

**VAIṢṆAVISM AND VAIṢṆAVA PILGRIMAGE CENTRES
IN MADHYA PRADESH AND CHHATTISGARH
[c. A.D. 600-1300]**

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that this thesis entitled, “Vaisnavism and Vaisnava Pilgrimage Centres in Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh (c. A.D. 600-1300)”, submitted by Sima Mallick in fulfillment of the requirement for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy is an original work. It has not been previously submitted for any degree of this university or any other university.

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Dedicated
To
Mummy & Papa

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CHAPTER – 1

INTRODUCTION

Vaiṣṇavism and themes related to its study remained an intriguing area of research for scholars since the British era, although Viṣṇu and his incarnations caught the fancy of historians and Indologists quite early. Viṣṇu is the prominent male deity of one of the most widespread religions of India. Almost every pocket of this country has one or the other shrine dedicated to this god or some form of him. The followers of the Vaiṣṇava sect command a good respect even among the public personalities of India. Mahatma Gandhi has his favourite hymn (written by Narsi Mehta) related to Vaiṣṇava sect-

Vaiṣṇava jana to tene kahiye pīra parāyī jāne re.

The non-violent aspect of this sect impressed Mahatma who was himself an epitome of Ahimsā (non-violence) and Satya (truth).

Though this sect emphasizes on the non-killing of animals and brotherhood in its teachings, how far this concept pervaded the Vaiṣṇava atmosphere in ancient times (when it had still to take its final shape as we see it today) can be a matter of debate and research. But despite the uncertainty over this aspect the sect enjoys wide popularity and following.

Vaiṣṇavism was supported and expanded by a group of Vaiṣṇava Ācāryas from south and north, Rāmānuja, Vallabhācārya, Nimbārkācārya, being a few of them. Vaiṣṇavism is largely regarded as the result of the Bhakti movement and preaching of these Ācāryas. It is considered as following the guidelines of them by and large.

Vaiṣṇavism like any other sect in India could not claim to have exclusive areas dedicated to the Vaiṣṇava deities. Besides, not all the areas have the equal representation of Vaiṣṇava deities. There are certain areas, which attest to the domineering presence of other sects. These areas are left by the historians and the

Indologists, who worked on Vaiṣṇavism. Even for the new entrants in the field of Vaiṣṇava research this does not seem to be a lucrative area. There are very few Vaiṣṇava temples as compared to other sects, lesser number of inscriptions invoking Viṣṇu and his incarnations, and not so bright prospect of availability of material from these areas. The difficulty associated in the study of Vaiṣṇavism and its developments in these regions drove away the scholars from them. As a result these areas were left neglected by the scholars. The sketchy references to these regions did not do much justice to the history of Vaiṣṇava religion.

The history of Vaiṣṇava religion is not only associated with the tracing of the path of development of the famous Vaiṣṇava related places but also to the tracing of non existence of it in some parts of India. The history of religion and for that matter any subject cannot be complete unless the pattern of incidence is compared with the pattern of its absence.

Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh constitute one such region of India, which was left aside as far as the study of Vaiṣṇavism in a regional context is concerned. This region came under the influence of Śaiva sects early in its historical period. This was the reason for which the development of Vaiṣṇavism was left un-researched after the Gupta period. My attempt in this research is to provide the justice to this region or at least to make a beginning in this direction.

As a theme for my Ph.D. research, I intend to work in detail on the history of Vaiṣṇavism in Madhya Pradesh and the recently created state of Chhattisgarh during the period c.A.D.600-1300.

Although this takes off from my M. Phil level initial research on Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh during c.A.D.300-600, the present research will move somewhat away from the structure of my earlier work. This period, especially from the close of the *Gupta* period onwards, saw intense activity of temple building in different parts of Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh. Diverse regional dynasties were ruling in different regions of this area. The Candellas were ruling in Khajuraho, Paramāras in Western Malwa, Kalacuris in Jabalpur and Ratanpur and, the Pratihāras and subsequently the Kacchaphātas near Gwalior and Nagavamsis in Bastar.

Vaiṣṇava centres, which have been confined to one or other parts Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh, now spread over the area. In this process of geographical expansion, forms of Vaiṣṇava worship too changed. Different *avatāras* of Viṣṇu were worshipped in Gupta period like *Varāha avatāra* in and around Eran, *Sāraṅgin* (one who has *sāraṅga* bow in his hand i.e. Rāma) form of Viṣṇu in Mandasor, while *Hayagrīva* (one with horse face) in central Madhya Pradesh. However, towards the end of the first millennium A.D., the *Caturbhuja* form of Viṣṇu image became prevalent.

In the present, an attempt will be made to find out evolutionary pattern of Vaiṣṇavism in diverse regions of Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh, and also to locate if any of these regional centres acquired a pan Indian character, thus developing into a major pilgrimage centre.

Vaiṣṇavism was not a phenomenon confined to Madhya Pradesh or Chhattisgarh only. But how far regional pattern of Vaiṣṇavism in Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh influenced the historical development of this religion forms an important aspect of my study. In this connection, I would like to quote Prof. Kunal Chakravarti¹ - "It is the making of regional traditions and the formation of regional identities which reveal the pattern of socio-cultural interaction between the pan-Indian and the local levels, so crucial for an understanding of the long term historical processes in India".

Besides the regional character and the geographical expansion, I would like to look into the sources and the pattern of patronage extended to the construction and maintenance of these centre, which sometimes became crucial in the development of these centres from a local tradition to the larger tradition.

In the process of its evolution, Vaiṣṇavism interacted with other major and minor cults that were prevalent in Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh. The nature of this interaction and the impact, which each bears upon the other, form other aspects of this research work.

¹ Chakravarti, Kunal, *Religious Process; Purāṇas and the Making of a Regional Tradition*, New Delhi, 2001, p. 1.

I

Madhya Pradesh is known for long as the find spot of one of the earliest Vaiṣṇava inscriptions in India. The famous Heliodorous Pillar Inscription at Besnagar² in Madhya Pradesh attests to the presence of Vāsudeva cult as early as the 2nd century B.C. This place may well have been a complex of Vāsudeva temples. In this connection, Bhandarkar³ refers to another base of a column, found in one of the streets of Vidisha. It contains a small inscription mentioning a Garuḍa standard made in connection with the best temple of *Bhāgavata-*

Bhagavato prāsādotamasa Garuḍa-dhvaja kārata---

The word '*prāsādotama*' suggests that of many temples this Vāsudeva temple is the best of which the column forms a part.

Another site⁴ excavated in close vicinity of the pathway leading from Udaigiri to Besnagar shows the presence of the two *kunḍas* and one large hall. These further suggest the site to be a big religious centre.

With such an ancient record of Vāsudeva cult centre flourishing in this part of Madhya Pradesh, the region presents an interesting area to study the further evolution and spread of Vaiṣṇava cult centres.

We have abundance of research materials and books on Vaiṣṇavism and the incarnations of Viṣṇu. Of them, early works deal mainly with the evolution of Vaiṣṇavism.

R.G. Bhandarkar⁵, one of the pioneers in the study of Vaiṣṇava religion, traces the origin of the religion from the 4th century B.C. to 8th century A.D. with an emphasis on the *avatāras* of Viṣṇu.

² *Archaeological Survey of India, Annual Report* (hereafter *ASIAR*), 1908-09, pp. 126-29.

³ Bhandarkar, *ASIAR*, 1913-14, P. 190.

⁴ Bhandarkar, *ASIAR*, 1914-15, PP. 12-18.

⁵ Bhandarkar, R.G., *Viṣṇuism, Saivism and Minor Religious Systems*, Strassburg, 1913.

Monier Williams⁶ considered Vaiṣṇavism as result of “abolition of triune equality of Brhamā, Śiva and Viṣṇu in favour of Viṣṇu”.

H.C. Raychaudhuri⁷ found Vaiṣṇavism not a plagiarism from Christianity, but of indigenous origin, and owing its origin to Vāsudeva.

J. Gonda⁸, dealing with almost the same theme, throws special light on Viṣṇu’s relationship with kingship. Jan Gonda is recognised as one of the pioneer writers on the religions of India especially Vaiṣṇavism. He throws special light on the connection of Viṣṇu with fertility cult. Time and again Viṣṇu in his different incarnations has been associated with Pṛthvī as his wife. This idea leads to the concept of Viṣṇu being the male partner of the goddess earth. This also emphasises the connection of Viṣṇu with king who is often related to one or the other incarnations of Viṣṇu. However this book suffers from the lack of chronological study. The author has endowed the god with those qualities, which could have been of late origin.

K.G. Goswami⁹ in his book ‘*Study of Vaiṣṇavism*’ depicts the growth of Vaiṣṇava religion from a tribal cult (of the god of *Sātvata* tribe), slowly transgressing the geographical boundaries.

Suvira Jaiswal¹⁰, in her book ‘*The Origin and Development of Vaiṣṇavism*’, studied the development and progress of Vaiṣṇavism from 200 B.C. to 500 A.D. in the context of its social base. The reference to Vaiṣṇavism cannot be complete without giving the book its place. This book tries to locate the origin of Vaiṣṇavism right from the *Rgvedic* period to the 5th century A.D., though its period starts from 2nd century B.C. it can be called a comprehensive work on the early history of Vaiṣṇavism (called Viṣṇuism in the book). The author took great pains to show the connection of Nārāyaṇa with that of agriculture and human sacrifice. At one place Nārāyaṇa is connected with the term ‘Bhagavata’ which means ‘to share’.¹¹ According to the

⁶ Monier Williams, M., “The Vaisnava Religion”, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, New Series XIV, 1882, pp. 289-316.

⁷ Raychaudhary, H.C., *Materials for the Study of Early History of Vaisnava Sect*, New Delhi, 1995, (2nd ed.).

⁸ Gonda, J., *Aspects of Early Visnuism*, Delhi, 1969, (2nd ed.).

⁹ Goswami, K.G., *Study of Vaisnavism from the Advent of the Śungas in the Light of Epigraphic, Numismatic and Other Archaeological Materials*, Calcutta, 1956.

¹⁰ Jaiswal, Suvira, *Origin and development of Vaisnavism (200B.C.-500A.D.)*, Delhi, 1980.

¹¹ *Ibid*, p. 38.

author if *bhagavat*, the possessor of the *bhaga* was Nārāyaṇa, the collective entity of the tribe, *bhaga* was the individual member who belonged to the *bhagavat* and received a share of the *bhaga*. At this primitive stage the communal wealth was identical with food that is why even in its early uses '*bhakta*' means 'meal'. When the culture, in which the concepts of the *bhagavat* and Nārāyaṇa originated, reached an agricultural stage, rice became the principal meal of the community and *bhakta* became synonymous with 'boiled rice'.

So far the origin of Nārāyaṇa was connected with the agricultural settled community. But at another place she traces the origin of Nārāyaṇa in the hoary past when human sacrifices were a common feature. 'The genesis of Nārāyaṇa appears to have had a sound material basis and may be traced to a state of savagery; the concept changed with the progress of civilisation'.¹² The explanation for the involvement of Nārāyaṇa with human sacrifice is provided in the ritual of Nārāyaṇa-bali described in some *Grhya Sūtras*. The rite of Nārāyaṇa-bali, in the opinion of the author, is a remnant of some earlier ritual in which human beings were unnaturally put to death in honour of Nārāyaṇa. And the connection of Nārāyaṇa with the *Puruṣamedha* referred to in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* strongly suggests this interpretation.

Thus the author points to a curious origin of Nārāyaṇa when the society was still at the stage of primitive agriculture and human sacrifices for the fertility was practiced by the agricultural community. The concept of '*bhagavat*' as described earlier indicates to the early mode of distribution of material wealth. The author gives a useful explanation for the origin and development of the worship of Śankarṣaṇa Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa along with Śrī-Lakṣmī.

Urmila Bhagowalia in her work '*Vaiṣṇavism and Society in North India*'¹³ did a similar kind of work in the context of its social implications.

Besides the evolutionary aspect of Vaiṣṇavism, *avatāra* concept remained popular

¹² Jaiswal, Suvira, *Origin and development of Vaisnavism*, p. 35.

¹³ Bhagowalia, Urmila, *Vaisnavism and Society in North India*, c.A.D.700-1200, Delhi, 1980.

among the scholars. Hermann Jacobi¹⁴ found the tenet of incarnations as fundamental to medieval and modern Hindu religions. D.D. Kosambi¹⁵ gave emphasis on the syncretic and assimilative aspect of the *avatāras*. The concept of '*avatāra*' was basically to assimilate as many sects into the Vaiṣṇava faith as possible through the mechanism of rebirth and incarnations.

A specialized study of different forms of Viṣṇu is a part of two major works: '*Elements of Hindu Iconography*' of T.A.G. Rao¹⁶ and '*Development of Hindu Iconography*'¹⁷ of J.N. Banerjea. Kalpana Desai's '*Iconography of Viṣṇu*'¹⁸ also deals with Vaiṣṇava iconography. These books provide an insight into the form of Viṣṇu and his incarnations. The different forms of Viṣṇu came under the banner of Vaiṣṇavism at different period of time. The iconographic features though guided by the texts sometimes contain the regional features specific to a place. The iconographic evolution of the image of Viṣṇu was taken up by J.N. Banerjea in his book mentioned above. Different traits and weapons associated with Viṣṇu were the result of the continuous evolution of the image of the god till the early centuries of 2nd millennium.

Similar kinds of studies, of the sculptures, are undertaken by different scholars on different parts of Madhya Pradesh at different periods. Some of them are J.C. Harle's '*Gupta Sculptures*'¹⁹, Krishna Deva's '*Temples of Khajuraho*'²⁰, S. N. Mishra's '*Gupta Art and Architecture*'.²¹

The work edited by B.L. Smith²² and titled '*Essays on Gupta Culture*' tried to point out the link between legitimacy and religion in the Gupta period and onwards.

¹⁴ Jacobi, Hermann, 'Incarnation Indian', *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, vol. VII, Edinburgh, 1914, pp. 193-97.

¹⁵ Kosambi, D.D., 'The Avatāra Syncretism and Possible Sources of the Bhagwad Gītā', *Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, vol. 24, 25, 1948-49, pp. 121-134.

¹⁶ Rao, T.A.G., *Elements of Hindu Iconography*, vol. I and II, Delhi, 1968.

¹⁷ Banerjea, J.N., *Development of Hindu Iconography*, Calcutta, 1936.

¹⁸ Desai, Kalpana, *Iconography of Visnu*, New Delhi, 1973.

¹⁹ Harle, J.C., *Gupta Sculpture; Indian Sculpture of the Fourth to the Sixth Centuries A.D.*, New Delhi, 1996 (New ed.).

²⁰ Krishna Deva, *Temples of Khajuraho*, New Delhi, 1990.

²¹ Mishra, S.N., *Gupta Art and Architecture with Special Reference to Madhya Pradesh*, Delhi, 1992.

²² Smith, B.L. (ed.), *Essays on Gupta culture*, Delhi, 1983.

Devangana Desai in her essay '*Patronage to Lakshmana Temple at Khajuraho*'²³ shows the efforts of the Candella kings to glorify the origin of their dynasty in their inscriptions. She specially puts emphasis on the sculptures of Lakshmana temple at Khajuraho, which clearly depicts the supremacy of orthodox *Brāhmanic* religion over the non-*Vedic* heretical forces. For exploring the possible existence of Vaiṣṇava pilgrimage centres in our region, we shall start with the study of a few major secondary publications.

There are publications on pilgrimage centres like Diana Eck's '*Banaras, the City of Light*'²⁴, Kanwar Lal's '*Holy Cities of India*'²⁵ and '*Sacred Places of Vaiṣṇavism*'²⁶, William Foster (ed.) '*Early Travels in India*'²⁷ and so on.

However none of these works deal with the Vaiṣṇava centres of Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh. S.M. Bharadwaj's '*Hindu Pilgrimage: Places of Pilgrimage*'²⁸ is also mainly concerned with the pilgrimage centres in Garhwal region. Despite it being concentrated on the Garhwal region it provides an insight into the pilgrimage system, its mechanism, circulation and its role in the integration of regional cults into pan Indian cults. Every religion has sacred foci to which men of faith periodically converge. The book can be considered as an all-encompassing book as far as the concepts of '*tīrtha*' and '*tīrthayātrās*' are concerned. The book focuses on the origin and development of the *tīrthas* in the ancient texts and their expansion. It also emphasises on the motives behind the undertaking of tenuous and difficult journey of *tīrthayātrās*. The chief aim of this book is to understand the nature of interactions between the Hindu sacred places of different levels and their pilgrim fields in both the spatial and social dimensions. For a close and introspective look of the involvement of the masses the author examines the caste composition of the pilgrims. Besides, the organisational aspect of the temples and their hierarchy were also scrutinised by the author.

²³ Desai, Devangana, '*Patronage of Lakshmana Temple at Khajuraho*', in B.S. Millar (ed.) *Powers of Art: Patronage in Indian Culture*, New York, 1992.

²⁴ Eck Diana, L., *Banaras: The City Light*, London, 1983.

²⁵ Lal, Kanwar, *Holy Cities of India*, Asia Press, 1961.

²⁶ Lal, Kanwar, *Sacred Places of Vaisnavas*, *Journal of United Provinces Historical Society*, vol. 10, 1937, p. 80.

²⁷ Foster William (ed.), *Early Travels in India*, Oxford University Press, London, 1921.

²⁸ Bharadwaj, S.M., *Hindu Pilgrimage in India: A Study in Cultural Geography*, Berkeley University of California, 1973.

Kunal Chakravarti's '*Religious Processes; The Purāṇas and The Making of a Regional Tradition*'²⁹ mainly deals with the Bengal region based on the evidences of the *Purāṇas*. This is quite introspective book based on the regional tradition of Bengal. The idea of regional tradition was carefully explained and expanded to enrich the knowledge base and the process of assimilation of regional tradition in the context of Bengal.

The concept of regional traditions and their impact on the mainstream religion cannot be complete without the reference of *The Cult of Jagannath and the Regional Tradition of Orissa*.³⁰ It is a comprehensive volume dealing with the rise and development of the cult of Jagannath from a local tribal cult to a pan Indian cult. About the regional traditions, the book observes, 'the various regional traditions--- form not only literally the "central portion" of India's tradition, but also the true melting pot of the local and all India tradition'. It is true that the all India tradition is in fact the compendium of the local traditions in the making at various parts of the country at different stages of development but playing the undeniably important part in the pan Indian traditions. Each part of the country has its own characteristics suiting to its geographical and socio-economic milieu. These characteristics construct and reconstruct a regional tradition, which were subsequently appropriated and assimilated in the all India traditions.

This volume is an anthology of research articles written by members of the Orissa Research Project, sponsored by the German Research Council (DFG), Bonn. The project was a part of the South Asia Interdisciplinary Regional Research Programme at the South Asia Institute of the University of Heidelberg. It attempts a comprehensive study of the origin and development of the Jagannath cult, the temple city and pilgrim centre of Puri and its role in the formation of the regional tradition of Orissa. It is thus a contribution to the study of India's "neglected" regional cults, their sacred places (*tīrthas*), and their religious and socio-economic networks. The sacred places are at the same time a nucleus of the regional tradition as well as the

²⁹ Chakravarti, Kunal, *Religious Processes*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2001.

³⁰ Eschmann, A., Kulke, H. and Tripathi, G.C., *The Cult of Jagannath and the Regional Traditions of Orissa*, Manohar Publications, New Delhi, 1986.

“transmission belts” between the local and the all India tradition.

The regional tradition of Orissa was characterized by a chain of tribal-Hindu continuum. This characteristic feature of Orissa still finds its lasting manifestation in the Jagannath cult of Puri. According to its authors the archaic iconography of the cult images on the one hand and their highest iconology on the other as well as the existence of former tribals (*daitas*) and *Vedic brāhmins* amongst its priests are by no means an antithesis, but a splendid regional synthesis of the local and the all India traditions.

Hermann Kulke in his article, ‘Royal Temple Policy and the Structure of Medieval Hindu Kingdoms’³¹, tries to establish the role of temple making in the development of nuclear areas of sub regional power. Prof. Kulke points to the royal patronage of autochthonous deities as an essential presupposition for the consolidation of the political power and its legitimization in the Hindu tribal zone of Orissa. The process of integration and thereby legitimization was achieved through three measures –

- (i) the royal patronage of the important places of pilgrimage,
- (ii) a systematic and large scale settlement of Brahmins and
- (iii) the construction of new “imperial temples” within the core region of the kingdoms.

The settlement of these *Brāhmaṇas* in and around the nucleus was to give moral strength to the king. These *Brāhmaṇas* in return prepared the lengthy genealogies of the king linking him to some mythical hero or even god (here Arjuna, Bhîma, Yudhiṣṭhira or some form of Viṣṇu). This clearly strengthened the legitimization process of the king and his dynasty. The third and the final stage was the construction of new monumental temples of a hitherto unknown height. Through the construction of these temples the *Rājās* tried to create a new and centralized ritual structure focussed on the new temple and its cult.

This aspect can be useful for the study of the development of the state system in Chhattisgarh, which was originally a tribal belt, and the use of religion (here

³¹ Kulke, Herman, ‘Royal Temple Policy and the Structure of Medieval Hindu Kingdoms’ in Eschmann, A. (ed.), *The Cult of Jagannath and the Regional Tradition. of Orissa*, pp. 125-38.

Vaiṣṇavism) in the process of legitimization of the kings. The Śarabhapurīya kings of early Chhattisgarh took the recourse of Vaiṣṇavism to get legitimacy. Not only the Śarabhapurīya rulers but all the rulers of Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh took the help of temple and *brāhmin* priests to legitimise their rule. The process of construction of high temples so characteristic to the early medieval period was a phenomenon in this region too.

Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh being a predominantly tribal belt passed through the almost similar process of assimilation and integration as observed in the case of Orissa. Being adjacent to Orissa proved to be another advantage to this region. In fact a temple in Chhattisgarh known as Rājivalocana temple is connected to the *Puruṣottama Kṣetra* of Orissa. Probably the presence of a strong state patronized cult in nearby region prevented the Vaiṣṇava temples of Chhattisgarh to acquire an independent identity, that too in the face of lack of royal patronage. Though there were donations made to the Vaiṣṇava temples of this region, they were quite few in number as compared to those given to Śaiva *Ācāryas* and their *maṭhas*. The presence of organisational institution of Mattamayūra cult stole the scene out of the hands of the Vaiṣṇava temples.

Given the kind of disparities existing in different parts of India, detailed regional studies are necessary. Even the different parts of Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh do not experience the same kind of development regarding Vaiṣṇavism.

Thus this study attempts to focus on regional variations and development of Vaiṣṇava pilgrimage centres in Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh over the time span of A.D.600-1300.

II

The present research work also attempts to study the pattern of historical change over a span of time. During the course of my M.Phil research I found that geographical distribution of *Vaiṣṇava* centres did not remain the same between c.A.D. 300-1000. While the Northern and central parts of Madhya Pradesh had many sites showing Vaiṣṇava affiliation, southern Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh are marked by their

absence in the Gupta period. New centres emerged and flourished in Chhattisgarh region from c.A.D. 600-800, while the other parts of Madhya Pradesh does not attest to this development. From c.A.D. 800-1000, once again all the parts of Madhya Pradesh show that Vaiṣṇava affiliated sites more or less evenly distributed.

The last phase of the chronological span covered in my research work i.e. c.A.D. 1000-1300 saw a cluster of Vaiṣṇava sites and inscriptions in the Chhattisgarh region. The Somavamsīs were ruling in this part of the region. Though they called themselves Śaivas³², their inscriptions show that land grants were given to the Vaiṣṇava temple sites.

Besides the distribution Vaiṣṇava centres, the shift in the form of Viṣṇu being worshipped is closely observed in the coming chapters. Earlier phases like the Gupta period and post Gupta period (c.A.D. 600-800) do not attest to the presence of some of the *avatāras* of Viṣṇu like Matsya, Kūrma, while Varāha, and Nṛsimha and Vāmana appear to have been the dominant form of images. As we are approaching towards the end of the first millennium A.D. there emerged a trend towards the worship of the *Caturbhujā* form of Viṣṇu. Other syncretic forms like Harihara images too were found in the Khajuraho temple. The *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, which is roughly dated to 6th century A.D. attests to the *Aṣṭabhujā* form of Viṣṇu according to R.C. Hazra³³. J.N. Banerjea's observation may be remembered in this context that the more deified a God, the more hands are attached to it³⁴. Probably, in this period cult worship of *Viṣṇu* image became more deified and prominent than the *avatāras* of the same. All these are discussed in the subsequent chapters of this research work.

Not only geographical distribution and iconographic evolution, but also the patronage accorded to these centres and change in the form of it with the passage of time are the areas of concern. While in the Gupta period, Gupta rulers remain stick to the symbolical meaning of religious legitimacy³⁵, the Candella rulers of Khajuraho

³² Hiralal, 'Sihwa Stone Inscription of Karnarāja, the Śaka Year 1114', *Epigraphia Indica* (hereafter *EI*), vol. IX, pp. 182-90.

³³ Hazra, R.C., *Studies in the Purāṇic Records on Hindu Rites and Customs*, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1987(reprint), p. 177.

³⁴ Banerjea, J.N., *Development of Hindu Iconography*, Calcutta, 1936.

³⁵ Asher, F.M., 'Historical and Political Allegory in Gupta Art' in Smith (ed.) *Essays on Gupta Culture*, Delhi, 1983, pp. 53-66.

openly patronise Lakṣmaṇa temple. The Pratihāra ruler Bhoja assumed the title of 'Ādivarāha'³⁶. Though the prominence Varāha as a dominant deity of the temple was somewhat relegated to the background it continued to be used by the kings 'as a rescuer of the earth' in their inscriptions, especially when they tried to promote their image as a protector and a rescuer.

The way Vaiṣṇavism affected different segments of the society is an important area to look into for understanding the spread of Vaiṣṇavism. If we move back to the Gupta period, we find a continuous tradition of Vaiṣṇava worship for four generations. The Eran stone pillar inscription of the time of Budhagupta³⁷ refers to *Mahārāja* MātṛViṣṇu with his brother Dhanya Viṣṇu creating a flag staff (*dhvajastambha*) of *Bhagvata* Janārdana. His ancestors are mentioned as IndraViṣṇu, Varuna Viṣṇu and Hari Viṣṇu. Further moving towards Chhattisgarh, I find the engraver or the composer of an inscription often bearing a Vaiṣṇava name. The Śarabhapurīya rulers have often their engravers named as Keśava³⁸. Even in late 12th century and early 13th century, I found a *Sethi* Keśava³⁹ or Nṛsimha⁴⁰ as engraving and composing different inscriptions, while the inscriptions are Śaiva in character. Thus I find a literate class of composers or engravers regularly using the Vaiṣṇava names. And the term 'Sethi' suggests that they were from an affluent section of the society.

III

Emergence of pilgrimage centres or Vaiṣṇava *tīrthas* or of sacred *Kṣetras* will be another important aspect of this study. The Sanskrit word 'Kṣetra' with a particular degree of generality, refers to physical space of all types: field, landed property, enclosed spot of ground etc. However, here 'Kṣetra' has a different connotation, the sacred space or the spiritual space. Only a cluster of *tīrthas* of spiritual significance is given the term 'Kṣetra'. The conception of sacred space found its greatest development in the *Purāṇas*. All spaces are not suitable for sacred performances. The effectiveness of a place depends on its association with gods, sages, ancestors, spirits

³⁶ Majumdar, R.C., 'The Gwalior Prasasti of the Gurjara Pratihara King Bhoja', *EI*, vol. 18, pp. 99-104.

³⁷ Bhandarkar, D.R., 'Eran Stone Inscription of Budhagupta yr. 165', *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum* (hereafter *CII*), *Inscriptions of the Early Gupta Kings*, vol. III, pp. 339-41.

³⁸ Shastri, A.M., 'Mallar Plates of Mahājayarāja, yr. 5', *Inscriptions of the Śarabhapurīyas*, pt. II, p. 15.

³⁹ Hiralal, 'Kanker Plates of Pamparājadeva', *EI*, vol. XI, 1907-08, pp. 166-170.

⁴⁰ Hiralal, 'Sihwa Stone Inscription of Kamaraja', *EI*, vol. XI, 1907-08, pp. 182-90.

and primeval events. And here comes the role of the *Purāṇas*. *Purāṇas* often glorify a particular place; various mythological accounts were associated with it. And soon it developed into a pilgrimage centre. Apart from a distinctive objective i.e. worship of a particular god/goddess, there is a hierarchy and the circuit of the *tīrthas*.

Pilgrimage centres do not emerge in isolation. Devotees are enjoined to go in search of merit, from one site to another to complete the circuit of the pilgrimage. And these *tīrthas* are arranged hierarchically. A major religious centre is often associated with numerous small centres. And the attempt to give *tīrtha* a pan Indian character is often reflected in different *Purāṇas*, which Prof. Kunal Chakravarti calls as “the cultural negotiation implicit in the *Purāṇic* records”.⁴¹

Sometimes a particular *vrata* has to be performed in one site of a region. In this connection, the description of *Puruṣottama tīrtha* of Avanti⁴² in *Skanda Purāṇa's Avanti Kṣetra Māhātmya* is important. It says that at the end of the three years, the *Adhikamāsa* (extra month) appears, when there is no transit of the sun. In the form of *Puruṣottama*, Kṛṣṇa always has the presiding lordship of *Adhimāsa*. The *tīrtha* is in Mahākālavana. Different *vratas* and associated auspicious days are mentioned in this text, which have to be performed in this month in this region. The list of *vratas* performed in this part and as found in various inscriptions of this period is to be prepared to show the prevalent religious practices.

We still have two sacred lakes – *Puruṣottama Sāgara* and *Śola Sāgar* in Avanti region⁴³. People come here during *adhikamāsa* to bathe and offer *pūjā* at the neighbourhood temples.

Another famous *vrata* associated with Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh is the *Satya Nārāyaṇa Vratākathā*⁴⁴. Two versions of the *Satya Nārāyaṇa Kathā* are found in the *Purāṇas*. One of these versions is a part of *Revākhanda* of the *Skanda Purāṇa* and

⁴¹ Chakravarti, Kunal, *Religious Processes*, New Delhi, 2001, p. 32.

⁴² Bhatt, G.P.(ed.), *The Skanda Purāṇa* pt. XII, Book V, *Avantya Khaṇḍa*, Sec.I, *Avanti Kṣetra Māhātmya*, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1997, p. 236-41.

⁴³ Samant, D.K., *Sacred Complex of Ujjain*, New Delhi, 1997, pp. 27-28.

⁴⁴ Kantawala, S.G., 'SatyaNārāyaṇa Kathā and Upabramhana', *Purāṇa* vol. 29, No. 1, 1987, pp. 46-53.

another in *Bhavisya Purāṇa Trtīyabhāga, Dvītīyakhaṇḍa, Adhyāyas 24-29*.⁴⁵

According to the story Śaunaka and other sages assembled in the Naimiśāranya (Nimsar), requested the *Paurānika sūta* to narrate a *vrata*, which fulfils of desires and annuls all pangs, pains, and miseries. And the story goes on, how various people observed the *vrata* and gained prosperity. In the narration of the *Satya Nārāyaṇa kathā* the *Bhavisya Purāṇa* refers to the *Narmadātata*, which tends to suggest that probably the name of this *Kathā* is the Narmada valley. This *Kathā* also illustrates very vividly the social and religious reformist activities conducted by the different members of the four *varnas* i.e. *Brāhmiṇ*, *Kṣatriya*, *Vaiśya* and *Śūdra*. However some of the scholars consider this *Purāṇa* of a later origin.

Vaiṣṇava cult centres were not emerging in isolation. Various other major (like Mahākāla in Ujjain) and minor cults were flourishing in different parts of Madhya Pradesh at the same time. How did *Vaiṣṇava* cult interact with them and in return get influenced by them, will form a part of this research.

IV

Sources for this research work are mainly archaeological, epigraphical and textual (mainly *Purāṇas*). Archaeological evidences and epigraphic materials offer possibilities of studying them which are more chronologically accurate and region specific. They thus can be used for analysing regional patterns over a period of time. The inscriptions are also excellent sources indicating the extent of royal patronage enjoyed by the religion. *Vaiṣṇava* epithets like *Paramabhāgavata* / *Parama Vaiṣṇava* and *Vaiṣṇava* names of persons show the inclination towards this religion. And the localities, in which the land donations are made to the particular temples, show the extent of the influence enjoyed by the presiding deity of the temple. Sometimes *Vaiṣṇava vratas* and auspicious days are mentioned in the inscriptions, which are very useful in estimating the nature of *Vaiṣṇava* religious practices prevalent in that part of the region.

⁴⁵ *Bhavisya MahāPurāṇa*, published by Venkateshvar Steam Press, Bombay, 1959.

Archaeological remains show the iconographic evolution of the deity. They reveal the particular form of Viṣṇu worshipped in different parts of Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh. For example, Eran in Sagar district in Madhya Pradesh has a series of Varāha sculptures right from the Gupta period down to the 8th century A.D. An image of goddess Vārāhī,⁴⁶ the female counterpart of god Varāha, is found from this place, belonging to 8th century A.D.

Purāṇas are excellent sources in describing the mythological accounts associated with a particular site. This indicates the attempt of the authors of the *Purāṇas* to glorify the site. They also describe the rituals and pilgrimage network associated with the site. However there is a problem in determining the chronology and spatial specificity of the text. These texts were written over a long period of time, often spanning centuries. They often refer to vague and mythological dates, which can't be used for historical purposes. Sometimes they represent famous religious centres to places of their interest just to further glorify the religious importance of the place concerned. In spite of all these problems, some of the places are well recognised in ancient India like Avantī, Revākhaṇḍa, Mahākāla, Narmada River, Ujjain, Padmāvati, Kuśasthalī, Amarakantaka, etc.

Of all the *Purāṇas*, *Skanda Purāṇa* is the biggest text. In it, many pages are devoted to pilgrimage centres and their *māhātmyas*, which may have been crucial in determining the importance of the site in ancient period. This *Purāṇa* along with others like, *Varāha Purāṇa*, *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, *Agṇi Purāṇa* will be extensively used in this research work.

Other texts such as *Prabodhacandrodaya* written by a court poet of Candella rulers may prove helpful in showing the Vaiṣṇava affiliation and effort to project its superiority over the non-*Vedic* heretical sects like Kāpālikas, Kālāmukhas, etc. These texts may also throw a ray of light on the prevalent social conditions and the faith among the local people. *Sthala Purāṇas* associated with particular sites may also prove beneficial.

⁴⁶ Bajpai, K.D., *Sagar Through the Ages*, Sagar, 1964.

Gazetteers and census reports will also be used for determining locations of present day Vaiṣṇava sites and festivals associated with it. They may provide the ethnographic evidence for the Vaiṣṇava centres of antiquity.

V

This research work, apart from analysis of primary written sources, is supplemented by field trips to various Vaiṣṇava sites / pilgrimage centres and museums of Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh. Some of the centres like Mahākāla in Ujjain are famous for Śiva worship. However, there are small Vaiṣṇava centres in its close vicinity. They might have been popular in ancient times, as is reflected in some parts of *Avantī mähātmya* of *Skanda Purāṇa*. One such site is *Ankapāda Kṣetra*⁴⁷ in Avantī. The story of the survival of Sāndīpanī's son is associated with this site. Not only this, but there is a circuit of pilgrimages mentioned in this text including the sites – *Śankhin*, *Viśvarupa*, *Govinda* and *Ankapāda*. It is till the most important place for the Vaisnavites in Ujjain.⁴⁸ It is known as the *Ankapaṭa Kṣetra*. Probably the lord Kṛṣṇa used to clear the slates in the tank here and so the name *Ankapaṭa* (according to D. K. Samant). During the Kumbha Melā, the Vaiṣṇava ascetics camp at this place. Of the various temples of this site, one is the Sāndīpanī *āśrama* (the teacher of Kṛṣṇa).

My objective while visiting these places was to collect the materials and to enquire into the present day significance of these sites.

Fieldwork also includes collection of the materials regarding the varieties, iconographic features and find spots of Vaiṣṇava sculptures. It required visit to various museums – Gwalior, Jhansi, Chanderi, Raipur and Khajuraho Museums, apart from other collections.

VI

My thesis is divided into six chapters. The first chapter is of introductory nature dealing with main issues and historiography. There is a section giving reasons why I

⁴⁷ *Skanda Purāṇa*, pt. XII, Book V, Sec. I, pp. 90-99.

⁴⁸ Samanta, D.K., *Sacred complex of Ujjain*, pp. 26-27.

selected Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh as an area of my study. This specifically deals with the history of Vaiṣṇava religion in Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh before my period (c.A.D. 600-1300). There is a classification of the sources, which I used during my study and fieldwork. A part of this chapter deals with the major issues and approaches used in the present work.

The chronological span c.A.D. 600-1300 of the present work is divided into two chapters the second chapter (c.A.D. 600-1000) and the third (c.A.D. 1000-1300).

These two chapters try to identify, list and locate the Vaiṣṇava centres in the respective periods. They take into account the iconography, icons and the monumental and dimensional aspects of the temple. These are mainly based on archaeological and epigraphical evidences. The regional variety of Vaiṣṇavism emerging from this exercise is taken into consideration. The rationale behind the division of the period of this research work into two chronological parts is to get a clear picture of the development of Vaiṣṇavism and its various aspects. The first period corresponding to 600-1000 A.D. saw the rise of Vaiṣṇavism in various parts of Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh. The local and imperial dynasties patronised this religion and new centres of Vaiṣṇava sect come up. This was the period when the Mattamayūra sect was gaining ground in this region. But the influence of this sect was still to come up.

In the next period 1000-1300 A.D., the decline of Vaiṣṇavism in Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh set in. It was the period of the rise and expansion of the Mattamayūra sect in this region, which stole the lustre out of Vaiṣṇava sect. Though there were centres of Vaiṣṇava worship, but the decline of it was largely visible all over this region:

Apart from this aspect the first period saw the gradual disappearance of the incarnations of Viṣṇu from the sanctum sanctorum of the Vaiṣṇava temple in favour of *Caturbhujā* form of Viṣṇu. In the next period the reference of incarnations of Viṣṇu as the main deity of temple is almost non-existent. However we do not have an idea if the incarnations of Viṣṇu are kept in the *garbhagraha* in the Gupta period or even earlier. The evidence in support or against of this hypothesis is not available.

Whatever temples of Gupta period have been found mostly represents the above-mentioned incarnations standing on a platform. Some of the forms of Viṣṇu are represented in caves like Udaigiri cave temples as will be shown later. Even the Daśāvātāra temple do not testifies to this idea. The sanctum of the temple is empty.

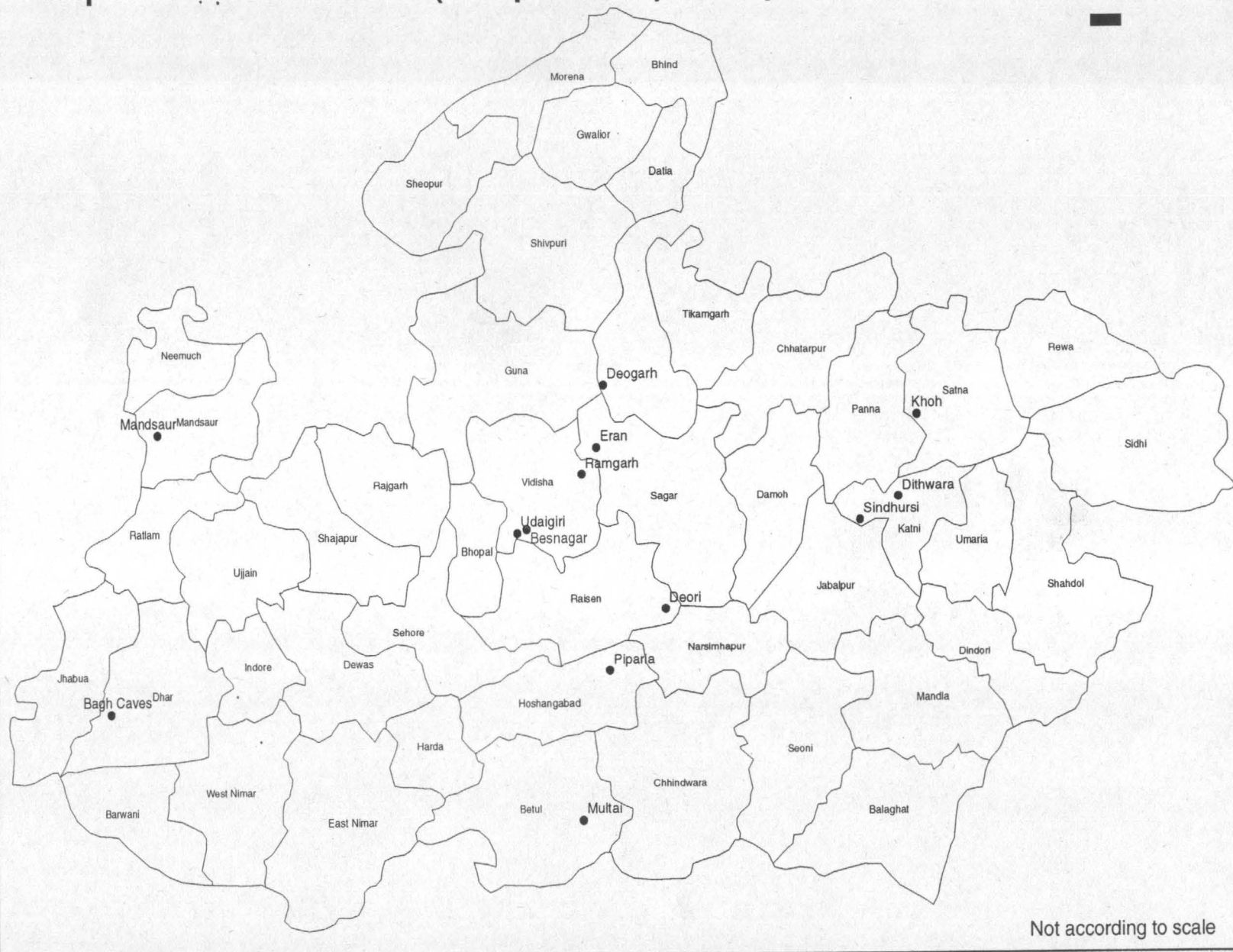
However the distinct change in the popular form of worship of Viṣṇu prompted me to bifurcate the time span of my research work into two parts. Its rise and decline too played a crucial part in dividing the chronological span into two chapters.

The fourth chapter describes the major cult centres and their pilgrimages. The study of pilgrimage centres of Vaiṣṇava sect in Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh is the important aspect of this study. The archaeological materials, epigraphical reports and the *paurāṇic* evidences and also field report, gazetteers and census reports- all of them will be utilized to identify these cult centres. The evolutionary aspect of the cult and the circuits of pilgrimages is specially dealt with. The mythological accounts of different *Purāṇas* glorifying particular cults or cult centres are quite helpful in determining the place of that cult/centre in the pan-Indian panorama. The associated *vratas* and rituals are also mentioned.

The fifth chapter deals with the interaction of Vaiṣṇavism with other cults. It will study the distribution pattern of all the Vaiṣṇava centres and the nature of relationships, which they developed with each other and with cults over the period of time. It enquires into reasons why there is an appearance or disappearance or replacement of a cult by another cult. This also tries to find out the shifts in the distribution pattern. Whether the change of dynasty or discontinuity of the patronage leads to the shift forms another aspect of this study. The nature of interaction varies from the cooperation and assimilation to conflict and subordination.

The sixth chapter is an attempt to sum up the distribution pattern of Vaiṣṇava cult centres, pilgrimage, patronage, regional variety and possible implications of all the above. It briefly presents the historical nature of Vaiṣṇava pilgrimage centres and Vaiṣṇavism itself in Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh in the time span of c.A.D. 600-1300.

Map I: Vaiṣṇava Centres (Temple Sites) in Gupta and Pre Gupta period



VI

The chronological span of the present work starts with the exit of the Imperial Guptas from the political scene. But any work regarding the spread or evolution of Vaiṣṇava sites in Madhya Pradesh has to begin with the Heliodorous Pillar Inscription, the earliest evidence of Vāsudeva in inscription. D.R. Bhandarkar⁴⁹ in his excavation report of Besnagar gives a detail description of the site and archaeological findings. As we all know the pillar records the erection of this pillar as a *Garuḍadhvaja* in honour of the God Vāsudeva by Heliodorous, son of Dion, a Greek ambassador from the Indo-Bactrian king Antialkidas of Taxila to the court of local prince Bhāgabhadra. Heliodorous in this inscription calls himself *Bhāgavata*- "*Heliodorena Bhāgavatena*". He refers to Vāsudeva as the god of gods and uses the term *Garuḍa* standard.

Both these terms are significant, keeping in view of two facts: first, supremacy of Vāsudeva over other gods and second, *Garuḍa* standard as being the symbol of the same.

Close beside this pillar are found three retaining walls of an old platform on which the old shrine of the Vāsudeva may have been erected. This place may well have been a complex of Vāsudeva temples. In this connection, Bhandarkar refers to still another stump of a column, which was lying uncared for in one of the narrow streets of Vidisha. It contains a small inscription which says-

“Bhāgavata, son of Gotamī, caused a *Garuḍa* standard to be made in connection with the best temple of Bhāgavat (*Bhāgavato prāsādottamasa Garuḍa-dhvaja kārata....*), when *Mahārāja* Bhāgavata had been crowned twelve years.”

Next he refers to an image, originally with four hands found from this site by Mr. Lake. The features, the crown and the headdress behind it, the peculiar earrings, the necklace, the breast ornament and lower dress of this image are exactly like that of the figure of Viṣṇu carved in the *veraṇḍah* of Udaigiri. But this figure is round. Hence

⁴⁹ Bhandarkar, *ASIAR*, 1914-15, pp. 66-81.

Bhandarkar⁵⁰ assumes that this is the image of Garuḍa, which crowned the Kham-baba column (Heliodorous Pillar). He also suggests that the Heliodorous Pillar was crowned by this image of Garuḍa by the Gupta ruler (Candragupta) when he came here.

Towards the south of the pillar is found the foundation of an old dwelling with fragments of tiles, pottery, nails, tanks and a domestic mortar. This may be the house occupied by the family of the worshippers who were in charge of the Vāsudeva temple.

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The site has a history of habitation from the pre-Maurya period. The remnants of an irrigation canal prove it. Another site⁵¹ excavated in close vicinity of the pathway leading from Udaigiri to Kham-baba yields an old *stūpa* and two *kunḍas*, of which one resembles, the *yonī-kunḍa*. *Brāhmaṇas* offer sacrifices in these *kunḍas*. Two drains and one large hall are also found. Fragments of potteries and 26 clay pieces bearing impression of seals are found from the site. Bhandarkar⁵² calls the structure the spacious hall constructed for the accommodation of large gathering of the people who must have come for the sacrifices for which the *kunḍas* were laid on the ground. Further down he found a flat stone with *Bhikhuniyā* (by the nun) incised on it in characters of the Maurya or Śunga age. He says that a *stūpa* of Maurya or Śunga period was originally standing here, which was later on occupied for the dwelling purpose.

With such an ancient record of habitation, the site was bound to become a big religious centre. This fact is visible in the seals and sealings found from the site. All the seals are affixed to the document, which came from outside the *yajñasālā* or sacrificial hall. A sealing contains the legend – ‘*Timitra-dātrisya(sa)-ho tā-p(o)-tā mamtra-sajana*’.⁵³ It means ‘the donor Timitra accompanied by *hotā*, *potā*, by hymn-kinsmen and’. Timitra or Demetrius was the *dāta* or the *yajamāna* who instituted the sacrifice. A mould of Indo-Bactrian type steatite stone and another bearing the effigy of Dragon and name Huvilāsyā show the involvement of three foreign people

⁵⁰ Bhandarkar, *ASIAR*, 1913-14. pp. 195-96.

⁵¹ Bhandarkar, *ASIAR*, 1914-15, pp. 12-18.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ *ibid*, p.77.



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in *Brāhmaṇic* sacrifices.

In the area adjoining the Kham-baba pillar to its southwest, remains of one of the earliest temples have been exposed by M.D. Khare.⁵⁴ A huge retaining wall made of rubble stones has been found whom he calls the enclosure of the Vāsudeva temple. The superstructure of the temple was of perishable material. Probably timber was used in the plinth. The age of its construction cannot be ascertained. The excavations only point to the fact that it was finally destroyed by the heavy floods in the river Betwa. After the first damage to the temple the site was raised artificially by making an embankment of earth. According to Khare, the desire to give eminence to the temple and also to secure it from the floods seems to have dictated the building of the temple on a high platform. It was during this period that the Greek ambassador Heliodorous from Taxila visited Vidisha. That more than one pillar has been erected and is in one alignment (north-south) outside the eastern rubble wall is indicated by traces of several pits at uniform distances with a similar filling as that of Heliodorous pillar. At least three more pillars are excavated on the plain in the trenches on the eastern side of the mound.

Occurrence of two northern black polished shreds and six square copper punch marked coins from the deposit of period I indicates that the temple is dated to the end of 3rd century B.C.⁵⁵

Thus we have traces of Vaiṣṇava temple as early as 3rd century B.C. With such a background, Madhya Pradesh presents an interesting field of research for the further development and expansion of Vaiṣṇavism.

VII

The next important period in the field of rise and development of Vaiṣṇavism commences with the rise of the Guptas. R.G. Bhandarkar characterized this period as

⁵⁴ Khare, M.D., 'Discovery of a Visnu Temple near the Heliodorous Pillar, Besnagar, District Vidisha (Madhya Pradesh)', *Lalit Kala*, No. 13, (1967), pp. 21-27.

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, p.27.

the era of 'vigorous *Brāhmaṇic* revival and renovation'.⁵⁶ This '*Brāhmaṇic* revival' was reflected to a great extent in the spread and development of Vaiṣṇavism too. However Gupta period Vaiṣṇavism cannot be said as *Brāhmaṇic* revival in proper sense. This revival was traced to the period of Śuṅgas. According to Prof. D.R. Bhandarkar⁵⁷, the popular deities of Gupta period- Viṣṇu, Śiva and Sūrya cannot be said as *Brāhmaṇic* deities in true sense. Gupta period inscriptions do not attach priests to the temples of these deities. Hence the idea of *Brāhmaṇic* revival has some limitations as far as Gupta period is concerned. But the revival of Bhāgavatism was a reality.

The great rulers of the Gupta dynasty - Candragupta I, Samudragupta, Candragupta II, Kumāragupta and Skandagupta dominate the history of India of the fourth and fifth century A.D. All the Gupta rulers are too well known to require an introduction. They came into power after the rule of the Kuṣānas over North India. Apart from the patronage enjoyed by Vaiṣṇavism in this period, it is also noted for the connection of the royalty with the religion and the legitimation derived out of it by the rulers.

There were several Vaiṣṇava centres that sprang up and flourished in this period. I will start from the caves of Udaigiri, situated within the radius of a dozen miles around the modern town of Vidisha. These caves have a unique distinction of being the only site, which can be personally associated with a Gupta monarch.⁵⁸ These caves are twenty in number. According to Harle⁵⁹, the images in these caves are fairly evenly distributed between the Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava pantheon. However quantitatively as well as qualitatively (size and structural evolution), Vaiṣṇava sculptures are in a dominant position.

Cave 6 contains an inscription of the time of Candragupta II.⁶⁰ The inscription records the excavation of the cave as a religious benefaction (*deya-dharmah*) to that of god by Sanakānika, son of Viṣṇudāsa and son's son of *Mahārāja* Chaggalaga. Chaggalaga is

⁵⁶ Bhandarkar, R.G., 'A Peep into Early History of India', *Journal of The Bombay Branch of Royal Asiatic Society*, vol. XXV, (1944), p. 356.

⁵⁷ Bhandarkar, D.R., *Inscriptions of the Early Gupta Kings*, vol. III, p. 123.

⁵⁸ Harle, J.C., *Gupta Sculpture : Indian Sculptures of Fourth to Sixth Century A.D.*, New Delhi, 1996, p. 9.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Bhandarkar, D.R., 'Udaigiri Cave Inscription of Chandragupta II, yr.82', *CII*, vol. III, pp. 242-244.

not a familiar Indian name. The person concerned may be of foreign origin, whose son Viṣṇudāsa (slave of Viṣṇu) converted to Vaiṣṇava faith, as it appears from his name. Though this inscription does not name the god, the figure of four armed Viṣṇu just below the inscription points to the fact that the cave was dedicated to Viṣṇu. Four-armed Viṣṇu is shown standing in *samapāda mudrā* (stiff legged) with his lower hands placed on Gadādevī and Cakrapuruṣa. Other sculptures of this cave include figure of twelve-armed goddess and a crudely carved image of Ganeśa.⁶¹

Cave 5 contains the famous Varāha incarnation scene.⁶² The Varāha is shown rescuing the goddess Pṛthvī(earth) from the depths of the ocean. This sculpture is most widely known among the Udaigiri sculptures partly due to its size and partly due to the allegorical meaning it is supposed to convey. No other bas-relief panel in India is as large as this figure, roughly measuring 7m×8m.⁶³ The Boar is sculpted in human form with an animal head, holding the human figure of Pṛthvī. Śeṣa with a canopy of thirteen hoods in two layers is in worshipful attitude. The god of ocean is represented by bottom figure of the sidewalls with a turban like headdress. In effective contrast to the dynamic personality of Varāha are the rows of small figures of amazed spectators, almost static and carved in low relief. These represent sages and demigods. On the top left row is represented Śiva, Brahmā and Agni. Two large figures on the proper right are shown worshipping the Boar. The first is a serpent king. Behind him, holding a lotus stalk in his right hand is a large kneeling figure of a man. The large human figure may well be the donor, one of the local *Mahārājas* mentioned in the inscriptions at the caves. According to Harle, since this panel far outranks in size, all the other sculptures, this figure can be Candragupta himself.⁶⁴

The image seems to serve as a remarkable allegory for the unification of the empire under Candragupta II, according to F.M. Asher.⁶⁵ Saving earth from the dismal state of affairs at the end of a cosmic age offers a comparison between the cosmic feats of an incarnation of Viṣṇu and the human achievements Candragupta II. This allegory gets credence from the fact that large part of India including Malwa (area in which

⁶¹ Patil, D.R., *Monuments of Udaigiri Hill*, Gwalior, 1948, pp. 33-37.

⁶² Ibid, pp. 33-37.

⁶³ Harle, J.C., *Gupta Sculpture*, p. 11.

⁶⁴ Ibid, p. 35.

⁶⁵ Asher, F.M., 'Historical and Political Allegory in Gupta Art', in B.L. Smith(ed.), *Essays on Gupta Culture*, Delhi, 1983, pp. 53-66.

Udaigiri is located) remained under the authority of Western *Kṣatrapas* before Candragupta's victory over it. The political allegory of the Varāha panel lies in the projection of the Gupta ruler as mighty conqueror. In consonance with this fact, sages standing in worshipful posture may recall local kings like the patron of relief who paid homage to the paramount Gupta sovereign. Asher found resemblance between the costume of the sages and that of the Kuṣāna rulers.⁶⁶ Further merging of Ganga and Yamuna into a mighty ocean may symbolise Samudragupta unifying disparate states of India into one central authority.

Royal connection of this Varāha image is strengthened by another Udaigiri inscription of Candragupta II.⁶⁷ It records the construction of cave 7 and its dedication to god Śambhu by Saba Vīrasena, a resident of Pāṭaliputra. The emperor was present there.

Other notable Vaiṣṇava images of these caves include a colossal statue of Śeṣaśāyī Viṣṇu in cave no 3.⁶⁸ This is one of the earliest images of the Śeṣaśāyī Viṣṇu. Cave 19 contains the *Amṛtamanthana* scene with the panel of *Navagrahas*.⁶⁹ This cave is now occupied by lots of *śivaliṅgas*. According to the archaeologist Narayan Rao, this cave was originally dedicated to some form of Viṣṇu as is evident from the *Amṛtamanthana* scene over the entrance of the cave. It might have been that at a later stage in historical period it was occupied by the people of Śaiva sects. There are other images of Jaina *tīrthankaras*, Kārttikeya and other deities.

Eran in Sagar district has yielded the earliest known Vaiṣṇava inscription of the Gupta period in Madhya Pradesh. A stone inscription of Samudragupta is found to the west of a ruined temple of Varāha.⁷⁰ It refers to something that was erected at Arikīṇā (Eran). The name of this object is lost. The lintel of this temple contains the figure of Viṣṇu on Garuḍa, which shows that the temple was dedicated to Viṣṇu. According to the inscription, to show his devotion to the feet of Acyuta (*Acyuta-pāda-pīṭha*), the king set up the temple of Janārdana here.⁷¹ The enshrined statue of Viṣṇu has four arms with one of the left hands resting on his hip.

⁶⁶ Asher, F.M., 'Historical and Political Allegory in Gupta Art', pp. 53-66.

⁶⁷ Bhandarkar, D.R., 'Udaigiri Cave Inscription of Chandragupta II', *CII*, vol. III, pp. 255-57.

⁶⁸ Patil, D.R., *Monuments of Udaigiri Hill*, pp. 38-39.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 40-41.

⁷⁰ Bhandarkar, D.R., 'Eran Stone Inscription of Samudragupta', *CII*, vol. III, pp. 220-24.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

The king is said to have left the kings like Pṛthu and Rāghava back in generosity (giving gold). There seems to be emphasis on the wealth and status of the god as it refers to Samudragupta who is equal to Dhanada (Kubera) and Antaka in joy and wrath respectively. At another place the king is said to have paid the purchase price of the goddess of wealth by his manliness and prowess. Samudragupta seems to have conquered many territories and accumulated wealth. This fact is corroborated by the well-known Allahabad Pillar Inscription of Samudragupta.

Another stone pillar of the time of Budhagupta (dated c.A.D. 485-86)⁷² is found engraved on a red sandstone column further north of the above-mentioned temple. The column stands about half a mile to the west of the village Eran. This column seems to be specially connected with a double temple. The inscription refers to the erection of a *dhvaja stambha* (flag-staff) of Janārdana by *Mahārāja* Mātṛviṣṇu and his younger brother Dhanyaviṣṇu for the religious merit of his parents. The capital of the pillar of the time of Budhagupta is surmounted by a huge square abacus with a pair of lions on each side.⁷³ Above the abacus a large *cakra* is surmounting the stand against this stand is a pair of two armed figures standing back to back. It may be the Garuḍa. Another such wheel is found from Pawaya (Gwalior), as a crowning figure of a monumental pillar.⁷⁴

The younger brother of *Mahārāja* Mātṛviṣṇu is named as Dhanyaviṣṇu. He was the son of Hariviṣṇu, grandson of Varunaviṣṇu and great grandson of Indraviṣṇu. There is a reference of a family probably adhering to worship of Viṣṇu as is indicated by their names. *Mahārāja* Mātṛviṣṇu is described as the head of the *Maitrāyaṇīya* School of the *Yajurveda* and performed sacrifices-

*Sva-karm-ābhiratasya kratu-yāji(nah) adhita-svādhyāyasya
vipr-arser=Mmaitrāyaṇīya-vṛṣabhasya.*⁷⁵

Since *Mahārāja* Mātṛviṣṇu belongs to the *Maitrāyaṇīya Upaniṣad*, its influence is evident clearly in all the inscriptions of this region. A passage in *Maitrāyaṇīya Upaniṣad* foreshadows the eventual merging of the two deities namely, Viṣṇu and

⁷² Bhandarkar, D.R., 'Eran Stone Pillar Inscription of Budhagupta, yr. 165', *CII*, vol. III, pp. 339-41.

⁷³ Harle, J.C., *Gupta Sculpture*, p. 12.

⁷⁴ *Ibid*, p.13.

⁷⁵ Bhandarkar, D.R., 'Eran Stone Pillar Inscription of Budhagupta, yr. 165', *CII*, vol. III, p. 340, line 5.

Nārāyaṇa. It identifies the soul (Ātman) with several gods enumerated as Īśāna, Śambhu, Bhava, Rudra, Prajāpati, Viśvasrj, Hiranyagarbha, Satya, Prāna, Hamsa, Śāstā, Acyuta, Viṣṇu and Nārāyaṇa.⁷⁶ Besides the order of the gods suggests that Viṣṇu and Nārāyaṇa are closely associated. The name of Viṣṇu as Acyuta appears in the previous inscription found from this area. *Mahārāja* Mātṛviṣṇu seems to have inculcated the tenets of this *Upaniṣad* and played a crucial part in the worship of this form of Viṣṇu in his area.

Besides this reference to the *Bhāgavata* family of Mātṛviṣṇu, this inscription is also noted for the reference of the *Caturbhujā* form of Viṣṇu. The inscription starts with the obeisance to Viṣṇu, who is four armed- whose couch is the extensive waters of the four oceans; who is the sole cause of continuance, production and destruction, etc. of the universe; and (whose) ensign is Garuḍa-

Jayati vibhuś = catur-bhujaś = catur-arnnava-vipula-salila-paryyaṅkaḥ
*Jagataḥ sthity = utpattinya (y-aika)-hetur = Ggaruḍa-ketuḥ.*⁷⁷

This inscription identifies the *nidrālu* form of god which connects it to the *Puruṣa* Nārāyaṇa of the *Puruṣa-sūkta* hymn according to Prof. D. R. Bhandarkar.⁷⁸ Besides Viṣṇu is also associated with Garuḍa. In *Rgveda* (X, 149.3), there is mention of Savitri's strong pinioned (suparna) Garutman who obeyed his law forever. Since Viṣṇu is a solar god this association of Garuḍa with Viṣṇu is a development from the *Rgvedic* period.

F.M. Asher found the significance of this wheel beyond the customary personification of the god's weapon.⁷⁹ He recalls the notion attached to the *Cakravartin*, the age-old ideal king whose very name means wheel-turner, extending his righteous rule to the four quarters. The reigning monarch is to be seen as the righteous universal monarch.

An anthropomorphic Boar incarnation of Viṣṇu is brought from the ruins near the

⁷⁶ Quoted by Suvira Jaiswal in *Origin and development of Vaisnavism* (200B.C.-500A.D.), p. 49, *Maitri Upaniṣad*, Cowell's ed., VII.7. For Acyuta as an epithet of Visnu in this *Upaniṣad*, see VI.23; and VI.38.

⁷⁷ Bhandarkar, D.R., 'Eran Stone Pillar Inscription of Budhagupta, yr. 165', *CII*, vol. III, p. 340, lines 1-2.

⁷⁸ Bhandarkar, D.R., *Inscriptions of the Early Gupta Kings*, *CII*, vol. III, pp. 126.

⁷⁹ Asher, F.M., 'Historical and Political Allegory in Gupta Art', pp. 60-61.

pillar of Budhagupta.⁸⁰ On flat surface beneath the left foot, a short inscription in two lines in Gupta characters is found-

“*Sri maheśvara-dattasya varāha-dattasya*”

i.e. the joint gift of Maheśvara Datta and Varāha Datta. It was venerated by Maheśvaradatta who could be a devotee of Śiva as indicated by his name. The other person can be called as the devotee of Varāha. These two persons could have been considered by their respective families as the gifts of lord Śiva and lord Varāha. Even now a days there is a tradition of naming the child after the god to whose (supposed) gift, it is considered. Though the Varāha has been identified with Viṣṇu in Gupta era, it was worshipped by people of other sects too. This also refers to the prevalence of the god Varāha in this region.

Eran Stone Inscription of Toramāna⁸¹ is found from the same place. The inscription is inscribed on the chest of a colossal red stone statue of a boar. It is recorded by DhanyaViṣṇu, the younger brother of *Mahārāja* MātṛViṣṇu, known from Budhagupta inscription. It extols the image of Varāha and calls him as the protector of the world, the god Nārāyaṇa (*jagata pāṛāyanasya Nārāyaṇasya...*).

Toramāna, the Huna chieftain, who came from Punjab, overthrew the Guptas from this area and established himself as the ruler of Malwa in Central India. MātṛViṣṇu and others who were feudatory of the Guptas accepted the supremacy of the Hunas.

The inscription starts with describing the various deeds of Varāha, and immediately after that follows a description of the strength of Toramāna and his family. Perhaps Hunas were conscious of their foreign origin and felt a need to assert their sovereignty through this image. Thus, according to Asher, this Varāha image serves as a visual metaphor and Varāha's acts as allegory for Toramāna's usurpation of authority in Eran.⁸²

One more inscription from Eran deserves mention. Eran stone pillar inscription of

⁸⁰ Harle, J.C., *Gupta Sculpture*, p. 35.

⁸¹ Fleet, J.F., 'Eran Stone Boar Inscription of Toramana', *CII*, vol. III, Varanasi, 1970, pp. 158-61.

⁸² Asher, F.M., 'Historical and Political Allegory in Gupta Art', pp. 57-58.

Bhānugupta⁸³ is found from this place. It is a small pillar, afterwards converted into a *linga* or phallic emblem of Śiva, which stands under some tall trees near the left bank of Bīnā, about half a mile to south-east of Eran. The pillar is sixteen sided. The upper most part of the pillar is octagonal. The faces of this part of pillar contain the sculptures of men and women, who are probably intended for Goparāja and his wife and friends mentioned in the inscription. The inscription does not refer to reign of any particular king but mentions one Bhānugupta who, though he may not have been a sovereign, was last of the contemporary scion of the Gupta family. It is dated in the year one hundred and ninety one (510-11 A.D.), on the seventh lunar day of the dark fortnight of the month of Śrāvana (July-August). It is a non-sectarian inscription.

The object of the inscription is to record that, in the company of Bhānugupta, who was a great ruler, his chieftain or noble named Goparāja came to Eran and fought a battle with the Maitras. Goparāja was killed and his wife accompanied him, by cremating herself on her funeral pyre apparently near the place where the pillar was set up. The father of the feudatory chief Goparāja is described as Mādhava. He is also described as the daughter's son of Śarabha king. There are two facts, which seem pertinent from this description. First that this family could be devoted to Viṣṇu (judging by their names) and secondly, king Śarabha was related to this chief who too may have had some influence of Vaiṣṇavism on him. Later on we see that the scion of this king established Śarabhapurīya dynasty in ancient Chhattisgarh, which was Vaiṣṇava in belief.

Eran has a complex of temples. It has four dilapidated east facing temples assignable to 5th-6th century A.D.⁸⁴ The northern most Nṛsimha temple is the earliest shrine at the site. Images of GajaLakṣmī and Vaiṣṇava *Pratihāras* are also found here. Immediately to the south of Nṛsimha temple is a shrine with two cells. To the south of this shrine is the Viṣṇu temple. This is a great piece of sculpture to whom the collection of shrines and relics are dedicated.⁸⁵

One of the important centres in Western Malwa from which evidence relating to

⁸³ Bhandarkar, D.R., 'Eran stone pillar inscription of Bhanugupta, yr. 191', *CII*, vol. III, pp. 352-54..

⁸⁴ Meister, W. Michael and Dhaky, M.A., *Encyclopedia of Indian Temple Architecture, North India: Foundation of North Indian Style*, New Delhi, 1989, pp. 18-56.

⁸⁵ *ASIAR*, 1923-24, PP. 29-30.

Vaiṣṇavism is available is Mandasor. Located in the northwest corner of Madhya Pradesh, Mandasor has a number of inscriptions dedicated to Vaiṣṇava deities. The earliest Gupta inscription from this area is that of Naravarman, a feudatory prince of Candragupta II.⁸⁶ A shrine of Kṛṣṇa adjoining the orchard is situated from where the inscription is found. It is dated in A.D. 405-06. The inscription starts with obeisance to thousand headed *Puruṣa* whose soul is boundless and who is sleeping on the waters of bed like four oceans-

*Sahaśra-śirase tasmai puruṣāya = āmit-ātmane
Catus-samudra-paryyaṅka-toya-nidrālave namaḥ*⁸⁷

Prof. D.R. Bhandarkar says that the first verse of the inscription reminds us of the *Puruṣa-sūkta* hymn of *Rgveda* (X, 90), which opens with *sahasra-śirase-puruṣaḥ*. The second half of the verse reminds of Manu (I, 10), where it is told: “The waters are called *nārāḥ*; the waters are indeed the offspring of Nara; as they were his first residence (*āyana*), he is already remembered as *Nārāyaṇa*”. Thus in the verse in the question, *Nārāyaṇa* is identified with *Puruṣa*. The composite deity called as *Puruṣa-Nārāyaṇa*.

From the smaller fragment of the inscription it appears that there was a shrine of Kṛṣṇa adjoining an orchard and that it was this orchard, which was apparently given by Satya-

*Nānā-vṛkso-latā-gulma-sampra(yukta)
Dhanyo bhavatu mangalyaḥ pu(tra)-(pauṭra-samanvitah)
Kṛṣṇena = āddhyusita-tāva(t).*⁸⁸

This verse connects *Gopālā-Kṛṣṇa* with *Vāsudeva Kṛṣṇa*. Thus *Viṣṇu* of the Gupta period is the vedic *Puruṣa-Nārāyaṇa* and *Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa* welded into one. At another place, it refers to *Vāsudeva (Vāsudevam jagad-vāsam)* whose abode is the world, who is inscrutable, unborn and all pervading.

The grant has been given on the festival of Indra approved *Kṛṣṇa*. It alludes to the *Śeṣaśāyī Viṣṇu*. It shows the subordination of *Vedic* deity *Indra* to *Kṛṣṇa*. Of the four

⁸⁶ Bhandarkar, D.R., ‘Mandasor Inscription of Naravarman, the Kṛta Year 461’, *CII*, vol. III, pp.261-66.

⁸⁷ Ibid, p. 264, v. 1.

⁸⁸ Ibid, p. 265, lines. 3-5..

months of the rainy season, Āśvina and Kārttika belong to Kṛṣṇa while Śrāvaṇa and Bhādrapada belong to Indra as I have explained later in this work. The grant was made on the fifth day of the bright fortnight of Āśvina (verse 5).

Kṛṣṇa of this verse is Gopāla-Kṛṣṇa. The association of Kṛṣṇa with cows and cowherds is a well-known fact. The ancient texts speak of the story of Kṛṣṇa lifting up mountain Govardhana to afford refuge to the cowherds from the havoc caused by deluge sent by Indra. Kṛṣṇa refused to perform the festival of Indra and forbade other cowherds too. It was described in the *Purāṇas* that thereby he proved himself to be *Gavām=Indraḥ* and came therefore known as Govinda.⁸⁹

The inscription of the feudatory chief Bandhuvarman⁹⁰ of the same dynasty refers to the construction and rebuilding of a Sun temple at the request of the guild of silk cloth weavers who migrated from Lāṭa. Mandasor or more properly Daśor, from where the inscription is found, is the chief town of the Mandasor district of Madhya Pradesh. The inscription is engraved on a sand stone slab, which was originally built into the flight of the steps leading to the shrine of Mahādeva on the river, and consequently to the Mahādeva ghāt called after that god. It is obvious that after the decay or destruction of the temple the stone slab was used into the flight of the steps.

Verse 3 of this inscription mentions Kumāragupta (I) as the suzerain, and, verses 24-29, Bandhuvarman, son of Viśvavarman as the ruler of Daśapura, during whose reigns the religious benefaction was carried out, namely the building of the temple. It refers to two dates- first, A.D. 437-38 of the construction of the temple and second, A.D. 473-74 of its repair.

Towards the end the engraver hails that the temple lasts as long as a garland of full bloom lotus flower clings to the shoulders of *Śāraṅgīn* (one who holds bow and arrows, a form of *Viṣṇu*)-

*Vikaṭa-kamala-matam=aiśa-saktam ca Śāraṅgī bhavanam.*⁹¹

⁸⁹ Bhandarkar, D.R., *Inscriptions of the Early Gupta Kings*, CII, vol. III, p. 127.

⁹⁰ Bhandarkar, D.R., 'Mandasor Inscription of Kumāragupta I and Bandhuvarman, Kṛta Year 493', CII, vol. III, pp. 322-32.

⁹¹ Bhandarkar, D.R., 'Mandasor Inscription of Kumāragupta I and Bandhuvarman, Kṛta Year 493', CII, vol. III, verse 43.

Elsewhere it is also compared to the *Kaustubha* jewel of *Śāraṅgīn-*

*Śaṣin-eva nabho vimalam kaustubha-manin-eva sāraṅgāno vakṣah.*⁹²

Thus the Sun temple is close to the chest of *Śāraṅgīn*. It may be an attempt to link the sun worship of migrated silk weavers to the faith to which they (the Guptas) adhered.

Another inscription of Mandasor of a later date begins with the creed formula of the *Bhāgavatas* (*jītam bhāgavata*) and praising Viṣṇu who is said to move about in a chariot of Garuḍa (*Garuḍa=mad rathayāyīn*).⁹³ The inscription records the excavation of a tank by *Mahārāja* Gaurī. It is probable that he was ruling over Daśapura (Mandasor) after the invasion of the Hunas. Mahavayanis, as the new dynasty was called, probably established themselves as a result of extirpation of Gupta dynasty after Huna invasion.

The above-mentioned inscription relates the Sun worship with that of worship of Viṣṇu. Viṣṇu is considered as a solar deity. There remains a kind of soft tone towards each other in the inscriptions referring to Sun or Viṣṇu worship. Indore copper plate inscription of Skandagupta⁹⁴ further emphasises this fact. The inscription refers to the reign of the Imperial Gupta king Skandagupta, whose officer, the *Viśayapati* Śarvanāga, was administering *Antarvedi*. It probably denotes some doab touching the Ganges, which was not far removed from *Indrapura* and of which it could be the head quarters. It is dated in words, in the year one hundred and forty six (464-65 A.D.); and in the month of Phālguna. The object of this inscription is to record a perpetual endowment, by a *Brāhmaṇa* named Devaviṣṇu, for the purpose of maintaining a lamp in a temple of the Sun at Indrapura i.e modern Indore. Though the inscription refers to the Doab region, it throws light on the amicable relationship between Viṣṇu worship and Sun worship in the Gupta period. The Vaiṣṇava *Brāhmaṇa* was associated with the Sun worship.

The description of *Gupta* period temples of *Vaiṣṇava* faith cannot be complete

⁹² Ibid, verse 42.

⁹³ Sircar, D.C., 'Mandasor Fragmentary Inscription', *EI*, vol. 30, pp. 127-32.

⁹⁴ Bhandarkar, D.R., 'Indor Copper Plate Inscription of Skandagupta: year 146', *CII*, vol. III, pp. 308-312.

without the mention of Daśāvātara temple at Deogarh.⁹⁵ Although located in⁹⁶ the Lalitpur district of present day Uttar Pradesh, the site of Deogarh is brought under the purview of the present discussion because of its geographical proximity to the sites in Madhya Pradesh and because of its significant position in the history of temple based Vaiṣṇavism. Deogarh Daśāvātara temple is the earliest known temple of *Pañcāyatana* type. That temple is dedicated to Viṣṇu is clear from the image of four-armed Viṣṇu on the *lalāṭabimba* (door lintel) of the door way as the central figure. Other figures of the doorway include those of Nṛsimha, Ganga-Yamuna and the Vaiṣṇava *Pratihāras* (Jaya and Vijaya). The image in the *garbhagrha* is missing.

The story of *Gajendra-mokṣa*⁹⁷ appears for the first time in a niche at Deogarh. Here the four armed Viṣṇu seated on Garuḍa in his liberator image is helping the elephant standing in the lotus pond.

Another figure shows the presence of Nara-Nārāyaṇa and Gajalakṣmī scenes.⁹⁸ The southern niche contains the famous *Anantaśāyī* Viṣṇu⁹⁹ with all its paraphernalia and subordinate gods and goddesses. Nārāyaṇa is sleeping on seven-hooded cosmic serpent. Lakṣmī is sitting at the feet of Viṣṇu with Bhūdevī holding a *camara* behind him. The upper part of the panel represents Brahmā seated on a full-blown lotus. He is not connected with the navel of the Viṣṇu, presumably emerging from behind the coils of cosmic serpent. Flanking him to the right are the figures of Indra on Airāvata holding *vajra* in his right hand, Kārttikeya on peacock and towards left Hara-Gaurī on the Nandī bull.

Besides these, the panels on the plinth consist of well known *Rāmāyaṇa* and Kṛṣṇa – *līlā* scenes.¹⁰⁰ While Rāma is everywhere depicted as an adult, Kṛṣṇa is depicted as a child. Rāma redeeming Ahalyā in his liberator form, Rāma-Lakṣmaṇa fighting with *rākṣasas* in Daṇḍaka forest, Rāvaṇa stealing Sītā are some of these scenes. Kṛṣṇa's story starts with his birth and revolves round in *Vraja* along with Nanda, Yaśodā, *Gopīs* (cowherd women) and killing of Kaṁsa (in Mathura).

⁹⁵ Vats, M.S., 'Gupta Temple at Deogarh', *Memoirs Archaeological Survey of India* (hereafter *MASI*), No.70

⁹⁶ *Ibid*, p. 20.

⁹⁷ *Ibid*, pp. 13-14.

⁹⁸ *Ibid*, p. 14.

⁹⁹ *Ibid*, pp. 14-15.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid*, pp. 16-20.

Among the incarnations of Viṣṇu, Vāmana and Nṛsimha are present.¹⁰¹ A projection on the plinth contains the story of Sunda and Upasunda.¹⁰² Some later Gupta temples contain images of Viṣṇu, *Kṛṣṇa* and the scenes of Daṇḍaka forest, fight of Bali and Sugrīva, monkeys etc.¹⁰³

This temple also contains a Gupta period inscription in two lines-

*Śrī Govinda Keśavapurāsvāmīpādīya bhagavata Govindasya edam nāma.*¹⁰⁴

It refers to *Bhagavata* Govinda, a votary of Lord Keśavapura. Lord Keśavapura may refer to the image of Viṣṇu installed in the temple under the name of Keśavapurāsvāmī. It may have been the presiding deity of Deogarh, then called Keśavapura. The Vaiṣṇava leaning of the region is well reflected in the name of the place itself, Keśavapura.

The reference to the name 'Govinda' deserves some comments. As I have shown earlier the name 'Govinda' is related to Gopāla-Kṛṣṇa. The other identification of Govinda comes from *Śāntiparvan* (Chap.342, verse 68) of the *Mahābhārata*. It says: "When in days of yore the earth became submerged in the waters and lost to the view, I found her out and raised from the depths of the ocean. For this reason the deities adored me by the name of Govinda". In other words, *gām(=pṛthivim) vindat = īti Govindah*. The same story is given in *Ādiparvan* of the *Mahābhārata*.¹⁰⁵

This temple, though called as Daśāvātara temple, nowhere shows the Matsya, Kūrma, Buddha or Kalki avatāra. In fact, no Gupta period sculptures or inscriptions are of the above four incarnations of Viṣṇu.

A Varāha temple in ruined condition is found in the midst of a thick jungle to the southwest of the fort Kīrti Durga.¹⁰⁶ The sanctum contains the anthropomorphic image of Varāha as the deity on a pedestal in the centre. Varāha has a plain circular

¹⁰¹ Ibid, pp. 20-21.

¹⁰² Ibid, p. 24.

¹⁰³ Ibid, pp. 25-27.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, p. 29.

¹⁰⁵ Bhandarkar, D.R., *Inscriptions of the Early Gupta Kings*, CII, vol. III, pp. 127.

¹⁰⁶ Banerjee, N.R., 'New Light on Gupta Temple at Deogarh', *Journal of Asiatic Society* (hereafter *JAS*), vol. V, No.1,2 (1963), pp. 37-49.

halo at its back, suggestive of its early date. He wears a *vanamālā* and is attended by Śrīdevī standing to his right. Ganga and Yamuna are shown at the base of the jambs but without their *vāhanas*. On the south a panel of *gajendra-mokṣa* shows Viṣṇu sitting on a winged Garuda and dealing with the elephant below. *Nara-Nārāyaṇa* panel is on the western wall. The third panel is that of *Anantaśāyī* Viṣṇu with Lakṣmī at the feet. Other images include fight of Madhu-Kaiṭabha, Viṣṇu, Śiva-Pārvatī, etc. Banerjee gives a date of early *Gupta* period to the temple, earlier than the Daśāvātāra temple.

Ramgarh village, about 4-5 miles west of Pathari district in Vidisha, has a group of rock carvings of Viṣṇu and his incarnations.¹⁰⁷ An early *Gupta* date has been assigned to these carvings. These represent a series of Vaiṣṇava themes- Varāha, Nṛsimha and Trivikrama. An image of Mahiṣāsūramardini has also been found. Other images include seated Gaṇeśa, Varāha, Viṣṇu, Trivikrama, Nṛsimha, etc.

Some of the Gupta period sculptures and temples are found in and around Jabalpur. Devri is a Gupta period site situated on the south bank of the river Ken in Jabalpur district. The Vāmana stone temple locally known as Marhia is located here.¹⁰⁸ Vaiṣṇava deities like Nṛsimha and Hayagrīva are presented in central panel. The lintel of the temple contains the image of *Garudāsīna* Viṣṇu. The sanctum of the temple is empty. In all probability the image of Vāmana lying outside the sanctum is the main deity of this temple. On the basis of the style of the sculpture, Pramod Chandra assigns a date towards the end of 5th century A.D.

Another small temple site depicting Viṣṇu worship in the form of Hayagrīva is found in Jabalpur district.¹⁰⁹ It contains the figures of Bhūvarāha, Hayagrīva, Kṛṣṇa and four-armed Viṣṇu.

Sindursi is a site located about 1km west from Bahuri Band, perched on the Kaimur Hills in Katni district. This region was on the main original route between Kausambi

¹⁰⁷ Berkson Carmel, 'Some New Finds at Ramgarh Hill, Vidisha District', *Artibus Asiae* (hereafter *AA*), vol. XL, (1978), pp. 215-32.

¹⁰⁸ Chandra Pramod, 'A Vamana Temple at Marhia and Some Reflections on Gupta Architecture', *AA*, vol. 32, (1970), pp. 124-45.

¹⁰⁹ Meister and Dhaky, *Encyclopedia of Indian Temple Architecture; Foundation of North Indian Style*, p. 18.

and Tripuri in 3rd century B.C.¹¹⁰ Gupta period rock cut sculptures (dated 5th century A.D.) are found here locally known as Jogini Mai. The sculptures include *Śeṣasāyī* Viṣṇu, *Sthānaka* Viṣṇu, Nṛsimha, Mahiṣāsūramardini, etc.

Similarly two sculptures of Viṣṇu and his Garuḍa were discovered by C.B. Trivedi at Dithwara, which lies about 15km northeast of Katni in Katni district.¹¹¹

Baghelkhand area in Madhya Pradesh shows Vaiṣṇava sites. The earliest known inscription is found from Supia, of the time of Skandagupta.¹¹² Dated Gupta era yr.141 (460-61 A.D.), it records the construction of the *bala-yaṣṭi* (memorial pillar) which was a *gotra-sālikā* (family stone) by *Varga-gāmikā* for increase of his own merit, glory and fame. Skandagupta in this inscription is described as Rāma in righteous conduct- '*Rāma tulyo dharma*'.

This area came under the rule of Parivrājaka *Mahārājas*. *Mahārāja* Jayanātha of the same dynasty granted the village *Dhavaṣandikā* for the purpose of resources for the temple of god Viṣṇu under the name of the *Bhagavat*¹¹³-

Bhagavat pādevyaḥ devsgrahāro tisṛstaḥ ebhiscattra pratiṣṭhaḥ...

The Khoh copper plate inscription of *Mahārāja* Sarvanātha¹¹⁴, issued from *Ucchakalpa* records the grant of village *Āśramaka* (north bank of river Tamāsā) for the purpose of a shrine of Viṣṇu under the title of *Bhagavata* and a shrine of Āditya. The plate on which inscription is inscribed contains a relief on a countermark surface at the top, Garuḍa, the vehicle of Viṣṇu. It may be the influence of the *Gupta* rulers who augmented the spread of Vaiṣṇavism in this area.

Gupta period Vaiṣṇavism can be reflected in the Bagh copper plate inscriptions. Bagh caves are found about one kilometre from the modern town of Bagh in Dhar district. This area (called as Valkhā in inscriptions) was probably one of the forest kingdoms

¹¹⁰ Bajpai, K.D., 'Rock Cut Sculptures at Sindursi, District Jabalpur, Madhya Pradesh', *Prachya Pratibha*,

Journal of Prachya Niketan, vol. IV, pt. I (1976), pp. 42-46.

¹¹¹ Trivedi, C.B., 'Newly Discovered Gupta Sculptures from Madhya Pradesh', *Purātattva*, No.11, (1979-80), pp. 150-51.

¹¹² Bhandarkar, D.R., 'Supia Pillar Inscription of the Time of Skandagupta', *CII*, vol. III, pp. 317-19.

¹¹³ Fleet, J.F., 'Khoh Copper Plate Inscription of Mahārāja Jayanātha', *CII*, vol. III, pp. 121-25.

¹¹⁴ Fleet, J.F., 'Khoh Copper Plate Inscription of Mahārāja Sarvanātha', *CII*, vol. III, pp. 125-29.

of the Allahabad Praśasti of Samudragupta.¹¹⁵ This place has 27 copper plates issued by different rulers. Of them Bhulunda, the first ruler makes grants in the name of Viṣṇu. Grant of Bhulunda of year 47¹¹⁶ records the grant of five villages on the southern bank of Narmada, namely Ukkāripadraka, Dubhodikā, Bhetunkalika, Sajjarhradaka and Karmānta. The inscription is dated in Gupta era and belongs to 4th-5th century A.D. Here *Mahārāja* Bhulunda is described as the devotee of Nārāyaṇa (*svāmiNārāyaṇa dāsasya mahārāja bhulundasya* – line I). It also praises Viṣṇu in his various forms.

Another inscription of the same ruler¹¹⁷ records the donation of the village Pippalojjhara on the southern bank of Narmada to the temple of Nārāyaṇa for the sake of the performance of the *bali*, *caru* and *sattra* rites. The deity of the temple is called as Nārāyaṇadeva. After a year the ruler granted the god Nārāyaṇa a plot of wasteland along with other donations.¹¹⁸

The ruler Bhulunda might have been the tribal king who acknowledged the lordship of Samudragupta and accepted his faith too. The Gupta period Bhāgāvatism has an impact on this area.

Apart from the *Gupta* inscriptions, the only Vākāṭaka inscription found from Madhya Pradesh is in Betul district. Pattana, a village in Multai tehsil of Betul district has yielded five copper plates of Pravarasena II.¹¹⁹ All the grants were issued from Pravarapura, the capital and at the victorious office of justice. The grant is made for the maintenance of a *sattra* or charitable hall in honour of the foot prints (*Pādamūla*) of *Mahāpuruṣaḥ*. The grant was made at the request of Nārāyaṇarāja.

Thus the period of Gupta rule saw the flourishing of various Vaiṣṇava centres in Madhya Pradesh. This provided the basis for the further development of Vaiṣṇavism in this region. Among the various incarnations Varāha, Nṛsimha and Vāmana were the

¹¹⁵ Ramesh, K.V. and Tewari, S.P., *A Copper Plate Hoard of the Gupta Period from Bagh, Madhya Pradesh*, New Delhi, 1990, p. viii.

¹¹⁶ Ramesh, K.V. and Tewari, S.P., 'Grant of Bhulunda of year 47', *A Copper Plate Hoard of the Gupta Period from Bagh*, pp. 1-3.

¹¹⁷ Ibid, Grant of Bhulunda of year 50, pp. 6-8.

¹¹⁸ Ibid, Grant of Bhulunda of year 51, pp. 8-10.

¹¹⁹ Mirashi, V.V., 'Pattana Plates of Pravarasena II', *EJ*, vol. 23, pp. 81-88.

prominent deities. Prof. Bhandarkar says that it was only in *Gupta* period that Boar came to be identified with Viṣṇu.¹²⁰ This may have been a local cult deity of the Malwa region, which was incorporated and identified as the incarnation of Viṣṇu.

Besides he also emphasizes that only Varāha and Vāmana incarnations were being worshipped in the Gupta era. However this does not seem to be so. Numerous images of Nṛsimha and temples in which he appears in various places namely Eran, Deogarh and others testify to the existence of Nṛsimha as an incarnation of Viṣṇu. *Jalaśāyī* image of Viṣṇu was also quite popular among the rulers and the subjects of the Gupta era as evidenced by the reference to *Anantaśāyī* Viṣṇu in various inscriptions and his representation in sculptures. The *Caturbhūja* form of Viṣṇu though known to the period was not much in worship.

The temple sites of the Gupta period were more or less concentrated in northern and north-eastern Madhya Pradesh. Of them the sites of northern Madhya Pradesh were basically connected with the rulers of the Gupta Empire. The sites like Khoh in Satna district, Mandasor in Mandasaur district and Bagh caves in Dhar district were results of patronage from the feudatories of the Gupta rulers. In Khoh and Bagh caves there were clear references to the donations made to the other deities, which could have been objects of local worship before the advent of the Guptas. Thus the donations made to these deities continued. However, some donations to the Vaiṣṇava deities started along side the earlier deities. Gupta period Vaiṣṇavism was more or less guided by the Gupta rulers.

The geographical distribution of the sites showing Vaiṣṇava temples, inscriptions or sculptures are quite uneven. Area around Vidisha and Jabalpur can be called as the hub of Vaiṣṇava centres. Deogarh temple in Lalitpur district could be called as the associated site of the Vidisha region. Mandasaur and the adjoining areas were another sites. Rest of the Vaiṣṇava sites of Madhya Pradesh include Devri, Piparia and Bagh caves. These were isolated sites. And among them Bagh caves cannot be called as proper Vaiṣṇava centre for it has the temples of other sects equal in number if not more. Thus more or less northern and northeastern Madhya Pradesh remained under

¹²⁰ Bhandarkar, D.R., *Inscriptions of the Early Gupta Kings*, CII, vol. III, pp. 126.

the influence of Vaiṣṇavism, while Chhattisgarh remained aloof of this development at least for this period. Of the Vaiṣṇava centres of Madhya Pradesh, Gupta rulers were directly associated with Vidisha and Udaigiri region. Other areas were under the rule of the feudatories of the Guptas who were responsible for the rise and development of Vaiṣṇavism there.

The cult of Viṣṇu or Vaiṣṇavism emerged from this period and assimilated many different sects into its pantheon with the period of time. The chapters of this research work deal with the evolution of the sect and its transformation from a local to the cult-based religion through post Gupta centuries.

CHAPTER – 2

VAIṢṆAVA CENTRES IN MADHYA PRADESH AND CHHATTISGARH [c.A.D. 600-1000]

Events in history are basically dealt as phenomena. Every important development starts in the fertile ground of socio-economic background of the period occasionally coupled with the process of rise and development of state system. Vaiṣṇavism or Vaiṣṇava religion has a long history in Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh. It dates back to the 2nd century B.C. as has been described in the previous chapter. The process of rise and development often works simultaneously in different parts. However, two segments of a society or two regions of a state need not also be at the same level of development. Thus, Vaiṣṇavism did have different forms and channels of development in different parts of erstwhile Madhya Pradesh.

The immediate background for the study of Vaiṣṇavism in the region is represented by the period of Gupta rulers. The Gupta rulers adopted the title of '*Parama-Bhāgavata*' in their inscriptions¹. Among the Gupta period temples, Daśāvātara temple at Deogarh is one of the earliest Vaiṣṇava temples in India. However, the term 'Vaiṣṇava' was for the first time used in the inscriptions of Pāṇḍuvāmsīn rulers. The 'Vaiṣṇavism' of this period was different from the 'Bhāgavatism' of the Guptas. This will be more evident as I explain the different forms and the centres of Vaiṣṇavism in the succeeding pages.

In the first half of this period (c.A.D.600-1000), Chhattisgarh region of erstwhile Madhya Pradesh saw the advent of Vaiṣṇavism. Strikingly enough I do not find any inscription or new monuments relating to Viṣṇu and his incarnations in northern Madhya Pradesh.

This period is noticeable for the rise of local dynasties in Chhattisgarh region. The

¹ Bhandarkar, D.R., 'Udayagiri Cave Inscription of Chandragupta II, The Year 82', *CII*, Vol – III, pp. 242-244.

mighty Gupta Empire had vanished and the rule of the Imperial Pratihāras was still to come. The minor powers were trying to establish independent state system in the Chhattisgarh region. Keeping in view the small territory and limited resources of these dynasties, it is quite possible that they would not resort to large scale making of big temples or monuments. This seems to have been the case initially, for big temple complexes came to be built only towards the end of 7th century A.D. or beginning of 8th century A.D.

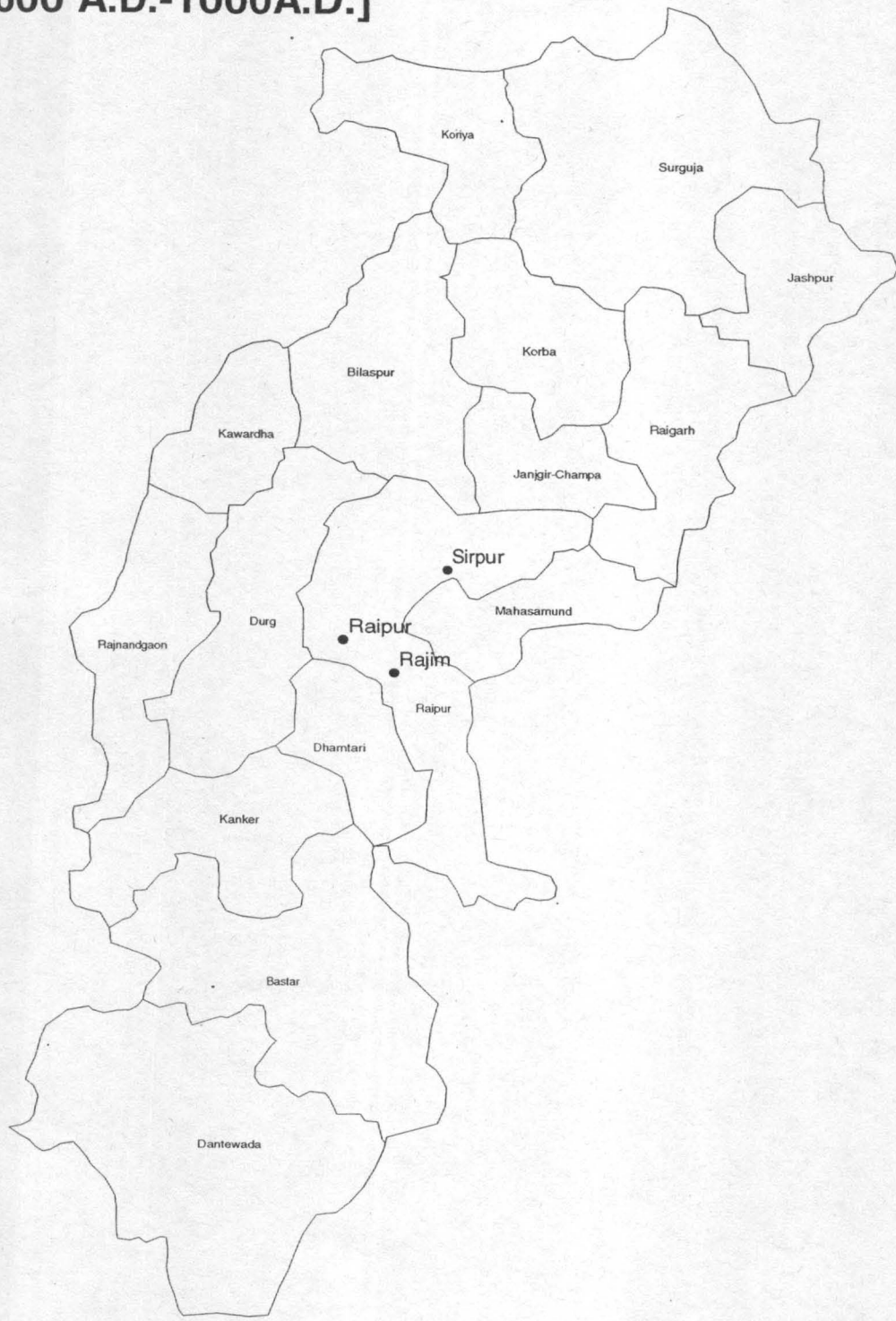
The history of any event cannot be traced in the domains of the political development alone. But the main sources for the history of ancient period are inscriptions and archaeological materials. The texts being subject to several interpolations cannot be relied upon solely. The inscriptions are mostly written by the orders of the kings and their officials. Quite a few inscriptions are written by the local people. Even they refer to the reign of one or the other king. As regards the archaeological material, for this research temples and sculptures are the main source for construction of history of Vaiṣṇavism. Mostly those archaeological materials survive the onslaught of time, which were preserved by the kings or the richer section of the societies. This does not mean that history of Vaiṣṇavism is only linked to the affluent section of the society, but we do not have ample evidence for the other parts. Seeing the scanty evidence I have chosen to start with the inscriptions and archaeological materials related to different dynasties. With the help of these I have tried to locate the social links of Vaiṣṇavism and their implications.

I

The political history of the Chhattisgarh region is in darkness before the rise of the Śarabhapurīyas about the close of the 5th century A.D. or early 6th century A.D. The Śarabhapurīya rulers were Vaiṣṇavas. They took the epithet of '*Parama Bhāgavata*' in their inscriptions². The Śarabhapurīyas were the feudatory of the Guptas. The first ruler of the dynasty is described as meditating on the foot of the *Paramabhāṭṭāraka* (Gupta ruler). Samudragupta defeated the Kośala ruler Mahendra during his campaign. After some time Śarabhapurīya rulers rose on the horizon. They put

² Shastri, A.M., 'Kurud Plates of Narendra, Year 21', Inscriptions of the Śarabhapurīyas, Pāṇḍuvamśins Somavamśins, pt. II., Delhi 1995, pp. 8-11

Map II: Vaisnava Centres (Temple Sites) in Chhattisgarh [600 A.D.-1000A.D.]



Not according to scale

Gajalakṣmī symbol on their inscriptions. The seal³ of the inscriptions shows Lakṣmī standing on a lotus, with two elephants pouring water over her from pitchers held in their upraised trunks.

The very first inscription of Śarabhapurīya dynasty discovered from Chhattisgarh (Pipradula, in Raipur district) refers to the reign of Narendra dated in the regnal year 3, *Mārgaśīrsa* 10⁴. It refers to the first half of 6th century A.D. The king is not taking any *Bhāgavata* epithet. The village Śarkarāpadraka in the Nandapura *bhoga* was donated by Rāhudeva to the *brāhmin Svāmipa*. The name of *bhoga* depicts some kind of Vaiṣṇava affiliation. This name might have been in vogue during the reign of the Guptas, which was retained. The names of the *viṣayas* are retained in spite of the change of the dynasties in the region. The grant was issued from Śarabhapura, which was evidently the capital of the region at that time.

The next inscription found from Kurud⁵ in Raipur district calls the king as *Paramabhāgavata* showing the Vaiṣṇava affiliation of the dynasty. The village Keśavaka was donated to the *brāhmin Śaṅkhasvāmin*, the son of Bhāśrutasvāmin. It was already donated by *Paramabhātārakapāda* (referring to Gupta ruler to whom the Śarabhapurīyas owed allegiance initially). The palm leaf charter was burnt in a conflagration in the donee's house. King Narendra after ascertaining by the official investigation that the village was in continuous possession of the donee, confirmed the grant by means of a copper plate charter. Here the name of the donee and the village points towards Vaiṣṇava affiliation. The village Keśavaka has been identified with modern village of Keshwa on the bank of nullah known as Keshawnala, some 5.5 miles to south east of Mahasamund, the headquarter of the tehsil of the same name in Raipur district. This village falls into Cullādasīma *bhoga*, which has been identified with modern village Charoda, about 7 miles east of Keshaw.

The same village was donated by king Sudevarāja to *karaṇika brāhmin Kansippasvāmin*. According to Sirpur Plates of Mahāsudevarāja⁶ the purpose of the

³ Ibid, 'Pipradula Plates of Narendra, Year 3', pp. 5-7.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid, 'Kurud Plates of Narendra, Yr.24', pp. 8-11.

⁶ Shastri, A.M., 'Sirpur Plates of Mahāsudevarāja, year 7', *Inscriptions of the Śarabhapurīyas*, pt.II, pp.35-38.

inscription is to record the grant of the village mentioned above formerly made by one Nanna in favour of Kansippasvāmin. The inscription belongs to later half of 6th century A.D. Sudevarāja is the grandson of Narendra.

Here I would like to throw some light on the form of Vaiṣṇavism prevalent in the region. As I have shown elsewhere the region has some sort of acquaintance with Vaiṣṇavism during Gupta rule. There was already a temple of Śrīdharasvāmin at Vaṭapadra in the Raipur district. Rawan Plates of Narendra⁷ refer to the donation of village Torāmaka in the Mantarāja *Bhukti* to the temple of the said god for meeting the expenditure of the *bali-caru* offerings and the free feeding house, which was evidently attached to the temple. Since the ruler Narendra is the first known ruler of the Śarabhapurīya dynasty, this temple might have been created by Gupta rulers or their feudatories. As a free feeding house was attached to it, it may have had some sphere of influence, which encouraged the ruler to donate land for it. This is the only known Vaiṣṇava temple of the Śarabhapurīya period. The prefix 'Śrī' shows that some form of Laksmī or Śrī dominated Vaiṣṇava religion was prevalent in the region. Even the engraver of the Pipardula plates of Narendra⁸ is named as Śrīdatta. The name of the village donated is Nandapura, again showing the influence of Vaiṣṇava religion, till that time called as *Bhāgavatism*.

Dhamtari plates of Sudevarāja⁹ record the donation of the village Khalapadraka in the Ḍakarī *bhoga* to one Mādhavasvāmin. Dhamtari is a village in Raipur district in Chhattisgarh. Khalapadraka has been identified as modern Khalari in Raipur district. The name Mādhavasvāmin denotes the presence of Vaiṣṇavas in this place as early as later half of 6th century A.D.

The presence of Vaiṣṇava *brāhmins* and donation of land grants to them is evident in Raigadh district of Chhattisgarh too. Kautaval plates of Sudevarāja¹⁰ records the donation of village Sunikā situated in Hakirī *bhoga* in favour of *Bhaṭṭa* Purandarāsvāmin. The place names have yet to be identified but they do fall in

⁷ Ibid, 'Rawan Plates of Narendra', pp.12-13.

⁸ Ibid, 'Pipardula plates of Narendra', pp.5-7.

⁹ Ibid, 'Dhamtari Plates of Sudevarāja, year 3', pp.32-34.

¹⁰ Shastri, A.M., 'Kautaval Plates of Sudevarāja, year 7', *Inscriptions of the Śarabhapurīyas*, pt.II, pp.43-45.

Raigadh district, the provenance of the copper plates.

The same *Brāhmiṇ* was granted village Āsādhaka in Tuṇḍarāṣṭra in Thakurdiya plates of Pravararāja¹¹, son and successor of Sudevarāja. This indicates the importance of this Vaiṣṇava *Brāhmiṇ* in Raigadh district of Chhattisgarh. Thakurdiya also falls in the same district. Tuṇḍarāṣṭra has been identified with modern village Tunda near Sheorinarayan, 25-30 miles from Thakurdiya, the find spot of the inscription.

Sarangarh plates of Sudevarāja¹² record the confirmation by the king to the grant of village Cullaṇḍaraka included in the Tuṇḍaraka *bhukti* by the chief queen and other members of the royal family. It was granted to a number of *brāhmaṇas* namely Bhāskaravāmin, Prabhākaravāmin, Babbarisvāmin, Botasvāmin, Dattasvāmin, Viṣṇusvāmin, Phalgusvāmin, Kirttisvāmin and Śaṅkaravāmin. Of all the *brāhmaṇas* mentioned here, the name of Viṣṇusvāmin figures in early two grants given by Jayarāja¹³ and Sudevarāja¹⁴ in Kalahandi district of Orissa. This *brāhmiṇ* may have risen into prominence over a period of time and acquired land in Sarangarh in Raigadh district along with lands in Kalahandi district of Orissa. However the presence of Śaiva *brāhmiṇ* was also noted in the name of Śaṅkaravāmin.

Bilaspur district has the inscription referring to the presence of Vaiṣṇavism in this region: Mallar plates of Pravararāja¹⁵ records the grant of village Mitragrāmaka in Śankhacakra *bhoga* to one *brāhmiṇ* named as Śubhacandrasvāmin, the son of Dāmodaragana. It was given in the same year as that of Thakurdiya grant. The name of the *bhoga* and that of the father of the donee points towards the Vaiṣṇava affiliation of the same. The two places village and the district could not be identified satisfactorily, but they in all likelihood fall into the Bilaspur district.

Lastly the presence of Vaiṣṇava *brāhmiṇs* in Chhattisgarh can also be deduced from a stray Śarabhapurīya grant found from Rajim in Raipur district. It is a fragmentary grant recording the donation of village Dandacakra to *Dikṣita* Anantasvāmin. Date

¹¹ Shastri, A.M., 'Thakurdiya Plates of Pravarāja, year 3', *Inscriptions of the Śarabhapurīyas*, pp.53-55.

¹² Ibid, 'Sarangarh Plates of Sudevarāja', pp.50-52.

¹³ Ibid, 'Amgura Plates of Jayarāja, year 3', pp.14-16.

¹⁴ Ibid, 'Nahna Plates of Sudevarāja, year 2', pp.28-31.

¹⁵ Shastri, A.M., 'Mallar Plates of Pravarāja, year 3', *Inscriptions of the Śarabhapurīyas*, pt.II pp.56-58.

and name of the king is lost. But it is certainly later than Mallar plates of Jayarāja. So it can be placed in later half of 6th century A.D. The name of the *brāhmiṇ* points to his Vaiṣṇava affiliation.

Thus the Śarabhapurīya rulers used Vaiṣṇava symbols and donated lands to Vaiṣṇava *brāhmiṇs* though there was no dearth of donation of lands to Śaiva *brāhmiṇs* by any means. Sometimes the place/village is named after the name of the Viṣṇu like 'Keśavaka'¹⁶ in Kurud plates of Narendra and 'Śaṅkhacakrabhoga'¹⁷ in Mallar Plates of Pravararāja. Apart from these symbols of Vaiṣṇava affiliation, Śarabhapurīya rulers refrain from large-scale construction of temples. It was left for the coming dynasties.

This period in Chhattisgarh region may be called as period of symbolic Vaiṣṇavism. In place of making large-scale temples the adherence to Vaiṣṇavism was restricted to adoption of Vaiṣṇava symbols on inscriptions and Vaiṣṇava names of villages, *viśayas* and people.

The engravers of the inscriptions were invariably *Suvarnakāras* or the *Akṣaśālikas*. Mallar Plates of Mahājayarāja¹⁸ provide the first reference, in the Chhattisgarh region, which depicts Acalasiṃha as the engraver. In a previous plate he has been mentioned as *suvarnakāra*. And this inscription onwards a special line was added, which continued till the Pāṇḍuvamśin rule.

“Agnera patyam prathamam suvarnam bhūrvvaiṣṇavi sūryasūtāśca gāvah.

Lokāstraya stena bhavantti dattāḥ.

*Ya kāñcanaṃ gāñca mahiñca dadyā diti”*¹⁹

Fleet²⁰ gives the translation of this text as: “Gold is the first offspring of fire; the earth belongs to (the god) Viṣṇu; and cows are the daughters of the sun; therefore the three worlds are given by him who gives gold, a cow and land”.

¹⁶ Ibid, 'Kurud Plates of Narendra, Yr.24', p. 10.

¹⁷ Ibid, 'Mallar Plates of Pravararāja, Yr. 3', pp. 56-58.

¹⁸ Ibid, 'Mallar Plates of Mahājayarāja', pp. 17-19.

¹⁹ Ibid, v.4.

²⁰ Fleet, J.F., 'Arang Copper Plate Inscription of the Raja Maha Jayaraja', *CII*, Vol. III, p.195, lines 17-18.

This line became the guiding formulae for the future inscriptions. This might have been the liberty the engravers initially took to explain the merit of protecting donation.

The purpose of emphasizing this aspect is to make it clear that goldsmiths were influential social groups during this period. However it is quite erroneous to suggest that *suvarnakāras* or the goldsmiths were *bhāgavatas* as nowhere do they show their religious affinity not even in their names. When the Pāṇḍuvarṁśins took over the reigns from the Śarabhapurīyas, the practice of keeping goldsmiths as engravers was continued. However towards the reign of Śivagupta Bālāditya, when the ruler declared himself in unequivocal terms as *Paramamāheśvara*, this practice was dropped. Not only the engravers came from a different occupational category but they took Śaiva names as well. This will be depicted further in the chapter.

After a brief interval of the *Amarārya-kula*²¹ in Chhattisgarh region, the Pāṇḍuvarṁśins occupied the territory. They too had goldsmiths as their engravers. However these rulers called themselves as '*Paramamāheśvara*' in their inscriptions²². The period of symbolic Vaiṣṇavism was still not over but the presence of Śaivism was being felt in Chhattisgarh. The Bilaspur district appears to be more acquainted with Śaivism as most of their Śaiva inscriptions are found from this region.

II

The Pāṇḍuvarṁśins of South Kosala belongs to the *śaśi-kula* or lunar race according to the Lakhneswar Temple (Kharod) inscription of Indrabala²³. And within the lunar race the dynasty traced its origin from the Pāṇḍavas. The Arang Stone Inscription of the time of Nannarāja I, for instance, states that Udayana was born of the Pāṇḍuvarṁśa²⁴.

The Arang stone inscription though refers to the worship of Sugata (Buddha), it compares son of Udayana (whose name is lost) with Kṛṣṇa in verses 17 and 18.

²¹ Shastri, A.M., *Inscriptions of the Śarabhapurīyas*, pt. I, p. 116.

²² Shastri, A.M., *Inscriptions of the Śarabhapurīyas*, pt.II, 'Mallar Plates of Vyāghrarāja', pp.62-69.

²³ Mirashi, V.V., 'Lakhnesvara Temple Inscription of Indrabala', *Studies in Indology*, I, p.258, fn. 1.

²⁴ Shastri, A.M., 'Arang Stone Inscription of Nannarāja I', *Inscriptions of the Śarabhapurīyas*, pt. II, verse 16, p. 97.

...sya tanūjanmā akrūre kṛtasangamena dadhatā cakram dvisām bhîtidam

dūrotsāritaraudranārahayenātmānamutkarsatā.

Jyeṣṭham cānuyatā va(ba) lam suva (ba) huśah śatruksayam kurvvatā kṛṣṇeneva

nṛpena yena (dha) ranerbhārāvātārah kṛtaḥ²⁵

It is said that 'by associating himself with the gentle (Akrūra), possessing an army that frightened enemies, raising himself after dispelling the terrible fear of hell, and frequently causing the annihilation of the adversaries while attending upon his elder brother Bala (Indrabala according to Keilhorn) he looked like Kṛṣṇa who was associated with Akrūra, carried a wheel (*cakra*) inspiring fear in the minds of the adversaries, raised himself up after putting an end to the fear from the demon Naraka and attended upon his elder brother Balarāma'.

With the arrival of Pāṇḍuvamśin rulers Vaiṣṇavism entered the phase of assertive Vaiṣṇavism from the phase of symbolic Vaiṣṇavism of the Śarabhapurīya rulers. The big Vaiṣṇava temples were constructed in Chhattisgarh. However towards the end of this though this period Vaiṣṇavism started losing ground to Śaivism in Chhattisgarh. Later on it was patronized by Pratihāras and Candellas under whom it reached its high water mark in some parts of Madhya Pradesh.

Udayana, the first member of the family of Pāṇḍuvamśin rulers ruled over a principality including Kālañjara and the adjoining areas²⁶. He had two sons – Indrabala and one whose name is lost. Indrabala succeeded his father Udayana. He is generally identified with *Mahāsāmanta* Indrabalaraja, who according to Dhamatari²⁷ and Kauvatal²⁸ plates occupied the office of *Sarvādhikṛdhikṛta* under the Śarabhapurīya ruler Sudevarāja. Nanna I succeeded Indrabala. Mahāśiva Tivara, whose inscription is the first to be found from this area, was the son of Nanna²⁹.

The Pāṇḍuvamśin rulers continued the practice of putting Vaiṣṇavite symbols on their

²⁵ Shastri, A.M., 'Arang Stone Inscription of Nannarāja I', *Inscriptions of the Śarabhapurīyas*, pt. II, verses 17-18, p. 97.

²⁶ Shastri, A.M., *Inscriptions of the Śarabhapurīyas*, pt. I, p. 132.

²⁷ Jain, B.C., 'Mahasamund Plates of Sudevarāja', *Journal of Epigraphical Society of India* (hereafter *JESI*), Vol. 10,(1978), pp. 93-97.

²⁸ Shastri, A.M., 'Kauvatal Plates of Sudevarāja, Yr.7', *Inscriptions of the Śarabhapurīyas*, pt. II, pp. 43-45.

²⁹ Shastri, A.M., *Inscriptions of the Śarabhapurīyas*, pt. I, p. 165.

seals like their predecessors. Their seals have the images of Garuḍa, *cakra* and *Śankha* inscribed on them. The first inscription of this dynasty invoking Viṣṇu came from Bonda issued by Mahāśiva Tīvara³⁰. Bonda is a village in Sarangarh tahsil of Raigarh district in Chhattisgarh lying on the left bank of river Mahanadi. A circular bronze seal is affixed to the inscription, which contains a figure of seated Garuḍa with outstretched wings and holding *nāgas*, *Śankha* and *cakra*. The king Tīvara is stated to have been a *ParamaVaiṣṇava* instead of the Gupta period fame *Paramabhāgavata*. Dated in the fifth regnal year of the king, the inscription probably belongs to the last quarter of the 7th century A.D. The charter was issued from Śrīpura for the religious merit of the king himself and his parents. The gift land was granted in favour of 25 *brāhmaṇas*. Among the *brāhmaṇas* Avantī-Vikrama-Opādhyāya and Lāṭaphalihasvāmin may belong to Avanti (near Ujjain) and Lāṭa (Nausari-Broach area of Gujarat) respectively. Apart from them, some of the *brāhmaṇas* may have had Vaiṣṇava affiliation as it appears from their names – Madhusūdana Opādhyāya, Viṣṇughosa Opādhyāya, Śridhara-bhutasvāmin, Yorāṅga-Viṣṇubhavasvāmin, Gopendrasvāmin, etc. Indrabala, the grandfather of Tīvaradeva is said to have obtained the lordship of the entire Kośala country – “*prāpta sakalako(śa)ladhipatyah*”³¹.

It may be possible that along with Kośala country the Pāṇḍuvarṣin rulers inherited the tradition of Vaiṣṇava worship. A more clear reference to the king claiming superiority on the basis of Vaiṣṇava affiliation comes from the Adbhar Plates of Mahānannarāja³². Adbhar is about 40 miles from Bilaspur in Sakti tahsil of Bilaspur district of Chhattisgarh. In this inscription there is a reference to Mahāśiva Tīvararāja as being exalted and graced by the God Nārāyana.

“*anekajanamāntarārādhitā bhagavannārāyaṇabhāṭṭārapāda prasādāsādita*”³³.

The inscription records the grant of a village *Koṭṭinīka* (Kathakoni or Kotami about 12 miles from Adbhar) situated in *Aṣṭadvāra viṣaya* to a, *bhāgavata brāhmaṇa* Nārāyana Opādhyāya.

³⁰ Sircar, D.C., ‘Bonda Plates of Mahāśiva Tīvara, Yr.5’, *EI*, Vol. 34, pp. 111-116.

³¹ Shastri, A.M., ‘Bonda Plates of Tīvaradeva, Yr.5’, *Inscriptions of the Śarabhapurīyas*, pt. II, line 16-17, p. 103.

³² Ibid, ‘Adbhar Plates of Nannarāja’, pp. 116-118.

³³ Shastri, A.M., ‘Adbhar Plates of Nannarāja’, *Inscriptions of the Śarabhapurīyas*, lines 1-2, p. 116.

One major landmark in the development and spread of Vaiṣṇavism in this part of Chhatisgarh is the site of Sirpur, which has yielded the Sirpur Stone Inscription of the time of Mahāśiva Gupta³⁴. The area from where the inscription has been found is a complex of temple sites of which the only standing temple is the Lakṣmaṇa temple according to Rai Bahadur Hiralal. The ruins in and around the village indicate that it was one major center. There are many temples the identification of which is now rendered impossible due to the removal of the idols they contained. These idols are carried to a place near the brick temple.

Sirpur is a small village on the right bank of Mahanadi in the Mahsamund tahsil of Raipur district. Sirpur Stone Inscription (undated; probably 8th or 9th century A.D.) records the construction of the temple of Hari by Vāsata, mother of Mahāśivagupta. It was constructed as the abode of Viṣṇu, where the deceased husband of Vāsata lived worshipping the deity who was imperishable (Acyuta).

*Tayā-nijaḥ pretya patiryathāvidhe vasatyasau nityamupāsītācyutaḥ prakāśitam
tādrśam=eva-kāritam vibhoridam dhāma hareḥ sanātanam³⁵*

For the maintenance of the temple, five villages were granted – Karapadraka (Kulapadar, 15 miles southeast of Sirpur), Varagullaka (Gullu, 10 miles southwest of Sirpur), Madhuvēdha (Madhuban, 4 miles from Turenga), Vanapadra (near Sirpur) and Nalipadra. An alms house (*sattra*) was also attached to the temple. The villages were divided into four shares, three of which were to be reserved for the maintenance of the alms house and for the support of the servants attached to the sanctuary. The fourth share was divided into fifteen parts, of which twelve were to be enjoyed by a corresponding number of *brāhmaṇas* fully conversant with the *Vedas*. The remaining three parts were to be enjoyed by a sacrificial priest (*viprah punyah vācakah*) and two *bhāgavata brāhmaṇas*- Vāmana and Śrīdhara.

The inscription begins with an invocation of Puruṣottama (Viṣṇu). The first three verses are devoted to the praise of Trivikrama and Nṛsimha incarnation. There is also

³⁴ Hiralal, Rai Bahadur, 'The Sirpur Stone Inscription of the Time of Mahasivagupta', *EI*, Vol. 11, pp. 184-197.

³⁵ *Ibid*, v. 20.

a reference to *Kamsanisūdana* (killer of Kaṁsa i.e. Kṛṣṇa. For the first time there is a reference to the Kalki *Avatāra* of *Viṣṇu*. There appears to be a pun on the name of Kṛṣṇa being played here. Kṛṣṇa is described as the one who took deceptive forms for destroying enemies, who was born black (Kṛṣṇa) on this (earth) and who again becomes sinful in future (Kalki). That Hari could not stand comparison with him (king) who kills his enemies without practicing any deception—

yaḥ pradvesavatām vadhāya vikṛtīrāsthāya mā(y)āmayoh kṛṣṇo
(yova)tarannabhūdiḥ sa khalvavyājālūnadviṣaḥ.
Nāsodeva samo harirdhavalatāmātyantikām bibhrato
*yasyākalkamaterna cāpi bhavitā Kalkī bhaviṣyanpunaḥ.*³⁶

Candragupta, the grand father of the king Śivagupta has been compared with Kṛṣṇa and his elder brother with *Balarāma* in this inscription. However it shows Candragupta worshipping lord of goblins i.e. Śiva.

Senkapat Inscription of Mahāśivagupta³⁷ describes him as a Śaiva, although his mother Vāsaṭa was a Vaiṣṇava devotee and so was his father, who was described as *upāsita cyutaḥ* (by whom Viṣṇu was worshipped).

The Lakṣmaṇa temple³⁸ found at Sirpur is the most well preserved temple. It is a brick temple standing on a large wall built of stone platform. Carved on the lintel is a large figure of Viṣṇu reclining on folds of serpent Śeṣa, the whole scene representing the birth of Brahmā.

The Vaiṣṇava dedication of the temple is proved by the carvings on the sanctum doorway of the Vaiṣṇava incarnations as well as the representation of *Śeṣaśāyī* Viṣṇu on the *lalāṭabimba* and is corroborated by epigraphical evidence (Sirpur Stone Inscription), coupled by its traditional name of Lakṣmaṇa temple. In 1872 Mr. James Bagler first time called it Lakṣmaṇa temple³⁹. In 1903, the inscription was discovered. The *maṇḍapa* of the temple is broken. The remains of brick pillars are found. The

³⁶ Hiralal, 'The Sirpur Stone Inscription of the time of Mahasivagupta', *EI*, Vol.11, pp. 184-197, v. 14.

³⁷ Shastri, A.M., 'Senkapat Stone Slab Inscription of the Time Śivagupta Bālārjuna', *Inscriptions of the Sarabhapurīyas*, pt. II, v. 3, p. 154.

³⁸ Krishna Deva, 'Lakshmana Temple at Sirpur', *Journal of Madhya Pradesh Itihas Parishad* (hereafter *JMP/IP*), no. 2, (1960), pp. 35-42.

³⁹ Courtesy ASI, Raipur, Chhattisgarh.

doorframe is made of stone. The sanctum is empty. Three images brought from somewhere are kept inside. One image has the snake canopy over it. This may allude to Lakṣmaṇa being the incarnation of Śeṣa, which gave this temple the name 'Lakṣmaṇa temple'. There is a headless figure of Viṣṇu kept in the nearby store. The figure is made up of granite. It has four hands, all of which are broken. The sculpture bears svastika mark and sacred thread. Probably this was the main deity of this temple. There is an image of Nṛsimha in the store made up of black stone belonging to 8th-9th century A.D.

The doorway of the sanctum represents Vaiṣṇava incarnations, Kṛṣṇa *līlā* scenes and other mythological scenes in the panels⁴⁰. *Matsya avatāra*, Bhū-Varāha, Nṛsimha and Rāma *avatāra* and Hayagrīva are represented among the Vaiṣṇava incarnations, while scenes of *Kāliya-damana*, defeat of Kaṁsa wrestlers, *Kaṁsavadha*, *Keśivadha* etc. are depicted among the episodes from Kṛṣṇa's life. The doorway introduces a large composition in relief depicting incarnations and other scenes, which exhibit developed iconography but lack simple vigour and charm of the Gupta sculptural art. The absence of Ganga and Yamuna figures from the *Kṛṣṇalīlā* scenes further assigns a later Gupta date to this temple.

The Varāha panel on doorway resembles the classic Varāha of Udayagiri caves in pose and general treatment and in depicting Varuṇa on one side paying homage to him. However some differences are there. Here the Varāha is eight armed instead of two armed as in Udayagiri. Bhūdevī is seated in the air with her right foot on a lotus stalk held in the hand of a *nāgī* on the proper left. The right hand of the *devī* is against the left arm of the god. Instead of Ganga and Yamuna, a *nāgī* on each side is paying homage to Varāha. Śeṣanāga is represented in full human form. The Lakṣmaṇa temple is architecturally important in representing a transition from the Gupta temples to the early medieval temples of North India.

Sirpur has a Rāmacandra temple also⁴¹. It is a brick temple situated at two furlong from the Lakṣmaṇa temple. It has lost its superstructure, door frame and most of the

⁴⁰ Krishna Deva, 'Lakshmana Temple at Sirpur', *JMPIP*, no. 2, (1960), pp. 35-42.

⁴¹ Meister, Dhaky and Krishna Deva, *Encyclopaedia of Indian Temple Architecture, Foundation of the North Indian Style*, p. 236.

north and east walls. Ornamentation of the temple bears clear resemblance to the Lakṣmaṇa temple (architecturally belonging to the same period – 8th-9th century A.D.). This is one of the earliest star-shaped temples⁴². A nearby mound after excavation has revealed a residential complex. Three chambers have been found here. They may have been used for restoration or meditation purpose. The middle chamber is plastered which may have had some specific purpose (not clear as yet). One of the other two chambers is more than 20ft deep. This site has yielded iron antiquity and Ganeśa plank too. One Raikhera pond is beside the site, which according to Archaeological Survey of India, Raipur, is as old as the site. Bones of animals have been found from the place, which show cut mark on them. Could this have been a Śaiva or Śākta temple?

Mahāyāna Buddhism also flourished in Sirpur almost at the same time. Excavations at Sirpur have brought to light two brick temples, both dedicated to Buddha⁴³ (roughly belonging to the period of Mahāśivagupta, 7th century A.D.). The doorframe of these monasteries yielded sculptures akin to the Vaiṣṇava or Śaiva temples. Perhaps sculptors of these monasteries were so much acquainted with the Hindu temple architecture that they followed the same pattern in the Buddhist monasteries also. There is a monastery for the lady monks on this site. One of the monasteries depicts the *Pañcatantra* story of the clever fox and the dumb crow. However these Buddhist establishments soon disappeared. Not long after the Pāṇḍuvarṣin dynasty, a people of Śaiva faith, according to M.G. Dikshit, occupied the Buddhist monasteries of Sirpur⁴⁴. By that time many Buddhist images were beheaded. No satisfactory explanation has come forward for this act.

The Śaiva sites soon outnumbered the places so far attached to the Vaiṣṇava religion. Śivagupta Bālārjuna was the first important ruler to show the inclination towards Śaivism. He donated lands for the maintenance of a Śaiva monastery. In the Lodhia Plates of Śivagupta Bālārjuna⁴⁵, he granted village to the god *Iśāneśvara Śiva*. *The god was enshrined in the temple at Pattana Khadira tāla*. The land was donated for the

⁴² Courtesy ASI, Raipur, Chhattisgarh.

⁴³ Dikshit, M.G. and Barret, Douglas, *Temples at Mukhalingam; Sirpur and Rajim*, Bombay, 1960.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Shastri, A.M., 'Lodhia Plates of Śivagupta Bālārjuna', *Inscriptions of the Śarabhapurīyas*, pt. II, pp. 128-33.

offerings of *bali*, *caru*, and *naivedya*, maintenance of feeding house (*sattra*), dance and instrumental music as well as repairs and maintenance of the temple at the request of the holy illustrious Śulapānī, the disciple of holy illustrious Prathamācārya. The later *ācārya* hailed from the celebrated penance, Pāñcajanya groove situated in the *Dvaiatavana*. The inscription belongs to later half of 8th century A.D. The place name, *Khadira tāla* has been identified with Khirapali in Raigarh district.

This place might have had Śaiva temple in existence to which the king made donations. And a group of Śaiva *Ācāryas* was already in existence at this place under whose influence this grant was made. As shown above these *Ācāryas* migrated from far off places. Soon the Śaiva *Ācāryas* grew in number and in influence. Whether it hastened the decline of Vaiṣṇavism will be a question of further investigation. I will try to throw some light on it later on.

III

The next dynasty, which falls in the first half of the period c. A.D. 600-1000, is the Nala dynasty. Nala kings seem to have established themselves in Raipur district sometime after Mahāśivagupta. Bhavadattavarman was the first ruler⁴⁶. They seem to have had their base in the Bastar – Koraput region during the 6th and early 7th century A.D. They probably filled the vacuum after the decline of the Pāñḍuvamśins towards the close of the 7th century A.D.

The only known inscription of this dynasty is found from Rajim and is of the king Vilāsatuṅga attached to the temple of Rājīvalocana⁴⁷. Rajim is a well-known Vaiṣṇava centre, which flourished in the Chhattisgarh region. It is a holy place situated 28 miles south by east of Raipur. The undated inscription is considered to be of the middle of 8th century A.D. Nalas who hailed from the eastern border of Bastar with their capital at Pushkar extended their power to Vidarbha. This inscription mentions three members of the ruling Nala family – Pṛthvīrāja, Virupākṣa and Vilāsatuṅga.

⁴⁶ Meister, Dhaky and Krishna Deva, *Encyclopaedia of Indian Temple Architecture, Foundation of the North Indian Style*, pp. 224-225.

⁴⁷ Mirashi, V.V., 'Rajim Stone Inscription of the Nala King Vilasatunga', *EI*, Vol. 26, pp. 49-58.

The object of the inscription is to record the construction of the Viṣṇu temple by the king. It is incised on a slab of stone, which is built into the left wall of the temple of Rājīvalocana. The inscription may have opened with the invocation of Viṣṇu (upper portion is broken). Another verse invokes Varāha *avatāra*, while the fourth verse is in the form of a dialogue between Hari and Lakṣmī. The next verse invokes the Vāmana *avatāra* as *Bali-śrī-nihanta*. As already mentioned Rajim is a pilgrim centre. Consisting of a group of several temples, it still attracts thousands of pilgrims every year and is held in great veneration by the local people.

Rājīvalocana temple is of *Pañcāyatana* type. The main temple is surrounded by four subsidiary shrines namely Badrīnātha (Viṣṇu), Vāmana, Varāha and Nṛsimha⁴⁸. The main temple of Rājīvalocana contains a black stone image of Viṣṇu with usual symbols of mace (*gadā*), discus (*cakra*), conch shell (*Śankha*) and the lotus (*kamala*). The temple has undergone three to four successive changes. The first one is roughly corresponding to the Śarabhapurīya period. Large number of records in shell character is found here. It may have been possible that during Śarabhapurīya period some structure was there, which was enlarged, renovated and dedicated to Viṣṇu in Pāṇḍuvamśin period. In the Pāṇḍuvamśin period, the top of the lintel of the doorway was devoted to a sculpture of Garuḍa, the vehicle of Viṣṇu with attendant *ganas* and musicians. The third time it was renovated by a Kalacuri king Jayasimha⁴⁹. During the Pāṇḍuvamśin period, the *Anantaśayana* image of Viṣṇu with Garuḍa at the base was added to the shrine.

Of the subsidiary shrines, the image of Nṛsimha is first from left. Here the ferocious God is shown tearing the belly of the demon. The image of the Badrīnātha (mentioned as such by M.G. Dikshit and also locally called as) is a black stone image of Yoganārāyaṇa. The two upper hands are carrying *Śankha* and *cakra* and the lower hands are in *yoga – mudrā*. The Vāmana image is pot bellied, and is carrying *kamaṇḍala*. The sculptures of Bali and Śukrācārya are also found beside the God. The Varāha image is carrying Pṛthvī on his left shoulder and holding *cakra*. The right lower hand of the God is resting on his thigh. The image of Trivikrama is found between the Nṛsimha and the Badrīnātha shrines. This is an unusual treatment of a

⁴⁸ Dikshit, M.G., *Sirpur and Rajim Temples*, pp. 27-32.

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, p. 32.

familiar subject. In this figure, Ādiśeṣa is in the act of paying obeisance to the standing figure of Viṣṇu. Trivikrama whose right leg is lifted high, shown crushing the ugly face of *Brahmāṇḍa*. A mutilated image of Varāha is found on the outer wall of the temple. Inside the temple a life size image of Varāha is shown carrying the earth goddess and *gadā* in his two left hands. An image of Nṛsimha is also there. Other figures include Jaya – Vijaya, the Vaiṣṇava *dvārapālas*, Garuḍa with folded hands, etc. The *lalātabimba* carries the image of Garuḍāsīna Viṣṇu.

The Rāmacandra temple⁵⁰ is situated near the Rājīvalocana temple. Like the latter it has undergone several structural changes. The first one was constructed during the Pāṇḍuvamśin period, and then repaired by Jayasimha of the Kalacuris of Ratanpur. The sculptures inside the temple include Viṣṇu on Garuḍa, Nṛvarāha and the Garuḍa on the door. However the doorframe points towards Śaiva affiliation. The *lalātabimba* shows the figure of Ganeśa.

The Chhattisgarh region continued to show some places of Vaiṣṇava affiliation even towards the end of my research period (c. A.D.600-1300) as will be shown in my next chapter.

IV

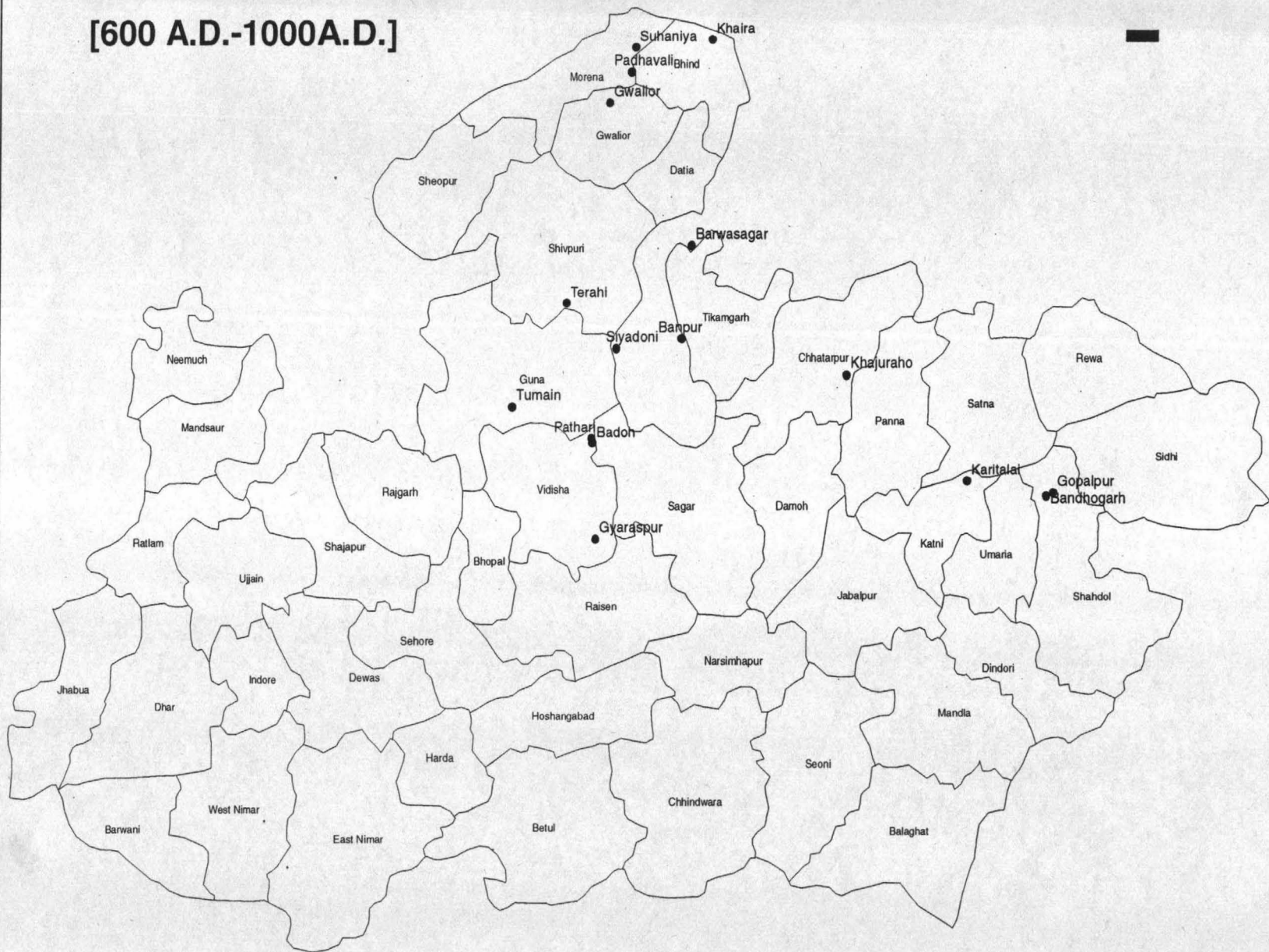
In the later half of this sub-period (c.A.D.600-1000), Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh region witnessed the emergence of a number of kings contesting for power. The multiple kingdoms with different nuclei of authority grew quite close to each other. In such a scenario, it was not unusual for them to seek support of religion to have a greater claim to supremacy. In this connection, it is to be kept in mind that by this time all the parts of Madhya Pradesh had experienced the statehood and perhaps the resource bases of the kingdoms had considerably expanded. It seems probable that vying for superior claims of legitimacy was the guiding factor behind the construction of temples in this period by the rulers and other groups.

It was also the period of high water mark in construction of Vaiṣṇava temples in

⁵⁰ Dikshit, M.G., *Sirpur and Rajim Temples*, pp. 27-32.

Map III: Vaisnava Centres (Temple Sites) in Madhya Pradesh

[600 A.D.-1000A.D.]



Not according to scale

Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh. Several beautiful and high temples were constructed by the rulers of this region. Vaiṣṇavism saw the reign of prosperity and expansion for some time.

The time span of the later half of this sub-period (c A.D. 600-1000) coincides with the mature and late phase of the rule of the Imperial Pratihāras and their adherence (or non-adherence, as the case may be) to the Vaiṣṇava religion.

The Imperial Pratihāras were gaining strength in the early years of 8th century A.D.⁵¹. Nāgabhatta was the founder of the royal line. Avantī was the home territory of the dynasty. The Pratihāras traced their genealogy from the mythical Lakṣmaṇa. Just as Lakṣmaṇa was the doorkeeper of Rāma, the Pratihāras, too were the doorkeeper of the world.

*Saumitristīvara daṇḍaḥ pratiharana-vidheryaḥ pratihāra āsīt
Tad varṁśe pratihāra ketana-bhrti ttrailokya-raks-āspade devo
Nāgabhattaḥ purātana-muner mūttir-vva(bba)bhūv ādbhutam⁵²*

i.e. 'all praise unto his (Rāma) younger brother, Lakṣmaṇa (Saumittri)- a stern rod of chastisement- who served as the door keeper (of Rāma), owing to his commandment not to allow others to enter. In that family, which bore the insignia of Pratihāra (door-keeper), and was a shelter of the three worlds, the king Nāgabhatta I appeared as the image of the old sage (Nārāyaṇa) in a strange manner-----, he shone with four arms brilliant on account of the glittering terrible weapons'.

Also Nāgabhatta is described as the destroyer of the army of the Arabs (*mlecchādhip aksauhiniḥ*)⁵³. Pratihāra period is marked by the construction of a number of temples. A large group of temples in and around Gwalior has been assigned to the Pratihāra period. R. D. Trivedi⁵⁴ divides these temples chronologically into three sub-periods – (i) c.A.D. 725-800, (ii) c.A.D. 800-850 and (iii) c.A.D. 850-950.

In the first sub group, the temples constructed were dedicated to Śiva. However, some

⁵¹ Majumdar, R.C., 'The Gwalior Prasasti of Bhoja', *EI*, Vol. 18, pp. 99-114.

⁵² *Ibid*, v. 3-4.

⁵³ Majumdar, R.C., 'The Gwalior Prasasti of Bhoja', *EI*, Vol. 18, pp. 99-114, v.4.

⁵⁴ Trivedi, R.D., *Temples of the Pratihara Period*, New Delhi, 1990, p. 44.

of them contain the figures of Viṣṇu and his incarnations. As for example, a standing figure of Viṣṇu in the Naresar group of temples⁵⁵ and the *Lalitāsana* Viṣṇu on Garuḍa in Bhuteśvara Mahādeva temple⁵⁶, both found in Morena district of Madhya Pradesh. A temple to the north-east of Bhuteśvara temple has one shrine whose doorway has the figure of Garuḍa holding two *nāgas*⁵⁷. It serves the dual purpose, as the controller of the *nāgas* as well as the mount of Viṣṇu to whom the shrine is dedicated. The *lalāṭabimba* Garuḍa is flanked by ten incarnations of Viṣṇu – Matsya, Kūrma, Varāha, Nṛsimha, Vāmana, Buddha, Rāma, Kṛṣṇa(?), Balarāma and Kalki. Buddha and Kalki are found in one of their early appearances as incarnations of Viṣṇu in this shrine. The temple is dated to the last quarter of 8th century A.D. or the end of 9th.

The second sub-period of the Imperial Pratihāras does not have many temples assigned to Viṣṇu or individual Vaisnavite sculptures. The only known example is of Sun temple at Umari⁵⁸ (40kms south-east-south of Tikamgarh), with three incarnations of Viṣṇu in its niches namely Varāha, Kṛṣṇa and Nṛsimha. On the basis of architectural features, the temple is assigned a date of early 9th century A.D.

The third sub period of Pratihāra group of temples (c.A.D. 850-950) saw many temples constructed in the northern and central Madhya Pradesh. The Cāmunda temple at Mahua⁵⁹ situated at about 12km southeast of Ranod in Shivpuri district of Madhya Pradesh contains a standing four-armed image of Nṛsimha.

Some of the temples of the Pratihāra period, which are now dedicated to Śaiva or Śākta pantheon may, have been devoted to Viṣṇu or his incarnations in ancient times. The Śiva temple at Terahi⁶⁰ (10km south-east of Ranod) is dedicated to Śiva, which is evident from the Śaiva or the Śākta images, but the *lalāṭabimba* of the doorway has the Garudāsīna Viṣṇu carved on it. It represents a four armed image of Viṣṇu seated on Garuḍa holding *Śaṅkha*, *cakra*, *padma* and *gadā*. No inscription referring to the dedication of temple to any god has been found.

⁵⁵ Ibid, p. 47.

⁵⁶ Ibid, pp. 79-81.

⁵⁷ Ibid, p. 85.

⁵⁸ Ibid, p.115.

⁵⁹ Ibid, pp. 121-125.

⁶⁰ Trivedi, R.D., *Temples of the Pratihara Period*, pp. 129-132.

Jarai Math temple at Barwasagar⁶¹ is situated 22km east of Jhansi in Uttar Pradesh. The temple is dedicated to a god or a group of goddesses. Just above the *lalātabimba* Viṣṇu is represented seated on Garuḍa flanked by four armed Brhamā seated on his mount Hamśa and Śiva seated on Nandī bull. Other images include Nṛsimha incarnation and Viṣṇu with his consort Lakṣmī. The date assigned to the temple is middle of 9th century A.D.

Similar is the case with the Śiva temple at Pathari⁶² in Vidisha district. The *lalātabimba* of the doorway represents a four-armed image of Viṣṇu seated on Garuḍa, wearing *kirīṭa-mukuta* and holding his usual attributes. Against the back wall there are remains of a pedestal, which originally appears to have supported, an image of Viṣṇu, but at present is occupied by a number of *śivaliṅgas* in various sizes under worship. Trivedi emphasizes that in case of a Śiva temple, the *śivaliṅga* occupies central position and not the backside against the wall. So the temple might have been dedicated to Viṣṇu.

In this connection, the inscription engraved on the pillar known as bhīmagaja located in front of this temple needs reference. This is the Pathari pillar inscription of Prabala⁶³, the only one hitherto discovered of a Rāṣṭrakuṭa king named Prabala, dated 861 A.D. This inscription records that king Prabala founded temple of Śaurī (Hari, Viṣṇu – *acīkarad devakulam sa Śaurer idam*) before which he carved a pillar on which the inscription is engraved. It opens with an invocation to Lakṣmī – Nārāyaṇa. The first four verses applaud the protection of earth by him and glorify the god Viṣṇu under the name of Murārī, Kṛṣṇa and Hari. It consists of two parts. The second part appears to be a separate inscription added by way of postscript, which may record the installation of an image of Viṣṇu, but the exact purpose of it is not legible. Reference to Viṣṇu's foot (*viṣṇoḥ kim carāṇas trivikramas*) and Śeṣa are found in this inscription. At another place the kings are compared to the *Mahābhārata* heroes – Yudhiṣṭhira, Bhīmasena, etc. This inscription also yields a proof for the Vaiṣṇava affiliation of the temple. The pillar inscription clearly shows that the temple in whose compound it is standing is dedicated to Viṣṇu.

⁶¹ Ibid, p. 168.

⁶² Ibid, pp. 129-132.

⁶³ Kielhorn, F., 'Pathari Pillar Inscription of Parabala', *EI*, Vol. 9, pp. 248-250..

At Badoh (near Pathari), Gadarmal temple⁶⁴, though a Śaiva temple, contains the figures of some incarnations of Viṣṇu – Vāmana, Nṛsimha, four armed Viṣṇu seated on Garuḍa, etc.

Badoh has a group of temples, locally called as Dashavatara mandi⁶⁵. Each of it seems to be originally dedicated to an incarnation of Viṣṇu. This group of temples belongs to 9th-10th century A.D. Most of the shrines of this place are in ruins. One image of Varāha is shown standing. The shrines are empty. But the representation of Viṣṇu or some of his form in the door lintel further proves that all these temples were dedicated to Viṣṇu and his incarnations.

Badoh may have been a Vaiṣṇava centre since 6th-7th century A.D. Gujari Mahal Museum has an image of Kūrma *avatāra* of Viṣṇu⁶⁶ dated to 6th-7th century A.D. The sculpture is found from Badoh, Vidisha district. It shows the scene of the churning of the ocean by the gods and the demons.

From Badoh itself, there are other sculptures in the Museum, which may point towards one or two Vaiṣṇava centres at the place. One Varāha *avatāra*⁶⁷ sand stone image of Viṣṇu dated to 8th-9th century A.D. shows the boar faced god trampling the sea under left foot. The upper hand holds club and the lower rests on the thigh. Bhūdevī is seated on the left arm.

The image of Kalki incarnation⁶⁸ in the Museum shows the god sitting on a horse belonging to the same period (8th-9th century A.D.).

One Viṣṇu *Caumukha* image⁶⁹ has been found from Vidisha, dated to 9th-10th century A.D. It shows the four incarnations of Viṣṇu – Varāha, Nṛsimha, Trivikrama and *Garudāsīna* Viṣṇu. The lotus representation of the Sun god is shown above the image. From the same place and assigned to the 9th-10th century A.D., there are sculptures of

⁶⁴ Trivedi, R.D., *Temples of the Pratihara Period*, pp. 154-155.

⁶⁵ *The Descriptive and Classified List of Archaeological Monuments in Madhya Bharat*, The Department of Archaeology, Gwalior, 1952, no. 92.

⁶⁶ Gujari Mahal Museum Sculptures, Accession no. 75.

⁶⁷ Gujari Mahal Museum Sculptures, Acc. No. 76.

⁶⁸ Gujari Mahal Museum Sculptures, Acc. No. 77.

⁶⁹ *Ibid*, Acc. No. 88.

Vāmana⁷⁰ and Rāma⁷¹ in the Museum.

All these sculptures indicate towards a flourishing Vaiṣṇava centre in Badoh, district Vidisha at least from 6th-7th century A.D. to the 9th-10th century A.D. This may have continued for one or more centuries after it.

The sun temple of the Gurjara Pratihāra Period often has remains of the incarnations of Viṣṇu. The village Sesai, situated 12km south of Shivpuri in the same district of Madhya Pradesh, has remains of ancient temples of which Sun temple⁷² is a major monument. It contains the *Daśāvatāra* of Viṣṇu. One of the lintels contains in the centre Viṣṇu seated in *padmāsana*. On the left and right of Viṣṇu are carved Śiva and Brahmā. All the three gods are with their wives representing the trinity.

The village Markhera situated about 18kms north of Tikamgarh in the same district has a Sun temple⁷³. The temple assigned to the late 9th century A.D., has the figures of incarnations of Viṣṇu – Varāha, Kṛṣṇa, Nṛsimha, Vāmana, Balarāma, Paraśurāma, etc.

The most outstanding temple of the Pratihāra period assigned to Viṣṇu is the Caturbhujā temple at Gwalior⁷⁴. It contains two subjoined inscriptions of Vaillabhaṭṭasvāmin temple, situated at Gwalior⁷⁵. These two inscriptions have been found from a small monolithic temple situated on a turn of road leading to the Gwalior fort. It records that the Viṣṇu temple containing the inscription is built by a certain Alla, the son of Vaillabhaṭṭa and the grandson of Nāgarabhaṭṭa. Vaillabhaṭṭa belonged to Varjāra family and migrated from Ānandapura in Lāṭamaṇḍala (Gujarat). The wife of Vaillabhaṭṭa was the daughter of Kāsarakīya-Viṣṇu. The inscription refers to the three strides of Viṣṇu (v.1). The purpose is to increase the spiritual merit of Vavvā (wife of Alla) and of himself. Vaillabhaṭṭa has been the *maryādadhurya* (chief of the boundaries) in the service of the king Rāmadeva. Alla succeeded his father and was appointed to the guardianship of Gopādri (*gopādrīpālāne*) i.e. of Gwalior fort by the king Śrīmada Ādivarāha. The king Bhoja Ādi Varāha is shown as willing to

⁷⁰ Ibid, Acc. No. 91.

⁷¹ Ibid, Acc. No. 94.

⁷² Trivedi, R.D., *Temples of the Pratihara Period*, pp. 161-168.

⁷³ Ibid, pp. 143-148.

⁷⁴ Ibid, pp. 135-143.

⁷⁵ Hultzsck, E., 'The Two Inscriptions of The Vaillabhattasvamin Temple at Gwalior', *EI*, Vol. I, pp. 154-162.

conquer the three worlds. There is a curious reference to Vaillabhaṭṭa, who does not seem to look towards the friendship of lower people favourably. He is compared with Yudhiṣṭhira for being constant in battle, but he does not like the company of low people (though Yudhiṣṭhira was a true friend of Nakula). Probably he was conscious of the dilution of his high image while interacting with low people. Conversely his son Alla is described as the 'robber of poverty of the beggars' in the same inscription (*dāridram hritārthino*, v.20).

The first inscription starts with adoration to Viṣṇu in the form of killer of Madhu (*madhujihantu*). At several places, there are references to Lakṣmī, Murārī, Madhuripu, Śarābhū, Śaci, etc.

The second inscription starts with invocation of Viṣṇu as ' *Om Namō Viṣṇave*'. It mentions four donations made to the temples – Navadurga of Rudra, Rudrānī and Pūrnāśā and the Vaillabhaṭṭasvāmin temple. The first grant was made for the Navadurga temple situated beyond the Vrścikālā River (Suvarnarekhā). The remaining three donations were given combinedly to Navadurga and Vaillabhaṭṭasvāmin temple. A flower garden, two-grain fields, perpetual endowment of one *pālikā* of oil per mill (by 3 mills) and a daily endowment of 50 garlands by the chief of guild of gardeners (dwelling on the top of the Gwalior fort) were given to the temples. The two inscriptions are dated A.D. 875 and A.D. 876 respectively. The land given to the temples for the performance of the worship include field cultivated by Dallaka in the chief grain land (*mūlavāpa*) of the common called Vyāghrakhendikā, in the village of Jayapurāka which was town property. Towards the north of the same field, the field cultivated by Memmāka, the son of *Kṣatriya* Devavarman. Besides the oil millers who donated oil for the worship of the deity lived in Śrīvatsasvāmīpura, Cacchikāhaṭṭikā, Nimbādityahaṭṭikā, etc. The suffix of '*haṭṭikā*' to these names may point to small market places surrounding the temple who were asked to donate the oil. Besides the group of the gardeners resided on the Gopagiri itself.

All the grants to the temple were made by the inhabitants of the place (*samastasthānena*). The town of Gopagiri was administered by the group of merchants called as Pañcakula. They invariably donated for the Vaiṣṇava temple and Rudra – Rudrānī temple.

The Caturbhujā temple⁷⁶, containing this inscription is a wholly rock cut temple. To begin with, the niches contain the images of Viṣṇu along with the figure of Gaṇeśa, two armed standing Kārttikeya holding *danda* and four armed standing Pārvatī. An image of the four armed Nṛvarāha with his lower right hand resting on the thigh and the upper left raising up the goddess Pṛthvī is on a separate niche. The god is forcefully exerting in the act of saving earth from the deluge. Vaillabhaṭṭasvāmin temple inscription (mentioned earlier) is engraved on the lintel over the doorway of this temple. It mentions king Bhoja as Śrīmad Ādivarāha. The forceful image of Varāha is intended to remind one of the king's roles as the saviour of his vast empire. Another image is that of a four armed standing Viṣṇu with *śankha* and *cakra* and his two attributes in human form near his feet as Padmapuruṣa and Gadādevī.

It also contains the image of Trivikrama, showing his right leg firmly placed on the ground touching the grinning face of Rāhu below which the donor Bali and his guru Śukrācārya are represented. Other incarnations include Nṛsimha, Rāma, Kalki and Budhha. The lintel presents Kṛṣṇa-*līlā* scenes. This theme has wider appeal in the Pratihāra period irrespective of any sectarian consideration, according to R.D.Trivedi.

The temple was an extremely important building during that time. The Pratihāra king valued the fortress of Gwalior because it guarded the territory between Kalinjar and Chittor and was integral to their campaigns against the Rāstrakūtas⁷⁷. The warden of the Gwalior fort was therefore a key officer and a temple built by such a person was the product of a respected and powerful individual. Subsequently members of Alla's family apparently continued in the imperial service at Gwalior for one of them died facing a Rāstrakūta raid. This is evidently a hero stone from Terahi (Shivapuri district), which records the death of one Allajiyappa, son of Allabhaṭṭa⁷⁸.

Apart from the importance of the temple and the inscription another thing to be noted is that we have an example of the god being named after the father Vaillabhaṭṭa of donor Alla (Vaillabhaṭṭasvāmin temple). Another important feature of the inscription

⁷⁶ Trivedi, R.D., *Temples of the Pratihara Period*, pp. 135-143.

⁷⁷ Willis, Michael D., *The Temples of Gopakṣetra*, British Museum Press, 1996, pp. 184-190.

⁷⁸ Willis, Michael D., *The Inscriptions of Gopakṣetra*, British Museum Press, 1996, pp. 1-4.

is the donations given by oil millers and gardeners to the temple. Perhaps, the professional groups associated with trade and commerce were coming forward to extend their patronage and services to the temple.

The Gwalior *Prasasti* of Bhoja⁷⁹ is another inscription, which attests to their adherence to Vaiṣṇava religion. The stone which bears this inscription is found about half a mile west of Gwalior town, at Sagar Tal in Gird-Gwalior district. It is the same inscription in which Bhoja traced his genealogy from Lakṣmaṇa, the later being the doorkeeper or Pratihāra of Rāma. The object of this inscription is to record the erection of a house within the seraglio (*antaḥ pura-puram*) of his compound. It begins with an invocation to Viṣṇu and repeatedly refers to Rāma-Rāvaṇa fight. Bhoja is described as more glorious than Agastya and as being embraced by Lakṣmī (sovereign power). It refers to Viṣṇu as Narakadvisaḥ (enemy of Naraka). Nāgabhaṭṭa the founder of the dynasty is compared with Nārāyaṇa in this inscription. The inscription is undated but Bhoja seems to have engraved this inscription around 933 A.D. (according to his R.C. Majumdar).

An inscription is found from Gyaraspur⁸⁰ in Vidisha district of about 10th century A.D. Apparently it records construction of a temple which is now in ruins. It begins with a salutation to Jag(nnātha) or the lord of the universe, specifically referring to Viṣṇu. It contains the genealogy and eulogy of a dynasty of kings of whom only three names occur in the surviving portion of the record. The three names are – Śivagaṇa, Cāmuṇḍarāja and Mahendrapāladeva. It was by a scion of this dynasty or someone of his or her dependants that the temple seems to have been built. The inscription is assigned a date of 10th century A.D., on paleographic grounds, which is also probably the date of the temple, as suggested on the basis of the style of the carvings. This is a huge temple. It consists of three shrines. The five pieces of sculptures and carvings found here comprised among others a bust of Trimurtī – Viṣṇu flanked by Brahmā and Śiva. Now the Jaina images are enshrined in the sanctum⁸¹. In the eastern half of the village a very richly carved *torana* gateway exits. The gateway known as Hindolā *torana*, consists of a cross beam of two pillars carved into panels inset with ten

⁷⁹ Majumdar, R.C., 'The Gwalior Prasasti of Gurjara Pratihara King Bhoja', *EI*, Vol. 18, pp. 99-104.

⁸⁰ Garde, M.B., *Annual Report Archaeological Department Gwalior* (hereafter *ARADG*), 1932-33, pp. 6-7.

⁸¹ *Descriptive and Classified List of Archaeological Monuments in Madhya Bharat*, no. 623.

incarnations of Viṣṇu⁸². The fragment of a figure of Viṣṇu may perhaps have been the idol of worship in the temple. All these sculptures belong to 9th-10th century A.D.

In the village Kagpur in Bhilsa district, there is a Mahāvīra platform now in total ruins, with carved fragments and sculptures lying about. Notable among sculptures is a lintel of doorframe with fine carvings and details showing incarnations of Viṣṇu and other sculptures⁸³. The temple may belong to the 8th century A.D.

Apart from these sculptures, a lot of sculptures have been found from Morena, Gwalior and Bhind districts. Gujari Mahal Museum in Gwalior has a sculpture of Viṣṇu from Pawaya (Gwalior district)⁸⁴. The image has disc and conch in left hands. The right upper hand holds a club and the lower is in *abhaya mudrā*. The sculptures belong to 6th century A.D. to the pre Pratihāra period.

Suhaniya in Morena district has yielded a Vāmana *avatāra* of Viṣṇu standing under a canopy⁸⁵. The face of the God is mutilated and the hands are missing. The sculpture is associated by two kneeling devotees parallel to the Vāmana's head, while on the Dexter side is a small male figure of *gana* in standing posture. The sculpture belongs to 9th century A.D.

Padhavali in Morena district has yielded a number of sculptures. The Archaeological Museum at Gwalior Fort has a *Gajendramokṣa* sculpture⁸⁶. The four handed image of Viṣṇu is shown rescuing the elephant from the clutches of the crocodile. It appears that the sculpture has eight hands. One of the hands is shown resting on some unidentified object. The sculpture belongs to the 10th century A.D. Another sculpture from the same museum is the four-armed figure of Viṣṇu holding *Śaṅkha*, *cakra*, *gadā* and one hand in *varada mudrā*⁸⁷. The sculpture belongs to 10th century A.D. Gujari Mahal Museum has a sculpture of Balarāma⁸⁸ found from Padhavali, Morena district. The God is shown standing holding a cup in his right hand pressing against

⁸² Ibid, no.661.

⁸³ Ibid, no. 758.

⁸⁴ Gujari Mahal Museum Sculptures, Gwalior, Acc. No. 46.

⁸⁵ Archaeological Museum, Gwalior, Fort, Acc. No.6.

⁸⁶ Archaeological Museum, Gwalior, Fort, Acc. No.11.

⁸⁷ Ibid, Acc.No. 32.

⁸⁸ Ibid, Acc. No. (not given).

his belly, with snake canopy. The sculpture belongs to 9th-10th century A.D.

The Archaeological Museum at Gwalior Fort has a 2m high sculpture of Viṣṇu surrounded by ten incarnations of Viṣṇu⁸⁹. The deity stands on a *padmapîtha* showing in front Laksmî flanked by two *nāgî* worshippers. Two *caurî* bearers standing in *tribhaṅga mudrā* flank the main deity. Next to the *caurî* bearers, are two *ganas*, one of them holding a *padma*. The miniature temples show Vinādhārini and the Cakradhārini in the *bhadra rathikā*. The incarnations shown are Matsya, Kūrma Varāha, Vāmana, Rāma, Balarāma, Paraśurāma, Nṛsimha, Buddha and Kalki. The sculpture is found from Khaira in Bhind district. It belongs to 9th century A.D. Judging by the size of the sculpture it might be the main deity of a Vaiṣṇava temple, which is no longer in existence.

Barakalan, another place in Bhind district has a Vaiṣṇava temple⁹⁰. The temple was originally brick built. Now it is totally in ruins only doorframes and stone images are left on the site.

Since all these sculptures are lying in museums and at most of the places no inscription is found, it is not possible to trace out the person responsible behind these constructions. The kings, his officials and the queens are not necessarily the builders of the temples. Other classes may have been involved in the construction of the temple or the propagation of the religion (here Vaiṣṇavism).

Siyādonî Stone Inscription⁹¹ is a landmark in describing the involvement of traders and guild owners in development of a particular religion (here Vaiṣṇavism). In Lalitpur district of Uttar Pradesh, there was found a large inscription in Siron-Khurd (Siyādonî) about ten miles west-northwest of the town of Lalitpur. It covers a long period from 903 A.D. to 968 A.D. The inscription consists of two parts. The first part records a large number of donations made at different times to various *brāhmaṇical* deities. Most of the donations recorded here were made in favour of God Viṣṇu under the names of Viṣṇu-bhaṭṭāraka, Nārāyana-bhhaṭṭāraka, Tribhuvanasvāmīdeva,

⁸⁹ Archaeological Museum, Gwalior Fort Sculptures, Acc. No. 24.

⁹⁰ *Descriptive and Classified List of Ancient Monuments in Madhya Bhara*, No. 158.

⁹¹ Kielhorn, F., 'Siyadoni Stone Inscription', *EI*, Vol. 1, pp. 162-179.

Vāmanasvāmīdeva, etc. Umā Maheśvara (Śiva) and Bhailasvāmīdeva (Sun) are also mentioned. The Siyādonī town was under the nobles. The affairs of the town seem to have been managed by an assembly of five called *Pañcakulas* and by a committee of two appointed by town from time to time. Thus, we find a totally independent merchant community looking after the town and patronizing Vaiṣṇavism in its various forms. This inscription mentions Bhojadeva and Mahendrapāladeva, the Pratihāra rulers. Probably this town was under the administration of some governor of the Gurjara Pratihāras.

As all the donations of the temples of this inscription were made by the local people of this region, there is plenty of regional words in it. According to Prof Kielhorn, the first part of the inscription contains a considerable number of words which either do not occur in Sanskrit literature at all, or for which the dictionary furnishes no appropriate meaning; and some of which were undoubtedly taken from vernacular⁹². *Avāsanikā*, *kanduka*, *ghānaka*, *jagati*, *nemaka*, etc. are some of these words. The donors were all merchants. Their references include *vanik*, *nemaka vanik* (salt merchant), *śilākūta* (stone cutter), *kanduka* (suger boiler), *ghānaka* (oil miller) and others.

A merchant Chanduka set up most of the temples in this inscription. Names of other merchants correspond to their Vaiṣṇava affiliation like Keśava, Govinda, Mādhava, etc. Cakrasvāmīdeva also appears to be a popular epithet in this area. The second part of this inscription starts with an adoration to Ganapati. Two verses invoke the blessings of Gaṇanātha and Trivikrama (Viṣṇu) respectively. Then it refers to a certain prince of Mahodaya. The town is compared with Indra's town Amarāvati. The prince of Mahodaya gave this town to Rāyakas. One of their descendants named Vaśiṣṭha happened to come on matters of business to Siyādonī, where he dwelt near the raja of the place, Harirāja. Vaśiṣṭha's son, Dāmodara founded here a temple of Murārī (Viṣṇu). He then furnished it with an image of the god, provided it with a garden and probably endowed it with the funds for the worship of the deity. This temple of Viṣṇu has been identified with a large ruined shrine of the neighbouring village of Satgatto to the northeast of Siron. Near the ruined temple is a large *bāoli* or

⁹² Ibid. p.165.

well still in good condition. The village has a number of shrines of Viṣṇu.

This independent involvement of traders and *brāhmaṇas* in the construction and donation of the temple is called by Michael Willis⁹³ as the third stage of patronage enjoyed by the temple, the first two being donation by the king and the feudatories respectively.

Siron-Khurd has yielded a number of Vaiṣṇava sculptures, which are kept in Government Museum Jhansi. This ancient town might have been a hub of Vaiṣṇava temples, all of which are now deserted and ruined. A four handed image of Vāmana⁹⁴, found from Siron-Khurd is kept in the museum. The god is standing in *samapāda mudrā*, holding kamandala, flanked by Śankhapurusa and Cakrapurusa to its right and left respectively. The image is encircled by the incarnations of Viṣṇu – Paraśurāma, Varāha, Nṛsimha, Kalki, Matsya, Kūrma, etc. the image may be the presiding deity of a temple, possibly corresponding to the Vāmanasvāmīdeva of Siyādonī Inscription. The image belongs to 10th century A.D.

Another image found from Siron-Khurd is of *Padmāsana* Viṣṇu⁹⁵. The God is in *dhyānamudrā* with two lower hands kept in Yogic posture and the other two carrying *gadā* and *cakra*. It also belongs to 10th century A.D.

The museum has the four handed sculpture of Trivikrama⁹⁶ from the same place. The left leg of the God is shown touching the mouth of the *rākṣasa*.

Banpur village in Lalitpur has yielded an image of *Śeṣāśayī* Viṣṇu⁹⁷ belonging to 10th century A.D. The God is sleeping on the coils of seven-hooded serpent. The size of the sculpture (188cm × 74cm) shows that it may be the main deity of a temple.

Several other stray sculptures or small temple sites are found in Madhya Pradesh belonging to the Pratihāra period. Tumain in district Guna has yielded a *Viśvarupa*

⁹³ Willis, Michael D., *Temples of Gopaksetra*, pp. 82-87.

⁹⁴ Sculptures of Government Museum Jhansi, Acc. No. 81.16.

⁹⁵ Ibid, Acc. No. 81.188.

⁹⁶ Sculptures of Government Museum Jhansi, Acc. No. 81.195.

⁹⁷ Ibid, Acc. No. 83.64.

form of Viṣṇu⁹⁸. Indore in Guna district has a shrine with sculptures of Viṣṇu-Lakṣmī and carved pillars lying about⁹⁹. It belongs to 9th-10th century A.D.

Lotkhedi in Mandasor has yielded stone sculptures of Mahiṣāsūramardini, Nṛsimha, Agni, Hanumān, and Gaṇeśa belonging to 8th-9th century A.D.¹⁰⁰. The same place has the remains of a 9th century Viṣṇu temple.

The Maurya feudatories of the Gurjara Pratihāras were ruling in Mālavā. The Dharmanatha temple¹⁰¹ in Dhamnar (Mandasor district) of their period contains the figures of Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa, Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa, *Anantaśāyī* Viṣṇu and *Daśavatāras*. The village Behta and Lahukhedu on the bank of Bhopal lake has a group of sculptures belonging to the Pratihāra period – Umā-Maheśvara, Brahmā, Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa, Bhairava, etc.¹⁰².

Ranod in Shivpuri district has yielded a four-armed figure of Viṣṇu¹⁰³ holding *Śaṅkha*, *cakra*, *gadā* and one hand in *varada mudrā*. The deity is flanked by *vidyādharas* and devotees. It belongs to the 9th century A.D.

With all the temples and sculptures assigned to the Gurjara Pratihāra period, it seems probable that they were involved in commissioning temples or images¹⁰⁴. They sought to avoid the localization of power and particularization of identity. Willis also seems to find it significant that no account of temple destruction is found in Rāṣṭrakūṭa records when such records deal with the defeat of the Pratihāras.

All these arguments may be true but the Pratihāras did involve themselves in the construction of temples, one example being the construction of the seraglio for the god Narakadviṣa (Viṣṇu)¹⁰⁵. Also there is evidence of refurbishing of the Gupta

⁹⁸ *Indian Archaeology : A Review* (hereafter *IAR*), 1972-73. p. 59.

⁹⁹ *Descriptive and Classified List of Ancient Monuments in Madhya Bharat*, no. 701.

¹⁰⁰ *IAR*, 1988-89, p. 105.

¹⁰¹ Meister, Michael W. and Dhaky, M.A., *Encyclopaedia of Indian Temple Architecture, North India: Period of Early Maturity* (A.D. 700-900), New Delhi, 1991, pp. 299-317.

¹⁰² *IAR*, 1982-83, p. 134.

¹⁰³ Archaeological Museum Gwalior Fort, Acc. No. 33.

¹⁰⁴ Willis, Michael D., *Temples of Gopaksetra*, p. 290.

¹⁰⁵ Majumdar, R.C., 'Gwalior Prasasti of Gurjara Pratihara King Bhoja', *EI*, Vol. 18, pp. 99-104.

temple at Eran during late 8th century A.D. with a new doorway and *mukhalingam*¹⁰⁶. They may have been involved in the protection and maintenance of the Caturbhuj temple at Gwalior. Importance of rituals may have declined, but that of religion may have not. And Pratihāras used religion to give strength to their call for legitimacy (being the door-keeper of the world like Lakṣmaṇa)¹⁰⁷.

V

In the early years of 8th century A.D., the Kalacuris were emerging in and around Jabalpur as new local rulers. Its founder Vāmaraja¹⁰⁸ overran Bundelkhand and established himself at Kālañjara, the impregnable fort in Banda. He transferred his capital from Mahismaṭī to Tripuri. He assumed imperial titles like *Paramabhṭāraka*, *Mahārājadhirāja* and *Parameśvara*.

Lakṣmaṇarāja I was fourth in succession as the Kalacuri ruler, whose inscription at Karitalai¹⁰⁹ is the first to invoke Viṣṇu in its various forms. Karitalai is a small village, 27 miles north by east from Murawara tehsil in Jabalpur district. The inscription is affixed to the temple of devī Mādhiā (a local deity). It starts with an obeisance to Druhina (Brahmā), Upendra (Viṣṇu), and Rudra (Śiva). It is dated in Kalacuri – Cedī era (840 A.D.). There is reference of Amoghavarṣa, who bowed to the feet of some saintly person. Amoghavarṣa is the famous Rāṣṭrakūṭa ruler. He might have gone to Cedī country to pay his respect to the holy person, who put this inscription.

Next Kalacuri inscription invoking Viṣṇu is the inscription of Yuvarājadeva I¹¹⁰ from Bandhogarh. He was one of the powerful rulers of later Kalacuri dynasty. These three inscriptions of his reign are incised on the western wall of Fish temple¹¹¹ in Bandhogarh. Bandhogarh is 6 miles south by west of Rewa in the same district of

¹⁰⁶ Meister & Dhaky, *Encyclopaedia of Indian Temple Architecture, North India: Period of Early Maturity*, pp. 27-60.

¹⁰⁷ Hultzsch, E., 'Two Inscriptions of Vaillabhassvamin Temple at Gwalior', *EI*, Vol. 1, pp. 154-162.

¹⁰⁸ Mirashi, V.V., *Inscriptions of the Kalachuri-Chedi Era*, *CII*, Vol. IV, pt. I, Ootacamund, 1955, pp. lxxvii- lxxxv.

¹⁰⁹ Mirashi, V.V., 'Karitalai Stone Inscription of Lakshmanaraja I', *CII*, Vol. IV, pt. I, p. 182.

¹¹⁰ Mirashi, V.V., 'Bandhogarh Rock Inscription (No.1) of Yuvarajadeva I', *CII*, Vol. IV, pt. I, pp. 182-185.

¹¹¹ This may have been an image of *Matsya*, whom Mirashi is referring as Fish temple.

Madhya Pradesh. The object of the inscription is to record that illustrious Gollaka caused the construction of the images of the Fish, the Tortoise, the Boar and others also known as Gauda. Gollaka was the son of illustrious Bhaku who was the minister of Yuvarājadeva I.

Another inscription¹¹² is incised on a pillar with a figure of Garuḍa to the west of the colossal rock figure of Ādivarāha. Ādivarāha is placing the left foot on a *nāga* figure. The object of the inscription is to record that the Fish, the Tortoise, the Ādivarāha and Paraśurāma were caused to be built by the illustrious Gollaka.

The third inscription is incised on a rock facing southwest near the rock cut image of the Tortoise at Bandhogarh. The object of the inscription is to dedicate the image of the Tortoise.

Not very far from Bandhogarh, there is another inscription of Yuvarājadeva I in Gopalpur¹¹³. Gopalpur is a village one mile to the north of Bandhogarh. The object of the inscription is to record that an image of Haladhara (Balarāma) is caused to be carved by the same Gollaka. This inscription is incised on a rock at the back of the *Śeṣaśāyī* image. It seems that the early Kalacuri rulers worshipped trinity, while the flood incarnation (Matsya, Kūrma, Varāha) were particularly worshipped in Bandhogarh region. Paraśurāma as an incarnation of Viṣṇu is for the first time mentioned in this inscription. Kūrma *avatāra* also made its first appearance.

The Varāha incarnation figures in the Karitalai inscription of Lakṣmanarāja II¹¹⁴, too. Karitalai has the distinction of being a place of antiquity. This inscription opens with the benedictory line assigned to the Vāmana incarnation of the Viṣṇu. It gives the description of a high temple (*prāsādayam*) erected by Someśvara. The image-installed there in is probably the Boar incarnation of Viṣṇu, which is referred to in the verse 27 and verse 35 of the inscription. The God is referred to as enemy of demons at two places – *daityadruhaḥ*¹¹⁵ and *dānavāreṣopyayā*¹¹⁶ (enemy of *dānavas*). Different donations were given to the God under the name of Varāha – *varāhanāya*

¹¹² Mirashi, V.V., 'Bandhogarh Rock Inscription (No.II) of Yuvarajadeva I', *CII*, Vol. IV, pt. I, pp. 183-84.

¹¹³ Mirashi, V.V., 'Gopalpur Inscription of Yuvarājadeva I', *CII*, Vol. IV, pt. I, pp. 185-186.

¹¹⁴ Mirashi, V.V., 'Karitalai Stone Inscription of Lakṣmanarāja II', *CII*, Vol. IV, pt. I, pp. 186-195.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid*, p. 190, v. 18.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid*, p. 190, v. 20.

*dvādasokhan dikam*¹¹⁷ - and Somasvāmin - *somasvāmīdevāya*¹¹⁸. The god is named as Somasvāmī after the name of Someśvara, the person who constructed this temple of Viṣṇu. Since the donations to the god were made under the above mentioned two names it is likely that the deity installed is Varāha.

Various donations were made to the temple by the king, queen and the prince in the town (*pura*) near the temple and eight *brāhmaṇas* were caused to settle. To them the king Lakṣmaṇarāja II donated village Dīrghaśākhika (Dighi, 6 miles southwest of Karitalai). He also gave another village to the God on the occasion of solar eclipse. His queen Rāhaḍā gave with his consent village Cakrakhraḍī (7 miles south of Karitalai). His son Śankaragaṇa is called as *ParamaVaiṣṇava*¹¹⁹. Two other villages Challipāṭaka and Antarapāṭa (Amaturra, 7 miles east of Karitalai) were donated to the God at solar eclipse. Further donation of two fields was made to the God. A potentate named Valli gave the village Vaṭagartikā (Barhati, 10 miles west by south of Karitalai) in his own territory. A visitor to the place donated a field of feed corn. Besides these, income from several taxes and tolls were ascribed to the temple. The various donations given to the temple show the extent of influence enjoyed by the God enshrined here. The inscription also refers to Bali giving three footsteps to Trivikrama.

The inscription refers to various sacrifices and the priests associated to these sacrifices like *Agnidh* (priest who kindles fire in a sacrifice), *Adhavaryu* (priest who officiates the sacrifices mentioned in the *Yajurveda*), *Hotr* (overall incharge of the sacrifices), *Udgātri* (priest who sings the metres of *Sāmaveda*) and others. At one place the king is shown as smearing his body with the butter (v.11). In the initiatory rite of *Agnistoma* sacrifice, the sacrificer is required to anoint himself with butter¹²⁰. There seems to be an extra emphasis on the *Vedic* sacrifices. It can be said that it was performed in emulation of the *Vedic* tradition. The worship of Viṣṇu was balanced with the *Vedic* tradition.

¹¹⁷ Ibid, p. 191, v. 35.

¹¹⁸ Ibid, p. 191, v. 27.

¹¹⁹ Mirashi, V.V., 'Karitalai Stone Inscription of Lakṣmanarāja II', *CIH*, Vol. IV, pt. I, p. 191, v. 33.

¹²⁰ Ibid, foot note 4, p.192.

Another inscription of Someśvara¹²¹ found from Karitalai refers to the construction of a *kūpa* (well) in the heart of the city Somasvāmīpura (Karitalai) by him. The first verse of the inscription praises Viṣṇu and Laksmī (...*kṣmalakṣmībhyām*). The name of the god Somasvāmin was given to the city to, Somasvāmīpura. This is second example¹²² in Madhya Pradesh that Vaiṣṇava incarnation is called after the name of the builder of the temple. The name Somasvāmin sometimes gives an impression that the temple is of Śiva. But the previous inscription refers to the temple of Viṣṇu which was constructed by Someśvara, is called as Somasvāmin. Also there is reference to various incarnations of Viṣṇu in both the inscriptions mentioned above. Thus Somasāmin here is a Vaiṣṇava deity.

Karitalai or Somasvāmīpura as it was called in ancient times may have been a Vaiṣṇava centre. We have a number of sculptures from this place kept in the Mahant Ghasidas Memorial Museum, Raipur. One sculpture shows Garuḍanārāyana¹²³ belonging to 10th century A.D. The god is wearing all usual ornaments and sitting on the back of Garuḍa.

Another sculpture is of the four handed image of Viṣṇu¹²⁴ carrying *Śankha* in left lower hand. Other hands are missing. This image belongs to 10th century A.D.

In one figure Viṣṇu is sitting in *dvibhaṅga* pose¹²⁵. The sculpture is found from Karitalai. The two left hands of the God are carrying *cakra* and *Śankha*. Two devotees are on the two sides of the God. It belongs to the 10th century A.D.

Still another sculpture shows pot bellied God Vāmana¹²⁶. All the hands of the God are missing. The God is flanked by two devotees and two garland bearers on two sides. It belongs to 10th century A.D.

VI

Towards the close of this period (c.A.D. 600-1000), the Candellas emerged as a dominant power in the area known as Jejakabhukti. It was a part of the former state of

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Vaillabhaṭṭasvāmin temple is the first example earlier described in this chapter.

¹²³ Sculptures of Mahant Ghasidas Memorial Museum, Raipur, Acc. No. 2542.

¹²⁴ Ibid, Acc. No. 2538.

¹²⁵ Ibid, Acc. No. 31.

¹²⁶ Sculptures of Mahant Ghasidas Memorial Museum, Raipur, Acc. No. 253E.

Chhatarpur and is now included in the Chhatarpur district of Madhya Pradesh. Khajuraho was one of the capitals of the Candellas, which they adorned with beautiful temples.

The earliest temple of a Vaiṣṇavite deity built in Khajuraho appears to have been the Varāha temple¹²⁷. The colossal Varāha is a powerfully modeled sculpture decorated all over with rows of gods and goddesses including Sarasvatī, Navagrahas, Ganga, Yamuna, Brahmā, Śiva, *avatāras* of Viṣṇu, etc. On the upper half of this figure occurs two ornamental feet probably of Bhūdevī, which it should have supported.

Lakṣmaṇa standing on the site is the first fully developed and organized temple. An inscription dated A.D. 953-54 in the reign of king Dhaṅga was originally found in the debris accumulated at the base of this temple and is now fixed in its *mandapa* passage. This is the famous stone inscription of Candella ruler Yaśovarman¹²⁸. It records the erection of a temple of Viṣṇu under the name of Vaikuṅṭha by the prince Yaśovarman, also called as Lakṣavarman of the Candrātreya family. According to it, Yaśovarman has received the image of Vaikuṅṭha from Devapāla, which he set up in the temple founded by him. Devapāla is mentioned as a son of Herāmbapāla who had obtained the image from the Sāhī king of Kīra (Kashmir), who in turn had got it from Bhota (probably Tibet). The inscription starts and ends with obeisance to Vāsudeva. It describes Vaikuṅṭha as the one who frightens the whole world with his roaring, the same way as the Boar and Manlion slew the three chief Asuras, Kapila and the rest –

*Dadhānānekām yah kiripurusasim (hobhaya) jusam tadākārocchedyām
tanumsuramu-khyānajavarāt jaghāna trīnugrānj(nc)agati kapilādīnavatu vah sa
vaikuṅṭhaḥ*¹²⁹.

Also there is a reference to the three strides of Hari.

Lakṣmaṇa temple is the first organized and well-planned temple of Khajuraho¹³⁰. The temple is a major *pañcāyatana* temple of Vaikuṅṭha with four subsidiary shrines at

¹²⁷ Krishna Deva, *Temples of Khajuraho*, New Delhi, 1990, pp. 36-38.

¹²⁸ Keilhorn, F., 'Stone Inscription of Yasovarman, of the year 1011', *EI*, Vol. 1, pp. 122-135.

¹²⁹ Keilhorn, F., 'Stone Inscription of Yasovarman, of the year 1011', *EI*, Vol. 1, p. 124, v. 1.

¹³⁰ Desai, Devangana, *The Religious Imagery of Khajuraho*, p. 99.

the four corners of its platform terrace. The small shrine facing the temple possibly housed Garuḍa, the mount of God. But now it contains an image of Brahmānī, locally called as Devī. The temple enshrines a majestic three-faced Vaikuṅṭha image¹³¹. Its central *saumya* (placid) face is flanked by Nṛsimha (Lion) and the Varāha (Boar) faces. However, the inscription mentioned above, refers to a four-faced Vaikuṅṭha image. This image does not have Himalayan or Chamba features in its face, physiognomy, dress, *mukuta* and jewellery. It is a heavy figure of stone, difficult to be easily transported without damage. It wears a double loop *mekhala* and *pādāṅgala* ornament. Stylistically, the present Vaikuṅṭha image belongs to A.D. 1075-1100 and must have been installed when the original image brought by Yaśovarman was missing (according to Devangana Desai).

Besides the Vaikuṅṭha image, the sanctum contains the figures of Śiva, Gaṇeśa, Pārvatī, different incarnations of Viṣṇu and various Kṛṣṇa *līlā* scenes. Lakṣmī illustrated by the elephants occupies the *lalāṭabimba* of the sanctum door flanked by Brahmā and Śiva on left and right respectively¹³². Below in the centre of the threshold is a figure of four armed pot bellied Kubera. Matsya *avatāra* is shown as the rescuer of the four *Vedas*. Main cardinal niche contains the incarnations of Viṣṇu – Varāha, Nṛsimha, Hayagrīva, Kūrma and Matsya *avatāra*. The western cardinal niche represents the *Yogeśvara* Viṣṇu. This extra ordinary image of Viṣṇu is with the raised index finger near mouth suggesting one or *ekāntin*, the single-minded devotion. Devangana Desai says that Viṣṇu is asking his devotees by his hand gesture to observe silence and guard the secrets of the doctrine he is expounding¹³³.

Among the sculptures, various Kṛṣṇa *līlā* scenes include *Tṛnāvata vadha*, slaying of sūta Lomahaṛṣana by Balarāma, fight with the wrestlers of the Kaṁsa, *Ariṣṭāsuravadha*, *Pūtanā vadha*, *Yamalārjuna* episode, etc. Thematically, except one scene – *Kubjānugraha*, the panel depicts the heroic deeds of demon killing. It accords well with the spirit of the inscription, which invokes Vaikuṅṭha Viṣṇu as '*daityārī*' (enemy of the demons), and calls the patron king Yaśovarman as '*kunthitārī*' (subduer of the enemies). The king's mother is linked to Devakī, the mother of Kṛṣṇa. In

¹³¹ Ibid, p. 101.

¹³² Ibid, p. 109.

¹³³ Desai, Devangana, *The Religious Imagery of Khajuraho*, p. 120.

sculptural depictions, Kṛṣṇa is represented as 'daityāri' like Vaikuṅṭha Viṣṇu and the patron king Yaśovarman, according to Devangana Desai¹³⁴.

The *mahāmaṇḍapa* of this sanctum has the *Viśvarupa* form of Viṣṇu¹³⁵. This is twelve handed and twelve armed form of Viṣṇu standing in *tribhanga* pose and holding *cakra*, *gadā* and arrow in the surviving hands. The principal head, which was human, was broken, but the lion's head on proper right and boar's head on proper left is preserved. The God wears *kuṇḍalas*, *keyūras*, wristlets, *kaustubhamani*, *hāra*, *upavita*, torque, *vanamālā* and anklets. Headless Garuḍa depicted by the side of the attendants of Viṣṇu is in praising attitude. The halo of the *Viśvarupa* Viṣṇu is flanked by seated figures of three headed and four-armed Brahmā on right and four armed Śiva on left. The main figure partly resembles *Ananta* form of Viṣṇu.

Other images of the *mahāmaṇḍapa* include four armed Śiva and Pārvatī. Northeastern shrine contains images of Agni, Varuna and Yama. The southeastern shrine contains the figure of four-armed Varāha and eight armed Sūrya¹³⁶. The image of Sūrya is carrying rosary, *trisūla*, lotus flower, *Śaṅkha* and *kamaṇḍala*. This image represents *Hari-Hara-Hiranyagarbha* combining the characteristics of Hari, Hara, Sūrya and Balarāma. Northwestern shrine contains one *Ardhanārīśvara* form among other images.

Devangana Desai opines that most of the temples of Khajuraho including Lakṣmaṇa temple show the patronage enjoyed by them¹³⁷. It also heralds a new image in the religious life of Khajuraho with the assertion of *Brāhmaṇic-Vedic* elements. The temple symbolizes the augmented power of the Candellas marching from chieftainship to kingship¹³⁸. The effort of the Candella kings to glorify the origin of their dynasty (born from mythical Candrātreyā) is due to their possible tribal origin. The temples constructed before the Lakṣmaṇa temple are brick temples. This is the first edifice whose rich splendor indicates the wealth of its patron Yaśovarman.

¹³⁴ Ibid, p. 125.

¹³⁵ Krishna Deva, *Temples of Khajuraho*, p. 295.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Desai, Devangana, 'Patronage of Lakṣmaṇa Temple at Khajuraho', in B.S. Miller(ed), *Powers of Art*, pp. 78-83.

¹³⁸ Desai, Devangana, *The Religious Imagery of Khajuraho*, p. 99.

The importance of acquiring the much sought after Vaikuṅṭha image can be seen in the context of power politics of North Indian States of 10th century A.D. One of the cardinal niches of the sanctum bears an image of Viṣṇu as Hayagrīva (Devapāla is called as *Hayapati* in the inscription engraved in the temple).

VII

This period witnessed a number of Vaiṣṇava centres emerging and flourishing in various parts of Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh, like Sirpur, Rajim, Badoh, Karitalai, Gwalior, Lalitpur, etc. (for geographical distribution pattern see map numbers II and III). The kind of patronage enjoyed by the temples also varied from the kings/queens and feudatories to the merchants.

The period of 600 A.D. to 1000 A.D. witnessed the rise and flourishing of many dynasties in Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh. The rise of new *Vaiṣṇava* sites could be connected to these dynasties. The *Vaiṣṇava* sites in Chhattisgarh were essentially the product of the influence of the Gupta rulers. The *Śarabhauriya* rulers were the feudatories of the *Guptas* and like them they took the epithet of '*Parama Bhāgavata*' in their inscriptions. However the first temples of the period came in *Pāṇḍuvamśin* period, though there was a temple called *Śridharasvāmin* in Raipur in the *Śarabhauriya* Period.

Madhya Pradesh has the *Vaiṣṇava* sites related to *Pratihāra* rulers and *Kalacuri* rulers in central and northern, and northeastern Madhya Pradesh respectively. Other parts of Madhya Pradesh remained aloof from the *Vaiṣṇava* influence. There were some new sites in Satna district like Bandhogarh and Gopalpur. Like wise the region in and around Vidisha has *Vaiṣṇava* sites and temples dedicated to *Vaiṣṇava* deities under the auspices of *Pratihāra* rulers.

The region has different patterns of Vaiṣṇavism prevalent in different parts. The early Vaiṣṇavism or the Bhāgavatism of the *Śarabhauriya* rulers was restricted to the *Vaiṣṇava* names of the *brāhmins* and the villages, sometimes *viṣaya* (district) too. The *Śarabhauriya* rulers show the affinity towards the feminine side of the *Vaiṣṇava* sect.

They adopted Gajalakṣmī symbol on their seals. The only known temple from their period is called as Śrīdharasvāmin temple. However, the best-known Vaiṣṇava temple of this period in Chhattisgarh was Lakṣmaṇa temple of Sirpur. It was constructed during Pāṇḍuvamśin rule. Rājīvalocana temple is another famous Vaiṣṇava temple. Unlike the Malwa region, Varāha was not an important deity of this region. Rather they worship Viṣṇu in the form of Rājīvalocana or Rāma.

Malwa region continued to show the worship of Varāha incarnation of Viṣṇu. However towards the end of this period (c.A.D.600-1000), there is a growing tendency towards the worship of *Caturbhujā* form of Viṣṇu. All the incarnations were assigned a lower place.

This is the tradition, which is still followed in various parts of Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and other states. As such this period (c.A.D. 600-1000) witnessed the beginning of modern day Vaiṣṇavism. The worship of Kṛṣṇa and his various deeds as a child also became a popular mode of worship.

As I have indicated earlier some of the Vaiṣṇava centres showed a declining trend. This trend became much more obvious in the next period (c.A.D.1000-1300). The various reasons behind this development will be studied in my later chapters.

The period saw the development of Vaiṣṇavism from symbolic worship to the assertive Vaiṣṇavism and finally the culmination of Viṣṇu worship in Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh. The large temples were constructed and patronized by the rulers of this region. The period also saw the rise of Śaiva ascetics in Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh, which soon eclipsed the upward movement of Vaiṣṇavism. But by and large it remained the period of the rise of Vaiṣṇavism.

CHAPTER – 3

VAIṢṆAVA CENTRES IN MADHYA PRADESH AND CHHATTISGARH (c. A.D. 1000-1300)

The term “Vaiṣṇava centres” usually connotes one or more Vaiṣṇava temples dedicated to some form of Viṣṇu or his incarnations and the associated priests. This centre can be an isolated one or a complex of temples with elaborate rituals. However, a deep study of these centres presents the multiple facets of its evolution and expansion before the researcher. These ‘centres’ are the product of a historical process of evolution from a simple to a complex form. And in the process of its evolution, it affected the socio-economic and political conditions of the region and in turn was affected by them. This process brings into the limelight the various elements associated with and benefited by its evolution.

The task of identifying Vaiṣṇava centres gets more complicated and confused in the period c.A.D.1000-1300. This period in Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh was an era of intense political struggle among the various dynasties for the occupation of the region and the manifestation of their political power. By now the kingdoms were established by conquests, the annexation of the neighbouring territories and initiation of the process of integration of intermediary zones. Prof. Herman Kulke¹ calls this stage as the stage of imperial kingdom, the third and the final stage in the development of Hindu statehood before the founding of the Islamic states.

In this era of intense political struggle or imperial kingdoms, the religious centres multiplied. However, the number of Vaiṣṇava centres in Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh dwindled. Most of the prominent dynasties adopted Śaivism. Loss of patronage was a big blow to these centres. But other reasons were also at work.

¹ Kulke, Herman, ‘The Early and The Imperial Kingdom: A Procedural Model of Integrative State Foundation in Early Medieval India’, in Kulke (ed) *State in India, 1000-1700 A.D.*, Delhi, 1995.

The religious centres are often connected with the process of legitimization of the kings and the dynasties. The development of religious centres (in general, Vaiṣṇava centres in particular) was so closely interwoven with the rise of the dynasties that sometimes it becomes difficult to separate them. The development and distribution of Vaiṣṇava centres in this period (c. A.D. 1000-1300) was not an isolated event. Some old centres continued their dominance, while the new ones emerged in other regions.

While the local landed class and other richer sections of the society did take part in the expansion and the creation of new centres, the role of the State was no doubt, more conspicuous. With vast resources at their disposal and the greater stake involved in the legitimization process (through religion), the State was bound to construct and protect the religious centres.

The kings often made donations and renovations to the existing religious centres, this phenomena is observed at several places in Madhya Pradesh and Chattisgarh, all the kings and the conquerors in the Vidisha region made religious donations to the Varāha form of Viṣṇu. The Kalacuri king Pṛthvīdeva II renovated the existing *Rājīvalocana* temple and proudly announced it in his inscription fixed into the wall of the temple.²

Similarly all the important dynasties of Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh donated land to the *brāhmaṇa* or a number of *brāhmaṇas*. Initially the land grant was limited to one or two *brāhmaṇas*, slowly the number of *brāhmaṇas* increased. These *brāhmaṇas* were well versed in different branches of *Vedic* studies. The settlement of these *brāhmaṇas* in and around the nucleus was to give moral strength to the king. These *brāhmaṇas* in return prepared the lengthy genealogies of the king linking him to some mythical hero or even god (here Arjuna, Bhīma, Yudhiṣṭhira or some form of Viṣṇu). This clearly strengthened the legitimization process of the king and his dynasty.

The third and the final stage was the construction of new monumental temples of a hitherto unknown height. Through the construction of these temples the *Rājās* tried to

² Trivedi, H.V., 'Rajim Stone Inscription of Prithvideva II', *Inscriptions of the Paramāras, Candēllas, Kachchhapaghātas and Two Minor Dynasties, CII*, vol. VII, pp.

create a new and centralized ritual structure focussed on the new temple and its cult. The king already gave patronage to the local tribal cults. These cults found a lower place in this cults patronised by the king too. Almost all the temples in Gwalior, Jhansi, Devgarh, Chanderi region has the sculptures of *Nāgas* and *Nāga kanyās* in the lower niches. *Nāgas* were the local tribal chiefs of this region.

So far the early religious policies aimed at the vertical legitimization of the political hierarchy of the Hindu kingship in a more egalitarian tribal society. The construction of large temples and the association of the kings with it decided the position of the kings as head of the divine institutional Hindu kingship. The establishment of the power of the king over the divine institutions settled the horizontal recognition by rivals and potential rioters among the feudatories.

The process of legitimization often led the king to adopt the name of the gods; the case of Bhoja having the title of *Ādivarāha* is an important example of it, as shown in the last chapter. This trend continued in this period (c.A.D. 1000-1300), too.

I

The Kalacuris of Tripurī, who established their hegemony in the Cedīmaṇḍala or Dāhalamaṇḍala in 8th century A.D., continued till 13th century A.D. Tripurī is a city of high antiquity. It is mentioned in various later *Vedic* texts, Jaina and Buddhist texts as well as in various *Purānas*.³ It was one of the sixteen *mahājanapadas*. In later *Vedic* literature it is mentioned as three important cities of Asuras, while in the *Purāṇic* literature it is said that the city was destroyed by converting them to Buddhism and Jainism.⁴ The *Mahābhārata* mentions it as Traipura and attributes its destruction by Viṣṇu in the form of a cow-bull.⁵ The situation of Tripurī is placed in southeastern division in the *Bṛhatsāmhitā*, whereas Hemacandra calls it Cedīnagara or the capital of Cedī country.⁶

³ Dikshit, M.G., *Tripuri-1952: Being the Account of the Excavations at Tripuri*, Bhopal, 1955, pp. 7-8.

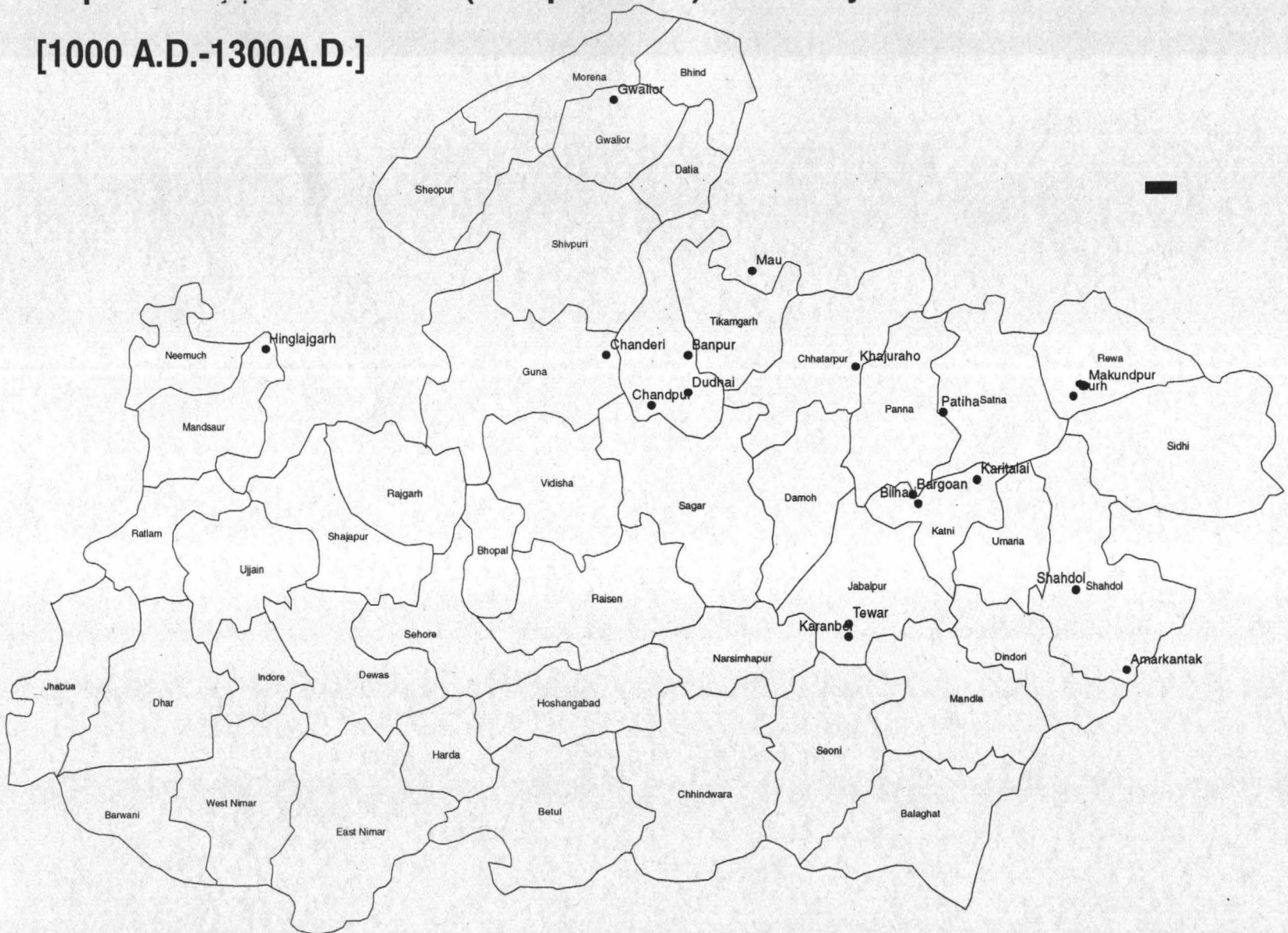
⁴ Ali, Rahman, *Art and Architecture of the Kalachuris*, Delhi, 1980, p. 3.

⁵ Sankalia, H.D., 'In search of Three Cities', *Journal of Madhya Pradesh Itihas Parishad* (hereafter *JMPIP*), vol. V, 1967, p. 59.

⁶ Dikshit, M.G., *Tripuri*, 1952,

Map IV: Vaiṣṇava Centres (Temple Sites) in Madhya Pradesh

[1000 A.D.-1300A.D.]



Not according to scale

Śaivism was the dominant religion in the country of Dāhala.⁷ It was actively patronised by almost all the kings of the Kalacuri dynasty, till the downfall of their reign. Next to Śiva, Viṣṇu seems to be the popular god as it appears in from the Bandhavagarh stone inscription of Yuvarājadeva⁸ and Karitalai stone inscription of Lakṣmaṇarāja II⁹ in the previous chapter. The present period (c.A.D. 1000-1300) too have some inscriptions and Vaiṣṇava sculptures in the northeastern and eastern parts of Madhya Pradesh.

Bargaon stone inscription of Śabara¹⁰ describes the gift of a cess on a threshing floor together with the granary to some ascetics residing at temple for the settlement of *brāhmaṇas*. Bargaon is a village, situated at a distance of 27 miles north by west of Murawara in the Katni district of Madhya Pradesh. The inscription is found incised on a broken slab lying amidst the ruins of a temple to the north of Bargaon. The temple may be of the god Śaṅkaranārāyaṇa for whose benefit the gift has been given as is mentioned in the inscription-

*Śrīśaṅkara nārāyaṇārthe brahmastāmvaba- sthanatapodhanasan.....*¹¹

The inscription opens with the obeisance “*om namah*”. The name of the god Śaṅkaranārāyaṇa seems to suggest that the temple was dedicated to Nārāyaṇa installed by Śaṅkara, who is probably identical with the Kalacuri prince of that name mentioned in the Karitalai stone inscription of Lakṣmaṇarāja II.¹² He is called ‘*Parama Vaiṣṇava*’ in that record. Śabara was the commander of the army.

We have a few sculptures of Viṣṇu found in different places. However the majority of them are detached from the original monuments. They are either preserved in museums or in personal collections. Among the *avatāras* of Viṣṇu, the Vāmana images so far have not been found intact with the original monuments of the Kalacuris.¹³ Similar is the case with the Varāha *avatāra*. Generally the majority of Nṛ-varāha images are represented with the other major images of Viṣṇu and hence they

⁷ Ali, Rahman, *Art and Architecture of the Kalachuris*, p. 17.

⁸ Mirashi, V.V., ‘Bandhogarh Rock Inscription of Yuvarajadeva I’, *CII*, Vol. IV, pt. I, pp. 182-185

⁹ Mirashi, V.V., ‘Gopalpur Inscription of Yuvarajadeva I’, *CII*, Vol. IV, pt. I, pp. 185-186.

¹⁰ Mirashi, V.V., ‘Bargaon Stone Inscription of Sabara’, *CII*, vol. IV, pp. 195-98.

¹¹ *Ibid*, p. 197, line 3.

¹² Mirashi, V.V., ‘Karitalai Stone Inscription of Prithviraja II’, *CII*, vol. IV, pt. I, pp.

¹³ Ali, Rahman, *Art and Architecture of the Kalachuris*, p. 124.

are shown as a subsidiary figure to indicate only incarnation of Viṣṇu. No temple dedicated to Nṛsimha *avatāra* (in the Kalacuri territory) has been discovered.

Karitalai in Jabalpur may have remained as a Vaiṣṇava centre even in the late Kalacuri period. We have a number of sculptures preserved in Mahant Ghasidas Memorial Museum in Raipur. An image of Nṛsimha¹⁴ shows the four handed, god tearing the belly of the demon. The God is wearing sacred thread. The sculpture belongs to 11th century A.D.

Another ferocious image of the God has been kept outside the museum roughly belonging to the same period and place.¹⁵

A 12th century Trivikrama image¹⁶ shows the broken half of the God. The left upper hand is carrying *cakra*, while the right lower is carrying lotus. Other hands and legs are missing.

An 11th century *Caturbhujā* Viṣṇu¹⁷ is shown in *tribhāṅga mudrā* carrying *cakra* in left upper hand. The right lower hand is in *abhaya mudrā*. Other hands are missing.

A somewhat crude image of Trivikrama¹⁸ is also preserved in this museum carrying *śāṅkha*, *cakra*, *gadā* and *varada mudrā*. No date and place are mentioned. It may belong to Karitalai as most of the sculptures are found from this region.

Yoganārāyaṇa image of Viṣṇu¹⁹ shows the God in tranquil posture. The two lower hands are in *yoga mudrā*. Other hands are missing. The image belongs to 11th century A.D.

Among other images preserved in this museum are images of Vaisnavi²⁰, Garuḍanārāyaṇa²¹ and *Caturbhujā* Viṣṇu²². This museum does not mention the find spot and the chronology of these sculptures. They may belong to Karitalai.

¹⁴ Sculptures of Mahant Ghasidas Memorial Museum, Acc. No. 2564.

¹⁵ Ibid, Acc. No. not mentioned.

¹⁶ Ibid, Acc. No. 98.

¹⁷ Ibid, Acc. No. 2385.

¹⁸ Ibid, Acc. No. 2586.

¹⁹ Ibid, Acc.No. 2558.

²⁰ Ibid, Acc.No. 2560.

²¹ Sculptures of Mahant Ghasidas Memorial Museum, Acc. No. 2585.

²² Ibid, Acc. No. 2561.

Besides the images of Viṣṇu and his various incarnations²³ along with other sculptures of Lakṣmī, Śiva and Bhairava have been found from Karitalai.

Bilhari in the Katni district has a Viṣṇu Varāha temple of the Kalacuri period.²⁴ A fine image of the Boar incarnation of Viṣṇu²⁵ is lying in the compound of the temple. The body of this Boar is entirely carved with figures gods. There are rows Ganeśas and twelve Ādityas on the body of the God.

An excellent image of Lakṣmī- Nārāyaṇa²⁶ is seen in the compound of the temple. Viṣṇu is shown in *lalitāsana* posture and Lakṣmī is shown sitting on his left lap in *ālingana* posture. The God is carrying *cakra* and *śankha*. *Garuḍa* is shown as a *vāhana* in human form and is well decorated with the ornaments.

Apart from this image of Lakṣmīnārāyaṇa, we have two other images from Tewar in Jabalpur district. One is lying in front of a modern shrine in Tewar.²⁷ Another is preserved in the Jabalpur Museum. The sculptural motif is the same but the figures look heavy because the outlines are not sharp and crisp. The image of Lakṣmīnārāyaṇa is surmounted by three miniature *śikhara*s. On either side of the central *śikhara*, the figures of Nṛvarāha and *Sthānu* Nṛsimha are shown. At the recessed corners other incarnations of Viṣṇu are shown, but they are quite deteriorated. The entire image is in fragmentary state and seems to be later creation of the Kalacuri artists.

There is a Keśavanārāyaṇa temple at Amarkantak in Shajdol district in Madhya Pradesh.²⁸ It has an image of Govinda.²⁹ The God has four arms holding a *gadā* and a *padma* with two upper hands and a *cakra* and *śankha* with two lower hands. He sat on a *padmapīṭha* under which his *vāhana* *Garuḍa* is shown. A male and a female devotee are shown at two sides of the God. The Vāmana and Buddha are shown behind the

²³ IAR, 1993-94, p. 136.

²⁴ Ali, Rahman, *Art and Architecture of the Kalachuris*, p. 121.

²⁵ Banerji, R.D., *Haihayas of Tripuri and Their Monuments*, MASI, No. 23.

²⁶ Ali, Rahman, *Art and Architecture of the Kalachuris*, p. 122.

²⁷ Ibid,

²⁸ Ibid, p. 123.

²⁹ Ibid. the texts viz. the *Rupamandana* and *Agnipurāna* prescribe the arrangement of *āyudhas* of Govinda, ft. nt. 4, p. 123.

two devotees. On the left of Garuḍa other incarnations of Viṣṇu i.e. Paraśurāma and Kalki are represented; Balarāma is represented behind Kalkin, with a *hala* and a drinking cup, whereas behind the figure of Buddha, the sculptural figure of Rāmacandra with *dhanuṣa* and *śara* in his hands are shown. Upon the *kudyastambhikas*, the figures of Nṛvarāha on the left and Nṛsimha on the right are sculptured. The Matsya and Kūrmavatāra are visible on the top. Banerji has placed this image in 12th century A.D.³⁰

II

Several Vaiṣṇava sculptures of the Kalacuri period are found scattered or they have been kept in museums including private collections. Therefore I am dealing with them separately in this section.

The palace of the Thākur of Sohagpur³¹ has a collection of Kalacuri sculptures- both Jaina and Vaiṣṇava. They claim descent from the Kalacuri *Mahārāja* of Rewa.

A *yogāsānamūrti* of Viṣṇu³² is preserved in this palace. The God is shown in *padmāsana* on a *padmapīṭha*. The two hands are in *yogamudrā*, while the two hands are holding the conch and wheel. On each of the upper end of the back slabs are the Boar and the Man lion incarnation of Viṣṇu. On the sides of the head of the main figure are shown the images of Rāma and Vāmana on the left and that of Paraśurāma and Buddha on the right. The Earth goddess is shown seated on a Kūrma in *añjalihastamudrā*. This image according to Rahaman Ali³³ bears a unique position, and exhibits the advanced workmanship of the Kalacuri artists.

A Śeṣāsayī image of Viṣṇu³⁴ shows the God sleeping on the coils of Ananta.

The palace of Sohagpur contains large slabs of stones bearing reliefs. The first of these represent the well known story of Kṛṣṇa³⁵- Kṛṣṇa with gopīs, *Ariṣṭāsuravadha*,

³⁰ Banerji, R.D., *MASI*, No. 23, pp. 108-09.

³¹ Banerji, R.D., *MASI*, No.23, p. 99.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ali, Rahman, *Art and Architecture of the Kalachuris*, p. 123.

³⁴ Banerji, R.D., *MASI*, No. 23, pp. 99-103.

³⁵ Ibid, p. 103.

uprooting the Yamalārjuna tree, Vāsudeva taking the child Kṛṣṇa from Mathura to Gokula, *Putanāvadha*, *Śakātavadhā*, Kṛṣṇa levying contributions of milk and butter from the milkmaids of Gokula, birth of Kṛṣṇa, Kāliyanāga of Gokula, *Govardhanadhārana*, etc.

About the Kṛṣṇāvatara, one thing is to be mentioned that no stray icon of the God has so far been discovered from the Kalacuri territory.³⁶

We find many sculptural *śilāpaṭṭas* and the fragmentary *stambhas*, which narrate the various *Purāṇic* stories and other incidents connected with the life of Kṛṣṇa. The God is mostly depicted on the bas-relief in action (showing various wonderful exploits).

Out of them one specimen is found from Shahdol district.³⁷ This is unique because the figure of Lakṣmī is also shown serving Devakī by holding her right leg. Devakī is seated on an embroidered *māsuraka* and baby Kṛṣṇa is sleeping on Ananta. Both are shadowed by *Nāga* hoods. The *śankha*, *cakra* and other weapons of Viṣṇu are shown supporting the *mañca*. A row of seven standing mail figures is represented just behind the figure of Devakī. They were induced to stupor by Yogamāyā, and the figure of Yogamāyā may be seen standing very close to Lakṣmī. She holds a powerful *asani-danḍa* (thunderbolt), which is clearly visible in the hand of female figure. This belongs to the first quarter of 11th century A.D. This image is now in Dhubela Museum in Chhatarpur district.

An interesting image of *Śeṣāsayī* Viṣṇu³⁸ is discovered at Shahdol. The God is holding *śankha* and *cakra*. His right leg is supported by Lakṣmī who is seated on a *māsuraka* and massaging it. Brahmā is represented on the *padmanābha* issued from the navel of Viṣṇu. The figures of Matsya, Kūrma, Nṛvarāha, Sthānu Nṛsimha and Kalki are displayed on the *pītha*.

³⁶ Ali, Rahman, *Art and Architecture of the Kalachuris*, p. 130.

³⁷ *Ibid*, pp. 130-131.

³⁸ Ali, Rahman, *Art and architecture of the Kalachuris*, pp. 136-37.

An image of *Sihānu* Nṛsimha was found from the village Antara in Shahdol district.³⁹ This specimen is noteworthy because of its excellent depiction of legend and its artistic features. The body of Hiranyakaśipu is thrown on the right by Nṛsimha who is shown busy in pulling out the entrails of demon with his two hands. It belongs to somewhat early period, to 9th century A.D.

The State museum at Dhubela in Chhatarpur district contains two images of *Vāmana avatāra* Viṣṇu.⁴⁰ In both the images, the God is shown holding *gadā*, *cakra*, *padma* and *varadamudrā*. The main figure is surrounded by the incarnations of Viṣṇu- Kūrma, Matsya, Nṛvarāha, Nṛsimha, Paraśurāma, Rāma, Kalkin, etc.

The museum also has an image of Nṛvarāha.⁴¹

III

North Eastern Madhya Pradesh seems to have become an important Kalacuri centre in this period. We have a number of Vaiṣṇava sculptures and two inscriptions from this region. Makundpur stone inscription of Gāṅgeyadeva⁴² records that the *śreṣṭhīn* Dāmodara, the ornament of the family of *Gṛhapati* caused a temple of Jalaśāyī to be constructed. Makundpur is a village about 9 miles south by west of Rewa on Madhya Pradesh. The record is incised on a slab lying on the ruins of a small temple situated to northwest of Rupasāgara, a large tank at Makundpur. The inscription refers to the reign of Gāṅgeyadeva. It belongs to A.D. 1019.

Rewa plates of the time of Trailokyamalladeva⁴³ belonging to 1212 A.D. starts with an invocatory verse in praise of Kṛṣṇa-

jayatu-jayatu devo devakī-nandanoyam
jayatu jayatu kṛṣṇo vṛṣṇi-vamiśa pradipah
jayatu jayatu megha śyāmalaḥ komal-āngo
*jayatu jayatu pṛthvī-(bhā)ra-nāśo(śī)mukunḍaḥ.*⁴⁴

³⁹ Ibid, pp. 128-29.

⁴⁰ Ibid, p. 125.

⁴¹ Ibid, p. 125-26.

⁴² Mirashi, V. V., 'Makundpur Stone Inscription of Gangeyadeva', *CII*, vol. IV, pt. I, pp. 234-35.

⁴³ Chakravarti, N. P., 'Rewah Plates of the Time of Trailokyamalladeva: (Kalachuri) year 963', *EI*, vol. 25, pp. 1-6.

⁴⁴ Ibid, p. 5, verse 1.

The inscription is basically a Śaiva inscription containing the seal of Trailokyamalla-deva. It is not a usual land grant but is a *viṭṭa-bandha* or deed of mortgage for the village Alira, situated in the Dhavahaṭṭa *pattana* (Dhureti). Dhureti is a village about 7 miles from the Rewa town from where the inscription is found.

Apart from these two inscriptions, there are several places in the Rewa district, which yield the image of Viṣṇu.

Gurh is one such place. An image of Nṛvarāha is discovered from here.⁴⁵ The God is shown in *ālīdha* posture. The earth goddess is shown on the left shoulder of the God.

We have an outstanding image of *Sthānu* Nṛsimha at Gurh.⁴⁶ The eight-handed God is shown in *vaikhānsāgama mudrā*. Two of his hands are holding *śankha* and *cakra* and other two hands are tearing the belly of the demon. Other hands of the God are broken. Many mutilated human figures are visible on either side of Nṛsimha. They might be Śrīdevī, Bhūdevī and Prahlāda. The image is fixed on the fencing wall of a temple known as Kaṣṭaharana temple in the village.

One *stambha* found from Gurh in the Rewa district contains the scenes from the life of Kṛṣṇa⁴⁷ like *Pūtanāvadha*, Balarāma-Kṛṣṇa going to Mathura, *Kubjāvadha*, *Cānuravadha*, *Keśīvadha*, *Tṛnāvatadha*, *Kāliyadamana*, *Govardhanadhārana*, etc. Another *stambha* from Marai in Rewa district shows the Kṛṣṇavatāra scenes.⁴⁸

On the slabs of the tank at Marai, there is a beautiful image of Śeṣāśayī.⁴⁹ The God is recumbent on a bed with the hood of the snake Ananta spread as a canopy over his head. *Navagrahas* are also depicted in the image. Under the bed is a horse and an elephant with the conch shell in centre is depicted. Two mutilated figures are visible near his left leg in the act of supplication. Most probably they are demons- Madhū and Kaiṭabha. Near the right leg of Viṣṇu a defaced female figure is visible and very close

⁴⁵ Ali, Rahman, *Art and Architecture of the Kalachuris*, p. 126.

⁴⁶ Ibid, pp. 129-30.

⁴⁷ Ibid, pp. 134-35.

⁴⁸ Ibid, pp. 133-34.

⁴⁹ Banerji, R.D., *MASI*, No, 23, p. 94.

to her another standing female with an indistinct object in her right is shown. They may be Lakṣmī and Bhūdevī respectively,

In the pillar found on the bank of the stepped tank of Marai, the second band has four images of Viṣṇu, each having lotus, wheel, mace, conch, etc. in respective hands.⁵⁰ The second face of the pillar shows different incarnations in different bands like Matsya, Kūrma, Varāha, Buddha, Kalkin, Rāma / Paraśurāma, Nṛsimha, Viṣṇu on Garuda, etc. The third and four faces contain Vaiṣṇava images and symbols.

Gurgi in Rewa district has one *śilapatta* depicting the legend of the birth of Kṛṣṇa.⁵¹ Devakī is shown fondling the baby Kṛṣṇa asleep. This specimen is a superb production of a master hand of 11th century A.D.

From the findings of such *śilapattas* showing the birth of Kṛṣṇa it appears that the legends of Kṛṣṇa birth were popular in the society.

The Śeṣaśayī image of lord Viṣṇu has been discovered from Rewa.⁵² The God is holding *cakra* and *śankha*. The figures of Kūrma, Matsya, Kalkin and Buddha are shown behind the serpent canopy.

Towards the end of Kalacuri rule in the northeastern Madhya Pradesh there is an inscription found from Karanbel, a village now in ruins near Bhera Ghat, which records the construction of the temple of Viṣṇu.⁵³ The object of the inscription is to record the construction of a lofty temple of Viṣṇu apparently at Karanbel by Harigaṇa. He caused this temple to be constructed out of his love for his chaste wife.

The inscription gives the genealogy of the Kalacuri rulers of Tripurī from Karna to Vijayasimha. The prevalence of the *Caturbhujā* form of Viṣṇu is discernible with the invoking of four arms of Viṣṇu as representing *dharma*, *artha*, *kāma* and *nīrvāna*. Next is the invocation of the man lion form of Viṣṇu tearing the heart of the demon Hiranyākṣa. The roarings of Viṣṇu has been praised and he is described as the lion of

⁵⁰ Ibid, pp. 95-97.

⁵¹ Ali, Rahman, *Art and Architecture of the Kalachuris*, p. 131.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Mirashi, V.V., 'Gopalpur Stone Inscription of Vijayasimha', *CII*, vol. IV, pt. II, pp.652-59.

Vaikunṭha. There seems to be constant reference of Vaikuṅṭha, the abode of Viṣṇu in this period. The *Cakrapāṇi* form of Viṣṇu is also invoked. After that there is reference of the story of the drinking of nectar by Rāhu in the guise of a god. At the beginning of the inscription it mentions the cutting of head of Rāhu by Viṣṇu. Among the various attributes of Viṣṇu, his *Kaustubha* jewel and *vanamālā* are also mentioned in the inscription.

With these sculptures discovered from Rewa and nearby places it appears that it might have one or two temples of Viṣṇu, which did not survive the onslaught of the time. However there must have flourished some Vaiṣṇava temples in this region in the Kalacuri period, though this region is particularly noted for the Śaiva ascetics.

IV

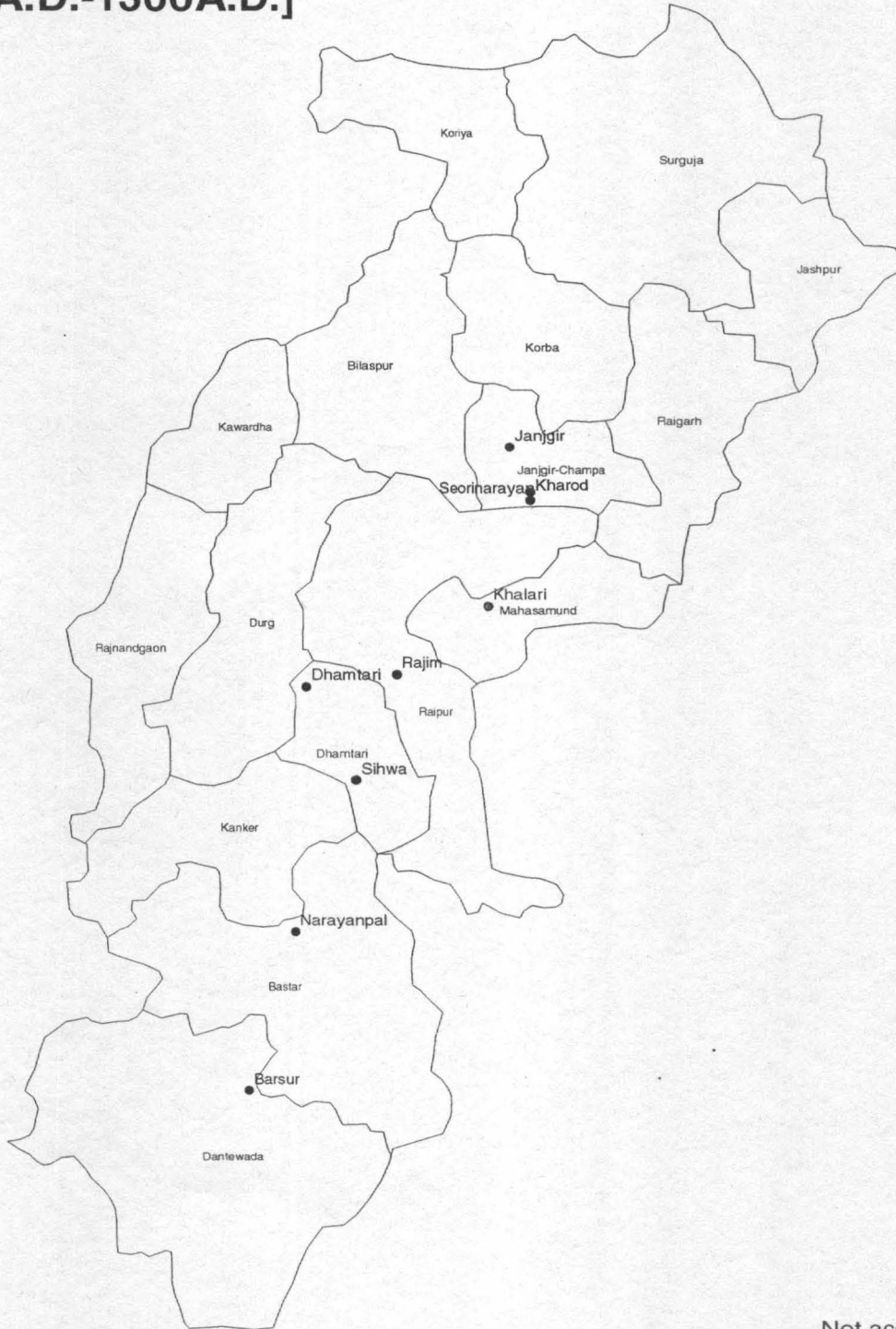
Chhattisgarh division of erstwhile Madhya Pradesh was under the rule of Ratanpur branch of the Kalacuri rulers. As per the general trend prevailing in the Kalacuri region, Śaivism was the dominant religion in this period. However, there are some pockets of Vaiṣṇava worship in this region- some of them were already there, while others were new creations.

Of the Vaiṣṇava temples of the Chhattisgarh region, Rājīvalocana temple is the most famous and the revered temple. Even now it occupies an important place among the pilgrim centres of Chhattisgarh. The temple was built by Nala king Vilāsatuṅga. It was frequently visited by the devotees even in the late Kalacuri period. This is clearly attested by the Rajim stone inscription of Prthivideva II.⁵⁴ The inscription is incised on a stone slab let into the left wall of the *mandapa* of the temple of Rājīvalocana at Rajim. Rajim is a village 29 miles south east of Raipur in the Mahasamund tehsil of Raipur district. The object in the inscription is to record the construction of the temple of Rāma and the grant of village Sālmaliya for the purpose of the *naivedya* or offerings of food to the deity by Jagapāla.

Īdr(śah) ca bhavetpunso jagapālopi sundaram(rah)

⁵⁴ Mirashi, V.V., 'Rajim Stone Inscription of Prithvideva II', *CII*, vol. IV, pt. II, pp. 450-57.

Map V: Vaiṣṇava Centres (Temple Sites) in Chhattisgarh [1000 A.D.-1300A.D.]



Not according to scale

*Rāmasobhaḥ sa(pra) kāsā(ya) prāsādam kārītam rimam.*⁵⁵

i.e. such is Jagapāla. He has caused this beautiful temple to be constructed for the manifesting the splendour of Rāma.

After the customary obeisance to Nārāyaṇa, the inscription traces the genealogy of the donor Jagapāla from the *Thakkura* Sāhilla. He had emigrated from the country of Vaḍahara. Sāhilla seems to have come as a military adventurer to Chhattisgarh where his descendants settled down as feudatories or the generals of the Kalacuri princes of Ratanpur whom they helped to extend their territories. Hiralal identifies Vaḍahara with the Badahara in the Mirjapur district under the rule of the Bhañjas.⁵⁶

However Prof. Mirashi identifies the place from somewhere on eastern coast. Vaḍahara may have been identical with district Vodā mentioned in the Antirigam plates of Yaśabhañjadeva.⁵⁷ The Vivarabhūmi which has been mentioned as the land conquered by Sāhilla appears to be another name of Pātāla or the nether world. Prof. Mirashi mentions *Navasāhasāṅkacarita* of Padmagupta⁵⁸ that Chhattisgarh was so designated by the Sankrit poets of 11th century A.D.

The younger brother of Sāhilla was named Vāsudeva. Jagapāla was the third generation of this family. He was appointed in the service of Jājalladeva I. During the reign of Pṛthvīdeva II, he acquired the name of Jagatsīma (lion of the world). Next his various exploits have been mentioned. He helped his master in the battle against Anantavarman Coḍagangā, in Talahārī *maṇḍala* (usually identified with southern part of Bilaspur district). He had three brothers with the help of them he is said to have conquered the whole world.

Thus Sāhilla who came to Chhattisgarh as a military adventurer had his descendants settled here as feudatories or generals of the Kalacuri princes of Ratanpur whom they helped to extend their dominions. Settlement at a new place would naturally have required some sort of legitimacy and familiarity of the region. He extended his support to the already existing temple of Rājīvalocana and renovated it. The temple

⁵⁵ Ibid, p. 455, verse 22.

⁵⁶ Ibid, p. 452, ft. nt. 3.

⁵⁷ Ibid, p.452, ft nt. 3.

⁵⁸ Ibid, p.452, ft nt. 4 (*JA*, vol. LXII, p.104ff).

was already there; this we know from the inscription of the Nala ruler Vilāsatūṅga. And this inscription also mentions a person named Mukṭātman, the owner of the temple in verse 24, line 15. This shows that temple was already there and owned and looked after by the above-mentioned person. He is described as 'bhagavantaḥ'. He could be the priest of the temple. He is also engaged in practicing self-control, vows, the study of sacred texts and meditation.

Sālmaliya granted for the *naivedya* of the deity is said to be now deserted and in lieu of it the village Rohana situated not far from the ancient site of Salmali was subsequently granted. It lies 10 miles south east of Rajim in the Mahasamund tehsil and is still appropriated to the worship of Rājivalocana. The inscription is dated in the Kalacuri era 896 i.e. Wednesday 3rd January 1145 AC.

Besides the above facts what is noticeable is that the inscription specially refers to the worship of Rāma in this part of the region. The feudatory lord at many places tried to compare himself with the *Kṣatriya* Rāma, of course to draw legitimacy from the legendary *Kṣatriya*. It is said in the inscription that as Rāma destroyed the family of the demons Jagapāla killed the forces of his enemies with multitude of arrows (v.10). At another place he is described as bearing the splendour of Rāma (*Rāmasobhopi*, V.18) and compared with valour of Rāma (*vikramena yathā rāmo*, v.19). The composer of this inscription, who hailed from Ayodhyā, is named Jasānanda. He is said to have been the devout worshipper of both Maheśvara and Viṣṇu.

*Iti Ayodhyāpurīyānvaye mahāmāhesva (śva) raparamavaiṣṇavya
mahāpaṇḍitaṭhakkura śrījasodharena⁵⁹*

The inscription was issued on an auspicious day Budha-dīna or Wednesday, the eighth *tithi*, called *rathāśtamī*, on the bright fortnight of the month of Māgha.

⁵⁹ Mirashi, V.V., 'Rajim Stone Inscription of Prithvideva II', *CII*, vol. IV, pt. II, p. 455, v.27.

The temple was originally constructed by the Nala king Vilāsatuṅga as we have already observed in the previous chapter. Jagapāla may have been involved in the repairing of the temple. The present deity established in the sanctum may belong to the Kalacuri period. However the structure of the temple belongs to the Nala period. Since the renovation of the temple is concerned with the establishment of the deity, Jagapāla took the credit of the construction of the temple. It seems that Rāma is the dominant deity of this region.

Apart from this inscription, there is a temple called Deur temple at Gandai⁶⁰ in Rajnandgaon district not very far from Raipur. The temple is dedicated to Śiva. However it contains the images of Lakṣmī Nārāyaṇa seated on Garuḍa, Rāma, Balarāma, Varāha, Kṛṣṇa, Nṛsimha, Hanumān, Mahiṣāsūramardini, Viṣṇu and Rāmālīlā and Kṛṣṇalīlā scenes. The temple belongs to the 13th century A.D.

The presence of Vaiṣṇavas in the area in and around Raipur can be deduced from the Paragaon plates of Ratnadeva II.⁶¹ The village Paragaon is about 7 miles north of Baloda Bazar in the Raipur district of Chhattisgarh. It records the grant by Ratnadeva II of the village Vodālā, situated in Kośala, on the occasion of the solar eclipse, which occurred in the month of Kārttika. The donee was Padmanābha, the son of Hariśarman and grandson of Sahadeva who had emigrated from village Gori. The inscription is dated Wednesday, the first *tithi* of the bright fortnight of Āśvina in the Kalacuri year 885, corresponding to 19th September 1134 A.D. The name of the donee and his father points to the Vaiṣṇava affiliation of the same. Padmanābha has been compared with the God Padmanābha (Viṣṇu) in righteous conduct in the inscription. There is a reference to the devouring of sun by Rāhu I the month of Kārttika. The Rāhu episode is closely related with Viṣṇu. That might be the reason to grant land to a Vaiṣṇava.

The last inscription from this period referring to the construction of one or the other forms of Viṣṇu is found from Sihwa.⁶² The inscription is on a slab built on the wall of the temple of the Karneśvara temple at Sihwa in Dhamtari tehsil of the Raipur district

⁶⁰ *IAR*, 1987-88, pp. 168-69.

⁶¹ Mirashi, V.V., 'Paragaon Plates of Ratnadeva II', *CII*, vol.IV, pt.II, pp. 622-26.

⁶² Hiralal, 'Sihwa Stone Inscription of Karnaraja', *EI* vol. 9, pp. 182-187.

in Chhattisgarh. The object of the inscription is to record the construction of five temples, two in his parents' name, two in his own name, and one in his issueless brother's name, by king Karnarāja of Kaikara, and of one by his wife Bhopalladevī. All the temples were built in the sacred place Devaḥṛada. The main temple was that of Śiva. The other, which he built for himself, was dedicated to Keśava, who apparently occupied a secondary place. The inscription is dated in Śaka era 1114, which corresponds to year 1191-92 A.D. A large portion of the Sihwa tract is regarded as a piece of holy land. Local tradition considers it as the hermitage of ṛṣi Śrīngin, who is still worshipped here. Five miles from this place is the village Ratawa where Angara (Angīrasa ṛṣi) used to live and Mucukunda had his *āśrama* in the village Mechaka, 22 miles from Sihwa. About 10 miles west of Sihwa there is Devakūta (the hillock of the gods), which also contains ruins of old temples. One of these temples must have been dedicated to Keśava, which has been mentioned in the inscription. Bhopala *devī* was a Vaiṣṇavī. It might be in deference to her that Karnarāja dedicated one of his temples to Keśava.

One stone inscription supplying the name Āditya Varāha is found from Murumura in Dhamtari tahsil of Raipur district.⁶³

A sculpture in the Mahant Ghasidas Museum in Raipur district shows the Śeṣāsayī form of Viṣṇu found from Dhamtari tehsil in Raipur district.⁶⁴ The God is carrying *śankha, cakra, gadā* and lotus. This thirteenth century image has the incarnations of Viṣṇu depicted above the sculpture. Among them Kalki, Balarāma, Nṛsimha etc. can be identified.

The area in and around Raipur remained the affiliated to Vaiṣṇava faith as is evident from the Khalari stone inscription of Haribrahmadeva⁶⁵, dated 1415 A.D. The object of the inscription is to record the foundation of a temple of Nārāyaṇa by a *mocī* (shoemaker) Devapāla at Khalavāṭikā, modern day Khalari, 28 miles from Raipur. The inscription begins with an obeisance to Gaṇapati, Bhārati and Nārāyaṇa. The inscription stands unique as it provides the only reference to a shoemaker sponsoring

⁶³ ASIAR, 1916-17, p. 21.

⁶⁴ Mahant Ghasidas Memorial Museum, Acc. No.

⁶⁵ Hiralal, Rai Bahadur, *Descriptive List of Inscriptions in the Central Provinces and Berar*, Nagpur, 1916, p. 99.

the construction of a Vaiṣṇava temple. This is a rather unusual example, as the making of a temple is associated with both high social status and sound economic wealth which a shoe maker was not expected to possess. A shoe maker is not even a Śūdra; he is of a lower status, an untouchable. The inscription refers to the residence of *brāhmiṇs* nearby. And the composer and engraver of the inscription is a *brāhmiṇ*. The socio-economic reality of the period might have helped this shoemaker to improve his situation both financially and socially. Even earlier, *Suvarnakāras* have been found associated with the royal dynasty as engravers during Pānduvāmsīn rule.

Bilaspur, another district of Chhattisgarh has some Vaiṣṇava temples of the Kalacuri period. The local people of this district greatly respect the memory of the Kalacuri king Jājalladeva II, generally called as Jājalladevajī *Mahārāja*. All the main temples of this region are connected with the name of this king in the popular memory. Among them one is in Janjgir village situated 2 miles from the Naila station. This is an incomplete temple containing Vaiṣṇava figures on the walls such as Varāha, Nṛsimha.⁶⁶ The corners of the temple contain the *devī* figures, dancing girls, ascetics and griffins. On the back wall, Sūrya has the place of honour in the principal niche. Above the doorway of the shrine are carved the Hindu trinity, Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva, Viṣṇu being in the centre. In between them are nine planets. The shrine is empty. As it was left unfinished, it may never have had an image. But it is certainly a Vaiṣṇava building. It is said that the builders of this temple and the highly ornate temple at Pali held a competition as to which should be finished first. When the Pali building was completed, the Janjgir temple was stopped. However when I visited the site the local people connected it with the Seorinarayan temple. According to another person there were five temples on the site of which only two survived- the Viṣṇu and the nearby Śiva temple. This can be true as the Kalacuri rulers often refer to five deities – Viṣṇu, Śiva, Bhāratī, Gaṇapati and Durgā- in their inscriptions.

Janjgir though it was under the Śaiva rulers of the Kalacuris, there were some persons related to Vaiṣṇava sect at this place. If the name of the person has anything to do with the religious affiliation of the person concerned, there was a sizeable number of

⁶⁶ Gazetteer of India: Bilaspur District, Bhopal, 1998, pp. 271-72.

influential Vaiṣṇavas in this area. Amoda plates of Pr̥thvīdeva I⁶⁷ refer to the donation of the village Vasāhā in the *Apara Maṇḍala* on the occasion of the construction of a *catuskikā*, or a hall resting on four pillars, of the temple of Vānkeśvara in Tummāna. The donee was the *brāhmaṇa* Keśava. The grant was made on seventh *tithi* of the dark fortnight of Phālguna of year 831, corresponding to 27th January 1079A.D. The great grandson of the donee is *Yaśodeva*. The *śresthin* also made a gift of land to the same *brāhmaṇa*. Vasāhā the donated village is identified with Basaha, about 12 miles north by east from Bilaspur. Tummāna, which has been the first capital of the Kalacuris of the Ratanpur, has been identified with Tumain, 45 miles north of Ratanpur.

An earlier inscription also talks of *brāhmaṇa* Keśava as the chief priest.⁶⁸

Similarly Daikoni plates of Pr̥thvīdeva II records the grant of village Budukunī situated in the Madhyadeśa to the *brāhmaṇa* Viṣṇu.⁶⁹ Daikoni is a village 7 miles due north of Janjgir in Bilaspur district. The grant of the village has been made on the occasion of the lunar eclipse on the fifteenth *tithi* of bright fortnight of Kārttika. The plates were issued on 11th *tithi* of dark fortnight of Mārgasīrsa in year 890, corresponding to 30th October 1138 A.D. the name of the *brāhmin* indicates his Vaiṣṇava affiliation while the name of his father is Śivadeva indicating Śaiva affiliation. The village Budukunī is identical with Daikoni. Once again there is a donation of land to a Vaiṣṇava *brāhmaṇa* on the occasion of an eclipse.

Seorinarayan plates of Ratnadeva II⁷⁰ of a slightly earlier period (1127 A.D.) than the above mentioned inscription records the donation of the village Tinerī, situated in the *viṣaya* of Anarghavallī, on the occasion of a lunar eclipse. The donee was Nārāyaṇaśarman, the son of Tribhuvanapāla and grandson of Śilāditya. The name of the donee indicates Vaiṣṇava affiliation. More important than this is the occasion of lunar eclipse being used to give a grant to a Vaiṣṇava *brāhmin* despite the ruler being Śaiva. Anarghvallī is probably the modern Janjgir tahsil. The village Tinerī could not be identified.

⁶⁷ Mirashi, V.V., 'Amoda Plates of Prithvideva I', *CII*, vol. IV, pt. II, pp. 401-09.

⁶⁸ Mirashi, V.V., 'Raipur Plates of Prithvideva I (Kalachuri) yr 821', *CII*, vol. IV, pt. II, pp. 398-401.

⁶⁹ Mirashi, V.V., 'Daikoni Plates of Prithvideva II', *CII*, vol. IV, pt. II, pp. 443-46.

⁷⁰ Mirashi, V.V., 'Seorinarayan Plates of Ratnadeva II', *CII*, vol. IV, pt. II, pp. 419-23.

Another temple is in Seorinarayan, a village in Janjgir tehsil, 39 miles southeast of Bilaspur on the old Sambhalpur road.⁷¹ The temple is dedicated to Nārāyaṇa from which the place derives its name. The name of the deity is found in the inscription on one of its tablets. The temple is said to have been built in the Kalacuri year 898 or 1146 A.D. A small fair is held here on the last day of Māgh (Jan-Feb) continuing for five days. Nearby is a Śiva temple to which an inscription is attached. The inscription is of Jājalladeva II of Kalacuri dynasty, dated 1167-68 A.D.⁷²

Mention here can be made of the Śabarī temple at Kharod. Kharod is about 2 miles to the north of Seorinarayan in the Janjgir tehsil of the Bilaspur district. According to the Archaeological Survey of India list of temples, it is a Vaiṣṇava temple. When I visited the site, I found a modern Durgā sculpture kept inside the sanctum. The image on the *lalāṭabimba* is not clear. It resembles the figure of Ganeśa. Narayan Rao, the senior Archaeologist calls it the figure of Garuḍa. Among other sculptures are Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa, Śiva, Lakṣmī, Nāgakanyās, Ardhanārīśvara and other goddesses. Judging by the predominance of the Śaiva sculptures, it can be the temple of a goddess.

In this connection I would like to mention the Kharod inscription of Ratnadeva III.⁷³ The object of the inscription is to record the benefactions of Ratnadeva's minister Gangādhara at Kharod and other places. He reconstructed the *maṇḍapa* of the temple, to which the stone bearing the inscription is fixed. He also built evidently at Kharod, a spacious and beautiful *maṇḍapa* of Śaurī. He built another *maṇḍapa* in honour of Purarati (Śiva) and temples of Hara and Herāmbā at Vadada in the forest tract. This is a typical example of a Kalacuri king making temples or *maṇḍapas* for the five deities. It is dated in the Cedī year 933 corresponding to 1181-82 A.D. Nārāyaṇapura, which lies 20 miles to south west of Kharod, in the Baloda Bazar tahsil of Raipur district has a medieval temple of Viṣṇu. The genealogy of the minister Gangādhara is mentioned in the inscription. His grand father, Devadhara has been compared with Hari. As Hari was foremost in the act of lifting up the earth, even so he was in succouring men sunk in adversity.

⁷¹ Gazetteer of India: Bilaspur District, pp. 294-295.

⁷² Mirashi, V.V., 'Seorinarayan Inscription of Jājalladeva II, *CII*, vol. IV, pt. II, pp. 519-27.

⁷³ Mirashi, V.V., 'Kharod Stone Inscription of Ratnadeva III, *CII*, vol. IV, pt. II, pp. 533-43.

At another place the tank constructed by him is said to have resembled Hari who shines with the discus and the lotus (v.38, .542). The king is adored by the world and frees it from oppression like the way Viṣṇu did.

Koni stone inscription of Pṛthvīdeva II⁷⁵ can be counted among those which testify to the presence of Vaiṣṇava following in the midst of otherwise dominant Śaiva region. Koni is a small village on the left bank of Arpa river, 10 miles south by east of Bilaspur. The object of the inscription is to record the construction of five-shrined temple of Śiva by Puruṣottma. Puruṣottma is a minister plenipotentiary (*sarvādhikārin*) of Pṛthvīdeva's father and predecessor Ratnadeva II. The inscription also records grant of some land in honour of the god installed in the temple. On the occasion of a solar eclipse Pṛthvīdeva II granted village Salonī to Puruṣottma. Puruṣottma was probably an old man at the time of present inscription. He had four sons all bearing the Vaiṣṇava names- Madhusūdana, Lakṣmīdhara, Yaśodhara and Gangādhara. All his sons were able statesman according to the inscription. Of them Madhusūdana is said to have attained great prowess. The inscription also mentions various benevolent works of the minister. He raised several groves, erected many *maṭhas* and *maṇḍapas* (temples) and excavated a deep tank at Ratnapura. These descriptions point towards the Śaiva orientation of Puruṣottma. However the name of his sons and his own name clearly shows Vaiṣṇava affiliation. The chief priest of the temple is Vāsudeva again showing Vaiṣṇava inclination. The king Pṛthvīdeva II has been compared with both Vaiṣṇava (Pradyumna and Hari) and Śaiva deities (Skanda). At another place Puruṣottama is compared with Kama and Rāma (v.20, p.468). Not only this, even the *pañcāyatana* temple of Śiva is compared with Dvārakā on earth (v.32, p.469). This site has also yielded the figures of Viṣṇu and Sūrya apart from the Śiva temple. Salonī the village granted to the temple of Śiva is identified with Saraoni, which lies about a mile and a half south by west of Koni where the present record is discovered. The date of the inscription is 20th April 1148A.D.

⁷⁴ Ibid, v. 20, p.538.

⁷⁵ Mirashi, V.V., 'Koni stone inscription of Prithvideva II', *CI*, vol. IV, pt. II, pp. 463-83

Turning towards another part of Chhattisgarh for the presence of Vaiṣṇava footprints, we come across Kanker, the capital of a former feudatory state. Tahankapar plate of Pamparājadeva⁷⁶ is a good example. Tahankapar is 18 miles from Kanker. This is a business document, executed at the (royal) residence in Kākairā, in favour of one Lakṣmīdhara. The object of it is to fix the revenue of the village Jaiparā. Pamparāja was the feudatory of the Kalacuri rulers. The inscription is dated on Monday the 10th *tithi* of the dark fortnight of Bhādrapada in year 965, corresponding to 12th August 1213 A.D. the charter was written by *Paṇḍita* Viṣṇuśarman and incised by *sethi* Keśava. Both the persons were having Vaiṣṇava names. It also mentions many royal officials as witnesses. Most of them bear Vaiṣṇava names- Bhatta Rāṇaka Govinda, Gaintā Lakṣmīdhara and Nāyaka Dāmodara. Jaiparā the village has been identified with Jaipra, 15 miles north of Kanker.

Another inscription found from the same place refers to the grant of village by Pamparājadeva and his son.⁷⁷ The present plate is granted, while they were residing at Pādī. The object of the present record is to register two grants- one of the village Kongarā made before the god Prāṅkeśvara by Pamparājadeva and the other of village Āndali, situated in the same district, by his son Bopadeva- on the occasion of a solar eclipse. This eclipse occurred on Sunday, in the month of Kārttika in the cyclic year Īśvara the *nakṣatra* being Citrā. It corresponds to 5th October 1214 A.D. The donee of the present grant is once again *Gaintā* Lakṣmīdhara, who appeared as witness in the last inscription.

The writer and the engraver of this inscription are again *Paṇḍita* Viṣṇuśarman and *sethi* Keśava respectively. Besides the royal officials mentioned in this inscription include some Vaiṣṇava names- Lakṣmīdevī, the queen, Nārāyaṇa, Govinda, Dāmodara and Viṣṇuśarman. The donee of the grant is the son of *Gaintā* Gadādhara and grandson of *Gaintā* Mādhavaśarman. The name of the ancestors of the donee clearly shows him to be a Vaiṣṇava by faith. Moreover the donation on a solar eclipse is more or less confined to a Vaiṣṇava *brāhmiṇ* seeing the previous tradition. This also indicates Vaiṣṇava leanings of the donee. That he was present at this place for a

⁷⁶ Mirashi, V.V., 'Tahankapar plate of Pamparajadeva: (Kalachuri) year 965', *CII*, vol. IV, pt. II, pp. 596-99.

⁷⁷ Mirashi, V.V., 'Tahankapar plate of Pamparajadeva: (Kalachuri) year 966', *CII*, vol. IV, pt. II, pp. 599-602.

long period and had important influence on the economic arena of the state is clearly visible. Pāḍi has been identified with Pade, 18 miles west by south of Kanker. Kongarā the village granted by Pamparājadeva can be one of the three villages lying close to Kanker namely, Deo Kongera and Kongera Biyas, 4 miles to south east and Hat Kongera 5 miles to north of Kanker. Āndali, the village granted by Bopadeva is Andani, 6 miles east of Kanker.

V

The forested tract of Chhattisgarh has some inscriptions referring to Vaiṣṇava temples and inscriptions. This region remained by far outside the domain of the Kalacuri rulers. Bastar region in south Chhattisgarh extends over an area of 13,000 square miles, all covered with dense forest and populated by tribes. The region was under the Nāgavamśī rulers. Barsur, a place 55 miles west of Jagdalpur (capital of ancient Bastar), contains ruins of many ancient temples and sculptures. Among the numerous images, that of Viṣṇu is noticeable⁷⁸. Though the region was not so under the *brāhmanic* influence, the tutelary goddess of the Nāgavamśī rulers was Dānteśvarī *Devī*. Dantewara (20 miles south of Barsur) contains the shrine of Dānteśvarī. The temple is built at the junction of two rivers called Śankhinī and Dānkinī and is notorious as a place where human sacrifices were formerly annually offered. The names of these two rivers themselves depict the presence of both *Brāhmanic* and tribal elements at this place. The temple of Dānteśvarī contains various images like Viṣṇu, Kārttikeya, Ganeśa, etc. Indian archaeology in general also gives reference to the Vaiṣṇava sculptures attached to the temple. Among the sculptures that are Vaiṣṇava, but attached to the *Devī* temples are Dānteśvarī *Devī* temple at Dantewada⁷⁹ in Bastar district and Mahāmāyā temple at Dhamdaha⁸⁰ in Durg district.

The only Vaiṣṇava inscription from this region is Narayanpal Stone inscription of Gunda Mahādevī⁸¹. Narayanpal is a village 23 miles northwest of Jagdalpur, situated on the right bank of Indravati. Hiralal considers Indravati as the boundary between the

⁷⁸ Hiralal, 'Inscriptions from the Bastar State', *EI*, vol. 9, p. 160.

⁷⁹ *IAR*, 1987-88, p. 160.

⁸⁰ *Ibid*, p. 168.

⁸¹ Hiralal, 'Narayanpal Stone inscription of Gunda Mahadevi', *EI*, vol. 9, pp. 311-316.

North Indian and the South Indian peoples. All the inscriptions to the north of Indrāvati are written in *Nāgarī* characters, while all to the south are written in Telugu. It appears that the Nāgavamśī kings, though ruling on both the sides of the river, had fixed it as the ethnic or at least the linguistic boundary for the convenience of the Northern and Southern peoples under their sway. This inscription found on the north bank of the river is in *Nāgarī* characters.

The Narayanpal inscription contains the usual symbol of the cow and the calf, the sun and moon and the *Śivalinga*. According to Hiralal, sun and moon represent that the grant is to last as long as these luminaries endure. Śiva is the protector against violation of the grant on the spiritual side and dagger and shield of the king on temporal side. The cow and calf depict the grave sin the transgressor would commit, exactly equal to taking away the cow from the calf.⁸² It also shows the half-*brāhmanized* portion of the Nāgavamśīs containing both cow and calf on one side and dagger and sword on other side. Whatever may be the meaning, the use of symbols, in a way, points to the tribal affiliation of the dynasty.

The inscription records the grant of the village Nārāyaṇapura to the God Nārāyaṇa and some land near the Kharjurī tank to the God Lokeśvara. It is dated in the Śaka era 1033 on Wednesday, the full moon day of the Kārttika month in the *Khara samvatsara*, corresponding to 18th October 1111A.D. The donor was Gunda Mahādevī the chief queen of *Mahārāja* Dhārāvarsa, the mother of Someśvaradeva and the grand mother of Kanharadeva. The last of the rulers is mentioned as ruling. The dynasty claims Bhogavatī as the best of the cities. The Nārāyaṇapura of the inscription is Narayanpal. The temple of Narayanpal is still standing there. The image of Viṣṇu is canopied by a hooded snake, showing tribal influence. The region seems to be partially urbanised as it has Bhogavatī, best among other cities. And the region is partially under Vaiṣṇava influence because a part of grant is donated to the God Lokeśvara, a form of Śiva.

⁸² Hiralal, 'Inscriptions from the Bastar State', *EI*, vol. 9, p. 164.

VI

While writing about the geographical spread of Vaiṣṇavism, one cannot forget the contribution of the Candellas. Candella Yaśovarman made the Lakṣmana temple at Khajuraho and similar other temples in the region. However towards the beginning of the 11th century A.D., the region came under the attack of Mahmūd Ghazanī. It probably accounted for less construction of the temples in this period. The state was naturally directed towards the security of the region than the construction of the temples. The only Candella inscription referring to the construction of a Vaiṣṇava temple comes from Jhansi. Mau stone inscription of Madanavarmadeva⁸³ records the construction of a temple of Viṣṇu, building of a tank near the village of Deddu and the execution of some other works of piety by one of the king's minister whose name appears to have been Gadādhara. Mau is a town in Jhansi district. The inscription starts with the obeisance to someone who though possessed of a divine body, which is marked by the *Śrīvatsa*, is yet wholly unperceived-

*Śrīvatsāṅga dadhadapi vapurdivyayamavyakta eva.*⁸⁴

At another place, it mentions Viṣṇu as Śrīdhara. Madanavarma was a later Candella ruler while the minister Gadādhara was the hereditary ruling class of this region under the Candellas. The inscription is not dated; it may belong to the middle of the 12th century A.D.

Not very far from the Jhansi town, there is a place Lalitpur, 56 miles to the south of Jhansi. The region in and around it has numerous temples. Some of them are dedicated to Viṣṇu:

Bhadana in Lalitpur district has a group of three temples⁸⁵, two of which are dedicated to Viṣṇu, while the third was dedicated to Śiva.

⁸³ Keilhorn, F., 'Mau stone Inscription of Madanavarmadeva', *EI*, vol. I, pp. 195-207.

⁸⁴ *Ibid*, p. 197, verse I.

⁸⁵ Mukherjee, P.C., *Report on the Antiquities in the District Lalitpur, North West Provinces of India*,

The temple of Jhammar⁸⁶ in Chandpur is dedicated to Viṣṇu. Similarly in Chandpur itself, there is a group of ruined Hindu temples mostly dedicated to Viṣṇu.⁸⁷ One of them has an undated inscription the characters of which appear to belong to the 12th century. Another group of badly ruined temples is dedicated to Varāha.⁸⁸ Among the ruins still stands the stone lingam of a crudely fashioned Boar, which is covered, with representations of the deities of Hindu pantheon. An inscription in the front of the pedestal (on which the Boar stands) is dated to 1150 A.D.

Dudhai is small village 18 miles south of Lalitpur. It has a small shrine with the Varāha incarnation under a four-pillar canopy.⁸⁹ Similarly the rock cut sculpture of a four-armed image of Nṛsimha⁹⁰ is found to the north of Ramsagar Lake in Dudhai. The God is shown in the act of slaying Hiranyakaśipu. About half a mile south west of the lake, there was an image of Varāha, which has been shifted to State Museum at Lucknow.⁹¹

Apart from these, the chief archaeological remains near the lake comprise the ruins of some old temples of Candella times, which occupy the ridge to the west of the lake.⁹² The principal group consists of groups of Jaina and Hindu temples. Among the Hindu temples, there are some dedicated to lingam shrines, some to Brahmā and two Varāha shrines:

Gurh is a small village on the left bank of the Dhasan about 55 miles east of Jhansi. A small Viṣṇu temple has been found in this area comprising many a shrine and a porch.⁹³

Judging by the findings of the Viṣṇu temples it is probable that this area might have been a flourishing centre containing many Vaiṣṇava shrines.

⁸⁶ Uttar Pradesh district Gazetteer – Jhansi, p. 334.

⁸⁷ Ibid, p. 334.

⁸⁸ Ibid, pp. 333-34.

⁸⁹ Cunningham, A., *ASI Reports, Tour in Bundelkhand and Malwa*, vol. X, Varanasi, 1996.

⁹⁰ Jhansi District Gazetteer, p. 339.

⁹¹ Ibid, p.338.

⁹² Ibid, p. 339.

⁹³ Mukherjee, P.C., *Report on the Antiquities in the District of Lalitpur*, p.

While on my fieldwork I visited Rani Mahal Museum at Jhansi. The museum is more like a reserve or store of the sculptures. It contains numerous sculptures of different religious sects. Of them, many are Vaiṣṇava sculptures. The museum does not give the exact find spots of these sculptures. However, all of them have been collected from the areas like Chandpur, Manpur, Banpur, Dudhai, Lalitpur, etc. A table on the next page gives the important Vaiṣṇava forms found in this museum.

S. No.	Form of Viṣṇu	No. of sculptures in Museum
1.	Varāha	6
2.	Nṛsimha	15
3.	Vāmana	13
4.	<i>Caturbhujā</i> Viṣṇu	41
5.	<i>Garudāsīna</i> Viṣṇu	11
6.	Saptamātrakas	3
7.	<i>Yogāsīna</i> Viṣṇu	6
8.	Lakṣmī-Viṣṇu on Garuda	13
9.	Nara-Nārāyaṇa/Vaiṣṇava <i>Dvārapālas</i>	3
10.	Lakṣmī	4
11.	Vaiṣṇavī	7
12.	Hayagrīva	9
13.	<i>Torana</i>	24
14.		1
15.	Hanumān	1
16.	Balarāma	1
17.	Gajendramokṣa	2
18.	<i>Śeṣāsāyī</i> Viṣṇu	1
19.	Fragments	15

Courtesy: Rani Mahal Museum, Jhansi

This table clearly shows that the *Caturbhujā* form of Viṣṇu became quite prevalent in this region towards the end of my period. All the sculptures of this museum roughly belong to the 12th-13th century A.D. The *avatāras* like Varāha, Vāmana and Nṛsimha started losing ground to the *Caturbhujā* Viṣṇu. However the influence of the Varāha

avatāra still lingers on. The Ramvan Museum copper Plate Inscription of Trailokyavarman⁹⁴ records the donation made by the ruler, of the village Varāhī. The village lies in the *viśaya* Patisā, which has been identified as Patiha, 16 kms west of Nagod. The village Varāhī has been identified with the modern village of the same name, lying about 8 kms south by west of Nagod. The king made the donation during his stay at the fort of Jayapura, which is Ajaygadh. Some of the names of the donees show Vaiṣṇava affiliation, like Vāsudeva, Dharanīdhara, Purusottama, Govinda, Nārāyaṇa, etc. The inscription is dated 11th March, 1226A.C. Thus Varāha incarnation has left its legacy.

A large number of *toranas* in this table shows that all of them belong to the *lalāṭabimba* of a Vaiṣṇava temple. In all these *toranas*, either Viṣṇu or some of his incarnations is placed in the middle. Thus it is clearly visible that at least 24 temples might have existed during the Candella period, which either decayed or were destroyed. The fragment numbering 15 shows that at least there were Viṣṇu or his incarnations were present in these sculptures, which does not exist now. All these fragments have a large base with Vaiṣṇava incarnations, particularly Kalki and Lakṣmī showing at the base. They might have contained large Vaiṣṇava sculptures. The size of the sculptures points towards the fact that they may have been the presiding deity of a sanctum. At least fifteen large temples existed in this region, which could not bear the onslaught of the time. No such large Vaiṣṇava sculpture existed in this museum. One reason may be that they were destroyed due to faulty construction of the temples. When I went to Devgarh, I found one Viṣṇu temple complex is destroyed due to unleveling of the plinth area of the structure. One another reason may be that they were destroyed by the Muslim army. There are references in the writings contemporary authors about the plunder and destruction of this region after the defeat of the Candellas.

Apart from the *Caturbhuja* Viṣṇu, *Garudāsīna* Viṣṇu and Viṣṇu – Lakṣmī were other major deities of the Vaiṣṇava pantheon. There are some other Vaiṣṇava deities like-Lakṣmī, Vaiṣṇavī, Hayagrīva, etc.

⁹⁴ Trivedi, H.V., 'Ramvan Museum copper Plate Inscription of Trailokyavarman', *CII* vol.VII, pt. III, pp.657-62.

VII

The region in and around Gwalior was under the rule of the Kacchapaghātas. The Kacchapaghātas arose out of the ruins of the Pratihāra dynasty. The origin of this dynasty is shrouded in mystery. They are generally taken to be predecessors of the Rajput clan of the Kachavāhas. Though the words are philologically connected, there is no epigraphical evidence in support of this view.

The royal house of the Kacchapaghātas was divided into three distinct families- Gwalior House, Dubkund House and Narwar House. Of them Gwalior House was most dominant.

The only inscription of this dynasty is found from Gwalior Fort- the Sāsbaḥu inscription of Mahipāla.⁹⁵ The Sāsbaḥu temple is on the Gwalior fort. The object of the inscription is to describe the construction of the temple dedicated to Viṣṇu and the charitable institutions to furnish the needs of the temple. The income of village Pāsāna pallī was divided into 30 shares of which a few were allotted to the god and the greater number to the *brāhmaṇas*.

The introductory verses (1 to 4) invoke the blessings of Hari and Aniruddha. The temple is described as “*bhavanam hareḥ*” and “*hari sadanam*”. The name Padmanātha, in the ‘*om namaḥ padmanāthāya*’ with which the inscription open must be taken to be a local name of Viṣṇu (suggested by the ordinary names of the deity as Padmanābha, Padmagarbha, Padmin).

Mahipāla completed the task of the temple construction, which was started by his father Padmapāla. It may be that the name of God derived from the name of the ruler. This was not a new phenomenon. Earlier also, as we have been seen this in the last chapter in the name Vaillabhaṭṭasvamin temple.

⁹⁵ Keilhorn, F., ‘The Sasbahu Temple Inscription of Mahipala’ *The Indian Antiquary, A Journal of Oriental Research*, vol. XV, Delhi, 1984, pp. 33-46.

Mahipāla established a charitable hall and made donations for the cooking of the *naivedya*. The *brahmottara* (sanctuary or *garbhagrha*) was divided into two porticos—one for glorious Padmanātha and other for the lord of the gods Vaikuṅtha.

Regarding the temple and the rulers, one thing is clear that whenever a ruler gets more strength he constructs a temple to legitimize his rule and also to create awe in the heart of dissidents by the sheer size and magnificence of the temple. Kacchapaghātas were ruling as the chiefs of the Candellas. When the Candellas grew weak Padmapāla was the first Kacchapaghāta ruler to declare independence. The temple may have been the manifestation of the same.

Gwalior has another inscription showing Vaiṣṇava affiliation. It records the construction of a temple of Balarāma at Gopaśaila (Gwalior).⁹⁶ After the opening verses in praise of Kṛṣṇa and Saṁkarṣana, the inscription gives a description of the rulers of the Kacchapaghāta families of Gwalior. It is a badly damaged inscription. If the inscription was found in situ by Cunningham this must have been the site of the original temple of Saṁkarṣana, which was later converted into a Jaina temple. The temple was constructed by Kulhana who was the lord of the entire army (*nikhilabalapati*) and the chief minister of the king (*mantra mukhya*).

In this connection I would like to mention an image of Balarāma⁹⁷ kept in the Archaeological Museum, Gwalior Fort. It is found from the Mitavali, district Morena. It belongs to 1st century B.C. The life size image of the God depicts the power and prowess of the God. From such an old image of Balarāma, could it be conjectured that this region has the tradition of Balarāma worship? However it will be a far-fetched conclusion as no other object in support of this evidence has been found from this area.

Among the Gwalior Fort sculptures of Viṣṇu, three are kept in Gujari Mahal Museum. The first image is of Śeṣaśāyī Viṣṇu⁹⁸ shown reclining on the Śeṣa, holding the club, disc in two hands and one hand in *varada mudrā*. It belongs to 11th-12th century A.D.

⁹⁶ *ASIAR*, 1936-37, p. 94.

⁹⁷ Sculptures of Archaeological Museum, Gwalior Fort, Acc. No. 1.

⁹⁸ Sculptures of Gujari Mahal Museum, Acc. No. 146.

Another image is of Viṣṇu⁹⁹ standing on a lotus pedestal carrying conch and disc in left hands. Right hands are missing. It too belongs to 11th-12th century A.D.

Another image is also of Viṣṇu¹⁰⁰ standing on a lotus and surrounded by his ten incarnations belonging to 11th-12th century A.D.

Among the various places Suhaniya district appears to have been an important centre of Viṣṇu worship. There are many sculptures found from this region. Some of them are Nṛsimha, *Caturbhujā* Viṣṇu, Varāha, etc. These three forms of Viṣṇu seem to be popular in this region. However, Suhaniya has yielded many more sculptures, which led Mr. Lal, the Archaeologist of Gujari Mahal Museum, to conclude that Suhaniya might be a centre of production of sculptures.

Gwalior Fort has another beautiful temple named as *Telīn mandir*.¹⁰¹ It consists of a large chamber and oblong shrine room with a barrel shaped *śikhara* in south Indian style. This is the only temple in north India showing a south Indian *śikhara*. The temple is richly carved and contains the image of Ganga and Yamuna on doorjambes. The image of *lalāṭabimba* proves it to be the Vaiṣṇava temple. However it contains many Śaiva images too. The Assistant Archaeologist of Gwalior fort, Mrs. Seema Tiwari, thinks that it can be a Saptamātraka temple because of the oblong *garbhagrha*, which is quite unlike the usual Vaiṣṇava temples.

The Narwar group of the ruling house of Kacchapaghātas were also involved in making temples. Some of them were Vaiṣṇava. Narwar Copper Plate Inscription of the Vīrasimhadeva¹⁰² records the donation of the village Babādo to certain *brāhmaṇas*, by the king. The inscription is dated 24th October 1120 A.C. After a small sentence dedicated to Nārāyaṇa, the inscription introduces the genealogy of the kings. Vīrasimhadeva, son of Śaradasimha and grandson of Gaganasimhadeva, is stated to be the zealous devotee of Viṣṇu. The inscription speaks of the qualities of the ruler

⁹⁹ Sculptures of Gujari Mahal Museum, Acc. No. 147.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, Acc. No. 151.

¹⁰¹ *Descriptive and Classified List of Ancient Monuments in Madhya Bharat*, No. 623.

¹⁰² Trivedi, H.V., 'Narwar Copper Plate Inscription of the Virasimhadeva', *CII*, vol.VII, pt.III, pp.552-53.

resembling that of epic heroes like Yudhiṣṭhira, Bhîma, Arjuna, Karna and even Duryodhana-

*Yudhiṣṭhiravat satyavādī Bhîmasena eva atyādbhuta-vîryorjuna eva
dhanurdharāgresaraḥ karna eva tyāgārjitakīrtiḥ duryodhana eve mahāmānī*¹⁰³

Most of the donees bear Vaiṣṇava names like Govinda, Padmanābha, Keśava, Rāma, Nṛsimha, Lakṣmaṇa, etc. This shows that this region has some Vaiṣṇava leanings. It can be called as a Vaiṣṇava centre. The geographical places mentioned here are Nalapura, which is Narwar itself, and Babādo, which can be identified with modern Barod village (28 kms south of Narwar).

Vaiṣṇava affiliation of Narwar can be proved from still another inscription of a different dynasty, called Yajvapāla.¹⁰⁴ The inscription begins with the customary obeisance of Ganapati. After that, it invokes the blessings of Murārī (Kṛṣṇa) and Vāṇī (Sarasvatī) respectively. The purpose of the inscription is not clearly known because it is incomplete. It might be mentioning some meritorious work like excavation of step well as found in other inscriptions of the Yajvapāla kings. It also describes the family of the Mathura *Kāyasthas* hailing from Gopagiri (Gwalior). Four generations of the family are mentioned, namely Śyāma, Bhuvanapāla, Vāsudeva and Dāmodara. All the names reflect Vaiṣṇava affiliation. Dāmodara was the treasury officer of the king Chahada, the Yajvapāla ruler, during whose reign inscription was engraved. This inscription is undated. Yajvapāla rulers might have succeeded the Narwar group of Kacchapaghāta dynasty. And they might have accepted the suzerainty of Paramāras as is evident from the reference to Vāṇī and Bhuvanapāla as being associated with Bhoja.

¹⁰³ Ibid, vcrses 2-7, p.554.

¹⁰⁴ Trivedi, H.V., 'A Yajvapala Stone Inscription of Shivpuri District', *CII* vol. VII, pt. III, pp.568-572.

VIII

The Paramāras of Malwa were an important ruling power in this period. They were ruling in the western part of Madhya Pradesh. The origin of the Paramāras is difficult to find out. They mention the famous *Agnikula* theory for their origin in their inscriptions. However this *Agnikula* theory is mentioned only from the reign of Sindhurāja. It may be that this theory was the creation of Padmagupta, who in his *Navasāhasāṅkacarita* greatly popularised this theory.¹⁰⁵

Paramāras were Śiva worshippers. However they do not discriminate against the Vaiṣṇava religion. All of their inscriptions start with *siddham* symbol and two *mangala ślokas*. The first eulogises the beauties of the manly throat of *Śrīkaṅṭha Śiva* desiring him to increase happiness. And the second describes the body of Muraripu with a request to him to protect the world-

*yaḥ Lakṣmī vadanendunā na sukhitam yannā drirtamvā ridhervārā
yanna nijena nābhisarasī padmyena śāntingatam tam.
Yacchesāhikanām sahaśra madhuraśvāsairna cā śvāsitam
Tadrādhāvīrahāturam Murariporvverllacvapuh pātu vaḥ.*¹⁰⁶

The earliest inscription, which shows the construction of a Viṣṇu temple, comes from the Vidisha district. The Udaipur stone inscription of the Paramāras rulers of Malwa¹⁰⁷ is found from Udaipur. Udaipur is a big village in the Basoda tehsil. This undated inscription starts with the introductory verse ‘*Om Namah Śivāya*’ and invoking the blessings of Śiva, Pārvatī and Gaṇeśa. The inscription contains the *Agnikula* theory of the Paramāra origin.

The last verse of the inscription glorifies Udayāditya, stating, “for him who restored the earth (from the enemies) it was easy to restore the Primeval Boar”. The statement

¹⁰⁵ Seth, Dr. K.N., *History of the Paramaras*, Bhopal, p. 11.

¹⁰⁶ Trivedi, H.V., ‘Dharmapuri Grant of Vakpatirajadeva’, *CII*, vol. VII, pt. II, p. 13, verse 2.

¹⁰⁷ Trivedi, H.V., ‘Udaipur Stone Inscription of Paramara Rulers of Malwa’, *CII*, vol. VII, pt. II, pp. 75-81.

appears to be a hint to the restoration of a Boar temple by Udayāditya in the inscription part B.

*Yenadharaṇivarāhaḥ paramārena (ddhrto)nirāyāsāt
Tasyai tasyā bhū (meruddhāro) va(ba)ta kiyanmātraḥ.*¹⁰⁸

The object of the inscription appears to be that Udaipur was placed in charge of a king who belonged to Nemaka dynasty and to record that he during his reign constructed a temple.

Another Paramāra inscription of somewhat later period also refers to Udayāditya as the primeval Boar.¹⁰⁹ It refers to the reign of Naravarman. The purpose of the inscriptions is to record the assignment of the village Mokhalapātaka (Mokalavadi, 56 kms east of Hoshangabad), which existed in the Vyāpura *maṇḍala* (Byavara, 6 kms south of Hoshangabad). The inscription seeks the blessings of *Devī* (Durgā), Śrīpati (Viṣṇu), Śiva, Brahmā, Harihara and Viṣṇu. Verse 34 of the inscription is important for both political history and the history of Vaiṣṇavism. It states that when after the death of Bhoja the kingdom was troubled by the enemies, Udayāditya played the part of the Primeval Boar in delivering the earth, which had submerged in the mighty ocean in the form of Karnāṭas, Karnas and other kings. The inscription is dated in Vikrama era corresponding to 24th November 1218 A.D.

Amera stone inscription of the time of Naravarman¹¹⁰ records the construction of a tank. Amera is a small village on the slope of a hill about 3 kms south of Udaipur in the Basoda tahsil of Vidisha district. The inscription is dated 1094 AC. The town was constructed by a *brāhmaṇa* during the reign of Naravarman. The inscription opens with the two symbols followed by two stanzas, which invoke the blessings of *Pāñcajanya*, the conch of Murārī and Nārāyaṇa.

Kadmbapadraka grant of Naravarman¹¹¹ (3rd February 1110A.C.) mentions some of the *Brahmiṇ* donees bearing Vaiṣṇava names like Nārāyaṇa and Devaśarman. The present charter was issued from *Dhāra* and the land lay in the possession of

¹⁰⁸ Ibid, p. 81, verse 22.

¹⁰⁹ Trivedi, H.V., 'Nagpur Stone Museum of Naravarman', *CII*, vol. VII, pt. II, pp. 106-114.

¹¹⁰ Trivedi, H.V., 'Amera Stone Inscription of Trailokyavarman', *CII*, vol. VII, pt. II, pp. 98-101.

¹¹¹ Trivedi, H.V., 'Kadmbapadraka grant of Naravarman', *CII*, vol. VII, pt. II, pp. 114-18.

Mahāmaṇḍalika Rājyadeva. It is situated in the *Pratijāgaraṇaka* (pargana) Maṇḍārikā in Upendramaṇḍala. This can be somewhere in southeast of Shivpuri district. The person mentioned as donee continued to get grants by the king, *Mahāmaṇḍalika* Rājyadeva and his wife till 1159 A.D.

One interesting inscription from Bhilsa eulogises the Sun God.¹¹² It is devoted neither to a distinguished personage, nor to a king. The inscribed stone belongs to the temple of Bhaillasvāmin. The composition is by the *Mahākavi-Cakravartin* Chittapa who is otherwise not known. This inscription calls Viṣṇu as the younger brother of Sun (verse 6). Viṣṇu is also known as one of the Ādityas who only beheaded Rāhu when the latter bore malice to him (the Sun) for his brilliance. Chittapa was probably a contemporary and court poet of Paramāra King Bhojadeva.

Another inscription attesting to Vaiṣṇava affiliation is Vidisha stone inscription of Trailokyavarman.¹¹³ The inscription is incised on a rectangular stone, which is now set up above the door of a house in front of a Jaina temple at Vidisha. The object of the inscription appears to be to record the construction of a temple of Murārī, probably by king Trailokyavarman himself or by one of his subordinates. He made many donations to it.

The king constructed the temple of Murārī in Boar incarnation. It was a very high temple and as illustrious as the moon (*kumudabandhu*). He also installed in it the images of some other deities with their respective weapons.

*Soci karata kumuda va(ba)-ndhu sava(ba)ndhu
Kāntikān(tamiva) rāh va puṣaḥ sadanam murāreḥ.*¹¹⁴

He endowed it with a garden and expressed the wish that the temple might last as long as the *Kaustubha* gem adorns Hari's breast and Śiva's forehead bears the moon.

¹¹² Trivedi, H.V., 'Eulogy of Sun-God composed by Chittapa', *CII*, vol. VII, pt. II, pp.122-26.

¹¹³ Trivedi, H.V., 'Vidisha Stone Inscription of Trailokyavarman', *CII*, vol. VII, pt. II, pp. 141-44.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid*, p. 143, verse 4.

Dandapur in Vidisha district has yielded a stone image of Viṣṇu of the Paramāra period.¹¹⁵

Vaisnavism enjoyed the patronage of the rulers and the local people in Vidisha region right from the Gupta period. Such a long span of time must have generated a section of society dedicated to this sect. It is for this reason that we find many donees of Bhopal Copper Plate inscription of *Mahākumāra* Hariścandra bearing Vaiṣṇava names.¹¹⁶ It records the donation of village Dādarapadra, connected with or belonging to Vikhilapadra-twelve in the mahādvādaśaka *maṇḍala*, with its suburbs on the east and the south. The village was divided into sixteen shares and was given to 19 *Brāhmaṇas*. The Mahādvādaśaka *maṇḍala* includes the region of Vidisha and Bhopal. Vikhilapadra may all probability be the modern village Bilquisganj, 22 kms southeast of Sehore and Dādarapadra may have been the modern village of Davri, about 25 kms southwest of Bilquisganj. The name of the donees most of whom belong to Vidisha-Bhopal region include Śrīdhara, Madhusūdana, Viṣṇu Kṣīrasvāmin, Nārāyaṇa, etc. The inscription is dated in Vikrama era corresponding to 19th October 1157 A.D.

As regards the influence of a donee, three inscriptions in and around Sehore record the donation of land to the same Brahmin Govindaśarman. First of them Piplianagar Copper Plate Inscription of Arjunavarman is found from Shujalpur Pargana of the Shajapur district.¹¹⁷ It records the donation of the entire village known as Piḍiviḍi situated in the Śakapura *Pratijāgaraṇaka* by the king Arjunavarman. The king made the donation from his stay at Maṇḍapa-durga (Mandu). Śakapura is situated 16 kms north of Mandu. Piḍiviḍi has been identified as Parlia, 7 kms southwest of Mandu. The inscription is dated as 24th Feb. 1211 A.D. the first four stanzas of the inscription invoke Moon, Paraśurāma, Rāma and Yudhiṣṭhira. The donee was as mentioned *Paṇḍita* Govindaśarman.

The Sehore copper plate inscription of Arjunavarman¹¹⁸ records the donation of a plot of land for the residence of *Danḍādhipati* to the family priest Govindaśarman. Here

¹¹⁵ *JAR*, 1984-85, pp. 148-49.

¹¹⁶ Trivedi, H.V., 'Bhopal Copper Plate inscription of Mahakumara Harishchandra', *CII* vol.VII, pt.II, pp.146-52.

¹¹⁷ Trivedi, H.V., 'Piplianagar Copper Plate Inscription of Arjunavarman', *CII* vol.VII, pt.II, pp.162-66.

¹¹⁸ Trivedi, H.V., 'Sehore Copper Plate Inscription of Arjunavarman', *CII* vol.VII, pt.II, pp.166-68.

the position of the *brāhmiṇ* seems to have been exalted by giving him the status of 'Supurodha' (family priest). The king granted the land after taking bath in Somavatī Tīrtha (on Kṣiprā). The dominant position of the family priest can be gauged by the fact that he was granted land right in Mahākālapura (Ujjain), extending as far as the boundary of the occupied houses. The land was granted on the occasion of solar eclipse on 22nd April, 1213A.D.

The same Brahmin got a plot of land in the village of Hathināvara (modern village Hatnawar, 3 km west of Dharmapuri in Dhar district) about two years later from the previous grant. Another copper plate inscription from Sehore¹¹⁹ says about the grant by the king Arjunavarman from his stay at Amareśvara (Omkar Mandhata in East Nimar district) after taking bath in the confluence of Rewa (Narmada) and Kapila (Kolar). The land was granted on the occasion of moon eclipse on 9th September 1215. King revered Bhavānīpati (Śiva) and Lakṣmīpati Cakrasvāmin (Viṣṇu) before giving the grant. This may be because of the presence of a Viṣṇu temple near Omkar Mandhata.

The Paramāra rulers, being Śaiva, paid obeisance to Śiva in most of their inscriptions. However, the presence of a Vaiṣṇava temple near Omkar Mandhata is proved by the Mandhata copper plate inscription of Devapāla.¹²⁰ These copper plates are found near the temple of Siddheśvara. It records the donation of the village Satājūnā in the Mahuada *pratijāgaranaka* by Devapāla from his stay at Mahiṣmatī on the occasion of moon eclipse on 19th August 1225. The village was donated by the king after taking bath in Rewa (Narmada) near Daityasūdana-

*Revāyām snātvā śrīdaityasūdanasannidhau.....*¹²¹

Daityasūdana may be referring to the temple of Viṣṇu or his incarnation at this place. Names of some of the donees bear Vaiṣṇava affiliation like Nārāyaṇa, Viśveśvara, Rāma, Puruṣottama, Ananta, Madhusūdana, Nṛsimha, etc. These donees came from Madhyadeśa, Mathura, Diṇḍavānā (Rajsthan) and Takarī (Gaya). Mahiṣmatī is

¹¹⁹ Trivedi, H.V., 'Sehore Copper Plate Inscription of Arjunavarman', *CII* vol.VII, pt.II, pp.168-71.

¹²⁰ Trivedi, H.V., 'Mandhata copper plate inscription of Devapala', *CII* vol.VII, pt.II, pp.175-85.

¹²¹ *Ibid*, v.23,p.182.

modern Mahishawar in West Nimar district. The village Satājūnā is 20 kms southwest of Mandhata and Mahuada *pratijāgaranaka* may be identified with the village Mohod about 40 kms south of Satājūnā.

The presence of a large number of Brahmins affiliated to Vaiṣṇava names can be further proved from Mandhata copper plate inscription of Jayavarman.¹²² The plates are found in the village Godarpur opposite the island of Mandhata on the southern bank of Narmada it records the perpetual grant of village Vadauda, situated in the Mahuada *paṭhaka* to the three *brāhmaṇas* hailing from different localities. Of them two bear Vaiṣṇava names – Mādhavaśarman and Janārdana. Mādhavaśarman is the son of Hariśarman. He hailed from Navagāmva (Nawegaon in Chanda district). Vadauda is the modern village Barud, 15 kms southwest of Mandhata. Mahuada *pratijāgaranaka* has been identified earlier. The inscription is dated as 7th November 1260 A.D. The elder brother of *Mahārāja* Jayavarman has been called as Bālanārāyaṇa.

Similarly, another copper plate inscription of the same ruler from Mandhata¹²³ speaks of the endowments of land in favour of a number of *brāhmaṇas* residing at a *brāhmaṇa* settlement at Mandhata. The gift was made by *Sādhanika* Anayasimha from his residence at Maṇḍapa-durga (Mandu), for creating a rent free holding with the prior approval of the king Jayasimhadeva. All the donees of the grant bear Vaiṣṇava names like Padmanābha, Mādhava, Śrīkaṇṭha, Govardhana, Vāmana, etc. It shows that the *Brāhmiṇ* settlement was inhabited by the people following Vaiṣṇava sect. Most of these donees come from Takārī (probably Gaya). At other places too this inscription refers to Viṣṇu and his incarnations. The second stanza of the inscription invokes Paraśurāma, Rāma, Purandruha (Śiva), etc. verse 10 again invokes Viṣṇu in his boar incarnation. While introducing Paramāra ruler Arjunavarman, he is stated to have been solely devoted to Kṛṣṇa. However Anayasimha made the donation of the shares of the villages Kumhadāuda and Valauda in *pratijāgaranaka* of Vardhamānapura, Vaghāḍī in Saptasati and Nāṭiyā in Nāgadaha. Nāgadaha is a railway station near Ratlam. There is a village named Baloda, which corresponds to the Valauda. It is about 10 kms southwest of Kadod (corresponding to Kumhadāuda).

¹²² Trivedi, H. V., 'Mandhata Copper Plate Inscription of Jayavarman', *CII* vol. VII, pt. II, pp. 200-06.

¹²³ Trivedi, H. V., 'Mandhata Copper Plate Inscription of Jayavarman', *CII* vol. VII, pt. II, pp. 209-24.

Vaghādī is the modern village of Bagdi, 6 km east of Dhar. Nātiyā is the modern village of the same name near Birwania station of Ujjain district. The inscriptions are dated in Vikrama era corresponding to 10th August 1274 A.D.

The description of these inscriptions no way means that all these were Vaiṣṇava centres. As I already stated that most of them refer to donation to Śaiva temples. But there are Vaiṣṇava temples as is evident from the passing references to these temples in the inscriptions. And the Brahmin community bearing Vaiṣṇava names might have been worshipping in those temples.

A Paramāra period Vaiṣṇava temple is found at Mandhata in East Nimar district.¹²⁴ It is called as Caubīs Avatāra temple dedicated to the twenty-four forms of Viṣṇu. It has now fallen in ruins. The image of Viṣṇu carved on a black stone is kept inside the temple.

Some other Paramāra sculptures too are found from the East Nimar district. There are two beautiful representations of Viṣṇu from Harsaud. One of them is in Nārāyaṇa form while the other one is in Śrīdhara form.¹²⁵

The first icon of lord Viṣṇu is standing in *sambhaṅga* posture accompanied by the Śankha Puruṣa and Cakra Puruṣa and holding *śankha*, *padma*, *gadā* and *cakra*. Another image of Viṣṇu, standing in *sambhaṅga* pose wears the *karaṇḍa mukuṭa*. The four-armed deity bears a *mālā*, *cakra*, *gadā*, and *śankha*. This is the Śrīdhara form of Viṣṇu.

A fragmentary inscription from Mandu¹²⁶ can throw some light on the worship of Viṣṇu in this region. The inscription refers to the reign of the king Vindhya-varman. The object of the inscription is to record the donation of two gardens by the Paramāra king Subhāṭavarman to Bilhana, who was his *Sandhivigrahika* i.e. minister for peace and war. The record is composed by Bilhana himself. The earlier portion of the inscription gives a poetic description of God Viṣṇu. Verse 10 eulogises the same deity

¹²⁴ *IAR*, 1985-86, p. 135.

¹²⁵ Shah, K.K., 'Some Paramara Sculptures from the East Nimar District', in R.K. Sharma (ed) *Art of the Paramaras of Malwa*, Delhi, 1997, pp. 67-68.

¹²⁶ Trivedi, H.V., 'A fragmentary Inscription from Mandu', *CII* vol.VII, pt.III, pp.618-21

in his Kṛṣṇa incarnation. The concluding portion of the inscription informs that Bilhana composed this poem to describe the eternal glory of the God (Viṣṇu). Subhaṭavarman's son Vindhavarman highly respected the poet and donated two gardens (*vāṭikās*), presumably for the maintenance of the deity installed there. It is not known if the construction of the temple and installation of the deity therein were mentioned in the portion that is lost now. Bilhana seems to be highly devoted to Viṣṇu and especially to Kṛṣṇa who has been mentioned separately in the inscription.

Thus the Paramāras, though not an ardent supporter of Vaiṣṇavism, constructed Vaiṣṇava temples or at least supported the cause of Vaiṣṇavism. They call themselves Śaivas in their inscriptions. But that did not prevent them from making Vaiṣṇava temples. One important fact that needs attention is that whatever Vaiṣṇava temples or grants they made, are found in the Vidisha region. And this was dedicated to the Varāha incarnation of Viṣṇu. Varāha worship has a great antiquity in this region, starting from the Gupta period to the Paramāra period. As per the trends in other parts of Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh, this region too was slowly moving towards the worship of *Caturbhujā* form of Viṣṇu. However it still retains the most popular Varāha form of ancient times. Paramāra rulers might have led the construction or renovation of Varāha image to connect them with the local tradition of the region. Otherwise they do not resort to large scale Varāha temple construction in other parts of Madhya Pradesh. This may have provided a kind of legitimacy to the Paramāra rule in the region. This respect for the local tradition was a 'give and take' relationship and of course it worked both ways.

IX

The period c.A.D. 1000-1300 saw the rise and decline of many dynasties and of the Vaiṣṇava centres. However, the Vaiṣṇava centres are not linked with the decline of the dynasties. While the royal centre declined, the Vaiṣṇava centres kept flourishing in some parts of Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh and get the support of new dynasties as well.

Some of the important Vaiṣṇava centres like Sirpur, Mandasor, etc. declined, while Vidisha, Rajim continued to flourish maintaining their distinct identities.

The period 1000 A.D. to 1300 A.D. saw the prevalence of Vaiṣṇava centres in northeastern Madhya Pradesh primarily (see maps IV and V). There were some new sites like Bargaon, Bilhari and Shahdol. The area around Lalitpur district continued to show the presence of Vaiṣṇava centres like the previous period. There are some new centres like Chandpur, Chanderi and Dudhai. Gwalior continued to be the Vaiṣṇava centres under the rule of Kacchapaghātas.

Chhattisgarh region was under the rule of the later Kalacuri dynasty. The Ratanpur branch of Kalacuri dynasty constructed some Vaiṣṇava temples in Janjgir, Seorinarayan and Kharod. Rajim continued to be the Vaiṣṇava centre even in this period with a renewed temple of Rāma. Barsur and Nārāyanpāl were the new sites of Vaiṣṇava centres, which came up under the rule of Nāgavamśi rulers.

The Vaisnavism of this period too could not touch the other parts of Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh owing to the rise of strong Śaiva sect of Mattamayūras. The Vaiṣṇava centres remained confined to Lalitpur region, northeastern Madhya Pradesh and some parts of Chhattisgarh.

It would be inappropriate to assume that the Vaiṣṇava sects acted hostility towards other sects. Often Śaiva, Vaiṣṇava, Buddhist and Jaina centres flourished side by side in the same region and the same period.

This period was also noted for the large-scale construction of Vaiṣṇava temples. There are many examples like Sās-bahu temple and Telin temple at Gwalior Fort, Seorinarayan temple at Bilaspur and many temples in the Jhansi region. However, many of them were destroyed during Ghaznī attack.

Among the forms of Viṣṇu, Caturbhujā form of Viṣṇu occupies the dominant place. All the other incarnations were slowly restricted to the different niches of the temple. The worship of Murārī and Kṛṣṇa got great impetus in this period. Rise in the number of sculptures of Kṛṣṇa is an important development of the period. The birth and the

līlās of Kṛṣṇa found great favour among the devotees. The modern day Kṛṣṇa-centred worship can be said to have a beginning in this period. Even the form of Murārī is either associated with Varāha or Kṛṣṇa. The image of Viṣṇu as the killer of the demon became favourite among the devotees. Murārī refers to the killer of *Asura* Mura, while Daityasūdāna has the similar meaning. Vāmana, Nṛsimha seldom got the attention of the worshippers. The Varāha incarnation continued to portray the protector image of the God and hence it was used by the rulers. The popularity of the protector image or as the killer of *Asuras* can be linked to the politico-economic turmoil of the period. These regions were ravaged not only by the attacks of the Muslim rulers but by the neighbouring Hindu kings also. In case of failure of the ruler to protect his subjects, Daityanihanta God seemed to be the only recluse of the armless people. And the ruler who ensured safety to the people at large from these attacks was likely to have a greater legitimacy to rule. This would have induced both the ruler and the ruled towards the worship of this form of God (here Viṣṇu). The popular epithet of Viṣṇu appears to be Nārāyaṇa in this period.

There is uniqueness in the sculptures of *Garuḍāsīna* Viṣṇu in Lalitpur region. In the sculpture Garuḍa is often shown carrying snake in his hand. Later on Paramāra rulers adopted Garuḍa holding snake as their state emblem. It may be to show the sovereign power of the rulers or the people worshipping Viṣṇu over those worshipping Nāga deities. Madhya Pradesh is known for the presence of Nāga rulers. The victory over Nāgas might have found allegory in the art of the period.

Vaiṣṇava centres show a declining trend in this period. There is no evidence of destruction of the centres, but the loss of royal patronage might have been associated with it. At the same time this was the period of the rise of the Mattamayūra clan of the Śaivas. The fervent preaching and the organisational set up of this sect were behind the spread of this sect. Of course royal patronage has a lot to do with it. Vaiṣṇava centres lacked both the organisation and royal patronage, which might have accounted for its decline.

However, there are some Vaiṣṇava centres, which showed the character of pan Indian ramifications. One important development was the rise of Vaiṣṇava pilgrimage centres. Now the devotees were asked to move from one centre to another centre to

earn the merit of the site. This gave rise to the expansion of pilgrimage centres and their network. This was an all-Indian phenomenon. Almost all the major sects saw the rise of pilgrimage centres in this period. Vaisnavism was not alone. An in-depth study of the pilgrimage centres will be carried out in the next chapter. The pilgrimage centres have different mythologies attached to them. This has been described in the Purāṇas, which will be extensively used in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4

VAIṢṆAVA PILGRIMAGE CENTRES

*Yathā śarirasyoddeśāḥ kecinme-
dhyatamāḥ smrtāḥ
tathā pṛthivyā uddeśāḥ kecit
punyatamāḥ smrtāḥ
prabhāvādbhutādbhūmeḥ salilasya
ca tejasā
parigrahātmunīnām ca tīrthānām
punyatā smrtā.*

[*Padmapurāṇa, Uttarākhaṇḍa 237.25-27*]¹

Just as some parts of the human body are held to be purer (than others), so some localities on the earth are held to be very holy. *Tīrthas* are held to be holy on account of some wonderful characteristics of the locality on account of the peculiar strikingness (or grandeur) of some watery place or on account of the fact that some (holy) sages resorted to them (for bathing austerities etc.).²

This statement of the *Padmapurāṇa* gives an idea of the concept of '*tīrtha*'. In Sanskrit literature, the word '*tīrtha*' has been described in various ways. The meaning of this word is 'passage', 'way', 'road', 'ford', 'a river', 'bathing place', and 'a place of pilgrimage on the banks (*tīra*) of sacred streams of water'.³ The term '*tīrtha*' was in vogue in *Vedic* period too, but not in that sense they meant today. In *Rgveda* water in general and rivers specifically are referred to as holy and purifying (*punānah*).⁴

¹ Kane, Dr.P.V., *History of Dharmaśāstras, Ancient and Medieval Religious and Civil Law*, Bhandarkar Oriental Institute, Poona, 1973, vol. IV(2nd ed.), p.555.

² Ānandāśrama edition of *Padma Purāna*, cited by P.V. Kane.

³ Sastri, Suryakanta, *Sanskrit-Hindi-English Dictionary*, Bombay: Oriental Longmans, 1975.

⁴ Kane, Dr. P.V., *History of Dharmaśāstras*, vol.IV, p.555.

Gautama (19.14), *Baudhāyana* (I 11.10.12) and *Vaśiṣṭha* (22.12) *Dharmasūtras* state that the *deśas* (localities) that are holy and hence destroyers of sin are all mountains, all rivers, holy lakes, places of pilgrimage, the dwellings of sages, cow pen and temples of the gods.⁵ The *Vanaparva* of *Mahābhārata* has a separate section on pilgrimage. With the passage of time more and more sites came to be considered as 'tīrtha'. The *Padmapurāṇa* (II.39.56-61) included the places where the *agnihotra* and *śrāddha* are performed, a temple or a house where a *Veda* is being studied, a cow pen, a place where the *soma* drinker dwells, parks, a place where the *aśvattha* exists, a place where *Purāṇa* is being recited, where one's teacher stands, a chaste housewife dwells and where a father and a worthy dwell.⁶

Among the scholars of ancient Indian history the concept of 'tīrtha' remains an enigmatic topic. There have been various opinions about the meaning of the word 'tīrtha'. Diana Eck considers *tīrthas* as the 'crossings' in the sacred geography.⁷ A *tīrtha* is a "crossing place" or "ford" where one may cross over to the far shore of a river or to the far shore of the worlds of heaven. There is an excellent comparison of the *tīrtha* with the rivers. Crossing the great rivers of India in the time of full flood has long been a challenge to travelers, who have sought out the fords with their ferries and rafts to make a safe crossing. *Samsāra*, the ceaseless flow of birth and death and birth again, was likened to a river and the far shore became an apt and powerful symbol of the goal of a spiritual traveler as well.

Tīrthas can also be compared with the *Avatāra* system.⁸ The *avātara* "crosses downward," opening the doorways of the divine in this world so that these thresholds might be crossed in other direction by the humans. The place of *avatāra* is the *tīrtha*, for there the crossing might be readily and safely made.

This concept becomes all the more relevant when we think in terms of the *avatāras* of Viṣṇu. All the *avatāras* of Viṣṇu can be considered as different *tīrthas* itself. With the help of them the crossing to the other side of the world can be easily made.

⁵ Kane, Dr.P.V., *History of Dharmasāstras*, vol. IV, p.560.

⁶ Kane, Dr.P.V., *History of Dharmasāstras*, voll. IV, p.564.

⁷ Diana, L. Eck, 'India's "Tīrthas": "Crossings" in Sacred Geography', *History of Religions*, vol.20, no.4,(May 1981), pp.323-44

⁸ *Ibid*, p. 15.

Any place on the earth can be a *tīrtha*. Diana Eck⁹ considers that no place in the world is too small to be called as *tīrtha*. A small temple can also be called a *tīrtha*. Temples are especially consecrated as a crossing place between the heaven and earth.

The development of *tīrthas* was a slow process. Initially when the natural forces were considered as gods and goddesses, the holy or sacred places used to be a natural spot: be it a river, mountain or lake as described in the *Rgveda*. The striking natural landscapes generated a sense of awe, grandeur, respect and sometimes peace in the mind of the ancient Indians. In these places they found the presence of god and accordingly these were worshipped as the sacred places. Slowly the scope and the meaning of the word '*tīrtha*' were inflated to include physical, mental and spiritual spaces. Among them the highest *tīrtha* is considered to be the purity of mind.¹⁰ The ancient texts classify *tīrthas* into four divisions – *daiva* (created by gods), *āsura* (those associated with such *asuras* as *Gayā*), *ārsa* (those established by the sages such as Prabhāsa, Nara-Nārāyaṇa) and *mānuṣa* (created by kings like Ambariṣa, Nanu, Kuru) and provides that each one is superior to each succeeding one.¹¹

The *tīrthas* thus evolved, attracted the devotees from the nearby areas. Thus the concept of '*tīrthayātrā*' emerged. The motive behind these pilgrimages is both spiritual and mundane. According to S.M. Bhardwaj¹² the high level sacred places (pan Hindu supraregional) are visited largely for general purification. On the other hand, the visits of pilgrims to the regional and sub-regional level shrines seem to be specific purpose oriented. The *Mahābhārata* (*Vanaparva* 82.9-12) lays the greatest emphasis on the cultivation of the high moral and spiritual qualities if the full reward of pilgrimages is to be reaped.¹³ The pilgrimages may help in removing the sins of men and acquire religious merit.

The removal of sins and gain of religious merit is of some importance. In the earlier period, the sacrifices were supposed to do these things. The sacrifices are by nature

⁹ Diana, L. Eck, 'India's "Tīrthas": "Crossings" in Sacred Geography', p.325.

¹⁰ *Skanda Purāna, Kāśikhanda*, 6.

¹¹ Bhardwaj, S.M., *Hindu Places of Pilgrimage in India; A study in Cultural Geography*, University of California Press, 1973, p.162.

¹² *Mahābhārata, Vanaparva*, 82.9-12.

¹³ Kane, Dr.P.V., *History of Dharmaśāstras*, voll. IV, p.

expensive. The *Vanaparva* (82.13-17)¹⁴ makes a comparison between the sacrifices to gods and pilgrimages. The sacrifices require numerous implements, collection of materials, the cooperation of priests and the presence of wife and so they can be performed only by priests or rich man. The reward that a man gets by visiting holy places cannot be secured by performing such sacrifices as *Agnihotra* in which large fees are paid (to priests); therefore visiting holy places is superior to sacrifices. The *Padmapurāṇa* (IV.80.9) remarks: sacrifices, *vratas*, *tapas*, and *dāna* cannot be carried out fully in the *Kali* age; but bathing in the Ganges and taking the name of *Hari* are free from all defects.¹⁵

The *tīrthas* thus draw a comparatively larger group than the sacrifices did. Hence these *tīrthas* grew popular among the masses and some of the *tīrthas* like Hardwar, Prayaga, and Ujjain attracted masses from all parts of India.

Apart from being less expensive, the *tīrthas* have another speciality. It has relatively democratic character. The Indian society, as we all know, is a mixture of various castes, ethnic groups, regional identities and linguistic groups. The *Dharmaśāstra* writers often follow a taboo on the performance of sacrifices by various groups. But the right to pilgrimage was available to each and every one. The *Viṣṇu Dharmottara Purāṇa* (III.273.9)¹⁶ puts the matter very clearly –

Sarveṣāmeva varnānāmi srvāśramanivāsinām
Tīrtham phalapradam jñeyam nātra kāryā vicāraṇā.

A holy place yields fruit to men of all *varṇas* and *āśramas*.¹⁷

The ancient texts took a liberal view of the pilgrimage and the eligibility to undertake *tīrthayātrās*. The *Vanaparva* (82.30-31)¹⁸ provides that *brāhmaṇas*, *kṣatriyas*, *vaiśyas* and *sūdras*, when they are bathed in holy places they are not born again. The same work further states that whatever sin a man or a woman may have committed

¹⁴ Kane, Dr.P.V., *History of Dharmaśāstras*, voll. IV, p.561.

¹⁵ Ibid, p.563.

¹⁶ Ibid, p.563.

¹⁷ The Venkateshwar Press edition of *Viṣṇu Dharmottara Purāṇa*, cited by P.V. Kane.

¹⁸ *Mahābhārata, Vanaparva*, 82.30-31.

from birth, the moment he/she takes bath in the holy Puṣkara all that sin vanishes.¹⁹ Therefore not only men but women also had the right to undertake *tīrthayātrā*. The *Brahmapurāṇa*²⁰ safeguards the interest of women when it says that a householder whose wife is alive and is chaste must go on a pilgrimage with her otherwise he would not reap the benefit of the fruit of the pilgrimage. The *Padmapurāṇa (Bhumi khaṇḍa, chapter 59-60)*²¹ narrates the story of a *vaiśya* called Kṛkala who went on pilgrimage without his virtuous wife and did not reap the fruits of a long pilgrimage. However, the women and the *śūdras* were not permitted to undertake pilgrimage without the husband's permission in the case of a woman and in the case of a *śūdra* not indifference to the primary duty (to wait upon learned *brāhmaṇa*).²²

It was also provided that there was no question of untouchability while bathing in holy waters-

*Tirthē vivāhe yātrāyāmi sangrāme deśa viplave
Nāgara grāmadāhe ca sprṣṭāsprṣṭirna duṣyati*²³

(Bṛhaspati quoted by *Kṛtyakalpataru* on *Śuddhi*, p.169)

At holy places, in marriages, in a religious festival or procession, in a battle, when there is an invasion of the country and when a town or village is on fire, no blame attaches on the ground of incurring contact with untouchable persons or things.²⁴

Thus the *tīrthas* provided a relatively democratic face of the ancient Indian society. The popular participation and the mass base became the corner stone behind the proliferation and expansion of the pilgrimage centres. This democratic outlook of the *tīrthas* started in *Mahābhārata* itself. Here sage Pulastya (*Mbh.* 3-80. 34-40) says that sacrifices are out of the reach of the poor people.²⁵ The sacrifices require many utensils and a large variety of materials. People without means could not perform them. The sage classifies pilgrimages as having merit equal to those of the sacrifices.

¹⁹ Kane, Dr.P.V., *History of Dharmaśāstras*, vol. IV, p.

²⁰ *Ibid*, p.568.

²¹ *Bhāryam vinayodharmah sa eva viphalo bhavet*, 59.33; Kane, Dr.P.V., *History of Dharmaśāstras*, voll. IV, p.568.

²² *Ibid*, p.569.

²³ *Ibid*, p.569.

²⁴ *Kṛtyakalpataru*, Gaekwad Oriental Series, cited by Dr. P.V. Kane.

²⁵ Ensink, J., 'Problems of the Study of Pilgrimage in India', *Indologia Taurenensis*, Vol.II, 1974, pp.58-59.

To make this pilgrimage accessible to the poor sections of the society too or in other words to encourage the practice of pilgrimage, the *Viṣṇu Dharmaśāstra*²⁶ provides that no money should be demanded from a pilgrim or by a ferryman or by a toll officer and that if he took money from such persons he was to return it.

The *Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa*²⁷ says that to make a pilgrimage on foot is the highest *tapas* (austerity) and that if a pilgrimage be made in a conveyance the pilgrim will reap only the reward of the path. The idea behind this statement is to make the pilgrimage more rigorous to gain more spiritual rewards. But it certainly reduced the burden of the expenses during *tīrthayātrā* and made it accessible to the common mass of the society. Thus the *tīrthayātrā* has remained as one of the cohesive forces of the society.

Another aspect of *tīrthayātrā* as one of the cohesive forces of the Indian society is the concept of circulation involved in it. Various texts often provide a list of *tīrthas*, which the *tīrthayātrīs* have to cover in a particular fashion. Only after that full reward of the pilgrimage is attained. Some places may be the focal points for pilgrim from the entire continent. Others, more modest places may serve as centers of congregation of devotees from the immediate vicinity.

Diana Eck²⁸ finds the *tīrthas* as being 'central for the shaping up of an Indian sense of regional and national unity'. The recognition of India as sacred landscape, woven together north and south, east and west, by the paths of pilgrims, has created a powerful sense of India as Bhārat Mātā- Mother India. The author further stresses the fact that in the thousands of *tīrthas* recounted in the *māhātmyas* of the *Purāṇas* and the Epics, there is an appearance of the divine in the form of Kṛṣṇa, Rāma, Śiva or Goddess. Often in its *māhātmya*, the local *tīrtha* will subscribe to the larger all India tradition by linking its sanctity to the great events of the Epics and the *Purāṇas*. This might be seen as the geographical equivalent of the Sanskritization.

²⁶ *Viṣṇudharmasūtra*, V.132-133, cited by Dr. P.V. Kane, p.571,

²⁷ *Ibid*, pp.576-77.

²⁸ Diana, L. Eck, 'India's "Tīrthas": "Crossings" in Sacred Geography', *History of Religions*, vol.20, no.4,(May 1981), pp.323-44.

Bhardwaj²⁹ finds several intermediate levels in between these two levels of extremes. The narrator of the great *Mahābhārata* suggests a clockwise circular pilgrimage of India.³⁰

Turner³¹ has stressed the eminent importance of the travel aspect of pilgrimage. It leads the devotee beyond the sphere where he lives and works, both in a social and geographical sense. Many social taboos and restrictions break away in these travels. Over a period of time, the travelers developed common religious practices and rituals despite a great variety in the local practices.

Religion practiced in the context of pilgrimage centres provide a population following similar rules and regulations at a particular time which the other politico economic processes could hardly generate. Thus religion assumes an important role in generating a circulation mechanism in which all the social strata of Hinduism participate. The pilgrimage centres played a major role in the integration of a society.

The development and expansion of the pilgrimage centres remained a continuous process in the society. New *tīrthas* were added from time to time and the monetary benefits derived by the permanent residents and particularly by the *tīrtha* priests led them to produce numerous *māhātmyas*.

The *Matsya Purāṇa* states that *Vāyu* declared that there are 35 millions of *tīrthas* in the sky, in the aerial regions and on the earth and all of them are centred in the Ganges.³²

The ancient texts mention clustering of holy places in the Ganga plain and the Kurukṣetra region, the main foci of the domain of the Aryans. The only region in the Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh region that is mentioned in the texts as the pilgrimage centre is Narmada – Ujjain area. Other areas – a large part of Madhya Pradesh and whole of Chhattisgarh – are by and large devoid of this list of sacred

²⁹ Bhardwaj, S.M., *Hindu Places of Pilgrimage in India*, p.

³⁰ Aiyangar, K.V., Rangaswami ed. *Kṛtyakalpataru of Bhaṭṭa Lakṣmīdhara, Tīrthavivēcanakāṇḍam*, Gaekwad Oriental Series No.98, Baroda: Oriental Institute, 1942, Introduction.

³¹ Turner, Victor, *The Centre Out There; Pilgrim's Goal*, *History of Religions*, 12, 1973, pp.191-230.

³² Kane, Dr.P.V., *History of Dharmasāstras*, vol. IV, p.567.

places assigned in the texts. These areas are the ones occupied (even to this day) by a considerable portion of the pre-Aryan tribes. Bhardwaj³³ says that the areas least desirable for plough agriculture were least aryanized. Hence lesser number of *tīrthas* figures in these regions in the texts.

The texts, which mention pilgrimage centres, show strong regional biases. The *Kṛityakalpataru* of Bhatta Lakṣmīdhara, compiled about 1110 A.D., mentions mainly the sacred centres of Northern India.³⁴ None of the major *tīrthas* mentioned by him is located south of the Narmada River. The *Tristhalīsetu* of Nārāyaṇa Bhaṭṭa³⁵, a 16th century text, mainly focuses on Prayaga, Kashi and Gaya. Other texts like *Catuvarga Cintāmaṇi* of Hemādri (1260-70 A.D.), *Tīrthacintāmaṇi* of Vācaspati (1450-80 A.D.) do have similar attitudes.

Moreover, these texts belong to a later period than my period of research (c.A.D. 600-1300). It is a mammoth task to present a picture of Vaiṣṇava pilgrimage centres in Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh with the help of these texts. The only region mentioned in the texts – Narmada-Ujjain region – is associated with the Śaiva faith, though there is no apparent enmity in between the Vaiṣṇava and Śaiva faith. At Ujjain, the temple of Mahākāla is especially sacred to the Śaivites, while the river Śīprā and the Ankapāda area just outside Ujjain are venerated primarily by the Vaisnavites.³⁶

Sometimes pilgrimage has been identified as a geographic subject,³⁷ by trying to determine the catchment area or ‘pilgrimage field’ related to a sacred site, calculate frequency of the of pilgrim travel distance or map pilgrim activity spaces at sacred places. Holy cities are complexes of many holy sites. Vidyarthi³⁸ applies the term “sacred complex” to the whole city and designates the smallest unit of worship as “sacred centre”. As a rule the most important object of veneration, an idol or a *linga* is housed in a temple and sacred centres of every description are scattered all over the

³³ Bhardwaj, S.M., *Hindu Places of Pilgrimage in India*, p.71.

³⁴ Kane, Dr.P.V., *History of Dharmasāstras*, vol. IV, p.565.

³⁵ *Tristhalīsetu* of Nārāyaṇa Bhaṭṭa; *The Bridge to the Three Holy Cites*, ed. By Richard Saloman, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1985, p.xiii.

³⁶ Bhardwaj, S.M., *Hindu Places of Pilgrimage in India*, p.63.

³⁷ Stoddards, R. H., *Sacred Spaces, Sacred Places: The Geography of Pilgrimages*, Louisiana, 1997.

³⁸ Vidyarthi, Lalita Prasad, *The Sacred Complex in Hindu Gaya*, New York, 1961, pp.5-7.

city. The territory of the holy city is called as *kṣetra*. It need not coincide with the city in a civil sense, but is sharply delimited.

The concept of '*kṣetra*' was slow to emerge. Every small centres or temples are related to the particular deity within its '*kṣetra*'. Often a tradition or the story prevails in the region, which connects these centres with the pan-Indian centres. The *māhātmya* of the pilgrimage centres cover the territory the '*kṣetra*'. Some times a temple built by a ruler and patronized by dynasty takes the form of small pilgrimage centres. These centres often skip the eyes of the ancient text writers. My effort in this chapter will be to look for these centres and to find out if any connection exists between the local and the pan-Indian centres.

The *Purāṇas* do seem to have strong regional biases, as shown by the efforts to promote the sanctity of certain *tīrthas*. This may have been done by the priest in order to attract more pilgrims and thereby to benefit from the fee paid by the pilgrims for the performance of the rituals. Bhardwaj says that this process may have ultimately resulted in the establishment of vested interests of the class of religious specialists called the *tīrtha purohita* or *pāṇḍās*.³⁹ Not only the priests but the Indian *rājās* and the princes seem to have vested interests in the *tīrthas* because of the revenue received from the temples. This curious mixture of vested interests of the priestly class and the ruling class led to the biased attention of the texts towards certain *tīrthas* in India.

There is a concept of journey involved in the *tīrthas*. The travel part of the *tīrtha* is the most important part of a *tīrtha*. The devotees are often asked to travel from one place to another place to secure the merit of *tīrtha*. The more difficult a path the greater is the fruits attached to undertaking that journey. The big or the famous *tīrthas* are often situated on far off places and on mountains. The difficulties of the journey gave these *tīrthas* more sanctity than attached to other *tīrthas*. Among the famous *tīrthas* on the mountains are Badrinath, Kedarnath, Vaishno Devi, Manasa Devi, Gomukha, Amaranath, and etc. The devotees are asked to take land route and to avoid comfortable journey to secure the greater merit of visiting these places. The *tīrthas* reached after long journeys are difficult to access (*durlabha*) and hence the award is

³⁹ Bhardwaj, S.M., *Hindu Places of Pilgrimage in India*, p.72.

multiplied. On the whole the rites performed at the *tīrtha* do not differ from those performed at home; it is the journey and the place itself, which make the ordinary extraordinary.⁴⁰

I

The *Purāṇas* are excellent sources for the *māhātmyas* of the various pilgrimage centres. But as mentioned earlier, the *Purāṇas* and other texts basically focus on the Narmada and Ujjain region. In this section, I will take the help of various *Purāṇas* to trace out the sacred Vaiṣṇava centres and their *māhātmyas*. It is not always possible to demarcate the place and period of the *tīrthas* mentioned in the *Purāṇas*. And also different sections of these *Purāṇas* belong to different periods of time. Many of them have a later time period than my period of research work (c.A.D. 600-1300). However the pilgrimage centres have a larger time period than a few years. It is quite possible that they were in existence in the early centuries of the first millennium, so that they found a place in the texts of the later period (2nd half of first millennium A.D.).

The focus of this section would be mainly on Narmada and Ujjain region – the only landmarks of Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh – mentioned in the epic *Mahābhārata*, *Purāṇas* and other texts.

Narmada is a highly venerated river in the texts. The *Matsya Purāṇa*⁴¹ states “the waters of the Sarasvati purify after one bathes for three days, those of Yamuna in seven days, those of Ganga at once, while the water of Narmada purifies a man at a sight of it. Śiva is the presiding deity of the Narmada region. Amarakantaka, the place from which Narmada originates, is considered as holy. According to *Kūrma Purāṇa*⁴², on the mount of Amarakantaka, Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Rudra (Indra) are present along with groups of Vidyādharas. The same text mentions a religious circulation, which derives merit to the devotees. Most of the places are related to Śiva, but some of them are dedicated to Viṣṇu and his forms.

⁴⁰ Diana, L. Eck, ‘India’s “Tīrthas”’: “Crossings” in Sacred Geography’, p.337.

⁴¹ Kane, Dr.P.V., *History of Dharmasāstras*, vol. IV, p.566.

⁴² The *Kūrma Purāṇa*, pt.II, tr. By Dr. G.V. Tagare, *Ancient India Tradition and Mythology*, vol.21, ed. by J.L. Shastri, Delhi, 1982, p.581.

Śūlabheda⁴³ is a particular spot where if a pure man observes fast after duly performing the ablution rites, he goes to Viṣṇu's reign. The *tīrtha* is situated on the northern bank of Narmada.

In the same circle comes the Koṭīṭīrtha, which rids a man of all his sins.

Another *tīrtha* mentioned on the northern bank of Narmada close to Viṣṇu *tīrtha*.⁴⁴ It is well known as Yodhānipura. Here Vāsudeva fought with the demons. One who bathes here shall have the glory and the splendour of Viṣṇu. By observing fast day and night, one can keep off (the sin of) the murder of a *brāhmaṇa*.⁴⁵ The *Padmapurāṇa* (*Bhūmi khaṇḍa* 39.46-47) says that all rivers whether flowing through a village or a forest are holy and that where no name of a *tīrtha* on rivers is known it should be called as Viṣṇu *tīrtha*.⁴⁶

Thereafter one should go to Kāmatīrtha⁴⁷ on the southern bank of Narmada. It is the place where Kāma worshipped Hari. One who bathes here is honoured in the Viṣṇuloka.

In the same circle comes the peculiar *tīrtha* called Janārdana⁴⁸. Here Viṣṇu is in the form of a *Linga*. This is a typical example of the syncretic conception of gods.

Another *tīrtha* which deserves attention in this list is Kapila *tīrtha*. It is mentioned in the Tiwarkhed inscription of the Rāṣṭrakūṭa Nannarāja.⁴⁹ In this inscription, the king donated land in the villages Tiverekheṭa and Ghuikhheṭa on a solar eclipse at Kapila *tīrtha*. The inscription is dated in Śaka era 553 (631 A.D.). It means that other *tīrthas* mentioned here might also have been of the same period or a few centuries later.

The concept of *Tīrthas* started pervading the religious spheres in the region as early as 7th century A.D. Bhrgutīrtha⁵⁰ and Varāhatīrtha⁵¹ are the other two centres associated

⁴³ Ibid, p.583.

⁴⁴ Ibid, p.586.

⁴⁵ Kane, Dr.P.V., *History of Dharmaśāstras*, vol. IV, p.561.

⁴⁶ Kane, Dr.P.V., *History of Dharmaśāstras*, vol. IV, p.560.

⁴⁷ *Kūrma Purāna*, pt.II, p.586.

⁴⁸ Ibid, p.587.

⁴⁹ Hiralal, Rai Bahadur, 'Tiwarkhed Plates of Rāshtrakūṭa Nannaraja; Saka 553', *EI*, vol.XI, pp.276-80.

⁵⁰ *Kūrma Purāna*, pt.II, p.591.

⁵¹ Ibid, p.592.

with Viṣṇu in this list. Of them Bhr̥gufīr̥tha is a place where Paraśurāma regained his energy taken away by Rāma, the son of Daśaratha. This place is now a day called as Bheraghat (12 miles west of Jabalpur), which has the temple of 64 Yoginis.

It is also said that Nara-Nārāyaṇa also visited the bank of Narmada.⁵² The Badarīkāśrama penance grove has been made by them. This place was formerly mentioned by Śambhu as the most meritorious and excellent *tīr̥tha*. Arjuna became a *siddha* here. A *Līṅga* was also installed here. There is a stream called Nara-Nārāyaṇa or Devadronī where one should perform holy rites.⁵³

There is another *tīr̥tha* called Jalaśāyī⁵⁴ on the northern bank of Revā (Narmada). Here Viṣṇu went to sleep after killing the demons. The demon named as Tālamēgha became a source of nuisance for the gods and Śiva and Brahmā. He started harassing the gods to the extent that their weapons lost their brilliance. Indra, the slayer of the Vṛ̥tras, had his glory checked by the demon. Varuṇa resembled like a helpless snake whose vitality was sapped by his mantra. Similarly, Yama and Ādityas too lost their brilliance. Along with gods Maheśa (Śiva) too became morose. Collectively, these gods went to Brahmā, who advised them to go to Viṣṇu. Viṣṇu, described here as Mādhava and Keśava, was found sleeping on the Ocean of Milk. All the gods started eulogising Viṣṇu. Hearing their words Viṣṇu woke up from the *nidrā*. After hearing the distress of the gods Viṣṇu became ready to kill the demon.

The demon has been described as living in the Himalayas with a huge military of innumerable horses, chariots and elephants. Viṣṇu thought about Garuḍa who is the destroyer of the multitudes of enemies. It seems natural to take the help of Garuḍa for the demon was formidable as described by the gods to Viṣṇu. Not only Viṣṇu took the help of Garuḍa but also he took all his weapons *śaṅkha*, *cakra* and *gadā*. Apart from his usual weapons the god is shown wielding the bow, the pestle and the plough. On reaching the city of the demon, the god blew the *Pāñcajanya* conch to raise terror in the heart of the demon. There ensued a fierce battle of Viṣṇu with the demon in which the god succeeded in finally killing him with his discus.

⁵² *Skanda Purāna*, pt.XIV, tr by G.V. Tagare, Ancient Indian Tradition and Mythology (AITM), vol.62, ed. by G.P. Bhatt, Delhi, 1999, pp.306-08.

⁵³ *Ibid*, p.308.

⁵⁴ *Ibid*, pp.292-301.

After killing the demon Viṣṇu came back to the banks of the Narmada. Here Narmada is described as the Ocean of the Milk on whom the god is sleeping. Along with Lakṣmī, Kṛṣṇa (Viṣṇu) lay down on the serpent Ananta on the northern bank of Narmada. The discus, which was polluted by the killing, was washed by the waters of Revā and was purified. The place is also called as Kālaghanāsana and Cakratīrtha because of these two reasons.

Then the narrator of the story goes on to say that, as Ananta is the most famous of all the serpents, Janārdana of all the gods and Mārgaśīrsa of all the months, so also Narmada famous of all the rivers. Henceforward, in the month of Mārgaśīrsa, on the eleventh day of the bright half, a man devoid of lust and anger should go to Jalēśa. This is evidently referring to Viṣṇu. The sins like *brāhmaṇa* slaughter are destroyed at this centre. Men observing *vratas* like *Paraka*, *Cāndrāyana* and *Pañcama vrata* at this *tīrtha* get their everlasting goals.

The story places the glory of Narmada ahead of all the other rivers by treating it like the Ocean of Milk. Besides it glorifies the might of Viṣṇu who killed the demon who was otherwise invincible. All the gods became helpless before this demon including Śiva. Śiva has been given a place lower than Viṣṇu and even Brahmā. As described earlier Śiva is shown moving to Brahmā, then to Viṣṇu for help. It seems it was intended to show Brahmā as a mediator between Viṣṇu and Śiva.

Besides, here is a curious mixture of weapons of Viṣṇu with that of Balarāma. Pestle, plough etc are the characteristic weapons of Balarāma. This mythology may belong to the period when an attempt was being made to identify Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma with Viṣṇu. At several places in this story Viṣṇu is called as Kṛṣṇa.

Most of the Vaiṣṇava *tīrthas* are on northern bank. Northern bank of Narmada seems to be the Vaiṣṇava region, while southern bank is Śaiva. Narmada separates the two regions.

All the places related to Viṣṇu / Nārāyaṇa recount a fight between Viṣṇu and the *Asuras*. This may allude to the faint memory of early fight between the *brāhmaṇical* cults and the tribal, though it is impossible to determine the period of the fight and the

subsequent conversion of the region into a *tīrtha* and the time taken by the event to find a place in the myths of the region.

II

Ujjain is famous for the Mahākāla temple. It is also called as Mahākālavana. According to *Skanda Purāṇa* (*Āvantiya khaṇḍa*, section II, p.1)⁵⁵ there are 84 Śiva temples or *Śivaliṅgas*. Viṣṇu occupies ten *sthānas* (shrines) here.

Of the several names of Ujjain, the origin myths of two - Kuśasthali⁵⁶ and Padmāvati⁵⁷ - are closely related with Viṣṇu. The *dēvas* and the *dānavas* were fighting among themselves. Brahmā sought refuge in Viṣṇu. The latter asked for a spot where he could make the universe stable. Brahmā took a handful of *kuśa* grass and went to the hermitage of Cyavana *rsi*. Here Puruṣottama came to the area of *kuśa* and hence the place is named as Kuśasthali.

The name 'Padmāvati' is closely related with the story of the churning of the ocean and arrival of Lakṣmī, *dēva-dānava* fight and the final union of Lakṣmī by Viṣṇu. Here Lakṣmī is called as Padmā. The *Suras* praise Viṣṇu and say that after approaching Ujjayinī they had become enjoyer of jewels due to the residence of Padmā, hence the name Padmāvati. Viṣṇu has invariably been portrayed as Padmanābha in the various inscriptions of the region. Association of Viṣṇu with the lotus and Lakṣmī is mentioned in almost all the texts of ancient period.

The story of the name of Padmāvati points towards the flourishing state of the city of Ujjayinī. The city may have been a hub of economic centres, which gave rise to prosperity and by implication the name 'Padmāvati' (the city of Lakṣmī). Padmāvati is usually identified with Padma Pawaya near Gwalior. But *Skanda Purāṇa* identifies Ujjayinī with Padmāvati.

⁵⁵ *Skanda Purāṇa*, pt.XIII, p.1, ft. note 1.

⁵⁶ *Skanda Purāṇa*, pt.XII, pp.165-68.

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, pp.177-79.

The excavation done by Shri N. R. Banerjee revealed the continuity of occupation of Ujjain from a date prior to 600 B.C. to the beginning of Muslim rule in Malwa.⁵⁸ Of the four periods of the excavation the 2nd period, corresponding to 3rd –2nd century B.C., points to an age of prosperity. It is marked by the presence of a large number of coins, ceramics and the NBPW pottery. The excavation also yielded presence of a massive rampart, dating back to the earlier period to the advent of the Muslim rule. There was a major entrance to the fortification. The passage was in constant use during the entire occupation of the site. A large number of coins were also found in the deposits of the period II, III and IV. One of the terracotta coin moulds shows the effigy of the Roman emperor Augustus.⁵⁹

All these point to the prosperity of the region in an earlier period, which might have led to the name ‘Padmāvati’. The presence of iron and trade with the Roman Empire may be the reason behind the prosperity of this region. The memory of the earlier prosperity might have led to the myth of name ‘Padmāvati’.

Among the various Vaiṣṇava pilgrimage centres, the Ankapāda *kṣetra*⁶⁰ is just outside the city of Ujjain. This was the place where Kṛṣṇa learnt all sixty-four *vidyās* in sixty four days in the hermitage of *brāhmaṇa* Sāndīpani. At the end of his education, the teacher demanded the return of his lost son in lieu of fee. Sāndīpani’s son was swallowed by a whale at Prabhāsa, while the ascetic was on his pilgrimage. When Kṛṣṇa approached the ocean, he was told by the latter that an *Asura* named Pāñcajanya in the form of a whale swallowed the boy. The god killed the demon and took the *Pāñcajanya* conch. But he did not get the boy there. From that place he went to Yama’s place and brought the boy back to his father. Sāndīpani being glad gave the boon that he who comes here (Ankapāda) and takes the holy bath will not meet premature death.

It seems from the above description that Prabhāsa on the coast of Gujrat was already a pilgrimage centre at the time when the stories about the Ankapata *kṣetra* was being formulated and crystallized. The Ankapata *Kṣetra* seems to be a small centre as

⁵⁸ *IAR* 1956-57, Excavations at Ujjain, pp. 20-28.

⁵⁹ *IAR* 1957-58, Excavations at Ujjain, p.36.

⁶⁰ *Ibid*, pp.90-99.

compared to Prabhāsa *Kṣetra*. Even now it is considered higher in ranking as compared to the Ankapāda *Kṣetra*. Small centres are often connected to the bigger centres to legitimize it and to have religious sanction. The local priests and the *brāhmiṇs* of the region are often responsible for this act of legitimization. These small centres may have provided the crucial link between the pan-Indian centres and the local people.

The second most important thing is the story attached to the pilgrimage centre. It recounts the acquisition of the sacred *Pāñcajanya* by Kṛṣṇa from the demon Pāñcajanya after whom the conch was named. It appears that the place (Prabhāsa *Kṣetra*) was inhabited by non-Aryan people headed by *Asura* Pāñcajanya. Kṛṣṇa defeated and took possession of the *Pāñcajanya* conch from the demon. The sacred conch might have some religious and political sanctity for which Kṛṣṇa supposedly kept it with him for lifetime. This entire story might be counted as an attempt by the Kṛṣṇa cult to usurp new places and spread its influence to far off people.

Still another important thing about this mythology is the depiction of this place as the 'Ankapaṭa *Kṣetra*' or 'Ankapāda *Kṣetra*'. Both these terminologies associate it with the centre of learning. Ujjain being an old centre it is quite possible that there are some good and renowned learning centres in this region. The story of Kṛṣṇa's education is attached to give it more popularity and the sanctity.

The same text describes the five Viṣṇu shrines – Śāṅkhin, Viśvarupa, Govinda, Cakrin and Ankapāda – when completed in a circle reaps the fruit of the pilgrimage. The devotee who worships Ankapāda on the *dvādasi* day with sweet smelling flowers, incense and *naivedya*, should perform *śrāddha*. At the same place there is a pond called as Kārī kunda. One who takes bath in it and worships Viśvarupa becomes rid of all sins, while a person taking bath in the Cakraṭīrtha becomes an emperor.

The *Skānda Purāṇa* (*Āvāntya khaṇḍa*, book II, section I)⁶¹ mentions a Ramēśvara *īrtha* in Mahākālavana. Here Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa installed a *Linga*. One who bathes

⁶¹ *Skānda Purāṇa*, pt.XII, Book V, Sec. I, pp.119-22.

in the Rāma *tīrtha* and visits Rameśvara *tīrtha* gets rid of all sins. The same story says that there is no fraternal relationship here. Everyone attends to his personal interests. On the northern bank of the Śīprā, there is an idol installed by Nārāyaṇa. It is worshipped as Keśavāditya.⁶²

The intercalary month when it occurs is associated with Visnu. In Mahākālavana, there is a *tīrtha* called as Puruṣottama *tīrtha*.⁶³ When this month arrives, great festivities are organized. Even now a festival is organized in this place. The *vrata* should be observed on the 8th, 9th and 14th day of the dark half of this month. Kṛṣṇa is the presiding deity of the *Adhimāsa*. The person performing the *vrata* should observe fast and feed *brāhmaṇas*. At midday Viṣṇu with Lakṣmī should be installed. On the eleventh day in the bright half of Bhādrapada, the devotee should observe fast and observe *Jāgaraṇa*. He should perform the adoration of Viṣṇu and conduct the aquatic procession of the deity everyday in the lake Puruṣottama.

There is another *tīrtha* related to *Cāturamāsa* on the bank of the Śīprā, called as Karkarāja.⁶⁴ When the *Cāturmaṣa* arrives, all the *tirthas* and meritorious shrines are stationed with the support of Viṣṇu and that Viṣṇu depends upon the excellent Karkarāja *tīrtha*. Then the text compares the bath in various tanks during *Cāturmāsa*. One such bath in Karkarāja *tīrtha* transforms the person to Viṣṇu himself.

To the north of Karkarāja *tīrtha*, there is a splendid *tīrtha* called as Nṛsimha *tīrtha*⁶⁵ on the bank of Śīprā. It was at par with Vaikuṅṭha. Here Hiraṇyakaśipu was killed with a single blow of Hari, in the form of Man-lion. Ever since all the *suras* perform the midday prayer at the place. If one person casually performs the worship of Nṛsimha on the 14th lunar day, which happens to be the day of Nṛsimha, he along with the goddess of fortune comes within the grasp of the person.

There are some other *tirthas* in the Avantī region. There is a *kunda* called Sundara *kunda*⁶⁶, where the top of Vaikuṅṭha fell upon during the turmoil of the end of the

⁶² Ibid, p.147.

⁶³ *Skanda Purāṇa*, pt.XII, book V, pp.236-41.

⁶⁴ Ibid, pp.285-87.

⁶⁵ Ibid, pp.278-80.

⁶⁶ *Skanda Purāṇa*, pt.XII, Book V, Sec. I, pp.209-10.

kalpa. It is the place where Viṣṇu and Śiva with his Śakti are present. A man should stay here for a fortnight, as his residence shall invariably be in the Vaikuṅṭha for a hundred *kalpas*.

In Padmāvati there is a Viṣṇu *tīrtha*.⁶⁷ By taking holy ablution therein one should see Siddheśvarī. He shall be endowed with Rddhi (prosperity) and Siddhi (achievement of spiritual power). He is then honoured in the Viṣṇuloka. Here there is a strange connection between Viṣṇu and Rddhi and Siddhi, the well-known wives of Ganeśa.

To the south of Kuśasthalī, there is an eternal ancient *tīrtha* – Nāga *tīrtha*.⁶⁸ It is said that, earlier it was the abode of Nāgas where Hari is present. That eternal *brāhmaṇa* Hari resorted to *yoganindrā*. He is well known as Śeṣasāyī. There are other *kuṇḍas* of Dhananjaya, Vāsuki, Takṣaka, etc. There is another *tīrtha* Rāmasara, where the wife of Hari, Ramā lives. Nearby is the *āśrama* of Bali. Hari is also present there. This story about Nāgatīrtha gives some faint indications of the take over of the cult of Nāgas by the cult of Viṣṇu. Ensink⁶⁹ says that the sacred places were not originally *brāhmiṇ* institutions. They must have been held sacred already by other communities before the *brāhmaṇas* took them under their aegis. Thus the conversion or adoption of the non-*brāhmaṇic* institutions into the *brāhmaṇic* stronghold remained the characteristic of the spread of *brāhmaṇical*, *Purāṇic* cults .

Śiprā, on whose bank Ujjain is situated, is called as the daughter of Varāha, in the *Skanda Purāṇa*.⁷⁰ There is a story of the birth of Śiprā. Jaya, the doorkeeper of Viṣṇu, was born as Hiranyākṣa. When Yajñavarāha killed Hiranyākṣa, the eternal river Śiprā flowed out of his heart filled with the water of bliss and became the bestower of boons. The river merged with a *kuṇḍa* in Padmāvati. Since it merged with it, it is called as Nīlagangā (Līnagangā). From Śiprā was born the lake of Varāha. By taking a holy bath here, drinking water, performing *śrāddha* and by giving a milch cow, one is honoured in Viṣṇuloka.

⁶⁷ *Skanda Purāṇa*, pt.XII, book V, pp.246-72.

⁶⁸ *Ibid*, pp.275-78.

⁶⁹ Ensink, J., 'Problems of the Study of Pilgrimage in India', *Indologia Taurinensis*, Vol.II, 1974, p.73.

⁷⁰ *Skanda Purāṇa*, pt.XII, Book V, Sec. I , pp.203-08.

Śiprā River is also called as 'Jvarāgni' (fire of fever).⁷¹ There was a fight between Śiva and Viṣṇu. Their final missiles "Jvaras" clash with each other and submerged and extinguished into the river. Hence the river was called *Jvarāgni*. The fight between Hari and Hara was for the sake of Bānāsura. The story is mentioned in *Harivamśa*, but there is no mention of the river Śiprā there. Though it will be a far-fetched conclusion to say about the fight between Śiva and Viṣṇu as that of between Śaivas and Vaiṣṇavas, it cannot be denied that there was some clash (may be of ideas). And it was finally settled.

Thus the region in and around Avantī was the centre of many beliefs and cults. They may meet, interact, sometimes even experience clash of interests, finally resolved. In some cases like the Nāga *tīrtha*, it was more of take over than settlement. However the peaceful coexistence of the two from centuries is in consonance with the *purānic* story.

Some other Vaiṣṇava *tīrthas* are Govindasvāmin and Vikramasvāmin in Avantī. *Brahmā Purāṇa*⁷² states that lord Viṣṇu is stationed as Govindasvāmin. He yields worldly pleasures and salvation to the devotees. Another Viṣṇu shrine is named as Vikramasvāmin. By visiting the lord, whether man or woman, attains the benefits mentioned above.

Thus the *Purāṇas* give a list of Vaiṣṇava *tīrthas* in the prominently Śaivite region of Narmada and Ujjain. It may be that the two sects – Vaiṣṇavism and Śaivism – were at par with each other earlier. With the passage of time, the patronage of the rulers and the expansion of the Śaiva cult of Mattamayūras, Śaivism rose into prominence. Whatever may be the course of history, the ancient writers recognized the existence of others sects though preferably at a lower level. The devotees are asked to move from one Śaiva *tīrtha* to other Vaiṣṇava *tīrtha* and vice versa. The reference to some *tīrthas* in inscriptions points towards the historicity of at least some of them.

⁷¹ *Skanda Purāṇa*, pt.XII, Book V, Sec. I, pp.192-95.

⁷² *Brahma Purāṇa*, pt.II, Ancient Indian Tradition and Mythology, vol.34, delhi,199 , p.247.

III

The pilgrimage centres in Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh are not all limited to the Narmada and Ujjain region. The inscriptions, archaeological materials and Gazetteers abound in the list of temples, donation of lands, pilgrim records and festivals organized at various places. The *Purānas* and other ancient writers do not provide the list of *tīrthas* and the mechanism of the circulation for these centres. But as the other parts of India list numerous pilgrimage centres, it is not possible that this part remained aloof.

It is not wise to comment further on these pilgrimage *māhātmyas* and specific rituals attached to the sacred centre in the absence of concrete evidences. The information so far available is not enough to construct the history of the local and regional pilgrimage centres. Moreover all the texts were written at a later period. By then many centres might have declined. They soon faded from popular memory and were denied a place in the texts. Despite their absence from the literature available to us, there is no doubt that they enjoyed a great degree of influence on the socio-cultural life of the region at that time. And hence they deserve a place among the pilgrimage centers of Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh of the period 600-1300 A.D.

There are many regions in Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh, which experienced the emergence of sacred centres long before other parts of India. The Heliodorous pillar of Besnagar⁷³ is the earliest iconographic evidence of Vaiṣṇavism in India. The excavation reports of Archaeological Survey of India 1913-14⁷⁴ and 1914-15⁷⁵ point towards a well established *brāhmaṇic* centres. The findings of two *kuṇḍas* and the associated structures give indication of the performance of sacrifices at this spot. The drains quite near the *kuṇḍas* were no doubt connected with the sacrificial pits. The sealing of the donor *Timitra* appears to be Greek Demetrious who might have instituted the sacrifice. Thus there was a well-established sacrificial centre at this place. The Kham-baba Pillar mentions the word “*Bhagavato prāsādotama-----*”.⁷⁶

⁷³ ASIAR, 1908-09, pp.126-29.

⁷⁴ ASIAR, 1913-14, pp.187-96.

⁷⁵ ASIAR, 1913-14, p. 190.

⁷⁶ ASIAR, 1908-09, pp.126-29.

It shows that there were more than one temples here of which this Vāsudeva temple was most beautiful before whom he caused the Garuḍa standard.

With a strong background of sacrificial religion (as appeared from the *kuṇḍas*) there is no doubt that this place emerged as the centre of Vaiṣṇava worship before the advent of the Christian era. The discovery of a Vaiṣṇava temple⁷⁷ near the Heliodorous Pillar establishes the fact. This continued as the important Vaiṣṇava centre even during the Gupta period.

Situated on the fork between the two rivers Betwa and Beas, the place was a famous pilgrimage centre. And the story runs thus. The old city is generally believed to have been built by *Rājā* Rukmāṅgada.⁷⁸ He neglected his wife for the sake of a damsel. One day the *Vimāna* (chariot) of Viṣṇu was stopped by a thorn bush. It was announced that this can be removed only by person who had fasted on the *ekādasi* festival. A *Telin* who had quarreled with her husband was found fit for it. And she removed the thorn. She in return asked Viṣṇu to take her with him. Meanwhile the king and his subjects also clung to the wheel of the *Vimāna* and the whole city was deserted. The new town Bhilsa is said to have been founded after the destruction of old Besnagar. However the new town Bhilsa was named after a Sun temple, Bhillasvāmin.

We do not have the evidence for the history of Vaiṣṇavism for a long period. But it was certainly there in 10th century A.D. Two inscriptions recovered from Bhilsa affirm the existence of a temple as early as A.D. 939-68.⁷⁹ According to one inscription, one minister Vācaspati erected this temple during the rule of Kṛṣṇa, who may be taken as the Rāṣṭrakūṭa monarch Kṛṣṇa III. His known dates are A.D. 939-68. It places the date of destruction of the old Besnagar town somewhere between 8th and 9th century A.D. Thus the ancient Vaiṣṇava centre, which attracted a resident from Greek ruled state, was destroyed. This pilgrimage may have been an element of past now. But in the phase covered by this research i.e. 6th to 9th century A.D., it was an

⁷⁷ Khare, M.D., 'Discovery of a Viṣṇu temple near the Heliodorous Pillar', *Lalit Kala*, No.13, 1967, pp.21-27.

⁷⁸ Cunningham, *ASIAR*, vol.II, p.37.

⁷⁹ *Ibid*; this may have been Śiyādonī Stone Inscription described earlier. The date of this inscription coincides with it. Cunningham describes this inscription as found from Bhilsa.

important pilgrimage centre. But it did not survive to the period of the *Purāṇas*. Alberuni, though mentions Bhillasvāmin as the place of great religious antiquity.⁸⁰ The place was named after the Sun god.

Deogarh in the Lalitpur district of Uttar Pradesh is a well-known site for one of the earliest temples of India – Daśāvātāra temple. The temple complex and its ruins point towards the flourishing Vaiṣṇava centre. Deogarh Rock Inscription of Svāmībhata⁸¹ contains the name of Vārāhī. It also refers to Keśava, Kṛṣṇa- the two names of Viṣṇu. This later Gupta period inscription points to the existence of Vaiṣṇava centre in this region. Siyādonī Stone Inscription⁸² (903-68 A.D.) mentions the involvement of the traders in constructing and maintaining several Vaiṣṇava temples. Siyādonī or Siron Khurd is about 10 miles west-northwest of the town of Lalitpur.

Dudhai, a village 18 miles south of Lalitpur has a small shrine of Varāha incarnation,⁸³ a rock cut sculpture of Nṛsimha⁸⁴ and the anthropomorphic image of Varāha⁸⁵ of roughly 11th-12th century A.D. The Jhammar temple in Chandpur in Lalitpur district is also dedicated to Viṣṇu. It too belongs to 11th-12th century A.D. Besides there are numerous Vaiṣṇava sculptures in the Rani Mahal Museum, Jhansi collected from the above mentioned sites. It is clear that till 11th-12th centuries A.D., this region was an important Vaiṣṇava centre. It must have attracted the pilgrims from far off places for which we have no record. After that these temples were abandoned due to faulty construction or it could not withstand the onslaught of Muslim invasion.

Eran or ancient Arikīṇā must have been an important Vaiṣṇava centre during *Gupta* period. Even the Hūna ruler Toramāṇa inscribed his inscription on the chest of the Varāha sculptures.⁸⁶ But it could not continue as a pilgrimage centre beyond 7th-8th century A.D.

⁸⁰ Sachau, E., *Alberuni's India*, New Delhi, 1989, p. 202.

⁸¹ Sahani, D.R., 'Deogarh Rock Inscription of Svāmībhata', *EI*, vol. XVIII, pp. 125-27.

⁸² Kielhorn, F., 'Siyadoni Stone Inscription', *EI*, Vol. 1, pp. 162-179.

⁸³ Field Trip to Deogarh and Associated Sites.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Fleet, J.F., 'Eran Stone Boar Inscription of Toramana', *CII*, vol. III, pp. 158-61.

Pathari in Vidisha district was late to emerge as a Vaiṣṇava centre. The earliest evidence is the Pathari Pillar Inscription of Parabala⁸⁷, dated 861 A.D. It records the construction of a temple for Śaurī (Hari). The temple in front of this pillar contains a *Linga*. But the *lalāṭabimba* of this temple containing *Caturbhuja* Viṣṇu indicates the Vaiṣṇava affiliation of it.

The village contains *Daśavatāras* of Viṣṇu in a group of temples belonging to 10th century A.D.⁸⁸ Among the *avatāras* – Kūrma, Buddha, Paraśurāma, Varāha, Vāmana, etc. are to be mentioned. The super structure of the main temple is completely in ruins. There is an open pillared hall probably for religious discourses. It may have been an important Vaiṣṇava centre. It might have attracted pilgrims from far off places. The tradition says that this place was originally called Barānagara (Varāhanagara) and was destroyed by *Rājā* Chatrasāla.

Gyaraspur is a village 24 miles northeast of Vidisha head quarters. It possesses the remains of several fine temples of the medieval period.⁸⁹ The Bajra Math, originally a *brāhmaṇical* temple dedicated to the Trinity, contains the Jaina images. The central shrine is dedicated to Sūrya, the southern to Viṣṇu and northern to Śiva. After having been desecrated by the Muslim invasion, the temple remained deserted for a long time and then at a later date was appropriated by the Jainas.

Another building called Hindolā *Toraṇa*⁹⁰ is an ornamental entrance to a *brāhmaṇical* temple. It contains the twenty-four forms of Viṣṇu. The lower panel contains the boar incarnation of Viṣṇu. Two portions of an inscription of 13 lines were found in the wall of the platform near the *Toraṇa*. It contains the date in Mālavā *Samvat* 936 i.e. A.D.879. There are quite a number of shrines enclosed by a compound. One of these structures has a figure of Garuḍa on its lintel. The superstructure of this complex is once again completely in ruins. It may also be the result of Muslim invasion.

⁸⁷ Kielhorn, F., 'Pathari Pillar Inscription of Parabala', *EI*, Vol. 9, pp. 248-250.

⁸⁸ Field Trip to Vidisha and Adjacent Sites.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

The importance and antiquity of Vidisha region is recognized by the ancient texts too. The *Brahmānda Purāna*⁹¹ mentions Daśārṇa (Eastern Malwa, whose capital was Vidisha) along with other pilgrimages like Pryāga, Kālañjara, Naimiṣa and Kurujāṅgala.

Gwalior too was a Vaiṣṇava centre. The *Caturbhujā* temple at Gwalior⁹² was constructed in A.D.875-76. The Gwalior *Prasasti* of Bhoja⁹³ assigns the epithet of *Ādivarāha* to Bhoja. The inscription dated A.D.933 points to the Vaiṣṇava affiliation of the king and the place. This did not stop here.

The Sās-bahu temple inscription⁹⁴ further attests to the continuing Vaiṣṇava worship in this place. There is a short contemporary inscription of a pilgrim who records his devotion to Cetanātha – “*Om Namō Cetanāthāya*”.⁹⁵ It presents an illusion to the name of the Jaina pontiff Cetanātha. However Cunningham opines that it is for a Vāyu god. It appears that the temple was occupied by the people of Jaina faith after it was deserted by the Vaiṣṇava followers.

The Telīn temple is the highest building in the fort.⁹⁶ The temple was dedicated in the year A.D.1092 and the inscription was engraved the following year. The whole of the building was once plastered over by the Mohammadans. The temple was not available for worship in the 13th and the 14th centuries as there is no pilgrim’s record of this period. On the eastern side of the wall, there is an incomplete inscription dated 1103 A.D., only ten years later than the opening of the temple. At the same place, there are two other dated records of A.D.1463 and A.D.1465, which shows that the temple was again used by the Hindus during the Tomara rule. This centre of Vaiṣṇava worship continued for almost six hundred years before being deserted.

⁹¹ *Brahmānda Purāna*, pt.II, Ancient Indian Tradition and Mythology, vol.23, Delhi, 1983, p.532.

⁹² Trivedi, R.D., *Temples of the Pratihara Period*, pp. 161-168.

⁹³ Majumdar, R.C., ‘Gwalior Prasasti of Bhoja’, *EI*, Vol. 18, pp. 99-114.

⁹⁴ Keilhorn, F., ‘The Sas-bahu Temple Inscription of Mahipala’ *The Indian Antiquary, A Journal of Oriental Research*, vol. XV, Delhi, 1984, pp. 33-46.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ *CASIR*, vol. II, pp. 359-62.

The old town of Suhaniya is situated on the north bank of river Ahsin, 25 miles to north of Gwalior.⁹⁷ It has an 8th-9th century Viṣṇu temple built by the queen Kākanavatī. The temple contains the pilgrim record of 1440 A.D., which adores the shrine of Viṣṇu during the reign of Duggara. Close to the village Suhaniya on the west side, there is a small temple of Ambikā Devī and another of Viṣṇu. The courtyard of the temple contains a number of sculptures including Vāmana, Durgā, etc. There are three inscriptions dated A.D.956, A.D.977 and A.D.1410. The Gujarī Mahal Museum, Gwalior, contains many sculptures from Suhaniya. The archaeologist of the museum opines that Suhaniya might have been a centre for sculpture construction.

The village Karitalai in Jabalpur district has the distinction of being a place of antiquity. In his stone inscription, the Kalacuri ruler Lakṣmaṇarāja II⁹⁸ gives the description of a very high temple constructed by Someśvara. Various donations were made to the temple. All this is now in ruins. The principal figure, which is standing, is that of Boar incarnation of Viṣṇu. There is another colossal Nṛsimha in white stone. The inscriptional reference to the huge temple and donations points towards once a flourishing Vaiṣṇava centres.

There is an interesting case of Dharmanātha temple at Dhamnar.⁹⁹ It is a rock hewn *brāhmanical* temple, which enshrines a *linga* now a days. The temple was originally dedicated to Viṣṇu. Against the back wall of the shrine stands a statue of Viṣṇu, holding in his hands *gadā*, *mālā*, *cakra* and *śankha*. Upon the dedicating block over the doorway to the shrine are seated Viṣṇu and Lakṣmī. The god is holding the goddess round her waist through his left lower hand. Besides the doorway dedicated to Viṣṇu, there is no *kīrtimukha* usually associated with the shrines of Śiva. Ganga and Yamuna are represented on their respective vehicles along side the doorway.

The temple is surrounded by seven minor shrines; the middle shrine at the back of the main temple contains a slab bearing Nārāyaṇa reposing on the serpent Śeṣa with Brahmā springing from his navel. Brahmā was attacked by the demons Madhu and

⁹⁷ Ibid, pp.399-401.

⁹⁸ Mirashi, V.V., 'Karitalai Stone Inscription of Lakṣmanaraja II', *CII*, Vol. IV, pt. I, pp. 186-195.

⁹⁹ *ASIAR*, 1905-06, pp.111-15.

Kaiṭabha who in turn were destroyed by Viṣṇu. In the sculpture the two demons are represented at Viṣṇu's feet attacking each other.

The middle shrine on the north side is a slab bearing the ten incarnations of Viṣṇu. There are nine compartments, the first on the left containing two *avatāras*- Fish and Tortoise. In the eighth compartment there is full-length image of Viṣṇu, a counterpart of that in the main shrine, which takes the place of the *avatāras*. Towards the right of the temple there is a slab bearing the representation of Śiva performing the *tāṇḍava* dance. The image is surrounded by four dancing goddesses- Pārvatī with Nandī, Vaiṣṇavī with Garuḍa, Indrāṇī with elephant and Brahmāṇī with goose. The name of the place Dhamnar appears to be derived from the name of *linga*, Dharmanātha. Other shrines of the temple are empty.

A large number of Vaiṣṇava shrines and the principal subsidiary shrine containing the image of Viṣṇu points to the Vaiṣṇava origin of the monument. The images are not worshipped now. It is possible that the shrine was desecrated during the invasion, possibly Muslim invasion. This attack might have dispersed the Vaiṣṇava attendants and left the shrine desolate. This desecration may have occurred more than once. After some time it was possessed by the people of Śaiva faith, who set the present *linga* there. The annual report of Archaeological Survey of India assigns a date of early Muslim invasion to this event. However if a short inscription (described later in the same report) is to be believed this may be a recent event.

There are two small stone pillars standing almost parallel to the temple and about 120 ft. from it. On the western pillar there is a short inscription inscribed in four lines which reads -

Samvat 1753

Nāgonada rā

-majin rā

-sa karāyā

In *samvat* 1753, Nāgonand Rāmji established a *rās*.

'*Rās*' is a term usually associated with a particular dance associated with Kṛṣṇa and the *gopis*. If some such Vaiṣṇava festival was organized in 1753, it can be supposed

that till that date Vaiṣṇava worship was carried in the monolithic temple. The occupation of the temple by the people of Śaiva faith was of considerable later date.

The local centres like this continued to be worshipped by the people for generations. Such an old temple would, no doubt, have attracted people from far off region. If the inscription is to be believed the 'rās' was performed in a particular season. This might have taken the form of a small fair for which we have no evidence now. But the socio-cultural influence of the temple would have been great at least in regions nearby.

IV

Along with all these centres (located in Madhya Pradesh), Chhattisgarh too experienced the emergence of pilgrimage centres. As already mentioned in the previous chapters, Rājīvalocana temple was built by Nala king Vilāstuṅga.¹⁰⁰ The temple of Rājīvalocana stands in Rajim, a well known holy place, situated 28 miles south by east of Raipur. The temple underwent three to four successive changes corresponding to Śarabhapurīyas, Pāṇḍuvāmsīns and the Kalacuri king Jayasīmha period.¹⁰¹ It shows the popularity of this pilgrimage centre. It is visited by thousands of pilgrims on their way to Jagannātha in Orissa.

There are various legends attached to this temple.¹⁰² According to one the widow Rāju or Rājib, was an oil dealer of Chanda. She possessed a black stone, which she used as a weight in selling her oil. Jagat Pāl, another person of the town tried to possess it for the purpose of building a temple over it. The *Telīn* asked for gold (either queen's nose ring or gold equal to the weight of the stone). Also she asked for a promise that the temple should be named after her.

In the Rajim *Māhātmya*,¹⁰³ it is stated that the Mahanadi River bore the name of Utpaleśvara above the junction at Pairi and that of Citrotpala below it. Sir Richard Jenkins says that previous to Rajim *Telīn* name, Rajim was called as Kamala-kṣetra

¹⁰⁰ Mirashi, V.V., 'Rajim Stone Inscription of the Nala King Vilasatunga', *EI*, Vol. 26, pp. 49-58.

¹⁰¹ Dikshit, M.G., *Sirpur and Rajim Temples*, pp. 27-32.

¹⁰² *CASIR*, vol. X, pp.7-8.

¹⁰³ *CASIR*, vol. X, pp.8-9. Cunningham mentions of the *māhātmya* attached to this shrine of Viṣṇu, which I

could not find out while my field trip to Rajim.

and Padmapura. At a later period, the *bhaṇḍāra* (treasury) and the *rasoi* (kitchen) were added to it. The kitchen is a necessary adjunct of every Vaiṣṇava temple for the preparation of *Prasāda*.

At short distance to the south, there is a comparatively modern temple built by Govind Lal, a banker of Raipur. The material for the temple is brought from Sirpur. On one of its pilasters there is a short inscription of a pilgrim in characters of the 8th-9th century A.D., reading 'Śrī Lokabala'.¹⁰⁴

There are several records of the visits of the pilgrims carved on the pillars of *Rājīvalocana* temple.¹⁰⁵ Of them, numbers 4, 5 and 6 are of Gupta style.

No. 1- Śrī Videsāsitya Videsa.

No. 2- Śrī Purnāditya Udbhinna Chanda.

No. 3- Śrī Purnāditya.

No. 4- Śrī Salonatūṅga Śrī Mana Devī.

No. 5- Śrī Salonatūṅga.

No. 6- Śrī Mana Devī.

No. 7- Śrī Vandasuthauda.

No. 8- Śrī Vakarahavalam.

No. 9- Śrī Bhaga Chapti.

No. 10- Śrī Ratnapuruṣottama.

These records point to the popularity of the temple. People from far off places visited this site. Even when I visited it, a family from Jhansi has arrived on a pilgrimage to this place.

There are some other places, which are connected to the Jagannātha tradition.¹⁰⁶ Śabarīnārāyaṇa temple in Janjgir district is one of them. It is also an important centre of Vaiṣṇava worship. People from nearby areas undertook pilgrimage to this temple. The image worshipped as Śabarī is that of a male. But the popular tradition of Śabarī

¹⁰⁴ *CASIR*, vol. X, p.14.

¹⁰⁵ *CASIR*, vol. X, pp.19-20.

¹⁰⁶ Bilaspur District Gazetteer, pp.294-95.

gave it a female identity. In this connection the Śabarī temple in Kharod¹⁰⁷ about 2 miles from Seorinarayan needs attention. This temple too was dedicated to Viṣṇu as appeared from the image Garuḍa above the *lalātabiṃba*. But now a day it enshrines a modern image of Cāmuṇḍā and is worshipped as Śabarī.

V

These are some of the pilgrimage centres, which flourished in Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh. Some centres declined while others are still continuing as a major or minor partner in the pan Indian framework.

There can be still more *tīrthas* in this part of India awaiting further investigations. The centres like Rājīvalocana, Śabarīnārāyaṇa were linked to the pan Indian centre of Jagannātha at Puri. Some of the centres did emerge as major pilgrimage centres but not as a Vaiṣṇava pilgrimage centre. With the withdrawal of patronage enjoyed by these temples they declined as major centre, but continued as tourists' spots, while others, which fell victim to the invasions and desecrations. In the broad Indian framework, once an idol of the god is broken or desecrated, it fell into disuse. It is considered as inauspicious to worship a broken image. And with the end of the dynasties, there was no one to take care of them.

The period of c.A.D.600-1300 saw the rise and decline of many Vaiṣṇava pilgrimage centres in Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh. In Chhattisgarh many centres like Rājīvalocana and Śabarīnārāyaṇa get affiliated to (may be at a later stage; It is visited by the pilgrims on way to Jagannātha) Puruṣottama *kṣetra*. These centres especially ŚabarīNārāyaṇa were attached to the local centres. The local tradition mentions a competition between the Janjgir and the Seorinarayan temple in a way connecting it to the pan Indian centre of Jagannatha. Rājīvalocana temple is connected with the story of Rajib *Telīn*. There is a temple of *Telīn* besides the Rājīvalocana temple. Thus the *Telīn* temple too was connected to the national level temples. These two in fact worked as the bridge between the local and the national level pilgrimage centres. They can be recognized as intermediate level centres.

¹⁰⁷ Bilaspur District Gazetteer, pp.272-73.

Some centres were important otherwise too for example, the pilgrimage centre of Ujjain had the advantage of being a commercial centre too. It might have benefited from the trade route passing through it, while the cities of Besnagar, Udayagiri, Lalitpur declined as a commercial centre in 8th-9th century A.D. These two combined factors (invasion and the decline of cities) played havoc for pilgrimage centres. The Chhattisgarh pilgrimage centres by and large remained away from these developments.

The role of traders in development of pilgrimage centres cannot be doubted. The Siyādonī inscription (explained earlier) is a proof. Among the traders *Telīn* community was more associated with these centres, be it Rājivalocana, Siron Khurd or Besnagar.

The significance of *tīrtha* can be understood 'by taking account of the many strands of the Indian tradition which have converged in the *tīrtha*'.¹⁰⁸ The tradition of making gifts, performing sacrifices and other rites has been substituted by the single act of undertaking pilgrimages. This act is less costly and more people friendly than the other acts of Hindu religion. The neglected section of the society particularly *Śūdras* and women do have rights of performing a pilgrimage. This comparative democratic outlook of this act gives it more popularity and sanction in the social sphere.

The less number of Vaiṣṇava *tīrthas* does not matter as long as the twin purpose of accruing religious merit and popular participation (though not forcefully envisaged by the authors or *tīrtha mātmyas*) are fulfilled.

¹⁰⁸ Diana, L. Eck, 'India's "Tīrthas": "Crossings" in Sacred Geography', p.344.

CHAPTER – 5

VAISNAVA CENTRES AND CONTEMPORARY SECTS IN THE REGION

The phenomenon and the growth of Vaiṣṇavism or for that matter any social event cannot grow in isolation. Vaiṣṇavism no doubt represented a vital and living dimension in the field of social and cultural life. But the impact of it was experienced beyond the sphere of cultural and religious realm. The political, economic and spiritual life could not remain untouched by the hands of this social phenomenon.

Indian society is an admixture of different religions, sects, language, culture and ethnic groups. All of them follow a different pattern of life and religious beliefs, practices and the mode of worship. While Vaiṣṇavism was gaining ground in Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh, it was inevitable that it would interact with all the other religious sects. It affected them and in turn got affected by them. The interaction of Vaiṣṇavism with other sects ranges from cooperation to conflict and subordination. The attitude of Vaiṣṇavism varies depending upon the kind of patronage and favourable environment present at the moment. It cooperated with other sects, when its own existence was not challenged by them. It tried to assimilate and subordinate whenever it found an opportunity to do so. The image of Vaiṣṇavas ascendancy was but a reflection of it. The presence of different forms of Viṣṇu and his incarnations was no doubt the result of this assimilation and subordination of the same.

Not all the incarnations were worshipped in India since ancient times. Time and place always has a bearing upon the prevalence of particular forms. As I have already noticed in my chapters, in the early Gupta period some of the incarnations like Varāha, Vāmana, Śeṣāśayī Viṣṇu , Nṛsimha, Hayagrīva were particularly in vogue. But towards the close of first millennium B.C. the *Caturbhuja* Viṣṇu replaced the other forms as the main deity of the sanctum. The *avatāras* like Matsya, Buddha, Kūrma, etc. appeared quite late. These never had temples dedicated to them. Contact with new areas and new people necessitated this kind of assimilation. Ancient Indian

society remained always in transition encountering new set of ideas. It was necessary to accommodate them for the smooth flow of social, economic and political life.

The association of different communities and cultures, which exist at different levels of development, demands similar assimilation and incorporation at the spiritual level. The movement or the change in the socio economic pattern of the society brought about corresponding changes in religion. Religion of a region is basically a response to the socio economic and political reality of the time and place. There is process and direction of these changes. There is need to understand it. As B.D. Chattopadhyaya puts it-

“...since even within a framework of integration, cultural elements and symbols exist in states of dynamic interrelationship, there is also need to understand the relationship of domination and subordination or marginalization within the frame. In other words, ‘integration’ does not mean complete dissolution of disparateness among various elements; as a historical notion ‘integration’ therefore requires a probe into how and in what historical contexts certain elements become dominant in relation to others, and, how dominance becomes evident not only in the relative order of the elements but also in the ways in which the essential meanings and symbols associated with different elements undergo change.”¹

This kind of assimilation was not one sided. It was a two way process both sides responding in a positive mode. And this phenomenon was in no way peculiar to Vaiṣṇavism only. All the religions of the period pass through the same set of changes. Vaiṣṇavism was only following the trend. By and large this phenomenon was peaceful. Some times conflicts and commotion did emerge at the surface but it all settled for the greater good of peaceful coexistence.

The ancient texts are a testimony to this conflict and settlement at the spiritual level. The happenings at the material level cannot be separated from the development at the spiritual level. No direct conclusion can be drawn from these references. But a

¹ Chattopadhyaya, B.D., ‘‘Reappearance’ of the Goddess or the Brāhmanical Mode of Appropriation: Some Early Epigraphic Evidence Bearing on Goddess Cults’, in the book *Studying Early India; Archaeology, Texts and Historical Issues*, Delhi, 2003, pp.172-73.

parallel development can be traced to the daily life. The ancient texts and inscriptions are extensively used in this chapter to trace the kind of relationship that existed between Vaiṣṇavism and different sects. It is dealt chronologically in the following pages.

Madhya Pradesh has a long history of Vaiṣṇavism starting from the Heliodorous Pillar Inscription.² Here we have an evidence of an outsider accepting the Vaiṣṇavas religion. The system must have provided an outlet for these people otherwise it was not possible to accommodate them in the society. Even before this period (Mauryan period) we have an evidence of the donation made by a person (probably following the Vaiṣṇavas faith) to the Buddhist *Stūpa* at Sanchi. There is an inscription of the Śirigupta³ found from Sanchi. This inscription records the gift by a merchant Śirigupta to the Kākānada *Stūpa*. The inscription is written in Mauryan Brāhmī and belongs to the Mauryan period. The name Śirigupta or Śrīgupta may indicate that the donor was not a Buddha but a Vaiṣṇavas.

However at such an earlier period, it is difficult to ascertain the inclusion of Śrī or Laksmī into Vaiṣṇavism. But it is certain that the person-making donation was not the Buddhist but the follower of other sect. That he did not hesitate to make gift to an align faith shows the catholicity of the outlook of the period. And with such a background it is not difficult to determine the attitude of the different sects at later period.

I

The mighty *Gupta* rulers were the patrons of the Vaiṣṇavas sect. They call themselves *Paramabhāgavata*⁴ in their inscriptions. The caves of Udaigiri hill are fine examples of Gupta period sculptures and royal power. The Udaigiri cave inscription of Chandragupta⁵ refers to the construction of cave 7 and its dedication to god Śambhu by Śaba Vīrasena, the minister of war and peace. The Vaiṣṇava king did not hesitate to

² Bhandarkar, *ASLAR*, 1914-15, pp. 66-81.

³ Kumar, Pushpendra, 'Sanchi Stupa Inscription of Sirigupta', in *Descriptive Catalogue of Sanskrit Inscriptions (from 300B.C. to 19th Century A.D.)*, Delhi, 1998, p. 186.

⁴ Bhandarkar, D.R., 'Udaigiri Cave Inscription of Chandragupta II', *CII*, vol. III, pp. 255-57.

⁵ Bhandarkar, D.R., 'Udaigiri Cave Inscription of Chandragupta II', *CII*, vol. III, pp. 255-57.

appoint a Śaiva as his minister. The Śaiva minister also made a donation of a cave in the presence of the emperor. There are lots of rock-cut sculptures of other sects present at this site. Cave 2 contains a standing deity with *danda* in his hand. In all probability this is the image of Skanda Kārttikeya.⁶ Figures of Mahiṣāsūramardini, Gaṇeśa, Saptamātrkas, etc represent other images of the caves. Probably Mahiṣāsūramardini was still to be connected with the Śaiva pantheon. It is frequently mentioned with the Vaiṣṇavas sculptures. Among other sculptures four Jaina sculptures of cave 20 are significant.⁷ In this cave four sculptures are shown seated on the pedestal below which is carved the symbol of wheel. An inscription ascribed to the reign of Kumāragupta (c.A.D.425-26) indicates towards the dedication of the cave to a Jaina *Tīrthankara*. It records the construction of the image of *Pārśvanātha* by a devoted ascetic Śāṅkara.

There may have been conscious attempt by the Gupta rulers to connect the different sects with Vaiṣṇavism. Mandasor Inscription of Kumāragupta and Bandhuvarman⁸ try to associate the fame of Sun Temple to that of the lotus garland of the god.

Another inscription from Mandasor of Malwa *Samvat 524* (467-68A.D.)⁹ starts with obeisance to Sugata (Buddha). At the same time it calls Candragupta as famous as Govinda (*Govindavat=khyātaguptah*).

Mandasor Inscription of Yaśodharman and Viṣṇu vardhana (533-34A.D.)¹⁰ records the construction of a large well by a person named Dakṣa, the younger brother of Dharmadāsa, who was a minister of Viṣṇu vardhana. It opens with obeisance to god Pinākī (Śiva). The king Viṣṇu vardhana is described as *Parameśvara*. One of the ministers of the dynasty was Varāhadāsa. He was clearly a follower of Vaiṣṇavism. The engraver of the inscription is also a Vaiṣṇavas, named Govinda.

⁶ Patil, D.R., *Monuments of Udaigiri Hill*, pp. 40-41.

⁷ Ibid, p. 41.

⁸ Bhandarkar, D.R., 'Mandasor Inscription of Kumaragupta and Bandhuvarman, Krita yr. 493 and 529', *CII*, vol. III, pp. 322-32.

⁹ Garde, M.B., 'Mandasor Inscription of Malwa Samvat 524', *EI*, vol. 27, pp. 12-18.

¹⁰ Fleet, J.F., 'Mandasor Inscription of Yasodharman and Viṣṇuvarhdhana, Malwa Year 589', *CII*, vol. III, pp. 150-158.

A Saptamātrka image has been found from the flight of steps leading down to the river Betwa and Sindh.¹¹ Deogarh as we know is the site of another earliest Gupta period Vaiṣṇava temple – Daśāvatāra.

Other areas that were not directly under the rule of the Guptas also followed the path of the Gupta rulers. The discovery of 27 copper plates¹² belonging to the five different kings can be sited in this connection. These are discovered in a field adjacent to a tribal settlement known as Riṣavala, located on the outskirts of the township of Bagh and in the vicinity of the temple of Bāgheśvarī. The kings were referred as meditating on the feet of *Paramabhaṭṭāraka*. They were in all probability the feudatory chiefs during the Gupta rule. Among the rulers Bhuluṇḍa was a Vaiṣṇava as is evident from his inscription of year 47¹³, where he extols the different images of Viṣṇu. At the same time the same ruler granted lands to Nandapāla and Nandī in Āmbilikāpadra¹⁴ and also a plot of land to god Nārāyaṇa simultaneously. The ruler made donation not only for the Śaiva followers but in still another grant he converted into a conventional *devāgrāhāra bhukti*, half of the village Vibhītakagartā which had earlier been brought under the enjoyment of the god Bappapiśācadeva.¹⁵ The god was installed by Bhojikā-bhaṭṭa Bandhulā.

Still another inscription of the same ruler granted two villages of Devāgrāhāraka and Gavayapāṇīyaka for the god Bappapiśācadeva in year 54.¹⁶ However this grant is to be administered by the good (devotees) of the Bhagavata (Nārāyaṇa). The presence of the deity Bappapiśācadeva points to the worship of the devils or evil spirits in that tribal region. Bappapiśācadeva may represent the soul of the father of lady Bandhulā who had installed the image. This example is a unique one with the prevalence of the Vaiṣṇavas faith and worship of spirits at the same place in the same period. That they two can coexist is an important aspect of this part of Madhya Pradesh in the history of Vaiṣṇavism.

¹¹ Vats, M.S., 'Gupta Temple at Deogarh', *MASI*, No. 70.

¹² Ramesh, K.V. and Tewari, S.P., *A Copper Plate Hoard of the Gupta Period from Bagh, Madhya Pradesh*, New Delhi, 1990.

¹³ Ibid, 'Grant of Bhuluṇḍa, year 47', pp. 1-3.

¹⁴ Ibid, 'Grant of Bhuluṇḍa, year 51', pp. 8-10.

¹⁵ Ibid, 'Grant of Bhuluṇḍa, year 54', pp. 10-11.

¹⁶ Ibid, 'Grant of Bhuluṇḍa, year 54', pp. 12-15.

This catholic attitude can be traced in the grant of Parivrājaka Mahārāja Hastin.¹⁷ The inscription opens with the invocation of Śiva -but the grant was made to a person named Gopasvāmin, indicating his Vaiṣṇavas affiliation. Still another ruler of the dynasty Sarvanātha granted half part of a village Dhavaṣaṇḍikā to the goddess Piṣṭapurikā Devī.¹⁸ Earlier this village was granted to Nārāyaṇa.¹⁹ Another king of the line, Mahārāja Samkṣobha issued an inscription dated A.D. 528-29.²⁰ It records the grant at the request of Choḍugomin of the village of Opāni to a temple of Piṣṭapurikā Devī, the inscription starts with the adoration to Vāsudeva (*Om namo bhagavate Vāsudevāya*).

Thus the religion of the conquerors (Vaiṣṇavism) was ready to accept the assimilation and subordination of the religion of the subjects. For the part of the vanquished there was little choice than to accept it. But of course no coercion or force seems to be used. Fleet calls goddess Piṣṭapurikā as Lakṣmī.²¹ However there is little evidence in support of this hypothesis. Quite often divine beings were attached to a particular place or locality. Piṣṭapura identified with modern Pithapuram in Godavari district was far outside the realm of the petty feudatory chiefs Samkṣobha and Sarvanātha. Probably a body of inhabitants of Piṣṭapura might have migrated from south to the territory in the central India ruled over by these feudatories and some of them might have started the worship of the local goddess of their native place.²² And the religion of the rulers was receptive of the new ideas.

This kind of assimilative attitude is reflected in other texts also. Pravarasena II of the Vākāṭaka family is known for his work *Setubandha*. The *Setubandha* throws further light on the religious tendencies of the king.²³ He represents himself as Rāma in this text. Accordingly, he devotes the first four-benedictory verses of *Setubandha* to Viṣṇu (1.1-4), but reserves the remaining four for the glorification of Ardhanārīśvara and Naṭarāja. This reflects the attitude of the Gupta period Vaiṣṇavism.

¹⁷ Fleet, J.F., 'Khoh Copper Plate Inscription of Maharaja Hastin', *CII*, vol. III, pp. 99-100.

¹⁸ Fleet, J.F., 'Khoh Copper Plate Inscription of Maharaja Sarvanatha', *CII*, vol. III, pp. 129-32.

¹⁹ Fleet, J.F., 'Khoh Copper Plate Inscription of Maharaja Jayaanatha', *CII*, vol. III, pp. 121-25.

²⁰ Fleet, J.F., 'Khoh Copper Plate Inscription of Maharaja Samksobha, year 209', *CII*, vol. III, pp. 112-16.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² Biswas, Dilip Kumar, 'Goddess Pistapuri or Pistapurika Devi- A Note', *Indian Historical Quarterly* (hereafter *IHQ*), vol. 21, p. 140.

²³ Pravrasena, *s Setubandha*, tr. by, Krishna Kanta Handiqui, Ahmedabad, 1976, p. 24.

The text *Mṛcchakaṭika* of Śūdraka mentions Śiva, Brahmā, Viṣṇu, the Sun and the Moon simultaneously.²⁴ The story of *Mṛcchakaṭika* revolves round Ujjayinī. Another text *Gauḍavaho* is written by Vākpatirāja. Vākpatirāja was the court poet of Yaśovarman of Maukharī dynasty. He describes the victory of his patron over Gauda king in it. The text starts with paying obeisance to Brahmā, Viṣṇu (verses 6-28), Śiva (verses 29-42), Durgā (verses 43-46), Sarasvatī, Moon, Varāha, Sūrya, Ganeśa, Lakṣmī and Ganga.²⁵ King Yaśovarman is described as Viṣṇu himself.²⁶ At another place the king is shown worshipping goddess Vindhyaśinī.²⁷

So far is the story of the assimilation and the cooperation. However, there are incidences of conflict also. Mandasor Inscription of Naravarman²⁸ is dated on the day when the festival of Indra approved by Kṛṣṇa was going on. According to *Harivamśa* (chap. 72-76, especially v. 4019-20), *Viṣṇu Purāna* (vol.10 and 12, chap. 12) and *Padma Purāna* (*khaṇḍa* VI, chap. 272, v.182-188), it was the custom of the people of Brndāvana to offer worship to Indra on the 14th day of dark half of Kārttika, but Kṛṣṇa induced them to transfer their worship to the cows and mount Govardhana which were the source of their sustenance. This made Indra angry who poured down such a deluge as to cause destruction amongst them and their kin. This led to a struggle for supremacy between Indra and Kṛṣṇa, which ended in the victory of latter. Kṛṣṇa pulled out Govardhana and held it as an umbrella over the cowherds and their kin. Thereupon Indra came to terms with Kṛṣṇa. Accordingly Indra agreed that although there were four months of the rainy season, the first two (Śrāvana and Bhādrapada) should be considered as his and last two (Āśvina and Kārttika) which constitute the Śarada season would henceforth be assigned to Kṛṣṇa. This story relates to an event of the past when both Kṛṣṇa and Indra were vying for supremacy. Ultimately the cult of Kṛṣṇa overpowered the cult of *Vedic* deity Indra. This event was transformed into the realm of myths, which remained live in the minds of the people through the texts while actual event get lost in between.

²⁴ The *Mṛcchakaṭika* of Śūdraka, ed. by, M.R. Kale, Delhi, 1972, p. 241.

²⁵ *Gauḍavaho* of Vākpatirāja, tr. by, Mithilesh Kumari Mishra, Patna, pp. 1-15.

²⁶ Ibid, p. 219.

²⁷ Ibid, pp. 64-75.

²⁸ Bhandarkar, D.R., 'Mandasor Inscription of Naravarman, Krita Year 461', *CII*, vol. III, pp. 262-

II

Coming to a later period (600 A.D. onwards) when the time span of this research period starts, there is a shift of the kings and dynasties following or patronizing Vaiṣṇavism. The region of Chhattisgarh was under the rule of Śarabhapurīyas, who were the followers of Bhāgavatism. They call themselves as *Paramabhāgavata* in their inscriptions.²⁹

The next dynasty of the region Pāṇḍuvamśins too patronized the Vaiṣṇavas religion. However they do not practice the taboo over the religion. Sirpur Stone Inscription³⁰ is a landmark in the development of Vaiṣṇavism in this region. Here the queen mother Vāsata of the king Mahāśivagupta Bālārjuna constructed the Lakṣmaṇa Temple at Raipur. In this inscription Harsagupta, the father of Mahāśivagupta Bālārjuna was described as a great devotee of Nārāyaṇa. Similarly his mother was also devoted. But an ancestor of the king named Candragupta is described as devoted to the lord of Goblins (Śiva).

Besides giving a share in the inscriptions to the kings following different religions, there is no taboo over the conversion of the king from the original faith to a different one. Mahāśivagupta Bālārjuna changed the trend of the dynasty by adopting Śaivism as the state religion. He reverted back to Śaivism and is styled as *Parama-Māheśvera* in his inscriptions.³¹ Most of records of his reign record activities connected with his newly adopted faith. This change finds reflection in the royal seal, which now bears the figure of a humped bull and a *Trisūla*, the mount and a characteristic emblem respectively of Śiva. Though there is no sign of the conflict between the followers of the two sects –Vaiṣṇavism and Śaivism, a sense of superiority does prevail. Senkapat Inscription of Śivagupta Bālārjuna records the donation of a temple in favour of a Śaiva ascetic. The second name of the king 'Bālārjuna' shows that the Śaiva notion of Viṣṇu's subservience to Śiva is cleverly put forward here.

²⁹ Shastri, A.M., 'Pipardula Plates of Narendra, Year 3', *Inscriptions of the Śarabhapurīyas*, pt. II, pp. 5-7.

³⁰ Hiralal, Rai Bahadur, 'Sirpur Stone Inscription of the Time of Mahasivagupta', *EI*, Vol. 11, pp. 184-197.

³¹ Shastri, A.M., *Inscriptions of the Śarabhapurīyas*, pt. I, p. 170.

Despite all this, the king evinced tremendous religious catholicity extending his patronage to the followers of other faiths. He himself donated a village in favour of a Buddhist settlement and a private benefactor was provided for a free feeding house for the Buddhist monks.³² There has been definite evidence to prove that Buddhism was in vogue in South Kośala not just up to the close of the 8th century A.D. but for a century after that as well. Still there are the remains of two Buddhist monasteries near the Lakṣmaṇa temple belonging to the same period. Another temple, locally called as Rāma temple, may have been the twin temple of the Śaiva faith.

Not only in Sirpur but in Rajim too we have the temples dedicated to Śiva – Rājeśvara and Dāneśvara near the Rājīvalocana temple of the same period.

Thus the rulers of South Kośala adopted the attitude of assimilation rather than conflict and the religion they follow (Vaiṣṇavism) exhibited the same.

III

The Gurjara Pratihāras were the prominent rulers of the 9th-10th century A.D. They were probably followers of Vaiṣṇavism. They trace their genealogy from Lakṣmaṇa. As Lakṣmaṇa was the doorkeeper of Rāma so they were the doorkeepers of the world.³³ The Pratihāra period has a number of inscriptions assigned to it. The early temples of the Pratihāra rulers are mostly dedicated to the Śaiva faith. For example, Naresar group of temples³⁴, Bhuteśvara Mahadeva temple,³⁵ both in Morena district of Madhya Pradesh, are the temples dedicated to Śiva. But they contain the figure of Viṣṇu and his incarnations. There was reciprocity on the part of other sects also that is reflected in the attitude of Vaiṣṇavism too. The Vaillabhāṭṭasvāmin Inscription of the Gurjara Pratihāra period made the grants of the land for the deities – Navadurga, Rudra, Rudrānī and Purnāsa along with the Vaillabhāṭṭasvāmin Temple.³⁶ There was no enmity on the part of the sects.

³² Shastri, A.M., *Inscriptions of the Śarabhapurīyas*, pt. II, No. III:XII.

³³ Majumdar, R.C., 'Gwalior Prasasti of Bhoja', *EI*, Vol. 18, pp. 99-114, v. 3-4.

³⁴ Trivedi, R.D., *Temples of the Pratihara Period*, New Delhi, 1990, p. 47.

³⁵ *Ibid*, pp. 79-81.

³⁶ Hultsch, E., 'Two Inscriptions of Vaillabhāṭṭasvāmin Temple at Gwalior', *EI*, Vol. I, pp. 154-162.

The Siyādonî stone inscription³⁷ mentions many deities apart from the Vaiṣṇavas deities like Umā Maheśvara, Bhaillasvāmîdeva and others. The second part of inscription starts with the invocation of Gaṇapati, Gaṇanātha (Śiva) and Trivikrama (Viṣṇu), although the inscription was predominantly Vaiṣṇavas. Siyādonî inscription is totally dedicated by the traders. They might have come from different towns and the different interests of them are to be harmonized. This can be the acceptable mode of living of that age. The realities of life might have provoked this kind of catholicism and liberal attitude. No doubt the society benefited from it and by implications Vaiṣṇavism too was enriched.

A fragmentary inscription from Kadwaha fort, district Guna, mentions the name of king Kirttirāja.³⁸ It has four benedictory verses dedicated to Nṛsimha, Śiva, Bhāskara and others.

The Pratihāra period Vaiṣṇavism was by and large free from the biasness towards the other sects. There are remains of sculptures of this period that too show this kind of catholicism. To the southwest of village, a religious complex locally known as Bajra Math consists of the three shrines. These shrines were originally dedicated to Śiva, Viṣṇu and Sūrya.³⁹ There are sculptures of *brāhmaṇical* gods on the doorframe and the niches. These shrines belong to the 9th century A.D. Now a day they enshrine the Jaina images. Similarly, another group of temples in Motasir, in district Raisin, contains the images of Viṣṇu in *lalitāsana*, standing Harihara, ten armed dancing Cāmuṇḍā, etc.⁴⁰

Padhawali in Morena district has a Vaiṣṇavas temple and an image of Trimurtî in Bateshwar valley.⁴¹

The image of Harihara is the best example for the syncretic form of worship that prevailed in the region. The interests of Vaiṣṇavism and Śaivism are harmonized in the rise of the form of Harihara. In this form Viṣṇu was given the left side while Śiva

³⁷ Kielhorn, F., 'Siyadoni Stone Inscription', *EI*, Vol. 1, pp. 162-179.

³⁸ *ARADG*, 1939-40, pp. 45-46.

³⁹ *Descriptive and Classified List of Ancient monuments in Madhya Bharat*, No. 623.

⁴⁰ *IAR*, 1986-87, P. 119.

⁴¹ *Descriptive and Classified List of Ancient monuments in Madhya Bharat*, No. 1243.

the right side (showing male part). Probably Śiva has a dominant role to play in this form. Nevertheless, the concept of equality and peaceful coexistence is more or less maintained in this form of Harihara. There is another evidence of Harihara in Varāhkhedi in district Raisen. A black stone image of Harihara is found from Jhabua district.⁴² In all probability there was a conscious attempt to reconcile the different groups in this part of Madhya Pradesh through this syncretic form.

IV

The Kalacuri rule was in the Dāhalaṃḍala, whose capital was Tripurī. Kalacuris were the supporters of Śaiva faith. Early Kalacuri rulers were ardent Śaivas.⁴³ They took titles like *Paramaśaivas*. However, the Karitalai inscription of Lakṣmaṇarāja invoked the trinity- Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva. Similarly, Lakṣmaṇarāja II made the famous Viṣṇu temple at Karitalai⁴⁴ as I have described earlier. His queen Rāhadā and Śankaragaṇa III made donations to the temple. The prince Śankaragaṇa is said to be *Paramavaiṣṇavas* in the inscription. He built a temple of Śāṅkarnārāyaṇa at Bargaon.⁴⁵

Not only this, another king of the dynasty Yuvarājadeva had two ministers – Bhākamiśra and Gollaka. The latter belongs to the Kāyastha stock and was a Vaiṣṇavas who caused to be carved the colossal images of Matsya, Kūrma, Varāha, Balarāma incarnations of Viṣṇu along with the Śayanamurti at Bandhogarh.⁴⁶ Bhākamiśra's son Someśvara constructed another Vaiṣṇavas temple at Karitalai as described earlier. Despite having Śaiva leanings, the Kalacuris maintained the image of Gajalakṣmī on their seals. The Rewa Plate Inscription of Trailokyamalladeva⁴⁷, though basically a Śaiva inscription, has the first invocatory verse in praise of Kṛṣṇa⁴⁸.

⁴² *LAR*, 1984-85, pp. 148-49.

⁴³ Ali, Rahaman, *Art and Architecture of the Kalacuris*, p. 16.

⁴⁴ Mirashi, V.V., 'Karitalai Stone Inscription of Lakṣmanaraja II', *CII*, Vol. IV, pt. I, pp. 186-195.

⁴⁵ Mirashi, V.V., 'Bargaon Stone Inscription of Śabara', *CII*, vol. IV, pp. 195-98.

⁴⁶ Mirashi, V.V., 'Bandhogarh Rock Inscription of Yuvarajadeva I', *CII*, Vol. IV, pt. I, pp. 182-185.

⁴⁷ Chakravarti, N.P., 'Rewa Plate Inscription of Trailokyamalladeva (*Kalachuri*) year 963', *EI*, vol. 25, pp. 1-6.

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, p.5, v. I,

The inscription has the figure of Gajalakṣmī in relief. The inscription starts with paying obeisance to Śiva. In line 5-7, it describes Trailokyamalla as *Paramamāheśvara*. It is dated in Kalacuri-Cedī era year 963 (A.D. 1212). This attitude is reflected in the sculptures of a Kalacuri temple at Bina in Sagar district.⁴⁹ It contains the sculptures of Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa, Navagraha, Śiva-Pārvaī, etc. Sihwa stone inscription of Karṇarāja records the construction of five temples, two in his parents name, two in his own name and one in the name of his issueless brother. The inscription is put up in one of the king's own temples in which Śiva is enshrined. The other one is dedicated to Keśava, who apparently occupied a secondary place. There is always an attempt to subordinate the other sects. However this attempt is on the part of Śaivism to accommodate Vaiṣṇavism. This was not unique with Śaivism, Vaiṣṇavism too followed similar pattern.

As has been described in previous chapters several Śaiva rulers donated lands to persons bearing Vaiṣṇavas names and some times out rightly asserting Vaiṣṇavas affiliation. Kalacuri inscriptions found from Koni, Ratanpur, Seorinarayan and other inscriptions testify to this fact. However the behaviour of the Śaiva rulers towards other sects especially Vaiṣṇavism can be gauged from the presentation of mythical origin of the Kalacuri rulers. Kalacuri rulers drew their mythical origin from the *Kṣatriya Kārttavīrya*. Amoda plates of Pṛthvīdeva II⁵⁰ mention it very explicitly.

Yadetagresaramaimva (imba) rasya jyo

Tih sa pūṣā puruṣaḥ purāṇaḥ

Athāsya putro manu

rādirājastanvaye bhūdbhūvi Kārttavīryaḥ. (v.2)

i.e. the foremost luminary of the firmament is the sun, the Primeval Being. Then was born from him his son *Manu*, the first of kings. In his family there was born Kārttavīrya on the earth.

Devaḥ śrikārttavīryaḥ kṣitipatirabhavad bhūṣanam bhūtadhātryā he

Lo (tkṣi) ptādrivi (bi) bhyattuhinagirisutā (śle) ṣasantoṣiteśam.

⁴⁹ *IAR*, 1959-60, P. 71.

⁵⁰ Mirashi, V.V., 'Amoda Plates of Prithvideva I', *CII*, vol. IV, pt. II, pp. 401-09.

Dorddaṇḍāka (kā) ṇḍesetuprati gamitam

Hāvārevāvāpravāhavyādhūta (trya)

kṣapūjāgurujanitaruṣam rāvaṇam yo vavandha. (v.3)

i.e. there was the king, the divine and illustrious Kārttavīrya, an ornament of the earth, who threw into bondage Rāvaṇa, who had propitiated Śiva with the embrace of the daughter of the Himalayas (Pārvatī) who was terrified as he lifted up the mountain (Kailāśa) with ease and who was greatly enraged when his offerings to the three-eyed (Śiva) were washed away by the stream of the gently flooded Revā which was turned back by the suddenly placed dam of his mighty arms.

Tadvaiṁsaprabhavā bhūpa va (ba) bhūvubhurvi haihayāḥ

Teṣām vaiṁse sa caidyādiksi (tī) saḥ (śaḥ) kokkalobhavat. (v.4)

i.e. the kings born in this family became (known as) Haihayas on the earth. In their family was born that (famous) Kokkala, the first king of the Caidyas.

These verses explicitly show the connection of the Kalacuris of Tripurī with legendary Kārttavīrya. Kārttavīrya was a known Śiva devotee. Hence the Kalacuri rulers were the devotees of Śiva. There is another side of the story. Rāvaṇa too was the devotee of the same deity as has been shown in their inscriptions. Though the inscriptions put Rāvaṇa in an uncomfortable position by showing him being defeated and disgraced by Kārttavīrya, there was a rapprochement between the two. This stands in contrast with the Rāma and Rāvaṇa fight where latter was defeated and killed by the former. This basic difference was maintained with the devotees of Viṣṇu and his incarnations in the attitude of the rulers.

The Ratanpur inscription of Prthvīdeva II⁵¹ can be cited for a similar expression. The object of the inscription is to record the erection of the temple of Śiva at the village Sāmbā by Devagana. Here the king Jājalladeva is said to have destroyed, like Rāhu devouring the full moon, the brave warriors of the proud Coḍaganga. It refers to the defeat of the Ganga king Anantavarman at the hands of the Kalacuri ruler.

⁵¹ Mirashi, V.V., 'Ratanpur Inscription of Prithvideva II (Vikrama) year 1207', *CIH*, vol. IV, pt. II, pp. 483-501.

This event was proudly boasted in many of the Kalacuri inscriptions. But the interesting part is the comparison of the Kalacuri king with Rāhu. There is a well-known myth of Viṣṇu cutting the head of Rāhu for his cheating. While Viṣṇu was distributing nectar to the gods, Rāhu took the form of a god and drank it. This whole episode was watched by moon who informed Viṣṇu. As a result Viṣṇu cut the body of this demon into two parts Rāhu and *Ketu*. This myth is alluded to in the Gopalpur inscription of Vijayasimha.⁵² This shows that this story was familiar in this region. It also shows the enmity between Viṣṇu and Rāhu. Given this kind of relationship it is quite possible that the ruler bearing this epithet maintained similar uneasy feeling for the enemy of Rāhu. Next Devagana the builder of the temple who is described as a bee on the beautiful lotus like feet of Śiva is praised in glowing terms. Seeing all the worlds on his side and whitened by his fame Kṛṣṇa is shown standing confused and losing interest in destroying Kālanemî (Snake Kāliyā) from the waters of Yamuna. Thus the fame of Kṛṣṇa remained unnoticed.

The attitude of the Śaivism and Vaiṣṇavism varied vis-à-vis the economy and the people at large. The Śaiva followers were in the form of a body of disciples guided by the Śaiva *Ācāryas*. The Śaiva *Ācāryas* had a great impact on the royal policy of the Kalacuris. They were appointed as *Rājagurus* of the Kalacuri rulers. The Jabalpur inscription dated 1174 A.D.⁵³ mentions some *Ācāryas* appointed as *Rājagurus*-Puruśaśiva (*Rājaguru* of Yaśakama), Śaktiśiva (*Rājaguru* of Gayākama), Kīrtiśiva (*Rājaguru* of Nṛsimha and Vimalaśiva (*Rājaguru* of Jayasimha). These *Ācāryas* must have had tremendous following among the rulers. They have large disposal of land at their hand. Most of the Kalacuri rulers donated lands to these *Ācāryas* for the construction of the temple and monasteries and for their maintenance.

The Bilhari stone inscription of the Cedî rulers (of the time of king Yuvarājadeva and queen Nohala) records the erection of the temple of Śiva by the queen Nohalā.⁵⁴ She endowed this temple with the revenues of the villages Dhanḡatapātaka, Poṇḡî, Nāgabala, Khailapātaka, Vīdā, Sajjāhalî and Goṣṡhapālî. Besides she also gave the villages of Nipanîya and Ambipātaka to the sage Īśvaraśiva, a disciple of Śabdaśiva,

⁵² Mirashi, V.V., 'Gopalpur Stone Inscription of Vijayasimha', *CII*, vol. IV, pt. II, pp.652-59.

⁵³ Mirashi, V.V., 'Jabalpur Stone Inscription of Jayasimha (Kalachuri) year 926', *CII*, vol. IV, pt. I, pp. 331-39

⁵⁴ Keilhorn, F., 'Bilhari Stone Inscription of the Rulers of Chedi', *EI*, vol.1, pp.251-70.

who again was the disciple of Pavanaśiva. Bilhari is a town in the Jabalpur district. Of the villages granted to the temple and the sage two have been identified namely Pondī and Khailapāṭaka with Poṇḍi (4 miles north-west of Bilhari) and Khailawara (6 miles east northeast of Bilhari) respectively. This inscription belongs to end of 10th century A.D. or beginning of 11th century A.D.

Another inscription, found from Gurgi⁵⁵ (about 12 miles due east of Rewa) of slightly later period than the previous one, records the grant of villages to the god Somanātha installed in the temple built by Prabodhaśiva and for the maintenance of the ascetics. The inscription shows that Śaiva *Ācāryas* had large sum of money at their disposal. Prabodhaśiva was placed in the charge of the monastery built at the cost of large sum of money by Mugdhatunga.

The vast resources at their disposal were used for the benefit of the people apart from other uses. The *Ācāryas* utilised the wealth of the *maṭhas* and the income of the *agrahāra* villages for the welfare of the people.⁵⁶ Kalacuri inscriptions mention *Vyākhyānaśālās* (lecture halls), *sattras* (charitable feeding houses) and gardens with which the *maṭhas* has been provided. Malkapuram inscription gives a detailed description of the measures adopted by Viśveśvaraśambhu for the maintenance of the institutions he founded in his *agrahāra* village for example a temple, monastery, college, free feeding house for the distribution of the food, a maternity home and a hospital.⁵⁷

A stone inscription from Ranod⁵⁸ records the construction of the tank by Vyomaśiva. Ranod has been described as an old decayed town about half way between Jhansi and Guna and 45 miles due south of Narwar. This inscription is found in front of an old Hindu palace identified as the monastery of the Śaiva *Ācāryas*. Outside the courtyard of this building is a deep square tank with steps leading to the water's edge. This is the same tank mentioned in this inscription. The description of the monastery as an old Hindu palace and the subsequent description of tank testify to the wealth of the Śaiva monasteries and its use for public purpose. The inscription is not dated but on

⁵⁵ Mirashi, V.V., 'Gurgi Stone Inscription of Kokalladeva II', *CII*, vol. IV, pt. I, pp. 224-33.

⁵⁶ Mirashi, V.V., *Inscriptions of the Kalachuri Chedi Era*, *CII*, vol. I, pt. I, p. clviii.

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, p. clix.

⁵⁸ Kielhorn, F., 'A Stone Inscription from Ranod', *EI*, vol. I, pp. 351-61.

paleographic grounds it can be assigned to the end of 10th century A.D. or beginning of 11th century A.D.

These charitable measures stand in contrast to the measures adopted by the Vaiṣṇavas followers. Though the Vaiṣṇavas inscriptions mention the provision of the free feeding houses but they do not go beyond that. The land granted for the maintenance of the Vaiṣṇavas temple remained essentially for the same. No works of public utility were executed by the Vaiṣṇavas beneficiaries.

The Śaiva *Ācāryas* were involved in the day-to-day economy of the region. Dhureti copper plate of the time of Trailokyamalla⁵⁹ proves the involvement of the Śaiva *Ācāryas* in the economic system of the state. It records the mortgage (*viṭṭa-bandha*) of a village by a Śaiva ascetic Śāntaśiva in favour of one *Rāṇaka* Dhareka on 7th day of bright fortnight of Jyeṣṭha in year 963 (corresponding to 9th May 1212). Dhureti is a village about 10 kms south east of Rewa, the head quarters of the same district. Śāntaśiva is the disciple of the holy Vimalaśiva who became religious preceptor of Kalacuri king Jayasimha. It was during the reign of Vijayasimha, his successor that Candella Trailokyavarman made great advances and probably captured this part of Madhya Pradesh. The powerful Śaiva *Ācāryas* remained undisturbed of the change of the dynastic rule in the region. Śāntaśiva who inherited the lordship of the Śaiva ascetics, placed by way of mortgage, the village Alaurā with all its dues i.e. all rights of collecting taxes to the *Rāṇaka*, the illustrious Dhareka. Though we have nothing on record in this respect it is not unlikely that the sage may have received the village as donation from the king who was a devout Śaiva. The village Alaurā has been identified with the Laur village in the Mauganj tahsil of Rewa district, about 48 kms north by east of this city. Dhānavāhī, the head quarter of a *pattalā* in which the village was then included, may be identical with village of same name lying about 35 kms southwest of Dhobāt. The name of the tahsil 'Dhānavāhī' can be equated with a fertile land producing plenty of grain. The Śaiva *Ācāryas* were supposed to be in possession of the fertile land of the state and directly taking part in the economic transactions.

⁵⁹ Trivedi, H.V., 'Dhureti Copper Plate of the Time of Trailokyamalla', *CII* vol. VII, pt.II, pp. 490-95.

The direct role of the Śaiva *Ācāryas* is in contrast to the role of the Vaiṣṇavas preceptors. This brought the *Ācāryas* in direct contact with the people in comparison to Vaiṣṇavas *brāhmaṇas*.

Among other sects Buddhism and Jainism find reference in the inscriptions and the texts of the period. As far as Buddhism was concerned it was a period of decline in Daksina Kośala as in other parts of the country. Apart from the Rewa inscription of Malayasimha⁶⁰, there is not a single reference to any Buddhist *vihāra* and *Bhikṣu* in the inscriptions of the Kalacuri rulers of the Daksina Kośala. The inscription is dated in the Kalacuri year 944 corresponding to 1179 A.D. It records the excavation of a tank (verses 34-40). The tank was completed at the cost of 1500 *tankakas* stamped with the effigy of *Bhagavān* (Buddha). The inscription is apparently devoted to lord Buddha for it starts with an invocation to Mañjughosa, the Buddhist deity of learning. The genealogy of the officers in charge of the tank is given. Vidyādhara was the superintendent of the excavation of this tank. He was son of Laksmīdhara, grandson of Śrīdhara. Puruṣottama is the composer of this *praśasti*. He was son of Divākara and grandson of Rāmacandra. The mason was Ananta. All these names of the officers point to the Vaiṣṇavas affiliation of the same. It seems the followers of two sects were comfortable with each other.

The Buddhist canonical and philosophical works were studied by some people. Rudraśiva, the spiritual leader of the Jājalladeva is described as conversant with the works of Dinnaga and others.⁶¹ Kāśala, who composed the Koni stone inscription, tells us that he had knowledge of three *ratnas* (i.e. probably Buddha, *Dharma* and *Samgha*) and that he had mastered the *Āgamas* of the Buddha and others.⁶²

*Jñyātā ratnatraysya prathitataramatiḥ śraighanādyāgamaughe
śrīmānetā(tām)praśasti(stim) samakṛta sukṛtī kāśalaḥ (pe)śalātmā.*

Some learned *brāhmaṇas*, who were required to take part in philosophical debates, must have been acquainted with the Buddhist systems.

⁶⁰ Banerji, R.D., 'The Rewa inscription of Malayasimha', *EI*, vol. XIX, pp. 295-99.

⁶¹ Mirashi, V.V., *Inscriptions of the Kalachuri Chedi Era*, *CII*, vol. I, pt. I, p. clxiv.

⁶² Mirashi, V.V., 'Koni Stone Inscription of Prthvideva II', *CII*, vol. IV, pt. II, pp. 463-83, v.37.

However there is not very friendly relation between the Śaivas and the Buddhists and Jainas on the other hand. Ranod inscription⁶³ praises Vyomaśiva whose holiness and learning surpassed all manner of devotees and learned men (the Śākya or Buddhists, who are compared to elephants, the jackal like Jainas and others).

The sects often go to the extent of denigrating other sects to extol their own faith. This could be an expression of that.

There are also no references to the Jainas in the Kalacuri inscriptions of Dakṣiṇa Kośala, but there is no doubt that Jainism had some followers there. Images of Jaina Tīrthankaras have been discovered at Arang, Sirpur, Mallar, Dhanpur, Ratanpur and Padampur. The one at Mallar is colossal.⁶⁴ We have no reference of the attitude of the Vaiṣṇavas towards Jainism. The attitude of Vaiṣṇavism and Śaivism with that of Śāktism will be dealt separately.

V

Candellas of Jejakabhukti were patrons of Vaiṣṇavas religion. The famous Lakṣmaṇa Temple Inscription bears testimony to that. It records the erection of a temple of Viṣṇu under the name of Vaikuṅṭha.⁶⁵ As discussed earlier there is a reference to Śiva bearing on his head the holy water, which fell on Hari's lotus feet. Thus, here is a clear reference of subordination of Śiva to Hari. Not only is that, the Kāpālikas and the Kālāmukhas depicted in the lower niches of the temple.⁶⁶ There seems to be a conscious attempt on the part of the rulers to depict Śiva as the subordinate god, while the Kāpālikas and Kālāmukhas seems to be poorly reckoned people. This Lakṣmaṇa temple is directly related to the Candellas. Devangana Desai opines that most of the temples of Khajuraho including Lakṣmaṇa temple show the patronage enjoyed by them.⁶⁷

⁶³ Kielhorn, F., 'A Stone Inscription from Ranod', *EI*, vol. I, pp. 351-61, v.39.

⁶⁴ Mirashi, V.V., *Inscriptions of the Kalachuri Chedi Era*, *CII*, vol. I, pt. I, p.clxiv.

⁶⁵ Kielhorn, F., 'Stone Inscription of Yasovarman', *EI*, Vol. 1, pp. 122-135.

⁶⁶ Desai, Devangana, 'Patronage of Lakṣmaṇa Temple at Khajuraho', in B.S. Miller(ed), *Powers of Art*, pp. 78-83.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

And thus, according to her, it heralds a new age in the religious life of Khajuraho with the assertion of the *Brāhmanic-vedic* elements. A parallel of this attitude of Candella rulers can be seen in the play '*Prabodhacandrodaya*'.⁶⁸ The author of this play was a poet in the court of Candella rulers. This book plays a pun upon the Kāpālikas and Kālāmukhas. A lady monk of the Kāpālika sect was some times used to divert the attention of the monks of other sects.⁶⁹ The dharma of Kāpālikas is defined as drinking *sura* in the human head and worshipping Mahābhairava.⁷⁰ The religion of the Buddhist monks is also represented as having all lavish and good things - good food, soft bed, palaces, women attendants, etc.⁷¹

The Buddhist monk was represented as having deviated from his path following the offer of the Kāpāliki.⁷² Even Śiva is shown as busy in material pleasures-

*Pārvatyāḥ pratirupayā dayitayā sānandamālingito
Muktaḥ krīdati candracūḍa-va-purityūce bhṛidānī patih⁷³*

The text emphasizes the importance of *Viṣṇu bhakti*, which helps in dispelling the effect of *Kali* and *avidyā*. The poets tried to emphasize the religion of his patrons over other sects.

Nevertheless, attempts to maintain a balance of co-existence between different sects remained. This fact is evident in the Ajayagarh Rock Inscription of the time of Vīravarman.⁷⁴ It records that Kalyānadevī, the wife of Candella king Vīravarman built a well, furnished it with water pot and also built a Śaiva temple. At the same time it compares Trailokyavarman, father of Vīravarman with Viṣṇu who lifted the earth merged in the ocean formed by the streams of the Turuskas. Found from the fort Ajayagarh in Panna district, the inscription is dated A.D. 1261. Thus the cordial atmosphere in the two sects remained towards the end of this research work.

⁶⁸ Śrikr̥ṣṇa Miśra, *Prabodhacandrodaya*, tr. By Pundit Shri Ramachandra Mishra, Banaras, 1955.

⁶⁹ Ibid, p. 119.

⁷⁰ Ibid, p. 112.

⁷¹ Ibid, p. 104.

⁷² Ibid, pp. 119-21.

⁷³ Ibid, p. 117.

⁷⁴ Trivedi, H.V, 'Ajayagarh Rock Inscription of the Time of Viravarman, Vikrama Year 1317', *CII*, vol. VII, pt. III, pp. 498-502.

In the region in and around Gwalior, the Kacchapaghātas were ruling. They were under the influence of the Candellas. There were different branches of the Kacchapaghātas, ruling at Narwar and Dubkund. The Narwar group of Kacchapaghātas were the worshippers of Viṣṇu, as is evident from their inscription found from Narwar, Shivapuri district. It is a grant issued by Vīrasimhadeva in V.S. 1177 or 1120 A.C.⁷⁵ It pays obeisance to Nārāyaṇa and calls him as *Paramavaiṣṇavas*. There is no inscription to find out the leanings of the house of Dubkund.

There are many sculptures of the time of Kacchapaghāta rule. A group of sculptures from Hinglajgarh shows the sculptures of Vāmana, Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Maheśa along with other images. It belongs to 11th century A.D.⁷⁶ Besides there are many Harihara sculptures found from Hinglajgarh kept in the Bhopal Museum (refer to table II).⁷⁷ Harihara form is one of the syncretic forms of Hinduism.

Another group of sculptures from Jiran, district Mandasor includes Viṣṇu, Laksmī-Nārāyaṇa, Nṛsimha, four faced Śiva and some episodes from the life of Kṛṣṇa.⁷⁸ Another group of sculptures includes Jaina temple along with Jaina sculptures and the images of Viṣṇu, Vaiṣṇavī, Śiva, Umā-Maheśvara and others. The sculptures of different sects found together points to the fact that they were brought from nearby places. That they flourish side by side at the same place at the same period speaks of the volumes of the liberal attitude of the period, Vaiṣṇavism was of course a part of it.

The rule of the Paramāras over Ujjain and a large part of Madhya Pradesh too had its bearings on the relation of Vaiṣṇavism with other sects. Most of the rulers of the Paramāras were devoted to Śiva, but they did not confine their allegiance to this god alone and extended support to other deities as well. The official representation of the Paramāras was Garuḍa. The inscriptions of the Paramāras start with paying obeisance to the beauties of the manly throat of Śrīkaṇṭha Śiva and Muraripu.⁷⁹ Vidisha stone

⁷⁵ Trivedi, H.V., *Inscriptions of the Paramaras*, CII, vol. VII, pt. I, p. 169.

⁷⁶ IAR, 1985-86, P. 110.

⁷⁷ Field trip to Bhopal.

⁷⁸ IAR, 1958-59, P. 81.

⁷⁹ Trivedi, H.V., 'Dharmapuri Grant of Vakpatirajadeva', CII, vol. VII, pt. II, p. 13, verse 2.

inscription of Trailokyavarman⁸⁰ constructed the temple of Murāri. In the same inscription the king expresses his will that the temple lasts as well as the *Kaustabha* jewel adorns the chest of Kṛṣṇa and Śiva's forehead bears the moon. –

Kaustubhastava(ba)kitami hareruh śaṅkarasya vidhuvami(bam) dhurami śiraḥ.(v.12)

According to Mandhata copper plate inscription, Devapāladeva⁸¹ donated land after worshipping Bhavānīpati near the temple of Daityasūdāna. The same king constructed the images of Hanumān, Kṣetrapāla, Gaṇeśa, Kṛṣṇa, Nakuliśa and others along with the construction of the temple of Śaṁbhu.⁸² This inscription was found from Harsaud in East Nimar district.

Another king of the dynasty named Jayavarman made the gift of land at Mandhata with invoking Paraśurāma, Rāma, Puradruh (Śiva) and *Aṣṭamurti Śiva*.⁸³ The blessings of the Boar incarnation of Viṣṇu too were sought. Thus the Paramāra rulers followed the liberal attitude towards other sects. The Vaiṣṇavas sect too responded the way it was treated. The ruins of a Viṣṇu temple at Jharada district, Ujjain contain the images of Viṣṇu, Śiva-Pārvatī and Pārvatī. It roughly belongs to the Paramāra period. Thus the attitude of Vaiṣṇavism towards the other sects remained the same throughout the period.

The ruins of Kajali-Kanoja in Betul district have remains of the *Brāhmaṇa* and Jaina sculptures.⁸⁴ The architecture appears to be of the 10th century A.D. The western and southern sides of the town seem to have been occupied by the Śaivas, as in this part the ruins belong to Śaiva temples. The centre of Kanoja town was occupied by the Jains. Towards east lies the village of Kajali. Here there is a big heap of ruins with beautifully carved stones and reliefs. This seems to have been a shrine dedicated to Viṣṇu, whose broken statue has been removed to Betul. Some of the bas-reliefs of the

⁸⁰ Trivedi, H.V., 'Vidisha Stone Inscription of Trailokyavarman', *CII*, vol. VII, pt. II, pp. 141-44.

⁸¹ Mittal, A.C., 'Mandhata Copper Plate Inscription of Devapaladeva', *The Inscriptions of the Imperial Paramaras*, Ahmedabad, 1979 (first ed.), pp. 252-267.

⁸² Trivedi, H.V., 'Harsaud Stone Inscription of the Time of Devapaladeva', *CII*, vol. VII, pt. II, pp. 171-175.

⁸³ Trivedi, H.V., 'Mandhata Copper Plate Inscription of the Time of Devapaladeva', *CII*, vol. VII, pt. II, pp. 209-224.

⁸⁴ Hiralal, Rai Bahadur, 'The Ruins of Kajali Kanoja', *JA*, Vol. LII, pp. 360-362.

ruins are the sculptures of the four handed Viṣṇu carrying conch, mace, lotus and discus. Kajali was apparently the site of a Vaiṣṇavas temple.

This is the example of the catholic attitude shown by different sects of the period, Vaiṣṇavism being one of them.

VI

The inscriptions, archaeological materials and the seals and sealings are no doubt provide proof for the interaction between the sects. But the texts written about the same period do provide a glimpse of relation among the different streams. The texts are often biased. They are written by a particular set of people for a particular set of audience. The importance of a particular deity or a place is blown up, while other sects were shown either in a subordinate form or were discarded as doing unhealthy practices. Even then these sects provide useful information about a sect they discard generally. There are many texts that were written in the court of a particular king. These provide information about the faith of the king and the attitude of king and his sect towards other sects. Apart from them the individual texts written by anonymous persons and the foreigners may also provide sufficient evidence for the belief prevalent in the public.

The *Purāṇas* among the texts are excellent sources for the *māhātmya* related to a place. In general the *Purāṇas* are written to describe the exploits of a particular deity. Other deities were given a secondary position. They often expound a particular *tīrtha* in complete ignorance of other *tīrthas*. They ignore other major or minor deities or subordinate them to the dominant deity or deity of their faith. The task of finding out a Vaiṣṇavas centre in Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh is difficult. Most of the ancient texts consider Mahākāla as the only prominent deity in the region. And Chhattisgarh, as I explained earlier in my chapter, is by and large outside the pale of the Aryan influence and so its sacred places did not get the places they are entitled to. Even then I am trying to recover history of Vaiṣṇavism from the *Purāṇas*. The interaction of Vaiṣṇavism with other religions is here my attempt. It is easy to find out

attitude of Śaivism towards other sects rather than that of Vaiṣṇavism from these texts.

Among the *Purāṇas* the *Skanda Purāṇa* has a number of *tīrthas* mentioned in them. Among them some are Vaiṣṇavas *tīrthas*. There is a *tirtha* named Rāmeśvara *Tīrtha* on the bank of Śīprā according to *Skanda Purāṇa*.⁸⁵ The *Purāṇa* attaches a story of the installation of a *līṅga* here by Rāma. Rāma, Maithili and Lakṣmaṇa went there. They were advised by the ascetic Nārada. Rāma took holy bath in the Śīprā. Then he was asked to install a *līṅga* there. Rāma asked Lakṣmaṇa to install the *līṅga* named Rāmeśvara. Thus Rāma (an incarnation of Viṣṇu) was shown as subservient to Śiva. Rāma was not shown doing this work on his own, but he asked Lakṣmaṇa to do it. Probably that way the sanctity of Vaiṣṇavism was maintained.

At another place in the text, it is mentioned that there was a king named Andhaka in Ujjayinī.⁸⁶ While the fight between Andhaka and Śiva was going on, the *devas* were enveloped in darkness. In the meanwhile, Nārāditya rose up by means of his own self and indulgence in the form of a man dispelling the darkness. The *devas* eulogized the *Divākara* (Sun). When the darkness was dispelled, Andhaka was killed by Maheśa with the trident. At that time, with a desire for the welfare of the Suras, Viṣṇu blew the conch. Then the *tirtha* Śankhodhāra emerged. Here the three prominent deities of the Hindu pantheon – Śiva, Viṣṇu and Sūrya were mentioned in perfect combination with each other for killing a demon.

There is a site on the bank of the Narmada where *Nara* and Nārāyaṇa established the Badarīkāśrama.⁸⁷ For the purpose of blessing the worlds, the triad established a *līṅga*. It opens the path to heaven and then to salvation.⁸⁸

However not all evidence points to harmony between the two sects. There is a story regarding the description of Śīprā as the remover of *jvara*.⁸⁹ It is written to glorify the river Śīprā. An imaginary fight between Śiva and Viṣṇu is described. The leader of

⁸⁵ *Skanda Purāṇa*, pt.XII, Book V, Sec. I, pp.119-22.

⁸⁶ *Skanda Purāṇa*, pt.XII, Book V, Sec. I, pp. 147-52.

⁸⁷ *Skanda Purāṇa*, pt.XII, Book XIV, p. 306.

⁸⁸ *Ibid*, p. 307.

⁸⁹ *Ibid*, pp. 192-95.

the *daityas* named Bāna insulted Aniruddha and fought with Kṛṣṇa. Vāsudeva cut off his thousand hands leaving the two. Bāna sought the refuge of Śiva. There ensued a battle between Kṛṣṇa and Śiva. Mahādeva created Maheśvara *jvara*. In his response, Kṛṣṇa created Vaiṣṇavas *tapa*. The *jvaras* pertaining to Maheśvara were hit and split. And their final missiles “*jvaras*” clashed with each other and got drowned in the Śiprā. Hence it became *jvarāgni*. Even the birth of *jvara* is mentioned along with a conflict between Śiva and Kṛṣṇa.⁹⁰ Once Mahādeva went to Vaikuṅṭha along with his skull. Viṣṇu put his finger in the skull. Śiva struck the finger with the trident. Blood flowed out of the finger. With that the vessel held by Śakara became full. It overflowed. At that spot Śiprā manifested her arising from the flow of flood. It appears that the place near Śiprā was a place for the conflict of the two sects- Vaiṣṇavism and Śaivism. Ultimately it got settled.

The *Revā Khaṇḍa* in the *Skanda Purāṇa* at numerous places refer to the relation between the two sects. There is the reference to the benefits of bath in Narmada.⁹¹ It says that people worshipped Śankara and Keśava by means of austerities on the bank of Narmada. Those who worship Nārāyaṇa along with meditations, adorations, *japas* and *mahāvratas* cross to other shore of the ocean of worldly existence. The devotees who perform the worship of Śiva and direct their mental feelings towards Keśava and get their bodies purified by the waters of Revā do attain their goals. Those who resort to the banks of Narmada and adore Śiva of immediate splendour or Nārāyaṇa with mental purity, do not waste the breast milk of their mothers i.e. are not born.

There is another reference to *liṅga* being installed by Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa at the bank of Revā.⁹² Hara came to the *tīrtha* along with meritorious sages. After releasing his own *kāla* into the *tīrtha* he granted a boon. It became a *liṅga* known as Kālakumbha. The lord became known as Kumbheśvara. Rāma too worshipped that *liṅga* Thus Rāma was shown in a subservient attitude.

⁹⁰ Ibid, p. 193.

⁹¹ *Skanda Purāṇa*, pt.XII, Book XIV, p. 38-39.s.

⁹² *Skanda Purāṇa*, pt.XII, Book XIV, pp. 274-78.

In the *Caturasitilingamāhātmya*, Narmada is described as place where ten *sthānas* are dedicated to Viṣṇu, while eighty-four *sthānas* are assigned to Śiva.⁹³

There is an interesting event showing the tension between Śiva and Kṛṣṇa. There is a story related to Lunkeśvara *Tīrtha*.⁹⁴ This *tīrtha* is situated in the middle of water beyond Mātṛtīrtha. It is revered by both *asuras* and *suras*. There was a demon known as Kālaprsthā. He was a grandson of Brahma. He performed severe penance on the bank of Ganga. Pārvatī melted and induced Śiva to grant him a boon. The demon asked for the boon that if he touched the head of a *deva*, *dānava* or *gandharva*, that person would be reduced to ashes. The demon tried to test the boon by keeping his hand on the god's head. Śiva could not fight with the demon. Nārada who met midway got delighted to see the discomfiture of Śiva. When approached by Śiva and Nārada, Hari went to receive them. Hari assured Śiva of help. He advised Śiva and all *devas* to reside on the bank of Revā. The *tīrtha* where all of them resided is known as Lunkeśvara *Tīrtha*.

Kṛṣṇa or Hari took the form of a beautiful girl. The demon fell into the trap. He put his hand on his head and was reduced to ashes. Thereafter Hari went to the Ocean of Milk. Then the text goes on to expound the glory of the *tīrtha*. Whosoever takes a holy dip here goes to the Śivaloka. The story thus glorifies Śiva. However, Śiva was rescued by the prowess of Viṣṇu. This way Śiva seems to be a subordinate god in comparison to Viṣṇu. The other deities are associated with Śiva while Viṣṇu remained in an exalted but secluded place. This may reflect the attitude of Vaiṣṇavism towards other sects and vice versa. This kind of conflict among the sects or among the followers of the sects is reflected in the writings of the period. As for instance the *tīrtha* known as Ankapāda *kṣetra* is associated with Viṣṇu⁹⁵ as I showed it elsewhere. *Nārada Purāṇa* says at one place that by worshipping Ankapāda, a man shall become the attendant of Śiva.⁹⁶ The author of this text may have the notion of Viṣṇu's subservience to Śiva.

⁹³ *Skanda Purāṇa*, pt. XIII, Book V, p. 3.

⁹⁴ *Skanda Purāṇa*, pt. XIV, Book XIV, pp. 233-74.

⁹⁵ *Skanda Purāṇa*, part XII, pp. 90-99.

⁹⁶ *Nārada Purāṇa*, pt. IV, tr. By G.V. Tagare, *Ancient Indian Tradition and Mythology* (ed. by J.L. Shastri), vol. 19, Delhi, 1982, p. 2043.

However, the syncretic and assimilative attitudes of the *Purāṇas* are more evident. The *Kūrma Purāṇa* mentions a *tīrtha*, known as Śūlabheda.⁹⁷ On bathing and drinking water there, one shall derive the benefit of gifting a thousand cows. Then he goes to Viṣṇu's *loka*. Thereafter, he should go to Rṣitīrtha. The man who took a holy bath here is honoured in Śivaloka. Thus here the two *tīrthas* belonging to separate sects are mentioned simultaneously.

Vāyu Purāṇa mentions the triad of the gods. According to it, in the accounts of creation, Brahmā is called both Nārāyaṇa and Maheśvara. Lord Nārāyaṇa divides himself into three and performed the functions of creation, preservation and destruction.⁹⁸ Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Maheśa present three different qualities- *rājas*, *sattva* and *tamasa*. In the prayer to Śiva, the god is also addressed as Viṣṇu and Brahmā.

VII

The different levels of assimilation, interaction and confrontation extended to the assimilation of the Great Mother Goddess into the Hindu *Brāhmaṇical* tradition. Mother Goddess has always been a part of the ancient religions of India. The communities of Indus Valley Civilization worshiped the mother goddess. The mother goddess figurines of Indus Valley Civilization have been mentioned as the 'effigies of the great mother goddess or of one or other of her local manifestations' by John Marshall in his report.⁹⁹ The importance of the mother goddess cult is recognized by almost all historians of the ancient India.

Shubhangana Atre goes to the extent of suggesting mother goddess as the main deity of the Indus valley civilization as 'a great goddess of animals and vegetations'.¹⁰⁰ Whatever may be the status of the mother goddess in the Harappan civilization, the presence and influence of it was accepted by historians by and large.

⁹⁷ *Kūrma Purāṇa*, pt. IV, tr. By G.V. Tagare, Ancient Indian Tradition and Mythology (ed. by J.L. Shastri), vol. 21, Delhi, 1982, p. 583.

⁹⁸ Patil Devandra Kumar, *Cultural History from the Vayu Purāṇa*, Delhi, 1993 (reprint), p. 66.

⁹⁹ Marshall, Sir John (ed.), *Mohenjodaro and the Indus Civilisation*, Delhi, 1973, pp.50-51.

¹⁰⁰ Shubhangana Atre, *The Archetypal Mother: A Systemic Approach to Harappan Religion*, Pune, 1987, pp.191, 204.

The role of mother goddess in the Vedic literature is insignificant. Most of the goddesses play a subservient role. Very few hymns were dedicated to the goddesses in the Vedic literature. David Kinsley¹⁰¹ finds none of the goddesses of the Vedic period rivaling the male gods of the texts. Many of the Vedic goddesses disappeared in the later Hindu tradition. Similarly great mother goddesses or the Śakti of the later Hindu tradition like Pārvatī, Durgā, Kālī, Rādhā and Lakṣmī, did not find a place in the Vedic literature. Kinsley thus says that the great goddess her various manifestations and the elaborate mythological ritual structures around them are late phenomena. But as Ingalls emphasizes in his 'Forward' to introduce 'Feminine Theology of India'-

*"What is strange about the Indian record is...that in India the goddess reappears...I suspect that within India's diversified culture the worship of the Goddess never ceased".*¹⁰²

The author does not stop here but goes on to suggest the reasons behind the two thousand years of silence in the record. The texts of this period are written in Sanskrit or related languages, which were oriented towards the male gods.

Those who worshiped Śakti or goddesses in *Rgvedic* period did not write anything or not at least in Sanskrit. Thus Sanskrit, which became the vehicle of the worship of Vedic male gods essentially, remained out of the domain of goddesses in that period. The goddesses who according to Ingalls are the continuation of an old religion do not find favour with the early Sanskrit writers of ancient India.

However they reappear in third-fourth century A.D. This period was the conjunction of two historical processes, as identified by Ingalls. On the one hand Sanskrit became the nearly universal language of the letters in India, and on the other, the pre Aryan worship of the Indians had spread very widely among the Aryans. As a result, from the third –fourth centuries, the religion of the goddess became as much a part of the Hindu written record as the religion of God.

¹⁰¹ Kinsley, David, *Hindu Goddesses: Vision of the Divine Feminine in the Hindu Religious Tradition*, Berkeley, 1986, pp.17-18.

¹⁰² Daniel H.H. Ingalls, 'Forward', in C. Mackenzie Brown, *God as Mother: A Feminine Theology of India (An Historical and Theological Study of Brahmavaivarta Purāna)*, Vermont, 1974, pp.xiv-xv.

Here one point to be noted is that goddesses have always been considered as outside the domain of Aryan religion. The ferocious and destructive attitude of the divine feminine was completely alien to the religion of the Aryans. The goddesses of the *Rgveda* show the sublime attitude. They were almost presented as the wives or the mothers of the different male gods, for example Indrānī or Saci as the wife of male god Indra and Aditi as the mother of gods. Goddess like Uṣā was raped by the superior male god Indra. The pitiable condition of the goddesses does not match with the dominant and assertive nature of Śakti as described in various later scriptures.

According to N.N. Bhattacharya,¹⁰³ among the agricultural tribes, the cult of mother earth, conceived as the female deity, is more prominent. Ritual based upon fertility must have played a very significant part in the agricultural societies. The worship of mother earth, which later developed into that of an all-pervading mother goddess, was thus a feature of agricultural societies. When the pastoral-patriarchal warriors invaded the dominions of the mother worshipping people, they introduced their strongly individualistic gods, but could not altogether eliminate the cult of the mother goddess.

This assimilation of or confrontation with the goddess worshipping societies led to the worship of the goddesses in the Hindu tradition and inclusion of the rituals related to them. Thus the concept of 'reappearance' emerges in the context of the mother goddess. The period of this 'reappearance' i.e. 3rd-4th century A.D. coincided with the classical phase of Hinduism. This was the period when Vaiṣṇavism was emerging under the patronage of the imperial Guptas. It was perhaps inevitable that the Gupta period Vaiṣṇavism will interact with it and in the process develop its own synthesis with the mother goddess cult.

Before moving towards the Gupta period Vaiṣṇavism vis-à-vis mother goddess cult, let us have a look at the scriptures. Gupta period is also known as the period of conceptualization of *Purāṇic* Hinduism. *Purāṇic* Hinduism represents the essential structure of Hinduism as it is perceived and practiced today. Also it represents a definitive evolutionary stage in the history of Hinduism, as emphasized by Prof. B.D.

¹⁰³ Bhattacharyya, N.N., *Indian Mother Goddess*, Calcutta, 1971, p.3.

Chattopadhyaya,¹⁰⁴ because of its taking the focus of religious practice away from sacrificial rituals as also from exclusive *Bhakti*.

Though the earliest attempts to recognize the mother goddess cult can be traced to the *Sāṅkhya* philosophy, which filtered down to the *Purānic* texts,¹⁰⁵ the concept of *Prakṛti* is presented as the female principle, more visible, immanent, and active than her constant companion, the pure and spiritual but inert *Puruṣa*, the male. Similarly in *Purānic* mythology, the goddess often comes to affect her consort as *Prakṛti* affects *Puruṣa*- animating him and implementing his latent powers.

The concept of mother goddess got its full-fledged exposition in the *Devī Māhātmya* section of the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*. It was probably composed north of the Narmada valley and sometime in the 5th or 6th century A.D.¹⁰⁶ Of the various features of the *Devī Māhātmya*, one is the ultimate reality of the universe being feminine. Thomas B. Coburn¹⁰⁷ gives a close look to the three myths associated with the *Devī's* salvific activities. The first that of Madhu and Kaiṭabha, is a delineation of the cosmic status of the *Devī*. The second, a more extensive account of her origin on the earth and her influential martial activity, culminates in the victory over the dread buffalo-demon Mahiṣāsura. The third and the longest myth continues to exemplify *Devī's* mundane activity. It is a celebration of her various forms and their role in her victory over the minions of Śumbha and Niśumbha.

In one of these myths we come across the relation of Viṣṇu with Śakti and the incorporation of the later into the broader framework of Vaiṣṇavism. It also sheds a light on different attitudes of different gods towards the Śakti. Turning towards the story of Madhu and Kaiṭabha we find interesting development. Throughout the *Mahābhārata*¹⁰⁸ the myth of Madhu and Kaitabha is associated with the figure of Viṣṇu. The myth is recounted in full on several occasions, and Viṣṇu's epithet

¹⁰⁴ Chattopadhyaya, B.D., 'Reappearance' of the Goddess or the Brahmanical Mode of Appropriation: Some Early Epigraphic Evidence Bearing on Goddess Cults', p.174.

¹⁰⁵ O' Flaherty, W.D., The Shifting Balance of Power in the Marriage of Siva and Parvati, in Hawley, J.S. and Wuff, D.M. (ed.), *The Divine Consort; Radha and the Goddesses of India*, Delhi, 1984, p.132.

¹⁰⁶ Pargiter, F.E., trans., *The Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*, Calcutta, 1888-1904, pp.viii-xiii; Mirashi, V.V., "A Lower Limit for the Date of the *Devī Māhātmya*", *Purāṇa* 6:1 (1964), pp.181-84.

¹⁰⁷ Coburn, Thomas, B., *Consort of None, Sakti of All: The Vision of the Devī-Māhātmya*, p.154.

¹⁰⁸ *The Mahābhārata* (2:611-12)(3.194.8-30).

Madhusudana, “slayer of Madhu” is used in the epic on several occasions. For a closer look on the two sides of the myth I will narrate the classical version of the myth first.

At the end of the cosmic cycle there was a *pralaya*, the state of universal dissolution. At that time Viṣṇu was sleeping on his serpent Śesa. While he was sleeping two *asuras* named Madhu and Kaiṭabha arose from the wax in Viṣṇu’s ear and being overconfident and proud attacked Brahmā, who was sitting on the lotus sprouting from the navel of Viṣṇu . Brahmā aroused Viṣṇu by shaking the lotus. Viṣṇu engages the two demons in battle, sometimes physically, sometimes in battle of wits. Madhu and Kaiṭabha think that they had outwitted Viṣṇu by asking to be slain in a dry place. But Viṣṇu raises his thigh and kills the demon on them. From the fat of the two *asuras*, which permeated in the water, the earth was created.

When the *Devī Māhātmya* tells this thoroughly Vaiṣṇavas myth, there are several crucial modifications in this version when the demons begin their assault on Brahmā, he endeavours to awaken Viṣṇu. He does so however not by shaking the lotus but by invoking *Devī*, who is addressed as *yoganidrā* that is as the personification of the state of sleep into which Viṣṇu has entered. *Devī* then accedes to Brahmā’s requests by withdrawing Viṣṇu’s various limbs. Viṣṇu awakens and the *asuras* are dispatched as in the earlier version.

Coburn derives several conclusions from the narration of this myth.¹⁰⁹ First of these conclusions is that it is solely through the grace or the graceful withdrawal of *Devī* that Viṣṇu can fulfill his familiar role of slaying the *asuras*. If this is true of lord Viṣṇu, the implication is that every human being is similarly indebted to her. Secondly, *Devī* is affirmed as the primary ontological reality. From her the gods derive their bodily form. From her, also, all material existence proceeds.

There are other references that can be drawn from the above episode. Though the importance of the goddess is established beyond doubt, Viṣṇu did not relegate to *Devī* his famous act of killing the demons. *Devī* is invariably associated with the act of

¹⁰⁹ Coburn, Thomas, B., *Consort of None, Śakti of All: The Vision of the Devi-Mahatmya*, p.158.

killing the *asuras* and relieving the earth from their suppression, as we will see later. But Viṣṇu remains firm in his act. The help of *Devī* was sought indicating the presence of a strong *Devī* cult, but the cult of Viṣṇu refused to dilute his responsibility and thereby giving an equality of status to her, while Śiva who is associated with far numerous forms of Śakti showed a more conciliatory attitude towards her. This will be discussed further.

The next episode relating to *Devī* throws a light on her career on the earth. *Devī Māhātmya* (2.1-2) further states that once upon a time, a battle started between the gods and the *asuras*. Mahisāsura was the chief of the demons. The gods' army was conquered by the mighty *asuras*. Faced with this catastrophe, the gods seek out Śiva and Viṣṇu for help. Having listened the accounts of gods Viṣṇu and Śiva got angry. Then from the bodies of Viṣṇu, Śiva, Indra and other gods came out a luminous brilliance (*tejas*). That peerless, unified brilliance, born of the bodies of the gods took the form of women, pervading the three worlds with splendor (2.8-12). *Devī* received her various limbs and weapons from various gods and finally killed the demon.

Coburn¹¹⁰ finds here that *Devī* is conceptualized as subordinate to various gods, because she is a derivative form and indebted to each of them. However, he immediately points out that reverse can also be true. It is she who succeeds in restoring the mundane equilibrium, a feat that the gods individually and collectively were unable to accomplish.

Next conclusion of Coburn puts *Devī* as the supreme ruler of the earthly creatures. *Devī māhātmya* thus affirms that the effective agent on earth, as in the cosmos, is not masculine but feminine, not king but queen.

Now referring to the third episode related to the miraculous acts of the divine feminine, Coburn¹¹¹ mentions the use of the term of 'Śakti' or power. He considers Śakti as the singular and the particular phenomena. This latter conceptualization emerges in the course of *Devī*'s martial engagement with the *asuras*, Śumbha and Niśumbha. In the fight with the *Devī* Śumbha got enraged at the destruction of two of

¹¹⁰ Ibid, p.159.

¹¹¹ Ibid, p.160.

his generals and sent forth his legions against *Devī*. Immediately the seven Śaktis emerged from seven gods, each possessing the distinctive weapons. These Śaktis-named Brahmānī, Māheśvarī, Kaumārī, Vaiṣṇavī, Vārāhī, Nārasimhī and Aindrī- are considered collectively in the ensuing combat as “the Mothers”.

The notion here is the fundamental existence of goddess in each of the gods who is not only wife but also the Śakti i.e. power of them.

This shows the attitude of the doctrine of mother goddess towards the other male divinities. Not discriminating among the various gods, but putting all of them on a subservient level. Though the later Śākta doctrines show preference to Śiva and Śakti, the *Devī Māhātmya* section shows no preference towards Śiva when it is discussing *Devī* as Śakti. In this connection reference to one inscription from Chhattisgarh is necessary.

The inscription is found from Pujaripali, a village 22 miles from northeast of Sarangarh.¹¹² The inscription is one of a king named Gopāladeva. The object of the inscription is to record the charitable deeds of Gopāladeva, especially the construction of the temples where it was put up. The record is not dated but on the basis of available other epigraphic evidences, it may belong to 12th century A.D.

This inscription is dedicated to the various goddesses. And as envisaged earlier, it shows no partisan attitude to any male gods but it starts with the invocation of Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Maheśa.

...tā vra(bra)hma [vi]snu [maheśvarāḥ].....¹¹³

In most of the following verses up to verse 37, the first half is dedicated to the description of a goddess, while the second states how Gopāla showed his devotion to her. The goddess is named as Vaiṣṇavī, Vārāhī, Nārasimhī, Aindrī, Cāmuṇḍa and so forth. Her form, weapons and vehicle are described in consonance with her various epithets.

¹¹² Mirashi, V.V., ‘Pujaripali Stone Inscription of Gopaladeva’, *CII*, vol. IV, pt.II, pp.588-594.

¹¹³ *Ibid*, p.590, v. i.

The inscription shows similar attitude while mentioning the *tīrthas*. The major *tīrthas* mentioned in the inscription are Kedāra, Prayāga, Puṣkara, Puruṣottama, and Bhīmeśvara, on the Narmada, at Gopālapura, Vārānasī, Prabhāsa, the junction of the Ganga with the sea, Vairāgyamatha, Śaurīpura, and the Pedrā village. In all these places the *kīrti* of Gopāla shone like the autumnal moon. The geographical names mentioned in the inscription refer to famous places associated with various gods. Kedāra is the well-known *tīrtha* in the Himalaya associated with Śiva. Prayāga is modern Allahabad. Puskara is in Rajasthan and is associated with Brahmā worship. Bhīmeśvara is a well known *tīrtha* also known as Drakṣarāma in Godavari district in Madras. Puruṣottama is in Puri associated with Jagannātha worship. Similarly Śaurīpura may be Dwaraka. Thus the *tīrthas* are associated with various gods not showing any particular favour to anyone.

The goddess Vaiṣṇavī is shown as holding a conch and a discus. Vārāhī is in the act of lifting earth with her tusk. Nārasimhī is shown as all-powerful with curly manes. Aindrī is endowed with a thousand eyes holding a thunderbolt in her hand. *Devī Cāmuṇḍa* is dark complexioned and terrifying the enemies in the battlefield. Other goddesses mentioned are Mārīca, Tārā, Mahālakṣmī, Vindhyavāsini, etc. The terrific and ferocious attitude of the goddesses of the Śakti is manifested in most of the forms worshipped here.

But some of the goddesses like Kāmāksī, Mahālakṣmī, Sarasvatī are praised for their forgiveness and compassion. The king seems to have more devotion towards Vārāhī for he says himself to be the son of Vārāhī. In the last of the inscription the king prays to the killer of Buffalo demon called Ambikā.

This inscription shows the attitude of the goddess cult towards various gods and by implication sects. As pointed out by Coburn¹¹⁴, although the polarity of Śiva and Śakti is well known in later *Śākta* doctrines and *Tāntric* circles, the *Devī Māhātmya* shows no preference for Śiva when it is discussing *Devī* as Śakti.

¹¹⁴ Coburn, Thomas, B., *Consort of None, Sakti of All: The Vision of the Devi-Mahatmya*, p.161.

Devī-Māhātmya establishes the identity of *Devī* in *Sanskrit* tradition by incorporating the familiar Vaiṣṇavas myth of Madhu and Kaiṭabha. This does not reflect the historical interaction between Vaiṣṇavas and *Devī* sects according to Coburn.¹¹⁵

It appears more likely that the *Devī-Māhātmya* section is offering a reinterpretation of a familiar myth in order to capture the attention of those who had a chance to hear the text. Similarly the use of regal imagery in the Mahiṣāsura episode has a Vaiṣṇavas aura, the *Devī-Māhātmya* uses the distinctively Vaiṣṇavas epithets *Lakṣmī* and *Śrī* almost casually without drawing out their theological ramifications. And this can hardly be taken as the fundamental conciliation between Vaiṣṇavism and the worship of *Devī*.

Of course the cult of *Devī* was apprehensive of the dilution of its authority as being envisaged in such rapprochements. On the other hand Vaiṣṇavism was not ready for an all-powerful goddess, which might endanger the authority of the chief male god Viṣṇu. Vaiṣṇavism incorporated only those goddesses into its pantheon, which were placed as subordinate wives. The incorporation of *Lakṣmī* and *Śrī* can be placed as an example.

Śaiva sect is however known for inclusion of *Durgā* and all tribal and terrible goddesses into its pantheon. Apart from *Pārvatī* and *Durgā* as considered as the goddesses of Śaiva pantheon, the inclusion of *Kālī* into it, prove the more open attitude of Śaiva sect towards them. *Kālī* is often portrayed as terrible in appearance and as offensive and destructive in her habits. Her habits and associations reinforce her awful appearance. Her two favourite dwelling places are battlefields and cremation grounds. Unlike most other Hindu deities she does not have an animal vehicle but instead rides a *preta* or ghost. In the mythology she is often associated with *Durgā*, *Pārvatī* and *Śiva*.

Two of *Kālī*'s most famous deeds are recounted in the myth of the goddess *Durgā*'s destruction of the demons *Śumbha* and *Niśumbha*. According to *Devī-Māhātmya* section, *Kālī* is born when two demon generals, *Caṇḍa* and *Muṇḍa*, are sent to haunt

¹¹⁵ Ibid, p.163.

and attack Durgā.¹¹⁶ Durgā loses her composure, grows furious and from her darkened brows springs Kālī. She capitulates Caṇḍa and Muṇḍa.

Later in the battle she is called by Durgā to kill Raktabīja. This demon has the magical ability to recreate him every time a drop of his blood touches the ground. Kālī rescues Durgā by swallowing the swarm of blood-born demons and sucking the blood from the original Raktabīja until he falls lifeless. In these myths Kālī seems to be Durgā's embedded fury, appearing when Durgā loses control or is confronted with a formidable task.

Kālī's association with Śiva is further emphasized by the story, which connects Pārvatī with Kālī. In the *Vāmana Purāṇa* Pārvatī is called Kālī because of her dark complexion. When Pārvatī hears Śiva using this name, she takes offence and does austerities to rid herself of her dark skin. After she succeeds she is named as Gaurī, the golden one.

In her association with Śiva, Kālī's tendency to wilderness and disorder, although sometimes tamed or softened by him, persists. It appears to Kinsley that Kālī was never finally subdued by Śiva and is most popularly represented as a being who is uncontrollable and is more apt to provoke Śiva to dangerous activities than to be controlled by him.¹¹⁷

Such a dangerous and uncontrollable goddess could not find a place in the Vaiṣṇavas pantheon which always goes for orderly movement. Śaiva pantheon being more receptive of these goddesses, find favourable ground among the tribals of Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh.

Vaiṣṇavism which incorporates sublime and orderly goddesses find favour among the worshippers of Lakṣmī or Śrī. These goddesses are invariably shown as caressing the feet of the Viṣṇu in various sculptures. A tribal goddess in ancient Chhattisgarh called Śabarī has been associated with Viṣṇu in one of his sculptures found from

¹¹⁶ Kinsley, David R., 'Blood and Death out of Place: Reflections on the Goddess Kali', in Hawley J.S. and Wuff, D.M. (ed.), *The Divine Consort; Radha and the Goddesses of India*, p.145.

¹¹⁷ Ibid, p.148.

Seorinarayan temple. The inferior status of the goddess is depicted in the miniature image of the goddess in contrast to the life size image of Nārāyaṇa.

This image of Lakṣmī is clearly visible in the Ratanpur stone inscription of the time of Pr̥thvīdeva II.¹¹⁸ The inscription is one of Brahmadeva, a feudatory prince of Pr̥thvīdeva II, of the Kalacuri dynasty of Ratanpur. The object is to record the religious and charitable works of Brahmadeva at several places. The inscription can be called as a Śaiva inscription as it speaks of the construction of the temple of Śiva under the name of Dhūrjati, Trayambaka, Somanātha, etc. and the construction of the shrine of Pārvatī. This inscription describes Śiva as the lover of Pārvatī in verse 2. And the next verse describes Viṣṇu whose feet are caressed by the lotus like hands of Lakṣmī. The making of the shrine of Pārvatī also stands in contrast of that of Vaiṣṇavas inscriptions none of which speaks of the construction to the shrine of Lakṣmī. The inscription is dated in Kalacuri Cedi era 915, corresponding to 1163-64 A.D.

The kind of relationship established in the Śaiva tradition towards the Śākta tradition can be traced in the Ardhanārīśvara form of Śiva where goddess Pārvatī is depicted as the left part of god Śiva. As such the goddess is treated on equal footing with that of Śiva. The Rewa stone inscription of the time of Karna¹¹⁹ invokes the Ardhanārīśvara form of Śiva in verse 4. The inscription is dated in Kalacuri era 800, corresponding to 1048-49 A.D. No equivalent to Ardhanārīśvara form is found in Vaiṣṇavas tradition.

The cordial relation of Śiva worship with other forms of Śākta worship is evident in the Bhera Ghat Gaurī Śankara temple inscription of Vijayasimha.¹²⁰ The inscription is incised on the stone slab let into the front wall on the right hand side of the door leading to the sanctuary of the temple of Gaurī Śankarā at Bhera Ghat, 13 miles from Jabalpur. It records the obeisance of the *Mahārājñī* Gośaladevī, *Mahārāja* Vijayasimhadeva and (the heir apparent) Ajayasimha to the enshrined god who appears to be named as Bhagnakhidrā (destroyer of diseases). The inscription is undated but it belongs to the 11th century A.D. on paleographic grounds.

¹¹⁸ Mirashi, V.V., 'Ratanpur Stone Inscription of Prithvideva II', *CII*, vol. IV, pt. II, pp. 501-533.

¹¹⁹ Mirashi, V.V., 'Rewa Stone Inscription of the Time of Karna', *EI*, vol. XXIV, pp. 101-115.

¹²⁰ Mirashi, V.V., 'Bhera Ghat Gauri Sankara Temple Inscription of Vijayasimha', *CII*, vol. VII, pt. II, pp. 363-64

Various stories abound in the region regarding the Śabarī, the great devotee of Nārāyaṇa. She got a boon from the god in return for her service and her miniature image was added to the shrine. The peculiarity of the sculpture is that the image identified as Śabarī is that of a male. It can be that of a devotee, or Garuda or some other male. But the popular memory associates it with the worship of Śabarī. The vermilion pasted on the image says its story. There is no reference to a goddess called as Śabarī in the texts. She might be the local goddess of the Śabara tribe, which was invariably portrayed as residing in the Vindhya. The popular tradition of the cult of Śabarī was incorporated into the Vaiṣṇava pantheon.

VIII

Thus, the texts of the period show different types of relationship and pattern of interaction between sects. Sometimes they do depict conflict between the ideas and the sects. However, on the whole, the catholic attitude of the region in all the periods was maintained and preserved. It was true for other sects also. Vaiṣṇavism assimilated other sects into it as did Śaivism on a much larger scale.

Sometimes there was no choice left for the religion of the vanquished. However, for a region of diversity and multiple ethnic groups, this can be a reality. The conflict with other sects did not lead to fight or violent submission. This was not the characteristic of the religion but of the social groups of the period, religion was of-course a reflection of their mentality. The region of Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh was subject to continuous influx of new people, sometimes due to trade and sometimes due to invasion. There could not be any other mode of survival for the sects but assimilation and submergence. The attitude of Vaiṣṇavism towards other sects reflects the reality of the time and place.

CHAPTER – 6

CONCLUSION

Vaiṣṇavism as a phenomenon underwent all the processes of transformation – adaptation, assimilation and confrontation in the period of c.A.D. 600-1300. Most of the contemporary features of Vaiṣṇavism can be traced back to this period. This period otherwise known as early medieval period of ancient India can be called as the period of crystallization of Vaiṣṇavism in India. Though the sect is subject to later interpolations and modifications down to modern era the basic tenets of the Vaiṣṇavism are more or less defined in the above-mentioned period.

The preceding era of the Gupta emperors has been described as the classical era for Hinduism and particularly Vaiṣṇavism in India. But the post Gupta era exercised profound influence of this religion in different parts of India. At the start of this period Vaiṣṇavism was known as ‘Bhāgavatism’ during the Gupta period. It’s in 6th century A.D. that for the first time the term ‘*Paramavaiṣṇava*’ was used in the inscriptions of the Pāṇḍuvamśins. Since then the term ‘Vaiṣṇavism’ became the quintessence identification of this sect.

The period saw the downfall in the worship of various incarnations of Viṣṇu in Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh in favour of *Caturbhujā* form of Viṣṇu. Some of the early incarnations like Varāha, Vāmana, Nṛsimha, Trivikrama etc. were relegated to different niches on walls of temples though among them Varāha incarnation maintained its position till the end of first millennium to the beginning of next millennium in different pockets of Madhya Pradesh. This was especially true of the Vidisha-Bundelkhand region, which seems to have been centres for the cult worship of Varāha.

Among other incarnations Rāma and Kṛṣṇa worship started gaining ground towards the end of this period. No single temple dedicated to Rāma or Kṛṣṇa was found in this period but the presence of several sculptures of Rāma-*līlā* and Kṛṣṇa-*līlā* on the

niches of the temples testifies to this fact. Rājīvalocana temple can be called as the forerunner of the Rāma temple. When the Kalacuri ruler Jayasimha restored it, it was called Rāmacandra temple.

About the Kṛṣṇa incarnation the noticeable development in this period was the presentation of the birth of Kṛṣṇa in the various sculptures. In these scenes god Brahmā is seen presenting the divine child to Devakī with several other gods standing in worshipful attitude. Earlier presentations of Kṛṣṇa show him in the act of killing various demons. The idea behind this presentation could be to further glorify and exalt the status of the god. The crystallization of the Kṛṣṇa worship as one of the main gods of modern day Vaiṣṇavism might have impact of this development in 12th-13th century A.D.

The representation of Buddha, Kalki, Matsya, Paraśurāma seem to have been a later development in the Vaiṣṇavism. The earliest independent sculptures of the last two as an incarnation of Viṣṇu were found from Bandhogarh in Madhya Pradesh. They seem to have had a short life span as independent but affiliated gods of Vaiṣṇava pantheon. This was the period when *Caturbhujā* form of Viṣṇu was on the ascendant. It soon replaced them along with other incarnations of Viṣṇu in Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh.

Towards the end of 11th century and beginning of 12th century there is an evident decline in the Vaiṣṇava centres in Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh. The early Vaiṣṇava centres declined while no new Vaiṣṇava temple or monastery was constructed by the rulers and the affluent sections of the society.

The empathy towards the Vaiṣṇavism can be traced back to the Pāṇḍuvāmsīn period itself when Mahāśivagupta of the Pāṇḍuvāmsīa declared himself a Śaiva and donated lands for the construction of the Śiva temple in his Senkapat inscription. The same ruler in his Lodhia plates found from Chhattisgarh (described earlier) donated lands to Isāneśvara Śiva. This kind of donation tended to increase with the time. This inscription also refers to a group of *Ācāryas* who migrated from far off places and being venerated by the king. There is no substantial proof to attach this group of *Ācāryas* to that of Mattamayūra clan of slightly later period. But as the inscription

mentions Śulapāni, the disciple of the holy illustrious Prathamācārya, it can be assumed that it was the earliest group of Śaiva *Ācāryas*. There was a conscious attempt by the rulers to bring the *Ācāryas* from far off places and donate lands to them, the temples and monasteries attached to them.

Kalacuri rulers were far ahead in supporting and patronizing the Śaiva *Ācāryas*. Vāmarāja the founder of the later Kalacuri dynasty was a devout worshipper of Śiva¹. Śaivism received a great fillip during the reign of Yuvarājadeva I, who under the influence of queen Nohala, invited several *Ācāryas* of Mattamayūra clan to the Cēdī country and built magnificent temples of Śiva and monasteries for them at Gurgi, Masaun, Chandrehe, Bilhari, Bheraghat and other places in Madhya Pradesh. These *Ācāryas* exercised profound influence on the political and religious history of the period.

The earliest inscription of the Mattamayūra clan was discovered at Ranod². It gives the earliest genealogy of the time. This genealogy is spiritualistic not from father to son but from guru to disciple. When the king Avantīvarman desired to be initiated in Śaiva faith, he attempted to bring the sage Purandara from Upēndrapura. The sage founded a *Maṭha* at Mattamayūra, the capital of the king whom he initiated in the Śaiva faith and established another *Maṭha* at Rānipadra (mod. Ranod). The last *Ācārya* mentioned in the genealogy i.e. Vyōmaśiva enlarged and repaired the *Maṭha*.

Upēndrapura, where Purandara practised penance has not been identified. Neither the Mattamayūra, the chief seat of the clan has been identified. It must have been situated not far from Terahi, Ranod and Mahua where inscriptions, temples and monasteries have been found. It can be identified with Kadwaha, according to V.V. Mirashi³, about 15 miles south of Ranod, which possesses remains of a Hindu monastery and of not less than fourteen *brāhmaṇical* temples all belonging 10th-11th century A.D.

The *Maṭha* at Mattamayūra, being a renowned seat of Śaivism, supplied Śiva pontiffs from time to time to the monasteries in the Cēdī country. Yuvarājadeva invited Śaiva

¹ Mirashi, V.V., *Inscriptions of the Kalachuri Chedi Era, CII*, vol. I, pt. I, p.cl.

² Kielhorn, 'A Stone Inscription from Ranod (Narod)', *EI*, vol. I, p. 351ff.

³ Mirashi, V.V., *Inscriptions of the Kalachuri Chedi Era, CII*, vol. I, pt. I, p.cliv.

Ācārya Prabhāśiva to his country and made munificent gifts to him. His wife Nohala invited another *Śaiva Ācārya* named *Iśvaraśiva* and donated several villages to him. Her son Lakṣmaṇarāja II called *Hṛdayaśiva* from *Maṭha* of Madhumatī and made over to him *Maṭhas* of Vaidyanātha and Nohāleśvara. *Hṛdayaśiva* placed his disciple *Aghōraśiva* in the charge of the latter *Maṭha*.

These *Ācaryas* received honour and patronage at the hands of the ruling kings. The *Rājagurus* are mentioned as royal officials to whom grants of land and villages, recorded in copper plate charters, are communicated. The Malkapuram pillar inscription⁴ records the tradition that Śadbhāva Śāmbhu of the Golakī *Maṭha* received the gift of 3 lakhs of villages from Kalacuri king Yuvarājadeva I. Malkapuram is in the Guntur tāluka of Guntur district. It records that the Kākatīya ruler Ganapatideva and his daughter Rudrāmbā granted the villages Maṇḍaram and Velangapundi respectively (both in Guntur district) to Viśveśvara Śiva. The latter constituted the village into the *agrahāra* with the name Viśeśvara Golakī.

Prof. Mirashi⁵ says that if correct this would amount to the one third of the revenue of the Kalacuri home province of Dāhala, which according to tradition consists of 9 lakhs of villages. Though this princely gift has not been recorded in any of the Cēdī inscriptions, there is no doubt that Kalacuris liberally patronized the *Śaiva Maṭhas*.

Both the Bilhari⁶ and Gurgi⁷ inscriptions record the donations of several villages for the maintenance of temples and monasteries made by successive Kalacuri kings. Bilhari inscription mentions several taxes and rates levied on oil mills and on elephants, horses, vegetables, betel leaves and other articles sold in the local markets, which were assigned for the maintenance of these religious institutions.

While the inscriptions abound in the list of gifts and exemption from taxes provided to the *Śaiva Ācaryas* and the monasteries, Vaiṣṇavism was neglected by the rulers of the period. Lack of patronage deprived Vaiṣṇava centres of material wealth. With the

⁴ Pantulu, J. Ramayya, 'Malkapuram Stone Inscription of Rudradeva (Rudramba), Śaka samvat 1183', *Journal of the Andhra Historical Society* (hereafter *JHS*), vol. IV, 1930, pp.145-62.

⁵ Mirashi, V.V., *Inscriptions of the Kalachuri Chedi Era*, *CII*, vol. I, pt. I, p.cliv.

⁶ Mirashi, V.V., 'Bilhari Stone Inscription of Yuvarajadeva', *CII*, vol. I, pt. I, pp. 204-24.

⁷ Mirashi, V.V., 'Gurgi Stone Inscription of Yuvarājadeva', *CII*, vol. I, pt. I, pp.

passage of time lack of patronage led to the abundance of the Vaiṣṇava temples. Many of them declined due to wear and tear of the time. Hindu temples are considered as inauspicious once a part of it breaks down. This accounts for decline of most of the Vaiṣṇava temples. Moreover, the powerful influence of the Śaiva *Ācāryas* might have desisted the kings from making Vaiṣṇava temples or donating gifts to them. Vaiṣṇavism who failed to give rise to the institutions like the Mattamayūra clan in Madhya Pradesh declined and lost patronage.

Apart from the patronage enjoyed by the Śaiva *Ācāryas* and monasteries, one more fact contributed to the downfall of Vaiṣṇavism in Madhya Pradesh. The Śaiva *Ācāryas* utilized the wealth of the *Maṭhas* and the income of the *Agrahāra* villages for the welfare of the people. Kalacuri inscriptions mention a lot of public work executed by the Śaiva *Ācāryas* in Madhya Pradesh. Malkapuram inscription gives a detailed description of the measures adopted by *Viśveśvairāśambhu* for the maintenance and management of the institutions he founded in his *agrahāra* village i.e. a temple, monastery, college, choultry for the distribution of food, a maternity home (*prasuti śāla*) and a hospital (*ārogya śāla*).⁸ Besides there were many people were associated with the *Maṭha*. This description is of an Andhra village in 13th century India. Dāhala region might have been influenced by these developments. Though the *agrahāra* and its charitable institutions exist in Andhra region, the *Maṭha* to which the Śaiva *Ācārya* was affiliated to was in Dāhala region.

These institutions no doubt benefited the public at large. This might have attracted the attention of the larger section of the society. All these institutions might have provided employment to a section of the society associated with hospitals, maternity home or the distribution of food. These measures were surely to draw the attention of the society. Vaiṣṇavism on the other hand could not come out with such benevolent measures for the people. So it decline not only from the royal circle but also from society.

⁸ Pantulu, J. Ramayya, 'Malkapuram Stone Inscription of Rudradeva (Rudramba), Śaka samvat 1183', *JAHs*, vol. IV, 1930, pp. 153.

Besides, the setup of the institution of the Mattamayūra clan also seems to be quite democratic. Elaborate rules were laid out for the election of the head of the *Maṭhas*⁹. His qualifications and fee to be paid to him for his services were set forth in detail. The whole Śaiva community of the village was given the right to appoint a new *Ācārya*, if the existing was found negligent in his duty or was found guilty of misbehaviour.¹⁰

Though the *Ācāryas* of the Mattamayūra clan were followers of Śaiva School, they were not bigoted. They studied various orthodox and even unorthodox systems as has been described in the earlier chapter. In the Gurgi inscription, the Śaiva *Ācārya* Praśāntaśiva is said to have spent his days in the company of meritorious persons who were adept in the philosophy of the Pañcarātrikas or Pāśupatas.

Vaiṣṇavism too was receptive of other ideas prevalent in the region. But it was not to the extent Śaivism was. Śāktism was a force to reckon with in Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh. Vaiṣṇavism accepted the mother goddess as Śrī, Lakṣmī, etc. as described in the earlier chapter. But Śaivism provided a larger space to the goddesses as compared to Vaiṣṇavism. Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh being tribal regions were more prone towards the Śakti worship. Hence the Śaiva mode of worship found its natural takers in this region.

All these facts combinedly contributed towards the downfall of Vaiṣṇavism and its replacement by Śaivism. The land of early worship of Vāsudeva and Bhāgavata religion became the stronghold of Śaivism. Vaiṣṇavism flourished in Orissa, Rajasthan and other parts of India.

This fact is responsible for the lack of or the less number of Vaiṣṇava pilgrimages in Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh. Though there are pockets of Vaiṣṇava worship in Madhya Pradesh like Gwalior, Vidisha, Karitalai, Pathari, etc. and Rajim, Sirpur, Seorinarayan, etc, in Chhattisgarh they could not rise as the pan Indian centres like Ujjain. This was also the reason behind the lack of description of Vaiṣṇava centres in *Purāṇas* and other ancient texts.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Kielhorn, 'A Stone Inscription from Ranod (Narod)', *EI*, vol. I, p. 355ff.

Muslim invasion was also a reason behind the downfall of some of the Vaiṣṇava centers in Bundelkhand region. Cult of Varāha might have fallen to continuous outside onslaught. The region known for Varāha worship remained a politically volatile region throughout the period from 1000 A.D. to 1300 A.D. The political instability and destruction of temples during attacks prevented the flourishing of the Varāha cult and any institution related to it. As a result it declined and soon faded from the public memory.

I

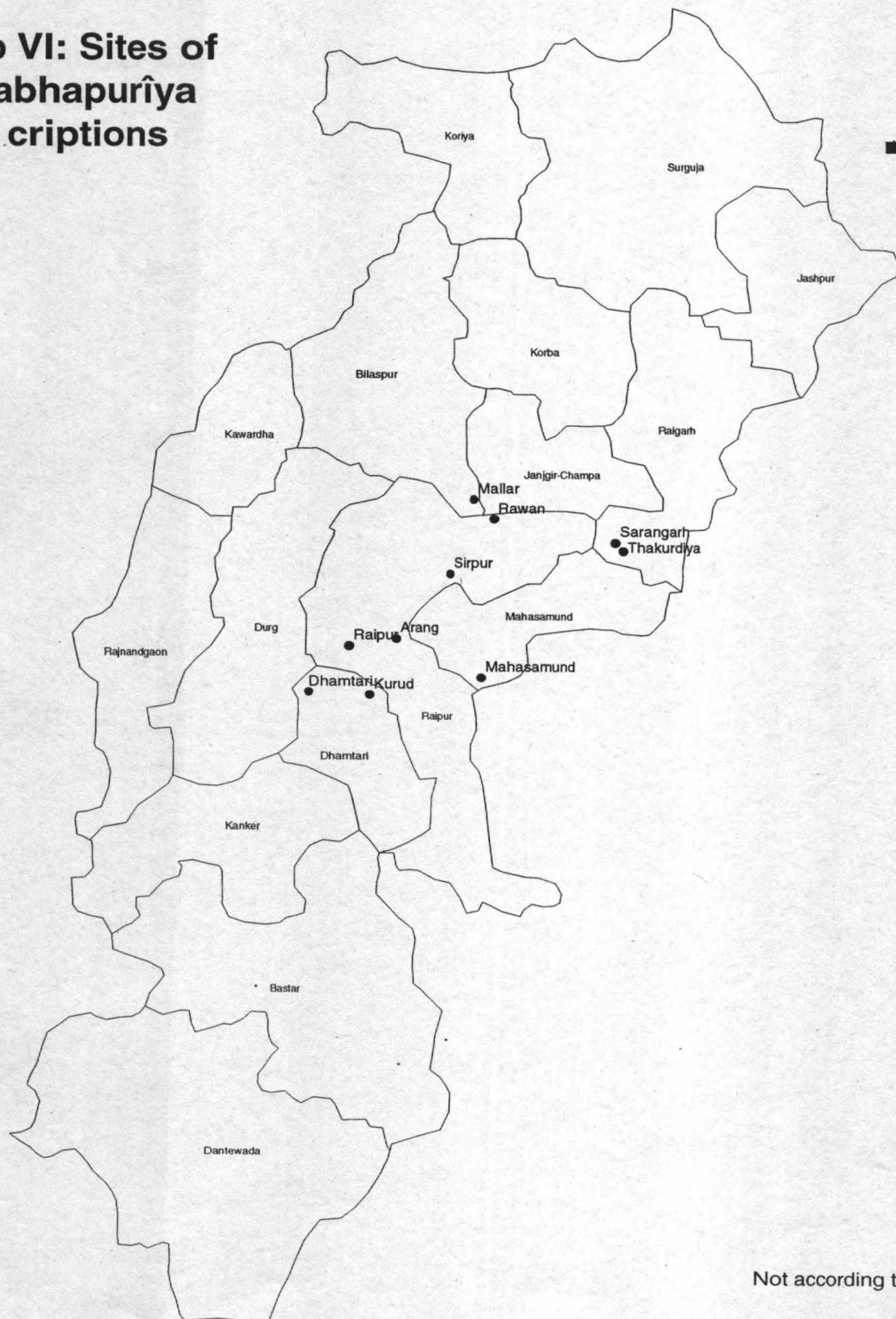
Some commentary may be offered on Chhattisgarh region previously called as South Kośala. The rise of the state system in this part of India corresponds with the rise of Śarabhapurīya rulers. Earlier they were feudatories of the Gupta rulers. The influence of the state machinery of the Guptas and the development of the local resources might have played the role of the catalyst in augmenting state system here. An interesting observation is the map of the forested regions of Chhattisgarh. The cultivated regions of modern Chhattisgarh exactly coincide with the sites showing findspots of the inscriptions of the Śarabhapurīya rulers (see maps VI and VII). The regions cleared of the forests in the ancient period are still used for cultivation in modern times.

During the rule of Samudragupta, this region was ruled by Mahendra. In his south Indian campaign Samudragupta defeated Mahendra of Kośala but let him free to rule on the condition of accepting him as suzerain. Towards the end of Gupta rule, the Śarabhapurīya rulers established their kingdom. The area cleared by the ancient Śarabhapurīyas proved to be fertile. Even now it is called as “*Dhān kā katorā*”. The saucer shaped Chhattisgarh valley experienced the first state in 6th century A.D. The importance of agriculture can be realized by looking at the inscriptions of the Śarabhapurīya rulers. All the inscriptions of the early Śarabhapurīya rulers issued from Śarabhapura are addressed to the agriculturist inhabitants of the region

*Śarabhapurān mahārāja śrī narendrah
nandapurabhogīya śarkarā padrake brāhmaṇā-
dīnprativāsikuṭumbino bodhayati.*¹¹

¹¹ Shastri, A.M., ‘Pipardula Plates of Narendra’, in *Inscriptions of the Śarabhapurīyas*, pp. 5-7.

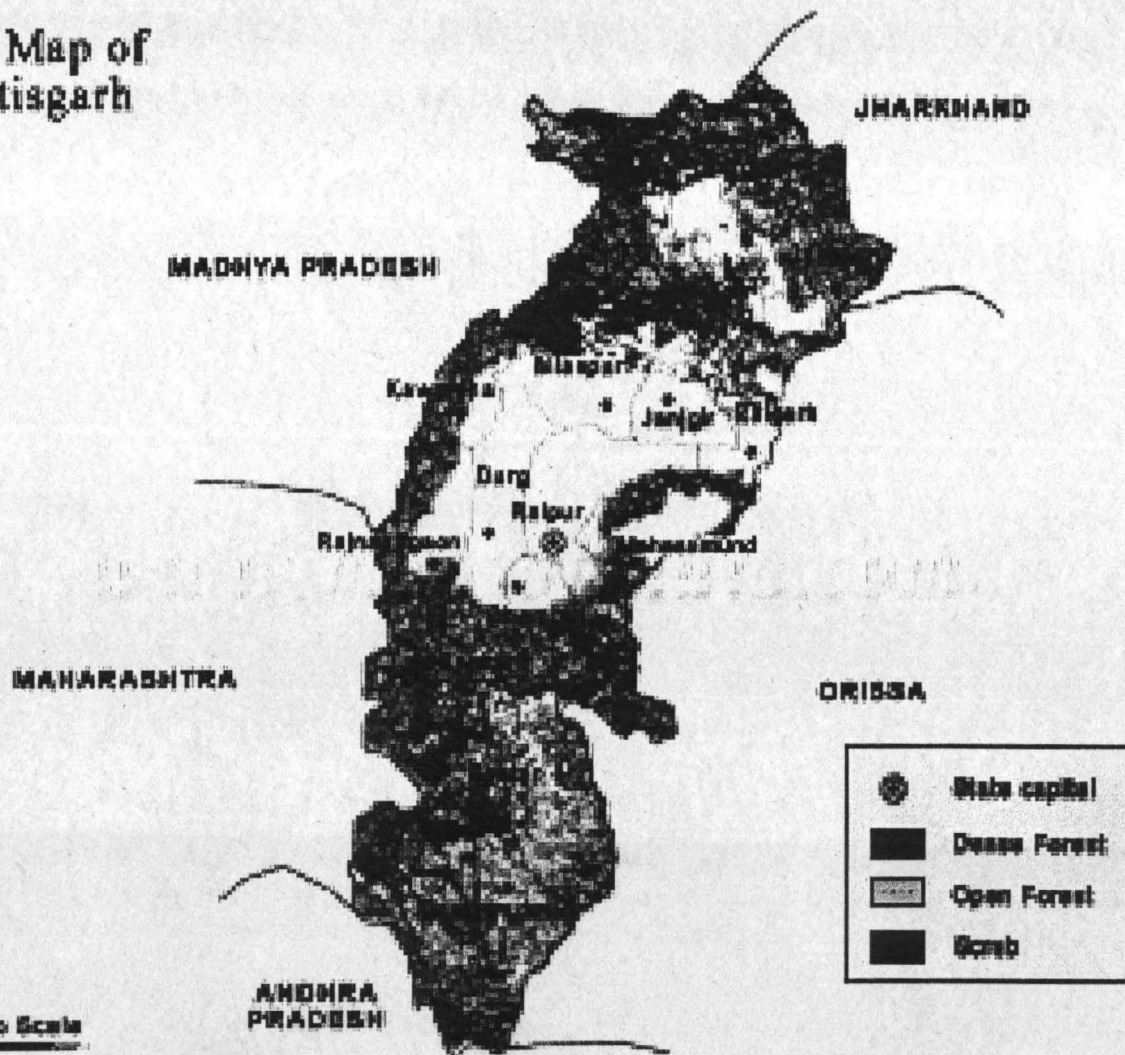
Map VI: Sites of Śarabhapurīya Inscriptions



Not according to scale

Map VII:

Forest Map of Chhattisgarh



Map not to Scale

i.e. *Maharaja* Narendra informed the agriculturist inhabitants including the *brāhmaṇas* residing at Śarkarāpadraka in the district (*bhōga*) of Nandapura.

The information to the agriculturists is as much necessary as to the *brāhmaṇas*. The agriculture practiced here involved all the family members as evident from the word '*kuṭumbinah*'. Large-scale agriculture based on hired labour was not prevalent. This once again points to the state being in the early state of development. This is the reason behind the almost non-existence of the temples in this period despite the rulers unequivocally supporting Bhāgavatism. When the capital of the kingdom was shifted to Śrīpura during the reign of Sudevarāja, the villagers of the region were addressed in the inscriptions.

Śrīpurāt----- śrīmahādurggarājaputra-
Śrīmahāsudevarājaḥ hakirībhogīyasunikāyām prativāsi-
nassamājñāpayati¹²

i.e. Śrī Sudevarāja addresses the residents of village Sunika situated in the Hakirī *bhōga*.

It remained no longer necessary to address exclusively the agriculturists of the region. It does not show the decline of agriculture but expansion of the state and a little development of the state system when it is necessary to address all the inhabitants of the place. The shift of the capital to a new area might have necessitated this development. We have already observed the rise of *Suvarnakāras*, which clearly do not fall into the domain of agriculturists. *Suvarnakāras* remained as the engraver class till the end of Pāṇḍuvāmsīn period. The mention of many occupational groups points to the diversification of the state economy from agriculture to other occupations, another step in the development of a state.

The role of Vaiṣṇavism in this state is to provide the necessary legitimacy to the rulers. As the term '*kuṭumbinah*', suggests kin relationship among the various sections of the agricultural society, the ruler has to maintain his exclusiveness to rule over others. It was this requirement, which led to the adoption of Vaiṣṇavism as the state

¹² Shastri, A.M., 'Kauvatal Plates of Sudevaraja', in *Inscriptions of the Śarabhapurīyas*, pp. 43-45.

religion by the Śarabhapurīyas and later on Pāṇḍuvāmśins. Vaiṣṇavism came as a handy religion because of the legitimacy attached to the Gupta rule.

The role of religion in providing legitimacy is undisputed in ancient India. Viṣṇu and his various incarnations were used to legitimize their rule by the rulers of Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh. Rulers like Bhōja Pratihāra, Gupta rulers, Paramāra rulers and above mentioned Śarabhapurīya and Pāṇḍuvāmśin rulers adopted epithets like 'Paramabhāgavata', 'Paramavaiṣṇava' and 'Paramamāheśvara' to project their exclusivity and divine sanction for rule.

Among the incarnations of Viṣṇu, Varāha was the most popular epithet used by the Vaiṣṇava kings of Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh. Varāha has been portrayed as saving earth from the deluge and the clutches of Hiranyākṣa. This divine act of Varāha was always compared with the act of the rulers while saving their empire from outside invasion. This was the reason why when all the incarnations of Viṣṇu were being replaced by the *Caturbhujā* form, the worship of Varāha lingered on till the end of this research work i.e. up to 1300 A.D. in some parts of Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh.

List of Inscriptions from Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh
(c.A.D. 600-1300)

S.No.	Inscriptions	Dynasty	Date	Find Spot	Form of Viṣṇu
1.	Pipardula Plates of Narendra, Year 3	Śarabhapurīya	First half of 6 th century A.D.	Raipur district	King referred as <i>Paramabhāgavata</i> , name of district as <i>Nandapura</i>
2.	Kurud Plates of Narendra	Do	Do	Do	King referred as <i>Paramabhāgavata</i>
3.	Rawan Plates of Narendra	Do	Do	Do	King referred as <i>Paramabhāgavata</i> , Viṣṇu as Śrīdharasvāmin
4.	Mallar Plates of Jayarāja	Do	Middle of 6 th century A.D.	Bilaspur District	King referred as <i>Paramabhāgavata</i>
5.	Arang Plates of Mahājayarāja	Do	Do	Raipur district	King referred as <i>Paramabhāgavata</i>
6.	Mallar Plates of Jayarāja	Do	Do	Bilaspur District	King referred as <i>Paramabhāgavata</i>
7.	Dhamtari Plates of Sudevarāja	Do	Later part of 6 th century A.D.	Raipur District	King referred as <i>Paramabhāgavata</i> , <i>Brāhmin</i> named as <i>Mādhavasvāmin</i>
8.	Sirpur Plate of Mahāsudevarāja	Do	Do	Do	King referred as <i>Paramabhāgavata</i> , name of village <i>Keśavaka</i>
9.	Arang Plates of Sudevarāja	Do	Do	Do	King referred as <i>Paramabhāgavata</i>
10.	Kauvatal plates of Sudevarāja	Do	Do	Raigadh district	Do
11.	Raipur Plates of Sudevarāja	Do	Do	Raipur district	Do
12.	Sarangarh Plates of Sudevarāja	Do	Do	Raigarh District	King referred as <i>Paramabhāgavata</i> , <i>Brāhmin</i> referred as <i>Viṣṇusvāmin</i>
13.	Thakurdiya Plates of Pravarāja	Śarabhapurīya	Later half of 6 th century A.D.	Raigarh District	King referred as <i>Paramabhāgavata</i>
14.	Mallar Plates of Pravarāja	Do	Do	Bilaspur District	King referred as <i>Paramabhāgavata</i> , district named as <i>Śāṅkacakrabhoga</i>
15.	Mallar Plates of Vyāghrarāja	Amarārya <i>Kula</i>	Do	Do	Seal of inscription contains <i>Garuḍa</i> and conch shell
16.	Malga Plates of <i>Sāmanta</i> Indrarāja	Pāndvas of <i>Mekāla</i>	First half of 7 th century A.D.	Do	Village is referred as <i>Śāligrāmaka</i>

S.No.	Inscriptions	Dynasty	Date	Find Spot	Form of Viṣṇu
17.	Bonda Plates of Tivaraṛāja	Pānduvamśin	Later half of 7 th century A.D.	Raigarh District	King referred as <i>Paramavaiṣṇava</i> , name of <i>Brāhmiṇs</i> as Madhusūdanopādhyaya, Viṣṇughosopādhyaya, Yorāṅabhavasvāmin, Vāmanasvāmin, Gopendrasvāmin
18.	Rajīm Plates of Tivaraḍeva	Do	Do	Raipur District	King referred as <i>Paramavaiṣṇava</i>
19.	Baloda plates of Tivaraḍeva	Do	Do	Do	Do
20.	Adhbhar Plates of Nannarāja	Do	Do	Bilaspur District	King referred as <i>Paramavaiṣṇava</i> , <i>Brāhmiṇ</i> named as Nārāyaṇopadhyaya
21.	Sirpur Stone Inscription of the Time of Mahāśivagupta	Do	Do	Raipur District	King referred as <i>Paramavaiṣṇava</i> , Viṣṇu referred as Hari, Acyuta, Puruṣottama, Nṛsimha, Trivikrama and Kamsanisudana. <i>Brāhmiṇs</i> named as <i>Viāmana</i> , Śrīdhara.
22.	Rajīm Stone Inscription of Vilāsatunga	Nala	Mid of 8 th century A.D.	Do	Viṣṇu referred as Varāha, Hari, Bali-śrīnihanta (Vāmana).
23.	Karitalai Stone Inscription of Lakṣmanarāja I	Kalacuri dynasty	840 A.D.	Jabalpur District	Upendra
24.	Bandhogarh Rock Inscription of Yuvarājadeva I'	Do		Rewa District	Fish, Tortoise, Varāha and Paraśurāma
25.	Gopalpur Inscription of Yuvarājadeva I'	Do		Do	Haladhara (Balarāma)
26.	Pathari Pillar Inscription of Parabala	Rāstrakūta dynasty	861 A.D.	Vidisha District	Śaurī, Murārī, Kṛṣṇa, Hari, Trivikrama, Śesa
27.	Karitalai Stone Inscription of Lakṣmanarāja II	Kalacuri dynasty		Jabalpur District	Vāmana, Varāha, Somasvāmīpura, Daitydruha, Dānavaresopyāya.
28.	Kalacuri Inscription from Karitalai	Do		Do	Viṣṇu-Lakṣmī and Somasvāmīpura.
29.	Two Inscriptions of Vaillabhattasvāmin Temple at Gwalior	Pratihāra dynasty	875 and 876 A.D.	Gwalior District	Viṣṇu, Madhujinihantu, Madhuripu, Murārī, Vaillabhattasvāmin, Lakṣmī. King is called as Ādivarāha.

S.No.	Inscriptions	Dynasty	Date	Find Spot	Form of Viṣṇu
30.	Gwalior <i>Praśasti</i> of Gurjara Pratihāra King Bhoja	Do	933 A.D.	Do	Rāma, Lakṣmana, Nārāyaṇa, Narakadviṣaḥ, Lakṣmī. King is called as Ādivarāha
31.	Stone Inscription of Yaśovarman	Candella dynasty	953 A.D.	Khajuraho District	Vaikunṭha, Varāha, Nṛsimha, Hari
32.	An inscription from Gyaraspur	Pratihāra dynasty	10 th century A.D.	Vidisha district	Jagannātha
33.	Śiyādonī Stone inscription	Do	903-966 A.D.	Lalitpur district	Viṣṇubhaṭṭāraka, Nārāyaṇabhaṭṭāraka, Murari, Vamanasvamīdeva, Tribhuvanasvāmīdeva, Cakrasvāmīdeva, Trivikrama. Merchants are named as Keśava, Govinda, Mādhava.
34.	Dharmapuri grant of Vākpatirājadeva	Paramāra dynasty	974-75A.D.	Dhar district	Viṣṇu is referred as Muraripu
35.	Udaipur <i>Praśasti</i> of Kings of Malwa	Do	Undated	Vidisha district	King is compared with Varāha
36.	Bargaon Stone Inscription of Śabara	Kalacuri dynasty		Jabalpur district	Viṣṇu is called as ŚankaraNārāyaṇa.
37.	Makandpur Stone Inscription of Gāngeyadeva	Do	1019A.D.	Rewa district	Viṣṇu is called as Jalaśāyīn.
38.	Amera Stone inscription of Naravarman	Paramāra dynasty	1094A.D.	Gwalior district	Reference of worship of <i>pāñcajanya</i> , the conch of Murārī and Nārāyaṇa.
39.	Narwar copper plate Inscription of Vīrasimhadeva	Kacchapa-ghāta dynasty	1120.A.D	Shivpuri district	Obienseance to Nārāyaṇa; king is described as <i>Paramavaiṣṇava</i> . Name of the <i>brāhmiṇ</i> donees are Govinda, Keśava, Rāma, Nṛsimha, Lakṣmana, Gopati, etc.
40.	Rajim Stone of Inscription of Prithvīdeva II	Kalacuris of Ratanpur	1145 A.D.	Raipur district	Viṣṇu is called as Rāma
41.	Inscription at Seorinarayan	Do	1146 A.D.	Bilaspur district	God is called as Seorinarayan.
42.	Kharod Stone of Inscription of Ratnadeva II	Do		Do	God is called as Śaurī.
43.	Mau Stone of Inscription of Madanavarman	Candella dynasty	12 th century A.D.	Jhansi district	Viṣṇu is called as Śrīvatsanga, Śrīdhara.

S.No.	Inscriptions	Dynasty	Date	Find Spot	Form of Viṣṇu
44.	Sāsbahu Temple of Mahipāla Inscription	Kacchapa-ghāta dynasty		Gwalior district	God is called as Padmanātha, Padmagarbha, Padmin. Reference of worship of Hari and Aniruddha.
45.	Inscription from Gwalior	Do		Do	It records the construction of the temple of Balarāma. Worship of Kṛṣṇa, Balarāma.
46.	Vidisha stone inscription of Trailokyavarman	Paramāra dynasty	1159 A.D.	Shivpuri district	Construction of the temple of Murāri in the form of Boar incarnation.
47.	Piplianagar copper Plate Inscription of Arjunavarman	Do	1211 A.D.	Shajapur district	Reference of Rāma. Donee is named as Govindaśarman.
48.	Rewa Plates of Trailokyamalladeva	Kalacuri dynasty	1212A.D.	Rewa district	Kṛṣṇa is called as Devakīnandana
49.	Sehore copper plate Inscription of Arjunavarman	Paramāra dynasty	1213 A.D.	Shajapur district	Donee is referred as Govindaśarman
50.	Harsaud Stone inscription of Devapāla	Do	1218A.D.	East Nimar district	Keśava constructed Śiva temple along with the image of Kṛṣṇa.
51.	Ramvan Museum Copper Plate Inscription of Trailokyavarman	Candella dynasty	1226A.D.	Nagod	Central part of the upper section of inscription is occupied by seated figure of Lakṣmī. Name of village as Vārāhi.
52.	Mandhata copper plate Inscription of Jayavarman	Paramāra dynasty	1260A.D.	Do	Brāhmins are named as Mādhavaśarman, Janārdana
53.	Ajayagarh Rock inscription of Viravarman	Candella dynasty	1261A.D.	Panna district	King is mentioned as Viṣṇu who lifted earth from the ocean of <i>Turuskas</i> .
54.	Mandhata copper Plate insvription of Jayavarman	Do	1274A.D.	Do	Invocation to Paraśurāma and Rāma along with Śiva. Names of the <i>brāhmin</i> donees are Padmaābha, Mādhava, Govardhana, Vāmana, Ananta, Hariśarman, Harideva, etc.
55.	Yajvapāla Stone Inscription from Narwar	Yajvapāla dynasty	Undated inscription	Shivpuri district	In invokes the blessings of Murāri. Name of the officials as Śyāma, Bhuvanapāla, Vāsudeva, Dāmodara.
56.	Fragmentary Stone Inscription from Mandu	Paramāra dynasty	Lost		Viṣṇu is eulogised in his forms of Matsya, Varāha, Nṛsimha and Kṛṣṇa. Reference of the construction of the temple of a deity, probably Viṣṇu.
57.	Khalari Stone Inscription of Haribrahmadeva	Kalacuri of Ratanpur	1415 A.D.	Raipur district	Construction of temple of Nārāyaṇa by a cobbler.

List of Vaisnava Temples and Sculptures from Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh (c.A.D.600-1300)

S. No.	Form of Viṣṇu	Date	Find Spot	Remarks
1.	Viṣṇu image	6 th century A.D.	Gwalior district	Disc and conch in left hands and club and <i>abhaya mudrā</i> with right hands
2.	Sculpture of Kūrmavatāra	6 th -7 th century A.D.	Rewa district	Scene of churning of the ocean by gods and demons.
3.	Colossal image of <i>Caturbhujā</i> Viṣṇu from Khaira	7 th century A.D.	Bhind district	Image is surrounded by ten incarnations of Viṣṇu.
4.	Lakṣmana Temple at Sirpur	8 th century A.D.	Raipur district	Lintel contains figure of Śeṣaśāyī Viṣṇu. Sanctum is empty. Other scenes included Rāmavatāra, Matsya <i>avatāra</i> , Bhūvarāha, Nṛsimha and Kṛṣṇalīlā scenes.
5.	Mahāvīra platform at Kāgpur	8 th century A.D.	Bhilsa district	Incarnations of Viṣṇu in a lintel.
6.	Rājīvalocana Temple	8 th -9 th century A.D.	Raipur District	<i>Pañcāyatana</i> Temple. Main temple is surrounded by the shrines of Badrīnātha, Vāmana, Varāha and Nṛsimha.
7.	Rāmacandra temple	Do	Do	<i>Garudāsīna</i> Viṣṇu, Nṛvarāha, Garuḍa.
8.	Viṣṇu Temple	Last quarter of the 8 th century A.D.	Morena district	<i>Lalātabimba</i> contains the image of Garuḍa and ten incarnations of Viṣṇu, while sanctum contains image of Śiva
9.	Varāha <i>avatāra</i>	8 th -9 th century A.D.	Gwalior district	Boar faced god, lifting Pṛthvī in left arm.
10.	Sculptures at Lotkhedi	8 th -9 th century A.D.	Mandasor district	
11.	Viṣṇu temple at Lotkhedi	9 th century A.D.	Do	
12.	Sun temple at Umri	Early 9 th century A.D.	Tikamgarh District	Images of Varāha, Kṛṣṇa and Nṛsimha
13.	Cāmunda Temple at Mahua	Do	Shivpuri District	Four armed Nṛsimha
14.	Śiva Temple at Terahi	Do	Do	<i>Lalātabimba</i> dedicated to Viṣṇu
15.	Jarai Math at Barwasagar	Middle of 9 th century A.D.	Jhansi District	Temple dedicated to a god or a group of goddesses but the <i>Lalātabimba</i> contains image of Viṣṇu. Among other images Nṛsimha is important.
16.	Vāmana <i>avatāra</i> at Suhaniya	9 th century A.D.	Morena district	
17.	Śiva Temple at Pathari	861 A.D.	Vidisha District	The temple is occupied by a large no. of Śivaliṅgas, but the sanctum is empty. Door lintel contains the image of Viṣṇu.

S. No.	Form of Viṣṇu	Date	Find Spot	Remarks
18.	Gadarmal temple at Badoh	9 th -10 th century A.D.	Do	Śiva temple containing the images of Vāmana, Nṛsimha and <i>Garudāsīna</i> Viṣṇu.
19.	Daśāvatāra temple at Pathari	Do	Do	Group of temples dedicated to different incarnations of Viṣṇu.
20.	Viṣṇu <i>Caumukha</i> image	Do	Gwalior district	It contains four incarnations of Viṣṇu, Varāha, Trivikrama, Nṛsimha and <i>Garudāsīna</i> Viṣṇu.
21.	Vāmana	Do	Do	
22.	Rāma	Do	Do	
23.	Sun temple at Sesai	Pratihāra period	Shivpuri district	It contains <i>Daśāvatāras</i> of Viṣṇu- Matsya, Kūrma, Varāha, Nṛsimha, Vāmana, Rāma, Paraśurāma, Kṛṣṇa, Balarāma and Kalki.
24.	Sun temple at Markhera	9 th century A.D.	Tikamgarh district	It contains images of Varāha, Kṛṣṇa, Nṛsimha, Vāmana, Balarāma and Paraśurāma.
25.	Caturbhujā temple	875-76 A.D.	Gwalior district	Images of Viṣṇu, Varāha, Trivikrama, Rāma, Kalki, Buddha, Kṛṣṇa <i>avatāra</i> scenes.
26.	Caturbhujā Viṣṇu from Ranod	9 th century A.D.	Shivpuri district	Holding <i>śankha</i> , <i>cakra</i> , <i>gadā</i> and <i>varada mudrā</i> .
27.	Varāha temple at Khajuraho	Do	Chhatarpur district	It contains images of gods and goddesses whole over the body. God in the form of anthropomorphic Varāha.
28.	Viṣṇu temple at Gyaraspur	10 th century A.D.	Vidisha district	A bust of Trimūrti. Temple now occupied by Jaina sculptures.
29.	Hindolā <i>torana</i> at Gyaraspur	9 th -10 th century A.D.	Do	Twenty-four forms of Viṣṇu and a fragment of the figure of Viṣṇu.
30.	<i>Gajendramoksa</i> scene from Padhawali	10 th century A.D.	Morena district	Viṣṇu rescuing elephant from the clutches of the crocodile.
31.	<i>Caturbhujā</i> Viṣṇu from Padhawali	Do	Do	
32.	Balarāma from Padhawali	9 th -10 th century A.D.	Do	Image holding a cup in his hand.
33.	Viṣṇu temple at Barakalan		Do	Now totally in ruins.
34.	Viṣṇu temple at Śtyādonī	903-68 A.D.	Lalitpur district	Ruined temple. A no. of sculptures in the nearby village.
35.	Vāmana image from Siron Khurd	Do	Do	Encircled by incarnations of Viṣṇu.
36.	<i>Padmāsana</i> Viṣṇu from Siron Khird	10 th century A.D.	Do	God is in yogic posture.

S. No.	Form of Viṣṇu	Date	Find Spot	Remarks
37.	Trivikrama from Siron Khurd	Do	Do	-
38.	Śeṣaśāyī Viṣṇu from Banpur	Do	Do	-
39.	Viśvarupa Viṣṇu from Tumain	Pratihāra period	Guna district	-
40.	Viṣṇu-Lakṣmī from Indore	9 th -10 th century A.D.	Do	-
41.	Dharmanath temple from Dhamnar		Mandasor district	It contains figures of Nārāyaṇa, Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa, Anantaśāyī Viṣṇu and <i>Daśāvatāras</i> of Viṣṇu.
42.	Sculptures in Beta and Lahukhedī	Pratihāra period	Bhopal district	Umā-Maheśvara, Brahmā, Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa, etc.
43.	<i>Caturbhujā</i> Viṣṇu from Ranod	First half of 10 th century A.D.	Shahdol district	
44.	Ādivarāha from Bandhogarh	Do	Do	
45.	Kūrma <i>avatāra</i> from Bandhogarh	Do	Do	
46.	<i>Garudāsīna</i> sculpture from Karitalai	10 th century A.D.	Katni district	
47.	<i>Caturbhujā</i> Viṣṇu from Karitalai	Do	Do	
48.	Vāmana from Karitalai	Do	Do	
49.	Lakṣmana temple at Khajuraho	953-54 A.D.	Chhatarpur district	Vaikunṭha image of Viṣṇu containing <i>saumya</i> face flanked by Varāha and Nṛsimha face. Other images include incarnations of Viṣṇu, Kṛṣṇalīlā scenes, Gajalakṣmī, <i>Viśvarupa</i> Viṣṇu, Hayagrīva, <i>Yogāsana</i> Viṣṇu, etc.
50.	<i>Caturbhujā</i> Viṣṇu (Vidisha Museum, Acc. No. 12)	10 th -11 th century A.D.	Ramlila Maidan, Vidisha	God carrying <i>cakra</i> , <i>gadā</i> , <i>padma</i> and <i>śankha</i> in left lower, left upper, right upper and right lower hands respectively. God is flanked by Śāṅkhapuruṣa and Cakrapuruṣa respectively. Sūrya above flanked by Śiva and Brahmā.
51.	<i>Caturbhujā</i> Viṣṇu (Vidisha Museum, Acc. No. 15/16)	10 th -11 th century A.D.	Vidisha	All hands missing; Brahmā and Śiva one two sides; Śāṅkhapuruṣa and Cakrapuruṣa on two sides; wearing <i>kīrtānakuta</i> .
52.	Viṣṇu (Vidisha Museum, Acc. No.)	10 th -11 th century A.D.	Vidisha	
53.	Varāha (Vidisha Museum, Acc. No.)	10 th -11 th century A.D.	Vidisha	Only torso.

S. No.	Form of Viṣṇu	Date	Find Spot	Remarks
54.	Trideva (Bhopal Museum Acc.No.)	10 th -11 th century A.D.	Bhatnavar, Shivpuri district	Viṣṇu in middle, Brahmā and Śiva on two sides; four handed Viṣṇu carrying <i>gadā</i> , rest missing; Śiva sitting on Nandī, four handed, one hand carrying <i>kamaṇḍala</i> , rest missing; Brahmā sitting on <i>kamāla</i> , one hand in <i>varada mudrā</i> , others missing, three faces of Brahmā. This may be the beam of the temple.
55.	Harihara (Bhopal Museum Acc.No.1293)	10 th -11 th century A.D.	Mandasor	God wearing <i>kirīta</i> and <i>karaṇḍa mukuṭa</i> ; carrying <i>cakra</i> , <i>śaṅkha</i> , <i>trīśūla</i> and <i>abhaya mudrā</i> in left lower, left upper, right upper and right lower hands respectively; sober and simple image of god wearing sacred thread and <i>vaijayantīmāla</i> .
56.	<i>Garudāsīna</i> Viṣṇu (Bhopal Museum Acc.No.)	10 th -11 th century A.D.	Shivpuri district	Viṣṇu sitting on flying Garuḍa; wearing <i>kirīta mukuṭa</i> , <i>vaijayantīmālā</i> and <i>svastika</i> mark; carrying <i>cakra</i> , <i>gadā</i> , <i>śaṅkha</i> and <i>varada mudrā</i> in left upper, right upper, left lower and right lower hands respectively.
57.	<i>Garudāsīna</i> Viṣṇu (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.367)	11 th century A.D.	Chandpur, Lalitpur district	Door lintel contains various figures Brahmā, <i>Garudāsīna</i> Viṣṇu and Śiva; also a panel of <i>Navagrahas</i> ; to right of Brahmā Ganeśa is depicted.
58.	Nṛsiṃha image from Karitalai	11 th century A.D.	Jabalpur district	God tearing the belly of the demon.
59.	Do	Do	Do	Ferocious image.
60.	Trivikrama image from Karitalai	12 th century A. D.	Jabalpur district	Left upper hand carrying <i>gadā</i> . Others missing
61.	<i>Caturbhujā</i> Viṣṇu from Karitalai	11 th century A.D.	Jabalpur district	<i>Cakra</i> in left upper hand, right lower hand in <i>abhaya mudrā</i>
62.	Trivikrama from Karitalai	No date	Jabalpur district	Crude mage, carrying <i>śaṅkha</i> , <i>cakra</i> , <i>gadā</i> and <i>varada mudrā</i> .
63.	YajñaNārāyaṇa from Karitalai	11 th century A.D.	Jabalpur district	Lower hands in <i>yoga mudrā</i> , others missing.
64.	Vaisnavī from Karitalai	No date	Jabalpur district	-
65.	Garuḍa Nārāyaṇa from Karitalai	No date	Jabalpur district	-
66.	<i>Caturbhujā</i> Viṣṇu from Karitalai	No date	Jabalpur district	-

S. No.	Form of Viṣṇu	Date	Find Spot	Remarks
67.	Viṣṇu-Varāha temple from Karitalai		Jabalpur district	It contains the boar incarnation of Viṣṇu. An image of Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa in the compound of the temple.
68.	Kṛṣṇa <i>janma</i> (Bhopal Museum, Acc.No.21)	11 th century A.D.	Hinglajgarh, Mandasor	Devakī giving birth to Kṛṣṇa; Brahmā carrying the child; Śiva on right side; navanidhi below depicted; above <i>Dikpālas</i> depicted.
69.	Kṛṣṇa <i>Janma</i> (Bhopal Museum, Acc.No.)	11 th century A.D.	Shahdol	Devakī giving birth to Kṛṣṇa; <i>Vāsuki</i> protecting the child; other gods and <i>dvārapālas</i> are shown.
70.	Vāmana (Bhopal Museum, Acc.No.)	11 th century A.D.	Semariya, Shahdol	Four handed god carrying <i>gadā</i> and <i>varada mudrā</i> in right upper and right lower hands; other hands missing; below Śāṅkhapuruṣa and Cakrapuruṣa and <i>caurī</i> bearers; above two garland bearers; god having locks on head; wearing <i>vaijayantīmāl</i> and sacred thread.
71.	Harihara (Bhopal Museum, Acc.No.585)	11 th century A.D.	Mandasor	Four handed image wearing <i>triśūla</i> , <i>cakra</i> and <i>varada mudrā</i> ; one hand is missing; one Śaiva <i>gana</i> on the side of Śiva and <i>Cakrapurusa</i> on Viṣṇu's side; <i>Nṛsimha avatāra</i> and two female figures on the side of Viṣṇu; <i>Ganeśa</i> and female figure carrying coconut on the side of Śiva.
72.	Harihara (Bhopal Museum, Acc.No.)	11 th century A.D.	Hinglajgarh, Mandasor	Four handed god wearing <i>kīṛita mukuṭa</i> , <i>vaijayantīmālā</i> , sacred thread; all hands missing; Viṣṇu above, Brahmā and Śiva in two temples; on Viṣṇu side Śāṅkhapuruṣa and two female figures; above incarnations of Viṣṇu- Paraśurāma, Balarāma, rest not identified; Nandī on the side of Śiva.
73.	Vāmana (Bhopal Museum, Acc.No.)	11 th century A.D.	Hinglajgarh, Mandasor	Four handed god; two missing; right lower in <i>varada mudrā</i> and left lower carrying <i>śāṅkha</i> ; god wearing sacred thread, <i>vaijayantīmālā</i> ; goddess below the god; <i>caurī</i> bearers and devotees on two sides; incarnations of Paraśurāma, Kalki shown; two <i>dvārapālas</i> on two sides.

S. No.	Form of Viṣṇu	Date	Find Spot	Remarks
74.	Nṛsimha (Bhopal Museum, Acc.No.)	11 th century A.D.	Hinglajgarh, Mandasor	Four handed god tearing the belly of demon; god wearing <i>karaṇḍa mukuṭa</i> .
75.	Trivikrama (Bhopal Museum, Acc.No.139)	11 th century A.D.	Ghusai, Mandasor	Eight handed image carrying shield, <i>cakra</i> , sword, bow, conch shell and something not identifiable; foot of god touching the face of Rāhu; below towards left are depicted Bali, Śukrācārya and Vāmana; god wearing <i>kiriṭa mukuṭa</i> , <i>vaijayantīmālā</i> and sacred thread.
76.	Nṛsimha (Bhopal Museum, Acc.No.137)	11 th century A.D.	Padhavali, Morena	Four handed image of god tearing the belly of demon; upper two hands carrying <i>śaṅkha</i> and <i>abhaya mudrā</i> with left upper and right upper hands respectively; god wearing sacred thread, <i>vaijayantīmālā</i> and <i>svastika</i> mark.
77.	GajaLakṣmī (Bhopal Museum, Acc.No.137)	11 th century A.D.	Jabalpur	Sitting posture; two elephants pouring water on her; carrying two weapons in upper two hands; one female figure on the left of Lakṣmī.
78.	Viṣṇu (Vidisha Museum, Acc.No.)	11 th century A.D.	Vidisha	<i>Caturbhujā</i> Viṣṇu carrying <i>cakra</i> and <i>śaṅkha</i> in left upper and right upper hands respectively; other hands are missing; god flanked by Śaṅkhapuruṣa and Cakrapuruṣa. Brahmā and Viṣṇu on two sides above.
79.	Śeṣaśāyī Viṣṇu (Vidisha Museum, Acc. No. 29)	11 th century A.D.	Vidisha	Four handed god carrying <i>cakra</i> , <i>śaṅkha</i> and <i>gadā</i> in right upper, left lower and right lower hands respectively. One hand is below head. <i>Navagrahas</i> above.
80.	Vāmana (Vidisha Museum, Acc.No.)	11 th century A.D.	Hinglajgarh, Mandasor	Four handed god; all missing; wearing sacred thread, <i>vaijayantīmālā</i> and <i>svastika</i> mark; Śaṅkhapuruṣa on one side; Viṣṇu above flanked by Brahmā and Śiva on two sides; one probable image of Varāha on right upper side; other images missing.
81.	Vāmana (Vidisha Museum, Acc. No. 25)	11 th century A.D.	Vijainagar, Vidisha	Part of a pillar.

S. No.	Form of Viṣṇu	Date	Find Spot	Remarks
82.	Varāha (Archaeological Museum, Gwalior Fort, Acc. 5)	11 th century A.D.	Suhaniya, Morena district	Standing posture; human body, boar faced; holding earth goddess by his snout under a lotus canopy; god bearing <i>śaṅkha</i> , <i>cakra</i> and <i>gadā</i> in his left lower, left upper and right upper hand respectively; his lower right hand rests on his thigh; <i>apsaras</i> on either side of the god- dexter side holding leaf letter and sinister side holding lotus.
83.	Viṣṇu (Archaeological Museum, Gwalior Fort, Acc. 7)	11 th century A.D.	Suhaniya, Morena district	Seated in <i>lalitāsana</i> on Garuḍa; holding <i>śaṅkha</i> and <i>cakra</i> in left lower and left upper hands respectively; right hands broken; on either side of the pilaster were female attendants holding lotus stalk and crocodile in ascending order. Now the remnants of female attendants of the dexter side, all three on sinister side are left.
84.	Nṛsimha (Archaeological Museum, Gwalior Fort, Acc. 8)	11 th century A.D.	Suhaniya, Morena district	Lion faced god tearing the belly of demon with lower hands; other hands are missing; male and female devotees holding <i>kamaṇḍala</i> and <i>mālā</i> respectively.
85.	Nṛsimha (Archaeological Museum, Gwalior Fort, Acc. 9)	11 th century A.D.	Suhaniya, Morena district	Standing posture; manlion form killing the demon with his lower hands; flanked by two <i>apsaras</i> on either side; god wearing <i>karāṇḍamukuta</i> .
86.	Viṣṇu (Archaeological Museum, Gwalior Fort, Acc. 10)	11 th century A.D.	Suhaniya, Morena district	Standing posture; god wearing <i>karāṇḍa mukuta</i> ; holding <i>śaṅkha</i> , <i>cakra</i> , <i>gadā</i> and <i>padma</i> in right upper, right lower, left upper and left upper hands respectively. In lower part flanked by Śaṅkhapuruṣa and Cakrapuruṣa on his right and left respectively. <i>Caurī</i> bearers and crocodile and <i>vyālas</i> on both side of god.
87.	Viṣṇu (Archaeological Museum, Gwalior Fort, Acc. 20)	11 th century A.D.	Suhaniya, Morena district	<i>Caturbhujā</i> Viṣṇu in standing posture, holding <i>śaṅkha</i> , <i>cakra</i> , <i>gadā</i> and <i>padma</i> in right upper, left lower, right lower and left upper hands respectively; deity is flanked by Śaṅkhapuruṣa and Cakrapuruṣa towards his left and right; wearing <i>karāṇḍa mukuta</i> .

S. No.	Form of Viṣṇu	Date	Find Spot	Remarks
88.	Varāha (Archaeological Museum, Gwalior Fort, Acc. 28)	11 th century A.D.	Suhaniya, Morena district	Anthropomorphic form of Varāha holding earth in his left upper hand; holding <i>śaṅkha</i> , <i>cakra</i> and <i>gadā</i> in left lower, right upper and right lower hands respectively. His left leg is raised and resting on a <i>padmapīṭha</i> .
89.	Nṛsimha (Archaeological Museum, Gwalior Fort, Acc. 29)	11 th century A.D.	Suhaniya, Morena district	Same as described above found from this place.
90.	Nṛsimha (Archaeological Museum, Gwalior Fort, Acc. 30)	11 th century A.D.	Suhaniya, Morena district	Same as described above found from this place.
91.	Viṣṇu (Archaeological Museum, Gwalior Fort, Acc. 31)	11 th century A.D.	Suhaniya, Morena district	<i>Caturbhuja</i> Viṣṇu carrying <i>śaṅkha</i> in left lower hand; other hands missing; standing posture; flanked by Śaṅkharuṣa and Cakrapuruṣa towards left and right respectively.
92.	<i>Trailokyavijaya</i> or <i>Trivikrama</i> (Archaeological Museum, Gwalior Fort, Acc. 35)	11 th century A.D.	Suhaniya, Morena district	Only torso of the god survived; scaling the surrendered body of Bali who is kneeling upside down. Viṣṇu is flanked by male and female devotees on either side.
93.	Viṣṇu (Gujari Mahal Museum, Gwalior, Acc. No. 772)	11 th century A.D.	Mehgaon police station, Bhind district	Viṣṇu in three parts.
94.	Standing Viṣṇu (Gujari Mahal Museum, Gwalior, Acc. No. 134)	11 th century A.D.	Gwalior Fort	Sand stone image. Standing on a lotus. Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva are shown above. Images of <i>gandharvas</i> ; <i>nāgadevas</i> below the seat. Incarnations clockwise from left Buddha, Paraśurāma, Vāmana, Varāha, Matsya, Kūrma, Nṛsimha, Rāma, Balarāma and Kalki.
95.	Varāha (Gujari Mahal Museum, Gwalior, Acc. No. 136)	11 th century A.D.	Suhaniya, Morena district	Standing boar faced god; lifting earth goddess on his left arm; trampling the demon under foot; carrying danda, disc and conch in right upper, left upper and right lower hands respectively; two attendants on either side of god.
96.	Nṛsimha (Gujari Mahal Museum, Gwalior, Acc. No. 137)	11 th century A.D.	Padhavali, Morena district	Sand stone image. Human figure with lion face; conch in upper left hand, the upper right hand in <i>abhaya mudrā</i> ; tearing the belly of the demon placed on his thigh.

S. No.	Form of Viṣṇu	Date	Find Spot	Remarks
97.	Nṛsimha (Govt. Museum Jhansi, Acc.No.81.17)	11 th century A.D.	Siron Khurd, Lalitpur	Manlion form tearing the belly of demon; god standing between two pillars; above two garland bearers.
98.	Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Navagrahas (Govt. Museum Jhansi, Acc.No.81.181)		Siron Khurd, Lalitpur	On a lintel broken from right side; Viṣṇu on Garuḍa in middle carrying <i>gadā</i> , <i>abhaya mudrā</i> , <i>cakra</i> and <i>śankha</i> in left upper, left lower, right upper and right lower hands respectively, surrounded by Navagrahas; Brahmā on his vehicle; above Mātrkā figures; Virabhadra on left and Ganeśa on right; below <i>vidyādhara</i> s are depicted.
99.	Viṣṇu with Sūrya and Navagrahas (Govt. Museum Jhansi, Acc.No.81.198)	11 th century A.D.	Siron Khurd, Lalitpur	Sūrya towards left and Viṣṇu towards right, Navagrahas in between; Kārttikeya towards left of Viṣṇu on peacock; Viṣṇu carrying <i>gadā</i> , <i>varada mudrā</i> and <i>cakra</i> in right upper, right lower and left upper hands, one hand is missing. It may be a part of Sūrya temple showing Sūrya in middle and left side is missing.
100.	Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva in a lintel (Govt. Museum Jhansi, Acc.No.81.199)	11 th century A.D.	Siron Khurd, Lalitpur	Viṣṇu-Lakṣmī in middle sitting on flying Garuḍa, carrying <i>śankha</i> with right lower hand holding Lakṣmī with left lower hand, others missing, Lakṣmī holding lotus stalk; Śiva-Pārvatī on Nandi on right of Viṣṇu; Brahmā-Sarasvatī on left of Viṣṇu on <i>hamsa</i> ; sculpture surrounded by Saptarṣis, Navagrahas and other flying figures; Mātrkā figures above.
101.	<i>Garuḍāsīna</i> Viṣṇu (Govt. Museum Jhansi, Acc.No.81.199)	11 th century A.D.	Siron Khurd, Lalitpur	Four armed god carrying <i>gadā</i> , <i>abhaya mudrā</i> , <i>cakra</i> and <i>śankha</i> in right upper, right lower, left upper and left lower hands respectively; Garuḍa in flying posture, supporting right and left leg of Viṣṇu.
102.	Vaiṣṇavī (Bhopal Museum, Acc.No.)	11 th century A.D.	Dhubela	Eight handed image carrying various weapons- <i>cakra</i> , sword, <i>gadā</i> ; wearing <i>kīriṭa mukuṭa</i> , <i>vaijayantīmālā</i> and other ornaments; sitting on Garuḍa.

S. No.	Form of Viṣṇu	Date	Find Spot	Remarks
103.	Vaiṣṇavī (Bhopal Museum, Acc.No.)	11 th -12 th century A.D.	Shivpuri district	Four handed goddess carrying <i>śankha</i> , <i>cakra</i> , <i>gadā</i> and <i>padma</i> in left lower, left upper, right upper and right lower hands respectively; Gadādevī and Kamaladevī on two sides besides two devotees and two female figures; goddess wearing <i>vaijyantimālā</i> and <i>kīriṭa mukuṭa</i> .
104.	Trivikrama (Gujari Mahal Museum, Gwalior, Acc. No. 139)	11 th -12 th century A.D.	Ghusai, Mandasor	Sand stone image. The eight handed God shown with an umbrella; carrying sword, disc, shield, bow conch etc.; the story of Bali is shown here. Vāmana, Bali and Śukrācārya are also depicted.
105.	Rāma-Sitā (Gujari Mahal Museum, Gwalior, Acc. No. 140)	11 th -12 th century A.D.	Suhaniya, Morena district	Sand stone image. Both stand together facing each other. Rāma holds bow and arrow in left and right hands. Sitā in his left arm.
106.	Balarāma (Gujari Mahal Museum, Gwalior, Acc. No. 141)	11 th -12 th century A.D.	Padhavali, Morena district	Stands with a drinking pot in his right hand. Two female standing on either side; the coil of serpent shown at the back with hood.
107.	Yoga Viṣṇu (Gujari Mahal Museum, Gwalior, Acc. No. 142)	11 th -12 th century A.D.	Sunari, Vidisha	<i>Caturbhujā</i> god seated in <i>dhyāna mudrā</i> ; above is shown Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva; incarnations clockwise from left Kalki, Balarāma, Rāma, Paraśurāma; god wearing <i>kīriṭa mukuṭa</i> , <i>svastika</i> and <i>vanamālā</i> .
108.	<i>Viśvarūpa</i> Viṣṇu (Gujari Mahal Museum, Gwalior, Acc. No. 143)	11 th -12 th century A.D.	Suhaniya, Morena district	Sand stone image; standing on a lotus; ten hands – four of the right hands carrying disc, conch, lotus and club; staff in his left hand; image has four faces- front face is that of Viṣṇu, others are Matsya, Kūrma, Varāha and Nṛsimha incarnations; six attendants on both sides- two seated and four standing.
109.	Viṣṇu on Garuḍa (Gujari Mahal Museum, Gwalior, Acc. No. 144)	11 th -12 th century A.D.	Vidisha	All hands broken. Halo behind head. Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva seated on the exterior. <i>Svastika</i> prominently shown.

S. No.	Form of Viṣṇu	Date	Find Spot	Remarks
110.	Standing Viṣṇu (Gujari Mahal Museum, Gwalior, Acc. No. 145)	11 th -12 th century A.D.	Gwalior fort (Padhavali, Morena)	Viṣṇu standing on lotus. Right lower, right upper, left upper and left lower hands carrying <i>gadā</i> , <i>cakra</i> , conch (broken) and <i>abhaya mudrā</i> respectively. The image is surrounded by the <i>avatāras</i> clockwise from right of god Buddha, Rāma, Varāha, Kūrma, Nṛsimha, Paraśurāma, Balarāma and Kalki. <i>Nāga</i> images are shown below the image.
111.	Vārāhī (Gujari Mahal Museum, Gwalior, Acc. No. 148)	11 th -12 th century A.D.	Badoh (Vidisha)	Sand atone image. Only bust. A crown on head.
112.	Lakṣmī (Gujari Mahal Museum, Gwalior, Acc. No. 149)	11 th -12 th century A.D.	Gandhermal, Devas	Seated on Garuḍa, holds a club in upper right hand.
113.	Harihara (Gujari Mahal Museum, Gwalior, Acc. No. 150)	11 th -12 th century A.D.	Ghusai (Mandasor)	Stands on a circular seat with atrident and a serpent in right hand and the disc in upper left hand. Brahmā and Śiva on the exterior on both sides of the sculpture.
114.	Vāmana (Gujari Mahal Museum, Gwalior, Acc. No. 152)	11 th -12 th century A.D.	Nader, Shivapuri	Conch and disc in left hands; and club and lotus in right hands.
115.	Vārāhī (Gujari Mahal Museum, Gwalior, Acc. No. 153)	11 th -12 th century A.D.	Badoh (Vidisha)	Sand atone image. Only bust.
116.	Nṛsimha (Gujari Mahal Museum, Gwalior, Acc. No. 154)	11 th -12 th century A.D.	Suhania, Morena	Lion faced god tearing the demon in lap. The god is seated on the stamp of the pillar from where it appeared. On the exterior sides are crocodile faces and giraffes.
117.	Varāha (Gujari Mahal Museum, Gwalior, Acc. No. 108)	11 th -12 th century A.D.	Badoh, Vidisha	Sand stone image.
118.	Hanumān (Gujari Mahal Museum, Gwalior, Acc. No. 111)	11 th -12 th century A.D.	Padhavali, Morena	Sand stone image.
119.	Viṣṇu (Gujari Mahal Museum, Gwalior, Acc. No. 105)	11 th -12 th century A.D.	Padhavali, Morena	Standing god; hands broken; wears ornamented necklace and general thread girdle and a belt. Feet broken.
120.	Lakṣmī Nārāyaṇa (Gujari Mahal Museum, Gwalior, Acc. No. 100)	11 th -12 th century A.D.	Badoh, Vidisha	Sand stone image. On Garuḍa. Lakṣmī on left lap of Viṣṇu. Viṣṇu has lotus, disc in left hands; right hands broken.
121.	Viṣṇu (Gujari Mahal Museum, Gwalior, Acc. No. 303)	12 th century A.D.		Standing image.

S. No.	Form of Viṣṇu	Date	Find Spot	Remarks
122.	Viṣṇu (Gujari Mahal Museum, Gwalior, Acc. No. 304)	12 th century A.D.		Standing image.
123.	Lakṣmī on Garuḍa (Gujari Mahal Museum, Gwalior, Acc. No. 305)	12 th century A.D.		Sand stone image.
124.	Balarāma (Gujari Mahal Museum, Gwalior, Acc. No. 395 in store)	12 th century A.D.	Unknown	Sand stone image.
125.	Viṣṇu (Gujari Mahal Museum, Gwalior, Acc. No. 431)	12 th century A.D.		Red sand stone image. Four armed Viṣṇu standing in a niche. Male and female attendants on right and left of the god.
126.	Nṛsimha (Gujari Mahal Museum, Gwalior, Acc. No. 486)	12 th century A.D.		A unique image of Nṛsimha embracing Śakti. The god holding conch in left upper hand. Right upper hand in <i>abhaya mudrā</i> . Other hands missing; probably embracing Śakti. Image in deep niche.
127.	Kūrmāvatāra (Gujari Mahal Museum, Gwalior, Acc. No. 491)	12 th century A.D.		Sand stone image.
128.	Viṣṇu (Gujari Mahal Museum, Gwalior, Acc. No. 684)	12 th century A.D.	Gwalior Fort	Red sand stone image. Standing Viṣṇu.
129.	Śeṣaśāyī Viṣṇu (Gujari Mahal Museum, Gwalior, Acc. No. 774)	12 th century A.D.	Dabra police station, Gwalior Fort	
130.	Vāmana (Gujari Mahal Museum, Gwalior, Acc. No. 138)	12 th century A.D.	Narwar, Shivapuri district	Sand stone image. God stands on a pedestal resting on three devotees. Two figures on either side carrying conch, disc and club in three hands; fourth hand in <i>varada mudrā</i> . God is four handed carrying <i>danda</i> , disc and conch in left upper, right upper and right lower hands respectively; left lower hand in <i>abhaya mudrā</i> . There are two circles of incarnations round the image. First circle consists of Buddha, Varāha, and Nṛsimha clockwise. The second circle consists of Paraśurāma, Trivikrama, Matsya, Kūrma, Rāma and Balarāma. Kalki near foot. Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva shown above the image.

S. No.	Form of Viṣṇu	Date	Find Spot	Remarks
131.	Nṛvarāha (Govt. Museum Jhansi, Acc.No.85.41)	12 th century A.D.	Banpur, Lalitpur district	Four handed god carrying <i>gadā</i> , <i>cakra</i> and <i>śankha</i> in right upper, left upper and left lower hands respectively; right lower hand on the thigh; Pṛthvī in female form on the left elbow of god; god suppressing two <i>nāga</i> figures with his left leg; one headless figure in left upper part of sculpture.
132.	Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa from Tewar	Late Kalacuri period	Jabalpur district	The image is surmounted by images of Nṛvarāha and <i>Sthānu</i> Nṛsimha.
133.	Keśava Nārāyaṇa temple at Amarkantak	12 th century A.D.		Image of Govinda surrounded by the other incarnations of Viṣṇu- Paraśurāma, Kalki, Balarāma, Rāma, Nṛvarāha, Kūrma, Matsya, etc.
134.	Yoga Viṣṇu from thakur of Sohagpur	Kalacuri period		Image is surrounded by the incarnations of Viṣṇu. Pṛthvī is shown sitting on Kūrma in <i>añjalihasta mudrā</i> .
135.	Śeśāyī Viṣṇu from Sohagpur	Kalacuri period		
136.	Kṛṣṇa- <i>līlā</i> scene from Sohagpur	Kalacuri period		Aristāsura- <i>vadha</i> , Śakaṭa- <i>vadha</i> , Pūtanā- <i>vadha</i> , birth of Kṛṣṇa, Kāliyānāga episode, <i>Govardhanadhārana</i> , etc.
137.	Kṛṣṇa <i>janma</i> scene	First quarter of 11 th century A.D.	Shahdol district	Lakṣmī is shown serving Devakī by holding her right leg. Devakī and Kṛṣṇa on the coils of <i>Ananta</i> . <i>śankha</i> , <i>cakra</i> are supporting the munca.
138.	Śeśāyī Viṣṇu	Kalacuri period	Shahdol district	God holding <i>śankha-cakra</i> . Goddess Lakṣmī massaging the feet of god.
139.	<i>Sthānu</i> Nṛsimha from Antara village	9 th century A.D.	Shahdol district	God tearing the belly of the demon.
140.	Two images of Vāmana <i>avatāra</i>	Kalacuri period	Chhatarpur district museum	God holding <i>gadā</i> , <i>cakra</i> , <i>padma</i> and <i>varada mudrā</i> . Image surrounded by incarnations of Viṣṇu.
141.	Nṛsimha image	Kalacuri period	Chhatarpur district museum	
142.	Nṛvarāha from Gurh	Kalacuri period	Rewa district	Earth goddess on the left shoulder of Viṣṇu.
143.	<i>Sthānu</i> Nṛsimha from Gurh	Kalacuri period	Rewa district	Two hand carrying <i>śankha</i> and <i>cakra</i> . Other two hands tearing the belly of demon.
144.	Kṛṣṇa- <i>līlā</i> scenes from gurh	Kalacuri period	Rewa district	<i>Pūtanā-vadha</i> , <i>Kubjāgraha</i> , Balarāma-Kṛṣṇa going Mathura, <i>Kāliyādamana</i> , etc.

S. No.	Form of Viṣṇu	Date	Find Spot	Remarks
145.	Form of Viṣṇu	Date	Find Spot	Remarks
146.	Kṛṣṇa-līlā scenes from gurbh	Kalacuri period	Rewa district	-
147.	Śeṣaśāyī image from Marai	Kalacuri period	Rewa district	God sleeping on Ananta, images of Bhūdevī and Lakṣmī; mutilated figures of Madhu and Kaitabha.
148.	Four images of Viṣṇu from Marai	Kalacuri period	Rewa district	Each having lotus, wheel, mace, conch. Pillar contains ten incarnations of Viṣṇu.
149.	Kṛṣṇa birth legend on a śīlapatta from Gurgi	11 th century A.D.	Rewa district	Devakī fondling baby Kṛṣṇa asleep.
150.	Śeṣaśāyī Viṣṇu	Kalacuri period	Rewa district	God holding <i>cakra</i> and <i>śaṅkha</i> . Images of Kūrma, Matsya, Kalkin and Buddha behind the canopy.
151.	Deur Śiva temple at Gandai	Kalacuri period	Rajnandgaon district	It contains images of Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa on Garuḍa, Rāma, Balarāma, Varāha, Kṛṣṇa, Nṛsimha, Hanumāna, Rāmalīlā and Kṛṣṇalīlā scenes.
152.	Śeṣaśāyī Viṣṇu from Dhamtari	13 th century A.D.	Raipur district	God carrying <i>śaṅkha</i> , <i>cakra</i> , <i>gadā</i> and <i>kamala</i> . Kalki, Balarāma, Nṛsimha depicted above the image.
153.	Janjgir temple		Bilaspur district	Incomplete temple. It contains the images of Varāha, Nṛsimha, Sūrya. Trinity above the doorway.
154.	Two Viṣṇu temples along with a Śiva temple at Bhadana	Kalacuri period	Lalitpur district	-
155.	Jhammar temple at Chandpur	Kalacuri period	Lalitpur district	Dedicated to Viṣṇu
156.	Ruined Viṣṇu temples at Chandpur	12 th century	Lalitpur district	Mostly dedicated to Viṣṇu.
157.	Group of ruined temples at Chandpur	1150A.D.	Lalitpur district	Dedicated to Varāha
158.	Shrine containing Varāha incarnation from Dudhai	Kalacuri period	Lalitpur district	God under four-pillerd canopy.
159.	<i>Catubhuja</i> Nṛsimha from Dudhai	Kalacuri period	Lalitpur district	Rock cut sculpture. God slaying Hiranyakaśipu.
160.	Varāha from Dudhai	Kalacuri period	Lalitpur district	-
161.	Two Varāha shrines at Dudhai	Kalacuri period	Lalitpur district	-
162.	Viṣṇu temple at Gurha	Kalacuri period	Jhansi district	It contains a shrine and a porch.
163.	Sāsbaḥu temple	Kacchapaghāta period	Gwalior district	Temple dedicated to Viṣṇu under the name of <i>Padmanābhīn</i> .

S. No.	Form of Viṣṇu	Date	Find Spot	Remarks
164.	Balarāma image from Mithaoli	1 st century B.C.	Morena district	Life size image of the god.
165.	Ṣeṣaśāyī Viṣṇu (Gujari Mahal Museum, Gwalior, Acc. No. 146)	11 th -12 th century A.D.	Gwalior Fort	God holding club and disc in his upper right and left hands respectively. Lower hand is in varada mudrā. His foot is being caressed by Lakṣmī and Bhūdevī. Besides there are images of Brahmā and twelve Ādityas.
166.	Caturbhujā Viṣṇu (Gujari Mahal Museum, Gwalior, Acc. No. 147)	11 th -12 th century A.D.	Gwalior Fort	God carrying conch and disc in left upper and lower hands respectively. Right hands are missing. The <i>avatāras</i> shown clockwise from the right of the image- Buddha, Varāha, Nṛsimha, Paraśurāma, Balarāma and Kalki. Some of the <i>avatāras</i> are lost.
167.	Standing Viṣṇu (Gujari Mahal Museum, Gwalior, Acc. No. 151)	11 th -12 th century A.D.	Gwalior Fort	Standing on lotus. The <i>avatāras</i> shown clockwise from right of god- Buddha, Paraśurāma, Vāmana, Varāha, Matsya, Kūrma, Nṛsimha, Rāma, Balarāma and Kalki.
168.	Vaisnavī (Bhopal Museum, Acc.No.)	11 th -12 th century A.D.	Shivpuri district	Four handed goddess carrying <i>śaṅkha</i> , <i>cakra</i> , <i>gadā</i> and <i>padma</i> in left lower, left upper, right upper and right lower hands respectively; Gadādevī and Kamaladevī on two sides of the goddess; goddess wearing <i>kīriṭa mukuṭa</i> and <i>vaijayantīmālā</i> ; two female figures on two sides.
169.	Teli temple	Kacchapaghāta period	Gwalior district	Śikhara in south Indian style. <i>Lalātabimba</i> contains image of Vaisnava deity.
170.	Viṣṇu temple form Mandhata	Paramāra period	East Nimar district	It is called as Caubis <i>avatāra</i> temple.
171.	Stone image of Viṣṇu from Dandpur	Paramāra period	Vidisha district	
172.	Nārāyaṇa Viṣṇu from Harsaud	Paramāra period	East Nimar district	God carrying <i>śaṅkha</i> , <i>cakra</i> , <i>gadā</i> and <i>padma</i> .
173.	Śrīdhara Viṣṇu from Harsaud	Paramāra period	East Nimar district	God wearing a <i>karaṇḍa mukuṭa</i> and bearing <i>mālā</i> , <i>cakra</i> , <i>gadā</i> and <i>śaṅkha</i> .

S. No.	Form of Viṣṇu	Date	Find Spot	Remarks
174.	Śeṣasāyī Viṣṇu (Vidisha Museum, Acc. No.)	12 th century A.D.	Dabra, Gwalior district	Reclining on Ananta, carrying <i>cakra</i> , <i>śaṅkha</i> and lotus in left upper, left lower and right lower hands respectively; one hand below head; right leg of Viṣṇu on the lap of Lakṣmī; Brahmā on lotus coming out of the navel of Viṣṇu; <i>Navagraha</i> and other figures above; below two devotees.
175.	YogaNārāyaṇa (Bhopal Museum, Acc.No. 6067)	12 th century A.D.	Hinglajgarh, Mandasor	God sitting in <i>yogamudrā</i> wearing <i>kīrītamukuta</i> , <i>vaijayantīmālā</i> , sacred thread, <i>svastika</i> mark; left upper and right upper hands carrying <i>śaṅkha</i> and <i>cakra</i> respectively; Śiva and Brahmā on two sides of Viṣṇu.
176.	YogaNārāyaṇa (Bhopal Museum, Acc.No.1153)	12 th century A.D.	Hinglajgarh, Mandasor	God sitting in <i>yogamudrā</i> wearing <i>kīrītamukuta</i> , <i>vaijayantīmālā</i> , sacred thread, <i>svastika</i> mark; other hands missing; Śiva and Brahmā on two sides of Viṣṇu; Śaṅkhapuruṣa and Cakrapuruṣa on two sides of god; upper most part of sculpture- incarnations of Viṣṇu- Kalki, Buddha, Varāha, Nṛsimha, Paraśurāma, Balarāma.
177.	Vaisnavī (Bhopal Museum, Acc.No.11)	12 th century A.D.	Bajhar, Barwani	Sitting on Garuḍa; carrying <i>cakra</i> and <i>gadā</i> in left upper and right lower hands; other hands missing; a goddess with the head of buffalow on right upper side of goddess; goddess wearing <i>kīrītamukuta</i> , <i>vaijayantīmālā</i> and other ornaments.
178.	Harihara (Bhopal Museum, Acc.No. 6)	12 th -13 th century A.D.		God wearing <i>kīrītamukuta</i> and <i>kaṇḍa mukuta</i> , <i>vaijayantīmālā</i> and sacred thread; four handed image carrying <i>śaṅkha</i> , <i>cakra</i> , <i>triśūla</i> and <i>varada mudrā</i> in left lower, left upper, right upper and right lower hands respectively; Kamalapurusa on the side of Viṣṇu and Nandī and <i>gana</i> on the side of Śiva.

S. No.	Form of Viṣṇu	Date	Find Spot	Remarks
179.	Harihara (Bhopal Museum, Acc.No. 6)			God wearing <i>kīrītamukuta</i> and <i>karaṇḍa mukūṭa</i> , <i>vaijayantimāla</i> and sacred thread; four handed image carrying <i>śaṅkha</i> , <i>cakra</i> , <i>triśūla</i> and <i>varada mudrā</i> in left lower, left upper, right upper and right lower hands respectively; Cakrapuruṣa on the side of Viṣṇu and Nandī and <i>gana</i> on the side of Śiva. Two female figures on two sides; Sūrya and Brahmā on two sides
180.	Viṣṇu (Vidisha Museum, Acc. No.)	12 th -13 th century A.D.	Vidisha district	
181.	Rear part of Viṣṇu (Vidisha Museum, Acc. No. 76)	13 th century A.D.	Vidisha district	A female carrying <i>śaṅkha</i> ; another female standing.
182.	Kamalāsana (Gujari Mahal Museum, Gwalior, Acc. No. 164)	13 th century A.D.	Naresar (Morena)	Head and three hands lost. Two female devotees on both sides.
183.	Vaisnavī (Gujari Mahal Museum, Gwalior, Acc. No. 166)	13 th century A.D.	Naresar (Morena)	Image rides on Garuḍa with conch and club in lower two right and left hands. A male and female attendant seated on both sides.
184.	Varāha (Gujari Mahal Museum, Gwalior, Acc. No. 737)	13 th century A.D.		Sand stone image.
185.	Nṛsimha (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.26)			Door sill depicting seated Nṛsimha in the middle flanked by two male figures holding <i>ghata</i> and seated on a <i>makara vāhana</i>
186.	Saptamātrkā panel (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.82)			Seven mother goddess; Ganeśa standing to the left holding a <i>ghata</i> in right hand; Vīrabhadra in the middle.
187.	Saptamātrkā panel (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.83)			Broken panel; out of the seven mothers only five are surviving.
188.	Yogāsana Viṣṇu (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.90)			Depicted with two pilasters; upper right hand holding <i>gadā</i> and upper left hand holding <i>cakra</i> ; above it a halo, two flying figures; god wearing <i>kīrīta mukuta</i> , <i>vanamāla</i> , sacred thread and Śrīvatsa mark.

S. No.	Form of Viṣṇu	Date	Find Spot	Remarks
189.	Viṣṇu (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.91)			<i>Samabhanga</i> Viṣṇu carrying <i>śankha</i> , <i>gadā</i> and <i>cakra</i> in upper right hand, upper left hand and lower left hands respectively; above Śiva, towards right Brahmā and left Viṣṇu; the middle right contains Nṛvarāha with Pṛthvī and to the corresponding side Nṛsimha with a demon on the lap; attendants, <i>caurī</i> bearers and devotees on the two sides; Viṣṇu wearing sacred thread and usual ornaments.
190.	Viṣṇu (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.92)			Within two pilasters, standing image may be Viṣṇu; upper right hand holding <i>gadā</i> , lower right hand in <i>varada mudrā</i> ; other hands missing. god wearing usual ornaments.
191.	<i>Garudāsīna</i> Viṣṇu (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.93)			Within two pilasters, <i>Caturbhujā</i> Viṣṇu on <i>Garuḍa</i> ; upper right hand holding <i>gadā</i> , lower right hand in <i>varada mudrā</i> , upper left hand holding <i>cakra</i> and lower left hand holding <i>śankha</i> ; <i>Garuḍa</i> in flying posture feet of Viṣṇu and holding a snake in left hands.
192.	Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa on <i>Garuḍa</i> (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.94)			Within two pilasters; <i>Caturbhujā</i> Viṣṇu carrying <i>gadā</i> , and <i>śankha</i> in upper right, lower right and upper left hands respectively; Lakṣmī with two hands one on the shoulder of god, other missing; image flanked by <i>caurī</i> bearers; <i>Garuḍa</i> in flying posture and holding snake.
193.	Viṣṇu (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.95)			In a niche; standing Viṣṇu carrying <i>varada mudrā</i> , <i>cakra</i> and <i>śankha</i> in lower right, upper left and lower left hands respectively; right upper hand probably holding padma, partially broken; god wearing usual attributes.
194.	Viṣṇu (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.93)			Within two pilasters; four handed carrying <i>varada mudrā</i> and <i>cakra</i> in lower right and upper left hand; lower left hand is kept on lap, other hand is missing.

S. No.	Form of Viṣṇu	Date	Find Spot	Remarks
195.	Viṣṇu (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.97)		Chandpur, Lalitpur district	Headless image carrying <i>gadā</i> , <i>abhaya mudrā</i> , and conch in upper right, lower right and lower left hands respectively; one hand is missing; Brahmā and Viṣṇu are depicted on right and left side of the <i>torana</i> respectively; near the <i>pādapiṭha</i> Cakrapuruṣa and Śaṅkhapuruṣa and five devotees are shown.
196.	Viṣṇu (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.98)		Do	Within two pilasters; four handed image carrying <i>kamala</i> , <i>abhaya mudrā</i> , <i>cakra</i> and <i>gadā</i> in upper right, lower right, upper left and lower left hands respectively.
197.	Viṣṇu (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.99)		Do	Within two pilasters; four handed image carrying <i>kamala</i> , conch, club and disc in right upper, right lower, left upper and left lower hands respectively.
198.	<i>Garudāsīna</i> Viṣṇu (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.100)			Four handed image, all missing; only upper left hand holding <i>cakra</i> ; head of Garuḍa missing; Viṣṇu and Brahmā depicted on <i>torana</i> to right and left sides respectively.
199.	Viṣṇu (Nara-Nārāyaṇa) (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.101)			Panel depicting two male figures; right side Viṣṇu carrying <i>cakra</i> , <i>varada mudrā</i> , club and conch in right upper, right lower, left upper and left lower hands respectively; left side Viṣṇu carrying conch, <i>varada mudrā</i> , <i>cakra</i> and a club in right upper, right lower, left upper and left lower hands respectively; both figures in <i>abhanga</i> pose; a lotus bud between the two.
200.	Viṣṇu (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.102)			Within two pilasters four handed image of Viṣṇu carrying conch, <i>varada mudrā</i> and <i>cakra</i> in right upper, right lower and left upper hands respectively; Cakrapuruṣa and Śaṅkhapuruṣa are depicted towards right and left of Viṣṇu respectively; Viṣṇu wearing usual ornamewnts.

S. No.	Form of Viṣṇu	Date	Find Spot	Remarks
201.	Viṣṇu (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.103)			Four handed image carrying <i>cakra</i> , <i>varada mudrā</i> , club and conch in right upper, right lower, left upper and left lower hands respectively; <i>dvibhanga</i> pose.
202.	Viṣṇu (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.104)		Chandpur, Lalitpur district	Within two pilasters; four handed carrying <i>varadā mudrā</i> and conch in right lower and left lower hands; others missing; two attendants near the feet.
203.	Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa on Garuḍa (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.105)			Viṣṇu carrying <i>cakra</i> in left upper hand and holding Lakṣmī with left lower hand; righthand of <i>Devī</i> on god's shoulder; other hands of the image are missing along with head of the two.
204.	Viṣṇu (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.106)			Within the two pilasters; four handed image carrying conch in upper left hand, others missing; a devotee in <i>añjalī mudrā</i> near feet; Indra on Airāvata to the right of pilaster; four handed Indra carrying flower and <i>kamaṇḍala</i> in left upper and lower hands respectively; other hands missing.
205.	Viṣṇu (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.108)		Chandpur, Lalitpur district	Portion of a door lintel; Viṣṇu on Garuḍa holding <i>abhaya mudrā</i> , <i>cakra</i> and conch in right lower, left upper and left lower hands respectively, one hand missing.
206.	Seated Viṣṇu (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.109)			Within two pilasters; Viṣṇu seated in <i>sukhāsana</i> , carrying <i>cakra</i> , <i>abhaya mudra</i> , club and conch in right upper, right lower, left upper and left lower hands respectively; Garuḍa below the seat.
207.	Viṣṇu-Lakṣmī (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.110)			Within two pilasters; Viṣṇu and Lakṣmī seated in <i>lalitāsana</i> ; four handed image carrying club, conch and <i>cakra</i> with right upper hand, right lower and upper left hand respectively; other hand is holding Lakṣmī; Lakṣmī is holding lotus stalk and keeping her left hand on the shoulder of god.

S. No.	Form of Viṣṇu	Date	Find Spot	Remarks
208.	Viṣṇu-Lakṣmī on Garuḍa (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.111)			Within two pilasters; four handed god carrying club and conch with his right upper and right left hand; lower left hand holding the goddess; Lakṣmī keeping her left hand on the shoulder on god's shoulder and holding some thing with her left hand; Garuḍa in the act of flying and holding three hooded snake with his left hand
209.	Viṣṇu-Lakṣmī on Garuḍa (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.112)		Chandpur, Lalitpur district	Same as above; Lakṣmī holding lotus stalk.
210.	Viṣṇu-Lakṣmī on Garuḍa (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.113)			Same as above.
211.	Viṣṇu-Lakṣmī on Garuḍa (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.114)		Chandpur, Lalitpur district	All the hand sof god missing except for lower right hand holding conch; both the hands of Lakṣmī missing along with face and hands of Garuḍa.
212.	Varāha (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.115)		Do	Panel depicting four handed Varāha holding club, discuss and conch with his right upper hand, left upper hand and left lower hand respectively; right lower hand on the thigh; near the face of god a female is depicted may be earth; below the folded left leg of snake has been shown.
213.	Varāha (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.116)			Panel depicting four handed god; upper left hand and lower left hand of god holds discuss and conch; lower right hand on the thigh; one hand missing; boar faced head of the god turned towards headless Pṛthvī; god's leg rests on something below which are two <i>nāga</i> figures.
214.	Varāha (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.118)		Chandpur, Lalitpur district	Panel depicts four handed god holding club with his upper right hand; other hands missing; boar faced god turned to headless Pṛthvī.
215.	Nṛsimha (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.119)			Within two pilasters; four handed god killing the demon with lower hands; upper right and left hands raised; hybrid form of god; demon holding weapon.

S. No.	Form of Viṣṇu	Date	Find Spot	Remarks
216.	Nṛsimha (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.120)			Within two pilasters; god fighting with Hiranyakaśipu; four handed god; ugra Nṛsimha shown with wide open jaws and eyes in contrast to demon's closed mouth and standing eyes.
217.	Nṛsimha (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.121)			Highly mutilated piece of Nṛsimha image; god shown with wide-open mouth, protruding eyes wearing a short <i>mukuta</i> and <i>vanamāla</i> .
218.	Vāmana (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.122)			Within two pilasters; god shown seated in <i>lalitāsana</i> ; right hand in <i>abhaya mudrā</i> and left hand holding club; pot bellied god wearing <i>vanamālā</i> , sacred thread, <i>mukuta</i> and <i>kundala</i> .
219.	Vāmana (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.123)			Standing god holding <i>cakra</i> in his only surviving left upper hand; on top of the torana Viṣṇu depicted flanked by flying figures; Brahmā and Śiva to its right and left; the right panel depicts Varāha and Vāmana incarnation; left oanel depicts Balarāma and two <i>Āyudhapurusas</i> Śāṅkhapuruṣa and Cakrapuruṣa to right and left; Buddha and Rāma the other incarnations depicted here; towards left Kalki on horse; below the <i>pādapiṭha</i> headless Lakṣmī is shown; god holding club in right upper hand.
220.	Vāmana (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.125)			Within two pilasters standing image of Vāmana; head and three hands missing; lower right hand holds conch; right hand may be holding club; Cakrapuruṣa and Śāṅkhapuruṣa to right and left of the image.
221.	Vāmana (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.123)			Within two pilasters; four handed god holding club, unidentified object, discus and conch in right upper, right lower, left upper and left lower hands respectively; two female <i>cauri</i> bearers outside the pilaster.

S. No.	Form of Viṣṇu	Date	Find Spot	Remarks
222.	Trivikrama (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.127)			Within two pilasters; right leg of god placed on the ground, left leg touching the head of a figure; four handed god holding club, lotus, discus and conch in right upper, right lower, left upper and left lower hands respectively.
223.	Trivikrama (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.128)			Within two pilasters; left leg missing, right leg placed on the mouth of the demon; four-handed god holding club, lotus, discus and conch.
224.	Trivikrama (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.129)			Within two pilasters four handed god holding club and discus in right upper and left upper hands; lower left hand placed on the angular portion of leg; one of right legs firmly planted on ground, another inside the mouth of demon.
225.	Viṣṇu (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.130)			Four handed god carrying discus, conch and flower bud in right upper, right lower and left lower hands; one hand missing.
226.	Gajendramoksa (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.131)			Within two pilasters; Viṣṇu riding on mount Garuda delivering Gajendra from the clutches of an aquatic monster; four handed god holding disc and conch in lower right and upper left hands; lower left hand placed on the tusk of Gajendra in act of mokṣa; below the seat to left crocodile and to right elephant is depicted.
227.	Śeṣasāyī Viṣṇu (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.132)			Panel depicts Viṣṇu sleeping on the coils of serpent and shaded by seven hooded canopy; lower panel depicts figures in <i>añjali mudrā</i> , horse and conch; one left hand below head and one right hand holding club which is hanging down.
228.	Gajendramoksa (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.133)			Within two pilasters; four handed Viṣṇu holding disc, club and conch with upper right, lower right and upper left hands respectively; lower left hand on the tusk of Gajendra in act of <i>moksa</i> ; god flying in the air.

S. No.	Form of Viṣṇu	Date	Find Spot	Remarks
229.	Viṣṇu (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.133B)			Pedestal of an image retaining two feet of Viṣṇu and figure of Lakṣmī seated below; figure of Lakṣmī flanked by two <i>nāga</i> figures.
230.	Viṣṇu (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.133C)			Standing four-handed image carrying club and disc in left upper and left lower hands; right hands missing; other parts of image broken.
231.	Lakṣmī (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.133F)			<i>Pādapiṭha</i> of Lakṣmī image; many male and female figures depicted.
232.	Lakṣmī (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.136)	Pratihāra period		Torso of image; below the seat lotus with stalks shown.
233.	GajaLakṣmī (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.137)			Within a pilaster; to the top <i>Gaja</i> is shown; four handed goddess; lower right hand in <i>abhaya mudrā</i> , lower left on knees, other hands not clear.
234.	Vaiṣṇavī (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.139)			Within two pilasters seated in <i>lalitāsana</i> ; four handed carrying club, <i>cakra</i> and conch in upper right, upper left and lower left hands; one hand missing.
235.	Lakṣmī (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.140)			Within two pilasters; seated in <i>lalitāsana</i> ; upper right hand holding lotus stalk, lower right in <i>abhayua mudrā</i> ; other hands missing; to the right elephant is depicted.
236.	Nṛsimha (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.147)			Within two pilasters headless four-handed god upper hands raised and lower hand killing the demon.
237.	Hayagrīva (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.188)			Standing two-handed god.
238.	Viṣṇu (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.207)			Within two pilasters, Viṣṇu seated on <i>Garuḍa</i> ; damaged image.
239.	Viṣṇu (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.208)			Within two defaced pilasters four armed god holding lotus stalk and conch in upper right and left hands respectively; other hands missing; to the right defaced male figure.

S. No.	Form of Viṣṇu	Date	Find Spot	Remarks
240.	Vāmana (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.209B)			Within two pilasters headless four handed image of Vāmana; four handed god carrying club in upper hands; lower right hand in <i>abhaya mudrā</i> and lower left hand holding cakra; below two attendants shown.
241.	Hayagrīva (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.258A)		Chandpur, Lalitpur district	Defaced image.
242.	Hayagrīva (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.258B)			Armless god depicted on both sides.
243.	Hayagrīva (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.258C)			God shown holding <i>kamaṇḍala</i> .
244.	Viṣṇu (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.285)			Door lintel containing four armed Viṣṇu.
245.	Nṛsimha (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.312)			Panel depicting fragmentary remains of Nṛsimha fighting with demon.
246.	Viṣṇu in door lintel (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.347)			Remains of door lintel containing four armed Śiva to right sitting in <i>lalitāsana</i> and to left four-handed Viṣṇu in <i>lalitāsana</i> holding usual attributes.
247.	Viṣṇu in door lintel (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.352)			Three seated figures from right to left Brahmā, <i>Yogāsana</i> Viṣṇu and headless Śiva; in relief it contains seven figures may be <i>Navagraha</i> panel.
248.	Viṣṇu-Lakṣmī (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.355)			Within two pilasters; figure of Lakṣmī damaged; two surviving hands of Viṣṇu hold club (upper right) and <i>abhaya mudrā</i> (lower right).
249.	Viṣṇu as door keeper (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.362)			Highly carved and decorated door jamb; Viṣṇu in a niche as door keeper holding conch and club in right and left hand; upper side of central niche two miniature riders containing each a seated figure may be Viṣṇu and Śiva; at bottom river Ganga depicted with <i>vāhana makara</i> and a <i>ghata</i> in right hand.
250.	Viṣṇu as door keeper (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.363)			Viṣṇu as a door keeper in a niche holding lotus and club in two hands; at bottom river Yamuna shown with <i>vāhana Kūrma</i> holding <i>ghata</i> in left hand.

S. No.	Form of Viṣṇu	Date	Find Spot	Remarks
251.	<i>Yogāsana</i> Viṣṇu (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.372)			Door lintel contains various figures; to right three-headed Brahmā with four hands; in <i>Lalātabimba</i> headless <i>Yoga</i> Viṣṇu, hands missing; left side contains Śiva four handed; it also depicts Varāha and Nṛsimha.
252.	Hanumān (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.389)			Head of god.
253.	Viṣṇu-Lakṣmī in door lintel (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.392)			To right Umā and Maheśvara, Umā containing mirror in hand; to left Viṣṇu with Lakṣmī; at back four <i>Navagrahas</i> shown.
254.	Viṣṇu in door lintel (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.394)			To right Brahmā in standing pose flanked by Varāha and other figures; four-armed Viṣṇu in mid niche flanked by attendants and Nṛsimha killing demon; in last niche Śiva in standing posture.
255.	Viṣṇu, Varāha and Nṛsimha in door lintel (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.397)			Right niche contains seated four armed Viṣṇu with usual attributes who is followed by Varuna; in central niche seated Śiva four armed holding usual attributes followed by Nṛsimha killing the demon; left niche contains four armed Brahmā seated in <i>lalitāsana</i> .
256.	Hayagrīva in door jambs (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.400)		Chandpur, Lalitpur district	To the right of niche standing two armed Hayagrīva holding club in right hand and left hand <i>janghahasta</i> ; just above swan is depicted; to right mutilated female foigure and above it a <i>nāga</i> figure.
257.	Mother goddess and Trimūrti (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.401)		Do	Door lintel depicts Brahmā, Śiva and Viṣṇu in different niches; at the back panel depicts mother goddess Kaumārī, Vaisnavī, Māheśvarī, Nrsimhī, Vārāhī and Cāmundā flanked by Ganeśa.
258.	Viṣṇu in door jamb (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.418)			At bottom it contains four armed <i>Viṣṇu</i> carrying club, disc and conch in right upper, left upper and left lower hands respectively; one hand missing; to right an armless male figure and to left female figure holding <i>ghata</i> ; above a <i>nāga</i> figure.
259.	Nṛsimha (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.487)			Panel depicting god killing the demon; below a <i>Devī</i> flanked by two devotees.

S. No.	Form of Viṣṇu	Date	Find Spot	Remarks
260.	Nṛsimha (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.488)		Chandpur, Lalitpur district	Defaced god killing the demon.
261.	Vaisnavī (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.526)			<i>Pādapīṭha</i> contains defaced <i>Devī</i> flanked by <i>nāga</i> figures.
262.	Vaisnavī (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.529)			Central image missing; goddess in <i>pādapīṭha</i> flanked by <i>nāga</i> figures.
263.	Fragmented sculpture (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.542)			Central deity missing; right side panel contains male figure holding danda (Rāma or Paraśurāma), a seated figure, a figure shaded by snake canopy (Balarāma) and a figure on the back of horse (<i>Kalkī</i>); under <i>pādapīṭha</i> Vaisnavī is depicted on the back of flying Garuḍa flanked by <i>nāga</i> figures.
264.	Viṣṇu (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.549)			Within two pilasters four armed Viṣṇu; one hand holding conch.
265.	Nṛsimha (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.550)			Within a niche Nṛsimha killing the demon.
266.	Viṣṇu (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.550A)			Torana depicting several figures with head of Viṣṇu with <i>śirsacakra</i> at back.
267.	Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa in a panel (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.550C)			Panel contains two sides; front side depicts Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa on back of Garuḍa; four handed god holding club, lotus and disc in right upper, right lower and left upper hands respectively; one hand holding goddess; other side depicts Lakṣmī Nārāyaṇa in <i>dvibhanga</i> pose; four armed Viṣṇu carrying club, conch and disc in right upper, right lower and left upper hands; one hand holding the goddess; <i>Devī</i> kept her hand on the back of Viṣṇu.
268.	Viṣṇu (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.551)			God in <i>samabhanga</i> pose; four arms; all missing, holding conch and disc.
269.	<i>Garuḍāsīna</i> Viṣṇu (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.552)			Within two pilasters god on Garuḍa; only surviving symbol club.
270.	Viṣṇu (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.555)			Within two pilasters four armed Viṣṇu holding lotus, club and conch in right upper hand, upper left and lower left respectively; one missing.
271.	Viṣṇu (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.556)		Dudhai, Lalitpur district	Within two pilasters four armed Viṣṇu carrying <i>abhaya mudrā</i> (lower right) and club (upper left).

S. No.	Form of Viṣṇu	Date	Find Spot	Remarks
272.	Viṣṇu (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.557)			Within two pilasters four armed Viṣṇu carrying unidentified object, <i>abhaya mudra</i> , club and conch in right upper, right lower, left upper and left lower hands respectively; below two standing <i>caurī</i> bearers.
273.	Viṣṇu (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.558)			Panel depicting two male figures in <i>dvibhanga</i> pose representing form of Viṣṇu i.e. Śrīdhara and Upendra holding club, discus, lotus and conch; other figure holding conch, club, discuss and lotus.
274.	Viṣṇu (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.459)			Panel depicts Viṣṇu having two hands holding club and discuss.
275.	Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.560)			Headless figure on the back of Garuḍa; only surviving symbol conch.
276.	Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.5671)			Within two pilasters seated on the back of Garuḍa; four-armed carrying lotus, conch and club; one hand holding Lakṣmī.
277.	<i>Garuḍāsīna</i> Viṣṇu (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.563)			Within two pilasters four handed god carrying club, lotus, discuss and conch.
278.	Nṛvarāha (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.564)			Fragmentary <i>torana</i> ; central figure shows god lifting Pṛthvī; four armed god carrying club, discuss and conch.
279.	Viṣṇu (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.565)			Headless image of four armed Viṣṇu seated on the back of flying Garuḍa; all hands missing; several attendants and devotees.
280.	Nṛsimha (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.565A)			Blurred and headless image of Nṛsimha killing the demon.
281.	Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva in torana (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.566)			All seated in <i>lalitāsana</i> having four armed; at the back several figures, most striking headless Varāha lifting the earth and Nṛsimha killing the demon.
282.	Vaisnavī (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.566A)			Seated in <i>lalitāsana</i> having four arms holding club, <i>abhaya mudrā</i> , lotus and conch.
283.	Vaisnavī (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.567)			Panel depicting four armed goddess holding club, discuss and conch in right upper, left upper and left lower hands respectively; one hand is missing.

S. No.	Form of Viṣṇu	Date	Find Spot	Remarks
284.	Nṛvarāha, Nṛsimha, Viṣṇu in <i>torana</i> (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.568)			Torana contains three miniature temples each containing the image of Nṛvarāha, Viṣṇu and Nṛsimha respectively; at back it contains image of Rāma with bow and arrow and Paraśurāma with <i>paraśu</i> ; to both extreme corner it depicts <i>makara</i> with a rider.
285.	Varāha-Nṛsimha in a panel (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.569)			Central image missing, retaining <i>pādapiṭha</i> and outer portion; right panel depicts seated male figure, Nṛvarāha lifting earth, and an attendant holding danda; other panel depicts <i>Nṛsimha</i> and a male attendant; below <i>pādapiṭha</i> a defaced female figure flanked by two devotees.
286.	<i>Garuḍāsīna</i> Viṣṇu (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.570)			Panel depicts four armed Viṣṇu seated on back of Garuḍa; only surviving symbol discuss; other hands missing.
287.	Vāmana (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.571)		Dudhai, Lalitpur district	Within two pilasters four armed Vāmana; upper right hand holding club and upper left holding discuss; other hands missing.
288.	Garuḍa (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.571A)			Panel depicting lower portion, flying Garuḍa.
289.	Balarāma (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.573)			Panel depicts male figure standing and shaded by three hooded snake canopy; upper right and left hands hold danda like object; lower right hand holds a cup and lower left hand in <i>katihasta mudrā</i> .
290.	Torso of Viṣṇu (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.573A)	12 th century A.D.	Chandpur, Lalitpur district	Wearing sacred thread, <i>vaijayantīmāla</i> and <i>Śrīvatsa</i> mark.
291.	Viṣṇu (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.575)			Niche contains figure of four-armed Viṣṇu holding stalked lotus, <i>abhaya mudrā</i> , defaced discuss and defaced conch.
292.	Torso of Viṣṇu (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.577)			
293.	Viṣṇu (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.585)			Panel depicting four armed Viṣṇu; upper right and left hands holding lotus and disc; lower hands missing; two attendants near the feet.
294.	Vāmana (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.586)			Torso.

S. No.	Form of Viṣṇu	Date	Find Spot	Remarks
295.	<i>Garudāsīna</i> Viṣṇu (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.589)			Within two pilasters headless image of Viṣṇu on flying Garuḍa; four armed, upper right holding discus and lower left conch; others missing; Garuḍa at bottom.
296.	Viṣṇu (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.590)			Two face panel; front face depicts deity in <i>dvibhanga</i> posture holding club, <i>abhaya mudrā</i> , discus and conch; other side depicts deity in <i>dvibhanga</i> pose carrying conch, <i>abhaya mudrā</i> , discus and club.
297.	Vaiṣṇavī (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.619)			Within two pilasters goddess mounted on the back of Garuḍa; upper right hand holding disc, middle hand a club, lower hand in <i>abhaya mudrā</i> ; upper left hand holds a disc, middle a <i>pāśa</i> , and lower a conch.
298.	<i>Garudāsīna</i> Viṣṇu (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.635)			Four armed on Garuḍa; upper right hand holds a club and lower right hand in <i>abhaya mudrā</i> ; Garuḍa supporting right leg of Viṣṇu with right hand.
299.	Viṣṇu, Nṛsimha in <i>torana</i> (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.726)			In mid Viṣṇu in <i>Yogāsana</i> ; to left Nṛsimha; <i>vidyādhara</i> s at back; below the seat of Viṣṇu a <i>kīrtimukha</i> is shown.
300.	Incarnations of Viṣṇu in a panel (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.731)			Panel representing various incarnations- Kalki, Nṛsimha and Varāha; each figure is intervened by a seated figure.
301.	Fragmented image (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.734)			Remains of a sculpture showing a man in <i>kātihasta mudrā</i> (<i>Varāha</i>), other male figure placed his hand on the head, still another shown seated in <i>vīrāsana</i> ; above a miniature defaced Nṛsimha.
302.	Viṣṇu (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.748)			Torso of Viṣṇu; below head of Garuḍa survived.
303.	Viṣṇu-Lakṣmī on Garuḍa (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.758)			Remains of Viṣṇu image; god mounted on Garuḍa who is in flying action; upper portion of Viṣṇu and Lakṣmī missing.
304.	Seated Viṣṇu (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.802)			Headless seated image of Viṣṇu in <i>lalitāsana</i> ; four armed figure carrying discus and conch in left hands; other hands missing.
305.	<i>Yogāsana</i> Viṣṇu (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.803)			Fragmentary remains of <i>torana</i> contains image of <i>Yogāsana</i> Viṣṇu within a niche.

S. No.	Form of Viṣṇu	Date	Find Spot	Remarks
306.	Viṣṇu (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.814)			Fragmentary remains depicting club and discuss.
307.	Seated Viṣṇu (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.828)			Defaced headless Viṣṇu; two hands carrying club and discuss; other hands missing.
308.	Torso (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.830)			Torso of male figure bearing <i>Śrīvatsa</i> mark.
309.	Vaiṣṇavī in <i>torana</i> (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.834)			Fragment of <i>torana</i> contains Vaiṣṇavī in a niche.
310.	Fragmented image (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.841)			Remains of a <i>pādapiṭha</i> , which contains to left a man on the back of horse holding a weapon.
311.	Head of Viṣṇu (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.849)			Panel depicts male figure in seated position; below it head of Viṣṇu and discuss.
312.	Viṣṇu (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.851)			Within two broken pilasters there stands headless image of Viṣṇu holding discuss and club.
313.	Fragmented image (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.880)			Contains conch, Varāha, Matsya and a man on crocodile.
314.	<i>Yogāsana</i> Viṣṇu (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.883)			Fragment of <i>torana</i> depicts a defaced image of <i>Yogāsana</i> Viṣṇu in mid flanked by flying figures.
315.	<i>Garuḍāsīna</i> Viṣṇu (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.887)			Headless image of Viṣṇu on back of flying Garuḍa; lower portion of Garuḍa missing; face and hands of Viṣṇu survived.
316.	Viṣṇu (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.897)			Bust of lady and above it defaced four-armed Viṣṇu.
317.	Hayagrīva (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.915)			Fragment depicts figure of Hayagrīva and male and female figures.
318.	Viṣṇu (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.933)			Fragment of Viṣṇu image, which contains cakra and śankha.
319.	<i>Garuḍāsīna</i> Viṣṇu (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.940)			Viṣṇu on Garuḍa in a fragment.
320.	Varāha (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.947)			Fragment depicts Varāha in lower portion.
321.	Viṣṇu (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.948)			Fragment of Viṣṇu containing upper portion, <i>śankha</i> and <i>cakra</i> .

S. No.	Form of Viṣṇu	Date	Find Spot	Remarks
322.	<i>Garuḍāsīna</i> Viṣṇu (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.954)			Headless Viṣṇu on back of <i>Garuḍa</i> .
323.	Viṣṇu (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.958)			Fragmentary; all hands missing; retains <i>gadā</i> and <i>kamaṇḍala</i> .
324.	Viṣṇu (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.963)			Within a niche defaced Viṣṇu containing one upper left hand holding <i>cakra</i> .
325.	Viṣṇu and Śiva (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.973)			Fragment of torana shows <i>Yogāsana</i> Viṣṇu, seated Śiva and <i>cakra</i> .
326.	Fragmented image (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.993)			Fragment depicts feet portion and a horse rider and seated male figure.
327.	Vaiṣṇavī (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.1001)			Fragment depicting goddess on <i>Garuḍa</i> .
328.	Varāha and Vāmana (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.1006)			Torana fragment depicting Varāha, seated Vāmana and a man on crocodile.
329.	Vāmana (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.1021)			Within two broken pilasters standing Vāmana; four handed god holding <i>gadā</i> , <i>padma</i> , <i>cakra</i> and <i>śankha</i> .
330.	Hayagrīva (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.1034)			Panel depicts defaced Hayagrīva on both sides.
331.	<i>Yogāsana</i> Viṣṇu (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.1047)			<i>Torana</i> fragment contains headless <i>Yogāsana</i> Viṣṇu and flying figures.
332.	Nṛsimha (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.1049)			Head of god in a fragment.
333.	Varāha (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.1050)			Fragment depicting figure of Varāha.
334.	Viṣṇu (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.1051)			Head of god.
335.	Viṣṇu (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.1065)			Torso of Viṣṇu and Lakṣmī.
336.	Vāmana (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.1070)			Fragment depicts figure of Vāmana and an <i>Āyudhapurusa</i>

S. No.	Form of Viṣṇu	Date	Find Spot	Remarks
337.	<i>Garudāsīna</i> Viṣṇu (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.1074)			Fragment depicts figure of headless Viṣṇu on back of Garuḍa.
338.	Varāha and <i>Nṛsimha</i> (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.1076)			Fragment depicts Varāha and <i>Nṛsimha</i> along with male and female attendants; <i>Āyudhapurusas</i> are also shown. Below the <i>pādapīṭha</i> a seated <i>Devī</i> flanked by headless pair of devotees.
339.	Incarnations of Viṣṇu with Brahmā (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.1081)			Torana fragment depicting figure of seated Brahmā, while Rāma, Vāmana, Varāha and Matsya incarnations are shown.
340.	Hayagrīva (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.1088)			Fragment containing figure of Hayagrīva.
341.	<i>Yoga</i> Viṣṇu and <i>Nṛsimha</i> (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.1096)			Torana fragment contains defaced figure of <i>Yoga</i> Viṣṇu and <i>Nṛsimha</i> .
342.	<i>Nṛsimha</i> (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.1102)			Fragment depicts god.
343.	Śiva, Balarāma, Kūrma etc. (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.1115)			<i>Torana</i> fragment retaining mutilated Śiva; above it depicts Balarāma with plough; it also depicts Kūrma and a man fighting with <i>makara</i> .
344.	<i>Nṛsimha</i> (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.1117)			Fragment depicts male and female attendants and <i>Āyudhapurusa</i> with <i>Nṛsimha</i> killing the demon; <i>pādapīṭha</i> contains image of <i>Devī</i> flanked by two figures in <i>añjali mudrā</i> .
345.	Fragmented image (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.1122)			Fragment depicting defaced attendants and a horse rider; below the <i>pādapīṭha</i> <i>Devī</i> flanked by male figures.
346.	Incarnations of Viṣṇu (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.1129)			Torana fragment depicting headless <i>Yogāsana</i> Viṣṇu, Matsya incarnation, <i>Nṛsimha</i> and Varāha; below it contains figure of Brahmā.
347.	Fragmented image (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.1144)			Fragment depicting a man on the back of horse; below the <i>pādapīṭha</i> a <i>Devī</i> flanked by male figures.
348.	Vaisnavī (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.1147)		Chandpur, Lalitpur district	Headless goddess on the back of flying Garuḍa; four handed, all missing.

S. No.	Form of Viṣṇu	Date	Find Spot	Remarks
349.	Viṣṇu (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.1154)			Fragment depicts a four-armed Viṣṇu; above it contains another four armed standing Viṣṇu under a niche.
350.	Viṣṇu in <i>torana</i> (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.1167)			<i>Torana</i> depicting <i>Yogāsana</i> Viṣṇu flanked by <i>vidyādhara</i> s; below four-armed Brahmā and Śiva are shown on both sides; it also contains Vāmana, Kūrma and Balarāma.
351.	Vaisnava divinity (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.1194)			Block of stone containing two sides; front side depicting two armed male figure representing some Vaisnava divinity; other side also has the same figure.
352.	Fragmented Image (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.1196)			Fragment of an image which contains <i>pādapīṭha</i> and outer portions; right side depicts two seated male figures and a lady; near her feet a headless seated figure and a seated male figure under the canopy of five hooded serpent; near the feet of the deity <i>Āyudhapurusas</i> are shown representing <i>cakra</i> and <i>śankha</i> ; below the feet of god a seated <i>Devī</i> flanked by two devotees, male and female.
353.	Hayagrīva (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.1197)			Fragment of an image retaining <i>pādapīṭha</i> and outer portions; the right side depicts <i>Hayagrīva</i> and male and female attendants.
354.	Śiva and Nṛsimha (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.1240)			Fragment depicting within a niche a figure of seated Śiva and a defaced figure of Nṛsimha.
355.	Hayagrīva (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.1249)			Fragment depicting figure of faceless Hayagrīva and a seated male figure above.
356.	<i>Garudāsina</i> Viṣṇu (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.1265)			Block of granite stone containing defaced Viṣṇu on back of <i>Garuḍa</i> .
357.	Viṣṇu (Rani Mahal Museum, Acc.No.1267)			Block of granite stone containing two figures of defaced Viṣṇu on two different directions and having four arms.

Note: The tables are arranged chronologically. Reference for the temples, sculptures and inscriptions that are published, have been cited in the chapters and bibliography. Unpublished sculptures and temples have been visited by the scholar personally.



Plate I

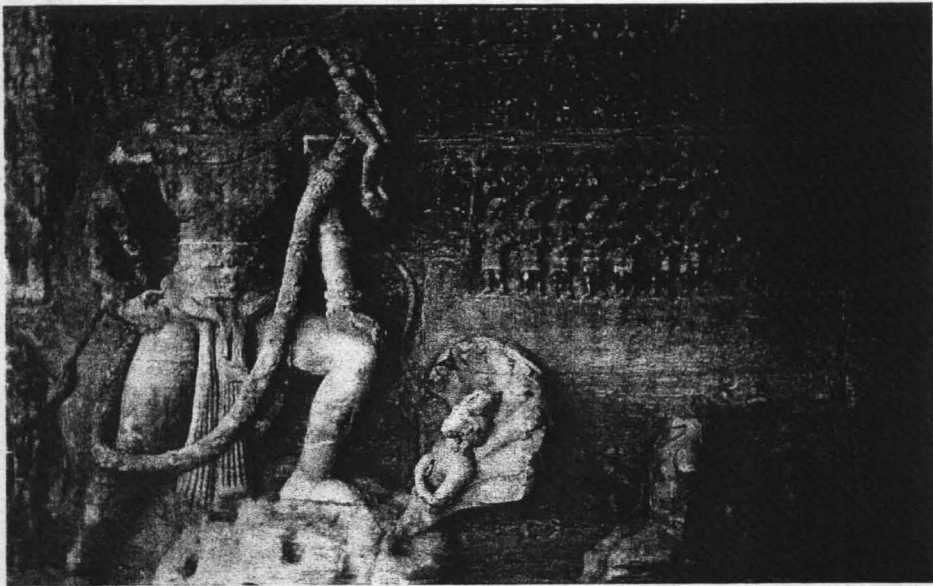


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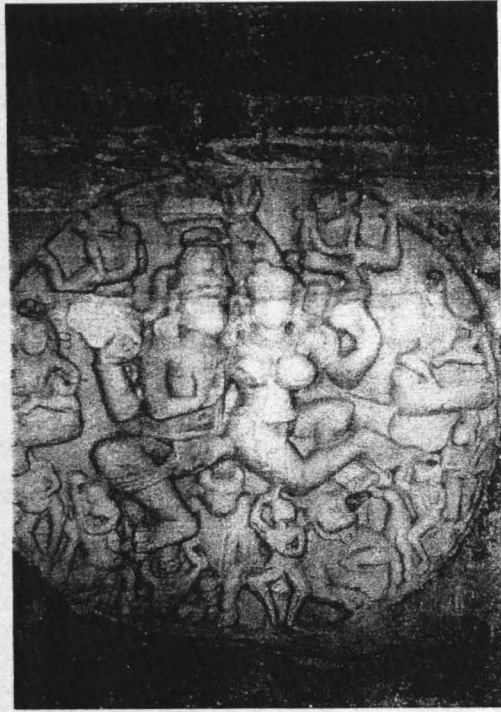


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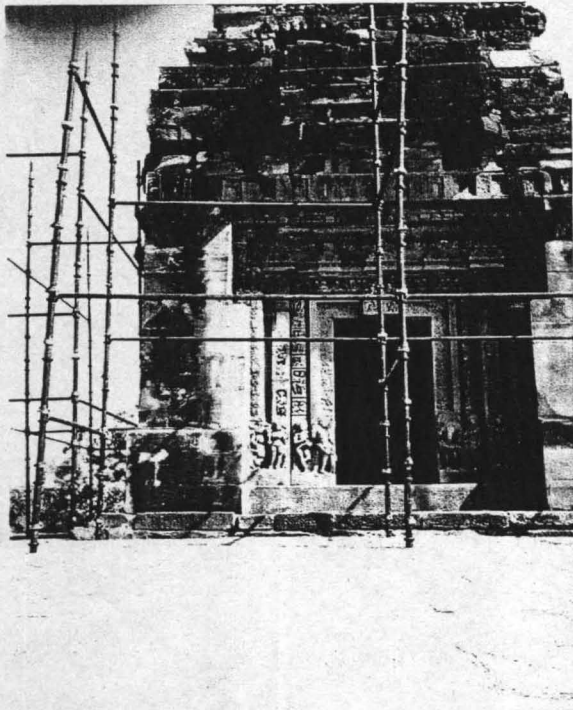


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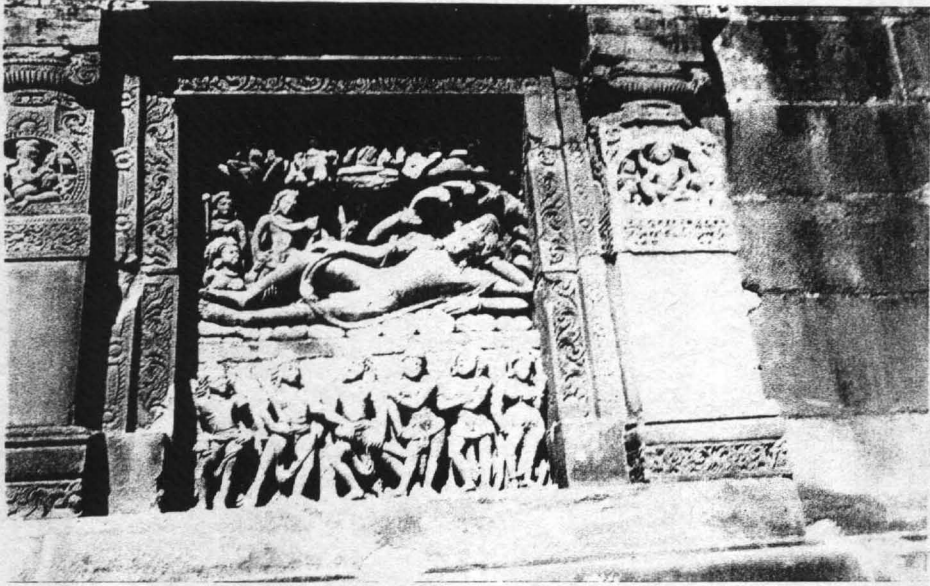


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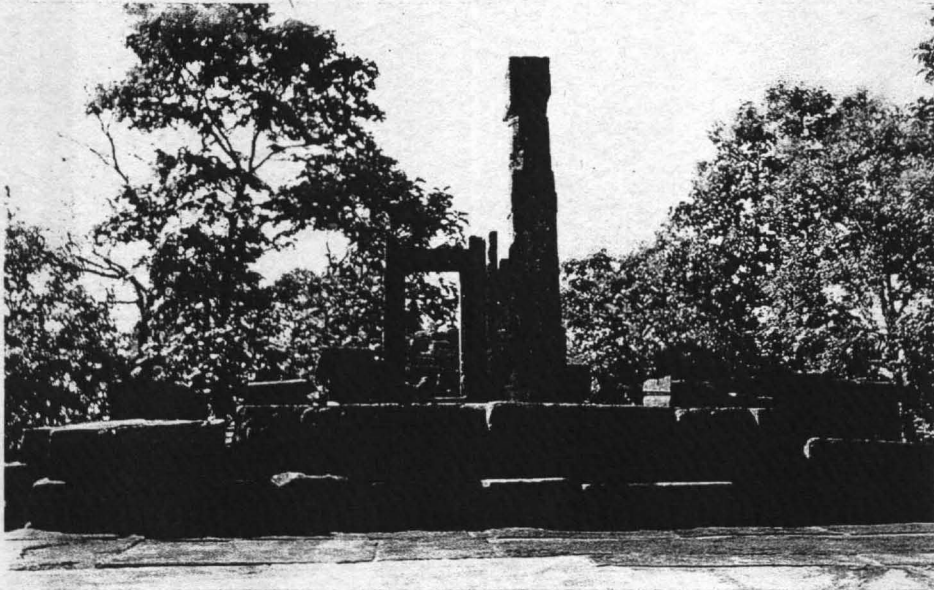


Plate VI



Plate VII



Plate VIII

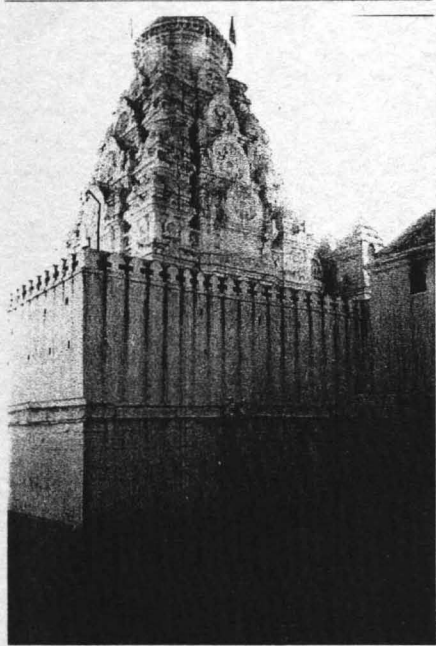


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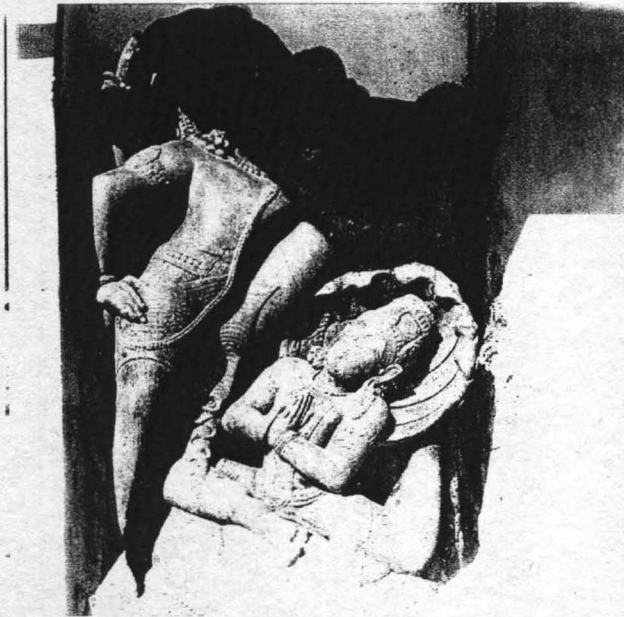


Plate X



Plate XI



Plate XII

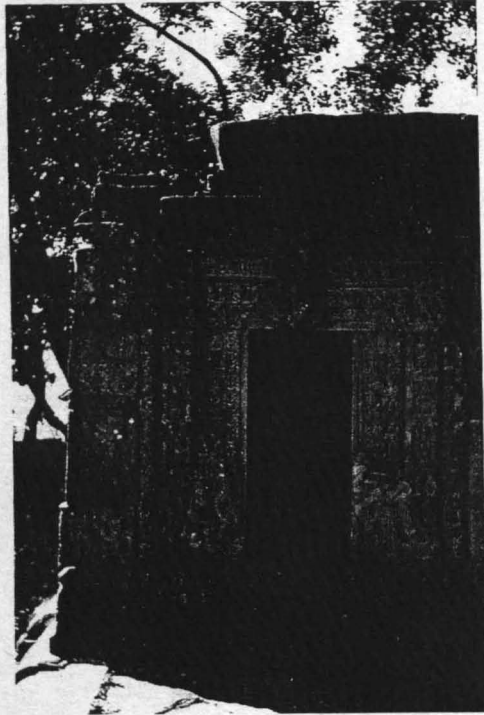


Plate XIII



Plate XIV

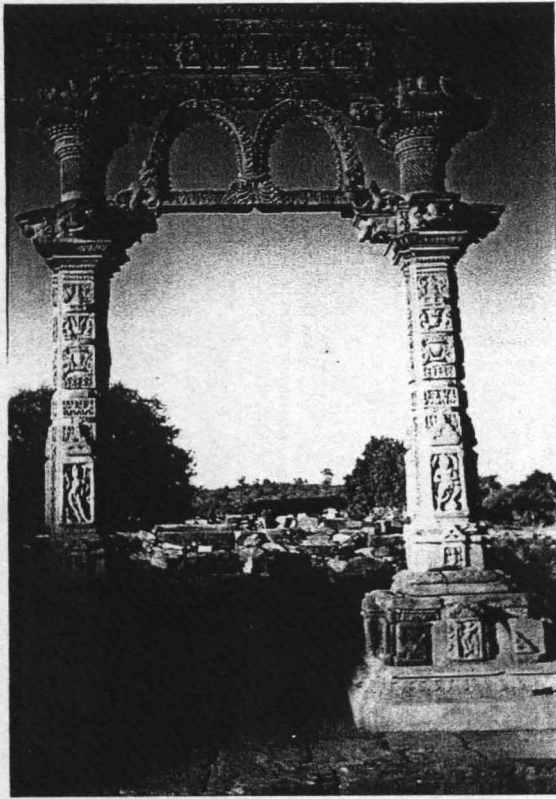


Plate XV



Plate XVI



Plate XVII



Plate XVIII

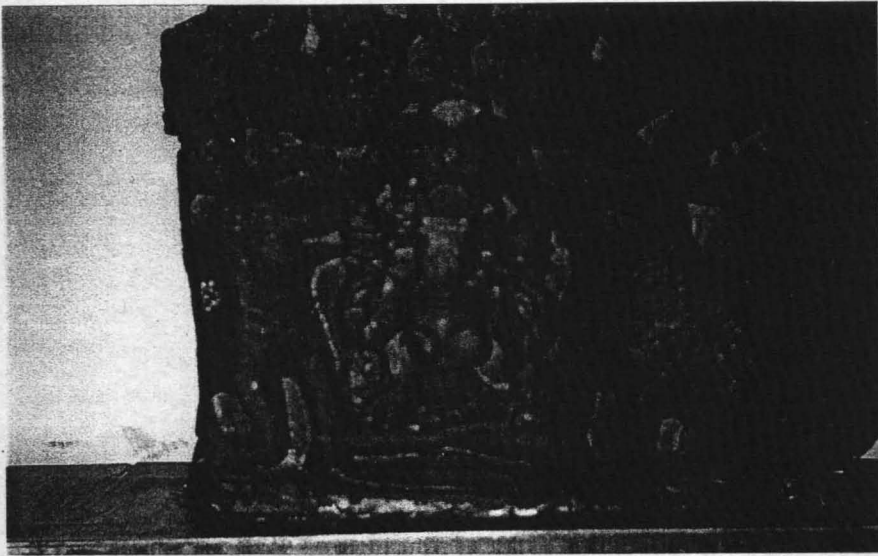


Plate XIX



Plate XX

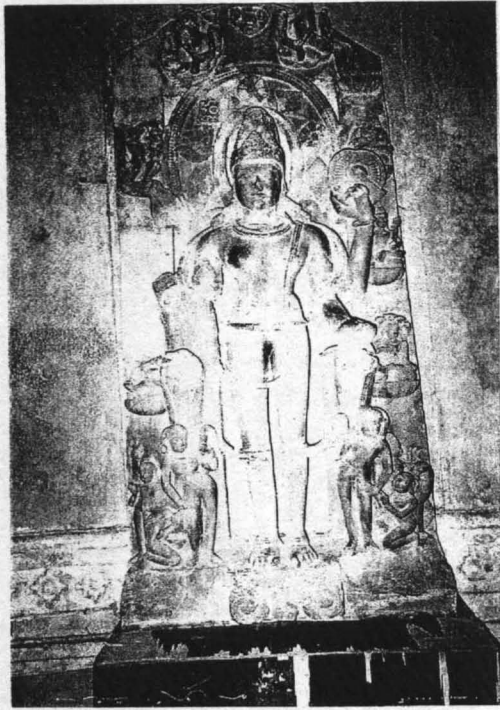


Plate XXI

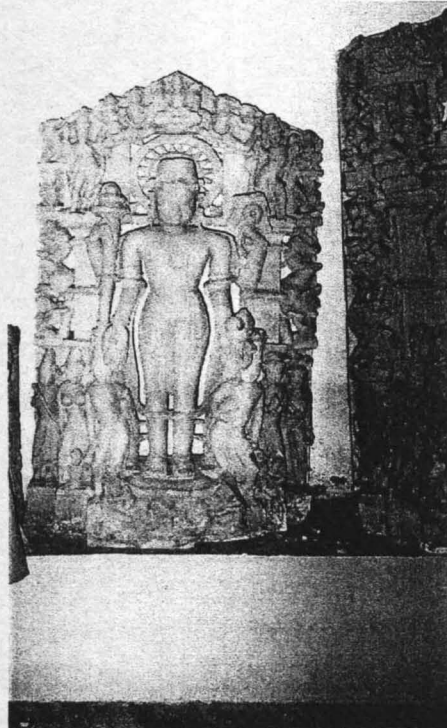


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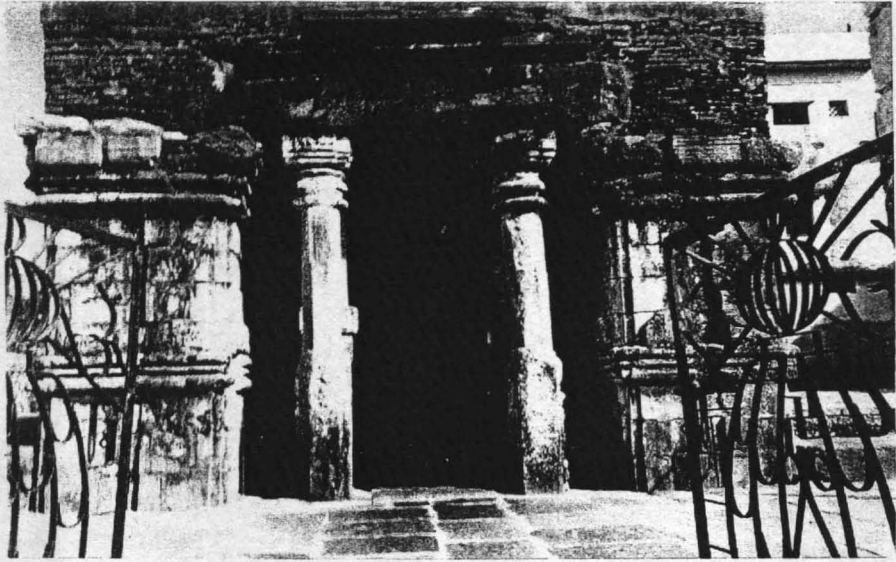


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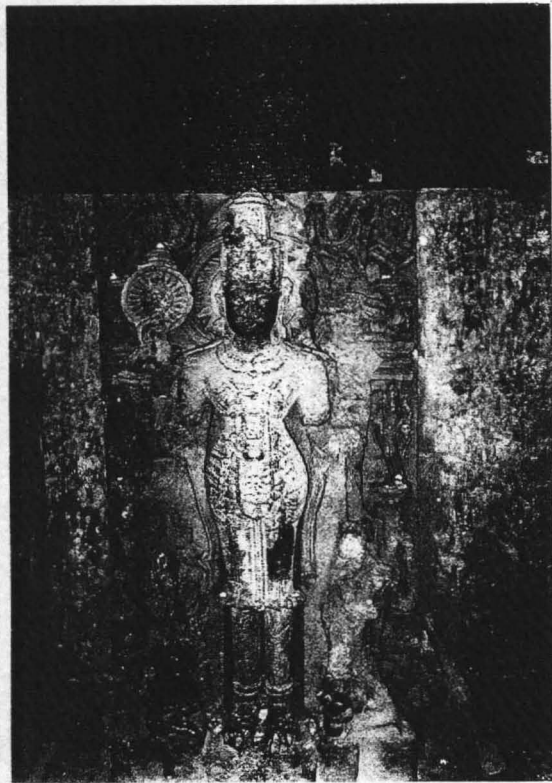


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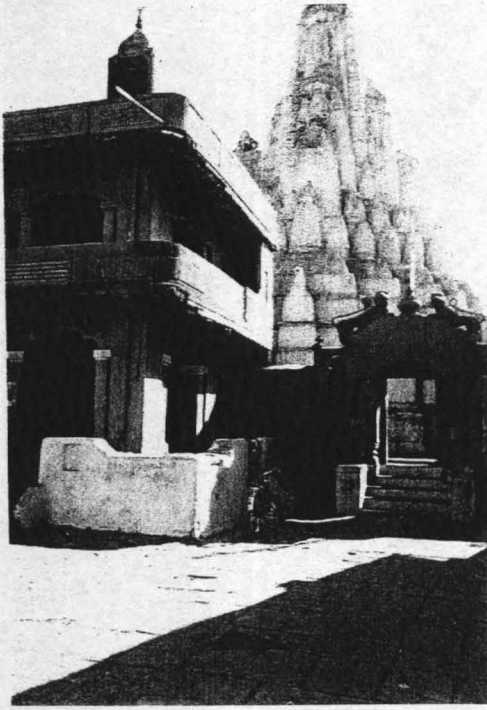


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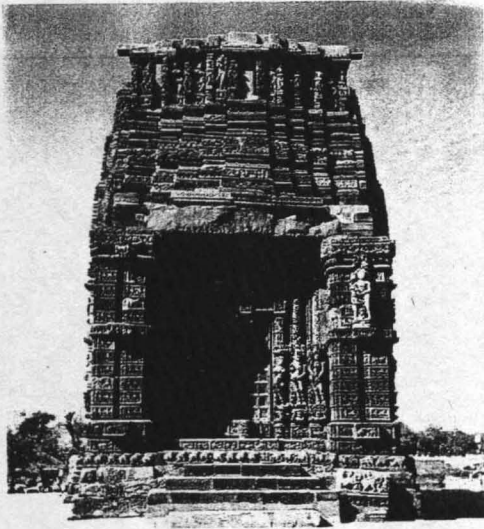


Plate XXVI

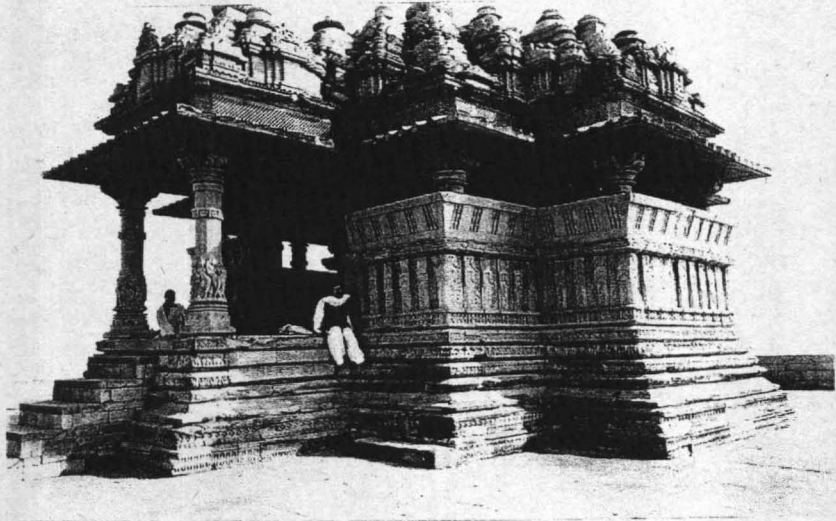


Plate XXVII



Plate XXVIII

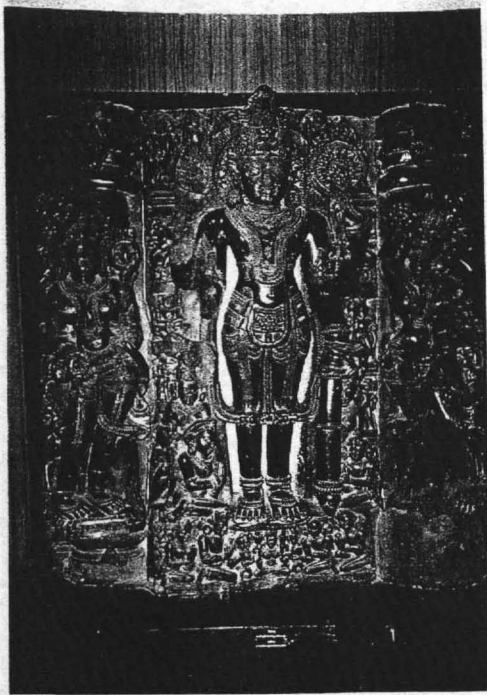


Plate XXIX



Plate XXX



Plate XXXI

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