

**CULTURAL-FLUX AND ITS VISUAL-MANIFESTATIONS
IN EARLY INDIA**

[A Case Study of VALKHĀ (BAGH) - A.D. 358-487]

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the M.Phil. Dissertation entitled "Cultural-Flux and its Visual Manifestations in Early India [A Case Study of Valkha {Bagh}, AD 358 - 487]", submitted by Ms. Archana Verma in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Philosophy has not been previously submitted for any other degree of this University.

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

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PREFACE

The visual mirrors the society; the society constructs the visual; the interpretation of the visual lies in the perception of the reader; the debate is endless. Here, I have made only an attempt to interpret the visual through the social processes, without participating much in the debate. Naturally, there is scope for even further reflections and other perspectives, for isn't it a fact that a subject can have endless questions and endless answers ?

This work is the outcome of the magnitudinous efforts of a number of people. First and foremost, I am indebted to my Supervisor, Prof. R. Champakalakshmi, who not only guided me with help, suggestions and insights, but showed great faith in me and endured my diversions from the main-track with patience.

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So much of pain has been taken by my friends and associates during the making of this work that I can not even begin to thank them. My parents, who showered utmost care and encouragement, my friend who went out of her way to get the illustrations, the person who typed the text with perfection and dedication as if it was his own dissertation, my colleague who set aside his own work to help me with the bibliography - the list is endless.

I think any attempt to say 'thanks' would be to show ingratitude, for 'thanks' is such a small word after all. Besides, most of these people do not even believe in 'thank-you-and-sorry' culture. Therefore, I can not find any appropriate word to show my gratitude, I can only acknowledge.

While the credit belongs to others, the errors herein are mine.

New Delhi
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AN INTRODUCTION TO VALKHÄ - A HISTORICAL REGION

The present study concerns itself with Valkhā, a historically significant region of Gupta period and the process of acculturation that transformed its profile. All the inscriptions from Bagh commence with the term 'Valkhāh' and some also give one phrase 'Valkha-ādhiṣṭhāna' (e.g., Bhulūṇḍa's grant, year 50, line 2), suggesting that the chiefdom of these inscriptions was known as Valkhā, deriving its name from its base (i.e., 'ādhiṣṭhāna'), which was also called Valkhā.¹ The base, Valkhā, was identified with the modern township of Bagh by Dr. G.S. Gai, the editor of the *Epigraphia Indica*, vol. 37, who first published an inscription of Bulūṇḍa, the first chief mentioned in the Valkhā-grants. This is supported by the fact that the present hoard of copper plates were found buried in a vessel in a field on the outskirts of Bagh and also from the fact that the Buddhist monastery which received a grant from Subandhu, the last ruler is situated 3 miles from Bagh. The similarity in

1. The eds of Bagh hoard of Copper-Plates also suggest this (ref. S.P.Tewari & K.V. Ramesh [ed.], "Bagh Copper-Plates", ASI, 1991, Introduction Chapter, p. xxiv.

the names is another factor supporting this evidence - which led to the identification of Valkhā with Bagh, 35 kms. north of the place where Bagh meets Narmada, lying on the right bank of Bagh river, a small tributary of Narmada.

By plotting the tentatively identified villages mentioned in the Bagh-plates on the map, Valkhā chiefdom emerges as a triangle, spreading on both banks of Narmada, stretching from east to west between Maheshwar and the western boundary of present-day Dhar district and from north to south between Bagh and the southern boundaries of present-day Rajpur and Barwani Tehsils in West-Nimar district. The latter extent forms the base of the triangle, which tapers towards the east, Maheshwar forming the apex (Map 2). A look at the present-day map shows that this area encompassed by the Valkhā chiefdom lay in the Narmada valley lying between the Vindhya and Satpuras, is flat and fertile and cultivation is more extensive. On the southern side of Narmada, it is covered with forests, enclosing rural settlements amidst them spread on both sides of Narmada, the Valkhā chiefdom comprised of the present day Dhar and West Nimar district.

Historically, this region fell in Avanti, whose name has come down to us from the Anguttara - Nikāya as one of the sixteen Mahājanapadas.² Avanti's southern limit was the region called Avanti-Dakṣiṇāpatha, with Māhiṣmatī or Maheshwar as its chief city. Since Valkhā was spread along both the banks of Narmada, with Māhiṣmatī as its capital in its 3rd phase of development, it must have coincided with the erstwhile Avanti-Dakṣiṇāpatha region of Avanti, literally, 'that portion of Avanti which led towards Dakṣiṇāpatha'. The southern offshoot of the Uttarāpatha, which started from Mathura and passed through Ujjayinī (or Ujjain), the capital of Avanti, went on to Māhiṣmatī, which was the nodal point of routes from south (Dakṣiṇāpatha), north and western seacoast of Surāṣṭra. The term Avanti-Dakṣiṇāpatha is significant in this sense.

Ujjayinī was also linked to Vidiśā and from there on to the northern route (Uttarāpatha). These linkages show that for its economy Valkhā could exploit the route-system through Māhiṣmatī and Ujjayinī and participate in the long-

2. Anguttara-Nikāya, PTS, Vol. I, p.213.

distance trade. The fact that the Māhiṣmatī-Bhārukaccha route passed right through the Valkhā territory is significant in this context. Perhaps, this was one reason why the centre shifted from Valkhā to Māhiṣmatī in the 3rd phase, since it was easier to exploit this route and also other converging ones, from Māhiṣmatī than from Valkhā, which lay in the interior parts. Also, the ruler of Māhiṣmatī could control the granted land along the banks of Narmada. Thus, one can say that the shift to Māhiṣmatī signified an increase in power for the ruler who controlled Valkhā.

As for the socio-cultural processes of Valkhā's development, these linkages explain from which centres the influences of acculturation and assimilation came to Valkhā. As will be seen, the Bagh caves experienced the advent of Mahāyānism into a pre-existing Hīnayāna centre of Buddhism. The long-distance connection of Bagh with Mathura, a prominent centre of Mahāyānism, via Māhiṣmatī and Ujjain, explains the incoming influence of Mahāyānism in Bagh. Thus, the reference to 'repairs' in Subandhu's grant to the caves in 5th century AD, may point to this influence and an attempt at introduction of art-forms expressing Mahāyānist beliefs, as will be shown in the chapter on the monastic art.

Bagh's connection with Ujjayinī, the epitome of Gupta-culture and Brāhmanical belief-system, also suggests that the Brāhmanical acculturation of Bagh with other important urban centres is important for our study. The acculturation processes in Valkhā manifested themselves in such a form that it becomes necessary to study these processes through diverse, and seemingly unrelated categories of sources and different approaches as, for example, the inscriptions from the region and the works of art found near Bagh (or Valkhā, as it was known in 4th - 5th century AD).

In order to understand the necessity for adopting this kind of approach, it would be appropriate to look at the complexity of developments that took place in Valkhā between the 4th century and the last decades of 5th century AD. Broadly speaking, the acculturation process in Valkhā chiefdom can be divided into three distinct phases. These phases, as evident from the inscriptions, show that this was one period when the chiefs of Valkhā, following the broader socio-cultural trends set by the Gupta rulers, tried to emulate them and gave a gradually increasing patronage to the Brāhmanical system. This patronage had an impact on the

local cultural matrix, which went out of visibility while the Brāhmanical influence increased through the three phases. This influence transformed the local economic-bases, religious and social institutions.

In the first phase (AD 358-379), we see what the local socio-religious and economic matrix of Valkhā was like. We find that within this local matrix, certain features of Brāhmanism had started surfacing during the first phase, although they hadn't become strong yet. It is in the second phase (AD 383-454) that this Brāhmanical influence became strong - so much so that the local elements, which had occupied a major space in economy, society and religion in the earlier phase, lost patronage as well as visibility in the 2nd phase.

Here, the question arises, as to what happened to these local elements after the growing Brāhmanism overshadowed them. For, certainly they must have existed even after the dominance of Brāhmanism had set in, for it had been the basic element of the Valkhan society. The answer for this is found in the study of the third phase, which is shorter in duration, but important (from AD 454-487). This phase tells

us that Brāhmanism was not the only influence in Valkhā, it had coexisted with Buddhism - at least for some time in the second phase onwards. Only, it had not surfaced in the sources available to us from the 3rd phase, when it became important for the process of socio-economic change going on there - for this was the phase when the base of Valkhā shifted to Māhiṣmatī, and therefore, had greater control over the Māhiṣmatī-Valkhā route which lay only 35 kms. from the centre of Buddhism in the region. The association of the traders with the Buddhist monasteries is well-known. In the third and last phase, even, the ruler wanted to relate himself to the erstwhile Valkha centre, where the caves lie.

It is at this point that the study of the works of art of this Buddhist monastery becomes important, for not only does it provide insights into the finer details and the symbolism used in Buddhism and its art, but it also suggests that the elements of the local culture which had been overshadowed by Brāhmanical system, had formed a space in Buddhism. Thus, what appears from the combined study of the epigraphs and the monastic art from the Buddhist caves is that the local cultural elements, when they lost their support-base because of the advent of Brāhmanism, turned to

Buddhism, which not only assimilated some of these elements, but was also influenced by Brāhmanism in its ritual and art. Thus, we find different kinds of approaches to the local culture by these two dominant acculturating influences in the region - one competed with the local culture and tried to dominate and suppress them, while the other received them head-on and incorporated some of their strands in its institution. Thus, we see a cultural-flux going on in the region during the period studied.

The above picture shows why we need to study these diverse forms of source-materials and how they are in conjunction with each other. Without the one, we would not be able to understand the other. By studying only the epigraphs, we will not get the full-picture of what was going on here in terms of the acculturation process - it will only tell us about the Brāhmanisation of the region. At the same time, by looking at only the monastic-art, we will hardly understand certain peculiar traits it shows in its expression, which sets it apart from the other comparable centres, e.g., Ajanta. Thus, both these sources are needed to understand that the art-forms of the Bagh-Caves are in part a

visual manifestation of the cultural-flux going on in Valkhā.

III. SOURCES OF STUDY:

As described earlier, epigraphs form one of the major sources of information in this work. They are 36 in number, and cover a period from AD 358 to 487, as described earlier. A word needs to be said about the era used to calculate the date of these charters. All the Valkhā chiefs mention that they meditate at the feet of the 'Paramabhāṭṭāraka', a well-known title for the Gupta overlords, thus suggesting that these chiefs were the subordinates of the Guptas. Most scholars, e.g., R.C. Majumdar and later G.S. Gai, subscribe to this view.³ The editors of the present hoard too have accepted the era used by the Valkhā chiefs on the basis of palaeography and internal evidence,⁴ as the Gupta era. In the present work too, the era has been taken to be the Gupta Era.

3. EI, Vol. XV, pp. 290-91; Ibid, Vol. XXXVII, p. 243.

4. K.V. Ramesh & S.P. Tewari, op. cit. Introduction Chapter, pp. VII-VIII.

On the basis of the above, some idea of the chronology of the Valkhā chiefs may be formed. Thus, the chief of the first phase, Bhulūṇḍa, ruled from the year 38 to the year 59 (~AD 358-379), his reign coinciding with that of Samudragupta [years 16 (~AD 336) to 57 (~AD 377)]. In second phase, first two rulers, Svāmidāsa (years 63-67 ~AD 383-387) and Rudradāsa (years 67-70 ~AD 387-390) were contemporaries of Kumāragupta I (years 96-135 ~AD 416-455).⁵ This shows that this group of Valkhā chiefs were the subordinates of Gupta rulers from Samudragupta to Kumāragupta I. The short tenures of the Valkha chiefs also points to either a political instability in the chiefdom, (or that this being a region probably not under the traditional rule of kingship), followed a system of rule-by-rotation of chiefs. This is suggested from the fact that Rudradāsa, after year 70 (~AD 390), is mentioned again in the year 117 (~AD 437)⁶ - a year which fell during the period of Bhaṭṭāraka. Thus, either a political instability or a rule by rotation is strongly indicated. If there was a political instability,

5. Ibid, p. VIII.

6. CII, Vol. IV, pf I, pp. 11-12.

then the numerous land-grants to Brāhmanas during this phase suggests an attempt by the rulers to create a strong support-base for themselves among the dominant social group. Thus, the cultural-flux described earlier may have been caused by a strong political factor too.

The epigraphic evidence presents the uniqueness of the third phase - the shift of the centre from Valkhā to Māhiṣmatī has been mentioned earlier. Apart from this, it is striking that the ruler of this phase, Subandhu, does not mention that he worships at the feet of the 'Paramabhaṭṭāra-ka'. Subandhu's donation to the Buddhist caves at Bagh is similar to Budhagupta's patronage to Buddhism. The date of Subandhu's one plate is lost, while his another plate is dated in the year 167 (~AD 487), thus placing him and the 3rd phase in the latter half of the 5th century AD. The date of AD 487 makes him a contemporary of Budhagupta, who ruled over eastern Mālava, Bengal, Bihar, etc. It is significant that Western Mālava, where Māhiṣmatī and Valkhā chiefdom were located, did not fall in his reign. This was the period when certain regions had started becoming independent and

the power of Guptas was declining.⁷ Thus, Subandhu might not have been a subordinate of Budhagupta, but still might have been influenced by the Gupta culture - thus making the Gupta impact over Subandhu's domain only cultural and not political.

A detailed analysis of the inscriptions from the socio-economic and religious viewpoints will be done in the next chapter. However, these inscriptions give some data about the territorial divisions and the villages donated which may be studied here. The territorial divisions mentioned in the inscriptions are - *Rāṣṭra*, *Viṣaya*, *āvāsa*, *bhukti*, and *patha-ka*. Their exact hierarchy is not certain. However, some idea can be formed going by D.C. Sircar's definitions of these terms. Here, it is important to note that Sircar gives the meaning for *āvāsa* as a shelter or accommodation which the villages were obliged to provide for the touring officers of the king.⁸ However, in one inscriptions from Bagh⁹, '*Durdūkāvāsa*' is mentioned as a territorial division within

7. P.L. Gupta, "The Imperial Guptas", Vol. I, Vishwavidyalaya Prakashan, Varanasi, 1974, p. 353.

8. D.C. Sircar, "Indian Epigraphical Glossary", Motilal Banarasidas, Delhi, 1966

9. Grant of Bhulūṇḍa, Year 55, Sravana, line 3.

which three grant-villages were located. *Āvāsa* gives the connotation of a territorial division comprising of several villages - different from that given by Sircar. *Rāṣṭra*, *Viṣaya*, and *Bhukti* are well-known as territorial divisions. The most frequently used division in the Bagh inscriptions is that of *pathaka*. There are eight *pathakas* mentioned. Sircar gives its meaning as a "group of villages".¹⁰ Considering that this was the most frequently used term, it can be concluded that this was the division one step higher than that of the village-unit. It served as the major means of identifying a settlement - it was enough to know which *pathaka* a village belonged to even if its *rāṣṭra* and *viṣaya*, etc. were not known.

There is also another term used in at least one case - that of a *palli*, in *Dāsilakapallipathaka*.¹¹ A *palli* is a hamlet, a village or its part.¹² Thus, 'Dāsilakapallipathaka' suggests that it was a *pathaka* which has grown from a hamlet. The sense of the expansion of a settlement is included in this name.

10. D.C. Sircar, op. cit., p. 243.

11. Bagh Cave inscr. of Subandhu, CII, Vol. 4, PEI, p. 20.

12. D.C. Sircar, op. cit., p. 228.

These references from the epigraphy suggest that Valkhā was a region showing some kind of administrative divisions, although their hierarchy is not known. Thus, an evolving polity, and an expansion of settlement is suggested by these divisions and their names. The emerging polity and its socio-religious and economic features will be discussed further in the next chapter.

In order to map out Valkhā, it is necessary to attempt to identify the sites mentioned in the grants, so that we can get an idea of the expanse of the chiefdom and also, the location of the divisions discussed above. Such a map can give us an idea of the settlement-pattern of Valkhā chiefdom. Thus, the plotting of the settlement-pattern on the map is linked to the identification of the sites. The information provided in the inscription helps us to identify at least some of the sites on the basis of the modern names of some villages. The editors of the inscriptions have identified some of the sites on the basis of the similarity in names, and the same methodology has been followed in this work to identify some more sites, both on the basis of similarity in names and the geographical location of the sites mentioned in the inscriptions, a method which is

explained below.

The inscriptions mentions a site called Valmīka - Tallavāṭaka.¹³ R.C. Majumdar, the editor of Epigraphia Indica says that this is to be identified with Talwara Deb, lying south of Narmada, 59 kms. south-east of Bagh. Since this is supposed to be in the division called 'Nagarikā - Pathaka',¹⁴ and another inscription¹⁵ mentions a village called 'Chāravāhaka' lying in the same Nagarikā-Pathaka division, it follows that Chāravāhaka would be somewhere near Talwara Deb, although its exact location cannot be determined. These two villages, thus, have been marked in the same place on the map (Map 2). There is another territorial division called Dāsīlakapallipathaka, which has been identified by G.S. Gai, the editor of Epigraphia Indica as Deswalia¹⁶, lying south of Bagh, at a distance of 24 kms. If we accept this identification then all the villages mentioned in the inscriptions as lying in this division are to be located as somewhere close to Deswalia, even if we do not know their exact location (Map 2). Similarly, there is

13. EI, Vol. XV, pp. 286-90.

14. Bagh Inscr. op. cit. p. 65, lines 2-5.

15. Ibid, p. 41, lines 2-4.

16. EI, Vol. XXXVII, pp. 243-46.

an important division called Udumbaragarttā-Pathaka, referred to as lying on the southern bank of Narmada.¹⁷ It has been identified in this work as Ummeda, which lies on the southern-bank of Narmada, 29.5 kms. from Maheshwar. Near it is a village called Nagajhiri, which may be identified with Nāgavardhanānaka of the inscriptions¹⁸, which lies in Udumbaragarttā. Hence, on the basis of both these places, other places referred to as lying in Udumbaragarttā can be considered as lying near the two sites mentioned above. This is an example of how villages can be located on the basis of their geographical location, territorial units as mentioned above and on the basis of similarity in names and other sites identified.

Here, a special mention needs to be made of a group of modern villages, which are named as 'Brahmana-gaon', 'Brahmana-puri', etc. Although they are not mentioned in the inscriptions, they are located in the vicinity of the clusters of some of the tentatively identified sites. Thus, they may deserve a mention on the map, as in this predominantly

17. Bagh Inscr., op. cit., p. 33.

18. Ibid, p. 58, lines 3-4.

tribal region, where modern sites have generally local names, the villages having such names as Brahmanagaon or Brahmanapuri are conspicuous and suggest a possible initial Brāhmanical activity (Map 2).

The above can show that the methodology employed in identification of the sites and therefore, in reconstruction of a map of Valkhā gives us an idea of its extent and also, its location in relation to the major centres, the settlement pattern and possible expansion of settlements and inhabitation of new areas (suggesting an expansion of Valkhā territory through new settlements brought about by the grants) etc., as the last two have been mentioned in the next chapter while discussing the socio-economic impacts of acculturation process in Valkhā.

As has been described earlier, apart from the inscriptions, works of art from the Bagh Caves form another major source in this work. These works of art included the architecture, sculpture and paintings. As not much of the sculptures and paintings have survived, part of our observations is based on the writings of the visitors to these caves during the colonial period. The earliest among them was Dr.

Impey, who visited the caves sometime in 1850s, and read a paper about them in 1854. This was published later in 1856 in the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society. Many of his descriptions, which do not exist now in either stone or paint, are extremely useful to us. Later, Maj. C.E. Luard visited the caves about half a century later and published an articles in the Indian Antiquary in 1910, alongwith illustrations. Although his article is largely a repetition of Dr. Impey, some of his illustrations are helpful, as has been shown in the chapter related to the works of art. Mukul Dey was the next to visit the caves in 1920s and published a travelogue in 1925, which provides some useful descriptions and illustrations.

In a major work, descriptions and illustrations of the sculptures, paintings and architecture with an attempt at interpretation are made, by John Marshall, Vogel and others, published in 1927. To this the present work has added information from M.D. Khare's work, Sandhya Pandey's illustrations which are most recent (1991) and some observations made during a personal visit to the Caves. The illustrations in the present work are largely used from the work of John Marshall, et al, and to some extent from others mentioned

here.

In this study, an attempt has been made to study the works of art not merely from the viewpoint of its artistic expressions, but to relate these works to the information from the inscriptions. It has been said before that seeing the nature of the historical process going on here, the art and the acculturation process reflected in the grants can not be dissociated from each other, i.e., they have to be seen as complementary to each other. Just as the inscriptions provide us with evidence of the impact that Brāhmanism had in the region, in the same way, the works of art provide us an insight into how Buddhism was interacting with the local culture, approximately at the same time, i.e., in the second and the third phases (AD 3⁵³-487) of the grants.

The architectural lay-out has been looked at from the functional point of view and to show the composition of the monk-body and the nature of practices followed by the monastic order. The sculptures have been studied to show how Buddhism underwent a change from *Hīnayāna* to *Mahāyāna*, assimilated and incorporated popular and local cults and experimented with the forms of deities which crystallised

into the forms of Bodhisattvas in later periods. The mention of local cults is important here. Paintings have been studied to show how the artistic symbolism was used to show the stages of transformation that Buddhism underwent and the reasons behind the choice of certain Jātaka stories and how they were influenced by local elements.

The division of the chapters follows the main trends discussed in the first section of this chapter, keeping these trends in mind, the first chapter shows the processes of acculturation in Valkhā region in three phases, both in the socio-economic and religious spheres. In order to see the other influences in the region, i.e., Buddhism, and its composition, and how the local elements overshadowed by the Brāhmaṇism were received by Buddhism, the second chapter has been constructed accordingly. Since this kind of study calls for further reflections on the complexities of the visual manifestations of the acculturation process, the last chapter attempts to show the possible linkages between the visual art and the more direct and authentic epigraphs.

The study of a region which has not been seriously researched before, is beset with many problems. The foremost

of these is the fact that Valkhā region remains unexcavated, and hence, any identification of sites, analysis etc., awaits confirmation through excavations in the area. Another problem is in the study of the works of art, most of which have vanished now. Although we have some illustrations and descriptions as described earlier, there is always a difference between an illustration of an existing work and a description. The surviving paintings are only in fragments, many figures having vanished. These obstruct the analytical process. The long panel of paintings in Cave 4 had an inscription painted underneath it, only one letter ('Ka') of which had survived by John Marshall's times. Had it survived, it would have given valuable information for analysis. However, it is lost to us forever, as is the date of the Bagh-Cave plate of Subandhu, thus necessitating a comparison between this and another dated plate of Subandhu for an estimation of its date.

As a result of the above fragmentary data, an attempt at drawing a correlation between the two facets of the influencing trends, is extremely difficult - the correlation appears only when one leaves the plane of objectivity and

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looks beyond into the ideational plane. This will be evident in the last chapter where this method is employed, partly because of the fragmentary nature of the sources and the absence of excavation.

THE PROCESSES OF TRANSFORMATION - VALKHĀ'S CHANGING PROFILE
(AD 358 - 487)

Valkhā's development as a historical region would seem to fall under 3 phases in which the changes in its economy, society and religion are interrelated and complementary. The present study demarcates these three phases on the basis of both the epigraphic records registering grants and the works of art which appear as the visual - manifestations of the change. As a result one perceives an essentially non-Sanskritised region of the pre-Gupta period being transformed into a predominantly Brāhmanised cultural region in the Gupta period with the earlier Buddhist forms continuing to be patronised in a significant way. The grants recovered from Valkhā region fall under six chiefs, from the year 38 (~AD 58) to the year 167 (~AD 487). A result of this acculturation was the transformation of the agrarian structure of the region, as the land-grants given to Brahmanas had the inevitable connotation of the intensification and the expansion of the agrarian structure. The grants also show that they were related to a polity different from an organised, complex administrative set-up, but show an emerging polity over time, perhaps, in an effort to keep pace with the growing outside influences and consequently a rapidly changing society in Valkhā.

On the basis of transformation taking place in Valkhā, the period of our study can be divided into broadly three phases - the first phase from the year 38 to the year 59 (~AD 358-379), comprising of the reign of a single ruler named Bhulunda, the second phase from the year 63 to the year 134 (~AD 383-454), covering the reigns of four chiefs, Svāmidāsa, Rudradāsa, Bhaṭṭāraka and Nāgabhaṭṭa, and the third phase covering the period upto the year 167 (~AD 487), the last date in this study and covered by the reign of Subandhu.

All the phases show remarkably different characteristics, showing the extent of change in society of Valkhā according to these influences, and at the same time of the external cultural forces themselves being oriented according to the social matrix of Valkhā, thus showing a cultural flux, i.e., the interaction of the local and external and cultural forces transforming both to form a new social matrix.

In the following sections, we deal with these three phases and so the basic trends in social and economic and religious sphere going on in Valkhā which changed its social

structure. In essence, the changes are related to the broader trend of an overall spread of the Sanskrit culture to the even smaller pockets of north India, during this period. Hence, the acculturation process evident in valkhā should be seen in context of this broader framework. The land-grants and their characteristics discussed below should also be seen in the context of the efforts of the Valkhā chiefs to emulate the Gupta period, who were their contemporaries and overlords, as discussed in the previous chapter.

(I)

The first phase, as stated above, covers the period from the period 38 to the year 59 (~AD 358-379), and coincides with the reign of the earliest ruler from copper-plates, viz., Bhulūṇḍa. This is the period which shows what kind of local characteristics existed in Valkhā in socio-religious terms before an overpowering Brāhmaṇical system engulfed the region.

Bhulūṇḍa's grants show a mixed-economy prevailing in the region i.e., parallel forms of economy-bases existing along-with the agrarian economy. Besides, this is the phase when

the **Brahmadeyas** start appearing in Valkhā region. Although they are only four in number, other grants of Bhuluṇḍa being **Devāgrahāras**. Thus, the first phase of this study shows that the acculturation process to be discussed here was linked to the appearance of **Brahmadeyas** in Bhuluṇḍa's reign. It also shows that in the first phase, although the alternative economy-bases existed, agrarian structure was becoming relatively stronger even in this phase, although the process was accelerated only in the next phase. Thus, the emergence of Brahmanas as a patronised group signified an instrumental development in the history of Valkhā.

The presence of economic-bases other than cultivation and their getting a space in the grants to either Brāhmaṇas or local deities during the time of Bhuluṇḍa is evident from at least three inscriptions. The first one of these mentions the grant by Bhuluṇḍa of three villages and a 'charikā' to a local deity.¹ Another inscription, again a **devāgrāhāra**, records the grant of a village and a 'vāṭa-kaccha'.² The editors of the Bagh inscriptions have translated 'vāṭa-

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1. K.V. Ramesh & S.P. Tewari (ed), The Bagh Copper-Plates, ASI, 1990, p. 20, line 6.
 2. Ibid, p. 22, line 5.

kaccha as 'marshy garden-land'.³ However, D.C. Sircar defines a '*kaccha*' as a 'field bordering near a stream, land near a well'.⁴ Going by this definition, a '*vāṭa-kaccha*' should be interpreted as a garden lying in an area bordering on a stream, while *charikā* signifies a pastoral land. The third inscription in this sequence grants a piece of land alongwith the surrounding *kaccha* as a *Brahmadeya*.⁵

The granting of these alternative forms of economy-bases e.g., pastoral land, garden land etc. shows that in the first phase in *Valkhā*, covering *Bhulūṇḍa*'s reign, these kinds of lands still had importance, so much so that they were considered appropriate enough to be given away as grants by the ruler. This shows that although cultivation was important, these lands were also a part of the economic structure of *Valkhā*. As for the agrarian economy, we have evidence for *Bhulūṇḍa*'s efforts to bring uncultivated land under cultivation and also to facilitate and intensify cultivation in the already cultivated areas.

3. *Ibid*, p. 23.

4. D.C. Sircar, Indian Epigraphical Glossary, Motilal Banarasidas, Delhi, 1966, p. 137.

5. Baḡh Inscriptions, op. cit., p. 63, line 4.

Of special mention are two inscriptions from Bhulūṇḍa's reign, one of them is the grant of five villages alongwith a reservoir as a *devāgrāhāra*⁶ and the other is the grant of three plots of land and a plot of waste-land,⁷ again as a *devāgrāhāra*. The mention of reservoir alongwith five villages implies an attempt to facilitate the cultivation of the relatively large-scale area of five villages. Incidentally, in the conventional list of people to whom the inscription is addressed, the word for cultivators does not exist. By contrast, in the inscription, the grant has been addressed to the '*kr̥ṣyamānām*'⁸, among others. This difference makes possible a subtle distinction between the two grants, while in one case, the absence of the word '*kr̥ṣyamānām*' shows that probably cultivation was not a major feature of these villages and hence, the ruler's efforts to facilitate cultivation in these villages by granting a reservoir. In another case, the presence of the word '*kr̥ṣyamānām*' and the fact that a waste-land has been granted alongwith the three plots of land⁹ which were cultivated,

6. Ibid, p. 1, lines 2-6.

7. Ibid, p. 9, line 4.

8. Ibid, p. 9, line 8.

9. Ibid, p. 9, lines 2-6.

shows that cultivation was a major feature in these plots, which was used by the ruler to bring the waste-land under cultivation. Thus, in one case, Bhuluṇḍa tried to intensify agriculture, in another case, he brought an uncultivated piece of land under cultivation by granting it alongwith three cultivated plots.

There is another kind of evidence related to agrarian structure in Valkhā. The very first grant of Bhuluṇḍa is that of a village where "cultivation has terminated".¹⁰ This village "earlier belonged to the agrāhāra of Ārya-Dharodhṛtaka"¹¹ and was regranted to seven Brāhmaṇas. These references show that the village had already existed as an agrāhāra and belonged to another person. It was regranted to another group of Brāhmaṇas as the cultivation had declined here, and Bhuluṇḍa wanted to revive it. This, apart from the agrarian planning of Bhuluṇḍa, also shows that the donee could enjoy the grant as long as he fulfilled the condition of *Brahmadeya*. However, if the cultivation declined or was neglected the ruler could always regrant it to some other donee. Looking at these evidences, it seems that there were

10. Ibid, Appendix I, p. 60, line 5.

11. Ibid, line 2.

three basic trends going along with the land-grants of the first phase in terms of agrarian economy - (1) uncultivated areas were brought under cultivation along with other cultivated areas, (2) cultivation was intensified in the already cultivated areas and (3) alternative forms of economy-bases were still an important feature of Valkhā, although they were getting integrated into an agrarian structure. Their mention as a part of grants given shows that the Valkhā settlements needed these lands along with cultivated tracts. Thus, we can see the beginning of a process of intensive agriculture in Bhulunda's period, which existed along with other forms of economy. Perhaps, the trend of *Brahmadeyas* had a crucial role to play in this process as is evident from the fact that a land was regranted to seven Brāhmaṇas in order to restart cultivation in this village.

Coming to the socio-religious aspects of Valkhā in the first phase, we can see that the beginnings of the acculturation process are evident even in these areas, just as the emerging Brāhmaṇisation in the region changes its economic structure, as shown above. The local socio-religious forms are strongly evident in the first phase, while the Sanskrit-ic norms made an appearance, although not as strongly marked

as in the second phase. Just as the Brāhmaṇisation influenced the agrarian economy, it also influenced the society and religion of Valkhā, as will be evident in the second phase. Thus, the emergence of Brāhmaṇical culture in the first phase as described below, is an important feature in the history of Valkhā.

In the first phase, Valkhā was a society with many indigenous traits, alongwith the emergence of Brāhmaṇisation of the region. It also showed a gradual development of administrative machinery and some migration of Brāhmaṇas from outside. As a result of these, there was an intermingling of various streams of belief-systems.

Out of the fifteen grants of Bhulunḍa, four are *Brahmadeyas*, and the rest of them are *devāgrāhāras*. In one case, an erstwhile *Brahmadeyas* was regranted as a *devāgrāhāras* to a local deity, showing the strong position this cult had in the society of Valkhā. The predominant number of *devāgrāhāras*, mostly to local cult deities, shows that Valkhā society in the first phase of grants was under a strong influence of indigenous belief-systems, while the Sanskritic culture represented by *Brahmadeyas* were just beginning to surface

in this region.

Among the *Brahmadeyas* the first grant of *Bhuluṇḍa* is socially important.¹² It is a *Brahmadeya* which grants a village to seven *Brāhmaṇas* of various *sagotras*. The village was erstwhile an *agrāhāra* under the care of¹³ a person called *Ārya-Dharodhṛtaka*. Another significant factor is that it had been granted in the year 38 (~AD 358) and was recounted again in the year 47 (~AD 367) at the request of the assembly of *Brāhmaṇas* (*'Brāhmaṇa-Parīṣad'*)¹⁴ and was engraved on the copper-plate. The above references show that the *Brāhmaṇas* were not really a new feature to the *Valkhan* society, as the mention of *Brāhmaṇa-Parīṣad* shows but their position here was not strengthened yet. This is evident from the fact that the verbal order regarding a *Brahmadeya* needed to be recounted nine years later at the request of the *Brāhmaṇa-Parīṣad* on copper-plate. This might have been because of some obstructions in the enjoyment of the *Brahmadeya* by the seven donees, hence they requested through the *Brāhmaṇa-Parīṣad* to make the order more permanent. This also

12. Ibid, Appendix I, p. 60.

13. Ibid, line 2.

14. Ibid, p. 61, line 9.

reflects on the activities of the *Brāhmaṇa-Parīṣad*. The existence of an active *Brāhmaṇa-Parīṣad* and the fact that the donated village was an erstwhile *agrāhāra*, shows that neither the feature of granting *agrāhāras* nor the presence of *Brāhmaṇas* started with *Bhulūṇḍa*, they were already in existence by the time of *Bhulūṇḍa* (although we do not have any earlier records of them). The lands already in the possession of *Brāhmaṇas* now become institutionalised.

An attempt by *Bhulūṇḍa* to regrant a land earlier under the care of a person whose social group is not specified, as a *Brahmadeya* to another person with a specified *gotra* is seen in one of the grants. Here, it is mentioned that the land was attached to or under the care of *Indrasena* (*Indrasena-Pratyaya*).¹⁵ It was regranted to 'Jayavardhana, the son of *Bhaṭṭi Dāma* of *Harita Sagotra*'.¹⁶ It is striking that *Indrasena's gotra* is not mentioned, thus making it difficult to relate him to any particular group, while *Jayavardhana* belongs to *Harita Sagotra* and gets the grant as a *Brahmadeya*, suggesting that he was a *Brāhmaṇa*. It is possible that earlier the land was under the care of a non-

15. Ibid, p. 15, line 4.

16. Ibid, line 3.

Brāhmaṇa and Bhulūṇḍa granted it to a Brāhmaṇa. The suffix 'Pratyaya' attached to Indrasena to show that the land was under his care, points to an important feature of land holdings in Valkhā - largely, the land was not under individual ownership but parts of land were managed by various individuals. Brahmadeyas were instrumental in bringing these lands under the holdings of Brāhmaṇas. However, these transfers might not have been permanent, as we have seen in the first grant that an agrāhāra was regranted by Bhulūṇḍa to 7 donees. Hence, the Brahmadeyas of the first phase made some changes in the indigenous concepts of land-holdings, but the ultimate power rested with the ruler to decide who should hold the land.

As mentioned earlier, there is some evidence that Bhulūṇḍa made some attempts to settle some Brāhmaṇas who came from outside in his chiefdom. His grant given in the year 56 (~AD 376)¹⁷ mentions the grant of a village to one 'Brāhmaṇa Dakkāna' of Bhāradvāja Sagotra. His name probably indicates his affiliation with Deccan or further south. However, merely on the basis of his name, it is not possible

17. Ibid, p. 17, line 3.

to say much about his origins as the charter does not mention his migration from anywhere. The use of such a name however, certainly shows Valkhā's connection with the southern regions.

The last one of the *Brahmadeyas* granted by Bhuluṇḍa in the year 57 (~AD 377), gives evidence of not only the transferring of land-holding from a non-Brāhmaṇa to a Brāhmaṇa, but also of the fact that not only the ruler donated a land, but his subjects did so too, it is mentioned that a piece of land alongwith the surrounding *kaccha* was under the care of a person called *Khuddataka* ('*khuddataka-pratyaya*')¹⁸ which was granted to a Brāhmaṇa *Kuśāraka* of *Bhāradvāja* *sagotra* at the request of *Āśadha-Nandī*.¹⁹ The transfer of land from the care of a non-Brāhmaṇa (as the name '*khuddataka*' suggests) to a Brāhmaṇa has been discussed earlier. Here, this grant shows that sometimes the donor was not the ruler but another person (*Āśadha-Nandī* in this case), who requested the ruler to make the grant ('*viññāpya*'). This again shows that ultimately it was the ruler who decided about land-donations and if anyone wanted to make a grant, he/she had

18. Ibid, p. 63, lines 2-6.

19. Ibid, line 3.

to request the ruler regarding it. This is also evident from several *Devāgrāhāras* to be discussed later in which a woman called Bhojikā-Bhaṭṭa-Bandhulā requested Bhuluṇḍa to grant some land to a local deity.

The above instances of the *Brahmadeyas* show the main features of the society of Valkha in the first phase. They show that the indigenous concepts of land-holdings of Valkha underwent a change under the influence of *Brahmadeyas*, although only to some extent. They also show that there was some effort by Bhuluṇḍa to settle *Brāhmaṇas*, as some pieces of land were transferred from non-*Brāhmaṇas* to *Brāhmaṇas*. they show that the *Brāhmaṇas* were not a new feature in Valkha during this time, but were not a strongly-felt authority yet. They were only beginning to show their presence felt in the first phase. The emerging new forms of agrarian economy discussed earlier should be seen in conjunction with these factors.

This feature of a strong presence of the indigenous structure, with the surfacing traits of *Brāhmaṇism* in the first phase is also seen in the nature of inscriptions themselves. As stated earlier, only 4 out of 15 grants of

Bhuluṇḍa are Brahmadeyas, the rest are all devāgrāhāras - out of which, only one grant gives land to a Brāhmaṇical deity, the rest grant land to the deities of local cults. Thus, first phase shows the beginnings of trends which brought about the acculturation in Valkha, although the indigenous trends were still very strong. the only devāgrāhāra showing Brāhmaṇical influence is an early grant of Bhuluṇḍa, of the year 47 (~AD 367), and records the grant of 5 villages and a water reservoir, for the performance of Bali, charu and sattra for Viṣṇu, who is described as eight-armed and carrying various weapons in these arms.²⁰ This grant is unusual in its format, as apart from its conventional passages referring to the grant, it contains a long passage describing the traits of Viṣṇu.

The Purāṇic influence in this grant is proved from the fact that this descriptive passage referring to Viṣṇu contains all the Purāṇic references of Viṣṇu characteristics e.g., his weapons, his bed of milky ocean, lotus arising from his navel etc., and also indicates his four incarnations - those of Vāmana, Kṛṣṇa, Rāma and Varāha. Here, it is

20. Ibid, pp. 1-2.

worth noting that these incarnations are not mentioned by name, but Viṣṇu is referred to as the deity who broke the pride of Bali, Rāvaṇa, Kaṇṣa, Chāṇūra, Śiśupāla etc. - only Varāha is mentioned by name.²¹

Apart from these references, Viṣṇu is also referred to as the deity who broke the pride of Naraka and Namuchi.²² Here, it is to be noted that the Purāṇic version describes Kṛṣṇa as Narakāri, Narakajit etc. and not Viṣṇu. Also, Namuchi was an Asura slain by Indra, not by Viṣṇu or his incarnations.²³ Also, the charter ends by referring to Bhuluṇḍa as the devotee / servant of Nārāyaṇa ("Nārāyaṇadāsa").²⁴

The above references show that there was a congruity between the religious and the socio-economic aspects of the first phase of Valkhā as described earlier. This grant to a Brāhmanical deity shows that Brāhmanism was still at a preliminary stage of creating an impact in Valkhā which largely followed the local cults, as will be shown later.

21. Ibid, lines 1-5.

22. Ibid, line 3.

23. V.S. Apte, Sanskrit - English Dictionary, Motilal Banarasidas, Delhi, p. 280.

24. Bagh Inscriptions, op. cit., p. 2, line 9.

This impact on Valkhā is shown by this inscription. While the description of Viṣṇu follows the Brāhmanical precepts closely, the identities between Viṣṇu, his incarnations, Indra and the local deity Nārāyaṇadeva²⁵ are blurred, as shown by the descriptions. Thus, this inscription shows that the Brāhmanical religion was well accepted in Valkhā and even received patronage through this grant. This inscription also shows that this is the point of time when there was no clear demarcation left between Viṣṇu, the Brāhmanical deity and Nārāyaṇa, the popular cult deity of Valkhā and elsewhere. Thus, two later grants by Bhulūṇḍa to Nārāyaṇa might well be taken as grants to Brāhmanical religion as well as the local cult, thus giving space to the Brāhmanical religion through these *devāgrāhāras*. In this sense, we can say that the introduction of the Brāhmanical religion in Valkhā brought the local cults into a complex interaction with this new element and helped in the acculturation process in the religious field.

Coming to the local cults present in Valkhā which got

25. Narayana as a local/tribal deity is discussed in Suvira Jaiswal, The Origin and Development of Vaisnavism, Munshiram Manoharlal Pvt. Ltd., Delhi, 1980, pp. 32-35.

royal patronage in the first phase, apart from the reference to the *devāgrāhāras* granted to Nārāyaṇa as stated above, we have references to the mother-goddesses, Mahāsenadeva and an ancestral deity, Bappa-Piśāca-deva. *Devāgrāhāras* to these form the bulk of the grants of Bhulūṇḍa. We should, rather than seeing them as clearly demarcated cults, see them as inter-allied cults, or perhaps, as the vehicle of the local belief-system of Valkhā which carried the pantheon of these deities. The reason for these will be clear from the discussion that follows.

The mother-goddesses or 'Bhagavatīs' were probably local village deities which got patronage during the first phase of these grants - in one case, they were installed by the ruler²⁶ and in another case they were installed by Pāśupatāchārya Bhāgavat Lokodadhi²⁷. Grants were given in both cases by Bhulūṇḍa. The installation of Bhagavatīs by a Pāśupatāchārya is important. The inscription also refers to the Pāśupatas who were associated with the temple and who were enjoined by the ruler to endorse the grant in accord-

26. Bagh Inscriptions, op. cit., p. 4, line 3.

27. Ibid, p. 22, line 3.

ance with the rules of devāgrāhāras.²⁸ This kind of reference shows that Bhagavatīs were a part of the Pāsūpata pantheon. This is also reflected in the name of the Pāsūpatāchārya which includes the epithet 'Bhāgavat'. The use of this epithet alongwith 'Pāsūpatāchārya' shows that the two terms were interrelated through religion. Here, Bhāgavat seems to have originated from 'Bhagavatī'. Thus, the Pāsūpatāchārya was both a devotee of the Pāsūpata sect and of Bhagavatī.

The interrelation between various cults/sects is also seen from the fact that Pāsūpatas are referred to as associated with a shrine of Mahāsenadeva, which received a grant from Bhuluṇḍa, Nārāyaṇadeva and Bappa-Piśācha-deva who was a major deity receiving patronage from Bhuluṇḍa. It is worth noticing that Mahāsenadeva was an epithet of Kārttikeya in the Brāhmaṇical religion.²⁹

A special reference needs to be made to Bappa-Piśācha-deva who received four grants in the first phase and who seems to have been a major local deity of Valkhā during the

28. Ibid, lines 7-8.

29. V.S. Apte, op. cit., p. 432.

first phase. The editors of the Bagh Inscriptions have mentioned that the name of the deity suggests either the prevalence of the worship of evil spirits in this tribal region, or the worship of an ancestor who met with an unnatural death.³⁰ The shrine of this deity was installed at the capital of Valkhā itself by a woman called Bhojikā-Bhaṭṭa-Bandhulā who requested the ruler to grant several devāgrāhāras to this deity. The strong following of this cult is evident from the fact that the last grant of Bhulūṇḍa in the year 59 (~AD 379) concludes the first phase of these charters from Valkhā, by granting two villages in the 'Narmadā-para-pārā-viṣaya', to a shrine of Bappa-Piśācha-deva installed in this viṣaya itself. Thus, by the end of the first phase, this cult had spread south of Narmada. As the very first grant of Bhulūṇḍa was located on the southern bank of Narmada, it may be said that the expansion of the Valkhā settlements had started in the very beginning of Bhulūṇḍa's reign. However, the installation of their ancestral deity south of Narmada through the last inscription of Bhulūṇḍa may show that this expansion had become full-fledged by this time, and an agrarian-base in this viṣaya was well estab-

30. Bagh Inscriptions, op. cit., Introduction, pp. XIII-XIV.

lished. Incidentally, this grant was made at the request of not Bhojikā, but a person called Inṅapāda.³¹ This name clearly suggests the non-Brāhmaṇical base of this cult.

Another important point suggesting not only a strong following of this cult in the first phase, but also a prominent position of the popular belief-systems of Valkhā during the first phase is that one of the villages called Jayasenānaka (not identified) was an erstwhile *Brahmadeya*, entrusted with *Agnīśvaraka* ("*Pūrva-Brahmadeya-kṣetram-Agnīśvaraka-Pratyaya*"³²) which was regranted as a *devāgrāhāra* to Bappa-Pisācha-deva. Thus, the popular belief-system was so strong in the first phase that the ruler could go to the extent of converting an erstwhile *Brahmadeya* into a *devāgrāhāra* to a local deity. This also shows the not so strong position of Brāhmaṇism in the first phase, as has been discussed earlier.

Another feature that emerges from the reference to this local deity is that of the association of a woman (*Bhojikā-Bhaṭṭa-Bandhulā*) with this cult and the *devāgrāhāras* related

31. Ibid, p. 29, line 9.

32. Ibid, p. 28, lines 4-5.

to this deity. It shows that the pre-Brāhmanised society of Valkhā was a society which gave a visible-space to women, who could perpetuate a cult-worship and even approach the ruler to grant devāgrāhāras to the cult deity. This kind of a system in which women had access to a visible-space was overshadowed in the second phase of the acculturation process in Valkhā. The cult of mother-goddesses-worship is also perhaps, indirectly related to giving a deified / prominent status to the feminine, among other things. In this sense, these two references - of Bhojikā and of mother-goddesses, point towards the same thing.

The interrelation between various cults discussed earlier is also obvious from a phraseology used in the grants related to the ancestral deity. Out of four the earlier two grants, both from the year 54 (~AD 374), mention in the end that the "grant is to be administrated by the devotees of the Bhagavat" (*Bhagavat-śiṣṭaiḥ adhiḅkṛtam*,³³). The editors of this hoard have interpreted this term as devotees of Lord Nārāyaṇa.³⁴ However, it may be recalled here that the Pāśupatāchārya mentioned earlier is also re-

33. Ibid, p. 11, line 8; p. 13, line 8.

34. Ibid, p. 12; p. 14.

ferred as to as 'Bhāgavat', owing to his association with Bhagavatī worship. Taking this in conjunction with the fact that Nārāyaṇa-bali is performed for a person meeting with an unnatural death,³⁵ it can be said that some aspect of Nārāyaṇa-bali or a likewise ritual was involved with the worship of Bappa-Piśācha-deva, therefore, the administration of the grant by the 'Bhagavat-sīṣyas'. Also, it can be said that the cult of Nārāyaṇa, Paśupati, Bhagavatī and Bappa-Piśācha-deva were inter-allied cults and there was no strict demarcation between their followers and officiating devotees cultwise - the devotees of one deity could be very well be the devotee of another deity as well and the officiating 'priest' of the ritual involved with one cult could also administer the affairs of another cult. Thus, most probably, these deities represented the pantheon of the religious belief-system of Valkhā, and should not be seen as the deities of distinct cults.

These shrines, apart from the Pāśupatas, and the 'Bhagavat-sīṣtas', and associated with them mantra-

35. Suvira Jaiswal, op. cit., pp. 32-34.

gaṇāchāryas, Ārya-Chokṣas,³⁶ Āchāryas,³⁷ Devakīya
 Karṣakāh,³⁸ deva-Prasādakāh,³⁹ Deva-Karmmāntika-Āchārya⁴⁰
 and Deva-Karmmāntikas, (both mentioned together in the last
 grant of Bhuluṇḍa, granted to Bappa-Piśācha-deva seem to be
 the temple-instructors of the religious precepts and temple
 priest respectively)⁴¹. This also shows that this particu-
 lar shrine of Bappa-Piśācha-deva was larger than the other
 shrines, since it needed additional groups of priests.

The mention of Ārya-Chokṣas, the only epigraphical
 reference to this sect according to the editors.⁴² They are
 a Bhāgavata sect,⁴³ depicted in the Chāturbhāṇī as believ-
 ing in hypocrisy and practices like untouchability and
 therefore, ridiculed. Incidentally, in the present inscrip-
 tion, they are associated with the temple of Nārāyaṇa-deva.
 Thus, their association with the Bhāgavata sect is quite
 likely.

36. Bagh Inscriptions, op. cit., p. 7, line 6.

37. Ibid, p. 28, line 6.

38. Ibid, p. 6, line 5.

39. Ibid, p. 11, line 6.

40. Ibid, p. 29, line 7.

41. Ibid, p. 29, line 7.

42. Ibid, Introduction, p. xiv.

43. Moti Chandra, Chāturbhāṇīs, Bombay, 1959, pp. 21-23.

Among the people engaged in rendering services to the temples, 'Devakīya karṣakāh' are referred to as 'tilling the land and sowing the seeds',⁴⁴ suggesting that the temple authorities had regular tillers to work on the land of the temple - thus, temple grants were becoming more or less institutionalised, although this process was still in an initial stage. Deva-Prasādakāh are engaged in providing incense, garlands, sandal paste etc. - i.e., generally they were engaged in the temple activities related to worship. Thus, they seem to have been temple-servants.

A constant occurrence in association with all the devā-grāhāras is the reference to the offering of bali, charu, and sattra. This terminology shows the kind of rituals which alongwith the worship of the deities. D.C. Sircar explains these terms as offerings included in five Mahāyajñas essential for Brāhmaṇas. Bali was the offering of flowers, fruits uncooked rice etc.⁴⁵. Charu was the offering to manes or ancestors⁴⁶ while sattra was a charitable feeding house⁴⁷. However, looking at the variety in the patheon worshipped in

44. Bagh Inscriptions, op. cit., p. 6, line 5.

45. D.C. Sircar, op. cit., p. 45.

46. Ibid, p. 67.

47. Ibid, p. 306.

Valkhā, they can not be taken in the restricted context of belonging to the five Mahāyajñas of Brāhmanas. Rather, offerings explained above show the kind of ritual system followed by the people of Valkhā, which later evolved into the Brāhmanical Mahāyajñas, as reflected in the second phase to be discussed later. Thus, they reflect the popular origins of these Mahāyajñas. This system embedded in the popular stratum is also reflected in the term 'mantra-gaṇāchāryas', indicating some form of incantation accompanying these rituals.

The above analysis shows, as stated earlier, that in the first phase, the Valkhā society was predominantly based on the popular belief-systems, as reflected in the study on the society and religion of Valkhā, Brāhmanism started emerging as a visible force in this period, but it was only in the initial stage of emergence. The economy was a mixed one, although cultivation was becoming intensified by the efforts of the ruler. Local cults were more forceful than the Brāhmanical influence, although the latter also had started getting patronage from the ruler. There were certain features in Valkhā society e.g., popular cults, women etc. getting a space in the patronage system, ritual system

based in the popular nature, which were prominent in this phase, but were to get overshadowed in the next phase, as will be shown later. Patronage to the temple was one of these, which did not get patronage in the next phase.

Thus, the first phase gives us a picture of what pre-accultured Valkhā was like, and what features of acculturation emerged in the first phase. The second phase can show us in what forms these features of acculturation became strong and also, in some case, how they incorporated the local features in their system.

(II)

The first phase of emergent Brāhmanism had brought about an attempt by the chief to intensify cultivation in Valkhā and to settle land along the southern bank of the Narmada, as was shown in the earlier section. The second phase to be discussed here shows an advanced stage of this acculturation process and its impact on socio-religious and agrarian systems. We find that many features which were characteristic of the first phase stopped finding a mention

in the grants of the second phase, while the traits of acculturation process became prominent and absolutely dominated the grants of this phase. This also affected the agrarian structure of Valkhā, as will be shown below.

The main trends in the agrarian economy, exercised by the four chiefs of this phase from the year 63 to the year 134 (~AD 383 to 454), in order to emulate the 'high-culture' of Brāhmaṇical society included several features which are normally associated with a Brāhmaṇised socio-economic structure. These include, among other things, a uniformity in the format of the grants and in contents, as against the grants of Bhulūṇḍa, which showed a diversity in the forms of land granted, to various kinds of donees etc. The grants of the second phase are all *Brahmadeyas*, which record the grant of generally a single village or a single piece of land to a Brāhmaṇa or a group of Brāhmaṇas.

The diversity in the kinds of Bhulūṇḍa's grants can be explained in terms of his efforts to patronise the indigenous elements, while giving space to the elements of influence at the same time. In agrarian terms, this meant donating various kinds of land to Brāhmaṇas or to the shrines of

local cults, as well as granting pure **Brahmadeya** lands for intensification of agriculture and for the expansion of settlements south of Narmada. Once all this was achieved, a form of uniformity was established in the kinds of grants and also, the Brāhmaṇa donees took a prominent place in the second phase. The grant of single villages/plots in the second phase reflects intensified agrarian economy, so a plot of land was considered enough as a grant, while in the first phase, several villages or a village with several plots were granted together by Bhulūṇḍa, showing that agrarian economy was not so well intensified and also, that Bhulūṇḍa wanted to bring additional land under cultivation.

Several other features in the agrarian economy of the second phase indicate an attempt by the rulers to settle deserted and uninhabited land, some evidence for the expansion of Valkhan territory south of Narmada, experimentation with paddy cultivation in one instance and a gradually evolving economic apparatus as the mention of the granting the right to collect revenue appears in one grant, these will be discussed below, we should remember that the increasing Brāhmaṇisation of the region was instrumental in the emergence of this kind of economic apparatus in Valkhā.

As stated above, the second phase-rulers made some effort to settle uninhabited land and as a result, the Valkhan settlement-area expanded south of the Narmada. This was an advance over the previous phase, in which lands were donated on the southern bank of Narmada. We have evidence regarding this from four records from the second phase, inscribed in close proximity of time. Three inscriptions out of these, one from the year 66 (~AD 386) of Svāmidāsa, and two from the year 69 (~AD 389) of Rudradāsa refer to a territorial division called Navarāṣṭraka' or Navarāṣṭrakapathaka lying south of Narmada, while one inscription of the year 67 (~AD 387) of Rudradāsa refers to a 'Śūnya-grāmakam'. The term 'Navarāṣṭraka' connotes the sense of a territorial division newly settled, lying south of Narmada, as mentioned earlier. It seems that after grants were given along the southern bank of Narmada, some uninhabited area left in between clusters of settlement was settled by the rulers and given the name 'Navarāṣṭraka' (Map 2) after it developed into a rāṣṭra.

There are several grants given in the 'Navarāṣṭraka' or

pathaka of the same name⁴⁸ (Map 2). Two of these villages have been granted to Chāturvaidya Brāhmaṇas who are residents of the centre and are asked to inhabit ('Samāvāsayatāh') these villages, as is the Brāhmaṇa Dantika, who is also granted a village in this rāṣṭra. Thus, there is a clear evidence that in the second phase effort was made by the rulers to inhabit and settle erstwhile uninhabited land and they sent the Chāturvaidya Brāhmaṇas from the centre and other Brāhmaṇas in other cases for this purpose.

The 'sūnya-grāmakaṃ' referred to above was also granted as a Brahmadeya and the donee was asked to 'cultivate it, get it cultivated and to settle it'.⁴⁹ Here again, the word 'samāvāsayatāh' has been used, as in the three grants discussed above. Besides, the editors of this inscription have translated the term 'sūnya-grāmakaṃ' as an 'uninhabited village'.⁵⁰ If this interpretation is correct, then it shows that this was another effort by Rudradāsa to settle an uninhabited village, (this time in Dāsīlaka-palli pathaka),

48. Bagh Inscriptions, p. 39, line 3.

p. 46, line 4.

49. "Bhunjatah, Kṛṣatah, Kṛṣāpayatah, Samāvāsayatāh", lines 5-6, (The Interpretation of the term 'samāvāsayatāh' has been left by the translators).

50. *Ibid*, p. 70, lines 2-5.

just as in the case of settlement of the Navarāṣṭraka-patha-ka.

The features of the experimentation of paddy cultivation and the emergence of an infra-structure based on revenue-collection are evident from an inscription of the year 102 (~AD 422) of Bhaṭṭāraka, Rudradāsa's successor.⁵¹ This grant mentions the donation of a plot of land alongwith 'paddy-fields and udrāṅga-revenue'.⁵² This shows that under the influence of the acculturation process, there was an effort by the rulers in the second-phase not only to intensify cultivation, but also to patronise the cultivation of paddy, which needs water resources and also organisation of labour. We do not know what was cultivated in Valkhā in the earlier period, as there is no reference to the crops cultivated, but the fact that the paddy fields get a mention in this grant and that udrāṅga-revenue goes along with them, shows that it was an important step in the second phase, we do not have a mention of this kind in any other grant. This inscription shows that the political and economic machinery

51. Ibid, p. 52.

52. "Kṣetraṃ tatmayā-saha-kedāraih s-odraṅga Brāhmadeyaṃ dattaṃ" (lines 4-5).

of Valkhā had evolved considerably from Bhulūṇḍa's time, since by AD 422 a Brāhmaṇa was granted the right to collect udraṅga,⁵³ (revenue) and there was sufficient labour-organisation machinery at least in this instance to introduce paddy-cultivation. However, it is worth-noticing that these references are not repeated in the second phase at least, the subsequent grant reverting back to the older form of granting a piece of land or a village without any revenue rights whatsoever. Thus, it can be said that this grant shows a new experimentation in the second stage by Valkhā, an advance on the efforts of the previous phase to intensify cultivation and also, it shows an evolution of the administrative machinery regarding revenue. We do not know whether udraṅga existed earlier, but it had evolved as a significant revenue by the time of this grant i.e., AD 422.

Thus, we can see that the agrarian economy shows an advance over the last phase here. There is an effort to expand the settled area of Valkhā, beyond the southern bank of Narmada referred to in the first phase, and to introduce probably new modes of cultivation of a new crop and also the

53. Ibid, p. 52, lines 4-5.

introduction of revenue collection rights in the grant-system, perhaps brought about by the increased yield of revenue from this area. The efforts to expand and settle new areas as also to improve cultivation may be linked to the topography of the region, which is not very fertile, except for the banks of Narmada. Thus, an evolving chiefdom needed additional revenue and surplus food, and therefore employed the Brāhmanisation - factor in the first phase to strenghten its grounds of agrarian economy. An increase in population may also be a reason for the expansion of settled area and of cultivation. Also, the growing influx of Brāhmanas who sought patronage had to be settled somewhere. The sudden emergence of Chāturvaidyas in this phase suggests that either they migrated from outside or the existing Brāhmanas had consolidated themselves in leading groups of Chāturvaidya. However, we do not have a direct evidence for these factors - they are largely inferred. In any case, the economy of second phase definitely shows an advance over that of the last phase and Brāhmanas played a significant role in this transformation.

In socio-religious sphere too, we see an increasing influence of Brāhmanism on Valkhā in the second phase. This

accelerated the acculturation process which had emerged in the first phase. We see the impact of this influence on the social structure as well as the references to the religious rituals etc. Not only is the Brāhmanical influence seen to increase in this phase, but the Brāhmaṇa- community also is well established and more differentiated as compared to the previous phase. The increasing influence of Brāhmaṇas is seen from the fact that certain land-holdings were taken from non-Brāhmaṇas, often groups belonging to lower strata of society and donated to Brāhmaṇas. This is different from such transfers discussed in the first phase, since the social-group affiliations of people from whom land was transferred to Brāhmaṇas in the first phase are not clearly mentioned. In contrast, in the second phase these affiliations are clearly mentioned. Hence, it also shows that apart from the Brāhmanical influences, social hierarchy in the second phase was more clearly established. Another feature is the emergence of the groups of Chāturvaidyas, perhaps an influential social group. As discussed in the section on economy, they helped in the expansion of the settled area of Valkhā. Their reference also helps us to understand a greater differential status of Brāhmaṇas as will be discussed

later.

The increasing Brāhmanical influence over the region also points towards a greater homogenisation of the cultural-matrix of the region. We no longer find a mention of the varied popular cults which were prominent in the first phase. The only such reference is that of a forest deity, and in an indirect manner. This shows that the popular cults took a backstage in the second phase. The local ritual system also underwent a transformation under the influence of Brāhmanism and were incorporated in the Brāhmanical order to serve the needs of this new dominant trend. Thus, what was only surfacing as a major influence in the first phase became a prominent feature in the second phase.

The evidence of the transfer of land-holdings from a non-Brāhmaṇa to a Brāhmaṇa comes from two grants of the year 67 (~AD 387), one by Svāmidāsa and the other by Rudradāsa. The former mentions the donation of a *Brahmadeya* to a 'Muṇḍa Brāhmaṇa', this land erstwhile being under the care of one 'Āryya-Vānijaka'.⁵⁴ The word Vānijaka suggests his origin

54. Ibid, p. 65, lines 3-4.

in the trading group. The second grant records the donation of a field, like in the former inscription, which was under the care of a potter 'Ārya-dāsa' ('kumbhakāra-Ārya-dāsa-pratyaya')⁵⁵ to a Brāhmaṇa called Hūnādhyaka. The introduction of the Brāhmaṇas in a non-Brāhmaṇa area is also somewhat related to this feature described above. This is evident from an inscription of Svāmidāsa, of the year 65 (~AD 385), by which a plot is granted to Mātujja of Kāśyapa sagotra, which lies in a village called 'Lohakārapallikā', literally, a hamlet of iron-smiths.⁵⁶ Thus, not only was the land erstwhile under the care of non-Brāhmaṇas given to Brāhmaṇas, Brāhmaṇas were also introduced in an erstwhile non-Brāhmaṇical area. Thus, we see a strong tendency to Brāhmaṇise the region by the rulers in the second phase.

That this tendency not only brought the Valkhan territory under an acculturation process but also strengthened the position of the Brāhmaṇas is seen from the fact that as many as seven grants in the second phase are given to the Ārya-Cāturvaidyas of the centre, who were probably a dominant group of Brāhmaṇas. Their association with the expan-

55. Ibid, p. 67, lines 3-4.

56. Ibid, p. 37, lines 3,4.

sion of settlements has been discussed earlier. Their sudden emergence is a remarkable thing, as nothing is mentioned regarding where they came from. There can be two possibilities regarding their appearance in the second phase - either they, in a group, migrated from somewhere else to Valkhā and received patronage from the chiefs and resided at the centre, or the influential Brāhmaṇa families of the first phase had aligned themselves in a Chāturvaidya group by the second phase. In this context, the reference to a 'Brāhmaṇa-Parīṣada' in the very first grant of Bhulūṇḍa is worth recalling. However, in the absence of any reference to their origin, nothing much can be said. Whatever may be the case, it is clear that they were an influential group, perhaps more influential than even other Brāhmaṇas. This is shown by the fact that almost all the chiefs from the second phase donated land to them - total seven in number, covering a period from the year 63 (~AD 383) to the year 134 (~AD 454), or the whole of the second phase. Thus, we can see that in the second phase, there was not only a social hierarchy established between Brāhmaṇas and other social group, but there was a hierarchy evident even among the Brāhmaṇas. This is certainly an advance over the first phase, where there was

visible differentiation only among the Brāhmaṇas and others.

That the Chāturvaidyas had attained a greater stage of differentiation than other Brāhmaṇas is also evident from the fact that they are referred to as belonging to various gotras and charaṇas (although the specific gotras and charaṇas are not mentioned), while the other Brāhmaṇas are identified with only a sagotra, suggesting that they were lesser differentiated than the Chāturvaidyas. This again, shows that Brāhmaṇas had evolved from the first phase, where there are no Chāturvaidyas, Brāhmaṇas are identified with only sagotras and no charaṇas. However, it is to be noted that although a reference to charaṇas emerges in the second phase, the names of charaṇas do not come to us, and the stage of differentiation of Brāhmaṇas in the second phase has not reached a stage where their śākhās are mentioned. Thus, they are still in a process of differentiation.

As mentioned earlier, the excessive acculturation of the area led to the subordination of the popular cults as they cease to get royal patronage absolutely. However, that these cults still existed to some extent, is evident from an indirect reference to a possible cult of a forest-deity in

the second phase. In the *earlier* stage of the second phase, in the year 65 (~AD 385), there is a reference to 'Vanavāsini' while defining the location of a Brahmadeya which lay 'north-west to Vanavāsini'.⁵⁷ The editors of the inscriptions have taken this term to be a territorial division.⁵⁸ However, the reference suggests that it was a shrine of a forest-deity lying on the outskirts of a village, or a village named after a forest-deity. Whatever be the case, the cult of a forest-deity is definitely evident in the origin of this name. The indirect reference to it and also, no *devāgrāhāra* to a popular cult in this period shows that the emergence and the strengthening of Brāhmaṇism gave a setback to the popular cults in this region in the second phase.

This growing influence not only suppressed the popular cults, it also incorporated the local ritual-system and transformed them in order to suit the needs of Brāhmaṇical religion. In the last grant of the second phase, granted in the year 134 (~AD 454), to the *Ārya-Chāturvaidya*, a Brahmadeya is donated for the observance of 'Bali, charu and

57. Ibid, p. 35, lines 3-4.

58. Ibid, Introduction, p. xx.

Vaiśvadeva offerings.⁵⁹ This shows a marked departure from the devagrāhāras of the first phase, where land was granted for 'Bali, charu and sattra' rites and it reflected the ritual-system of the popular-worship. The substitution of the term sattra in the favour of 'Vaiśvadeva' in the second phase is significant. D.C. Sircar explains 'Vaiśvadeva' as offerings to gods, one of the five Mahāyajñas performed by Brāhmaṇas.⁶⁰ The fact that the grant has been given to Ārya-Chāturvaidyas shows that the phrase 'Bali-charu-Vaiśvadeva' had assumed the meaning of Mahāyajñas by AD 454 in Valkhā, transcending its popular origins from the first phase. Thus, a ritual-system had been accommodated by the Brāhmanical order to suit its purpose.

The above discussion shows that the emerging trends of acculturation of Phase I had become a dominant trend by Phase II, so much so that there was no legitimation left for the popular-systems. We see, as a result of growing Brāhmaṇism and perhaps a need felt for intensification of agriculture because of the aridness of much of Valkhā (or perhaps because it was forested), an attempt to not only intensify

59. Ibid, p. 58, line 6.

60. D.C. Sircar, op. cit., p. 359.

agriculture but also experimentation with paddy-cultivation. We also see the revenue-system becoming strong in this phase.

The socio-religious picture shows a complete dominance of the Brāhmanical order. We get a reading not only from what is evident, but also from what is not evident. For example, the visible-space given to women and popular cults in the first phase is completely overshadowed, showing the impact of the dominance of Brāhmanism. It does not mean that these cults did not exist in the second phase, it simply means that they were not considered important enough to be patronised. A parallel to this can be seen in the area of land-grant. In contrast to the first phase, when pasture-land, garden-land etc. were donated alongwith the cultivated land, in the second phase, there is no mention of these forms of land. They must have existed even in the second phase, since a settlement needs these types of land alongwith cultivated land, but it was not considered appropriate enough to grant such lands in the second phase. Thus, to some extent, acculturation had changed the perception of the people in the second phase.

Apart from the dominant Brāhmaṇisation, we also see the emergence of various social groups not mentioned in the first phase, pointing towards a greater differentiation of the society, and also of the Brāhmaṇa community in the second phase. Thus, we can see that the acculturation process in Valkhā had created a strong impact on the region by the end of second phase.

In the next section, we will see not only the emergence of Brāhmaṇisation in its full-fledged form, but also, the prevalence of a new influence on the region which formed the third dimension of social transformation of Valkhā.

(III)

This phase, upto the year 167 (~AD 487), comprises of only two grants, but they are extremely important, as they give information about the culmination-phase of acculturation in Valkhā, and also about the prevalence of a new influence over Valkhan society i.e., that of Buddhism. We have reasons to believe that Buddhism was introduced in Valkhā in late 5th century AD or in early 5th century AD (or perhaps even earlier) i.e., sometime in the second phase,

when Brāhmanism was a strong force. Thus, it shows that the centrestage in the second phase was shared by both sects equally, and this continued into the third phase. Certain features of the grants of this phase show that this co-existence of the two major sects in Valkhā led to a religious complexity in which Brāhmanism affected the Buddhist grant.

The grants of this phase show that Valkhā attained an advanced state of administrative machinery, and a stronger polity in third phase. The social differentiation was also an advance over the last stage. Besides, Buddhism had started having its impact in this phase. It is worth noticing that Buddhism had existed here even in the second phase but did not receive a mention from the rulers of Valkhā, it made a strong impact only in the third phase. Perhaps the changed status of Valkhā and its centre in the third phase had something to do with it.

Between the last inscription of the second phase (~AD 454) and the first dated inscription of the third phase (~AD 487), there is a gap of 33 years during which no inscription is available to us. When we get inscriptions again in AD

487, there is a marked change in the political status of Valkhā. Firstly, the grants are issued not from Valkhā as was the practice in earlier two phases, but from Māhiṣmatī. Secondly, the ruler of the third phase viz., Subandhu, does not pay obeisance to Gupta rulers as do the rulers of the first two phases. This shows that the hiatus of 33 years was a period of political disturbance, and when the political situation became stable again, the position of Valkhā had changed. Bagh had lost its political importance, the base had shifted from Bagh to Māhiṣmatī and the chiefdom of Valkhā had come under a more powerful ruler, who did not acknowledge the suzerainty of any overlord. Here, it should be noted that Subandhu was contemporary of Budhagupta, and studies show that in the last decades of 5th century AD, Budhagupta's empire included the land from eastern Mālava to northern Bengal and from Kali Nadi to Ganga. Thus, his kingdom comprised of North Bengal, Bihar, Eastern Uttar Pradesh and Eastern Mālava.⁶¹ Here, it is important to know that only Eastern Mālava is listed as under the control of Budhagupta and not Western Mālava, where the area of this

61. P.L. Gupta, op. cit., p. 353.

study lies. Moreover, it is acknowledged by scholars that during this period the power of the Guptas was beginning to decline and many erstwhile feudatories and other local leaders including Subandhu made no reference to any Gupta sovereign.⁶² Hence, we can safely say that Subandhu who ruled from Māhiṣmatī over the erstwhile Valkhā chiefdom was more or less an independent ruler and any allegiance which he had to the Gupta was nominal.

The above is true of the political independence of the Māhiṣmatī-ruler and Valkhā territory. However, a cultural and religious influence of Budhagupta over Subandhu can not be denied. Rather, it explains Subandhu's patronage to the Bagh caves partly, as Budhagupta is also known to be a patron of Buddhism. Thus, the emulation tendency of the Valkhā rulers takes a different form in the third phase - in earlier phase they supported Brāhmaṇical culture, while in this phase it led to a patronage of Buddhism, apart from usual patronage to Brāhmaṇism.

Continuing the discussion on economic front from the earlier two phases, it is seen that Subandhu's grant to Bagh

62. Ibid, pp. 353-354.

caves (identified by the editors as 'Kalāyana-Vihāra of the grant) includes the right to collect *udraṅga* and *Uparikara* taxes, apart from the donation of land. This shows that in the earlier instance from the second phase, where *udraṅga* was given in one case, was now accompanied by the right to an additional tax i.e., *Uparikara*⁶³ Thus, the revenue-system had become more advanced than the second phase by Subandhu's time.

In social sphere, we find the culmination of the development of Brāhmanical influence in Subandhu's grant. This is evident from the format of the grant themselves. While the grants of the earlier phases simply mentioned the donation aspect without mentioning any cause behind the donation, the grants of the third phase state that Subandhu had granted the village 'for acquiring merit (*Puṇya*) for his parents and for himself',⁶⁴ thus, we see an increasing influence of the Brāhmanical ideals in Phase III, which prescribed donation of land as one of the means of acquiring merit. Thus, while the *Brahmadeyas* of Phase II were an attempt by the ruler to patronage a certain belief-system, in the third phase, the

63. CII, Vol. 4, Pt. I, p. 20, line 9.

64. EI - 19, pp. 262-263, line 4.

grants became an instrument through which the ruler expressed his affiliation with this particular belief-systems, apart from the patronage-aspect of it. Thus, while Phase II showed the rulers of Valkhā as giving space to an outside influence and trying to transform their chiefdom according to its precepts, Phase III shows the ruler as living within the folds of this belief-system - it is no longer an outside influence in Phase III but has come to stay in this region.

We see a further differentiation in the Brāhmaṇa-community in Phase III, as apart from the gotra, the sākḥā⁶⁵ of the Brāhmaṇa donee is mentioned, something which is not seen in the earlier phases. Thus, we can see that Brāhmaṇa-community was not only differentiated but that certain portions of Vedas were increasingly being practised by certain specialised groups of Brāhmaṇas, again showing the existence of full-fledged Brāhmaṇism in the third phase.

As mentioned earlier, the coexistence of two major sects shows a religious-complexity in the grants of this phase. Subandhu grants a village for the repair of broken parts in the Kalāyana-Vihāra (Bhagna-sphuṭita-

65. Ibid, lines 3-4.

sanskāraṅārtham'), to provide bed, medicines, robes, food etc. to monks and for the offer of garland, *bali*, *sattra*, rites for the Lord Buddha.⁶⁶ The mention of the grant for repair-work shows that the caves had existed for a long time before Subandhu's grant, therefore, the need for repair-works. This is the reason for our view that the caves must have been excavated sometime in the later part of the 4th century AD. From the inscription of Subandhu, we know that the caves were excavated by one 'Dattaṭaka' ('Dattaṭaka-kārita').⁶⁷ Since no qualifications are given, we do not know who this person was, but the absence of any royal epithets shows that he was most probably a rich merchant or some other influential person from Valkhā, who did not hold a royal / official post. However, in the absence of further information nothing much can be said about it.

The religious complexity comes about in the references given above and also the way in which the inscription ends - by quoting the conventional verses of Vyāsa - remarkable for a Buddhist inscription. The mention of the offerings of *bali*, *sattra*, garlands, incense, perfume to 'Bhagavato

66. Ibid, lines 2-7.

67. Ibid, lines 3-4.

Buddha' gives us a glimpse into the kind of rituals practised by the Buddhists here - clearly they had assimilated the relics of the popular ritual-system from the first phase. Once again, the meaning of the term 'bali-sattra' changes from the second phase, where it was used in the sense of *Mahāyajñas*. Here in the third phase, they are used in the form of popular rituals, but not for the local cults, but for Buddhism. The use of these rituals in a sense helped in identifying Buddha as a deity (reference to him as a 'Bhagavata' or deity is significant), facilitating the newly emergent Mahāyānist principles in the erstwhile *Hīnayāna* caves, the artistic symbolism of which will be discussed in the next chapter. The use of the verses of Vyāsa again shows the heavy influence of Brāhmaṇism.

Thus, we can say that the Buddhist caves of Bagh represented the culmination and the converging point of all the three phases of the acculturation process. This is why a religious-complexity in the grants of Buddhist caves.

The discussion in this chapter shows that the incoming influences of various streams changed the society of Valkhā considerably. The patronage of the ruler and their desire to

emulate the Guptas was a instrumental factor in this acculturation process in Valkha. The acculturation involved not only a change in the socio-religious ideas, but also affected the economy and polity. Overall, there was a homogenisation effect on Valkhā which brought it closer to the mainstream society. It is not that the indigenous systems were wiped out, but that they lost the visible-space they commanded in the first phase. In each phase, we see a gradual increase in the hold of Brāhmaṇism and later, Buddhism step by step, the latter presenting the converging point for the trends of the three phases, through the rituals and the ritual terms referred to in the Buddhist grant. We see a gradual evolving polity and economy, alongwith a transforming society and religious structure.

RELIGION AND ART - SYMBOLISM AND ASSIMILATION

The acculturation process and the incoming elements in Valkhā including not only Brāhmanism but also Buddhism and, from some point in the second phase onwards, they coexisted, as has been shown in the previous chapter. The inscriptions from Valkhā however, do not mention the existence of Buddhism; it was left for the last inscription available to us, from Māhiṣmatī and not from Valkhā, to give some reference to the Bagh Caves, which lie ironically, not close to Māhiṣmatī but close to Bagh or the Valkhā centre. Perhaps we should look for the cause of it in the historical process going on in this region. In the second phase, the monastery existed right next door to the Valkhā centre, but perhaps it did not play a very significant role in the socio-economic history. However in the third phase, when Valkhā was ruled from a commercially important centre like Māhiṣmatī and when the trade route from Māhiṣmatī to Bhārukaccha pass through Valkhā territory, the commercial significance of the Buddhist monastery of Bagh increased, as it lay not very far from Māhiṣmatī - Bhārukaccha route. Here, its important to note that the excavator of the caves, Dattakaṭṭa (refer previous chapter), may have been a trader. Moreover, if Subandhu belonged to the same stock as that of the

earlier Valkhā rulers (although we do not have a direct reference to his origins), then he felt it necessary to go back to his place of origin and establish his links with Valkhā by making a grant to the Bagh caves. Thus, Bagh caves became significant in this period.

Since this is the only grant giving us any information regarding the Bagh caves and Buddhism, it is necessary to use another method to obtain information about the Buddhism of the region, as we have seen that it was also a strong influence on the region, apart from Brāhmanism. This method is employed through interpreting the works of art in the caves, viz., the architecture, sculptures and paintings, to get an idea about how the artistic symbolisms were used here to express the kind of Buddhism existing here, and how the popular cults were being assimilated in the Buddhist ritual and iconography, which is the main concern of this chapter. In the following sections, we deal with how the architecture, sculptures and paintings of Bagh caves show the subtle features of the changing monastic organisation and also, how artistic symbolism was used to sustain a transforming Buddhism from *Hīnayāna* to *Mahāyāna* during the fifth century AD.

(I)

Architectural composition:

It is worthwhile to compare the architectural composition of Bagh caves with that of the contemporaneous caves of Ajanta, the nearest and the most prominent Buddhist monastic complex at the time, since it gives us an idea about how Bagh differed from Ajanta in its artistic expressions, which were found to suit the specific needs of the religion of the monastery of Bagh.

Ajanta and Bagh monastic complexes differ to a considerable degree not only in their layout, but also in the composition of the caves. While Ajanta has some caves combining the functions of *Chaitya* and *Vihāra* and others where a distinct *Chaitya* plan is followed, Bagh does not have a single apsidal *Chaitya* cave. Most of the caves are of *Chaitya - cum - Vihāra* variety (i.e. shrine-cum-monastic residence) and there is one an instance of a *Vihāra* cave, with provisions for occasional gatherings.

Chronologically, cave numbers 11, 7, 6 and numbers 15

to 20 of Ajanta are contemporaneous with the Bagh caves¹, which came into existence some time in the beginning of 5th century AD, or even earlier.

Caves 6 and 7 of Ajanta combined the residential cells with the chapel, just like the caves at Bagh. However, they show variations in their plan, while Bagh caves are more or less uniform in plan. For example, cave no. 6 of Ajanta is double-storeyed, while cave no. 7 has two small porches which lead to a verandah at the rear wall of which are cells on either side of antechamber.² Such a plan is absent in Bagh. Since Bagh shows some indication of the advent of Mahāyānaism at some stage (as will be shown earlier), it is worthwhile to look at cave 19 of Ajanta which is an example of Mahāyāna rock-cut caves. It maintains the orthodox plan of a pure *Chaitya* cave without any residential cells. A striking feature of these caves is that they are apsidal in design with pillars along the apsidal wall and the votive object housed at the tapering end. However, at Bagh, all the caves are either oblong or square in shape, no apsidal caves

1. Owen C. Kail, Buddhist Caves Temples of India, Taraporevala, Bombay, 1975, pp. 80-84.

2. Ibid.

are found here. The stūpas too are different at Bagh and Ajanta. At Bagh the stūpa is a typical Hīnayāna stūpa, while at Ajanta, Buddha image invariably is carved on the stūpa of the contemporaneous caves, showing the unity in the symbolism of Mahāyānist image and the stūpa. At Bagh, this similarity is shown in a different, which will be discussed later. These differences show that the rituals of worship and the stage of Mahāyānism practised in these two places were different. Also, these may show that Bagh followed a regional variation in architectural composition. As the religious aspects of Ajantan architecture and sculpture are beyond the scope of this work, we will look into the details of the form of Buddhism practised at Bagh and also, the artistic symbolism employed here.

Looking at the architectural lay-out of Bagh, it is obvious that it was a relatively well-knit monk-body staying here, with its hierarchical rankings marked out, although smaller in strength than Ajanta. Although it is not possible to know exactly the strength of the monk-community of Bagh was there are about ninety extant residential cells in the seven preserved caves of Bagh. Taking into account that nos. 8 and 9 have collapsed, the housing capacity of this

Vihāra-complex seems to have been sizeable, although less than that of Ajanta.

Looking at the plan of Bagh caves, it appears that a major part of the monastic complex was executed at one point of time, each cave with a definite purpose and later on some additions were made as the need arose because of a growing *saṅgha*. There is also a possibility that some additions were made during 'repairs' referred to by Subandhu. There is some evidence of some additions particularly in caves 2 and 3 which will be discussed below. However, the precise date when they were added is not certain, since there is no record of it, but it could well be towards the close of the century.

The caves are designed in such a manner that each cave forms a *Chaitya* -cum - *Vihāra* complex in itself (except nos. 5 and 6), serving the purposes of residence, worship and religious congregation at once, thus fulfilling the needs of the resident monks in each cave. In this sense, each cave can be called a self-sufficient monastic unit.

These characteristics can be seen in the architecture of

caves 2, 4, 7 and 3 (figs. I, b, c, d). Cave 1 seems to have been excavated as an experimentation work before starting the whole excavation as it contains only a small hall with four pillars, having no stūpa or cells (fig. I a). Caves 2, 4 and 7 follow a more or less uniform design - this includes a large pillared hall, almost square in shape, with residential cells on three sides. The wall facing the entrance has an antechamber in the middle, flanked by cells on both sides and leading on to a chamber which houses the stūpa (fig. I b, d). Thus, the cells housed the resident monks, the stupa cut-out within the cave was the votive object and the central hall provided the space for sacred gatherings, carrying out of rituals and offerings of prayers etc. This kind of plan suggests a communal form of worship offered by the residents of each cave, probably led by one or more chief monks, who perhaps resided in the cells closest to the antechamber described above.

While caves 2 and 7 follow identical plans and cave 4 is similar to the plan described above, it is to be seen that the latter is larger in size than the former too and also has more number of cells showing that the group of monks living here was larger in size. It is also significant

that the cells adjacent to the stūpa are more in number. Moreover, this cave does not have any antechamber leading to the chapel containing the stūpa - one can approach the chapel directly from the hall.

Caves 3 and 5 & 6 are of special importance as they throw light on both the religious aspect on Buddhism practised here as well as the hierarchical structure of the monk community of the monastery. Caves 5 & 6 are the only ones in the whole group which are connected by a small passage (fig. 1e), other caves maintaining their aloofness from each other, to be entered from the main entrance. A look at the lay-out of cave 5 explains the peculiarity of these two caves. Cave 5 is in the form of a rectangular hall, with two rows of eight pillars each in the middle, along the length of the hall and a high-rise pedestal-like projection in between the first pillars of the two rows (fig. 1e), referred to by John Marshall as a seat.³ He says that this hall served either as a refectory or an oratory, as appearing from its plan.⁴

3. John Marshall et al, The Bagh Caves, India Society, London, 1927, p. 15 & (1)n.

4. Ibid, p. 15.

M.D. Khare's illustration⁵ and a visit of the present writer to the caves revealed a narrow drain running all around the length and breadth of the hall, along its walls (fig. 1e). This shows a mechanism for the draining out of water, perhaps used for washing hands before eating or offering prayers. Considering that a 'seat' is provided at the head of the row of pillars and that the drain exists, it shows that this hall was used for both ritual feasts and/or the accompanying prayers or otherwise, sacred gatherings of monks.

In this connection, it is important to note that Subandhu's grant to the caves discussed in the last chapter, mentions the maintenance of alms-house / feasts ('sattrā') as one of the objects to be fulfilled with the grant.⁶ This shows not only that the feasts to monks were a regular feature of the sacred gatherings of monks, but that this feature got a support from the ruler and it influenced the architecture of the caves to some extent. This congregational - refectorial nature of cave 5 is also highlighted by the

5. M.D. Khare, Bagh kī Guphāyen, MP Hindi Granth Akademy, Bhopal, 1971, fig. 5.

6. Subandhu's grant, op. cit., line 5.

plan of adjacent cave 6, which is connected to cave 5 by a small passage. Cave 6 is a small hall with four pillars, with cells on three sides - those on only one side are extant now. The fact that this cave is interconnected to the cave 5 - the only such interconnection found in the whole group, shows that this cave served as a place for making arrangements, preparation of meals etc. (although no hearth is found), which were carried on to the cave 5 through the passage which is quite broad. Thus, there is a direct relation between the two caves. The cells around cave 6 also suggest that these were occupied by people engaged in preparation activities related to the feasts, rituals etc. - whether they were members of the monk community or lay employees of the monastery is not known. The Mahāvagga mentions Bhaṇḍāgārika (overseer of stores)⁷ and Chullavagga mentions Khādyabhājaka (apportioner of food)⁸, showing that there was a mechanism using workers for preparation for ritual gatherings and feasts. This functional aspect of this twin cave-complex also explains the absence of a stūpa chamber in cave 6 - the only cave with cells which does not

7. Mahāvagga VIII/8, ed. N.K. Bhagavat, Bombay, 1944.

8. Chullavagga VI/4/3, ed. H. Oldenberg, PTS, London, 1880.

have a chapel. This is because the cells were used by attendants of the sacred gatherings and during *sattras*, as Subandhu's plate describes the feasts or the alms distribution ceremony.

Cave 3, although residential in nature having a *stūpa*, is somewhat different from caves 2, 4 & 7. It is a rectangular hall with two rows of four columns each in the middle along the length of the hall and cells on the two long sides. The third wall opens into another hall, again having two rows of columns along its length in the middle. The two halls of the cave lie perpendicular to each other, one surrounded by cells and the other without any cells (fig.10). John Marshall says that the inner hall led to another court without any cells on the other side⁹ (now ruined). The whole composition of this cave shows that although it was residential, its functions exceeded simply residence and worship by the ordinary monks of Bagh caves. John Marshall mentions that going by the extra-ornateness of the cells and the walls, it must have been a cave for the superior monks of the community.¹⁰ This is evident also from the exist-

9. John Marshall et al, op. cit., p. 10.

10. Ibid.

ence of two halls on both sides of the central hall - suggesting a special function for these halls - thus indicating the prominent position of the residents of cave 3 among the monk-community of this monastery. Most probably, on special occasions, the resident monks, who held high ranks within the Sangha, performed ritual ceremonies in front of the chapel and the rest of the monk-community stood attendant in the two halls referred to. John Marshall says that the outer hall is a later addition as appears from the remnant of carvings near the doorway leading to it.¹¹ This shows that the monk community grew in time and therefore, a need arose to excavate another assembly-hall. Probably, the gathering included by followers alongwith the monks.

From the Buddhist sources, we know of some practices which had congregational aspects. For example, 'Uposatha' ceremony comprised of the recitation of the rules of disciplines on eighth, fourteenth and fifteenth day of the fortnight. The monks were also required to attend to lay visitors on the fourteenth and fifteenth day of fortnight.¹² 'Pavāraṇa' marked the return of the dry season and in this

11. Ibid, p. 11.

12. Mahavagga, II/1/1.

ceremony each Bhikṣu requested the assembly to point to him any incident of his having been found guilty of misconduct through speech or action during the Vassāvāsa¹³, Kathina involved distribution of robes to the monks.¹⁴ Since we have the evidence of two gathering places, one in cave 3 and another in cave 5, it is possible that both the places were used for different kinds of gatherings. This is also evident from the fact that cave 5 is provided with a seat, showing the gathering was led by a single leader, while cave 3 has no such arrangement, showing that the gathering was a common one, standing in front of the precept-residents who also stood during the ceremony (or they all sat on the floor). Thus, the leadership of the gatherings differed in both the caves. This shows that gatherings like the distribution of robes, preaching of sermon by a major monk who was either a resident or a visitor to the caves etc., apart from the sattra gatherings were held in cave 5, while a common recital of principles, meetings with the laity, observance of rituals concerned with the special occasions related to the

13. C.S. Upasak, Dictionary of Early Buddhist Monastic Terms, (Based on Pali Literature), Bharati Prakashan, Varanasi, 1975, p. 198.

14. Ibid, p. 60.

stūpa etc., were held in the cave 3, the resident of this cave taking a leading part in these ceremonies. On normal days of course, the stūpa was meant for the use of the resident monks of cave 3.

From the above discussion, we can see that the architectural composition of the caves shows not only the form of Buddhism practised here, but also gives us an insight into the finer details of these practices. Also, we get an idea of the hierarchical set-up of the monk-community living here. As has been shown, the highest authorities lived in cave 3. Below them were some residents of cave 2, 4 and 7 and probably 8 and 9.¹⁵ The residents near the chapel were probably more important than the others and they might have led the daily worship ceremony. Below these were the vast majority of the monks who resided in the cells of the caves 2, 4, 7 and probably 8 and 9. Still lower than these were the attendance of the ceremonies, their cells in cave 6 - they may or may not have been monks, or were perhaps going through the *parivāsa* phase i.e., the phase of intervention between entering the monastery and ordainance.¹⁶ At the

15. Caves 8&9, have collapsed, hence no analysis can be made.

16. C.S. Upasak, op. cit., pp. 144-145.

tail end were the *upāsakas* who were only occasional visitors to the caves and did not reside there. Their existence as a possibility suggests that Buddhism appealed to the local people and try to carve out a support-base among them. The hierarchy of the monk-body shows that it was a well-developed monastery with clear functions laid out for each member. Architectural composition helps us in understanding this hierarchy.

(II)

Sculpture and Religious Content:

The religious aspects of the Buddhist monastery at Bagh, as discerned from the architecture can be complimented further by the types of sculptures found there. They show not the Buddhist conception about their deities, but also the influences of the popular cults on the monastic religion. The major sculpted object, and also the object of veneration in all the residential caves, as has been stated earlier, is the *stūpa*, housed in a cell and in caves 2 and 7, approached from an antechamber. The *stupas* are mounted on a cylinder, which has an octagonal base.

Cave 2 apart from the stūpa, shows groups of Buddha images with attendants, and also, single attendants in the antechamber. These are the only Buddha-and-attendant sculptures extant now. If one looks at the records of Dr. Impey,¹⁷ who visited the caves sometime in 1850s and the diagrams of Maj. C.E. Luard¹⁸ who visited the caves in 1910 and whose diagrams are based on the writings of Dr. Impey and his own visit, one will find that there was a Buddha figure on the left side verandah near the entrance of caves 2 and 4 and four figures of Buddha on the exterior wall of the area between caves 5 & 6. The figures described as found outside caves 2, 4 and 6 are barely visible now, not showing any identifiable features. However, their placement in a monastery where stūpa was being worshipped speak volumes about the form of Buddhism being practised here. For, this means that the Buddhism of Valkhā showed the point of junction between the Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna, the former revering

17. E. Impey, Esq, "Description of the Caves of Bagh in Rath", Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society, Vol. V, Bombay, July 1856, Reprinted 1969.

18. Maj. C.E. Luard, "Buddhist Caves of Central India", Indian Antiquary, Vol. 39, 1910.

the *stūpa*, the latter worshipping the Buddha image.

The Buddhists sculptures at Bagh represent that stage of Buddhism, where the influence of Mahāyānism affected the monastery enough to introduce the Buddhists idols in the premises of the monastery, but not enough for them to replace the *stūpa* or even to superimpose or combine with it as in Ajanta, although Mahāyānism was acknowledged by the community (no particular Buddhist sect is mentioned at Bagh). Thus, Buddha acknowledged as a deity to be represented in anthropomorphic form, but *stūpa* was retained as the symbol of worship.

Here, an observation by S.J. Tambiah is important to note. He says that both the *stūpa* and the idol of Buddha are 'reminders' of the presence of Buddha, and hence their veneration acts as a 'field of merit' in which the worshipper can harvest the religious merit. In this sense, psychologically, there is not much difference between the worshippers of *stūpa* and that of the Buddha idol, although there may be differences in their sectarian principles.¹⁹

19. S.J. Tambiah, The Buddhist Saints of the Forest and the Cult of Amulets, Cambridge Univ. Press, Cambridge, 1984, pp. 200-204.

Taking the above into consideration, it is significant that even in an important cave like the no. 3, where the high-ranking monks lived and congregational ceremonies were performed, the object of worship remained the *stūpa* - this reflects on their way of resolving the problem of identification of the object of worship. It seems that the psychological congruity in venerating the *stupa* and the Buddhist idol as described by Tambiah must have played a significant role here - *stūpa* was perceived as signifying the same thing as did the Buddha idol, and hence, there was no necessity to replace the *stūpa* by the image even after the advent of Mahāyānism.

The transitional phase of Bagh monastery is also evident from the attendants shown alongwith the Buddha idols in cave 2. The Buddha is standing with one of his hands *varada Mudrā* (bestowing a boon), and has an *uṣṇīṣa*. The left hand holds the hem of the garment in front of the shoulder. The attendant on the right of the Buddha holds a chowrie in his right hand and wears ornaments - crown and earrings, necklace, bracelets round the wrist and a thread over his left shoulder. The attendant on the left side of the Buddha has long curly locks without a crown. He too

wears ornaments and holds lotus buds in his right hand. The triad on the northern wall has the same bearings. The doorway leading to the inner chapel has two single attendants. The one on the left has an elaborate *jaṭāmukuta* which has a miniature Buddha seated in *Abhaya Mudrā*. The attendant wears ornaments. The figure on the right is devoid of ornaments, the matted hair is tied on top with a seated Buddha in *Abhaya Mudrā*. The left hand of the attendant holds a *kamaṇḍalu*, as described by John Marshall²⁰

Regarding the identification of these images, it is to be observed that the Buddha images of early medieval period onwards, are flanked by Bodhisattvas who generally represent *Maitreya* and *Padmapāṇi Avalokiteśvara*.²¹ The former is plainer in appearance, holds a *Nāgapuṣpa* and has a miniature *stūpa* in its crown, while the latter holds a lotus in his left hand and has *Amitābh* in *Dhyāna Mudrā* in its hair.²²

These are the descriptions of these Bodhisattvas as they emerged from eighth century onwards. However, we have

20. John Marshall et al, op. cit., p. 34.

21. Ibid, p. 31.

22. Ibid, pp. 31-32. Also, Alice Getty, Gods of Northern Buddhism, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1928, pp. 60-62.

to keep it in mind that the Bagh caves are much earlier in date. Thus, the representations of Buddha attendants vary greatly. Firstly, both the attendants on the doorway has Buddha seated in *Abhaya Mudrā*, while the description of Bodhisattvas above requires the miniature *stūpa* in case of one and Buddha in *Dhyāna Mudrā* in case of the other. However, one attendant in one of the triads has a lotus bud, although in his right hand instead of his left and he does not have any *Dhyānī* Buddha in his diadem. On the other hand, one attendant on the doorway holds a *kamaṇḍalu*. It is to be noted that the medieval period Bodhisattvas were beginning to have a *kamaṇḍalu* in their hand.²³

On the basis of the above, while we cannot definitely say that these attendants of Bagh caves were Bodhisattvas, as their representation does not totally tally with the description of the Bodhisattvas, we may say that these forms were precursors of the later full-fledged Bodhisattvas. Thus, the introduction of Mahāyānism at Bagh also brought about an experimentation with the forms of Buddha attendants, which had not yet taken the shapes of Bodhisattvas,

23. Alice Getty, *op. cit.*, p. 61.

but also were a step ahead of being simply attendants, as is evident from their characteristics e.g., having a Buddha in **Abhaya Mudrā** etc. Thus, these attendants reflect a stage when the idea of Bodhisattvas flanking Buddha was floating about in the society, but had not yet taken a crystallised form, which came about only after the texts relating to Buddhist iconography laid down a set pattern for the attendants in later centuries. Thus, these attendants further show the transitory stage of Buddhism at Bagh caves.

There is also a minor figure on the exterior of cave 4 on the right side of the doorway, which suggests the experimentation stage of Bagh sculptures. This figure is supposed to be of the river deity (Gangā)²⁴ - commonly found elsewhere in Gupta period. However, a closer look at the representation of this figure shows that this was another of the floating ideas which had not taken concrete shape yet, not at least in a peripheral region like Bagh. The female figure is standing on the 'Makara motif', as is the case with the Ganga sculptures. Her left hand is also on the head of a dwarf / child, again following the set norm. However, her

24. M.D. Khare, op. cit., Fig. 40A and caption below.

right hand is raised and she hold the branch of a tree which forms the canopy over her head (fig. 1) - as against the typical river deities, who hold water pots in one hand, symbolising their association with water. Here, it may be remembered that the toraṇas of Sanchi Stupa have the figure of a female who holds the branch of a tree overhead. Thus, the Bagh figure may show a stage which has transcended the Śālabhañjikā of Sāñchī, but has not yet achieved the set form of the river deities. Hence, we see in this figure a combination of the traits of both the forms.

Bagh caves have also assimilated and incorporated some figures from the popular cults and given them a place on the exterior walls of the caves - suggesting the assimilative ability of Buddhism in which these cults got a space, albeit subordinate to the Buddhist figures. Although very few of these sculptures are extant now, by following John Marshall's description, we can have an idea of the minor cults represented here. To begin with, there were two representations of Nāgarāja extant till the time of Marshall, one on the northern end of cave 2 and another on the north-eastern end of cave 4, the latter carved in a shrine. The former was seated in the Lalitāsana pose, flanked by attend-

ants, who were probably females and bore chowries. John Marshall saw some faint traces of the cobra-hood over the central figure.²⁵ While this figure was seated alone, the Nāgarāja in the shrine outside was seated alongwith his female companion. Her hood was gone by the time of John Marshall but the seven-headed hood of the Nāgarāja was well preserved.²⁶ Marshall describes the presence of a seated Buddha in 'Dharma - Chakra - Pravartana' pose over this Nāga panel.²⁷ The position of Buddha immediately over the Nāgarāja suggests the symbolic representation of Buddha as being the main Buddha while the popular deity was subordinate to him.

This symbolic representation of Buddha's superiority over popular cults is also denoted by a *stūpa* carving over a figure by the side of cave 4. Marshall identified this figure as a Yakṣa, on the basis of its bearing, which is similar to the Yakṣas found at Ajanta and Ellora. Marshall describes that right above the image is carved a *stūpa* with two parasols. The representation of the parasols over the

25. John Marshall, et al, op. cit., pp. 38-39.

26. Ibid, p. 42.

27. Ibid, pp. 42-43.

stūpa shows that the *stūpa* is depicted not only as a symbol related to Buddhism, but as a reminder to Buddha himself. The depiction of *stūpa* over the image of Yakṣa shows an attempt at representing the superiority of Buddha over the popular cult of Yakṣa. The depiction of *stūpa* as a symbolic form of the presence of Buddha is important in this sense. Here again, we see an ideational interchange in the symbolisms of *stūpa* and the figure of Buddha which was depicted over the Nāgarāja as described earlier. Thus, the interchange of identifications between *stūpa* and the Buddha image inside the cave signified a general trend enveloping the whole monastic complex - on the exterior of the caves this artistic symbolism was used to signify the superiority of Buddhism over minor popular cults. In this sense, the symbolism in art forms was used to signify the changing ideals in the religion of Bagh caves.

From the above discussions, it becomes obvious that apart from having a clear-cut monastic order and elaborate rituals in their religious systems, Buddhism in Bagh experience a transition of the influence of Mahāyānism which transformed not only the religion but also its art. On another plane, the popular cults were getting assimilated into

Buddhism, over which it showed its own superiority. That the form of worship itself has incorporated the local customs of offering garlands, flowers, bali etc., has been described in the previous chapter on the basis of the inscription of Subandhu. It is also to be noted that this kind of worship of an idol by making such offerings is derived from the changing character of Buddhism under **Mahāyāna** influences and increasing ritualism. Thus, the incorporation of the local ritual system actually helped in the perpetuation of the Mahāyānist influence.

(III)

Paintings:

Although very few paintings are left at Bagh, by taking into account the descriptions of Dr. Impey, we can form an idea of the nature of paintings that decorated the walls of Bagh. By studying these paintings, we see that in many cases, the artistic symbolism used is much the same as that in sculpture as described in the earlier section. Moreover,

they give us an insight into how the local idioms transformed the style of representation of the Buddhist figures and also, the Jātaka story which was probably selected to decorate the walls. The choice of a particular Jātaka is also in some way related to the royal patron who made donation to the caves i.e., Subandhu.

As far as, painting technique is concerned, the preparation of for painting was more or less the same as that of Ajanta i.e., the *tempera** technique was employed at both the places. At Ajanta, the painting is not a true frescoe, but is done in *tempera* technique. In true frescoe, the colours are applied when the plaster is still wet. In Ajanta, the base is lime, but the colours were applied when the lime had dried. Pure white lime, probably obtained from the calcine cells, was laid on very thin and fine over layers of a mixture of straw, clay and powdered rock. The lime finish was laid out a few millimetres thick, then polished with a trowel and thus condensed. On this ivory-smooth surface were applied colours obtained from minerals like red and yellow earth and malachite green and from vegetable materials like

* For a detailed study of this technique at Ajanta and Bagh vide appendix 3.

madder and indigo. Binding media was gum.²⁸ John Marshall describes that the technique of ground preparation was more or less the same at Bagh and Ajanta, although the first coating was not laid out carefully at Bagh. At Bagh also, the coating was made of the local ferruginous earth, gravel, lime and the fibers of jute and hemp. The work, however, has been done in a slipshod manner, the coat is less tenacious than at Ajanta - seeping of water through the porous rock overhead compounding the problem.²⁹

Coming to the style of painting, although the authors have tried to liken the Bagh paintings to those of Ajanta³⁰, a point seems to have been missed while comparing the two paintings. The paintings of Ajanta have used a prominent light and shade effect in order to produce a three-dimensional impression, especially to highlight the facial features. At Bagh, although this effect has been used to some extent, it has been played up. Moreover, at Ajanta, the delineation of the facial features have been touched up with

28. Krishna Chaitanya, A History of Indian Painting - Mural Tradition, Abhinav Prakashan, New Delhi, 1976, pp. 27-28.

29. Marshall et al, op. cit., pp. 16-17.

30. Ibid, p. 17. Also, S.M. Pahadia, Buddhism in Malwa, Delhi, 1976, pp. 129-130 etc.

black outline, thus making them stand out to the view of the observer. Some marking of outline is seen in the reinforcing of body-parts. At Bagh however, except for some Bodhisattva paintings (figs. 44, 45), this reinforcing of body-outline and facial features by means of blackline has not been done, only a lighter shade of ochre has been used to show the eyebrows, nose and lips, thus requiring the viewer to observe more closely for these features. Thus, there is an overall underplay of reinforcement at Bagh.³¹

Apart from the above, the general surroundings of Ajanta give an urbane look in many jātakas, with a liberal use of city-life motifs, heavy ornamentation of subjects etc. In contrast, Bagh paintings seem to be set in natural surroundings and have plainer backgrounds. The bodies of women and high-ranking personages are decorated with ornaments, but they are not as lavish as at Ajanta. All this shows that although the basic style of painting at Bagh and Ajanta is same, Bagh represent a variant from the Ajanta school. This differentiation may have come about in Bagh because of the local influences.

31. From personal observation.

Regarding the themes of the paintings, they have not been identified with any certainty. However, some attempt has been made to see them as reflections from contemporary literature. Although John Marshall has not identified the paintings, he has made a conjecture that they do not seem to relate to any event in the life of Buddha, but related some Jātaka or Avadāna story.³²

Before going over to the possible identification of the paintings, it would be appropriate to describe the paintings in brief. Most of the paintings belong to cave 4. At the very outset, at the back of the left-side verandah where the Nāga panel described in the earlier section is carved, Dr. Impey noted rows of seated Buddha figure paintings. John Marshall also talks about the painted ornamentation of cave 3, although it is impossible to tell what these paintings were like. He however, mentions the paintings of Buddha attended by kneeling worshippers.³³ C.E. Luard has also given illustrations of sitting and bending monks on cell doorways of cave 3 (figs. iii).³⁴ More recently, Sandhya

32. John Marshall et al, op. cit., p. 46.

33. Ibid, p. 10.

34. Maj. C.E. Luard, op. cit., Pt VI, Figs. 1 & 2.

Pandey has given illustrations of Buddha and Bodhisattva paintings from different caves, which she has tried to identify as Buddha in preaching attitude, in 'Khasarpana' pose (discussed later in this chapter) and two Lokesvaras and Bodhisattva³⁵,

It may be suggested that on ideational plane, the execution of the painting of the Buddha and Bodhisattva etc. represents the same feature as does the carving of the images of Buddha and Bodhisattva. In this sense, they have the same function of reflecting the advent of Mahayanism as do the images of Buddha and Bodhisattva. This is also highlighted by the reference by John Marshall to the worshippers kneeling in front of the Buddha figure and not in front of the stūpa. Thus, these paintings give us further evidence of the advent of the concept of worshipping of a personified object, although the worship of the stūpa as a reminder of the presence of Buddha is retained in the chapel. Again, John Marshall mentions that the figures of kneeling worshippers in front of the Buddha are painted on the outer wall of the shrine housing the stūpa which is eroded now, in cave

35.. Sandhya Pandey, Gupta Kālīna Bauddha Chitrakalā, Pari-mal Publication, Delhi, 1991, Pts. 3, 11, 14, 15.

3.³⁶ Here again, we get evidence of the use of artistic symbolism to establish the identities of stūpa and the Buddha figure as one. Thus, the depiction of Buddha on the outer wall of the shrine symbolically states that the image and stūpa signify the same thing i.e., the presence of the Buddha. In this sense, paintings serve the same function of signifying the artistic symbolism, as do the sculptures and carvings at Bagh - the symbolism has been extended from sculpture to painting.

The paintings of monks on the cell doorways show that cave 3 was residential. One of the monks was bare-headed, while another was wearing a head-gear (fig. iii), showing that this monk was of a higher rank. This is important in light of the discussion in the previous section about cave 3 as occupied by the high-ranking monks.

Regarding the identification of the Buddhist figure as 'Khasarpana' by Sandhya Pandey, it is worthwhile to look at the description of 'Khasarpana' in Buddhist iconography. He is described as having the peculiar feature of being invariably accompanied by the four divinities - Tara, Sudhana

36. John Marshall et al, op. cit., p. 10.

Kumāra, Bhṛkuṭi and Hayagrīva. The principle figure is two-armed and one-faced. He is of white complexion, and sits either in *Lalitāsana* or in *Ardhaparyāṅka*.³⁷.

The Bagh figure identified by Sandhya Pandey as *Khasarpana* is sitting on a lotus, one leg folded and another raised, his right hand in *Varada Mudrā* and has a halo. There seems to be a back-rest-like object provided behind him. He has a kneeling devotee in front of him with a lamp in his hand which is not lighted. The appearance hardly tallies with the description of *Khasarpana* as described in the Buddhist text, the deity in any case being of later origin than the date of Bagh caves. Thus, in all probability this is a figure of Buddha, although his pose is unusual. However, the *Uṣṇiṣa*, elongated ear-lobes and the devotee etc. confirm that he must be Buddha. As regards *Padmapāṇi* etc., although their appearance also does not follow the description, their possibility of being precursors to the later Bodhisattvas has been discussed earlier in the section on sculpture.

37. B. Bhattacharya, *Indian Buddhist Iconography*, Cosmo Publication, New Delhi, 1924, p. 37.

A distinction between the Bodhisattva figures of Ajanta and those of Bagh as appears from the illustrations from Sandhya Pandey is in their ornamentation. A particular comparison can be made between the Padmapāṇis of Ajanta and Bagh.³⁸ (figs. (i), (ii)). Both the Buddhist figures are in 'Trihaṅga' pose, although bending in opposite directions. The Bagh figure holds the stalk of a flower in its right hand, the flower is gone, but by the shape of the vacant space as evident in Mukul Dey's reproduction,³⁹ it appears that it was a lotus, suggesting the identification of the figure as Padmapāṇi. When compared with the famous Padmapāṇi of Ajanta, it is seen that apart from the similarity in pose, expression and the characteristic of holding a lotus, the conception of the Padmapāṇi by the artists at two places is very different. For, the Ajanta figure is lavishly decorated and has a luxurious appearance - his ornaments are made of expensive jewels and pearls, his crown of gold studded with gems. On the other hand, the figure of Bagh is decorated with Nature itself. His crown is only a band of metal, the rest of the head decoration done with flowers and leaves.

38. Sandhya Pandey, op. cit., Pt. 3.

39. Mukul Dey, My Pilgrimages to Ajanta and Bagh, OUP, London, 1925, Pt. LII cf p. 171.

Creepers, leaves and flowers have been used to decorate his person as well, to the extent that the Brāhmanical chord over the left shoulder of the Ajanta figure has given way to the entwined double-creepers at Bagh.

This seems to be an example of the local motifs influencing the perception of the Bagh artist. The artist at Bagh has taken the local motifs and produced, with natural ornamentation of the Bodhisattva figure, an effect which is in marked contrast to the urbane and luxurious effect produced by the artist at Ajanta. This shows how the surviving elements of local culture influenced the imagination of the artist who had to follow certain set norms while depicting a deity, and could bring about a change in the conception of the divinity of the figure. This is also a case of the local elements, which were subordinated by the Brahmanical influence, got a space in the Buddhist art.

The influence of the local culture brings about a change in the concept of divinity itself. At one place, urbane luxury is considered to be a part of the pre-ascetic divinity, while at another, natural beauty takes the place of the urbane luxury and produces quite a different type of

Padmapāni To a somewhat lesser degree, this kind of ornamentation by natural objects is shown in two other Bagh figures of Buddha or Bodhisattva⁴⁰ (their identification not being clear), showing that this influence of the local / folk resentments was not incidental. Thus, we can say that Bagh shows a variation from Ajanta in its conception of pre-ascetic Buddhist divinities as it has employed a different idiom to express their divinity.

The painted panels in cave 4 are the major works of paintings at Bagh. As has been said earlier, several attempts have been made to identify these paintings, but no definite conclusion has been reached. As most of the paintings were in a bad state even during John Marshall and Mukul Dey's times, we have to go by Dr. Impey's accounts, taking help from John Marshall's illustrations of whatever paintings were left by his time. Dr. Impey describes the long continuous panel divided into sections in cave 4, which includes a weeping woman and her royal-looking friend consoling her (fig. V, a), three princely figures talking to a monk-like figure wearing jewels around his neck (fig. V, b),

40. Sandhya Pandey, op. cit., Pt. 15.

five ascetics talking to an ascetic (fig. V, c), two groups of dancing women around two foreign-looking figures (fig. V, d & e) and a long cavalcade of horse and elephant riders (fig. V, f) including either higher officials or royal personages, as is evident from the parasols over them and some women riding on elephants (fig. V, g) being a part of the cavalcade. The illustrations of all these paintings are provided by John Marshall.⁴¹ However, Dr. Impey's account tells us that beyond this cavalcade, there were more paintings which had vanished by John Marshall's times. These paintings, as described by Dr. Impey, will be discussed later.

Krishna Chaitanya has tried to identify the royal cavalcade described above as the pleasure ride arranged by Śuddhodhana for Siddhārtha, from which the prince withdrew in the evening. He also says that the weeping woman must be Yaśodharā and the royal lady consoling her is Queen Foster Mother Gotamī.⁴² However, it is to be noted that the whole panel described above, from the weeping woman to the royal cavalcade, relates to one event, as sections are related to each other and seen to point towards the section where three

41. John Marshall, op. cit., Pts.

42. Krishna Chaitanya, op. cit., p. 43.

royal personages are talking to one ascetic-like person who has jewels around his neck (fig. 5b). Dr. Impey also remarks that it is a continuous panel. Hence, if we take the weeping woman to be Yaśodharā and the cavalcade as the pleasure ride arranged by Śuddhodhana, then the meaning of the panel is not clear, since the cavalcade does not have a painting of Siddhārtha riding in a chariot as the legend describes. Nor would the meaning of the group engaged in conversation be clear, unless we identify the ascetic-like figure as Buddha himself, which is not likely, judging from his appearance. He does not have any characteristic traits of Buddha and the jewels around his neck do not tally with Buddha's renunciation account, in which he gave away all his jewels and robes etc. to his charioteer. Krishna Chaitanya too is silent on the matter of identification of this figure.

Moti Chandra believes that the panel at Bagh does not appear to be Buddhist, but seems to be related to contemporary life. He says that the themes are nothing but the vignettes from the *goṣṭhikās* as reflected in the Chāturbhāṅgī, the four burlesques of the Gupta period.⁴³ The Chā

43. Moti Chandra, Early Indian Painting, Asia Publishing House, London, 1970.

turbhāṇī depict goṣṭhikās, in which the urbane elites or the nagarikās took part, alongwith courtesans, attendants and friends etc. These were pleasure sessions which were held in a garden or a grove.

Moti Chandra has perhaps based his identification on the dance scenes and the royal cavalcade described earlier. However, the scene of three royal figures conversing with a monk-like figure certainly has a Buddhist content, contrary to Moti Chandra's view. Moreover, the weeping women does not fit into his identification of the panel as the representation of a goṣṭhikā.

The above discussion shows that whatever little attempt has been made to identify the paintings of Bagh, is based on only a part of the whole panel-no author has visualised the whole panel as one single continuous account of an event, its sections having relation to each other. If we visualise the whole panel in this manner, we get certain ideas about the event depicted. The happenings in the panel which emerge from observations are - (1) a prince's renunciation and becoming an ascetic, but he has not attained complete monk-hood yet - as seen from the necklace around his neck, (2) a royal lady, related to the prince probably, grieving over

his decision to renounce the world, (3) one person of royal bearing along with to other major personalities coming to talk to the prince, (4) another ascetic, of a different nature from the ascetic-prince describe above, along with five other ascetics having some relation with the whole event, (5) a royal pageant, comprising of dancing women and men, musicians, royal figures, high officials and other people, coming towards the prince - perhaps they formed the retinue of the royal figures who are conversing with the prince.

This kind of sequence of events is very familiar in the Buddhist literature as the Jātakas and the life-legend of Buddha talk about many royal personages becoming followers of Buddha. The reason why the renouncer-prince is not identified with Buddha himself is that he does not carry attributes of Buddha and no event in the Buddha Charita corresponds exactly with the sequence of events depicted here. Thus, John Marshall may be right that the panel depicts some Jātaka story. There is at least one Jātaka which relates the renunciation of a prince - Mahājanaka Jātaka. It has been depicted at Ajanta too, but the events depicted

there are different in their form of representation from Bagh. If we look at some of the events described in this *Jātaka*, we find that there is some similarity in the narration and in the Bagh paintings.

The *Mahājanaka Jātaka* is a long narrative, but we are concerned here only with the latter part of the *Jātaka*, as it is this part which has been probably depicted here in part. In short, Mahājanaka decided to renounce the world. When he left the palace, his queen Śivālī sent seven hundred concubines to snare him with their charms. Mahājanaka was unperturbed and carried his journey onwards to the Himalayas. The queen was greatly grieved and went after Mahajanaka, followed by all the army, people and the animals for riding. A sage called Nārada, who had just attained the perfect bliss, decided to encourage the king to pursue his path inspite of the dissuasion of these people. Nārada came flying in the air, talked to Mahājanaka and left, flying in the air again. Nārada is said to have attained five supernatural powers, which are not named.⁴⁴ This is the portion of the *Jātaka* which is of interest to us. The story goes on

44. E.B. Cowell (ed), *The Jataka*, Vol. VI, p. 30; pp. 31-33.

to relate the renouncer -prince's onward journey and the queen and the other people's repeated entreaties to him to turn back, and his efforts to prove to the queen that he no longer belongs to the world. However, this later part is of no concern to us, as the paintings at Bagh show similarities with the portion of the story narrated above.

The reference to seven hundreded concubines who were sent by queen Śivālī to ensnare Mahājanaka may be represented by the two groups of the dancing women, along with the women musicians (fig. V, c, d). Again, the grieving Sivali may be represented by the weeping woman, who is being consoled by her royal friend (fig. V, a). The group engaged in discussion with the monk-like figure shows the efforts of the royal family members and the royal officials to try to persuade Mahājanaka, while the royal cavalcade fits the description of the queen being followed by "all the army, people and the animals for riding",⁴⁵ when she went after Mahājanaka. The mention of Nārada's visit to Mahājanaka by the aerial path may be seen in the ascetic-like figure surrounded by five more figures like himself (fig. V, c). It is to be noted that

45. Ibid, pp. 31-32.

the ascetic surrounded by five figures, has been described by John Marshall as "flying and issuing forth from the clouds".⁴⁶ It is also noteworthy that Nārada has five supernatural powers⁴⁷ and the ascetic described above is surrounded by five figures. The supernatural faculties, evil and good tendencies etc. are often depicted in human form in Buddhist art. The depiction of Temptation, Māra in personified form is well known. Thus, it is possible that the supernatural powers of Nārada were painted as human forms surrounding him.

We can see that there are certainly some similarities in the motifs of narration and the motifs of depiction. Hence, it may be suggested that the panel at Bagh possibly represents a portion of the *Mahājanaka jātaka*. There are, however, also some narrations. For example, the *jātaka* describes the king going away and the queen, the officials and the crowd following him. On the other hand, this painting gives the impression of the renouncer-prince sitting in a grove while the queen grieves and the stately figures of the court try to dissuade him. It is also noteworthy that

46. John Marshall et al, op. cit., p. 48.

47. Cowell, op. cit., p. 32.

while Ajanta starts from an earlier point in the story, when Mahājanaka was ruling as a king, and later he decided to stay at the top of the palace as a sage and finally, the queen and the royal procession alongwith the masses are shown as going out of the city-gate, Bagh has captured one moment of the story, focussing on the grief of the queen and the royal officials and the people coming out of the city-gate (i.e. if one identification is correct). Thus, the treatment of the same theme is different at Ajanta and Bagh. The focus on the queen's grief at Bagh again shows that folk elements of Valkhā which gave a visible-space to women, also moulded the art of Bagh caves.

Here, a slight discussion on the forms of narrative employed in the ancient Indian mural-art would be helpful to understand the style of composition employed at Ajanta and Bagh. There are basically three kinds of narratives - synoptic narrative takes one single event of a story and depicts it in a single picture-frame. Episodic narrative employs the strategy of showing the sequences in an episode, but the geographical locale does not change. Continuous narrative shows the movement of the story from one event to another,

through a number of picture-frames.⁴⁸ Sometimes, two or more of these narrative modes are combined in the representation of a particular *jātaka*. At other times, the pure form of narrative is used. Thus, at Ajanta, the story moves through several sequences of events, hence it follows the continuous narrative-form while depicting *Mahājanaka jātaka*. On the other hand, at Bagh, one strong moment of the story has become important. However, several sections, on a long panel have been employed to depict this moment. Also, the topography remains more or less the same throughout the panel. Thus, while synoptic narrative is the basic technique used, it combines the features of continuous as well as episode narratives in the depiction of the *jātaka*.

The paintings follow a realistic style of depiction instead of too much stylisation except in the case of hand-gestures etc. This again suggests the influence of the local culture on the style of painting at Bagh. This is also seen from the appearances of the figures depicted here (figs. 10). In this sense, the style of depiction of the figures from

48. Roland Barthes, Structural Analysis of Narrative in Image, Music, Texts, Introduction, Fontana (Paperback), 1977.

the long panel is analagous to the departure from norms in the adornment of Bodhisattvas as described earlier. One is struck by the relatively plainer appearance of even the royal personages, as against the figures of Ajanta, which are normally bedecked with jewels. Perhaps this style at Bagh represents a different idiom of depiction from Ajanta, and the difference is influence by the local folk elements, subordinated by the Brahmanism, which were getting a space in Buddhism.

As in sculpture, in painting too, we see the artistic symbolism used, some of which has already been described before. This is again seen in Dr. Impey's account of a painting which is lost now. It tells us that beyond the cavalcade described above, there were more paintings which had vanished by John Marshall's times. He notes that "this panel consists of four elephants and three horses, which seem to have arrived at their destination and are at rest, and so are the mohouts. Their gaze is fixed on a mango tree, under which are two small frames containing drinking vessels and a gourd. Close to these a piece of cloth with blue ends is suspended from a branch and beside it is a chakra. Further on, under a plantain tree is a figure of Buddha (al-

though it is an unusual description), seated cross-legged and clothed, holding his right hand in his left and beside him a discipline listening to the doctrine he is expounding. He differs from Buddhist figures in general in being without curly hair and therefore, resembles other figures.⁴⁹

If the Buddha figure described by him is really Buddha, then it depicts the event of Dharma-Chakra-Pravartana, for his description of the figure's right hand held in the left one is a typical Dharma-Chakra Pravartana gesture. But Dr. Impey's statement that the Buddha is without his curly hair suggests that he could be either the Buddha or another monk preaching to a discipline. The presence of the wheel however, is typical of the Dharma-Chakra Pravartana depiction. On the other hand, the wheel may symbolise the presence of Buddha, while the monk is preaching to the discipline - thus empowering the preacher. The symbolism of chakra here is again important in that not only it denotes the presence of Buddha but also empowers the preacher. However, since the painting has long ago vanished, nothing much can be said about it. The paintings of Bagh caves thus, show similari-

49. Dr. Impey, op. cit., p. 564.

ties with sculpture in using artistic symbolism to signify the presence of Buddha.

The discussions in this chapter give us insights into not only the religious aspect of Buddhism, but also into how the artistic expressions were used to signify the finer details of this outside influence which coincided with the Brāhmanism discussed in the previous chapter, both in space and in time. Apart from the direct information about Buddhism e.g., hierarchy in the monk-body and the advent of Mahāyānism at Bagh, the art - expressions tell us how artistic symbolism was used to signify various features which had become integrated into the Buddhism of Bagh. Assimilation of popular cults, influence of local culture, use of painting to denote power and the conception of a personified deity (i.e. Buddha), psychological congruity between the meanings of *stūpa* and image, use of a *jātaka* to signify the concept of renouncer-prince who resembles Buddha in life-narrative etc. are some of the finer aspects which emerge from the study of the works of art of the caves. An important feature which comes out of this study and is not known from the inscription is the revelation that the elements of local culture, which were overshadowed by the acculturating influ-

ence of Brāhmaṇism, not only received a space in Buddhism, but also influenced its art and ritual.

This complex interplay of various streams in the visual-art of the caves arose because of the transformation of Valkhan society described in the previous chapter. Buddhism in Hīnayāna form was increasingly sidelined with the advent of Brāhmaṇism in Valkhā. However, once an agrarian base came to be established in Narmada region with the help of Brāhmaṇical ideology, Valkhā's revival as a Buddhist centre would certainly have required change in Buddhism of a kind similar to Brāhmaṇical forms of worship and ritual which only Mahāyānism could provide. Hence, Subandhu's renovation of the Bagh caves could well be associated with the introduction of Mahāyānist forms and ideals.

It is possible that there is political allegory behind the choice of a ~~jātaka~~ dealing with the life of a renouncer-prince as the disappearance of the territory of Valkhā from the historical visibility after Subandhu tempts one to ask whether Subandhu took to Buddhism and did not pursue exercise of power. However, in absence of more conclusive evidence regarding this possibility, it can only be posed as a question.

OVERVIEW

The foregoing discussion in this work shows that the visual-art of Valkhā represents the religious assimilation by Buddhism, an approach caused by the processes of transformation that took place through three successive phases, as shown by the analysis of the inscriptions. As a result of this transformation, we find that Valkhā saw the emergence of a dominant class composed of various categories of Brāhmanas. However, this being an early stage of transformation of Valkhan society, we do not find certain features of Brāhmaṇisation here which are evident in some other regions e.g., there is no use of a geneology by the ruling chiefs of Valkhā*, nor is there evident a well-developed Varṇa - structure. We only come across various categories of Brāhmanas and the mention of some professional groups e.g., potter, trading group suggested in the name 'Vānijaka' etc. Thus, the acculturation process in Valkhā shows the establishment of a strong Brāhmaṇical idiom as evident from the inscriptions, but not with all its features.

* These ruling chiefs apparently did not belong to a single descent group or lineage as no attempt is made in the inscriptions to mention the relationship of one chief to another, although all of them in some way or the other, show a subordinate relationship with the Guptas.

An impact of the emergence of Brāhmaṇical ideal in Valkhā was coincident with a simultaneous overshadowing of certain local / popular ideals or their incorporations into the Brāhmaṇical stream in such a manner that they were given a complete Brāhmaṇical appearance. The transformation of the 'bali-charu-sattra' offerings used by the local cults into the Brāhmaṇical Mahāyajñas of 'bali-sattra-vaiśvadeva' as discussed in the chapter on transformation reflects the tendency of the emergent Brāhmaṇism to give the popular rights a Brāhmaṇical garb. On the other hand, it has been discussed earlier that women got a visible-space in the first phase of land-grants when the local idiom was still strong in Valkhā but from the second phase onwards, women become almost invisible in the inscriptions. This reflects a case of the Brāhmaṇical norms overshadowing the pre-existing popular norm which gave a prominent space to women.

More or less the same tendency is evident in the fact that the patronage to the female deities i.e., the Bhagavattīs in the first phase, vanishes with the emergence of the dominant Brāhmaṇism - suggesting and overshadowing effect. Thus, we can see that the Valkha of 4th - 5th centuries of the Christian era had started showing the emergence of the

traits of the Purāṇic religion which went hand-in-hand with the Brāhmanical dominance in the later centuries. The Brāhmanical influence was so strong in Valkhā by the last phase studied here, that even the Buddhist grant was inscribed in a Brāhmanical idiom - as discussed in an earlier chapter.

With the emergence and strengthening of the Brāhmanical ideal, the pre-existing Buddhism in Valkhā could reinvigorate itself only by transforming itself in such a way that it both resembled the Brāhmanical form of ritual and worship and appeal to the popular levels by giving space to some of the idioms from the popular culture. We come across the evidence from this in epigraphical as well as the visual sources from Bagh. The mention of the 'mālya-bali-sattra' with reference to 'Bhagavato-Buddhāya' in the Buddhist grant reflects the efforts of the monastic sect to transform its worship and ritual to resemble the Brāhmanical rituals described earlier. Also, as this ritual system was already known to the popular cults in Valkhā, it made a distinct appeal at the popular level.

Another transformation in the Buddhism of Bagh consequent upon the strengthening of Brāhmanism here is the

transformation of the erstwhile Hīnayānism to Mahāyānism by 'repairs' carried out by Subandhu as discussed in the chapter on art-symbolism, which also indicate a possible embellishment of the caves.

Buddhism's attempt to appeal to the popular level is also evident from its visual-art, which attempted assimilation, of local / folk forms in its religion as discussed earlier. Moreover, its paintings executed in the local idiom and the Mahājanaka Jātaka panel focussing on the queen's misery rather than on Mahājanaka's attainment points to an attempt by the monastic art to give a visible-space to the local norms.

Thus, Brāhmaṇism not only transformed the society and the religion of Valkhā but was also instrumental in transforming the monastic religion of Buddhism, which was consequently manifested in its visual-art. In this sense, the focus on Valkhā and the Bagh caves in this work is important, as it brings into sharp focus the nature of assimilation through visual representations, especially when juxtaposed with the contents of epigraphs. The visual-art thus, reflects the flux going on between the three strings at Valkha - the popular, the Brāhmaṇical and the Buddhist.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX - I
Epigraphs Studied

PHASE - I

EHULUNDA

DATE	DONEE(S) AND, GOTRA Etc.	NATURE OF GRANT	LAND DONATED
Granted in the year 38 (~358 AD) and recorded in the year 47 (~367 AD)	Asvadeva - Kāśyapa Agnisarma - Vātsya Skanda - Bhāradvāja Dāsila - Kauśika Vāsula - Śarma - Kauśika Durakka - Kauśika Mahāsarma - Gargga	Brahmadeya	A Village, "belonging to the agrāhāra of Āryya - Dharodh-ṛtaka of Vātsya Sagotra"
The year 47 (~367 AD)	For the Bali, Chāru and Sattrā rites for the worship of Viṣṇu	Devāgrāhāra	Five villages and one reservoir on the southern bank of Narmadā
The year 50 (~370 AD)	For the Bali, Chāru and Sattrā rites for the 'Bhagavatīs'	Devāgrāhāra	One village under the care of Mūlāsarma, a plot of land under the care of Bhūta-Bhojaka and another village
The year 50 (~370 AD)	For Bali, Chāru and Sattrā rites for Nārāyaṇadeva installed at Valkhā	Devāgrāhāra	One village

DATE	DONEE(S), GOTRA, Etc,	NATURE OF GRANT	LAND DONATED
The year 51 (~371 AD)	For Bali, Chāru, dhūpa, gāṇḍha, puṣpa and Mālya offerings to Nārāyaṇa	Devāgrāhāra	3 plots of land under the care of Māheśvara, Nandapāla and Nandī and a plot of wasteland ("Khilaṃ")
The year 54 (~374 AD)	For Bali, Chāru, Sattrā, dhūpa, gāṇḍha, Mālya offerings to Bappa-Piśācādeva	Devāgrāhāra - Bhukti	half of a village
The year 54 (~374 AD)	For Bali, Chāru, Sattrā, dhūpa, gāṇḍha, puṣpa, mālya offerings to the god Bappa-Piśācādeva	Devāgrāhāra	Two villages
The year 54 (~374 AD)	Jayavardhana, the son of Bhattidāma - Haritasagotra	Brahmadeya	A plot of land and a house
The year 55 (~375 AD)	For Bali, Chāru, Sattrā, gāṇḍha, dhūpa, mālya offerings to Mahāsenādeva	Devāgrāhāra	3 villages and a çarikā
The year 56 (~376 AD)	Brāhmaṇa Dakkānta - Bhāradvāja	Brahmadeya-kulāgrāhāra	a village
The year 56 (~376 AD)	For Bali, Chāru, Sattrā, gāṇḍha, dhūpa, puṣpa and Mālya offerings at the Mātṛ-sthāna-Devakula	Devāgrāhāra	one village and a marshy garden-land ("Vātakaçça")

DATE	DONEE(S), GOTRA, Etc,	NATURE OF GRANT	LAND DONATED
The year 57 (~377 AD)	Brāhmaṇa Kusāraka - Bhāradvāja	Brahmadeya on the request of Āsāḍhanandī	a piece of land alongwith the surrounding marshy land (Kaçcha)
The year 57 (~377 AD)	Ārya-Chāturvaidyas of "various gotras"	Brāhmadeya at the request of Rāma	a village on the southern bank of Narmada
The year 57 (~377 AD)	For Bali - chāru - sattrā - gaṇḍha - dhūpa - puṣpa - Mālya offerings	Devāgrāhāra at the request of Jaya, the messenger of Bhojikā	one village
The year 59 (~379 AD)	For Bali - chāru - sattrā, for bathing the deity and gaṇḍha - dhūpa - puṣpa and Mālya offerings to Bappa-pisāca-deva	An erstwhile Brahmadeya regranted as a devāgrāhāra and a devāgrāhāra	A field and a village

PHASE II

SVĀMIDĀSA

DATE	DONEE(S), GOTRA, Etc.	NATURE OF GRANT	LAND GRANTED
The year 63 (~383 AD)	Ṣaṣṭhidatta (Brāhmaṇa) - Aupamānya Sagotra	Brahmadeya	One village on the south of Narmada
The year 63 (~383 AD)	Ārya - Chāturvaidyas "resident in Valkhā and	Brahmadeya	One village on the farther bank of

DATE	DONEE(S), GOTRA, Etc.	NATURE OF GRANT	LAND GRANTED
	having various gotras and Charanas"		Narmada
The year 65 (~385 AD)	Brāhmana - Pañcha - Vatsa sagotra	Brahmadeya	A plot of land, under the care of Dadhipañchaka
The year 65 (~385 AD)	Mātujja - Kās'yapa sagotra	Brahmadeya	Two plots of land
The year 66 (~386 AD)	Āryya - Chāturvaidyas of the centre	Brahmadeya	A village on the farther bank of Narmada
The year 67 (~387 AD)	Brāhmaṇa Muṇḍa - Sāṅḍilya	Brahmadeya	A field under the care of Ārya - Vānijaka

RUDRA DĀSA

DATE	DONEE(S), GOTRA, Etc.	NATURE OF GRANT	LAND GRANTED
The year 67 (~387 AD)	Brāhmaṇa H. Ūṇādhyaka - - Kās'yapa sagotra	Brahmadeya	A field, under the care of the potter Āryadāsa
The year 67 (~387 AD)	Brāhmaṇa Bhagava _ _ - Kās'yapa	Brahmadeya	An uninhabited vil- lage ('sūnyagrāma')

DATE	DONEE(S), GOTRA, Etc.	NATURE OF GRANT	LAND GRANTED
The year 68 (~388 AD)	Chāturvaidyas of Valkhā	Cāturvaidya - āgrāhāra (Brahmadeya)	Two villages and one agrāhāra village
The year 68 (~388 AD)	Brāhmaṇa of Vatsa sagotra	Kulāgrāhāra - Brahmadeyikā (Brahmadeya)	One village, "under the care of Brahmadatta"
The year 69 (~389 AD)	Brāhmaṇa Dantika of Aupamānyaṅga sagotra	Brahmadeya	One village on the southern bank of Narmada
The year 69 (~389 AD)	Āryya - Chāturvaidyas of the Valkha - ādhisthāna	Brahmadeyāgrāhāra	One village
The year 70 (~390 AD)	Brāhmaṇa Varadatta - - Kāśyapa sagotra	Brahmadeya	A "Kṣetraṃ" enjoyed as a Brahmadeya by Bhūtapālaka and Āryyadāsa"

BHATTĀRAKA

DATE	DONEE(S), GOTRA, Etc.	NATURE OF GRANT	LAND GRANTED
The year 102 (~422 AD)	Revatī - Sarman of Vātsya sagotra	Brahmadeya	A "Kṣetraṃ" earlier "under the care of Vāyuśarman, along- with Udrāṅga reven- ue and paddy fields ("Kedāraih")

RUDRADĀSA

DATE	DONEE(S), GOTRA, Etc.	NATURE OF GRANT	LAND GRANTED
The year 117 (~437 AD)	Brāhmaṇa Droṇilaka of Bhāradvāja sagotra	Brahmadeya	A "Kṣetram", earlier under the care of Bhattivaidya

BHATTĀRAKA

DATE	DONEE(S), GOTRA, Etc.	NATURE OF GRANT	LAND GRANTED
The year 127 (~447 AD)	Chāturvaidya - Samūha of Valkhā	Brahmadeya	One village
The year 129 (~449 AD)	Chāturvaidya - Samūha of Valgu (~ Valkhā?)	Agrāhāra	One village

NĀGABHATTA

DATE	DONEE(S), GOTRA, Etc.	NATURE OF GRANT	LAND GRANTED
The year 134 (~454 AD)	Chāturvaidya - Samūha of the centre, for the Bali, chāru, vaiśvadeva offerings at the request of Āryyikā- Bhaṭṭa	Brahmadeya	One village

PHASE - III

SUBANDHU

DATE	DONEE(S), GOTRA, Etc.	NATURE OF GRANT	LAND GRANTED
The year 167 (~487 AD) (from Māhiṣ-matī)	Brāhmaṇa - Śaṣṭhisvāmin of Bhāradvāja sagotra Vājisaneya śākhā	Brahmadeya	One field (Kṣetraṃ)
Date Lost (considered to be late 5th century AD)	To Kalāyana Vihāra constructed by Datta ṭaka (Bāgh caves) for repair-works, Mālya-bali-sattra rites to 'Bhagavato-Buddha', and for the maintenance of Bhikṣusaṅgha	Agrāhāra	One village (name lost)

APPENDIX - II

ADMINISTRATIVE AND SOCIO-RELIGIOUS MACHINERY OF VALKHĀ

Ist Phase

RULER	OFFICIALS, PROFESSIONALS
BHULUNDA	Āraṅṣika, Preṣaṅika, Bhaṭa, Chatra, Ājñā-vinirggataka, Prasādhaka, Karaṅīya, Dauvārika, Pañcha-kārukam, Santakān, Āmātya, Kṛtyakāra-Bhojaka (executives), Dūtakaṃ, Pratihāra
	Devakarmminah / Deva-Karmmāntika, Devakīya Karṣakah, Pāsapatāh, Ārya-Chokṣas, Deva-prasādakas, Deva-parichārikāh, Vapamānām, Bhāgavat-siṣṭas, Mantra-gaṇāchāryas, Pāsapatāchāryas, Āchāryas

IInd Phase

RULER	OFFICIALS, PROFESSIONALS
SVĀMIDĀSA	Santakān, Ayuktakān, Ārakṣika, Preṣanika, Bhaṭa - Chātra, Ājñāvinirggataka, Pratihāra Dūtaka
RUDRADĀSA	Santakān, Āyuktakān, Ārakṣika, Preṣanika, Bhaṭa, Chātra, Ajñāvinirggataka, Dūtakaṃ, Pratihāra
BHATTĀRAKA	Santakān, Āyuktakān, Ārakṣika, Preṣanika, Bhaṭa, Chātra, Dūtaka, Rājyādhiḥkṛta
NĀGABHATTA	Āyuktakān, Bhaṭa, Preṣanika, Bhāndā-gārika, Dūtaka

IIIrd Phase

RULER	OFFICIALS, PROFESSIONALS
SUBANDHU	Āyuktaka, Dūtaka, Viniyuktaka, Chāṭa - Bhaṭa, Goṣṭhikāgama, Āgamika, Dūta, Preṣanika, Viṣayapati

APPENDIX - III
Techniques of Mural Paintings at Ajanta and Bagh

In order to form an idea about the technique of painting used at Bagh and to compare it with that at Ajanta, it would be worthwhile to look at the textual injunctions in the Viṣṇudharmottaram regarding the technique of mural painting. This text has been selected for this study, as it is the earliest of the texts on the techniques of art-forms and therefore, closest in date to bagh among all such texts.

Apart from the delineation and painting of forms etc., the 40th chapter of the third section of Viṣṇudharmottaram called the Chitrasūtra, gives a detailed account of how the ground for the mural paintings should be prepared. It says that brick-powder (Iṣṭakachūrṇa) of three varieties (smooth, medium and coarse) should be mixed with clay, one-third of it in porportion. To this is added fragrant gum-resin, beeswax, honey, Kundara grass, molasses, safflower soaked in oil, all in equal in porportion.¹ To these two parts al-

1. C. Sivaramamurti, Chitrasūtra of the Viṣṇudarmattaram, Kanāka Pub., New Delhi, 1978, p. 150, ("Guggulaṃ Samād-
hūt-siṣṭam-madhu-kundarakam-guḍam / kusumbham-tailasa-
myuktaṃ-kṛtvā" / III/40/1-3.

ready composed is added powder of lime² 3/4 parts burnt with bel - fruit pulp and lampblack.³ It is soaked in water stored in a pot so as to get lubricious⁴ and is kept so for a month. When it becomes a very soft paste, it has to be carefully taken out and a coat applied by a skilled artist on the wall after testing that it is quite dry.⁵ The coating should be smooth, even, firm, free from uneven patches, neither too thick nor too thin.⁶

When the wall is dry after this coat and is still not quite smooth, it should be smothered by an application of the clay bereft of sarjarasa and oil by coats of lime and frequent melting of the surface with milk and rubbing all with a great effort.⁷ ...When the wall is dry...the artist should draw and fix-up the proportions and positions of the figures. Then he should fill figures with colours.⁸ The materials for colours are gold, silver, copper, mica, lapis lazuli, red lead, yellow ochre, terreverte, lime, red lac,

2. "Agnidagdhayassudhāyā", VD III/40/2.

3. VD III/40/1-2.

4. VD III/40/4.

5. VD III/40/5.

6. VD III/40/6.

7. VD III/40/7-8.

8. VD III/40/14-15.

vermillion, indigo and many such colours.⁹ For a desirable binding medium in the colours, the exudations of *Vakula* and *Sindūra* trees would be appropriate.¹⁰

The above accounts from the Viṣṇudharmottaram shows that the technique of preparing the ground for painting involved two layers of plastering, what S. Paramasivan called coarse and fine plasterings.¹¹ Over the fine plastering, the figures were executed and filled with colours.

The description however, is a textual one, reflecting the ideal mode of executing mural paintings, achieved by centuries of experimentations. The extant mural paintings however, may or may not have followed these guidelines exactly depending on the material available, familiarity of the artists with the texts etc. Hence, it is necessary to juxtapose this description with the actual findings from the chemical analysis of the paintings of Ajanta and Bagh. Ajanta and Bagh have followed broadly the same technique and in general conformed to the textual description, but they

9. VD III/40/25-26.

10. VD III/40/29.

11. S. Paramasivan, referred to in A.K. Bhattacharya, Techniques of Indian Painting, Sarawat Library, Calcutta, 1976, p. 39.

also show some variations from each other and also from the texts, owing to the availability of materials.

The scientific investigation shows that in the rough plastering, mud mixed with straw husk, vegetable seeds, vegetable fibres and paddy husks were used at Ajanta. The rough plaster was more or less same at Bagh, except the presence of paddy husks which was peculiar to Ajanta.¹² Apart from these materials, the presence of sand also has been noted in various proportions at both the places.¹³ In the layer of fine plastering, both Ajanta and Bagh reveal lime as the basic material along with the small portion of gypsum.¹⁴ Thus, fibrous material is not included in the fine plastering, as suggested in the description given about in the Chitrasūtra, where the artist is enjoined to use clay bereft of *sarjarasa* grass. However, whether oil was used as described in the text is not clear.

As for the colours used at Ajanta, Paramasivan has identified the following pigments - yellow ochre, red ochre, carbon, lime, terreverte, and lapis lazuli from cave 2 and

12. Ibid. p. 38.

13. A.K. Bhattacharya, op. cit., p. 38.

14. S.Paramasivan as referred to in A.K.Bhattacharya, op. cit., p. 39.

terreverte and yellow ochre from cave 16.¹⁵ A.K. Haldar's study of the pigments of the Bagh caves shows that the earthen and stone pigments used at Bagh were identical to Ajanta. Apart from these, lac-dye for red was also used at Bagh.¹⁶ Thus, we see that almost all the colours used at Bagh and Ajanta have been referred to in the text mentioned above. However, besides these the text also mentions the use of pigments made of expensive metals which are not found at Bagh and Ajanta. Two reasons seem to be implied here - the cost of preparing the pigments as has been suggested by A.K. Bhattacharya¹⁷ and secondly, the text shows a perfected technique reached at by experimentations of centuries, while the extant paintings show an advanced stage in this technical evolution - the use of metallic colours probably came later than this period. The use of lac-dye at Bagh shows the artist's tendency to improvise with the locally available material.

Although it is very difficult to identify the binding medium through chemical analysis, Paramasivan's analysis

15. Ibid. p. 69.

16. A.K.Haldar, "The Paintings of Bagh Caves", Rupam, Vol. VIII, 1921, p. 15.

17. A.K. Bhattacharya, op. cit., p. 79.

shows that Ajanta artists used animal extracts i.e., glue for binding the colours, while Bagh artists used the tree extracts i.e., gum for binding the colours¹⁸ - the latter in line with the text while the former showing a tendency to experiment. It appears that after such experiments were done with pigments, binding medium etc., the texts prescribed a certain substance as 'appropriate' for use by the artists. Thus, after the experiments of Bagh and Ajanta the texts injunctioned that the tree extract was appropriate as has been described earlier. However, it could also be the case that while the text presented an 'ideal' technique of painting, different art-centres used their own variations on the broad guideline and therefore, there is some deviation from the texts. In any case, it appears that the textual injunction was only to be used as a guideline, it was not meant to be and was never, followed word-to-word, as only the broad instructions of the text were taken.

18. n. 14, p. 69.

APPENDIX - IV

Valkha constituted a part of Avanti i.e., western Mālava in the early historical and the Gupta periods. Various excavated sites of the early historical period in the Avanti region show that the centres of Avanti were inter-linked with each other and Valkhā or Bagh was brought into this network, but not directly, as it does not lie on the major routes. Valkhā has not been excavated so far, so any identification within Valkhā of various sites remains tentative and awaits confirmation through excavation. The present geography of the Valkhā region shows that the area around Bagh (Valkhā) is a sandy hill tract with hardly any trees. However, it is difficult to say whether this area was entirely arid and sandy or covered with forests in the ancient period, as cultivated land near Valkha is mentioned in the inscriptions of this area.

Western Mālava comprises of Ujjain, Dhar and West Nimar districts (where Maheshwar is located), and is largely covered by black soil, which is good for the cultivation of

cotton, wheat, sugarcane, groundnuts etc.¹ Among the main rivers of this region is Narmada, its valley lying between the Vindhya and Satpura ranges, flat and relatively more fertile than the other areas in Western Mālava. The southern banks of Narmada are covered with forests, enclosing rural settlements amidst them, while the northern region around Bagh is a sandy, hilly tract lacking in greenery today.² It is this area on both sides of Narmada over which the chiefdom of Valkhā is spread. Valkhā located in Avanti Mahājanapada is little known to history except through copper-plate inscriptions issued from Valkhā. However, we get many references to Avanti as an identifiable region from both Brāhmanical and Buddhist sources and from the places mentioned in these sources as falling in Avanti.

Avanti had two divisions - the northern being called Avanti with its centre at Ujjayinī and the southern known as Avanti-Dakṣiṇāpatha with its centre at Māhiṣmatī. It is not clear whether the tradition of Avanti-Dakṣiṇāpatha³ contin-

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1. O.H.K. Spate, India and Pakistan, London, 1964, pp. 576-7.
 2. Map Survey of India, Sheet No. 46.
 3. D.R. Bhandarkar, Lectures on Ancient History of India, Calcutta, 1921, p. 45.

ued into the Gupta period but since this was the southern part of Avanti, spread along the banks of Narmada with Māhiṣmatī as its centre, one can say that the Valkhā chiefdom of Gupta period lay roughly in the traditional Avanti-Dakṣiṇāpatha as it had the same area of influence with its centre shifting from Valkhā (Bagh) to Māhiṣmatī in its later period.

Among the more important sites excavated are Ujjain, a walled city and its satellite sites and Maheshwar. Ujjayinī, which emerged as an important settlement from 700 BC, had a slow pace of evolution in period I (BC 700-500), but showed enormously increased and differentiated pace of activity in period II (BC 500-200). There are marked changes in life-style followed in the fortified area in this period. It is also significant that this was the period of formation of **Mahājanapadas**, Avanti being one of them, with Ujjayinī as its centre. The archaeological findings from Ujjain⁴ show that Ujjayinī was a strong centre of power and commerce during Phase II. Shell bangles show Ujjayinī's connection with the western seacoast of Bhṛgukaccha and ivory seals

4. IAR, 1956-57, pp. 20-28.
1957-58, pp. 34-36.

show some kind of administrative set-up during BC 500-200. There are indications of religious cults of popular nature existing here, as mother-goddess figurines of terracotta are found here. That the cult of mother-goddess was popular in Avanti region as a whole, including Valkha is evident in archaeological findings elsewhere and the epigraphical records of Valkhā, which has been discussed in this work. Among the materials found in Avanti region, most used in the second phase seem to continue into the third phase.

Dangwada, a site near Ujjain, also provides evidence⁵ of links with Vidiśā and Ujjain and the prevalence of the Yakṣa cult, a common phenomenon in the early historical site. Dangwada also comes up with the figures of deities of different religious faiths such as Haritī, Buddha, Viṣṇu, Durgā, Lajjā gaurī etc. in the Gupta period. Other sites near Ujjain have also come up with similar evidence.⁶

Excavations in the smaller sites near Ujjayinī show that while crafts activity slowed down in Ujjayinī, in some of the smaller sites close by, it picked up pace, not only

5. IAR, 1979-80, pp. 54-55.

1982-83, pp. 56-60.

6. IAR, 1980-81, p. 39.

in kinds of material worked with but a definite shift towards working in gold, silver and semi-precious stones. It may signify that there was an attempt at branching out of the crafts-activity from the walled city to several sites nearby.

The above description, although it does not give a full picture of Avanti as a whole, shows the economic activity going on in the core area. The data regarding the popular, Buddhist and Brāhmanical sects may be taken as a general picture of socio-religious activity in Avanti region. Further excavations in the small sites may well add more useful information to improve our understanding of the general picture.

The excavations at Maheshwar⁷ show that the material culture diminished in quantity at Maheshwar in the last phase of its occupation i.e., between AD 100-400. However, we know from the epigraphical records of Valkha that the base shifted from Bagh to Māhiṣmatī in the last decades of 5th century AD (i.e., after AD 400). Subandhu has issued two inscriptions from Māhiṣmatī during this time and his inscrip-

7. R.S. Sharma, Urban Decay in India, Delhi, 1990, pp.68-70.

tions start with the phrase 'Māhiṣmatī-nagarāt'.⁸ The refer-
rings to Māhiṣmatī is in the inscriptions as a 'nagara'
shows that the people in the last phase of the 5th century
AD perceived this place as an urban-centre. Moreover, the
preference of Māhiṣmatī over Bagh shows that the former was
considered to be more appropriate place to be the centre of
power.

A site near Maheshwar is Pagara where excavations have
revealed several levels of occupations from 1st century AD
to 12th century AD. We deal here with only the first two
phases i.e., upto 6th century AD. The first phase (1st-3rd
century AD) shows red ware. The second phase shows a larger
assemblage including shell-bangles, Gupta gold-coins and
Ksatrapa silver coins,⁹ suggesting large-scale exchange
based on trade and a link with the sea-coast.

Apart from the excavated sites in Avanti, we have the
names of the sites mentioned in the epigraphical sources,
some attempt has been made by the editors of the Bagh in-
scriptions to identify some of these sites. However, as the

8. EI, 19, pp. 262-263.

CII, Vol. IV, Pt. I, p. 20.

9. IAR, 1980-81, p. 33.

editors themselves agree, these identifications are only tentative, based on similarity in names of the sites mentioned in the inscriptions and of modern sites and await confirmation through excavation. The content of inscriptions to give some idea about the whereabouts of certain sites, as some descriptions regarding their geographical locations are given. Some of the identified sites in this work have been mentioned in the introductory chapter.

The editors of Bagh inscriptions have, on the basis of similarity in names, identified 'Dagdha pallikā' as Dahi and 'Lohakāra pallikā' as Lohari.¹⁰ Since Yaṣṅagrāhāraka is granted alongwith Lohakārapallikā to the same Brāhmaṇa,¹¹ it may be concluded that the former lies somewhere near Lohari. A village called 'Devāgrāhāraka' is granted in 'Urīkarāṣṭra', alongwith Gavayapānīyaka.¹² Following the same methodology of identification, we find a village called Deogarh, resembling in name with Devāgrāhāraka. If this identification is accepted, then the location of Gavayapānīyaka should be taken as near Deogarh, although the exact

10. Bagh Copper Plates, op. cit., p. XXIII.

11. Ibid, p. 37, lines 2-6.

12. Ibid, p. 15.

location cannot be ascertained. Again, two other sites are Gajnera (Garjanānaka) and Piplod (Pippalobjjharā),¹³ the identification based on both the similarity in the names and their reference as lying on the south-bank of Narmada, which tallies with the location of the tentatively identified sites.

Here, a special mention needs to be made of a territory division called Navarāṣṭrakapathaka, referred to as lying south of Narmada.¹⁴ The name suggests that this was a new territory, earlier uninhabited, which was settled by the Valkhā chiefs. thus, its location could be either south of Gajnera etc., or south of Ummeda, Talwara Deb etc., for these are areas which do not have any sites mentioned in the inscriptions.

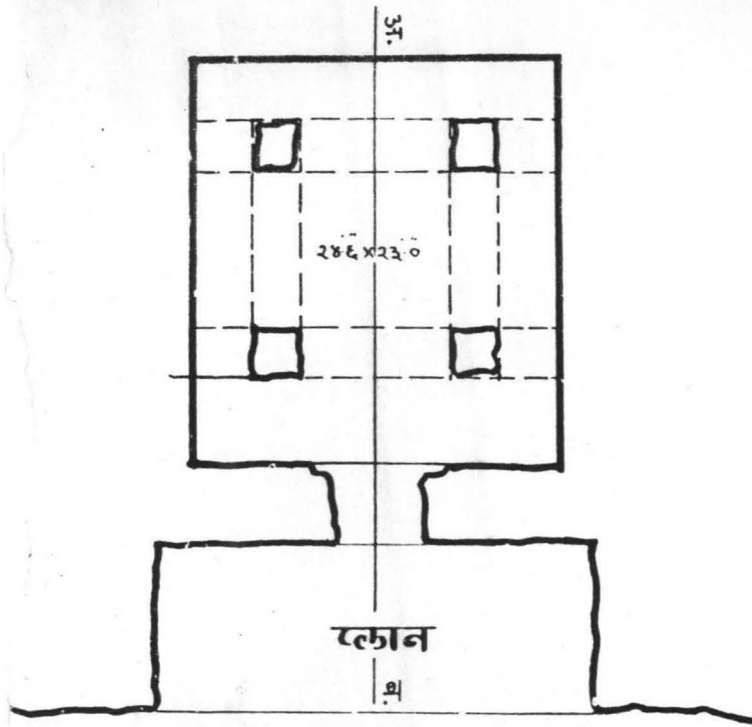
There are still a number of sites which remain unidentified, in the absence of any clues to their whereabouts. Apart from Narmada, only one other river is mentioned i.e., Domphagarttā (a tributary of Narmada). However, no major tributary of Narmada today has a similar name. Hence, it is

13. Ibid, p. 6, lines 2-5.
p. 28, lines 2-5.

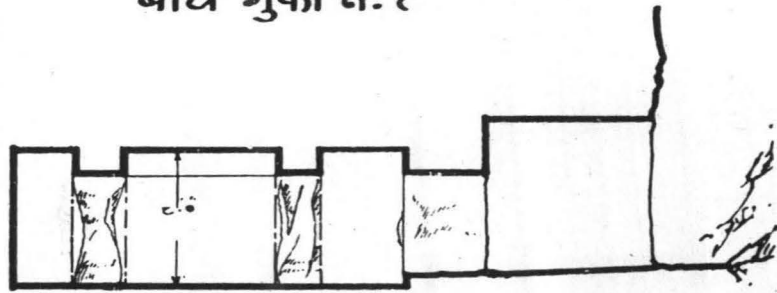
14. Ibid, p. 46, lines 2-6.

possible that this was the local name of one of the smaller tributaries of Narmada, now lost to us.

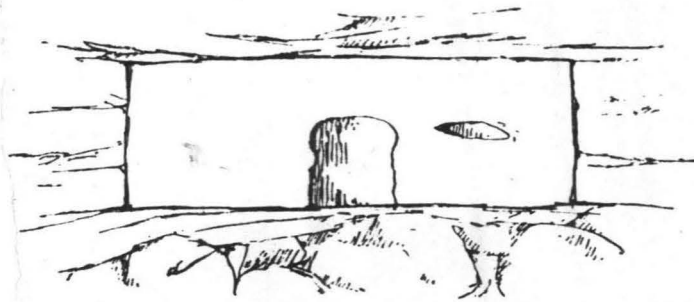
The map which emerges before us of Valkhā after plotting these sites has been discussed in the introductory chapter. Thus, Valkhā can be placed in the wider context of the Avanti region and many of its sites can be identified.



बाघ गुफा नं. १



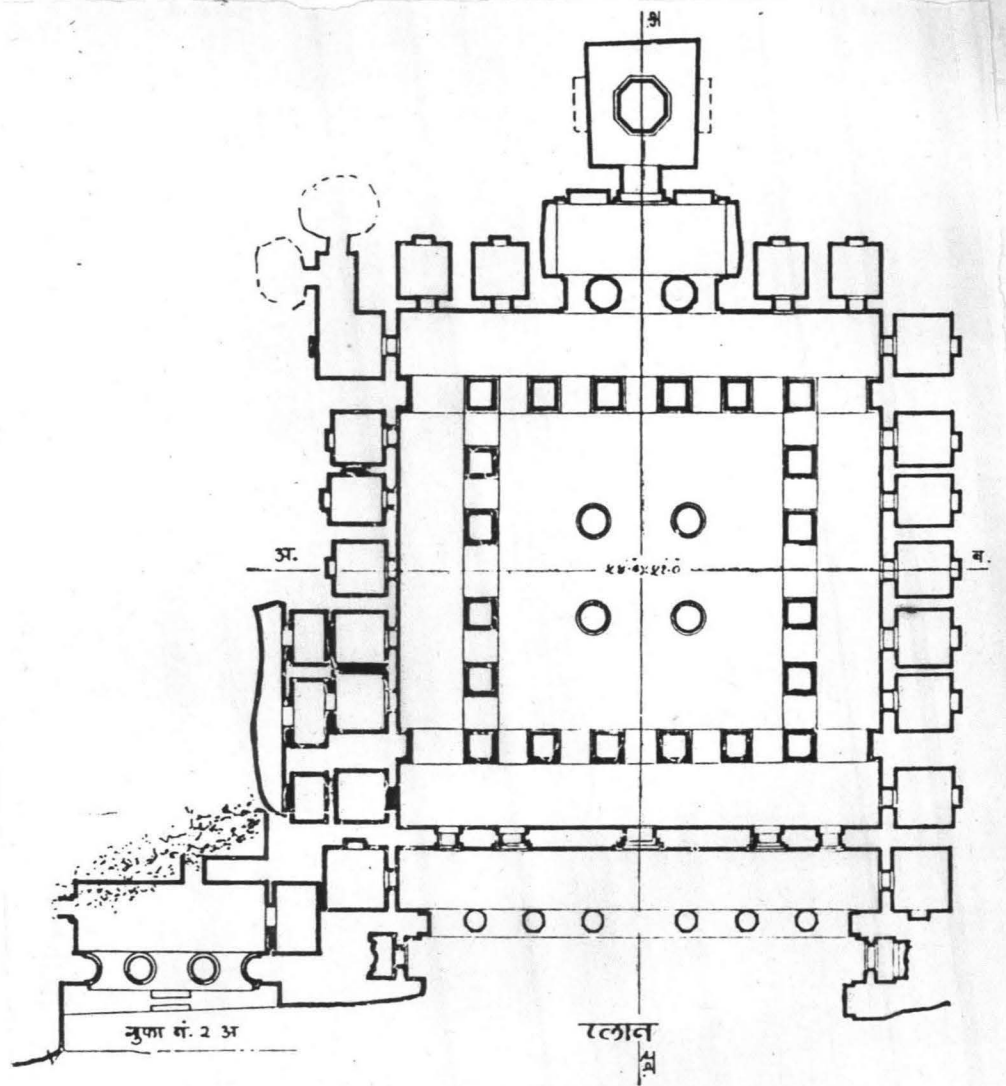
संक्षान अ. ब.



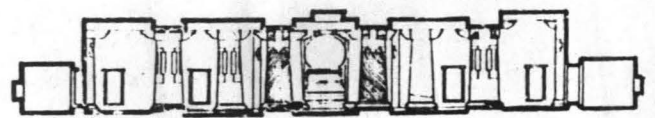
इलीव्हेशन

आकृति १

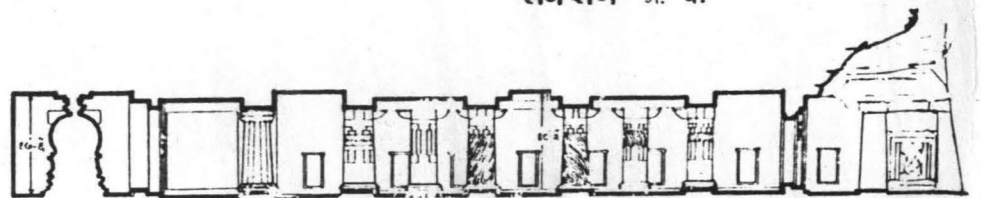
C fig - I (a)



बाघ गुफा नं. 2



संक्शन अ. ब.

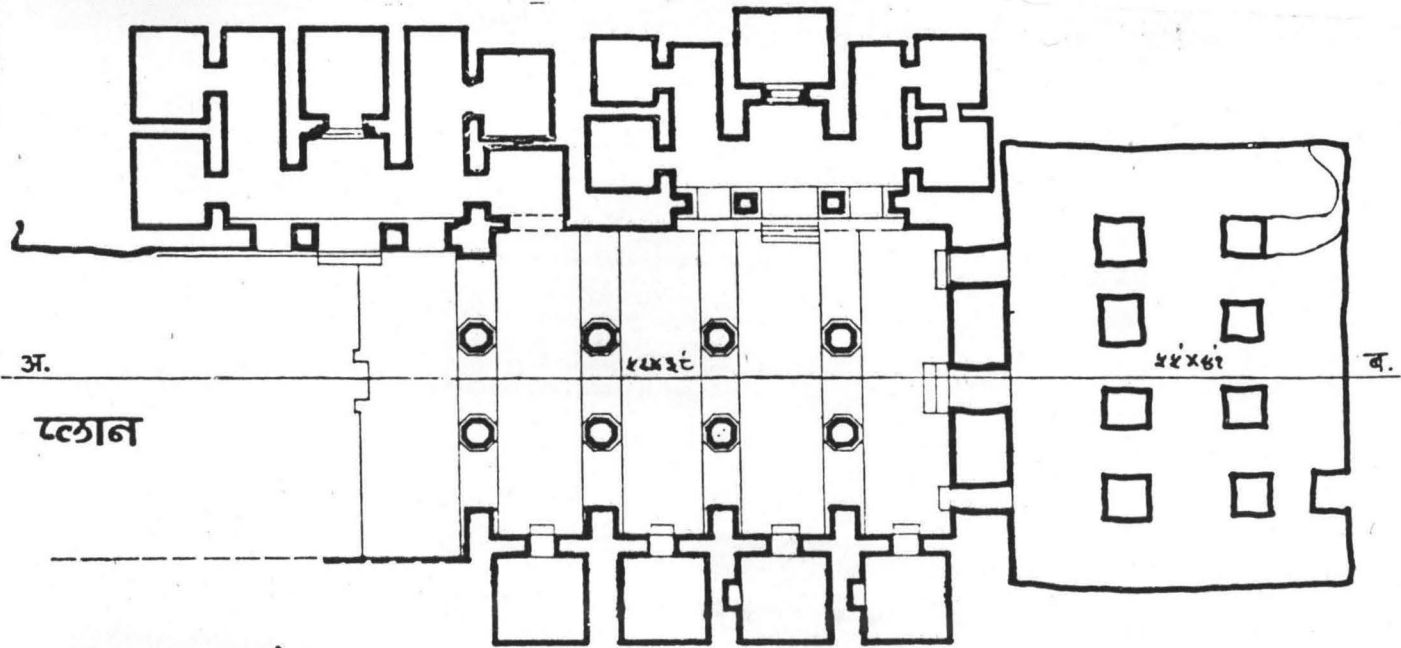


संक्शन क. ख.

आकृति 2

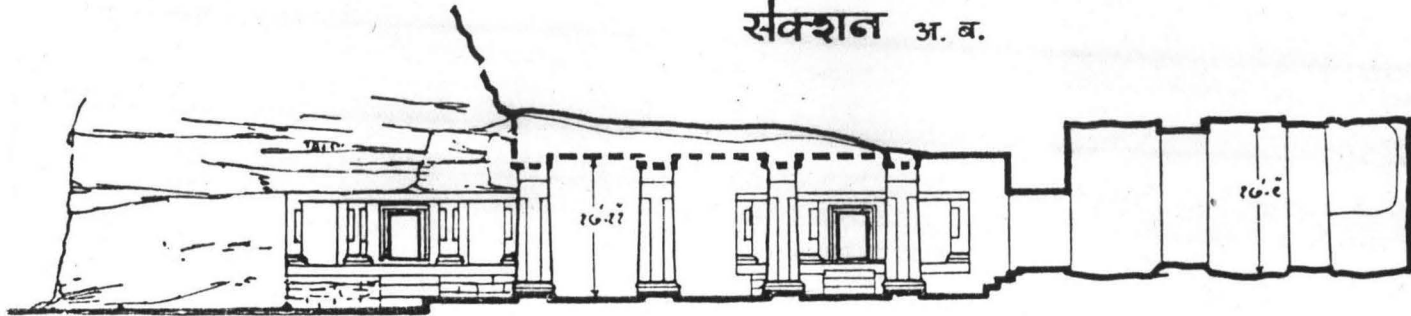
fig II (b)

Fig I (c)

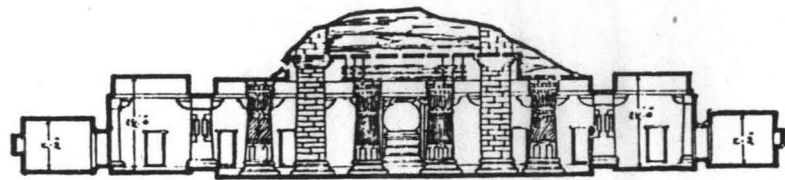
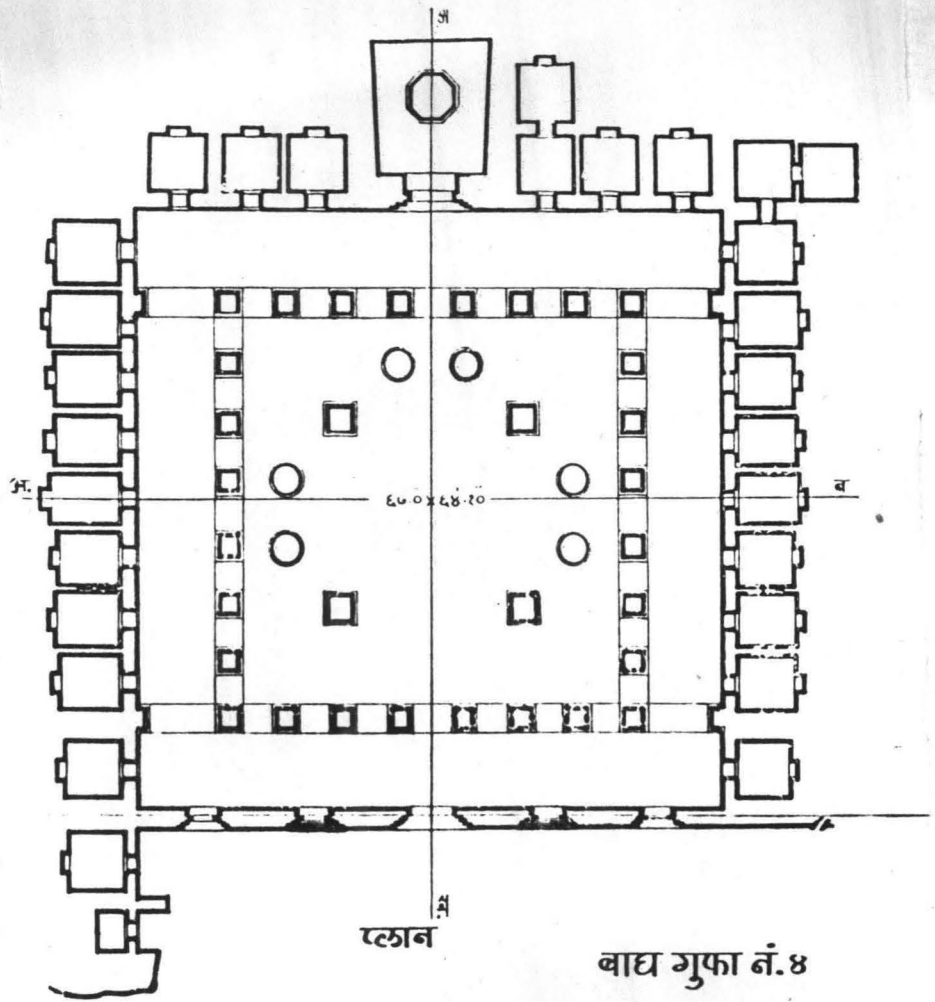


बाघ गुफा नं. ३

संक्शन अ. ब.



बाहति ३



संक्शन अ. ब.

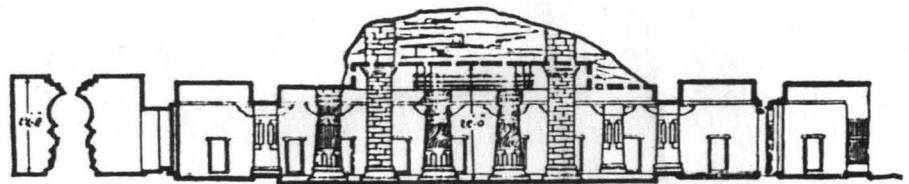
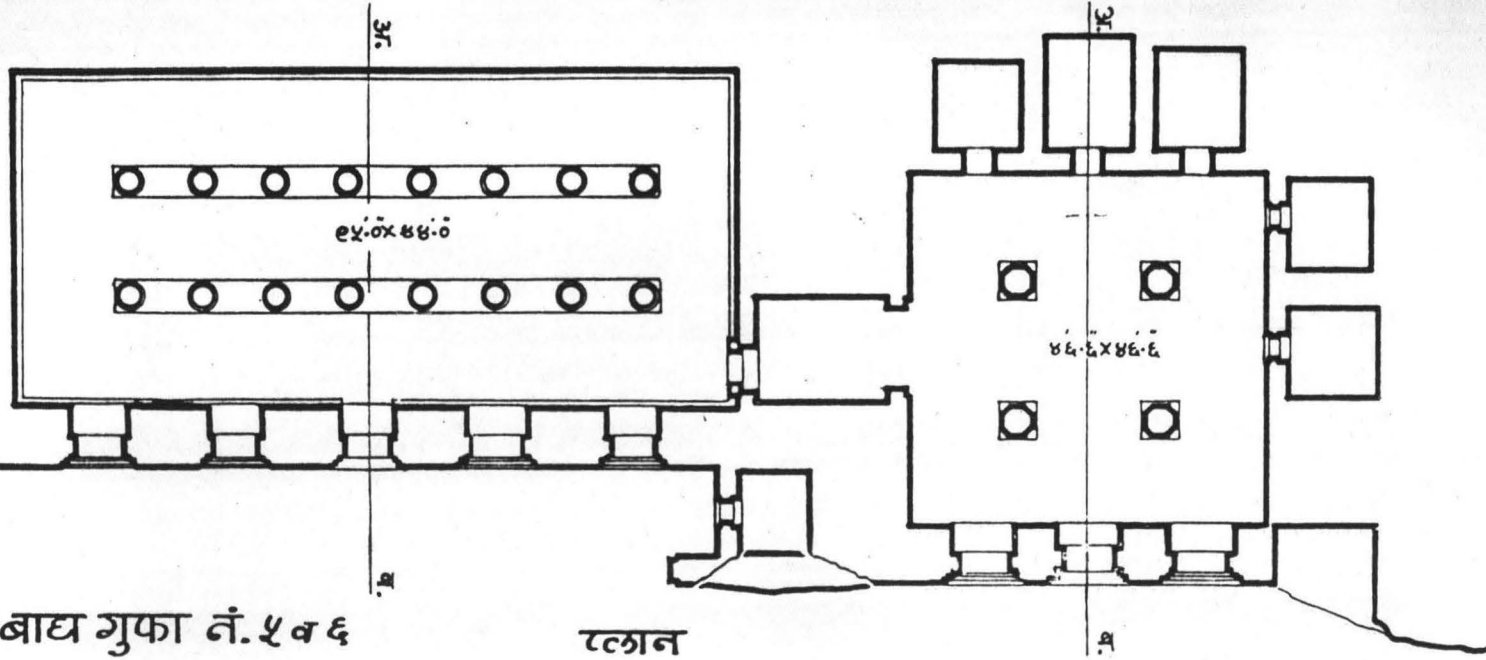


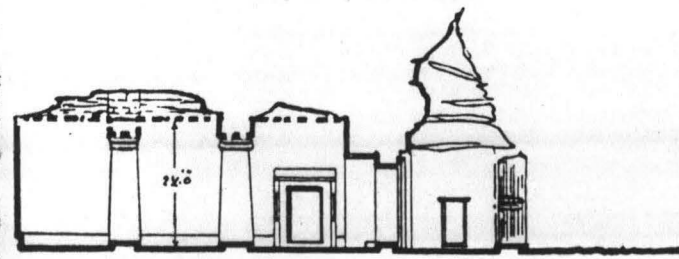
fig I (d)

Fig I (e)

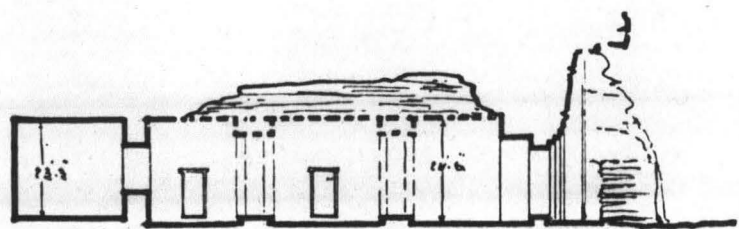


बाद्य गुफा नं. ५ व ६

रत्नान



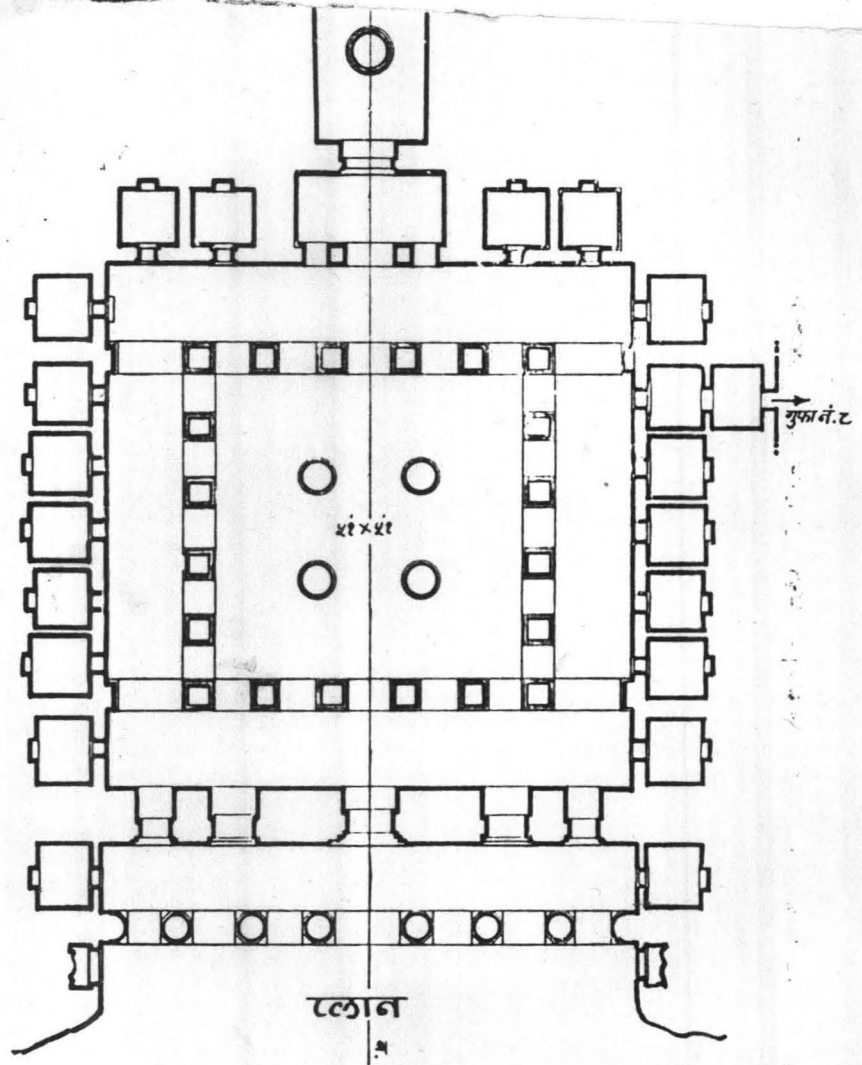
संक्शन अ. ब.



संक्शन अ. व.

आकृति ५.

१२३



बाघ गुफा नं. ७

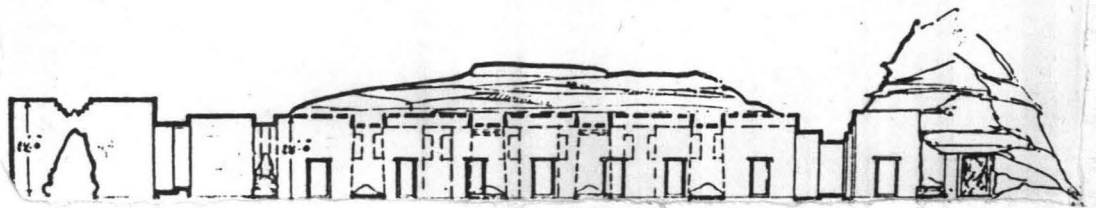
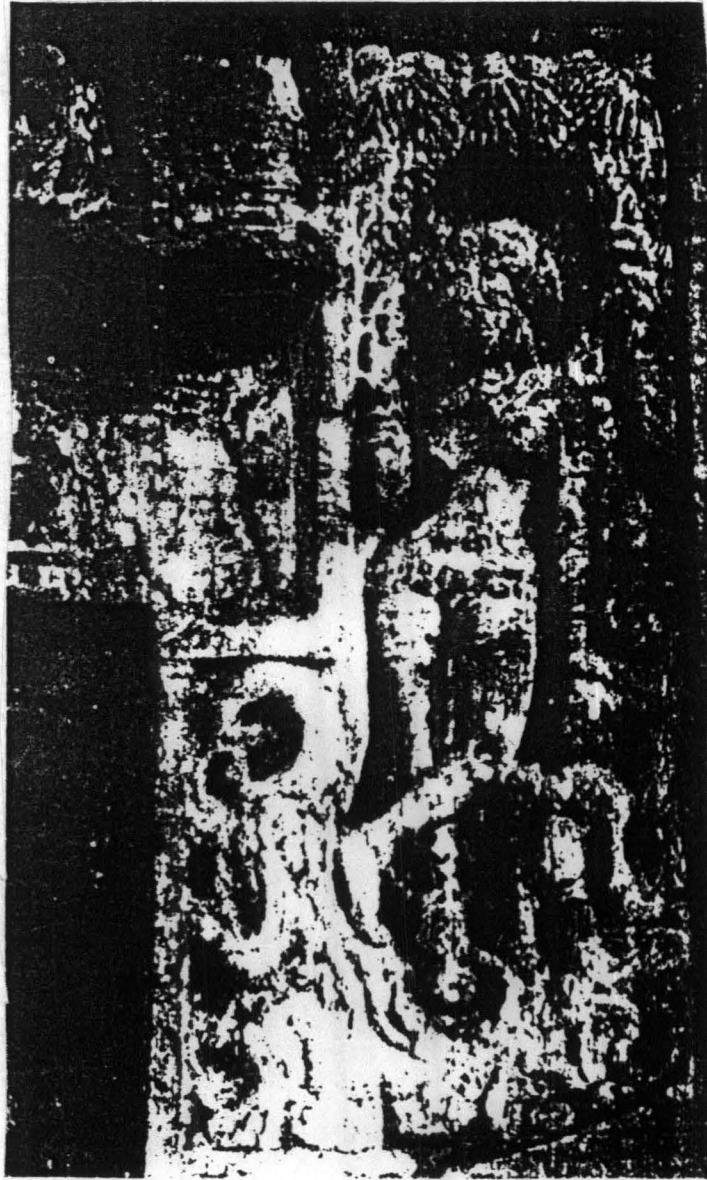


fig I (f)



चित्र : ४० अ

गुफा नम्बर ४

मुख्य द्वार पर नदी देवी (दाहिनी ओर)

(Fig 1)

Text - pp 94-95

Courtesy, M.D. Khare, Bagh kī Guphāyen, MP Hindi Granth Akademy, Bhopal, 1971.



fig ii(a)

text - PP106-108



figii (b)

Text - PP 106 - 108

Courtesy, Mukul Dey, My Pilgrimages to Ajanta and Bagh, OUP, London, 1925 (for a).

_____, Sandhya Pandey, Gupta Kālīna Bauddha Chitrakalā, Parimal Publication, Delhi, 1991 (for b).



figiii text + p104

Courtesy, Maj. C.E. Luard, 'Gazetteer Gleamings in Central India - Buddhist Caves of Central India', Indian Antiquary, Vol. 39, 1910.



(fig iv)

text - P101

Courtesy, Sandhya Pandey, Gupta Kālīna Bauddha Chitrakalā,
Parimal Publication, New Delhi, 1991.



Fig V (a)

Text - P408 ff.



(b)



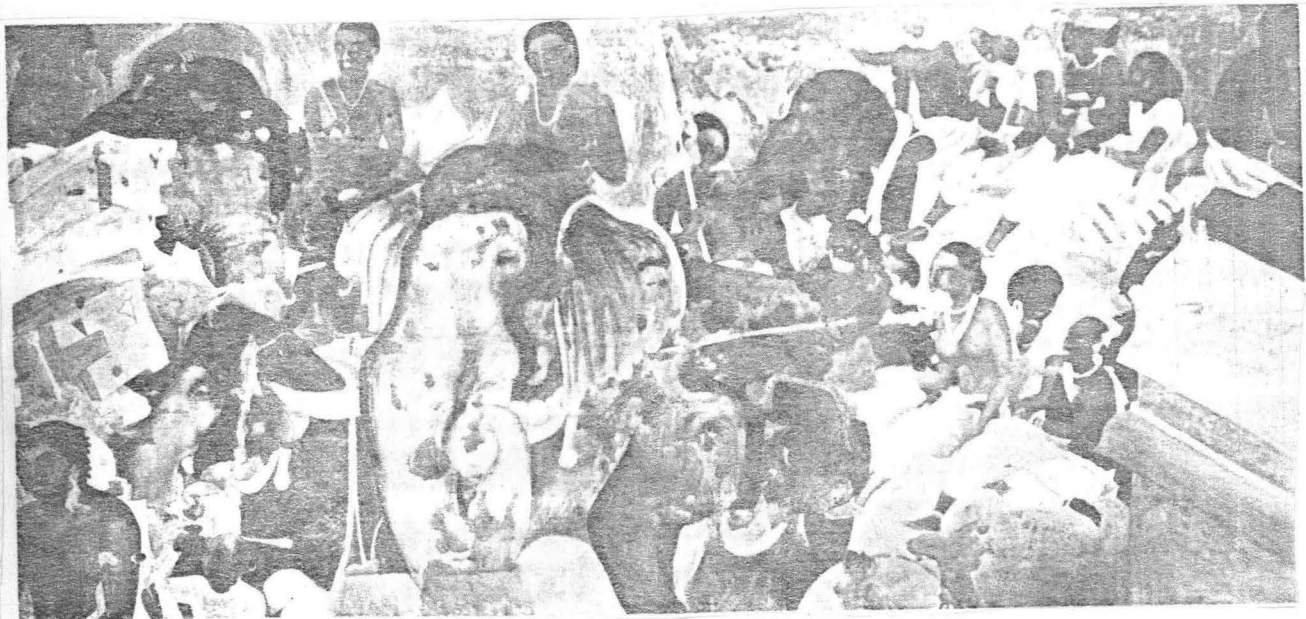
(c)



(d)

Copy in the Museum of Rabindra-Bharati, Calcutta

Courtesy, John Marshall et al, The Bagh Caves, India Society, London, 1927 (for a to ~~c~~).
To be seen in continuation from a to ~~b~~.



Copy in the Museum of Rabindra-Bharati, Calcutta

(e)

Courtesy, Mukul Dey, My Pilgrimages to Ajanta & Bagh,

OUP, LONDON, 1925 (for d and e)

SITES FROM BAGH - INSCRIPTIONS

MAP-2

- ◻ MODERN PLACES
- ◻ VALKHAN SITES



SCALE - 1cm - 1000m

