texts exert in the field, due in part to the initial encounters of the European scholars with Sanskrit and Pāli scriptural texts that came with the discovery of the existence of both Pāli texts and Sanskrit manuscripts preserved in Nepal by the British colonial enterprise in India and Sri Lanka in the first half of the 19th century. Consequently, though researches on Tibetan, Chinese, and Mongolian texts were also carried out, texts written in an Indic language always exerted a certain hegemony also as a result of the western preoccupation with historical origins. Nattier also points out the prevailing notion that the Indian texts are the "originals" and the Buddhist texts in other languages (whether translations or local compositions) are simply derivatives of them, despite many texts in non-Indic languages predating the surviving Sanskrit and Pāli documents by several centuries. She also notes that the Sūtras that have enjoyed greatest prominence in the western presentations of Buddhism tend to be those that portray the Buddhist message in terms congruent with certain core western values, such as egalitarianism which, for instance, can be deduced from the universal potential for Buddhahood according to the Lotus Sūtra; lay-centered religion which is exemplified in the ability of the lay Buddhist hero of the *Vimalakīrtī* to confound highly educated clerics in debate; the simplicity and individuality of religious practice as seen in the centrality of personal faith in Amitābha in the *Sukhāvativyūha*, and even anti-intellectualism which can be deduced from the apparent rejection of the usefulness of rational thought in the Heart Sūtra, the Diamond Sūtra, and other Perfection of Wisdom texts. In sum, that certain sūtras have been highlighted above others not only due to the accident of their survival in Sanskrit or to their importance in Japan, but also as a result of their congeniality to contemporary western religious tastes. This brings to our attention that it is important for one to be aware of the nature of the scholarship that has taken place in order to keep away from clichéd conclusions that have been accepted as "representative" of the Mahāyāna Buddhism.

Studies on origins of the Mahāyāna have been thoroughly investigated in recent scholarship. The early presupposition of a sharp divide between the "Hinayāna" and the Mahāyāna schools has now been put under scrutiny by various scholars. Noting

the way Mahāyāna has been portrayed and perceived in standard scholarship Jonathan Swift observes that a fundamental presupposition underlies the understanding of the Mahāyāna Buddhism in which it is seen as one pole of a binary set in opposition to "Hinayāna", the small or literally inferior, vehicle, which is also denoted as Sectarian Buddhism, Nikāya Buddhism, Conservative Buddhism, Śrāvakayāna etc[6]. This, he points out, comes from the presupposition of first the existence of an older monastic Buddhism, thought to be conservative, closer to the source, which emphasizes a personal liberation from *samsāra* accessible only to the monk who can devote himself to intensive meditation practice, and so on. The Mahāyāna or great, superior vehicle, on the other hand, is assumed to be opposite in every way. It is portrayed as representing the rejection of the old tradition in favor of a new school with positive innovations, which are, at the same time affiliated to the original and authentic core intentions of the Śākyamuni's Buddhism. The Bodhisattva ideal is seen as coming to the rescue of those who have been neglected by the selfishness of the old monastic, world-denying search for escape. The Bodhisattva is thus perceived as the polar opposite of the Hinayāna monk, and this compassionate being must work tirelessly for the liberation of all beings.

Portrayed in this manner, Mahāyāna is thus perceived as a complete contrast of the "Hinayāna". Such a portrayal has been very much criticized in recent scholarship. Peter Skilling points out that forcing development of Buddhism into a binary 'Hinayāna/Mahāyāna' model is a fundamental distortion since the term 'Hinayāna' itself did not exist during the early centuries of Buddhism, and its referent never existed as a self-conscious historical agent[7]. The term, as we know, is derogatory in nature coined by the Mahāyānists. He rightly points out that it is consequently inappropriate to presuppose such a binary as though Buddhism passed from a Hinayāna period to a Mahāyāna period[8]. It is believed that most scholars formulated this sort of a binary on the basis of interpretations of remarks of the Chinese pilgrims who were travelling in the medieval period from Buddhist China to Buddhist India keeping records which report in detail the Mahāyāna or Hinayāna population of various monasteries in India and Indian Central Asia[9]. Yijing's definition seems to have played a very important role. In his *Record of Buddhist Practices*, dating from 691 AD, he gives a very crucial information which runs as follows: "Those who worship the Bodhisattvas and read the Mahāyāna Sūtras are called the Mahāyānists,

while those who do not perform these are called Hinayānists"[10]. This definition is of great importance in understanding the current issue and scholars have thoroughly examined it in order to come to its implications. From this definition Barth concludes that "there were Mahāyānists and Hinayānists in all or in almost all the schools"[11]. Barth's opinion of the Mahāyāna is that of a religious movement with rather vague limits which at the same time was an internal modification of primitive Buddhism and a series of additions to the same alongside of which the old foundations were able to subsist more or less intact. Przyluski held that each sect resolves itself in its turn into two distinct parts: one, the Mahayanist and the other Hinayānist while at the same time it is incorrect to negate the existence of aspirations, of dogmas which are common to all the Mahāyāna factions[12]. He also suggests that perhaps there was not a sole Mahāyāna that issued from one particular school and up to a certain point one could probably speak of a Dharmaguptaka Mahāyāna, a Sarvastivāda Mahāyāna, a Mahāsanghika Mahāyāna and so on. Therefore it would be incorrect to call Mahāyāna an autonomous body. He rather proposes to call the adherents of Mahāyāna as monks of the Mahāsanghika, Dharmaguptaka, Sarvastivādin and other traditions who undertake the vows and rules of the Bodhisattvas without abandoning the monastic vows and rules fixed by the tradition with which they are associated in the day of their *upasampad*. Such observations would make us question the basis on which one sect is different from the other. How different is one sect different from the other? Is it valid to understand these sects as associated to either the Hinayāna or the Mahāyāna as has been the case many a times?

La Vallee Poussin observed that the question of "sect" is a matter of Vinaya, of monastic discipline, and that the designation "school" is a matter of Abhidharma or doctrine[13]. Members of each sect were subject to a certain archaic Vinaya and these very members were adherents of the two schools, the Hinayāna and the Mahāyāna which were further divided into Sautrāntikas and so on. Silk, following La Valle Poussin, gives the term Nikāya as a translation of the term "sect"[14]. He defines Nikāya not by any doctrine but by adherence to a common set of monastic rules, a Vinaya. According to his supposition one enters a Nikāya or sect through a formal ecclesiastical act of ordination, an *upasampada karmavaćana*. The Sanskrit equivalent Silk gives for the term "school" is *vāda*. He defines schools primarily by doctrinal characteristics held in common by some who follow the same intellectual

methods but have no institutional existence. It is also held that the eighteen schools and the Mahāyāna exist within a single belief system as they accept the same cosmology and the same fundamental postulates (such as *karma*, *anātman*, *pratityasamutpāda*, the four *āryasatyas*), the same categories (such as *skandha*, *āyatana*, and *dhātu*) and cultivate the same practices (such as the thirty seven *bodhipakshiya-dharmas*)[15]. Therefore sharp categorizations to the extent of believing that one is a complete contrast of the other would be incorrect. The Mahayanist, in this way, could probably be distinguished by the worship of Bodhisattvas and the reading of Mahāyāna Sūtras as noted by Yijing which is done in addition to the veneration of the Buddhas and study of the classical Tripitaka in which way Mahāyāna only adds more to the old edifice[16]. It has also been suggested that probably the various monastic communities associated with different sects of Sectarian Buddhism distributed geographically over India produced different varieties of early Mahāyāna Buddhism and perhaps by the time of Nāgārjuna there was a certain kind of leveling leading to a more generalized Mahāyāna[17]. This suggestion is supported by the fact that various early Mahāyāna Sūtras, while having some characteristics in common, sometimes express radically different points of view[18].

While understanding Mahāyāna Buddhism does not seem to be an easy task, it has been very wisely suggested that the concept of Mahāyāna movements can perhaps be understood in the context of what is not Mahāyāna[19]. A near correct understanding would definitely entail avoiding sharp categorizations to the extent of perceiving a sect as a closed, non-interactive body with a unique set of characteristics. The use of terms like "Hinayāna" and "Mahāyāna" monolithically leads to ignoring the plurality of doctrines, goals, and paths as it has been noted that the category of "Hinayāna" includes even a number of "proto- Mahāyāna" schools (e.g., the Mahāsanghikas)[20].

Coming to the most important feature of Mahāyāna Buddhism, it has been agreed by many that the Bodhisattva doctrine originated in the second century B.C. It is well known that the word *bodhisatta* is very old and occurs in the Pāli Nikāyas and Gautama Buddha speaks of himself as a *bodhisatta* when he refers to the time before the attainment of Enlightenment. While this has been understood as the earliest signification of the word, Har Dayal suggests that there was no systematic doctrine as such till the middle of the third century B.C. when the *Kathāvatthu* was composed[21].

On the basis that the *Aṣtasāhasrika Prajñāpāramita* and the *Saddharmapundarikā* belong to the first century B.C. and they contain ideas of Bodhisattva's renunciation of personal Nirvana and the ideal of Bodhi respectively, Har Dayal infers that the Mahāyāna ideal of the Bodhisattva in its earliest form was definitely formulated in the second century B.C and hence can be taken as the chronological starting point. The possibility that the Hindu revival under the Śunga dynasty also played a role in it has also been pointed out. He also holds the view that the Bodhisattva ideal developed from the growing lack of concern of the arhats for the emancipation of the layman. He believes that the early Buddhism solely inculcated the double ideal of *arhatva* and Nirvana which began by Gautama Buddha converting his first disciples by preaching the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Way and laying stress in the transitoriness and non-substantiality of all the constituents of human personality. These disciples who were called *arhat* are characterized by certain qualities some of which pointed out by Har Dayal are the following. He is supposed to have (i) comprehended the twelve *nidānas*(causes); (ii) gotten rid of the five *nivaraṇas*(hindrances), sensuality, malice, sloth-and-topor, worry-and-excitement, and doubt; (iii) freed himself from the three "roots of evil":sense-desire, hatred and delusion; (iv) no craving for the five Aggregates that constitute human personality (form, feeling, perceptions, volitions and consciousness); (v) obtained the six *abhijñās*(super-knowledges); (vi) destroyed the ten Fetters (*samyojana*) of belief; (vii) freed himself from the threefold craving for pleasure, life and annihilation; and (viii) freed himself from the three *āśravas*("intoxicants", sins and errors) of sense-desire, love of existence and ignorance, and also the fourth supplementary *āśrava* of speculative opinion. An *arhat* who was thus liberated, knew that he would not be re-born since he had accomplished what was to be done. He had attained undefiled and final emancipation of mind and heart. Such an *arhat* also went forth as a preacher and taught the doctrine of the Buddha to the people as exhorted by the Master. Such, Har Dayal says, was the ideal of the *arhat*, as it was understood during the three centuries after Gautama Buddha's death. The monks then began to neglect certain important aspects of it in the second century B.C., and emphasized only on their own liberation from sin and sorrow. The Bodhisattva doctrine with the old gospel of "saving all creatures" was thus promulgated by some Buddhist leaders as a protest against this lack of true spiritual fervor and altruism among the monks of that period. He suggests that the later Pāli literature exhibits this tendency towards spiritual selfishness among the monks. For

instance, the *Dhammapāda* not only stresses on self- control, meditation and absence of hatred, but also exhibits an attitude of contempt for the common people and remoteness from their interests; the poets of *Thera-gātha* only strike the note of personal salvation and seldom speak of the duty of helping others; and the author of *Milinda-panha* declares that an arhat should aim at the destruction of his own pain and sorrow. Thus Har Dayal's understanding of the Bodhisattva ideal is against this background of a saintly and serene, but inactive and indolent monastic Order[22].

Basham believes that the word Bodhisattva is unique to Buddhism and that no such word or any word of similar composition occurs in the Vedic literature or the literature of early Jainism or Hinduism[23]. He opines that the concept in its original form arose in a purely Buddhistic framework, without influence from outside in its inception. It is important to not underestimate the presence of the Bodhisattva ideal in early Buddhism and one needs to examine it with a critical eye. We know that in the Theravāda, the Bodhisattva is virtually the historical figure of Siddhārtha and the term is generally applied to his previous lives as recorded in the Jātakas. From the fact that in the Jātakas of the *Khuddaka Nikāya* the word Bodhisattva figures at least once in each of the 547 stories, Basham infers a fully elaborate doctrine of the Bodhisattva to have been already developed in the Theravāda system[24]. The carvings on Bharhut stūpa railings are seen to reflect that the Jātakas, and with them the doctrine of the Bodhisattva, were important elements in popularising Buddhism. We already know that the concept of Bodhisattva was particularly associated with the Jātakas. Basham has tried to conjecture how popular folktales must have undergone changes to become Jātakas. He brings to light that the *Vinaya Piṭaka* contains specific instructions that a monk should not enter a village to participate in story-telling on themes of love, war, crime and adventure. The list includes most of the popular tales of India's rich folk-lore. He deduces that this rule pre-supposes that some monks had been listening to and repeating such tales, probably using them to stimulate the moral fervor and piety of the lay-folk and consequently this rule could have been promulgated by certain senior monks who were worried about the secularization of their movement and the introduction of popular elements in what began as an austere system of self-discipline. Therefore, the tales had to be given the seal of authenticity by attributing them to the Master himself turning them to the stories of his previous births where he had performed deeds of altruism and wisdom. Thus, according to his

deduction the collection of Jātakas was compiled, partly on the basis of existing stories and partly with new stories devised for the purpose to legitimize the practice of the monks telling edifying legends and fables in order to gain and maintain the support of the laity. Hence, says Basham, the concept of the Bodhisattva in its Hinayāna sense was born. He takes the doctrine of the Bodhisattva as it appears in the Theravāda literature, as an internal development of early Buddhism which appeared sometime after the Buddha's death and sees it as a product of a developed Buddhist church, when many of the monks were already settled in permanent monasteries and took pastoral care of a significant body of lay adherents. Basham brings in the deeds of Ashoka to be seen as reflecting a developed Buddhology and hence presence of the Bodhisattva ideal by the king's time[25]. Ashoka's enlargement of the stūpa of Buddha Konāgamana at Nigliva is seen to prove that the cult of earlier Buddhas was practiced at this time which would prove that a developed Buddhology had arisen by the mid-third century B.C. or maybe earlier. He points out that in Ashoka's inscriptions there is no specific mention of several basic Buddhist categories like Nirvana, the Four Noble Truths, the Eightfold Path, and the chain of Dependent Origination but the concept of Complete Enlightenment (*sambodhi*) is mentioned, and that the location of Ashoka's pillars shows that the sites of the Buddha's birth, enlightenment, first sermon and passing away were already revered as sacred places. Taking this into account along with the Jātaka illustrations at Bharhut, he infers that edifying stories about the Bodhisattva's earlier lives were already being told. Ashoka's Eighth rock edict, the inscription of which mentions that he set out for *sambodhi* is seen to imply that he had made some vow or resolve that he would strive to achieve full enlightenment. According to Basham rather than Nirvana, a concept nowhere occurring in the Ashokan inscriptions, his aim here is thought be that of achieving *sambodhi* or supreme enlightenment. This he links to the vow of the Mahāyāna Bodhisattva who did not strive directly for Nirvana but rather for *sambodhi*, employing the merit, wisdom and power he had accumulated for the welfare other beings. On this basis Basham traces a developed Bodhisattva ideal to Ashoka's times.

As we know, the term "Bodhisattva" occurs a number of times in the Pāli Literature in reference to the Śākyamuni himself before Enlightement and also in reference to the previous Buddhas. Samuels points out the occurrence of this term in a number of *suttas* in the *Majjhima Nikāya, Anguttara* and *Samyukta Nikāya*[26]. For example, in the

Mahāpadānasutta of the *Digha Nikāya*, the notion of the past Buddhas and hence past Bodhisattvas is elucidated. Samuels brings to notice that Gotama himself, after outlining the lives of the past six Buddhas, recollects the first buddha, Vipassi, from his life in Tushita heaven until he dispersed his monks for the purpose of spreading the teachings. Gotama not only refers to Vipassi up to his enlightenment as a Bodhisattva, but also takes the life events of Vipassi as an example for all future Bodhisattvas and buddhas, including Gotama himself. He also points out that there are also references in the Pāli Canon to the possibility of the coming of future Buddhas. In the *Cakkavatisimhanādasutta* of the *Digha Nikāya*, the Buddha foretells of the future when an Exalted One named Metteya, who is an *arhat*, fully Awakened (*sammasambuddha*), willing to lead gods and men will arise[27]. It has been suggested that the Mahāyāna doctrine of the Bodhisattvas may be derived logically from belief in future Buddhas and the belief in future Buddhas comes logically from the belief in the earlier Buddhas[28]. Samuels brings to notice that though Maitreya is the only future Buddha mentioned specifically, the possibility of attaining Buddhahood is not restricted solely to him[29]. For instance, in the *Sapasadaniyasutta* of the *Digha Nikāya*, Sāriputta has quoted the Exalted One when he says that in future times there will be other Supreme Buddhas equal to himself in the matter of Enlightenment. Samuels sees this as reflecting that the Bodhisattva-path was regarded as open to anyone who desires Buddhahood. He also points out that the Pāli canonical text of *Buddhavamṣa*, which comes a little later, has the Bodhisattva ideal developed to a great extent. Here, the Bodhisattva refers to an ideal personage who makes a vow to become a fully and completely enlightened Buddha (*sammasambuddha*) out of passion for all sentient beings, performs various acts of merit, and receives a prophecy for future Buddhahood. In addition, the Bodhisattva depicted in the *Buddhavamṣa* makes a vow to become a Bodhisattva only after the attainment of arhatship is reached. It is interesting here to note that attainment of arhatship is important here. Also it is pointed out that the need to complete a number of Bodhisattva perfections (*pāramita*) is found most clearly in the *Buddhavamṣa* and the *Chariyapiṭaka*[30]. In these texts ten perfections of a Bodhisattva are mentioned. It is also mentioned how the ten perfections maybe practiced at three different levels. This brings us to the three- tiered classification into "yānas" of the Buddhist spiritual careers before Mahāyāna came into the picture[31]. They were (a)Śrāvakayāna, leading to arhatship (b) Pratyekabuddhayāna, leading to Pratyekabodhi (c) Bodhisattvayāna, leading to

ultimate, full awakening (*anuttara-samyaksambodhi*). It is noted that the available scriptures of the eighteen schools allow all three options: it is one's own decision whether to become an Arhat, a Pratyekabuddha, or a Buddha and practice accordingly. That is to say that the eighteen schools embraced all the three '*yānas*'[32]. Then at a certain point, maybe around the first century B.C., groups of monks, nuns and lay-followers began to develop themselves exclusively to the Bodhisattvayāna which became the Great –Vehicle, the Mahāyāna[33]. This has been seen as the origin of Mahāyāna as a movement in the formative period of which is said to be from the second century B.C. to the first or second century C.E., when Buddhism spread rapidly along trade routes of flourishing empires, and confronted new cultures and ideas[34].

As we know, Bodhisattva-yāna has been identified with Mahāyāna. Samuels notes that Nāgarjuna was one of the first Mahāyāna Buddhists who identified the Bodhisattva-yāna with Mahāyāna Buddhism on the basis of Nāgarjuna's sayings in his *Precious Garland of Advice for the King* (*Rajaparikatha-ratnamālā*)[35]. Nāgarjuna asks, "Since all the aspirations, deeds and dedications of Bodhisattvas were not explained in the Hearer's vehicle, how then can one become a Bodhisattva through its path?". Nāgarjuna also states that "the subjects based on the deeds of Bodhisattvas were not mentioned in the (Hinayāna) Sūtras." Samuels takes these instances as suggesting that subjects concerning Bodhisattvas are found only in the Mahāyāna texts and are absent from all the Hinayāna texts. Another person to uphold a Mahāyāna- Hinayāna distinction based on Bodhisattva- śrāvaka opposition is said to be Asanga[36]. As illustrated by Richard S.Cohen[37], Asanga posits, in his *Mahāyānasūtrālankara*, that the Great Vehicle and the Hearer's Vehicle are mutually opposed. Chandrakīrti is yet another Mahāyāna thinker who is thought to have posited that the Mahāyāna and the Hinayāna are mutually opposed even as he uses the Bodhisattva-śrāvaka distinction to separate Mahāyāna and Hinayāna Buddhism as well as to promote Mahāyāna as against Hinayāna Buddhism[38]. These authors seem to clearly present Mahāyāna and Hinayāna as mutually contradictory and exclusive. Looking through the lens of these writers would make one really perceive it as so. One needs to be cautious regarding the extent to which they can be thought of being opposite of each other. However, this being said, the differences between the two also cannot be ignored. Skilling suggests that the vital difference between the Mahāyāna

and the Śrāvakayāna is not one of doctrine and rather is a matter of aim[39]. While a follower of the Śrāvaka method aims to become an Arhat; a follower of the Pratyekabuddha method aims to become a Pratyekabuddha; a follower of the Bodhisattva method aims to attain the supreme and perfect awakening of *anuttara-samyak-sambodhi*. Thus what defines Mahāyāna is its orientation which is his aim for the ultimate awakening out of compassion for the world of sentient beings. He also points out that the Theravāda description of Bodhisattva differs from that of the Mahāyāna[40]. A Mahāyāna Bodhisattva practices six or ten perfections, and progresses through ten stages (*bhumi*) to Buddhahood. They possess ten powers (*bala*). Theravāda has its own set of ten perfections, which are further developed in three grades rising hierarchically: *pārami, upapārami, paramatthapārami.* It defines three types of Bodhisattva, who progress to the Buddhahood at different paces. Skilling notes that these classifications are not known to the Mahāsanghika, Sarvastivāda, or Mahāyāna, and seem to be unique to the Theravāda. While these are the differences between the Theravāda description of the Bodhisattva and the Mahāyāna description of Bodhisattva, the fact remains that Bodhisattva ideal was very much there in the Theravāda practices. Thus rather than simply identifying the Bodhisattva-yāna with the various Mahāyāna Schools and the Śrāvaka-yāna with the numerous Hinayāna schools, it has been considered more appropriate to say that in the Mahāyāna Buddhism the Bodhisattva ideal is more universally applied, and to the Theravāda Buddhism is reserved for and appropriated to certain exceptional people[41]. Also while the Bodhisattva-yāna and the goal of Buddhahood continues to be accepted as one of the three possible goals by the followers of Theravāda Buddhism, the same goal comes to be viewed as the only acceptable goal by followers of Mahāyāna Buddhism[42]. Hence, it has been noted that the Bodhisattva ideal is not so much of an invention of a new type of saint or ideology, but it is rather a bringing into prominence of an already existing ideal[43].

Historical circumstances giving rise to the Bodhisattva doctrine have been discussed by scholars. Har Dayal regards the Bodhisattva doctrine as an outcome of the prevailing circumstances during several centuries after Gautama Buddha's death[44]. He is also of the view that the growth of *bhakti* was a crucial factor which led to the rise of the Bodhisattva doctrine. He proposes that *bhakti* was at first directed towards Gautama Buddha who became idealized, spiritualized and universalized later due

which he became an unsuitable object for the pious Buddhist's *bhakti* and this deep rooted feeling found an outlet in the invention and adoration of the Bodhisattvas. We are aware that many are of the opinion that *bhakti* originated in the Hindu sects and was subsequently adopted by the Buddhists. The Bhagavad Gīta is thought to have played an important role in the development of the ideal of *bhakti* among the Buddhists. *Saddharmapundarika* has been considered as being influenced by the Bhagavad Gita to a great extent. However, contesting this view, Har Dayal puts forth that Buddhism had its own independent genius which has been proved by their invention of a class of Bodhisattvas[45]. Har Dayal strongly suggests that the idea of *bhakti* was an integral part of the Buddhist ideal from the earliest times. In fact, the very word *bhakti*, as a technical and religious term, is said to occur for the first time in the Indian literature in a Buddhist treatise and not a Hindu scripture. He notes that the *Theragātha* speaks of *bhatti* and its verses are supposed to go back to the earliest period of the history of Buddhism until its final redaction took place in the middle of the third century B.C. He points out that the idea of *bhakti* is found in the ancient Pāli Nikāyas in the form of *saddhā* in the fifth century B.C which was a very important concept in early Buddhism. For instance, the Buddha is repeatedly declared to be essential for the spiritual development of the monks and the laymen and that a novice must "take refuge" first in the Buddha and then in the Doctrine and the Confraternity. He suggests that the Pāli Canon gives the impression that Gautama Buddha is the centre of the whole movement, and that the doctrine derives its vitality from his personality. These instances are seen to prove that the concept of devotion was there in Buddhism from the very beginning. Har Dayal holds that in the course of time Buddha became dehumanized and Universalised like a cosmic Law[46]. Consequently he ceased to appeal to the popular imagination as an object of devotion as he was no longer connected with the world of change and sin. Har Dayal draws an interesting parallel with how the Hindus could not adore the metaphysical *Brahman* of the *Upanishads* and needed deities of flesh and blood for their cult. He therefore deduces that the Mahāyānists consequently turned in their need to the earlier history of the Gautama Buddha, when he was not the remote metaphysical Buddha, but only a charitable, patient and wise Bodhisattva who had helped many people with his knowledge. He was a more humane and lovable figure at that stage of his career. Therefore the idea of Bodhisattva came to be chosen for worship and adoration in order to satisfy the needs of the devout and pious Buddhists. He also points out that

the Buddhists invented their class of saints who were the Bodhisattvas chiefly personifying the different virtues and attributes of Gautama Buddha's personality in a way that certain epithets that were applied to Gautama Buddha were taken up and converted into the names of some Bodhisattvas. The two chief Bodhisattvas, Manjushri and Avalokiteshvara, he says, are supposed to be personifications of Wisdom (*prajñā*) and Mercy (*karuṇā*) respectively. Maitreya typifies *maître* (friendliness). Some other Bodhisattvas owe their names to the adjectives that were first employed to describe the great Teacher. He points out that the Buddha is spoken of as "*samantato bhadraka*" and "*samantabhadra-kaya*" in the *Avadāna Śataka* and the *Lalitavistāra*; and we find that Samantabhadra is the name of a Bodhisattva. Even "Manjushri" is said to derive from *manju-ghosha* and *manju-svara*, as these two epithets are used to describe Buddha's voice in the texts like *Sukhāvativyūha Sūtra*, *Mahāvastu* or *Lalitavistāra*. Har Dayal also notes that the descriptive titles of the Hindu *devas* have been transferred to the Bodhisattvas[47]. Brahma is described as "*mahā-bala-sthama-prapta*" in the *Dasabhūmika Sūtra*, and as we know, an important Bodhisattva is called Mahāsthāma-prāpta. He also observes that preexisting cults of certain *devas* and deified heroes exercised a profound influence on the further development of Buddhism compelling the Buddhists to endow their Buddhas and Bodhisattvas with similar attributes and powers[48]. He notes that influences of the Bhāgavata sect, which was probably founded in the fifth century B.C., and inculcated the worship of Bhāgavat (the Adorable) as the supreme, can be traced in the figures of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. He brings to light various evidences of the existence of a sect of Vāsudeva-worshippers. For instance, the Vāsudeva worshippers are mentioned in the *Mahāniddesa*, Vāsudeva as a deity has also been spoken of by Pānini in his grammar, several inscriptions belonging to second century B.C., like those of Besnagar[49] and Ghāsundi[50] refer to the cult of Vāsudeva, and Megasthenes, who lived as an ambassador at the court of Chandragupta about 300 B.C. declared that the Indians worshipped Herakles. He has been quoted as follows: "This Herakles is held in especial honor by the Sourasenoi, an Indian tribe who possess two large cities, Methora and Cliesbora"[51]. Har Dayal supposes that Mathura being the centre of Krishna worship, Megasthenes must refer to Krishna when he says "Herakles". Such historical evidences are seen to establish the existence of a powerful bhakti-cult of the worshippers of Vāsudeva in centuries that followed the rise of Buddhism. However, it would be inappropriate to see the development of the Bodhisattva doctrine as an

impact of the so-called bhakti-cult of the worshippers of Vāsudeva. It would be more appropriate to see the emergence of the Bodhisattva ideal or any religious phenomena, in the light of the need of the followers of the particular sect rather than seeing it as a copy or an impact of the religious beliefs of a parallel sect. The Śaiva sect is also said to have been making progress during the same period and Har Dayal provides several instances[52] such as: (i) Śiva is praised in the *Mahabharata*; (ii) Patānjali mentions a Śaiva sect in his commentary on Panini's grammar which belongs to about 150 B.C.; and (iii) the Śaivas are also mentioned along with the Vāsudeva- worshippers in the *Milinda*[53]. The sect of the Paśupatas, who worshipped Śiva, is said to have existed in the second century B.C. if not earlier[54]. Megasthenes wrote that the Indians also worshipped "Dionysios"[55]. This Dionysios has been identified as Śiva. All these evidences are seen to point to the existence of a vigorous sect of Śiva-worshippers. These evidences of the Vāsudeva and the Śaiva cult point to the existence of parallel religious traditions in one space. Though there is no doubt that there must have been mutual borrowings between the many co-existing sects, it would, however, be incorrect to see one as to have totally influenced the other. As just mentioned, it would be more appropriate to see a religious development in a sect more so as a result of the needs of its followers.

It is believed that the revival of Hinduism under the Śunga dynasty in the second century B.C. made the Buddhists develop new methods of popular propaganda. Har Dayal quotes E.W.Hopkins as he says that the second century B.C. was a critical period in the history of Buddhism[56]. The royal patronage had ended with the fall of the Maurya dynasty in 184 B.C. and Buddhism had to fight for its life against the Brāhamins, who had taken the Bhāgavatas and the Śaivas into their fold. The arhats were becoming too meditative and inert. From this Har Dayal deduces that the nurturing of the ideal of Bodhisattva was a step taken by the Mahāyānists by inventing the compassionate Bodhisattvas as Buddhist counterparts of the Hindu deities and their incarnations in order to save Buddhism.

These being the internal factors, external factors are also considered to have played a part in the rise of the Bodhisattva ideal. Basham has pointed out the possibility of a common influence on both Buddhism and Christianity of proto-gnostic ideas emanating from the Middle East[57]. He refers to a passage popular in Judaism and Christianity describing the 'Suffering Servant' which has been interpreted by the Jews

to refer to the people of Israel collectively and by Christianity to be a prophecy of the passion of Jesus. This passion for the people has been pointed out to reflect a doctrine similar to the Mahāyāna one of transfer of merit and looking forward not only to the suffering of Christ, but also to the later Mahāyāna Bodhisattva who voluntarily undertakes to share the suffering of the world in order to save it. Basham also deduces parallels between Christianity and Buddhism. For instance he draws similarities between the parable of a prodigal son in both St.Luke's Gospel and the *Saddharma-pundarika*, the vision of the New Jerusalem in Revelation and the description of the glorious city of Nirvana in the *Milinda-panha* etc. Some of these he attributes to the direct influence of Buddhism on Christianity or due to borrowing from one another or due to influence from a common source which possibly is the Middle- East. The post-exilic Judaism and Christianity on the one hand and the mythology of the various cults of early Iran[58], such as Zoroastrianism, Zurvanism and Mithraism on the other hand, are suggested to have provided probable sources of inspiration for much of the mythology of Mahāyāna Buddhism. Basham also postulates a common origin in of the later apocalyptic Messianism of the Jews which culminated into Christianity and the concept of Maitreya Buddha in the Zoroastrian *Shaoshyant.* The belief in angels and Bodhisattvas are traced to the *fravashis* and *amesha spentas*[59]. Basham sees the whole Bodhisattva concept as bearing an Iranian tinge. He supports this by saying that the whole concept appears to have begun in that part of India which came under the dominance of Central Asians long in contact with Iran. If not a direct influence, he holds that the spread of the Iranian influence at least prepared grounds for the Bodhisattva doctrine by encouraging among people at large certain attitudes like expectation of a heavenly helper in practical difficulties, the hope for a great day in future when a divine savior would be instrumental in purifying the world, the ultimate salvation of all living beings etc. which Buddhism took care of as it spread in the Northwest, Afghanistan and Central Asia by evolving the doctrine of heavenly Bodhisattvas. Moreover, he also notes that during the time of the Buddha himself the Northwest parts of India, now Pakistan, were dominated by Iran. D.B.Spooner has also put forward arguments in favor of massive Iranian influence on India at the time of the Mauryan Empire[60]. Consequently the first century A.D., when western contacts with India were closer than ever before, is noted to be the period that saw the emergence of the developed Mahāyāna Bodhisattva doctrine in that part of India which was most exposed to influences from the West. However as we know that

the doctrine of the future Buddha and that of the Bodhisattvas can be deduced logically from the teachings of primitive Buddhism, looking at the Bodhisattva doctrine as having been deliberately borrowed from Zoroastrianism or any other branch of Iranian religion has also been suggested as incorrect[61].

Taking into consideration the historical circumstances, Basham considers the period between 200 B.C. to 200 A.D. as a period when in India the seeds of Mahāyāna Buddhism, Vaiṣnavism and Śaivism germinated and developed[62]. He gives us a picture of the socio-religious and political circumstances of these centuries. The fall of the Mauryan regime is said to have given way to smaller kingdoms which soon felt the weight of foreign attacks. The Bactrian Greeks occupied Panjāb, the Śakas penetrated as far as Mathura and Gujarat, and the power of the Kuṣāṇas under Kaṇiṣka was felt as far as Varanasi. Each of these conquests meant new battles, new hordes of barbarians, widespread misery and death. Basham cites the *Mārkaṇḍeya Parvan*, interpolated into the Mahabharata, to give an idea of how the times appeared to some orthodox brāhamins[63]. He cites a prophecy put in the mouth of the ṛṣi Mārkaṇḍeya, in which we are told of impure barbarians overrunning the holy land of Bhāratavarsha bringing around disaster everywhere. Basham suggests that such circumstances must have provided a fertile base for the growth of new religious concepts based on faith and devotion rather than cold metaphysics and psychologies of older Buddhism, Jainism and Upaniṣadic Hinduism. Men needed saviours which Hinduism provided to their followers in the form of Krishna avatar of Vishṇu and in the beneficent aspects of Śiva and in Buddhism the heavenly Amitābha, Avalokiteshvara and other Bodhisattvas, and the future Buddha Maitreya met the need.

These being the historical circumstances possibly giving rise to the following of certain iconic Bodhisattvas, Basham also suggests that once the doctrine of future Buddhas, especially Maitreya, became accepted, the way was open for faith in Bodhisattvas active in the contemporary world[64]. He points out that since each earthly birth of the Bodhisattva of the Jātakas was divided by very long periods of residence in the heavens, similarly the chain of being which would ultimately lead to the Maitreya Buddha would already be in existence, in all probability in the form of a heavenly being. From this he concludes that this far at least the evolution of the

Bodhisattva ideal of the Mahāyāna can be deduced from the earlier Theravāda Buddhology. He suggests that the cult of heavenly Bodhisattvas must have been in existence definitely by the time of Kaṇiṣka, the latest possible date for the beginning of the belief in heavenly Bodhisattvas being formulated from the larger Sukhāvativyūha Sūtra, which was first translated into Chinese by Lokakṣema, who lived from AD 147 to 186[65]. He suggests that by the time this text was composed, probably well before it appeared in China, something like the full Mahāyāna mythology, including belief in the heavenly Bodhisattvas must have been in existence.

In the course of several centuries the Bodhisattva doctrine underwent modification in its essential features. In the early Mahāyāna the Bodhisattvas are subordinate to the Buddhas; but they acquire greater importance in course of time with a cultic following. The figure of Avalokiteshvara has been seen as the epitome of rise in the popularity of the Bodhisattvas. Avalokiteshvara, whose compassion is exemplified, helps others to acquire Buddhahood, while he eternally remains as a Bodhisattva. Har Dayal, maps the change in the significance of certain Bodhisattvas across the centuries in the following manner[66]. He notes that in the early Mahāyāna, Wisdom and Mercy are regarded as equally important or rather wisdom is considered to be somewhat more important than Mercy. For instance, Manjushri, who represents Wisdom, is invoked in the opening verses of several treatises, and he is also praised in the *Saddharmapuṇḍarikā*. The glorification of Manjushri is seen to reach its climax in the writings of the Mādhyamika school which was founded by Nāgarjuna in the second century A.D. But the later Mahāyāna emphasizes Mercy more than Wisdom. It sometimes seems to ignore and discard Wisdom altogether, and highlight *karuṇa* as a quality required to be possessed by the Bodhisattva. Consequently, the importance of Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara rises till he becomes the supreme and unique Bodhisattva as reflected by the quest of *bodhi* (Enlightenment) being relegated to the background, while active altruism in this world of sin and suffering being regarded as more important. Har Dayal also notes that while the early Mahāyāna recognizes an oligarchy of Bodhisattvas, and eight are mentioned as a group of equal rank, in the later Mahāyāna, the oligarchy is changed into an absolute monarchy with Avalokiteshvara on the top and rest nowhere. He absorbs all the virtues, powers, functions and prerogatives of the other Bodhisattvas.

These being certain issues surrounding the cultic following of the iconic Bodhisattvas, there have been many studies on the origin of the Bodhisattva path as such. Many views have been adopted regarding the institutional basis, the social environment, and the cultic setting out of which the Bodhisattva movement grew[67]. There are diverse opinions as to whether the idea of the Bodhisattva vehicle was a product of a lay centered community of believers who gathered at stūpas containing the remains of Buddha as Hirakawa opines[68]; whether it developed within traditional monastic organizations as suggested by scholars such as Shizutani Masso[69]; whether it was a new form of practice which was a liberalizing "reform movement" as opposed to a more conservative sangha- which is a standard assumption[70]; whether it was a movement of certain Buddhists concerned with bettering the conditions of life in this world, or whether its proponents advocated even greater withdrawal from society than were their śrāvaka counterparts. In the following lets look into the various views held by scholars in a little more detail.

The Mahāyāna literature distinguishes two types of Bodhisattvas: lay and monastic. Coming to Hirakawa's view first, he is of the opinion that the Mahāyāna adherents were composed of an entirely different group of people from the Nikāya Buddhists and were predominantly laity[71]. They formed an organization called the Bodhisattva *gaṇa* which was different from the śrāvaka sangha. These adherents were brought together by the cult of the stūpa. Hirakawa argues that the Chinese word *miao*, used in early Chinese Sūtra translations to label the place where Bodhisattvas congregated, refers to a "stūpa-temple", while terms such as *seng-fang*, *seng-chieh-lan*, *ching-she* that occur in parallel passages in later translations of the same Sūtras refer to a vihāra or samghārāma[72]. This change in vocabulary, Hirakawa contends, reflects the gradual transition from an independent stūpa centered Mahāyāna community to later "monasticized"Mahāyāna organization. According to him monastic Bodhisattvas practiced at stūpas or at rude dwellings in the forest[73]. "These stūpas were generally situated in villages and were visited by lay Bodhisattvas who would give alms, worship at the stūpa, and receive instructions from monastic Bodhisattvas. The forest centers (*aranyayatana*) were situated away from the distractions of the villages and were mainly centers of meditation. Younger monastic Bodhisattvas would receive instructions in the practice of religious austerities and guidance from a more experienced member of the group who would act as preceptor (*upādhyāya*). In this

way monastic Bodhisattvas were organized in a fashion similar to that of the orders of Nikāya Buddhism"[74]. This opinion reflects his belief in a separatist nature of this practice. Hirakawa is of the opinion that the Mahāyāna doctrine would have made it difficult for Bodhisattvas to participate in orders with Hinayāna monks and lay believers because of which the Bodhisattvas formed their own orders. He is of the opinion that because of the great doctrinal differences it would have been difficult, if not impossible for the Great Vehicle and the Small Vehicle to stay together. He stresses that passages frequently appear in the Mahāyāna texts strongly cautioning against allowing Śrāvakayāna attitudes to arise. Citing a passage from the *Dasabhūmikavibhāsa* that warns the Bodhisattva against "falling to the level" of the Śrāvaka and the Pratyekabuddha Vehicles and describes such a fall as the "death of Bodhisattva," he concludes that people of the Bodhisattvayāna "abhorred" and disdained the Śrāvakayāna. He points out that the very fact that the Mahāyāna Buddhists referred to Nikāya Buddhism by the derogatory epithet "Hinayāna" would have made communal living and practice very difficult and moreover, since early Mahāyāna Buddhism was primarily lay in character, it did not have to depend upon the monastic orders of Nikāya Buddhism to survive[75].

Regarding Hirakawa's contention that the Mahāyāna emerged out of a stūpa cult and his argument in support that the Chinese word *miao*, used in early Chinese sūtra translations to label the place where Bodhisattvas congregated, refers to a "stūpa-temple", Nattier's refutation is that the hypothesis is based on a precariously small body of data[76]. Hirakawa cites only four sources (the *Ugradattapariprchcha*, an early translation of part of the *Avatamaśaka-sūtra*, the *Saddharmapuṇḍarikā Sūtra*, and the *Dasabhūmikavibhāsa*), and that only two texts can be identified in which a shift from *miao* to terms clearly meaning "monastery" can be documented. Besides, she puts forward her study of the *Ugradattapariprchcha* according to which the descriptions of events in it make it clear that we have here not a stūpa-based community, but a traditional ordinary Buddhist monastery. Therefore, at least in the *Ugradattapariprchcha* Hirakawa's contention that the "Mahāyāna"emerged out of a cult of the stūpa finds absolutely no support. On the contrary, the sūtra provides evidence in support of the opposite theory: that the Bodhisattva path was developed, as an optional religious vocation, within the confines of the traditional monastic community. Nattier also points out that in the *Ugradattapariprchcha* there is no

mention of groups of lay Bodhisattvas gathering at any place, for any purpose. Not a trace of anything that could be construed as a "congregational" community with mutual encouragement among Bodhisattvas of roughly equal status is seen and the only interactions between individual lay Bodhisattvas and other Buddhists portrayed in the sūtra are vertical relationships. The picture that emerges is not one of a mutually supportive community of Bodhisattvas, but of individual lay Bodhisattvas practicing more or less in isolation. Nattier suggests that because so many 20th-century Buddhist groups in the West and other countries such as Sri Lanka and Japan are congregational in character – stressing fraternal relations among equals and even, in some cases, meeting in the homes of lay practitioners rather than at temples or monasteries – there has been a tendency on the part of some scholars, especially Americans and Japanese to read this contemporary model back into earlier centuries[77].

Secondly, Hirakawa's contention that members of the Bodhisattva vehicle and that of the Śrāvakas could not have lived together seems to have been quite influential in the construction of the binary of the Hinayāna and Mahāyāna which scholars are now questioning. Nattier, in her study of the *Ugradattapariprchcha* brings to light that the member of the Bodhisattva vehicle is only one of several types of monks the layman might meet[78]. Therefore she deduces that being a Bodhisattva seems clearly an optional pursuit which also seems to conform to the picture provided by the information supplied by the Chinese travelers some centuries later: that the Bodhisattva and non-Bodhisattva monk could and did live together within a single monastery. The monastic community that this sūtra describes is such in which scriptures concerning the Bodhisattva path were accepted as legitimate canonical texts, but in which only a certain subset of monks were involved in the practices associated with the Bodhisattva Vehicle. Therefore the Bodhisattva path appears as an option elected by some members of the monastic community, while others continued to follow the traditional śrāvaka path. Moreover, she stresses that what is observed in the sūtra, however, is not differences in "doctrine and faith" but a difference in vocation[79]. So Nattier concludes that the difference is thus not a matter of religious affiliation but of the selection of a particular lifestyle among a number of such options – that is, of a vocation.

Among others who have dealt with the origin of the Bodhisattva path, Reginald Ray is

one who has put forth a theory according to which the Bodhisattva path emerged among forest-dwellers who devoted themselves to intensive meditation[80]. Ray too is of the opinion that the Mahāyāna arose outside the confines of the monastic establishment, but unlike Hirakawa's assertion that the laity played a key role he opines that the first Bodhisattvas were renunciants who were even more stringent in their religious practice than settled monks. Ray's argument presupposes a fundamental dichotomy between ordained monastics and forest renunciants. He is of the contention that a third category of the forest renunciants is neglected while much stress is laid on the standard "two-tiered model" which divides the Buddhist community into laity and monastics. He proposes a threefold model consisting of laity, settled monastics, and forest renunciants. According to him it is the forest renunciants who played a crucial role in the emergence of the Mahāyāna. He is of the opinion that the Mahāyāna from the very beginning was primarily a forest tradition, entirely non-monastic in character.

Ray presupposes three types of Bodhisattvas- those of forest, city and monastery. He provides us with many instances from a number of texts to prove that wilderness dwelling was privileged. He is of the opinion that though at a first glance it may seem contradictory that the compassionate self, self –giving Bodhisattva should be a solitary figure, withdrawn from the world, meditating in a remote forest hermitage this contradiction is only apparent. Supporting this he cites a passage from the *Mahāprajñāpāramita Sūtra* which says that though the Bodhisattva is physically secluded from others, his mind never abandons them and in his solitary retreat he practices meditation and gains wisdom in order to save others. Ray gives various examples to prove that the forest Bodhisattvas were an important lot in the evolution of the Mahāyāna. Of other instances, he cites fragments of Mahāyāna sūtras contained in the eleventh, or "Praise of the forest" chapter of the *Śikśāsamućāya*, attributed to the Buddhist monk Shantideva. Although such an attribution places the text in the eighth century, Ray suggests that much of the material it contains is taken from a considerably earlier time. Two of the sūtras that he cites are as follows. The *Ugradattapariprchcha Sūtra* says that the life of forest renunciants represents the normative Buddhist way of life for Bodhisattvas, "the Bodhisattva who has left the world must reflect that dwelling in the forest was ordained by the Buddha and therefore he must live in the forest; for thus there is fulfillment of the pure law". The

Chandrapradīpa Sūtra (*Samādhirāja Sūtra*) adds that none of the Buddhas of past, present or future have been able to attain their goal without leaving the world and following the solitary life of forest renunciation. It adds that the Bodhisattva cannot attain supreme wisdom while he is enmeshed in attachments and "follows the household life which he ought to loathe" and that terrified of the dangers of household life one should flee to the forest. Consequently Ray concludes that these texts take as their central ideal the Bodhisattva who is a saint of the forest. Ray also points out that in many ways the Bodhisattvas of the forest are not so very different from their Nikāya counterparts since all of them are motivated by a strong sense of personal vocation; all have renounced the world, and desiring tangible results, have retired to the forest; all aspire after realization, all meditate, and all are understood as, in one way or another, realized. The difference is that in the Mahāyāna texts the forest saint is now called Bodhisattva, not arhat or pratyekabuddha. Also the Mahāyāna sūtras more explicitly present the compassion of the Bodhisattva as integral to his type while in the Nikāya evidences compassion tends to be assumed, rather than explicitly emphasized, as a central part of the personality of the arhat or the pratyekabuddha.

Ray interestingly links the evolution of the notion of śūnyatā to forest Buddhism. It is well known that the term śūnyatā and its meaning are already present in the Nikāya Buddhism. Ray holds that a "proto-Mādhyamika" exists in the Pāli canon, precisely in the *Suttanipāta*, an early text reflective of forest renunciation. He also cites instances from the *Ćulasunnatā sutta* and *Mahāsunnatā sutta* in the *Majjhima Nikāya* both of which he considers clear representatives of forest Buddhism depicting the realization of emptiness as an attainment won by forest renunciants.

Nattier brings to light that though Ray successfully demonstrated that the *araṇya* plays a major role in a number of early sūtras, yet it is far less clear that in any of these texts the *araṇyaka* or wilderness-dweller, is being treated as belonging to a category separate from that of the ordinary monk[81]. This brings us to the very important point discussed earlier that sharp categorizations of distinct groups is certainly inappropriate. Nattier cites instances from the *Ugradattapariprchcha* which show that the wilderness-dwelling Bodhisattva was considered to be a particular kind of monk and that he is described as making occasional trips back from the wilderness to take part in the life of the monastic community, even as he is urged to return to the

wilderness as soon as possible. She holds that the repeated mentions of the conditions under which he may return to the vihāra, and how he should conduct himself when he does so, make it clear that despite his intensive program of ascetic practice which made him spend long periods outside the monastery, he remained within the orbit of monastic community.

We have also a school of thought that believes that the preservation and the cultic following of scriptures played a major role in the origin of Mahāyāna. Gregory Schopen posits the centrality of what he refers to as "the cult of the book" in a number of Mahāyāna scriptures[82]. He observes that a number of well-known sūtras promise substantial amounts of merit to those who read, recite and copy the texts. He argues that the adherence to Mahāyāna meant primarily adherence to special texts in addition to those recognized by the established orthodoxy, and proposes that the sites where such texts were taught could possibly have formed one of the institutional bases out of which early Mahāyāna arose. Schopen also goes on to suggest that the early Mahāyāna, far from being a single identifiable group, was in the beginning a loose federation of a number of distinct though related cults, all of the same pattern, but each associated with a specific text". Another scholar who agrees to this view is Richard Gombrich. Gombrich has even suggested that the rise of the Mahāyāna is due to the use of writing[83]. He in fact argues that it was the introduction of writing that allowed Mahāyāna scriptures to be preserved, while in an earlier period such deviant texts would not have survived.

Nattier agrees that the reading, reciting, and copying of particular Mahāyāna scriptures played an important cultic role in the Indian Buddhism, and that the communities that formed around such texts were multiple[84]. She supports Schopen's contention that each text places itself at the centre of its own cult. She also supports Gombrich's suggestion that the introduction of writing introduced important new dynamics into the practice of Buddhist scriptural transmission. However she is not convinced that the cult of the book played a role in the initial emergence of the Mahāyāna and opines that the Mahāyāna does not begin with the cult of the book, but rather culminates in it at a certain point[85]. She points out that though references to reading and reciting a particular scripture as a central source of merit are quite common in Mahāyāna literature, a number of early Mahāyāna scriptures seem not to

know of such a practice and that the *Ugra* is one such text. She puts forth that the Mahāyāna Sūtras are the precipitate and not the initial cause of Bodhisattva practice. She brings to notice that the earliest Mahāyāna scriptures already take the Bodhisattva path for granted, and a book-centered cult is added at a slightly later stage. Therefore she suggests that one must look into earlier traditions as possible sources of inspiration and holds that the Jātaka tales and the closely related Avadāna literature are the obvious sources of inspiration for the later culmination of the cult of the book and one can see in them the Mahāyāna in its formative stage.

As we have seen, the Bodhisattva vehicle is central to Mahāyāna Buddhism. However it is also evident that the Bodhisattva path is not an invention of Mahāyāna Buddhism. It is rather a coming to the fore of a pre-existing practice. Therefore it calls for extreme care in making categorical conclusions if at all that is possible. Consequently, in more recent studies scholars have come up with evidences defying certain assumptions regarding Mahāyāna Buddhism and therefore the Bodhisattva vehicle. Schopen has brought to light that inscriptions that refer to the Mahāyāna by name are only found from the 6th century though reference to Mahāyāna under another name is found in inscriptions from the 4th century A.D[86]. He suggests it appears therefore, that the group that we are in the habit of calling the Mahāyāna apparently came to use that name epigraphically only very gradually and rather late and that if this conclusion is accepted then it can be said that what we call the Mahāyāna did not begin to emerge as a separate and independent group until the 4th century. While such a possibility would question the existence of an early distinct sect called Mahāyāna, distinct enough to deserve a mention in the inscriptions, at the same time these evidences should not be taken to imply that when Mahāyāna came to being, it brought along a whole new world of thoughts and beliefs. Therefore, while on the basis of these inscriptions it can be said that the term "Mahāyāna" as such appears in inscriptions in a much later period, however the philosophy behind it is cannot be considered as new as the term "Mahāyāna". Its ideas and beliefs go back to those of the Mahāsanghikas who are universally believed to be the earliest forerunners of the Mahāyāna. The antiquity of the Mahāsanghikas goes back to a very early period. It is said that the monks who deviated from the orthodox views in the Second Council which led to the well-known schism, later came to be called the Mahāsanghikas[87]. The Mahāvastu is supposed to be the original work of the Mahāsanghika available to us[88]. The

underlying belief is that Buddhas are *lokottara* (supramundane) and are connected only externally with the worldly life. This conception of the Buddha is understood to have contributed much to the growth of the Mahāyana. Inscriptions of the Kuṣāṇa period mentioning the Mahāsanghikas are found in Mathurā. The pre-Kanishkan Lion Capital inscription in Mathurā recording that a teacher named Budhhila was given a gift so that he might teach the Mahāsanghikas, is supposed to be the earliest epigraphic evidence that the Mahāsanghika sect existed[89]. Therefore, with such evidences of a strong base of Mahāsanghikas, the appearance of Mahāyana can be viewed as a natural consequence. So, though we have inscriptions mentioning Mahāyana coming from a much later period, the underlying philosophy goes back to much earlier times.

The picture of Mahāyāna has come under certain reconsiderations. Certain notions that were attached to the Mahāyāna Buddhism have been attacked. A correct understanding of it would perhaps mean freeing oneself of these ideas that have so far been considered as representative of it. Not that these ideas are untrue, but that there are other facts too which have not received due attention. Nattier, in her study of the *Ugradattapariprchcha* brings to light evidences that shake standard beliefs regarding the Bodhisattva ideal. For instance, the belief that the very use of the term Mahāyāna points to the emergence of the Bodhisattva "movement" as a separate institution or organization seems to be disproved by evidences provided by the *Ugradattapariprchcha* that locate the vocation of the Bodhisattva squarely within the larger Buddhist, mostly śrāvaka community[90]. Also what is noteworthy in Nattier's observation is that the lay Bodhisattva is portrayed in the text in terms consistent with the traditional role of the *upāsaka* and the renunciant Bodhisattva appears in the *Ugradattapariprchcha* as a particular type of monk[91]. Such an observation reinforces the view that the "Bodhisattvas" so to say, were not a unique body of people with distinct characteristics, and helps demystify romantic notions attached to them. Nattier has also suggested that it is inappropriate to have a standard notion of a Mahāyāna text followed by the Bodhisattvas and that at least the *Ugradattapariprchcha* contains no information on whether all reciters of the Bodhisattva-pitaka were themselves Bodhisattvas or for that matter, whether all Bodhisattvas participated in the memorization and transmission of such texts. Therefore assuming a complete identity of the two groups would probably be incorrect though doubtless there was

considerable overlap between the two. She cites instances from the *Aṣtasāhasrika-Prajñāpāramita* and the *Akshobhyavyūha–Sūtra*. In the *Aṣtasāhasrika – Prajñāpāramita* one finds references to Bodhisattvas who did not accept the Perfection of Wisdom Sūtras as legitimate. The *Akshobhyavyūha-Sūtra* too recommends that members of the Śrāvakayāna as well as the Bodhisattvayāna listen to and recite this text and promises that by doing so they will be able to attain Arhatship quickly, perhaps even within this very life. Therefore, she concludes that what the Mahāyāna scriptures provide is a kaliedoscopic assortment of combinations of the presence and absence of elements that until now have been widely-but-wrongly grouped together as essential components of the "Mahāyāna"[92]. Thus one finds one scripture (the *Akshobhyavyūha*) that advocates both śrāvaka and Bodhisattva practice, propounds the possibility of rebirth in a pure land, and enthusiastically recommends the cult of the book, yet seems to know nothing of emptiness theory, the ten *bhūmis*, or the *trikāya*, while another propounds the ten *bhūmis* and focuses exclusively on the path of the Bodhisattva, but never discusses the *pāramitas*, *Mādhyamika* treatise (Nāgarjuna's *Mūlamādhyamika-kārikas*) may enthusiastically deploy the rhetoric of emptiness without ever mentioning the Bodhisattva path and so on. So Nattier holds that one must be prepared, in other words, to encounter a multiplicity of the Mahāyānas flourishing even in India, not to mention those developed in East Asia and Tibet.

Therefore, it is clear that a valid understanding of the Bodhisattva path would entail an accommodation of diverse facets. This would also lead to a better understanding of the visual imagery and its significance.

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87. Bapat, P.V., *2500 Years of Buddhism*, New Delhi, 1956, pp.87-99.

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92. Ibid., p.191.

CHAPTER III

BACKGROUND

CHAPTER-III

BACKGROUND

In this chapter I will first deal with the historical geography of the region followed by an account of the archaeological campaigns that have taken place so far. This will be followed by the political history of Mathurā till the Kuṣāṇa period, nature of its society, and the visual traditions of the region.

3.1. HISTORICAL GEOGRAPHY

Mathurā, the headquarter of the Surasena Janapada, falls in Madhyadeśa, the pivot of Āryavarta[1]. Every power with an ambition to rule India gravitated to control it thus forming a part of "perennial nuclear region" or what is known as "areas of attraction" as compared to "areas of relative isolation"[2].The Mathurā district is the north-western district of the Agra division. It is located between Lat.27° 14' and 27° 58'N and Long.77° 17' and 78° 12'E and covers an area of approximately 3,800 square kilometers[3]. The Yamuna flows through the centre of the district. The Yamuna has frequently changed course in this region[4]. Therefore the location and identification of sites would be dependent on the study of change of course at a particular period. East of the Yamuna i.e. the Trans Yamuna tract comprises of the Tahsils of Mat and Sadabād and is part of the Gangā-Yamunā Doab. West of the Yamunā, the Cis-Yamunā tract includes the Tahsils of Chhata and Mathurā and lies at a higher level than the eastern tract. Mathurā is a conglomeration of sites important amongst which are Bhūteshwar mound, Pālīkherā, Kankālī Tīlā, Gāyatri Tīlā, Jamālpur mound, Ganeshrā, Katrā-Keshavadeva mound, Saptarshi Tīlā, Girdhārpur, Maholī, Māṭ, Mahāban, Morā, Isāpur, Govardhan, Ānyor, Sonkh, Bajnā, Tārsi, Usphar, Chhārgaon, Chaubārā mounds and Govindnagar.

As it is well known, Mathurā has been a prominent region in the Indian subcontinent. Its easy access to what has been called the Gateway of the doab, formed by the Himalayan ranges to the north-west and the Thar desert and outliers of the Arāvalli system to the south-west has been considered favorable for much of the movement around it[5]. South-east of Mathurā is also located on a curve of the river Yamuna, and is a central point of entry into the Doab. Such a position has been held responsible for numerous routes passing through the Mathurā region[6]. Routes from the North-west cross Mathurā in order to proceed both eastwards and southwards; others from the

Doab to the north-west and south-west, and with the Doab and districts further east. Such was the location of Mathurā which made it a nodal point of communication giving it a position of control both economically and politically[7].

Excavations have shown that the main city of Mathurā consisted of the Dhūlkot fortifications which enclosed an area of three square kilometers adjacent to the river Yamuna within and in close proximity of which more than ninety sites have been found with sculptures and inscriptions[8]. West of the city, sites are more numerous in Mathurā Tahsil, extending into the south of Tahsil Chhata where Kuṣāṇa sites numbering up to forty have been located[9].

3.2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL CAMPAIGNS IN MATHURĀ

A chance discovery made by L.R.Stacy in 1836 of the so-called Silenus sculpture and a railing pillar with a lady mounting on a dwarf and holding a cage with a bird[10] attracted the attention of researchers in Indology who, thereafter, started exploring the sites a Mathurā. Since the department of archaeology was not yet born it was left on the individual scholars to carry out whatever course of action they wanted. It is said that the travel accounts of the Chinese pilgrims lured General Cunningham to take up excavations at Mathurā. He took up the site of Kaṭrā which went on to reveal numerous Buddhist remains. Cunningham's explorations brought to light that the mosque at the site of Kaṭrā Keshava Deva was built after the destruction of the temple of Keshava Rai in the reign of Aurangzeb. In 1853 regular explorations were started which continued in 1862. In 1853 when Cunningham carried out his first exploration in Kaṭrā he discovered a number of capitals and pillars. An important discovery was a fragmentary inscription recording the genealogy of Gupta kings up to Samudragupta[11]. In 1862 when he resumed his exploration a number of architectural and sculptural fragments were discovered. But the most important discovery was a beautiful standing image of the Buddha recording the year 230 installed by a nun Jayabhatta in the monastery known as Yaśā vihāra. From the inscription it has been suggested that the year mentioned is a Gupta year[12]. In that case it has been suggested that the site of Kaṭrā was under the control of the Buddhist church till the end of the sixth century A.D. The image being discussed is presently housed in the Lucknow Museum (No.B.10).When the Jamālpur mound or Jail mound was leveled up for the construction of the building of the present Collectorate in 1960, the site revealed numerous architectural fragments. From the epigraphs of the pedestals that were

discovered we get to know of the existence of a monastery known as Huviṣka vihāra[13], and a shrine dedicated to DadhikarnaNāga[14]. The most remarkable find was more than life-size image of the Buddha by the sculptor Dinna as indicated by the inscription. The sculpture is now housed in the Mathurā Museum (No.A.54).

In 1869 Dr.Bhagwanlal Indraji made two important discoveries. The first was a life size female statue which he excavated at Saptarshi Tīlā. It was sent to the Lahore Museum together with all other Gandhāra sculptures in the Delhi collection. The image is remarkable in that it has both its style and material of which it is made like those of Gandhāra images which is of great importance in the history of Buddhist art. Not far from this mound, Dr.Bhagwanlal discovered the famous lion capital with its eighteen Kharoshthi inscriptions of the time of the Kshatrapas. The capital is now in the British Museum, London.

In Cunningham's fourth archaeological campaign that commenced on November 1871 he excavated Kankālī Tīlā and Chaubārā mounds. Kankālī Tīlā yielded several Jaina images, partly inscribed, as well as portions of railings. In the course he discovered twelve inscriptions which date from the year 5 of Kaṇiṣka's reign to the year 98. The Bhūteshwar mound, situated between Kaṭrā and Kankālī Tīlā and named after the temple of Bhūteshwar, at the back of which it is situated, produced a large railing pillar carved with the figure of a female parasol bearer over which is a bas relief apparently referring to a some jātaka. It is now in the Mathurā museum. Near the site, in the verandah of a native rest-house Cunningham discovered five railing pillars[15]. On the obverse of each is a female figure standing on a prostrate dwarf; above is shown a balcony over which are seen pairs of figures in various attitudes. Cunningham discovered more broken pillars. Two of these are now in Mathurā museum, two in the Indian Museum and one in Lucknow museum. About the same time Cunningham excavated the Chaubārā mounds, 3 miles south-west of Kaṭrā from where a gold relic casket and copper ceit was found. From other mound a steatite vase for relics was discovered and is now in the Indian Museum. The third mound produced a remarkable Persepolitan pillar capital depicting four human-faced animals with horns. This pillar too has been placed in the Calcutta museum (No.M.14)[16]. Another mound in Chaubārā produced fragments of huge images[17]. After Cunningham the Chaubārā mounds and its vicinity were explored by Growse from where several sculptural and architectural pieces were discovered. He also discovered

many sculptural finds from Maholī and Pālīkherā. The Bacchanalian group, showing a pot-bellied man with a cup in his hand on one side and his intoxicated helpless state on the other, was acquired from Pālīkherā(GMM.No.C.2).

F.S.Growse's taking over as Collector of Mathurā district was a turning point in the history of collection of the antiquarian remains discovered so far. Frequent discoveries posed the problem of the safe custody and the maintenance of the same as no steps were taken to preserve them. Their fate lay at the mercy of the excavator or whosoever found them which led to a loss of hundreds of them. Growse, realizing the necessity of housing the available objects founded a museum in an unused guest-house near the Collectorate building in 1874 which was later shifted to the present building in 1930[18]. However, despite this, Cunningham sent several sculptures from Calcutta to Mathurā in 1882.

A.Fuhrer undertook a vast archaeological campaign at the site of Kankālī in the years 1888-91 which resulted in the discovery of hundreds of images and architectural fragments, mostly Jaina in character and ranging from about second century B.C. to twelfth century A.D. The result of this excavation is seen to prove the existence of at least two Jaina stupas at Kankālī[19]. All the antiquities discovered in this excavation were moved to Lucknow Museum as Fuhrer was the Curator there and nobody was at Mathurā to look after the museum after Growse's transfer. This makes Lucknow Museum the owner of a huge collection of Mathurā art. Fuhrer excavated the Kaṭrā mound in 1896. After fourteen years Radha Krishna, Asssitant Curator of Mathurā of Mathurā Museum, started the collection of antiquities for the Mathurā Museum at a large scale in 1909. Later in 1912 Radha Krishna excavated the Iṭokri mound at Mat and discovered the well known Kuṣāṇa royal portraits of Vima Kadphises, Kaṇiṣka and Caṣṭana which are of great significance[20]. Radha Krishna got several wells cleaned in Mathurā town and the adjoining region leading to the collection of almost 600 sculptures. In 1953 M.Venkat Ramayya and Vallabh Saran of the Archaeological Survey of India conducted the first systematic excavation of Kaṭrā site. The report of this excavation has not yet been published. A brief note appeared in the Indian Archaeology-1954-55, A Review, pp.15-16.

Several instances of leveling and digging in Mathurā for construction purposes or otherwise have led to the discovery of many objects including sculptures, architectural fragments etc. Thirty-eight such sculptures were discovered in 1954 when K.D.Bajpai

was the Curator. Bajpai also conducted small scale operations at different sites and acquired some antiquities for the Museum.

One of the most significant campaigns was carried out by Herbert Hartel, Director of Indian Art Museum, Berlin and Professor in Freien University at Sonkh, about 22 km north-west of Mathurā. The excavation commenced in the year 1966, continued for eight years and was wound up in 1974. The report of this excavation was recently published from Berlin but the main features were discussed by Hartel in his preliminary report[21]. Digging vertically from top to bottom, the excavators found 40 layers of the whole deposit. Some coins of Shahjahan, Akbar and Sher Shah Suri, besides very fine quality of thin glazed porcelain and a few glass and shell objects were gathered. Small grey stone plaques with Brahamānical deities particularly Sūrya and Vishṇu dateable in the late medieval period were found. The site seems to have been neglected during the Gupta era as the contemporary remains are few. A significant discovery from the Kuṣāṇa level is an apsidal shrine with a circumambulatory path. A stone stele bearing a figure of a seated Mātrika was also recovered from the shrine. This shrine is a remarkable discovery of the Sonkh excavations and can be seen as the earliest structure reminiscent of a Hindu temple. A vase containing about a hundred and twenty copper coins from the reign of Vāsudeva I to Kaṇiṣka III is also a notable discovery from these layers. It can be deduced that the residents of this site in this period were primarily followers of Brahamānism (Hinduism) as reflected by discovery of several small statuettes of Vishṇu, Skandha, Kubera, Mahishāsuramardini, Durga and Mother Goddesses. The cult of Skandha Kārtikeyya and Mātrika appears to have been more popular. A number of pottery remains of this period have also been discovered. Another extremely significant discovery of this excavation is the discovery of a number of bronze figures Brahamānical in nature. These are the earliest bronze figures from this region and are the oldest Brahamānical bronzes in India. This discovery is of considerable significance. Another interesting discovery was that of a Nāga shrine 400 metres north of the main excavation site, presently known as Cāmaradevi. Excavations revealed an old apsidal shrine with distinct phases of Sūryamitra level and Kuṣāṇa level. From the repeated discovery of serpent figures or their anthropomorphic representations it has been deduced that the shrine was an abode of a Nāga deity and as such the earliest Nāga temple in India.

Excavations at the main site further revealed several interesting objects belonging to the Kuṣāṇa period. Further deep, coins of Kshatrapa and Mitra kings were recovered which went on to play a very significant role in the fixing of chronology of various kings of the pre-Christian era. The finds indicate that the Kuṣāṇas were preceded by the Kshatrapas and Dattās. Then we have evidences of Mitra rulers. Besides coins we have interesting finds from the second-first century B.C. layers like terracotta objects, noteworthy among which is a votive tank with seven females sitting on the bottom, each carrying a bowl. From this, Hartel deduces the worship of saptamātṛkas or ashtamātṛkas this early in time. In the Mauryan layers were found a few shining black polished pottery pieces (NBP), fragmentary grey colored terracotta representing mother goddesses etc. The lower layers revealed Black and Red Ware beginning from about fourth century B.C. and continuing with the Painted Grey Ware which is the earliest type of ceramic from Sonkh. The objects discovered from Sonkh excavations were deposited with the Mathurā Museum in 1974 whereas few of them were made over to the excavation team for permanent exhibition in the Indian Art Museum, Berlin.

Immediately on or just before the winding up of Sonkh excavations the Archaeological Survey of India started excavations at different sites in the Mathurā city under the supervision of M.C.Joshi. The main intention of the excavation was to trace the development of the township of Mathurā. Notable discoveries were that of numerous terracotta figurines and pre-historic copper implements. In 1975 R.B.Joshi of Poona and R.C.Sharma discovered palaeolithic tools which indicated the presence of prehistoric man earlier than 50000 B.C. in this region. They are now displayed in the Mathurā Museum galleries. In 1976-77 R.C.Sharma along with the assistance of Mathurā Museum staff carried out a major salvage expedition of antiquarian remains at the site of Govindnagar recovering numerous sculptures and others, mainly Buddhist.

These are the major archaeological campaigns that have been carried out in Mathurā so far. The region is rich with antiquarian remains. Diggings, leveling or clearing up of places for construction purposes or otherwise have almost invariably led to the unearthing of antiquarian wealth which have contributed to the collection of the Mathurā Museum in a great scale.

3.3. HISTORY OF MATHURĀ FROM THE BEGINNINGS TILL THE KUṢĀṆAS

Indigenous literary texts, foreign travellers' documents and archaeological sources have made possible the reconstruction of the history of Mathurā. Literary sources have provided a significant amount of information regarding the history of the pre-Mauryan era. In the early texts there is no mention of the term 'Mathurā', instead one frequently comes across the terms Braj and Surasena janapada. The Vedic Samhitās do not mention any of these three terms so it has been considered possible that this region was not known to the Vedic sages. However the later Vedic texts contain hints of places and persons who were associated with the land of Vraja. The Mahabharata has several references to Mathurā and the Surasena region. Mathurā has been described as a stronghold of Andhaka-Vṛshṇi clans[22]. Mathurā, as recorded in the Mahabharata, was the city of the Yādavas[23] and the (supposed) birthplace of (Vāsudeva) Kṛshṇa[24]. Patanjali, the well known commentator on *Ashṭādhyāyi* has made many references to Mathurā. He praises the general conditions of this place saying that the people were happy and good-looking and better off than the residents of Śankāsya and Pāṭaliputra[25]. The Purāṇic literature however has the most number of references to the region of Mathurā some of which that repeatedly refer to it are *Harivamṣa Purāṇa, Vishṇu Purāṇa, Matsya Purāṇa, Padma Purāṇa, Bhāgvata Purāṇa, Varāha Purāṇa* and *Brahma Vaivarta Purāṇa*[26]. These texts not only mention the geneology and chronology of kings and dynasties but also reflect the culture, religion, polity, society, arts and crafts of the region. Besides the Brahamānic literature, Buddhist and Jaina literature also provide vital information helpful in the reconstruction of the history of Mathurā. Some of the Buddhist works, particularly *Divyavadana* and *Lalitavistara*, refer to the visits of the Buddha to Mathurā. It is in these texts that several eminent Buddhist monks have been associated with Mathurā. Mathurā, along with traces of its cultural life, is mentioned in the *Ghaṭajātaka, Majjhima Nikāya, Mahāvatthu, Vimanavatthu, Aṭṭakattha* etc. The Jaina literature also provides substantial amount of information regarding the socio-religious conditions of Mathurā. The Śilpa texts contain information regarding the artistic and architectural wealth of the place. The *Rāyapaseniya*, for instance, is a remarkable treatise for the study of the Jaina stūpa of Mathurā.[27]

The documents of foreign travelers Megasthenes, Pliny, Ptolemy, Fa-Hien, Hiuen-tsang have provided substantial information on Mathurā.

To the surprise of many, Mathurā lacks evidence associating it with the Mauryan period, other than those from excavations. It is noteworthy that there are no Ashokan inscriptions in the vicinity. It has been pointed out that the archaeological data suggests a transition to urbanism during this period[28]. Since the pre-Mauryan evidence does not indicate an urban settlement and the post-Mauryan evidence does, it can be assumed that the transition to urbanism took place in the Mauryan period. There are other possible reasons for the absence of any direct evidence of Mauryan control. Since the important Mauryan administrative centers were Pāṭaliputra, Taxilā and Ujjain, Mathurā would have been overshadowed by the latter as it was perhaps too close to it to develop Mathurā as a provincial capital[29]. Alternatively it may still have nurtured a lineage autonomy to a larger extent than the other cities and managed to maintain this autonomy[30]. From the account of Megasthenes, the Greek ambassador to the court of Chandragupta Maurya, it can be deduced that he had some personal knowledge about the place[31]. He mentions the people as Sourasenoi; their deity as Herakles; the river Jobares (probably Yamuna) and the two cities Methora (Mathurā) and Cleisbora[32].

One has to depend mainly on the evidence of coins for the first phase of post-Mauryan history of Mathurā. The nature of the evidence is such that it is far from giving us a linear progression of events. However the evidences are at least seen to represent a political pattern marking a movement away from the authority of Magadha[33]. There is no direct evidence of Śūnga rule in Mathurā[34]. However the dynastic label Śūnga has been indiscriminately used for the sake of convenience. Simultaneously there were Yavana raids in Mathurā. Most probably it was Demetrius, contemporary of Pushyamitra, who after conquering the Punjāb, attacked Mādhyamika and Saketa and passed through Mathurā[35]. Menander was another important Indo-Greek ruler who raided up to the Yamunā valley[36]. However there is no definite proof as to the Indo-Greek sovereignty on Mathurā. It is clear, however, from numismatic evidences largely corroborated by literary traditions that the Yavana chiefs carried out aggressive activities by way of plunder and massacre wherever they went.

From about the beginning of the first century B.C. several princes were trying to consolidate their hold at Mathurā[37]. This has been deduced from the discovery of coins of Gomitra, Sūryamitra, Brahmamitra and Vishṇumitra suggesting a Mitra dynasty and similar finds of Purushdatta, Uttamadatta, Bhāvadatta, Kāmadatta, Rāmadatta, Seshadatta etc., pointing to the possibility of a Datta rule. Though it is not possible to deduce a definite time span of every individual ruler, the Sonkh excavations at least prove that the Mitras were followed by the Dattas. We have evidences other than coins that seem to prove their rule, for instance, an inscribed stone fragment and a brick from Ganeshrā referring to some building activity by Kohada, a minister of Gomitra[38]. Some of the Datta kings who followed the Mitras used the title of Rājan in their coins[39]. There are no firm evidences as to whether these Mitra and Datta rulers were scions of the main Śūnga dynasty or independent rulers as suggested by the coins minted in their respective names. However, in the light of the evidences that prove that the Śūngas were disintegrating right from the middle of the second century B.C., particularly due to mounting pressure of Bactrian invaders, it has been suggested that this gave way to the provincial governors and the feudatories freeing themselves from the central control and giving rise to short term rule of such less significant princes[40].

In about the middle of the first century B.C. Mathurā was invaded by the Scytho-Parthians. The chiefs were generally known by their titles Kshatrapa or Satrapa. The earliest of them was Rājuvula or Rājula, who was himself a Ksatrap of Azilesis[41]. The Kharoshthi epigraph on the lion capital discovered in 1869 from Saptarshi mound and now housed in the British Museum is an important evidence that attests to the Kshatrapa rule in Mathurā. It is also one of the earliest evidences of their rule[42]. Made in typical red sandstone it records the construction of a Buddhist monastery Guha Vihāra by Ayasi Kamuia (Kambojika), the chief queen of Mahākshatrapa Rajuvula[43]. Almost a life size statue made in schist stone and carved in Gandhāran style is believed to represent the queen[44]. Rājuvula was succeeded by his son Soḍāsa who probably enjoyed the governorship of Mathurā in his father's regime as can be deduced from the Morā well inscription incised on a large stone slab mentioning Rājuvula as the Mahākshatrapa (overlord) and his son (name not given) as Swāmi (governor)[45] commemorating the installation of statues of five Vṛshṇi heroes[46]. Soḍāsa is also mentioned on the Jaina āyāgapaṭṭa set up by Amohini with the epithet of king as overlord, Mahakshatrapa[47]. Among other inscriptions is a rare stone

inscription acquired by R.C.Sharma from the village Mirzāpur near Mathurā in 1979 mentioning Swami Mahākshatrapa Soḍāsa and interesting facts about the Kshatrapa rulers and their relation with the local subject[48]. Numismatic evidences point to the existence of Śivaghosa and Śivadatta and then Hagāmaṣa and Hagāna as short term rulers in the Mathurā region[49].

The Kshatrapas were followed by the Kuṣāṇas. As we know, regarding the history of the Kuṣāṇas there are two major controversies namely the chronology of Kuṣāṇa kings and the year of Kaṇiṣka's accession to the throne. There have been various theories regarding these two issues. A landmark discovery in Kuṣāṇa studies is the discovery of a rectangular piece of stone 90 cm wide, 50 cm high and 25 cm thick bearing an inscription in Bactrian, in March 1993, in a hill locally known as the Kafir's Castle, in the region called Rabatak forty kilometers north of Pul-i-Khumri[50]. The most startling revelation of the Rabatak inscription is the previously unrecognized Kuṣāṇa king, Vima I Tak[to] whose position among the Kuṣāṇa kings is clearly indicated. This person has been identified with the anonymous issuer of the Kuṣāṇa "Soter Megas" coins[51]. Another remarkable revelation is the family relationships by way of calling Kujula Kadphises the great grandfather, Vima Takto grandfather and Vima Kadphises as the father. For the first time we have a firm structure for the history of early Kuṣāṇa kings, affirming Kaṇiṣka's direct connection to the Kuṣāṇa kings[52]. Since in Mathurā itself the local Soter Megas issue was the first Kuṣāṇa issue, therefore it can be said that Vima I Tak[to] took the city and its region from Soḍāsa , the son and successor of Rajuvula[53]. Therefore it matches the Chinese description of his father (Kujula) as the uniter of the Yuezhi and conqueror of the Kabul region, the Indo-Parthian kingdom and Kashmir, and himself as the conqueror of India[54].

Regarding the year one of Kaṇiṣka's era, we are aware that scholars have come up with various hypotheses which we need not mention here for the sake of brevity. However the doctrine most commonly held is that Kaṇiṣka was the founder of the Śaka era of A.D.78. The earliest genuine inscriptional instance of the use of the name Śaka with the era of A.D.78 comes from the Wada inscription of Konkan Maurya dated Śaka 322[55]. We also have the Chālukyan inscription at Bādāmi of A.D.578 in which the Śaka era is mentioned[56]. This inscription provides numerical calculation for determining the beginning of the Śaka era. The arguments in support of A.D.78 as the

year one of Kaṇiṣka are many. It is proposed that as the name implies, the era was associated with Indo-Scythians and Kaṇiṣka was the greatest of the Indo-Scythian kings and the only Indo-Scythian king actually known to have begun an era[57]. He had hegemony over the Western Kshatrapas who certainly used this era[58]. It is also noted that the reign of Kaṇiṣka, which was a period of the expansion of power, is a full half century removed from the time of Rudradaman, the expansion of whose power brought him into areas known to have been ruled by Kaṇiṣka[59]. These arguments, besides that general historical pattern places him in close proximity to this date, have been used in support of Kaṇiṣka's establishment of the Śaka era. There have been counter arguments given to this formulation besides arguments in support of other rulers having begun this era. With regard to Mathurā inscriptions it is noteworthy that the Kuṣāṇa inscriptions so far discovered have been dated in regnal years. The term "Śaka era" has not been mentioned in any of them. If Kaṇiṣka established the Śaka era then it is amusing that none of his inscriptions seem to mention "Śaka era", let alone the inscriptions of the following rulers.

As mentioned earlier, the recent discovery of the inscription in Rabatak has cast a fresh light on this issue. The identification of Kujula Kadphises as the first significant ruler of the Kuṣāṇa dynasty gives support to the earlier suggestion that he is the same person as the Kuṣāṇa chieftan Qiu-jiu-que named in the Chinese Later Han Chronicle (*Hou Han Shu*)[60]. This has given a new confidence in the interpretation of information contained in the chronicles. With this newly discovered chronology of the early Kuṣāṇa rulers Cribb has attempted to arrive at a date bracket for the first year of Kaṇiṣka[61]. He points out that though the chronological context of the kings named in the Rabatak inscription separates them from the Sassanian rulers of Iran (from 224 A.D.), the later Kuṣāṇa rulers with a determinable chronological relationship with the last of the Kuṣāṇa kings in the inscription i.e. Kaṇiṣka, can be associated with the Sassanian princes who ruled in the former Kuṣāṇa territory as Kushanshahs. Since overstrikes and hoards place the Kuṣāṇa kings Vaṣiṣka and Kaṇiṣka III, ruling about120-141 years after the first year of Kaṇiṣka I (according to Ara inscription) as a contemporary of the Sassanian conquest of the of the western parts of the Kuṣāṇa territory, the reign of Kaṇiṣka would, therefore, fall in the period c. A.D. 130-170. Cribb also points out that Samudragupta was a contemporary of the late Kuṣāṇa kings as shown by his coinage and confirmed by a statement in his Allahabad pillar inscription that a Kuṣāṇa king Śaka ruled under Samudragupta's authority. Since

Samudragupta's reign can be dated approximately between the reign of his father Chandragupta I beginning c.A.D.319, year 1 of the Gupta era, and of his son Chandragupta II, whose recorded dates in the Gupta era show him still ruling from A.D.401-c.A.D.415, these connections are seen to place the late Kuṣāṇa kings after Vāsudeva II, in the opening years of the fourth century. Hence, on the basis of these calculations Cribb comes down to a date bracket of c.A.D.100-120 for the first year of Kaṇiṣka. In more recent studies, Harry Falk[62] and Richard Salomon[63] have come up with their formulation of the commencement of Kaṇiṣka's reign. Salomon attributes Year 279 of the Dast-e Nawur trilingual inscription to the newly identified Yavana Era of 186/5 BCE, which yields a date of 92 or 93 CE as a year during which Kaṇiṣka's grandfather, Vima Takto, was reigning[64]. Therefore, by these calculations the beginning of Kaṇiṣka's reign cannot have begun before 92 or 93 CE. Falk calculates the year 127 CE using evidence from an astronomical text (Yavanajātaka) for Kaṇiṣka's accession, given that 92/93 falls within his grandfather's reign. The chronology of the Kuṣāṇa kings worked out by Cribb on the basis of the information provided by the Rabatak inscription is as follows[65]:

Kuṣāṇa kings	Local Eras from inscriptions		approximate A.D. dates	
			earliest	latest
Kujula Kadphises	Azes	years 122-136	30-78	
Vima I Tak [to]	Unknown Era	year 279	78-90	78-110
Vima II Kadphises	Unknown Era	year 284 or 287	90-100	110-120
Kaṇiṣka I	Kaṇiṣka Era	years 1-23	100-126	120-146
Huviṣka	Kaṇiṣka Era	years 26-64	126-164	146-184
Vāsudeva I	Kaṇiṣka Era	years 64-98	164-200	184-220
Kaṇiṣka II	Kaṇiṣka Era	years [1]05-[1]17	200-222	220-242
Vaṣiṣka	Kaṇiṣka Era	years [1]22-[1]30	222-240	242-260
Kaṇiṣka III	Kaṇiṣka Era	years [1]41	241-270	261-290
Vāsudeva II	Kaṇiṣka Era	year 170	270-310	290-330
Śaka	Contemporary of Samudragupta		310-345	330-365
Kipunada			345-365	365-385

While the beginning of the Kuṣāṇa era is a controversial issue, the end of the Kuṣāṇa rule is equally vague. Keeping ourselves confined to Mathurā, it is generally assumed that Kuṣāṇa power was on a decline after the death of Vāsudeva I. Although we know

of many of his successors (the chronology of which is another controversy in itself), it is said that they were not as dynamic as their predecessors[66]. However it is noted that after Vāsudeva I all cultural life does not suddenly break off in Mathura and begin suddenly with the arrival of the Guptas[67]. Since very little is known about this dark intermediate period between these two great dynasties, it is explained by the crumbling of the large Kuṣāṇa kingdom into a number of smaller kingdoms mostly reigned over by dynasties originally of foreign descent[68]. Mitterwallner strongly refutes the view that the Kuṣāṇa empire disintegrated after Vāsudeva I[69]. She observes that a fresh outburst of artistic activity along with new evolutionary processes is seen in Mathurā under the reign of Kaṇiṣka II. She also notes that a number of inscribed icons survive from the reign of Kaṇiṣka II which can only be explained by a certain political stability and economic prosperity during his reign which enabled donors and devotees of Buddhist, Jaina and Brahamānical faith at Mathurā to donate so many icons in his time. She also points out that during the reign of Kaṇiṣka II a new wave of influence from Gandhāra can be observed in the images made at Mathurā at this time.

We can see that there are conflicting views regarding the economic and political circumstances of the later Kuṣāṇas. However, returning to the transitional period between the Kuṣāṇa and Gupta sovereignty it has been observed that the Nāga dynasties ruled at Mathurā subsequent to the period when the Kuṣāṇas withdrew and prior to the phase when the Guptas extended their hegemony[70]. This theory has been put forward on the basis that a number of Nāga statues and coins have been discovered in Mathurā. Also the unearthing of a Nāga shrine established by a Nāga king Dadhikarṇa in the Sonkh excavations is seen to establish that Mathurā was a stronghold of the Nāga dynasty. However, this view has been refuted on the following grounds[71]: (1) not a single inscribed image has been found at Mathurā, the record of which mentions a king of a Nāga dynasty as ruler; (2) images of Nāga deities cannot be used as proof for the direct rule of kings of a Nāga dynasty with their capital at Mathurā during the transitional period from Kuṣāṇa to Gupta sovereignty as many of them had been installed and worshipped already during the time of the early Kuṣāṇa rulers; and (3) comparatively few coins of Nāga kings have been found at Mathurā itself. However, in this context it is important to bring in Samudragupta's Allahabad pillar inscription where he is described to have subdued some Nāga kings[72]. It has been suggested it was probably Ganapati Nāga who ruled over Mathurā when

Samudragupta annexed this region into the Magadhan empire[73]. The Allahabad pillar inscription also states that a Kuṣāṇa king Śaka ruled under Samudragupta's authority[74].

While it is clear that we have not many evidences of the political circumstances of this transitional period between the Kuṣāṇa and Gupta sovereignty, it seems we can only explain this period as marked by the crumbling or disruption[75] of the large Kuṣāṇa kingdom into a number of smaller kingdoms as mentioned earlier.

3.4. MATHURĀ: NATURE OF ITS SOCIETY

Mathurā occupies a unique place in Indian history which is attested by various evidences. The eclectic nature of its society has been an object of amusement for historians of ancient India. The nature of its art products speaks volumes of the existence of a multicultural society. The seemingly peaceful co-existence of various religious practices in one space is one of the unique characteristics of the society of Mathurā which corresponds to the different types of artworks representing different ideologies produced here. It is imperative here to stress on this quality and see a particular stream of works as being created in such a context. As mentioned earlier, Mathurā's location was such that it was a profitable area for traders and was hence exposed to outside cultural influence. The evidence of the earliest mud fortification of Mathurā, datable from a period ranging from the closing decades of the 4th century B.C. to c.200 B.C.[76] suggests that by the end of the age of the Nandas or during the Mauryan period the habitation was considered important enough to be fortified for ensuring protection to its wealth and residents[77]. Mathurā has had many encounters with the outside world which definitely left an impact on it. Mathurā was well known to the outsiders. This is proved by the evidence of Megasthenes, the Seleucid envoy to the court of the Mauryas. One of the passages of his *Indika*, quoted by Arrian, states that 'Heraikes is held in special honour by the Sourasenoi tribe' which 'possesses two large cities, Methora (Mathurā) and Cleisobora and through whose territories flows a navigable river called Iobares'[78]. Megasthenes also narrated interesting legends about this Herakles[79], identifiable perhaps with Vāsudeva Kṛṣṇa[80]. Following the disintegration of the Mauryan empire which must have brought along a political turmoil, it is possible that Yavana elements could have been introduced into the population of Mathurā[81]. This has been deduced from the statement of Patānjali referring to the Yavana invasion *inter alia* Saketa[82] which may be taken to suggest

Yavana activities in Madhyadeśa which included Mathurā. Mathurā seems to have been noticed by Patānjali as an important city[83]. He mentions that the residents of Mathurā became known as 'more cultured' than those of Śankāsya and Pāṭaliputra[84]. Patānjali also refers to the currency of Kārṣāpaṇa in Mathurā which vouches for brisk trading activities. From these evidences it has been inferred that the political uncertainty which may have been caused by the Yavana activities did not disturb the society and economy of Mathurā[85]. It seems that there were better houses and building facilities as revealed by the houses of level 29 at Sonkh and also by the evidence available from period III at Mathurā[86]. Trade might have encouraged movement of people and ideas which at least partly explains the appearance of Vāsudeva and Samkarshaṇa on coins of the Indo-Greek king Agathocles and the setting up of Garuda column in honor of Devadeva Vāsudeva by Heliodora, a Yona (Yavana) envoy from Takshashila sent by the Indo-Greek king Amtalikita (Antialcidas) to the court of Kāśiputra Bhāgabhadra[87]. It may be observed that the Vāsudeva cult, especially associated with Mathurā, was not limited to the local population.

Further heterogenous elements were introduced into the society of Mathurā with the extension of the Scytho-Parthian rule to Mathurā during the last decades of the 1st century B.C. or in the beginning of 1st century A.D[88]. Mathurā, as a part of the Scytho-Parthian dominions of North-Western India, became further exposed to influences from the west. Mathurā lion capital inscriptions, referring to a number of Śaka rulers and to certain donations in Guha vihāra in honor of inter alia all Śakastan[89] seems to prove that the Scytho- Parthians themselves became great patrons of Indian religion and culture. With the annexation of Mathurā to the international and multiracial Kuṣāṇa empire with its chief seat of authority in the North-west the importance of Mathurā was further enhanced as it now became an integral part of the international empire[90]. The Kuṣāṇa rulers are known for their eclectic attitude towards religion. In Mathurā, Buddhism, Jainism, Vaishṇavism, Śaivism and various other cults (Nāga and Yaksha cults) flourished side by side[91]. All these indicate that the citizens of Kuṣāṇa Mathurā enjoyed freedom in their religious life. This is reflected by the art works of a variety of sects.

This change in the political or politico-cultural setup across these years, however, does not seem to have disturbed the religious practices like Brāhamanism, Buddhism, Jainsim and other cults. Dedications including consecration of religious shrines were

made by persons belonging to different strata of the society[92]. Rich traders of the age with money could have patronized religions of their choice. The material power of the merchants, traditionally belonging to the Vaishya caste, and the influence in the society of anti-caste religious faiths (like Jainism and Buddhism) should have loosened the barrier and stringency of caste system[93]. Mathurā also emerged as an important trading centre for internal and also external trade which added to the complexity of its nature[94]. It began to serve as halting station for merchants and those traveling by caravans carrying goods from Central Asia and North-Indian localities to Indian ports[95]. It follows that fortune-seekers from rural areas migrated to Mathurā, and constituted the populous and complex society of Mathurā. It has been observed that the Imperial Kuṣāṇa, whose interest lay in accumulating wealth through *inter alia* levying taxes on articles of commerce, naturally should not have willfully disturbed the social and religious inclinations of the people and would have encouraged trade activities[96]. However, this observation is not based on any solid evidence as such. Anyway, it is apparent that Mathurā had a presence of a strong trading community which had money and power to control or influence religious or socio-religious as well as economic activities. The epigraphic evidences in the form of donative inscriptions point to the ability of people of different strata of the society to contribute for the making religious monuments.

A bird's eye view of Mathurā during these centuries would give us a picture of Mathurā in the context of regions where the ethnic groups after having passed through Bactria which lay within the reach of Iranian and Hellenistic influences, settled down diffusing elements of these cultures which they happened to absorb on their way. It is also to be noted that all foreign influences were not necessarily introduced by these nomads but also by travelers such as Western traders or itinerant Indian monks returning home[97]. It may also be added that Hellenistic elements, for instance in architecture and sculpture, were more likely brought along by travelling artisans one of whom was Saint Thomas, than by nomadic intruders themselves[98]. Close cultural relations were established between Gandhāra in the Northwest and Mathurā in the Doab during the Kuṣāṇa period. Thus, the Hellenistic element incorporated in the art and architecture of Gandhāra around the beginning of the Christian era as a result of the Scythian invasions, were in turn, to some extent passed on to the workshops of Mathurā. Hellenistic influences are most apparent in the coinage. The different languages on the coins confirm the enormous cultural, ethnic and linguistic diversity

of the vast empire which was ruled from their capitals in Peshawar and Mathurā[99]. The linguistic geography of the Kuṣāṇa empire was as complex as its geographic position would indicate[100]. Bactrian language was widely used in Central Asia, Bactria and in the territory of modern Afghanistan and in the eastern provinces. Sanskrit and different forms of Prākrit, written in two scripts- Kharoshthi and Brāhmi were also used. Buddhism has played a significant role in linking up these regions. Social flexibility was an important feature of the Buddhist religion and one of the major reasons for its rapid expansion. This characteristic was particularly important in the borderland regions where many peoples were non-Indian and therefore without caste, placing them outside the social boundaries of the old Vedic and newly emerging Hindu systems[101]. Thus, Buddhism permitted the social integration of the foreign elite. Therefore, when observed from this perspective, the eclectic nature of Mathurā of the period of our concern seems explicable. It is important to keep this in our mind while we study the artworks of this period.

3.5. A SURVEY OF THE PRE-EXISTING AND SIMULTANEOUSLY EXISTING VISUAL IMAGERY OF THE DIFFERENT SECTS IN MATHURĀ

Before approaching the next chapter which will deal with Buddhist imagery of the period of our concern, it is important that we have a quick look at the pre-existing as well as simultaneously existing visual imagery in Mathurā. This would help us contextualize our area, providing us a bigger picture of the prevailing circumstances. We are aware that the importance of Mathurā as a prominent and influential religious and artistic centre from the time of the Kuṣāṇa period has been universally attested by scholars. However, not much attention has been given to the art products belonging to the period before the beginning of the Kuṣāṇa rule. Only disparate and preliminary studies of the earliest known works of art from Mathurā, dating from ca.150 BCE through the first century CE, have been undertaken[102]. The prevailing notion is that prior to the entry of the Kuṣāṇa kings into northern India, the school of art at Mathurā was a minor one. There exist a total of seventeen iconic statues from Mathurā which were objects of devotion datable from ca.150-75 BCE associated with a variety of sects[103]. It is noteworthy that this number far exceeds those found from any single region of India during the same time period[104]. This surpassing of other regions in number, and in some cases in quality, of such major images has been seen to indicate that Mathurā sculptors had a propensity for depicting images of the divine in human

form the beginning of the region's stone sculptural tradition. Thus, we would not be wrong in saying that Mathurā began to attain the status of an important cultural centre as early as 150 BCE.

The importance of the worship of images of goddesses in early historical Mathurā is represented in abundance in the carved ringtones and disc stones, terracotta images and placques. A number of mother goddess figurines have been discovered in stratified contexts in the course of Mathurā excavations[105]. They form the earliest objects of cultic significance, and make their appearance in the later part of Period II (Late fourth century BC-second century BC)[106].The 'goddess' figurines of succeeding centuries display greater stylistic refinement, technical innovations and increase in number and variety.

We are aware of the surviving colossal Yaksha images in and around the Mathurā region. The worship of Yakshas and Yakshis go back to at least 2nd to 3rd centuries B.C. and cannot be described or dismissed as a minor cult. The imposing stone images from the Mathurā area and elsewhere were the products of urban ateliers, financed by affluent urban patrons and reflect the existence of iconographic conventions and artisanal skills, and imply community worship in shrines[107]. We find various references to Yakshas in Brahamānical, Buddhist and Jaina literature which are generally demonic and frightening. However, in spite of their eventual absorption, marginalization and demonization in the dominant religious traditions, the sheer pervasiveness of the presence of Yakshas and Yakshis in these texts illustrates just how important and widespread their worship once was[108].

Another major aspect of iconic worship in Mathurā was the worship of serpent deties-Nāgas and Nāgis, who like the Yakshas were associated with water and fertility. From the colossal and imposing nature of some of the Nāga images belonging to early centuries A.D. and the technical finesse of their carving it can be deduced that they represent more than a simple folk cult. Vogel noted that ancient Nāga images in the Mathurā district were being worshipped as *Dauji* or the god Baladeva/Balarām and that modern images of Balarām were in fact imitations of ancient Nāga images[109]. He suggested that the plough wielding, snake canopied god Baladeva may have been a Nāga deity who came to be absorbed into the Krishna cult. Many images and

inscriptions indicate that the Nāga cult enjoyed considerable patronage in the Mathurā region in the early centuries of our era[110].

Mathurā has also been described as a stronghold of Andhaka-Vṛshṇi clans[111]. Epigraphic records bear testimony to the prevalence of the Bhāgvata cult which gained a considerable popularity in the Mathurā region. The Morā stone inscription[112] of the time of Soḍāsa records the enshrinement of the Panchavīras of the Vṛshṇis in a stone temple by a lady named Toṣa. These Panchavīras were identified by J.N.Bannerjea[113] with Samkarshaṇa, Vāsudeva, Pradyumna, Sāmba and Aniruddha, all closely connected members of the Vṛshṇi dynasty. The appellation Toṣa is suggested by scholars[114] to be of foreign extraction from which it has been generally deduced that the foreigners also had their leanings towards the Bhāgvata religion. The Mathurā stone door jamb inscription[115] of the time of Soḍāsa records the erection of devakula, a toraṇa and a vedika in honour of Bhāgavat Vāsudeva so that he may bestow dominion, longevity and strength on Svāmin Mahakshatrapa Soḍāsa. Thus it appears from epigraphic records that it was not only the local population that played a role in the growth and development of the Bhāgvata religion. In this connection, mention may be made of the Besnagar pillar inscription[116] which records the setting up a *garuḍa-dhvaja* at Besnagar in Vidisha district in honor of the god Vāsudeva by Heliodorus, who was an ambassador of the Indo-Greek king, Antialkidas and was deputed to the court of the king Kāśiputra Bhāgabhadra of Vidisha. We are aware of the well known connection of the Surasena with Herakles. Herakles is generally identified with Kṛshṇa. If Herakles refers to Kṛshṇa then it would point to the Vāsudeva- Kṛshṇa cult being popular in this region at least as early as fourth century B.C. confirmatory evidence of which comes from Panini where reference is made to the worship of Vāsudeva and to the *dvanḍva* compound of Samkarshaṇa-Vāsudeva[117].

We know of the existence of a Pre-Kuṣāṇa Vaishṇava icon in Mathurā which is the well-known Mathurā image of Balarām from Jānsuti, Mathurā district (SML No. G 215).This image opens up the possibility of an even earlier representation at Mathurā. While not many Vaishṇava icons seem to have been produced in the pre-Kuṣāṇa era, there is an extraordinary increase in the number and variety of Vaishṇava icons during the Kuṣāṇa period[118]. The most frequently represented Vaishṇava deity in the Kuṣāṇa period is a four armed standing male who holds *gadā* and *chakra* in the extra raised right and left hands respectively of which over 30 representations are known[119]. We

can see an explosion in the number and types of images. Mathurā's enormous productivity is more evident when compared with the production of Vaishṇava art in the rest of Northern India during the Kuṣāṇa times[120]. The Mathurā idiom can be detected in all these pieces and also the rate of productivity cannot be matched with any of these sites. Thus it can be said that during this time Mathurā was the creator and disseminator of Vaishṇava art modes as well as a probable centre of Vaishṇava bhakti cults[121].

Jainism occupied a significant space in Mathurā. Till the end of the 3rd century A.D., Mathurā flourished as an important centre of Jaina art and iconography. In comparison to contemporary Jaina centers in other parts of the country the position of Mathurā is much more superior[122]. Epigraphical sources reveal the existence of Jaina monuments from 2nd century B.C. onwards. The earliest Jaina inscription[123] recording the erection of an ornamental arch of a temple by a layman named Uttaradāsika, disciple of the ascetic Māgharakshita, has been assigned to 150 B.C.[124]. Epigraphical sources are supported by the archaeological finds from Mathurā in general and from Kankālī Tīlā. in particular. Apart from a vast number of architectural fragments we have a lot more of Jaina art that have come down to us. They belong from between 2nd century B.C. to 3rd C AD[125].They are 20 āyāgapaṭṭas, 5 śilāpaṭṭas, 98 figures of seated Tīrthankaras, 26 standing Tīrthankaras, 28 Sarvatobhadrika figures,17 representations of male divinities, 8 representations of female divinities, 3 depictions of stories or events and a number of detached heads of Tīrthankaras. Naigameśa, Baldeva and Vāsudeva are the identifiable male divinities in the Kuṣāṇa period. Naigameśa, the god headed god is the chief of the divine infantry. He is closely associated with children. Identifiable female divinities in the Jaina pantheon in Kuṣāṇa a times are Āryavati, Saraswati and Lakshmi. It is evident therefore that the Jaina pantheon too was developing simultaneously.

Śaiva imagery in Mathurā includes representations of the deity in the anthropomorphic or linga forms or a combination of both (the mukha lingas and vigraha lingas). One of the earliest representations is an architectural fragment found at Bhūteshwar (ca.2nd century B.C.) showing the worship of a lingam on a platform under a peepal tree encircled by railing, by two winged figures[126]. The prevalence of the Shiva cult in Mathurā is well attested by archaeological evidences, mostly numismatic and glyptic. However, epigraphic evidences are rare. The paucity of

epigraphic data is fully compensated by a large number of coins with theriomorphic and anthropomorphic representations of Shiva in the period of Kaṇiṣka, Huviṣka and Vāsudeva I. Vima Kadphises' Saivite affiliations have been suggested by V.S.Agrawal. Agrawal opines that the Mat devakula was the shrine of Vima's *ishṭadevata* i.e. Śiva[127].

Between 200 BC and 200 AD stone images are also dominated by Sūrya, Kubera, Hariti, Mātrikas, Vasudharā, goddesses Durgā and Lakshmi[128].

Thus, we can see that in Mathurā a number of traditions existed simultaneously and perhaps peacefully or rather without much conflict. The Mathurā sculptors on the one hand stuck to the Yaksha and Nāga iconography and on the other hand introduced evolutionary changes as required by fresh formative forces[129]. While the central deity of each sect is laden with its respective ideology, there has been a free use of similar artistic motifs by every sect as though from a common pool.

The above discussion gives us a brief account of the prevailing circumstances in which art production was taking place. This should give us a perspective from which we can view the production of Buddhist artworks in Mathurā.

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CHAPTER- IV

BODHISATTVA IMAGERY IN MATHURA FROM THE BEGINNINGS TO APPROXIMATELY 3rd CENTURY A.D.

The Buddha has been associated with Mathurā in a number of Buddhist legends. This throws light on the importance of Mathurā among the Buddhists of those times which in turn provides us with an insight of the prevailing circumstances enabling us to see the visual imagery from a certain perspective.

4.1. Buddhist Legends and Mathurā

For the sake of brevity it is possible here to only look into a few Buddhist legends which concern Mathurā. According to the traditions of *Anguttaranikāya* the Buddha visited Mathurā when he completed his twelfth rainy season (*vassāvāsa*) at Veranja[1]. It is here that we find the Buddha not satisfied with this place as Yakshas were dominating here and creating terror over people. However, he subdued them and set a large number of them right by preaching his law. As Mathurā was dominated by the Brāhamaṇas, they did not like the growing influence of the Buddha and persuaded their leader Nilabhūti to throw a challenge of learning (*Śāstrārtha*) to the Buddha[2]. But Nilabhūti was much influenced by the greatness of Buddha when he came to know that the Buddha had humbled the notorious and mighty Yakshas. The Buddha was, however, not pleased with the people and the place and he observed the following five defects: the roads are undulating, the dust is too much, the dogs are wild, ignorant Yakshas live here and alms are collected with great difficulty[3]. According to Gilgit manuscripts people cared too much for the high cast born against the low cast, there are a lot of bushes and thorns, the stones and pebbles are in plenty, women are in large number and most of the people take food late at night[4]. The expression *'prachūra mātrigrāma'* has been used which can be interpreted as villages where female deities or mother goddesses were very popular[5]. This can be corroborated by the terracotta figures of mother goddesses found in abundance from the early sites of Mathurā ranging in period from 7th century B.C. to first century B.C[6].

These references from the *Anguttaranikāya* and Gilgit manuscripts give us the impression that the first visit of the Buddha was not a success and he was not given a good reception though he was probably able to humble the notorious Yakshas[7]. The traditions of some other texts such as *Divyavadāna* and *Lalitavistāra* etc. point out that the Buddha just before his death revisited Mathurā and this time he had a good impression of this place[8].

Of the many people whose names are involved in the Buddhist legends relating to Mathurā, Mahakāṭyāyaṇa and Upagupta are the most prominent ones. According to the legends, these two disciples of Buddha are known to have played an important role in the spread of Buddhism in Mathurā. Mahakātyāna was the head priest of Chanda Pradyota who was a powerful king of Avanti and a contemporary of the Buddha[9]. Kāṭyāyaṇa was greatly influenced by the teachings of the Buddha and entered the Sangha. He became capable of propagating the Dharma and preached at various places as a missionary. The main regions of his teachings were Avanti and Surasena. As far as Upagupta is concerned , according to the traditions of the *Divyavadāna,* when Buddha visited Mathurā before his demise he foretold that after hundred years of his death an illustrious son called Upagupta would be born to a perfume merchant called Gupta who would fulfill his mission and propagate his Law[10]. Upagupta was succeeded by his disciple Dhitika who was the son of the wealthy Brāhamaṇa of Ujjain who was influenced by the teachings of Upagupta[11]. He became the latter's pupil and successor after initiation.

Other persons who deserve mention with regard to their role in establishing the association of Buddhism with Mathurā are Bhadra Kapilāni, who was the wife of Mahākshyapa, one of the main disciples of Buddha, and Mahādeva, who is associated with the second Buddhist Council[12]. Mathurā was Bhadra Kapilāni's native place[13]. Mahādeva, associated with the second Buddhist Council, was the son of a Brāhamaṇa of Mathurā[14]. After his initiation into the Dharma at Kukuṭagrāma in Pāṭaliputra he was known as a man of great learning and wisdom and later headed the Buddhist Sangha.

Regarding the accounts of foreign travelers, the Chinese traveler Fa-hien who visited the place in the beginning of the 5th century A.D. recorded Mathurā as the first kingdom with the capital of the same name[15]. According to him everyone from the highest to lowest rank had faith in Buddhism and it was so from the time of Buddha.

He records twenty monasteries on both sides of the river Yamuna and 3000 monks residing in them. Besides, he saw six stūpas, three of them commemorating the sacred memory of Sāriputra, Ānanda and Mudgalaputra the great teacher of *samādhi* or meditation. The remaining three stūpas were to pay respect to the holy books, the Tripiṭakas i.e. *Abhidharma, Sutra* and *Vinaya*. Fa-hien speaks of happy and cordial conditions of the place. The rulers and the court officials showed much regard to Buddhism and they derived pleasure in serving the monks and feeding them. Hiuen-tsāng followed Fa-hien after about 200 years and spent about sixteen years in India. According to his records the city had twenty monasteries, probably the same as described by his predecessor Fa-hien and about 1250 teachers of Law resided at a place[16].He also records the existence of five temples dedicated to the Brahamānical deities. Three stūpas built by Ashoka were also seen by him besides several spots where the four former Buddhas left their footprints. The stūpas built in the memory of the disciples of the Buddha were also held in great reverence. These consist of the holy relics of Sāriputra, Maudgalyāna, Purvamaitryāniputra, Upāli, Ānanda, Rāhula, Manjushri and other Bodhisattvas.

While the veracity of all the information with regard to Mathurā contained in the legends is contested, it nevertheless seems to establish the significance of the religion in the region. This should help us form a certain backdrop while we observe the imagery of Bodhisattvas in the following pages.

4.2. Bodhisattva Imagery

It is said that Buddhists were at Mathurā at least as early as 1st century B.C. This has been proposed on the basis of the lion capital inscriptions which have been dated to about the year 69 B.C[17]. The inscription records the enshrinement of the relics of the Buddha in a stūpa by the chief queen of the Mahākshtrapa Rājuvula and a person associated with her for the acceptance of the Sarvastivādins; the religious gift made by Udaya, a disciple of Ācārya Buddhadeva along with the princes Khalamāṣa and Maja to Buddhila of Nāgaraka in the Guha vihara for the acceptance of the Sarvastivādin monks in the reign of Kshatrapa Śoḍāṣa; and the donation of some piece of land to Āchārya Buddhila of Nāgaraka who refuted the arguments of the Mahāsanghikas during the reign of Kshatrapa Śoḍāṣa[18]. These inscriptions bear the earliest reference to the Buddhist community in Mathurā which also has the earliest mention of the schools, Sarvastivāda[19] and the Mahasanghikas. It has also been

deduced from this that the early Śaka-Kshatrapa rulers of Mathurā were supporters of Buddhism, particularly the Sarvastivāda[20]. Even Kaniṣka has been established as a supporter of Sarvastivāda on the basis of inscriptions which associate him with the Sarvastivadins[21]. However, a study of the epigraphs of the Kuṣāṇa period on a whole shows the existence of sects like Mahāsanghika, Sammitiya and Dharmaguptaka[22].

While it is said that Sthaviravādins or Theravādins gained more popularity in the beginning, it has also been proposed that Mahāyāna Buddhism existed in Mathurā much before it has been understood to be. John C. Huntington is of the opinion that Mahāyāna Buddhism was in existence in Mathurā from a much earlier time[23]. He states this on the basis of the discovery from the site of Govindnagar a pedestal base with the dedication of an image of Amitābha(GMM No.77.30). This is seen as strongly suggesting the presence of the Sukhāvati Cult. The inscription dates it to the 26th year of Huviṣka. Besides stating that the image is that of Amitābha, Huntington insists that the inscription contains several advanced features of the cult. The last line of the inscription reads in translation, "Whatever roots of merit (*kuśalamūla*) are in this devotion (of setting up the image), may it be for listening to the highest Buddha knowledge (*anuttarabuddhajñāna*)". Huntington believes that the accumulation of roots of merit, *kuśalamūla*, and the hearing of the highest, *anuttarabuddhajñāna*, are features of the later forms of the cult as evidenced by the Wei, T'ang and Sanskrit versions of the so called 'Larger Sukhāvativyūha Sūtra' These evidences are seen to attest to a cult of Amitābha this early in Mathurā. From this he concludes that the formative stage has to be pushed back in time at least a hundred or more years as the present image contains fully developed image conventions since we are examining the 'first surviving' examples rather than the 'first images'. These are the arguments put forward by Huntington for the early existence of Mahāyāna Buddhism in Mathurā. However, it does not seem plausible to conclude from the discovery of one piece of evidence that a full-fledged Mahāyāna Buddhism per se existed. This is supported by the fact that inscriptions that refer to Mahāyāna by name are only found from the 6th century[24]. Though reference to Mahāyāna has been deduced from a votive formula which several scholars have described as 'the common Mahāyāna formula' which more or less consists of transference of merit accruing to the pious deed of a certain dedication to all beings, however, there is no solid evidence as such that can be given for the attribution of this formula to the Mahāyāna.

From the above evidences, it seems only possible to conclude that various sects existed side by side in Mathurā with the freedom of producing their own visual imagery.

It has been generally understood that the rule of Kaniṣka was instrumental in the production of a large number of Buddhist images as attested by a number of standing and seated Buddha/Bodhisattva images of his reign. However it has also been brought to light that the Śaka-Kshatrapas were no less in patronizing the religion. The lion capital inscriptions discussed earlier stands in support of the possibility that the Buddhist patronage of the family of the Śaka Mahākshatrapas Rājuvula and Śoḍāṣa contributed to the upsurgence of Buddhist art[25]. In fact, there is more evidence of Śaka Kshatrapa patronage of Buddhism at Mathurā than there is evidence of Kuṣāṇa patronage of Buddhism at Mathurā[26]. Thus, it seems more appropriate to trace the rise of Buddhism and Buddhist art in Mathurā to the house of Śoḍāṣa rather than that of Kaniṣka. The Buddhist art of Mathurā, then, can be said to be a continuation of the tradition already set in motion by the Śaka-Kshatrapas.

The earliest iconic representations of the Śakyamuṇi are the seated and the standing types which are inscribed as "Bodhisattvas". These representations of the Master are intimately connected to the debates on the earliest representation of Buddha. The earliest dated Bodhisattva images are those that survive from the reign of Kaniṣka. However there are ample evidences that show that at least the seated Bodhisattva types have been represented from the pre- Kaniṣka period. This is supported by the strong iconic tradition in the Kshatrapa period, especially of the time of Śoḍāṣa which reveal a diversity of iconic imagery in Mathurā[27]. The style and iconography of these sculptures naturally draw from the earlier traditions that prefigure the icons that would be produced during the Kuṣāṇa period. The well known torsos discovered in the village of Morā (GMM E.22; GMM E.21) near a well with an inscription (GMM Q.1) carved during the time of Śoḍāṣa recording the installation in a stone temple of the images of the five holy heroes of the Vṛshṇis reflect the tradition of iconic imagery in this period. Another example is that of the Agni image in Bharat Kala Bhawan (#23171) at Banaras Hindu University which has been dated around the early first century C.E. on stylistic basis[28]. The figure has been identified as Agni conceived in the garb of a Brahmin. It is broken from the knees down and stands frontally and axially, as iconic divinities are typically shown, with his right hand held up in the

abhaya mudra. Behind his head is a halo of flames that identifies him as Agni. Images of Agni have been carved in Mathurā since at least ca.100 BCE- the date to which a monumental sculpture of Agni (GMM.87.146), inscribed as so, from Bharanā Kalān has been attributed on stylistic basis[29]. These instances attest to the ongoing worship of the Vedic god of fire throughout the early centuries of stone sculptural production at Mathurā, a fact hitherto not noted[30]. The fact that no other anthropomorphic images of Agni have been recovered from any other site dating earlier than the Gupta period reveals Mathurā's strong propensity for making human icons of many different kinds of divinities[31].

In the light of the observations made above it seems valid to conclude that the iconic images of the Buddha/ Bodhisattva were also made in the pre- Kaniṣka period. There can be no doubt that the seated images were made and installed in Buddhist monasteries during the pre- Kaniṣka period for Luders identifies at least five inscriptions of this period as coming from the bases of such images[32]. This brings to our notice a fragmentary sculpture of a Bodhisattva in the Mathurā Museum (GMM, No.A.66, fig.1). The Bodhisattva is now extant by his left leg with left hand placed on it and right foot which was in the cross-legged position. The epigraph on the pedestal is of vital importance as it records the installation of a Bodhisattva image by a Kshatrapa lady called Nanda for the acceptance of Sarvastivādin monks and for the welfare and happiness of all sentient beings[33]. The most important point is that some Kshatrapa is mentioned in it. However it does not refer to the reigning king. It is therefore possible that it was carved during the Kshatràpa period also on the basis of the early form of writing, style of carving and spotless hard stone of which it is made[34].

A fully preserved image possibly belonging to pre-Kaniṣka period is that of the Kaṭrā Bodhisattva (GMM.A.1, fig.2). The inscription states, "Buddharakhita's mother Amoha-asi has erected (this) Bodhisattva image together with her parents in her own convent (temple) for the welfare and happiness of all sentient beings"[35]. The fact that this image bears no date is a possible indication of its being made before Kaniṣka came to the throne as the images made during his reign or that of his successors, as a rule only omitted the date when there is no space in the rim of the pedestal for a long inscription[36]. We can see that this was certainly not the case here as part of the lower plinth has been left blank. The Kaṭrā image is a carefully integrated image expressing

power and authority, and deserves to be considered the classical statement of the type[37]. The inscription mentions that this image was placed in the convent or temple for the welfare and happiness of all sentient beings. Placing it in a temple seems to imply mass worship of the image which has been specifically identified as Bodhisattva rather than Buddha. There have been many views on this identification which will be discussed later.

What gives support to the production of such iconic images is the representation of the Master in architectural reliefs in small sizes in this period[38]. A small fragmentary relief panel discovered from Kankālī Tīlā, carved with a scene of discourse between the Buddha and a king in the State Museum, Lucknow (No.J.531,), is a very early representation of the Master carved almost in the form of a Yaksha. A railing fragment from Isāpur (GMM H.12) shows the Master seated upon a high pedestal supported by lions and surrounded by four standing figures offering alms bowls to the Buddha. They have been identified as the four lokpālas[39]. This representation of the Master could also be the earliest surviving representation[40]. A toraṇa beam in the Mathurā Museum (GMM.No.M.3) is of great significance as it represents a stage of transition between the symbols and the icons. *Bodhigṛha* and *dharmachakra* are on one side and on the other side is noticed a small anthropomorphic representation of the Buddha seated in *padmāsana* inside a cave.

These instances of representation of the Master stand in support of the possibility of iconic representation of the Master in pre-Kaniṣkan period under the identity of a Bodhisattva. We already have visual representation of Bodhisattvas in the jātaka narrative reliefs in Sānchī and Bharhut in symbolic forms as well as in human form. The iconic representation of the Master inscribed as Bodhisattva could perhaps be seen as a continuation of the tradition of representation of the Bodhisattvas in the jātaka narrative reliefs. This issue will be dealt with in much detail later.

Kaniṣka's rule has been considered as instrumental in the production of a number of Buddhist relics in Mathurā. It is generally presumed that patronage to Buddhism given by the Emperor was responsible for the production of large number of Buddhist statues from the very beginning of his assumption of power. However, while some Chinese sources present Kaniṣka as a great patron of Buddhism and compare him with Ashoka, the Turkish texts denounce him as a sinner[41]. Also there is no direct evidence to project him as a convert to Buddhism and his inclination towards the faith

is also seen as politically motivated. However, the fact remains that from the reign of Kaniṣka we have a large number of Buddhist relics. We have the earliest dated standing Bodhisattva image from his reign, viz. the one found at Kauśāmbi inscribed as belonging to the 2nd year of his reign[42]. It is a headless statue now in the Allahabad Museum (Acc.No.69). The inscription says, "In the year 2 of Maharaja Kaniṣka, on the 8th day of the second (month) of *hemanta*, (Buddhist) nun Buddhamitra, who is well versed in the Tripīṭaka, sets up (this image of) Bodhisattva at the promenade of the Lord Buddha". The information that the image of Bodhisattva was set up at the promenade of the Lord Buddha is of great interest. Clearly, the Buddha and the Bodhisattva here represent two different ideologies. We will come back to this later in our discussion on the identification of these iconic images as Bodhisattvas.

Kaniṣka's reign brings to light a number of seated and standing Bodhisattva images for the first time in a large number. A typical standing type Bodhisattva image has the following characteristics: the body is straight and stiff, the head is shaven with a top knot in the style of a snail shell (*kapārḍa*), the right hand is obliquely held in *abhaya mudra*, the left hand is held akimbo resting on the waist, a large halo, if intact, emerges from the shoulders and bears a scalloped border only while the remaining field is left blank, only the left arm and shoulder are covered with the folds of the drapery, the lower garment reaches below the knee and its hem rests on the left hand, the thinness and fine quality of the cloth is marked through its transparent effect and consequently the body appears semi-nude, and an object is seen between the two legs which is either a bunch of flowers surmounted on a knot of hair or a lion. Regarding the seated images a distinct formula seems to have been evolved by this period. Van Lohuizen terms it as 'Canonised or Kapārḍin Buddha' on the basis of the top hair on the head of the Buddha which is shaped like a small shell, kapārḍa[43]. The image is generally in high relief and not carved in the round. The features are clear and expressive. The nimbus bears the scalloped border. The back slap shows the foliage indicating the Bodhi tree. The upper two corners are occupied by two celestials hovering in the sky with wreaths in their hands. The deity is flanked by an acolyte on each side. The top hair on the head of the Buddha is shaped like a small shell, *kapārḍa*, the right arm is raised up in *abhaya*, the expression on the face of the deity is that of a slight smile, the left part of the body is covered by garment and the upper arm shows thick and heavy pleats, the left hand resting on the thigh and knee is sometimes clenched, the legs cross each other in *padmāsana*, the lower garment

covers the half leg only , the posture suggests some stiffness, the seat is shaped as an altar with ridges, and it is mostly supported by two or three lions.

A standard example given as representing the Kapārdin type is the Kaṭrā Bodhisattva mentioned earlier (fig.2). Though this stele, as discussed earlier, possibly belongs to the pre- Kaniṣka period, it, however, has all those characteristics that represent the Kapārdin type of Kaniṣka's reign. The standard example given for the standing type Bodhisattva is that of the monumental figure dedicated at Sārnāth by Bhikshu Bala(Sārnāth Museum, Acc.No.B.1, fig.3) in the year 3 of Kaniṣka era. This allows us to place the image within the first quarter of the 2nd century A.D. according to the latest conclusions on the advent of Kaṇiṣka's reign. The ten line inscription that accompanies this colossal statue says, "In the third year of Maharaja Kaniṣka, the third (month) of winter, the 22nd day, on this date (specified as) above, was (this gift) of Friar Bāla, a master of the Tripiṭakas and follower of Friar Pushyabuddhi (namely, an image of) the Bodhisattva and an umbrella with a post, erected at Banaras, at the place where the lord used to walk, together with (his) parents, with (his) masters and teachers, (his) followers and pupils and with (the nun) Buddhamitra versed in the Tripiṭaka, together with the kshatrap Vanashpara and Kharapallana and together with the four classes (monks, nuns, laymen and laywoman) for the welfare and happiness of all the creatures"[44]. Other short inscriptions are also engraved on the image giving almost the same information. Such monumental sizes of these images certainly point to a cultic following by the masses. Also the mention in the inscription that the image was erected for the welfare and happiness of all creatures itself implies a concern for the general wellbeing of the masses. The fact that this image was discovered at Sārnāth can be seen to suggest that as a part of a new cult large sums of money were collected and paid for a supervised carving of the statues in the workshop of Mathurā and then sent off to their destinations further East[45]. Though this image is dated to the third year of Kaniṣka's reign, it would be incorrect to assume that it was one of the first of its kind ever made. However quickly the fashion developed, however great the prestige of the Mathurā ateliers may already have been, it is natural for some time to have elapsed between the first acceptance of the type in Mathurā and the development of a general demand for Mathurā Buddha images at other and distant sites throughout the Ganges valley[46]. However, it is also to be kept in mind that the stylistic similarities of this image with those of similar types found in Mathurā itself should not necessarily be taken to mean that such images were imported from Mathurā. It is

very much likely that such images were made at the find-place itself, especially with regard to places like Sārnath and Kauśāmbi both of which had significant image making traditions of their own. Coming back to our point, it seems that the tradition of representing the standing type Bodhisattva too goes back to pre-Kaṇiṣkan times.

We come across a number of such seated and standing images of the Master from Kaniṣka's time. According to Prudence Myer these early Bodhisattva images were intended as anthropomorphic symbols of the Three Refuges (*trisarana*) which the Buddhists still invoke: I take refuge in the Buddha;I take refuge in the Dharma; I take refuge in the Sangha[47]. What has intrigued scholars is that these images have been mostly inscribed as Bodhisattva and not Buddha. There have been several viewpoints with regard to this peculiar characteristic of these images. One of the reasons given for this phenomenon is that images with such an inscription represent Bodhisattva Siddhārtha Gautama before the time of his Enlightenment[48]. It is also suggested that the term 'Bodhisattva' was used for the Buddha dressed like a monk under the impact of the Mahāyāna system of Buddhism on the donors and artists of Mathurā. Since one of its main tenets was the ideal of the compassionate and the altruist Bodhisattva, this is seen to be the reason why the first stage of Śākyamuṇi's life, until his Enlightenment, had been emphasized by the designation 'Bodhisattva' in the inscription although the enlightened Buddha was meant[49]. According to R.C.Sharma, in the early stages of the evolution of the Buddha image, the human figure of the Buddha was reluctantly or inconspicuously shown[50]. The reluctance is shown either through a tiny figure of the Buddha or through captioning the represented deity as Bodhisattva. V.S.Agrawal is of the opinion that these early images represent Bodhisattva Gautama himself who after renunciation donned the monk's robe in order to attain Buddhahood[51]. This stage between his *abhinishkramaṇa* and *sambodhi* is technically known as that of a Bodhisattva i.e. a Buddha in the making. According to Agrawal Mathurā sculptures evolved this formula of the Bodhisattva figure by thinking of Gautama as a monk moving about in quest of knowledge in a monk's robe and this, he feels, agreed quite well with the figures of monks which they saw in actual contemporary life. However, a seated image from Anyor near Goverdhan in the Mathurā Museum(GMM.No.A.2. fig.4) which is a Kapārdin style representation of the Śākyamuṇi, differs in some respect. The surviving inscription says "Buddha pratima.." i.e. a Buddha image[52]. Regarding this, Agrawal is of the view that in the earliest stages of Buddha's iconography the technical distinction of showing the

Bodhisattva figures as a prince clad in royal garments and ornaments was not thought of, and in art both were treated indiscriminately with the aid of an inscription on the pedestal to declare their identity[53].

While we do not know which one of all these reasons stated above for the identification of the early images as Bodhisattvas is valid, the fact, however, remains that it was important to distinguish these images by means of inscription. This implies a shift in ideology with the change in the term used for the image.

These seated and standing images of the Śākyamuṇi have been adapted from pre-existing visual traditions. While we find seated figures intended to represent ascetics, hermits or Brāhmins in the early Central Indian School, as for instance in the railings of Bharhut andSānchī, owing to their clumsiness, it does not seem appropriate to say that the seated Bodhisattva types have been derived from them[54]. It is, on the other hand, suggested that the seated type have been derived from the tiny figures of the Jinas depicted on the early āyāgapaṭṭas. It is held that such miniatures antedated the development of independent images. With regard to the standing Bodhisattva figures it has been generally understood that they have been derived from the pre-existing Yaksha images or images of other supernatural beings. It has also been suggested that the King type figures have provided the prototype for the standing Bodhisattva images[55], in other words that the standing type Bodhisattvas are simply royal figures without crown and ornaments. Myer traces their iconography to the image from Ganeshrā (SML, Acc.No.B12b, fig.5) which belongs to pre- Kaniṣka period[56]. According to him the treatment of the lower portions of the standing Bodhisattva images are formally derived from this splendidly bejeweled Ganeshrā figure of the pre- Kaniṣka period. The stance, gestures and drapery of this monumental figure are seen to anticipate those of Bala's Bodhisattvas which are commonly found in Kaniṣka's reign. The Ganeshrā figure's *uttariya* hangs down to the calf and its free end is disposed in a lavish loop that falls over the left arm, while one of the pleated ends of his transparent *paridhana* loops down to the knee and is gathered up and grasped by the left hand. The great swag formed by the upper garment is seen to resemble that of the Bala-type *sanghati*. The identity of this figure however remains a puzzle for it lacks the obesity characterizing the monumental Yakshas. Myer refers to it as a Bodhisattva because its splendid dress and adornments resemble those of Gandhāran Bodhisattvas. However since ornamented Bodhisattvas of this kind

belong to the Mahāyāna branch of Buddhism which did not develop until the Kuṣāṇa period she says that the image could represent an otherwise lost type of Bodhisattva or a Yaksha or it could have belonged to some other cult. She also suggests that it or very similar images were adapted for later Buddhist images, not only for those dedicated by Bāla but also for representing Maitreya.

Coming back to the typical seated type Bodhisattvas from Kaniṣka's reign and onwards, it is important for us to direct our attention to the acolytes that accompany the central figure. The space occupied by these acolytes is of great importance in the present study. While they are simply attendant figures bearing *chauri* in adoration of the central figure, in some cases they also hold certain attributes on the basis on which it seems possible to deduce their identities. Van Lohuizen holds that both personages wear royal attires: necklaces, ear-rings, bracelets, and turbans[57]. Consequently she calls them exalted beings. According to Coomaraswamy they are Yakshas, borrowed from popular belief by the Buddhists[58].

Lets take into consideration the attending secondary figures in the Kaṭrā stele and a partially destroyed stele in the Boston Museum (figs.2and fig.6). The Boston Museum stele is partially destroyed and the inscription too has not survived. The attendant figure on the right holds a flywhisk but the one to the left is holding an object near to the hip which is identifiable as a *vajra*. The same figure is distinguished by very short pants and something tied around the neck. Even in the Kaṭrā stele (fig.2), the left adorant does not seem to carry a flywhisk but a thunderbolt[59]. From these instances Van Lohuizen infers that a *vajra* bearer often seems to have been represented by the side of the central figure[60]. She deduces that these vajra bearers are Indra, the god to whom of old the thunderbolt was attributed. According to her Vajrapāni is one of Indra's surnames. With the identification of one of the figures as Indra, she concludes that the other acolyte with the flywhisk is Brahma as flywhisk has always been one of his typical attributes. She disagrees with Coomaraswamy's opinion that the figure with the *vajra* would be known as Yaksha Vajrapāni, who had no relation whatsoever to Indra, but from whom the Bodhisattva Vajrapāni would later have originated. In support of her opinion she gives the example of a pedestal fragment of a Buddha image in Lucknow Museum (Acc.No.B18, fig.7). Only one line of the epigraph survives which says, "On the sixth day of the second month of winter....(the image of the) Bodhisattva was dedicated for the welfare of parents....."[61]. Although the

date has been broken away, she dates it to a very early period, from the time before Kaniṣka on the basis of the palaeography, the corpulent representation of the two figures on the pedestal, the shawl of the figure at our left hand and the way the monk's robe flows across the Buddha's legs. The figure on the right has been identified as god Indra on the basis of the high mitre which he alone wears in the reliefs from Gandhāra and Mathurā. With both the hands he lifts the *vajra*. Like the figure to the left, he is seated in *lalitāsana*, the attitude especially assumed by monarchs or gods. The figure to the left has a shawl thrown round his shoulders in the same wide loop which is seen on figures on the early āyāgapaṭṭas. He holds his hands in *anjali mudra* and is also corpulent. The hair is arranged in a coil. Van Lohuizen identifies this figure as none other than Brahma. Both these figures are turned towards each other and represented as if in a lively discussion. It is suggested that their attitude could represent passages in the *Mahāvastu*, according to which Brahma and Indra, after the Enlightenment of the Buddha, first discussed among themselves their request to the "Exalted One" to set rolling the wheel of Dharma[62]. Van Lohuizen points out that in Gandhāra, Brahma and Indra form a permanent couple on either side of the Master and this custom therefore goes back to a very old Indian iconographic tradition, for even at the time when the Master was still indicated by a symbol we find both these gods in adoration on either side of an empty seat under a Bodhitree. Therefore she concludes that although some haut reliefs may be found on which both acolytes hold a flywhisk, and are consequently not clearly characterized as Indra and Brahma, there are yet several other reliefs in which the acolytes represented are undoubtedly Indra and Brahma. She adds that it was customary in the earliest Indian representations to render Indra and Brahma as worshippers on either side of the Buddha and the Mahāvīra, the intention being to express that the two highest gods of Hinduism came to worship the Buddha.

However it is important to bring to our notice an uninscribed stele of Kaṭrā style from Ahichhattra which is now in the Indian Museum collection (Acc.No.25524, fig.8). Here both the attendants carry flywhisks on one hand. The other hands of both the figures hold different objects. The figure on the right side of the central figure seems to hold a *vajra* in his right hand of the same type as mentioned above, whereas the figure on the left clearly holds a flower with a long stalk. It does not seem appropriate to call this flower-holding attendant Brahma. On the other hand it seems more appropriate to call them prototypes of Padmapāni Bodhisattva. Taking another

example, fig.9 is a similar stele discovered from Ahichhattra belonging to Huviṣka's reign according to the year mentioned in the inscription. It is a Kaṭrā style (Fig.2) stele but in high relief. The three lined inscription says, "In the year 32, in the fourth month of the winter (*hemanta*), on the 8th day, on this (date specified as) above, this is the gift of the monk Viraṇa with his mother and father and his issues for the benefit and happiness of all teachers together with elderly *śramaṇas* and with disciples". The central figure is seated in the usual protection pose and the left hand is clenched on the knee. He is flanked by Vajrapāni on the right and Padmapāni on the left replacing the earlier *chauri* bearers. The figure of Vajrapāni is clad in a Scythian or Northern dress wearing a flat turban with a criss-cross motif. The buckled scarf round the neck and the short lower garment or short pants are also alien in form. While we call this figure Vajrapāni, it seems more appropriate to identify this figure with Vajrapāni, the Yaksha who, according to the Mahāyāna traditions accompanied the Buddha on his (apocryphal) journey to Gandhāra[63]. In other words, it seems inappropriate to identify this figure as Bodhisattva Vajrapāni of the later tradition only on the basis of the thunderbolt held by him. Similar is the case with Padmapāni here. By Padmapāni we mean here someone 'holding a lotus in hand'[64]. The lotuses held in his hand and his juxtaposition as a counterpart of Vajrapāni do not permit a secure identification of this figure as Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara as it is only in the reign of the "Later" Kuṣāṇa king Kaniṣka II, that fully developed images of Avalokiteshvara have been created by the artists of Mathurā[65]. The Padmapāni here may belong to the initial stage of evolution of the complex personage of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara. Huntington brings to light that the depiction of Vajrapāni here antedates any known direct textual reference to Vajrapāni by approximately three hundred years as it is not until the sixth- century translations of Buddhist texts into Chinese that there is any reference to Vajrapāni[66]. According to him the 'quasi-Herculean' Vajrapāni, and Padmapāni who may or may not be a hypostasis of Avalokiteshvara at this time, are a clear representation of the well-known karuṇā-prajñā, the coefficients of Bodhi so universal in the Mahāyāna Buddhism. He compares this formulation of the images to that of the representation of Vajrapāni-Padmapāni as accompanying a central Buddha figure in Ajanta, Aurangabad and Ellora as well as many other Western Deccan caves. He is of the opinion that these caves have a strong presence of esoteric Buddhism. Also from the fact that the *maṇḍalas* of both *Mahavairocana-sūtra* and *Manjuśrimūlakalpa* use the two Bodhisattvas to flank the central Buddha he

concludes that the Ahichchattra stele demonstrates the presence of some form of esoteric Buddhism in the second century A.D.

Coomaraswamy traces the prototypes of these steles or rather triads to triads representing the symbolic form of the Master attended on either side by adorants in Sānchī[67]. If we look at the Sānchī North torana, outer face, we find, on the topmost architrave in the centre a Dharma-Chakra (Wheel), that is to say, the Buddha turning the Wheel of the Law, in other words preaching the first sermon at Benaras; and on either side, though one is now missing, a *chauri* bearing Yaksha[68]. Again, between the lowest and second architraves we see three uprights[69], in the centre a Bodhi-tree, representing the Buddha on the occasion of the Great Enlightenment, and on either side a Yaksha holding a rose lotus. He points out that chauri bearing type persists long after the anthropomorphic images appear but is later on replaced by differentiated Bodhisattva types holding attributes. The lotus bearing figures just mentioned can be described from an iconographic point of view as Padmapāni, that is to say, 'having a lotus in the hand'. While it is not so that these figures already represent the Bodhisattva Padmapāni, Coomaraswamy asserts that when it became necessary to present this Bodhisattva, the type lay ready to hand. He also suggests that it may well be that the very conception of a Bodhisattva Padmapāni was suggested by the existence of Padmapāni Yakshas. A parallel case is that of Yaksha Vajrapāni[70], originally the Buddha's faithful attendant, later the Bodhisattva Vajrapāni.

The padma-bearing Yaksha finds representation a number of times in ancient Indian sculpture. For instance, Sānchī guardian Yaksha at the base of a pillar, north torana; Amin (Thaneshwar) Yaksha with padma in hand; and Mathurā Yaksha on railing pillar with lotuses in right hand[71]. The pillar at the northern entranceway in Bhārhūt, now in the Indian Museum, Kolkata, features Ajakalaka Yaksha (fig.10) as the inscription says[72]. He is shown standing on a human figure, holding a half-blossomed lotus in the right hand with his left hand in the *kaṭihasta* pose. We, therefore, have a Yaksha with an identity holding a lotus as its attribute. He is represented together with Kubera (guardian of the North) and Chandra Yakshi.

We, therefore, have enough instances indicating that the padma-holder was, in fact, a frequently represented figure in the ancient Indian sculpture. This brings us again to Coomaraswamy's contention just mentioned above, that when it became necessary to represent Bodhisattva Padmapāni, the type already lay ready to hand.

Coming back to Mathurā steles we were previously discussing, they are found from pre- Kaniṣkan times onwards until further into Huviṣka's reign. In the last years of Huviṣka we no longer have acolytes accompanying the main figure[73]. This will be discussed in detail later.

Huviṣka's phase has been marked by the emergence of Gandhāran traits. From the time of his reign Mathurā sculptor begins to make distinction between the Buddha and Bodhisattva figures as a result of which the confusion between the two disappears[74]. More contacts with Gandhāra resulted in the assimilation of several western traits in the art of Mathurā though at the same time some traits of Kaniṣka's time are still retained. The Ahichhatra stele in National Museum, New Delhi (Acc.No.L.55.75, fig.9) of the year 32, belonging to Huviṣka's reign is probably the earliest dated Buddhist image reflecting Gandhāra impact[75]. It can be placed around mid-second century A.D. going by the latest developed chronology. The figure of Vajrapāni that flanks the central figure on the right side is clad in a Scythian or Northern dress (*uḍicyaveśa*) wearing a flat turban with a criss-cross motif. The buckled scarf round the neck and the short lower garment or short pants are also alien in form. Besides, the thunderbolt in the right hand, the physiognomy is apparently non-Indian. The ladies worshipping the Bodhi tree on the pedestal wear sarees in the Scythian fashion. The additional thick pleats on the left shoulder of the central figure of the Master is also considered a result of Gandhāran impact. However, the remaining features of the stele are still those of Kapārdin type Buddha steles of Kaniṣka's reign. Further into Huviṣka's reign the increasing Gandhāra impact is reflected by the garment of the Buddha figures that now entirely cover his body showing a ribbed effect and covering both shoulders unlike in earlier images. The garment that drapes the body is broadly pleated, the right hand is in *abhaya mudra* as usual and the raised left hand gathers up a part of the garment. With the culmination of Gandhāra impact in the last years of Huviṣka's reign the ribbed effect of the drapery is transformed into the shutter effect which continues for a long time[76].

The genesis of the visual representation of Maitreya Buddha in Mathurā has amused scholars in this field. While a lot of attention has been given to Mathurā and its role in the origin of the Buddha image, we almost fail to notice that the beginning of the visual representation of Maitreya in the art of Mathurā also probably goes back to a very long time. It is even believed that the Sarvastivādins of Mathurā might have been

willing to accept images of Maitreya at a time when they still avoided the representation of Śākyamuṇi himself[77]. This is supported by the belief that for the Buddhists Maitreya was the living model to be followed rather than the Śākyamuṇi who had passed into the final Nirvana[78]. It is even held possible that the figure from Ganeshrā (SML, No.B.12b, fig.5) depicted the Future Buddha on grounds of the similarity in surface modeling, stances and proportions with the later Maitreya images[79].

However, there is the problem of dating the early Maitreya images. Fig.11 now in the National Museum, New Delhi, was discovered from Ahichhattra. The surviving last line of the inscription says, "*Maitreya pratima pratishthapita..*"[80]. As the inscription says, it is a standing figure of Bodhisattva Maitreya. He holds a flask in the suspended left hand. The right arm is raised up in usual protection pose. Heavy earrings, flat torque, a necklace, three bracelets and armlet are his ornaments. The waist band is also carved with floral motifs. A *yajñopavita* runs across his torso. The *kamandalu* is held in the left hand. Despite the lower garment the bareness of the body is conspicuous. The figure has been dated to the early years of Huviṣka's reign on stylistic basis[81]. It is comparatively less voluminous, with a tendency to reducing mass as compared to earlier standing images. It is in this figure that small curls of hair are seen for the first time in the art of Mathurā[82]. It is this very feature that makes it impossible to push back the date of this Maitreya image prior to the reign of Huviṣka while the remaining features of the image point to an early phase[83]. P.L.Gupta traces its probable date to the period of Maharaja Śoḍāṣa on palaeographic grounds[84]. It is worth noting another representation of Maitreya on the tympanum from Jamālpur (fig.12) now in the National Museum, New Delhi (Acc.No.1.1) which further adds to the complexity of the issue. The seated Maitreya represented here almost seems like just a seated version of the standing Ahichhattra statue. Czuma dates this tympanum to early pre- Kaniṣka period[85]. Czuma's dating is mainly on the basis of the fact that this tympanum represents a begging bowl and a turban, both of which are symbolic representations of the Buddha. He considers the appearance of these symbolic representations, and the Buddha and the Bodhisattva in human form together in one space as indications that they belong to the period of transition from the aniconic to the anthropomorphic stage which is the early pre- Kaniṣka period.

It has been pointed out that the standing Maitreya in the Lucknow Museum (Acc.No.B.83, fig.13) maybe the oldest among all the available examples of the Maitreya image from the art region of Mathurā[86]. The notable features of this image are: the presence of the *chhatra* above the head, the absence of the V-shaped necklace, and the presence of a relatively large-sized water vase. The head of this image, when closely observed, reveals small circles in two or three rows. This representation of the *chhatra* needs to be noted as the *chhatra* used to be commonly placed behind the fully rounded Buddha–Bodhisattva images of the pre- Kaniṣka or early Kaniṣka period. The flat circular necklace around the neck recalls that of the attendant or chauri bearer of the early seated Buddha/Bodhisattva images of pre-Kuṣāṇa and early Kuṣāṇa period(Fig.2). Therefore, on the basis of these features it has been suggested that this image of Maitreya is probably one of the earliest representations[87].

After considering all evidences, it seems that Maitreya icons were made at least by the time of the early period of Kaniṣka's reign. At the same time we are aware of the possibility of them being made even in the pre- Kaniṣkan times in which case we are bound to reconsider the proposed dates of Huviṣka period for the introduction of the small-curls hair type and conclude that this type was known to the early Mathurā artist before the generally accepted date[88]. It is possible that this curly hair style was made only for the Maitreya images by the early artists of Mathurā during the Kuṣāṇa period and was not necessarily a style developed after the Kapārdin type[89]. This could also explain the appearance of these two types of hair style, the Kapārdin type and the small curls hair type simultaneously in a same panel as in fig.12. Another important fact supporting this proposal is that there is not a single image of Maitreya having the so-called Kapārdin type hair style[90].

We have a lower half and pedestal of a seated figure, probably Maitreya, flanked by two smaller attendants (GMM. Acc.No.2879, fig.14) found at Girdhārpur, Mathurā District. The key to identification here is the water vessel- the *kamaṇḍalu*- held in the left hand. The inscription reads, "In the year 29 of Maharaja Huviṣka, fourth month of the rainy season, first day; on that day (as specified above) this image was installed by Karatita (a resident) of Araki in the ....vihāra for the acceptance of the Dharmaguptikas for the welfare of all beings"[91]. The image and the date inscribed give us an idea of the tradition of dedicating iconic Maitreya images by time of the

early years of Huviṣka. Taking this image and the images of Maitreya discussed earlier, it seems possible to deduce a mass following of Maitreya at least by the time of Huviṣka. Apart from being independently represented, Maitreya images also appear in small sizes in architectural reliefs. Further down the line Maitreya is represented on the pedestals of Buddha images, on architectural friezes along with Mānuṣi Buddhas, or Śākyamuṇi or with the ornamented Buddha probably representing Prince Siddhārtha.

By the last years of Huviṣka we have another Maitreya type that emerges in the Mathurā region. This type is characterized by the presence of a crown on the head and appears quite different from the Maitreya images discussed above[92]. In other words the crown is added to the small-curl hair type of the early Maitreya images, and often the top of the *uṣnīṣa* is intentionally kept visible and it projects out from the top of the crown. A stone relief from an architectural fragment from Jamālpur mound now in the Lucknow Museum(SML,Acc.No.B.208, fig.15). Maitreya figure is seen on the lower frieze to the right of the image of perhaps the donor figure in the Indo-Scythian garb in *namaskāra mudra*. The ornamentation, the hand gesture, the seated posture, and the garment type are all same as the earlier representations while the head is adorned with a crown not seen in the earlier types. Fig.16(SML,Acc.No.B.82) is another such representation of Maitreya of this type. It is suggested that Mathurā artists, being aware of Maitreya's nature as the celestial Bodhisattva, the ruling figure in the Tushita realm, depicted the crown to symbolize this celestial nature of the Maitreya[93]. In other words, this adaptation was made through literary rather than artistic influence as according to the *Lalitavistāra* the Śākyamuṇi Buddha, before leaving Tushita heaven, put his diadem on the head of Maitreya, who became the leader of thirty two thousand Bodhisattvas[94].

The Maitreya Buddha is often shown along with Scythian figures in adoration. From a good number of such representations that have survived from Huviṣka's reign onwards it seems possible to deduce that Maitreya was popular among the Scythians[95]. It is believed that the Bodhisattva ideal itself must have spread rapidly among them, igniting great popular enthusiasm. Perhaps the ideal of the Maitreya Buddha to some degree accommodated the theological needs of the recently converted frontier people[96]. The concept of Maitreya probably worked well for the Northwesterners because Maitreya being the Buddha-to-come whose guidance will

lead myriads of the faithful to salvation, similar doctrines of a Messianic savior had been current throughout the ancient Orient. We have discussed about this in the second chapter. Among the Jews, particularly in their Babylonian captivity, there had been intense anticipation of the coming ideal king who would bring salvation to Israel. The role of Jesus, as the Messiah come among men, had greatly strengthened the awareness of the principle as Christianity spread throughout the Roman Empire. Among the Iranians, there was belief in the Shaoshayant, the Avestic leader of the Pure Ones, who will come to subdue evil finally at the end of creation. So here was Maitreya Buddha of the Buddhist legends who was the Buddha-to-come for the emancipation of the many. Looking at fig.14 again from Girdhārpur, it is a lower half and pedestal of a seated figure of Maitreya as identified by the water vessel held in the left hand. As mentioned earlier the inscription says that the image was installed in the year 29 of the Maharaja Huviṣka, fourth month of the rainy season by a Karatita of Araki for the acceptance of Dharmaguptikas and for the welfare of all beings. On its pedestal the four figures flanking a chakrastambha are clear examples of Scythian donor types, both male and female. According to Rosenfield the donor's name and place of origin seem to be North-Western: Karatita from Araki[97]. Rosenfield brings about the significance of the mention of the Dharmaguptakas[98]. He points out that the Dharmaguptakas, which is a Hinayāna sect, played a primordial role in the evangelization of Central Asia and China, and in India the school was established in areas where Indo-Scythians had settled- Uddiyāna, Saurāshtra as well as Mathurā. He notes that this is only the second inscribed work of art to be associated directly with the school. He points out that the Dharmaguptakas are commonly mentioned in ancient sources as an offshoot of Mahishāsakas and are closely related to Sarvastivādins. Also they were strong supporters of the cult of the Bodhisattvas and added to their Tripiṭaka a *Bodhisattvapitaka*. This image dedicated by the Dharmaguptakas is another affirmation of what is otherwise well known: that the worship of this deity flourished in the Hinayāna as well as the Mahāyāna circles.

The figure of Maitreya is unique for the Brāhamanic element fundamental to his nature. The *kamaṇḍalu* and the *yajñopavita* are said to reflect the Brāhamanic aspect of his nature[99]. However, it may be observed that *kamaṇḍalu* cannot be deemed as unique to Brāhmanism as it was widely used in the Śramaṇa tradition as well. Also we have various instances of representations of Nāga figures with *kamaṇḍalu* in one hand. Rosenfield relates these visual characteristics of the figure of Maitreya to

passages in texts where Maitreya has been depicted as one born into a Brāhmin family[100]. In these texts the Śākyamuṇi is described as predicting the future career of Maitreya. Śākyamuṇi states that when Maitreya, after dwelling in the Tushita paradise, returns to earth in the future, he will be born into the family of the Brahman Purohita of the Chakravartin ruler of Ketumati (the future name of Banāras); his father will be Subrahamana, learned in the four Vedas, in sacred formulas, etymology, and grammatical analyses; his mother will be Brahamāvati. Maitreya himself will have the superior quality of a Brāhamaṇa. Rosenfield brings to light that the Brāhamanic element is a constant factor in the literature of the Bodhisattva through the fifth century A.D. perhaps reflecting an intense doctrinal competition and conflict among the Buddhists and orthodox Brāhamanas. He points out that the Pali canon claims that the Buddhists had restored the purity of the profession of spiritual inquiry from which the Brāhamins had strayed[101]. There are various instances in a number of texts that reflect a constant tension between the Buddhists and the Brāhmins. And here we have the figure of Maitreya who is born in a Brahmin family but who follows the path of the Buddha, a clear indication of acceptance of the Buddhist tradition over the Vedic-Brāhamanical tradition.

In the Buddhist art of Mathurā we also find frequent representations of an ornamented figure. This princely figure has been generally identified as that of Bodhisattva Siddhārtha in a stage before Enlightenment. It is generally represented seated in *padmāsana* and hands in *dhyāna mudra*. This figure has been frequently represented on the pedestals of Buddha images or in architectural reliefs with devotees in Indo-Scythian garb[102]. V.S.Agarwal is of the opinion that in the Kuṣāṇa art of the reign of Huviṣka the Bodhisattva images are as a rule distinguished from those of the Buddha by royal ornaments and drapery befitting a prince[103]. According to him this iconographic form of the Bodhisattva did not exist from the very beginning. However, there is a standing princely figure in the Mathurā Museum which, according to Sharma, belongs to Kaniṣka's period[104]. One could, perhaps, still say that the seated kinds began to be represented from the time of Huviṣka. However, we have a representation of the seated type too going back to a much earlier time. Fig.17 is the reverse side of fig.12 which is the tympanum from Jamālpur. We have the representation of the seated ornamented Bodhisattva in *dhyāna mudra*. As discussed earlier, this tympanum has been even dated to pre- Kaniṣka period on the basis that the entire tympanum has both symbolic and figural representations of the Buddha

which indicates a period of transition from the aniconic to the anthropomorphic stage. Therefore, it seems that we are not in a position to state conclusively that princely type figures were not represented before Huviṣka's reign. However, we find these seated figures in a good number from and after Huviṣka's reign, and they are usually shown attended by figures in Indo-Scythian garb on the front of the pedestals. Such representations of Maitreya, Buddha and Prince Siddhārtha on the front of the pedestal adored by the Indo-Scythian figures is said to be a Gandhāran characteristic because in the steles of the earlier period holy symbols were shown in place of the Buddha or Bodhisattva in the centre[105].

With regard to these seated ornamented figures Rosenfield comes up with a different theory altogether[106]. According to Rosenfield this figure could be considered the *uttama* Bodhisattva (the Bodhisattva par excellence) or the Bodhisattva Mahāsattva which is a term used generically in the early Mahāyāna literature in reference to the personification of active altruism. He is of the opinion that in most essential respects, this was the prototype of the fully developed concept of Avalokiteshvara, whose autonomous imagery and cult did not become stabilized until the Gupta period in spite of existence of certain tentatifs in the third century. One of the examples of this figure is the pedestal of a lost standing image of Śākyamuṇi (who is so named in the inscription) exported from Mathurā to Sānchī and dedicated in the 22nd year of the new Kuṣaṇa era (Sanchi Museum, Acc.No.A.83, fig.18)[107]. The deity is flanked by an array of Indo-Scythians bearing bouquets and other gifts. Seated in meditation, he wears a turban with a large frontal plate in whose centre is a kind of bud or vase; he has an *urṇa*; earrings hang down onto his shoulders; there are amulets about his arms and wrists, a heavy necklace and a torque about his neck; a scarf is wound about his left shoulder and forearm. Many representations of this figure survive belonging to the same period.

Rosenfield refers to the description of the Māravijaya in Ashvaghosha's Buddhacharita (Chapter XIII) where an invisible character tells Mara that Śākyamuṇi is like a great physician, pitying the world in its distress, diseases and passions. He is described as a dependable informant when the caravan is lost- a lamp of knowledge for beings lost in the darkness. He has seen the world drowning in the great flood of the cycle of existence, unable to find the further shore, and he will ferry it across-to release from rebirth. His one desire is to free mankind from the snares of delusion. So

great are his vow, his energy, his psychic power, and his compassion for creation that he has become invincible. Rosenfield also refers to the Mahāyāna appendix of three chapters that were added to a Hinayāna meditation manual, the *Yogāchārabhūmishāstra* written by the monk Sangharaksha, in 284 AD, when the work was translated into Chinese by the Yueh-chih monk Dharmaraksha, then at Tun Huang. He points out that the appendix presents a lengthy series of aphorisms and parables which define a Bodhisattva's functions, who is never specified or named except as Bodhisattva Mahāsattva- a kind of archetypal being. The description of this Bodhisattva is similar to the description given by Ashvaghosha of Śākyamuṇi's compassion. The Bodhisattva is described here as being the guide of a caravan who restores order and reassures travelers when they are deluded and frightened. He considers all beings as his children; he does not hesitate to save them even though he submits to the torments of transmigration; he understands the sadness of the three spheres and without any longer seeing *samsāra* vows the salvation of men.

According to Rosenfield, these primary qualities which the Bodhisattva Mahāsattva possesses are those which later become the basic ones of Avalokiteshvara. So also the aphorisms of Ashvaghosha used to describe the compassionate Śākyamuṇi comprise a part of the role of Avalokiteshvara. With the sum of this evidence Rosenfield comes to the conclusion that Avalokiteshvara is indeed a deification or hypostatization of a moment in the biography of Śākyamuṇi. According to Rosenfield it was the compassion of the Tathāgata which was hypostatized in the figure of Avalokiteshvara. He observes that in the second century A.D. the ideal of Śākyamuṇi himself as the Lord of Mercy must have been a dominant element in popular Buddhism. He is also of the opinion that the early Buddha images of the Mathurā school have been inscribed as Bodhisattva emphasizing the compassion and altruism in Śākyamuṇi's nature.

Therefore, as per Rosenfiled, these seated princely figures are a representation of the Bodhisattva Mahāsattva who is the personification of the above described qualities, and also a prototype of Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara. However, it is important here to note that in the Buddhist literature the term Mahāsattva has been used as hardly different from the term, Bodhisattva[108]. Mahāsattva is, indeed commonly used along with the term Bodhisattva; for example, in the Saddharmapundarika Sūtra, Maitreya is called the 'Bodhisattva Mahāsattva Maitreya', and Siddhārtha is addressed by the

name 'Bodhisattva Mahāsattva Simha'[109]. Therefore it seems incorrect to say that Bodhisattva Mahāsattva is a particular Bodhisattva.

We find a good number of Bodhisattva heads with Dhyani Buddhas portrayed in the headdresses. These headdresses evidently belong to iconic images of Bodhisattvas. The drapery worn by the Dhyāni Buddha on the headdress shows the shutter effect which is traceable in Buddha images coming from the last years of Huviṣka onwards[110]. From this it seems valid to conclude that these images were not made at least before the last years of Huviṣka. These headdresses reflect that the Bodhisattvas to whom they belong, were frequently dedicated. One such headdress is the one represented in fig.19 (GMM, No.2336) belonging to Padmapāni Avalokiteshvara[111]. The Dhyāni Buddha in the centre of the crown is seated in *padmāsana* on a lotus, and has his hands in *dhyāna mudra*. Therefore he is identified as Amitabha Buddha[112]. We also have heads of Maitreya Buddha with Dhyāni Buddha represented on the headdresses.

Regarding Vajrapāni Bodhisattva we do not have enough evidence to establish a proper practice of Vajrapāni representation. Vogel has published a headless and legless fragment of a standing image which is ornamented around the neck, garlanded and holding a vajra-type implement in the unbroken left hand (fig.20)[113]. From what he holds, it maybe possible to deduce that the image represents Vajrapāni. But there is no definite proof that identifies this figure as so since there is no surviving inscription or any other evidence. As to the period to which it belongs, considering the individuality of the image, we could say that it probably comes from around the same time as those of the Dhyāni Buddha heads i.e. from the last years of Huviṣka.

According to Grittli Von Mitterwallner, standing and seated images of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteshavara for worship on an altar are first found in the reign of Kaniṣka II[114]. She sees this in the context of a fresh outburst of artistic activity in the reign of Kaniṣka II. She is against the general opinion that the Kuṣāṇa empire degenerated after Vāsudeva I and holds that on the contrary political and economical situations improved with the advent of Kaniṣka II. She holds that the large number of inscribed coins that have survived from the time of Kaniṣka II has to be a result of a certain political stability and economic prosperity during his reign which enabled donors and devotees of Buddhist, Jaina and Brāhamanical faith at Mathurā to give many icons at this site in his time and also invent many new image types. She also

adds that during his reign a new wave of influence from Gandhāra has been observed in the images of Mathurā. This has been best reflected in the amulet- cases of seated icons of Bodhisattva Siddhārtha and in the amulet cases and sandals of seated and standing images of Bodhisattvas Maitreya and Avalokiteshvara. Mitterwallner brings to light a fragmentary image in the characteristic spotted red sandstone said to be in an unknown private collection in the U.S.A. This has been identified as having formed a part of a standing Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara. The image displays many long hair-strands, uncurled at the ends, on both shoulders; a long and thick undulating lotus stem is carved on the proper left side of the body which ends in a semi -open lotus blossom the seed capsule of which is turned towards the head of Avalokiteshvara. The stem of the lotus was once held by the left hand near the hip. From the way the stem is carved, Mitterwallner deduces that it must have grown up from the ground by the side of the Bodhisattva. The breast and neck of this image are decorated with the same kind of amulet cord and necklaces as the torso(GMM, Acc.No.A.46, fig.21) in the Mathurā Museum. Mitterwallner has dated this piece in the private collection to the reign of Kaniṣka II on the basis of the similarity of its face to that of Skandha (GMM, Acc.No.42.2949, fig.22) belonging to the year 11 of Kaniṣka II[115]. The torso (fig.21) has also been identified as that of Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara on the basis of its resemblance to the fragment in the U.S.A. It was found near the Jamālpur mound and measures in height from the neck to beneath the navel 72.5 cm. Because of the size of what remains it is deducible that it belonged to a monumental statue. Mitterwallner is of the opinion that the strands of uncurled hair at their ends seem to have been a characteristic feature of the standing Avalokiteshvara images in the reign of Kaniṣka II. He distinguishes them from the standing images of the Bodhisattva Maitreya of the same period which are shown with long hair strands too, but these are curled into locks at their ends. These two Bodhisattvas have the same kind of breast decoration. So according to Mitterwallner the artists of Mathurā must have felt the need to distinguish between the two Bodhisattvas by giving Avalokiteshvara straight hair strands and Maitreya long curly locks.

We also have seated icons of Avalokiteshavara. This is borne out of several surviving fragmentary images. The most well preserved of them is the one in the Kronos Collection[116] (fig.23). This image depicts the Bodhisattva seated on a rectangular stool of shallow depth, ornamented in the front with wicker-work design. His turban is decorated with a large circular crest, in front of which the miniature figure of the

haloed Amitābha Buddha is seated on a lotus in *dhyāna mudra* which serves as a key for the appropriate identification of the seated main personage as that of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara. The Bodhisattva touches his head with the index finger of his right hand, while his left lies at ease on his upper thigh with its palm turned up. Like the torso discussed above, this image too has a string with amulet cases around the breast, which together with the necklaces point to influence from Gandhāra. Another feature of the Gandhara impact are the sandals worn by the figure. The gesture which the figure of Avalokiteshvara here displays is a pensive thoughtful one, which according to Mitterwallner, is of no surprise if one recalls that it is this Bodhisattva who is known as the embodiment of compassion (*karuṇā*)[117]. There exist at least three more such seated Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara in fragmentary condition. Two of them are in the Government Museum Mathurā (Acc.Nos. A.47 and 41.2916), and one in the Indian Museum, Calcutta (Acc.No.25031). Mitterwallner dates the Kronos collection figure to the last years of Kaniṣka II on the basis of a comparison of its halo-decoration with that of a dated Jina "Ariṣṭanemi" in the State Museum, Lucknow of the year 18 or 19 of the new Kuṣāṇa era[118], and on the basis of the rendering of the wheel in the palm of his hands[119]. She points out that there exist several remnants of seated and standing Avalokiteshvara. She deduces that these figures must have produced in large numbers in the wake of the introduction of Mahāyāna Buddhism in Mathurā.

We find representations of Avalokiteshvara, Bodhisattva Siddhārtha and Maitreya with the same kind of necklace, amulet string and sandals, all of which are Gandhāran motifs as discussed earlier. According to Mitterwallner these motifs reflect a fresh wave of Gandhāran influence during the reign of Kaniṣka II. Going by her deduction, these images, then, belong from the reign of Kaniṣka II. There is a beautiful monumental depiction of a seated ornamented figure with the same kind of jewellery as just mentioned. It is a headless figure and maybe identified as representing Bodhisattva Siddhārtha (GMM.Acc.No.A.45). Similar trends in sculpture seem to have continued after Kaniṣka II for no new image types seem to have been produced during the reign of Vaṣiṣka[120].

If we quickly run through the Bodhisattva imagery in Mathurā that we have discussed until now, we see that according to the surviving evidences the seated Kapārdin type Bodhisattva are found from the pre- Kaniṣkan times while we have the first dated

standing types from Kaniṣka's reign. Regarding the earliest representation of Maitreya, while we have definite evidence of iconic Maitreya imagery in Huviṣka's reign, we also have arguments dating Maitreya imagery to even pre- Kaniṣkan times. Also regarding the imagery of the seated ornamented type, some are of the opinion that they came to be represented from Huviṣka's time as a distinction between Buddha and Bodhisattva which was not there earlier since the same visual vocabulary (of the Kapārdin type) was used to represent Buddha as well as Bodhisattva at that time. Yet, we have also discussed the probabilities of it being represented from much earlier times. The acolytes flanking the central figure in steles have also been discussed. While these acolytes are usually chauri or garland bearers, we also have this space used to represent Indra and Brahma or Vajrapāni (Yaksha) and Padmapāni (Yaksha). While, by the time of Huviṣka we seem to have iconic standing and seated images of Maitreya, the concept of Bodhisattva Padmapāni or Avalokiteshvara, or Bodhisattva Vajrapāni does not seem to have developed as yet. We even have representations of crowned Maitreya at least from the last years of Huviṣka which seems to point to a proper following of the Bodhisattva. He is represented in big sizes as well as in small sizes in architectural reliefs. By this time we also have a number of representations of the seated ornamented Bodhisattva Siddhārtha on the front of the pedestals of seated Buddhas. It has also been pointed out that Maitreya and Bodhisattva Siddhārtha have been frequently depicted on the front of the pedestals worshipped by figures in Indo-Scythian garb. We have many Dhyāni Buddha heads i.e. crowned heads with representations of seated Dhyāni Buddhas on the crown which have been identified as belonging to Maitreya or Avalokiteshavara. Regarding Vajrapāni we have discussed that we do not seem to have enough remains that establish a proper practice of its representation the way we do of Maitreya and Avalokiteshvara (or Padmapāni Bodhisattva). Then we have Mitterwallner's opinion that the figure of Avalokiteshvara was formulated in the reign of Kaniṣka II and not earlier in the wake of a fresh wave of artistic activities in his reign bringing about new experimentations with iconic imagery even in other sects. As has been discussed, Kanishka II's reign is marked by a wave of Gandhāra influence as seen in the ornamentation and the sandals worn by the Bodhisattva images. There are representations of Maitreya, Avalokiteshvara and Bodhisattva Siddhārtha of this type and similar trends in sculpture seem to have continued after Kaniṣka II as no new image types were produced during the reign of Vaṣiṣka. It is

regrettable that so few Buddhist sculptures have survived of the period of the later Kuṣaṇa kings.

It is thus observed that the pre-eminent position of Mathurā and its society was greatly impaired with the loss of two major factors namely the vast multi-ethnic Kuṣāṇa empire, governed by rulers of Catholic taste, and the international trade, in which the empire (including Mathurā) participated[121]. It is held that their decline should have affected the material fortune of Mathurā and flow of ideas into the city from the West. A comparison between the known sculptures of the Kuṣāṇa age and of the Gupta period unearthed in the Mathurā area indicates a decline in the number of art products and also in the quantum of non-Indian influence on the local art and iconography[122]. As regards our concern, in the light of the above information and the lack of any surviving evidences, we could perhaps say that the same visual vocabulary for the representation of the Bodhisattvas continued until around the 3rd century A.D.

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CONCLUSION

CONCLUSION

The primary objective of this dissertation was to study the Bodhisattva imagery in Mathurā from the beginnings to approximately the third century A.D. But before coming to that it was necessary to contextualize the growth of iconographic conventions in historical circumstances.

The Bodhisattva ideal, as we have dealt with in the second chapter, was not a novelty of the Mahāyāna Buddhism. It was already present in the Theravāda philosophy. The origin of Mahāyāna Buddhism itself is shrouded in mystery. It has been pointed out that certain biases underlie the construction of the idea of Mahāyāna Buddhism in early studies. Only certain texts were taken into account on the basis of which the idea of Mahāyāna was formed and then represented. Texts in Sanskrit and Pali exerted a certain hegemony over texts in other languages like Tibetan, Chinese or Mongolian, even though the latter predated the former in certain cases. Recent studies have also put under scrutiny the sharp divide between the "Hinayāna" and Mahāyāna and the perception of Mahāyāna as a polar opposite of the Hinayāna. It has been brought to light that the ideal of Bodhisattva which was perceived as representative of the Mahāyāna Buddhism earlier was already present in the Theravada philosophy and only gained prominence in the Mahāyāna Buddhism. There are many theories with regard to the rise and the practice of the Bodhisattva path. Buddhist literature divides Bodhisattvas into two types: lay and monastic. Hirakawa held that Mahāyāna Buddhism emerged out of a stūpa-cult. According to him monastic bodhisattvas practiced at stūpas and these stūpas were visited by lay bodhisattvas who would give alms, worship at the stūpa, and receive instructions from the monastic Bodhisattvas. Reginald Ray held that the Bodhisattva path emerged among forest-dwellers who devoted themselves to intensive meditation. However, these arguments have been refuted at some or the other level primarily due to the fact that sharp categorizations are not possible in the understanding the machinery of a Buddhist community. Gregory Schopen posits the centrality of what he refers to as "the cult of the book" in a number of Mahāyāna texts. He brings to light that a number of well-known sutras promise substantial amounts of merit to those who read, recite and copy the texts. He argues that the adherence to the Mahāyāna meant primarily adherence to special texts in addition to those recognized by the established orthodoxy, and opines that the sites

where such texts were taught could possibly have formed one of the institutional bases out of which early Mahāyāna arose.

One thing that has to be kept in mind while we come across various views is avoiding sharp categorizations. It is therefore necessary to not read contemporary models into earlier practices.

There are many causes noted for the rise of the Bodhisattva doctrine. The growth of Bhakti has been considered as a crucial factor that led to its rise. Bhagvad Gita is said to have played an important role in the development of the ideal of Bhakti among the Buddhists which led to the invention and adoration of the Bodhisattvas. It is also believed that the revival of Hinduism under the Śūnga dynasty in the second century B.C. made the Buddhists develop new methods of popular propaganda in the form of the Bodhisattvas. Parallels have also been drawn between the Bodhisattvas and the Persian *fravashis* and *amesha spentas*. The rise of the cult of Bodhisattvas has also been seen in the context of the unstable political situation following the fall of the Mauryan Empire giving way to smaller kingdoms which in turn felt the weight of foreign attacks. It is believed that such a political scenario invoked in people the idea of Saviours which the Buddhists fulfilled with their devotion to Bodhisattvas. However, it would be inappropriate to see the rise of the Bodhisattva devotion only as an impact of external factors. This can be best understood in the manner the so called bhakti cult brought about by the Bhagvad Gita has been taken to have given rise to the adoration of the Bodhisattvas. It is important here to understand that it is the religious need of the followers that plays the primary role in bringing about a certain religious phenomenon. Moreover, one needs to pay attention to how the textual traditions are formulated over a period of time. It would be incorrect to imagine that a certain text appeared at a certain point of time which went on to influence the contemporary philosophies.

As it is well known, Mathurā has been a prominent region in the Indian subcontinent. As noted previously, its easy access to what has been called the Gateway of the doab, formed by the Himalayan ranges to the north-west and the Thar desert and outliers of the Aravalli ranges to the south-west has been considered favorable for much of the movement around it. South-east of Mathurā is also located on a curve of the river Yamuna, and is a central point of entry into the doab. Such a position has been held

responsible for numerous routes passing through the Mathurā region. This would have definitely had an impact on the art scenario in Mathurā.

A bird's eye view of Mathurā during the centuries of our concern would give us a picture of Mathurā in the context of regions where the ethnic groups after having passed through Bactria which lay within the reach of Iranian and Hellenistic influences, settled down diffusing elements of these cultures which they happened to absorb on their way. Also it is to be noted that all foreign influences were not necessarily introduced by these nomads but also by travelers such as Western traders or itinerant Indian monks returning home. Also it is much more likely that Hellenistic elements, for instance in architecture and sculpture, were brought along by travelling artisans than by nomadic intruders themselves. Close cultural relations were established between Gandhāra in the Northwest and Mathurā in the Doab during the Kuṣāṇa period. Thus, the Hellenistic element incorporated in the art and architecture of Gandhāra around the beginning of the Christian era as a result of the Scythian invasions, were in turn, to some extent passed on to the workshops of Mathurā.

Mathurā comes across as an eclectic society which is best reflected by its visual tradition. This very characteristic has amused historians of ancient India. The peaceful co-existence of Buddhism, Jainism, Vaishṇavism, Śaivism and various other cults of Nāgas, Yakshas and Mother goddesses give us a fair idea of the freedom exercised by the local people to promote their religious beliefs. This corresponds to the art works of the various sects that we find here. Use of Hellenistic motifs has been observed in the midst of all this. The imagery of the Yakshas and Nāgas are said to have provided the prototype for the making of iconic images of deities of the sects just mentioned. There is a free use of similar artistic motifs by all as though from a common pool. It is difficult to distinguish them without inscriptions.

With such a backdrop, we understand that the Bodhisattva imagery derives itself from the same pool but with an ideology unique to itself. The earliest Bodhisattva images that we know of consist of seated and standing ones, inscribed as Bodhisattva. These images are also supposed to be the earliest representations of the Buddha. Therefore the earliest Bodhisattva images are intimately linked with the debates regarding the earliest representation of the Buddha. The seated ones are believed to go back to pre-Kaniṣka period. While it is generally held that Kaniṣka's patronage was instrumental in the production of a number of such Bodhisattva images, it has also been pointed out

that the Kshatrapas too gave impetus to the production of Bodhisattva images as the earliest ones possibly go back to their reign. It is also likely that the standing type go back to pre-Kaniṣkan times. We also come across debates regarding the early representation of Maitreya Buddha. The possibility of Maitreya being represented even before Buddha himself has also been pointed out. We also have early representations of an ornamented figure, possibly representing the Bodhisattva Siddhartha in princely garb. Huviṣka's reign is marked by a wave of Gandhāran influence best reflected in the drapery of the figure of Buddha. By Huviṣka's time we have definite evidences of representation of iconic images of Maitreya. Huviṣka's reign also marks the distinction between the figure of the Buddha and Bodhisattva. Maitreya figures, apart from being represented in iconic sizes are also represented in small sizes in architectural reliefs. So far, in the name of Bodhisattvas we seem to have had representations of the monk figure of Gautama inscribed as Bodhisattva, princely figure of Bodhisattva Siddhārtha with crown and ornaments and Maitreya Buddha. We do have representations of *vajra*-holding and *padma*-holding acolytes of the figure of Buddha who cannot be called Bodhisattvas Vajrapāni and Padmapāni Avalokiteshvara as yet. These *padma*-bearers and *vajra*-bearers have a history of their own. We find many representations of the *padma*-bearer, who has been generally called as Padmapani Yaksha, in ancient Indian sculpture. For instance, Sānchī guardian Yaksha at the base of a pillar, north torana; Amin (Thaneshwar) Yaksha with padma in hand; and Mathurā Yaksha on railing pillar with lotuses in right hand. The pillar at the northern entranceway in Bhārhūt features Ajakalaka Yaksha as the inscription says. He is shown standing on a human figure, holding a half-blossomed lotus in the right hand with his left hand in the *kaṭihasta* pose. We, therefore, have a Yaksha with an identity holding a lotus as its attribute. With regard to the *vajra*-bearer, according to the Mahayana traditions, the Vajrapani Yaksha accompanied the Buddha on his (apocryphal) journey to Gandhāra. It is evident that these Yakshas go on to become Bodhisattvas Padmapani Avalokiteshvara and Vajrapani. Hence, it has been concluded that ancient Indian art traditions provided the religious sects with prototypes for the representation of their icons.

We come across a number of heads with Dhyāni Buddhas depicted on the crown. From the drapery of the Dhyāni Buddhas, it is possible to deduce that these figures were not made at least before later years of Huviṣka. From these Dhyāni Buddhas heads we can understand that the relation between Dhyāni Buddhas and Bodhisattvas

was worked out in Buddhist philosophy by this time or may be even earlier. The heads are mostly identified as belonging to Padmapāni Avalokiteshvara or Maitreya. Kaniṣka II's reign is supposed to be marked by a fresh wave artistic activity along with the Gandhāran influence. We have iconic representations of Avalokiteshvara, Maitreya as well as Bodhisattva Siddhartha. All of them are ornamented. It is believed that the same visual vocabulary continues after the reign of Kaniṣka II.

It seems that at least by the time of Kaniṣka II there is a complete crystallization of the figure of the Bodhisattva. However, it would not be incorrect to say that the crystallization process must have begun in the late second century A.D. going by the new chronology. Apart from Maitreya and Bodhisattva Siddhartha, we begin to have iconic representation of Avalokiteshvara Padmapāni. We could perhaps say that the figure of Avalokiteshvara Padmapāni marks the beginning of the cult of the Mahāyāna Bodhisattva. In the time period of our concern we do not seem to come across representations of any other Bodhisattva. Regarding Vajrapāni we do not have enough evidences as to the practice of frequent dedications of his images. Yet, a figure has been cited that holds a *vajra*-type of implement in his hand. Besides these Bodhisattvas we do not come across any other Bodhisattvas. Therefore it seems that the upper limit of the time bracket of the present study marks the beginning of the cult of Mahāyāna Bodhisattva best reflected by the figure of the seated pensive Avalokiteshvara.

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ILLUSTRATIONS

Fig.1. Pedestal fragment of a Bodhisattva image.

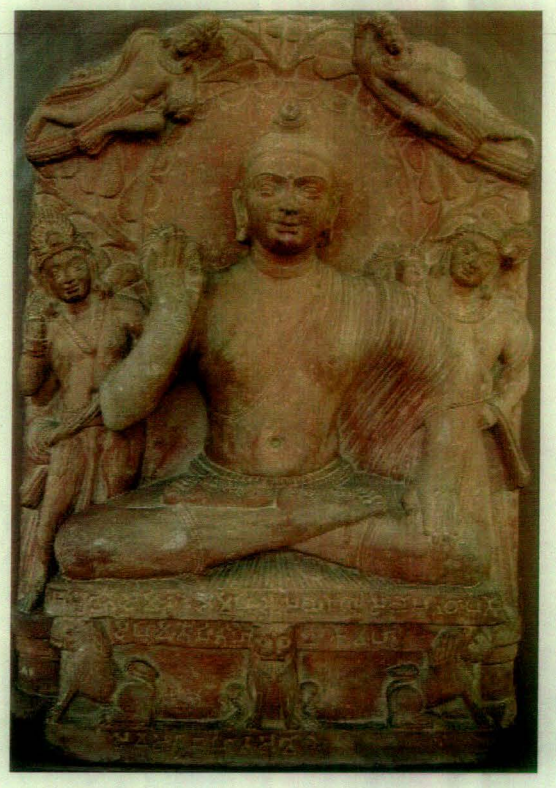

Fig.2. Bodhisattva stele from Kaṭrā.

Fig.3. Bodhisattva from Sārnāth.

Fig.4. Seated Buddha from Goverdhan.

Fig.5. Yaksha/ Bodhisattva from Ganeshra

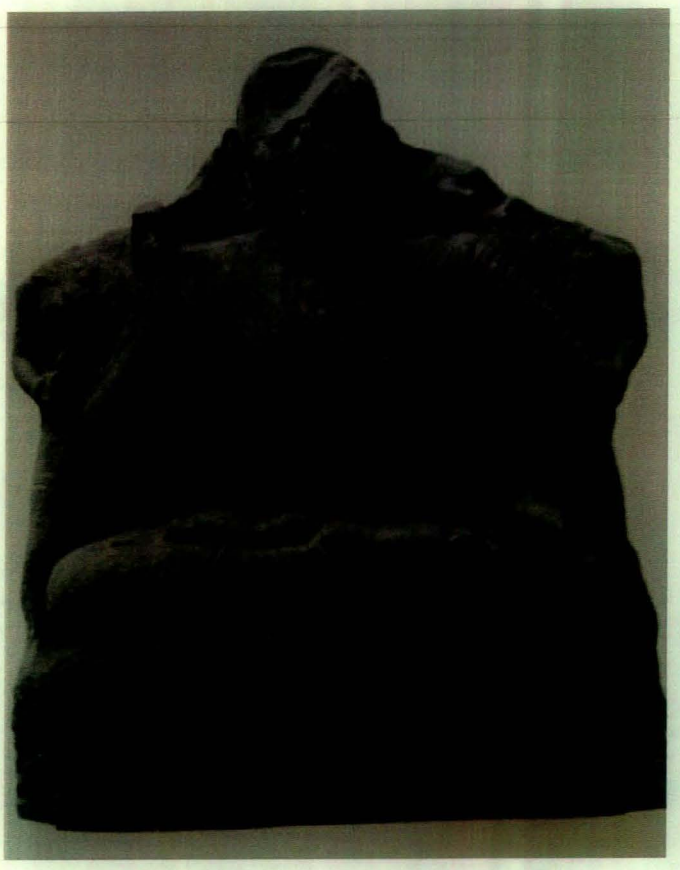

Fig.6. Boston Museum stele.

Fig.7. Pedestal fragment.

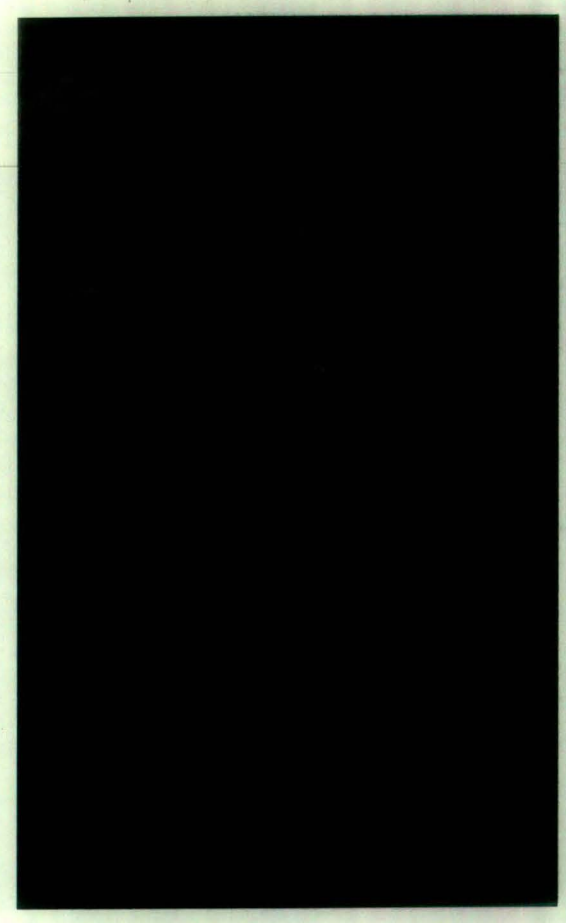

Fig.8. Stele from Ahichhattra in Indian Museum, Kolkata.

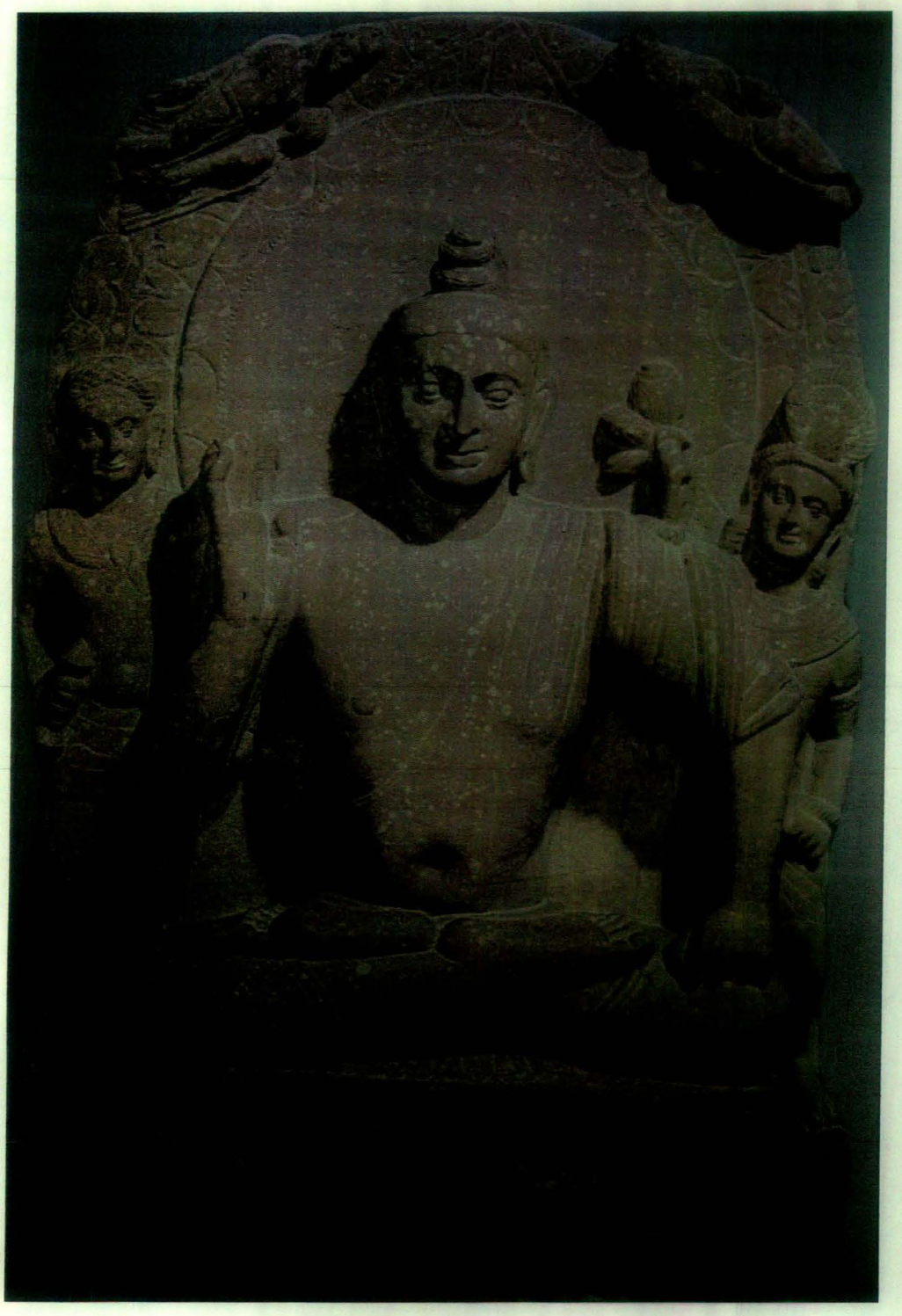

Fig.9. Stele from Ahichhattra in National Museum, New Delhi.

Fig.10. Yaksha Ajalaka from Bharhut.

Fig.11. Maitreya figure from Achhattra in National Museum, New Delhi.

Fig.12. Tympanum fragment from Jamālpur.

Fig.13. Maitreya figure in State Museum, Lucknow.

Fig.14. Pedestal of a seated Maitreya figure from Girdhārpur.

Fig.15. Architectural fragment from Jamālpur mound.

Fig.16. Crowned Maitreya figure in State Museum, Lucknow.

Fig.17. Tympanum fragment from Jamālpur (Reverse of fig.12).

Fig.18. Pedestal from Sānchī.

Fig.19. Dhyāni Buddha head.

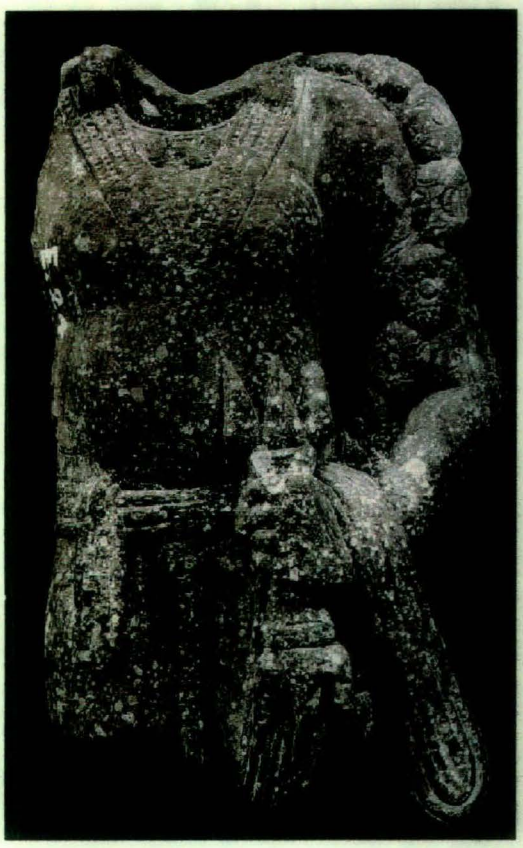

Fig.20. Vajrapani/Indra.

Fig.21. Avalokiteshvara torso in Government Museum, Mathura.

Fig.22. Skandha figure in Government Museum, Mathura.

Fig.23. Pensive Avalokiteshvara in Kronos Collection.