CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT (D)

INDIAN ICONOGRAPHY*
(A. D. 300-985)

INTRODUCTION

History of art is regarded by some as a history of ideas. If so, the study of icons is one of the most fruitful means to trace that history in so far as it is related to religion. India with her teeming millions professing various religious faiths offers an extensive ground for such an investigation covering a vast period. The study of countless images—anthropomorphic, theriomorphic or symbolic representations of cult-deities—produced in different epochs, and their intrinsic meaning with changes in their forms and techniques constitutes a fundamentally important branch of research in the history of Indian art as well.

Earliest evidence of plastic activities in India is furnished by a number of female terracotta figurines discovered at the peasant culture sites on the banks of the Zhob and the Kulli in Baluchistan of about the first half of the third millennium B.C.1 Most of these female figurines have rightly been interpreted as those of Mother-goddess as conceived in those days. Almost similar figures have been discovered at the Indus sites like Harappa and Mohenjodaro,2 the culture of which extended from the second half of the third millennium B.C. From Mohenjodaro has come a group of seals, a few of which depict a two-horned deity with three faces, being surrounded by some animals.3 Marshall4 has recognised in this figure a prototype of Siva-Paśupati of later days. Along with this interesting piece have been found some conical objects and stone rings which are

* As iconography has not been dealt with in Vol. II if the subject has been treated from the very beginning—Editor.

1 Stuart Pigott, Pre-historic India, pp. 106, 127, figs. 9, 16.
2 Ibid., pl. 8; AIA, I, pl. A8.
3 MIC, I, pl. XII, 17; AIA (AIA denotes its second volume, if not otherwise mentioned), pl. IIa.
4 MIC, I, pp. 52-6.
taken by scholars as representations of male and female energies in the phallic and the yoni forms respectively. If so, the practice of worshipping a Siva-like deity in phallic form may also be believed to have been in vogue in those days.

What happened along the arrow of time between the Indus civilization and the Vedic culture is not definitely known. The religion of the Vedic Aryans was essentially henotheistic or kathenotheistic in which sacrifice played a dominant part. The Vedic rishis, as the Rigveda and other Vedic texts would show, used to worship their deities aniconically. A sizable section of the Indians, deprecated in the Rigveda as śīmādevas (phallus-worshippers) and mūrađevas (worshippers of inanimate objects), appear to have carried forward the tradition of image worship prevalent among most of the Indus people. Thus the philosophically-minded Vedic rishis could not check the progress of the practice of image worship in India. And presumably a section of the Vedic population also came under the influence of indigenous image worshippers.

The practice of image worship became gradually popular with the fusion of Vedic and non-Vedic elements as evident from the post-Vedic literary and archaeological sources. Thus Pāṇini, who probably flourished in the fifth century B.C., seems to allude to the worship of deities in concrete forms in his aphorism (sūtra) jīvikārthe chāpanye (V. 3.99). Though Pāṇini is silent about these deities, it may be presumed that he had the images of popular deities like the Yakshas and the Nāgas or more probably of Vāsudeva, Arjuna and the Mahārajas (Kubera, Dhritarāṣṭra, Viṣṇudhaka and Virūpāksha, the guardian deities of the Northern, Eastern, Southern and Western quarters respectively) in view. Patañjali of the second century B.C. while commenting on Pāṇini’s sūtra in question, mentions the construction of images of a few of the gods, namely Śiva, Skanda, and Viṣṇu whom he elsewhere (VI. 3.26) seems to have described as laukika devatās or folk-deities for worship in his time. His assertion that the Mauryas used to sell images, evidently for replenishing their royal coffers, indicates in a way the demand of images among their subjects. Kautilya, who may have flourished in the Maurya period, also refers to the figures of the goodess and altars to be carved on wooden door-frame of the royal underground chamber and to the images and flags of the gods as well. The word devatāḥ used in Gautama’s Dharmasūtra (IX. 13), according to Haradatta and Maskari, means images (pratimāḥ). Instances from indigenous literary records can be multiplied.

5 AIA, I, pl. A3.
Turning to foreign accounts, we hear from Quintus Curtius⁶ that an image of Herakles was carried in front of the army of Porus when he was advancing against Alexander. This image, either of Siva or of Krishna, was obviously used for abhichārika (malevolent) purpose. Literary evidences thus show that the practice of icon-worship was well established in the early pre-Christian centuries.

Archaeological materials supply more definite information as to the existence of the practice of image-worship in India in pre-Christian centuries. Among many pre-Christian epigraphic records the Besnagar⁷ and the Ghosundi⁸ inscriptions may be mentioned. While the Besnagar inscription of the second century B.C. records the erection of a Garuḍa-dhvaja in honour of deva-deva Vāsudeva by Bhāgavata Heliodora (Heliodorus), a Yavana by birth, the Ghosundi inscription of the first century B.C. contains a reference to the construction of a stone enclosure (pujā-sīla-prākāra) round the shrines of Saṅkarshaṇa and Vāsudeva, the shrines very probably containing the images of the deities concerned. Many more inscriptive evidences can be cited to prove the existence of structural shrines and the installation of images of different deities.

Numismatic and glyptic data also testify to the existence of concrete representations of Brahmanical and non-Brahmanical deities. For instance, Siva, one of the principal Brahmanical deities, appear for the first time in an anthropomorphic form on the coins hailing from Ujjayini and its environs.⁹ On many of these coins the god holds a staff in the right and a vase in the left hands. Siva also appears as holding a club and a trident on some copper coins of the Indo-Scythic ruler Maues.¹⁰ Kāṛttikeya, another Brahmanical deity, appears in human form, sometimes with six heads, on one unique silver and a fair number of copper coins of the Yaudheyaas belonging to the second-third century A.D.¹¹ On some coins of the Kanishka appears the figure of Buddha.¹² Besides coins, seals also bear effigies

⁶ De Rebus gestis Alexandri Magni, Book 8, Chapter XIV; CAIR, p. 119. The image has been variously identified with Siva or Yaksha (Coomaraswamy, HIIA, p. 42, fn. 5). Kesava or Indra (Bevan, Clil, I, p. 328). Krishna (Banerjea, DHI; p. 89; fn. 1) and a ṛikhā or planet (A. M. Shastri, JII, XLII pt. 1, p. 125).
⁷ SI, p. 88.
⁸ Ibid., p. 90.
⁹ CAI, pp. 97-98, pl. X, figs 1-6; Allan in CCBM (AI), intro., pp. cxlii; describes the deity and its variants on Ujjain coins as either Siva-Mahākāla or Skanda-Kāṛttikeya, while in the body of the Catalogue, pp. 245-52, he describes them as Kāṛttikeya or simply as the figures of a deity. Banerjea, however, confidently identifies the deity with Siva, DHI, p. 117.
¹⁰ CCBM (GSK), pl. XVII. 3.
¹¹ THAI, pls. VI, 112, 113a; VII, 113 b-c, 115, 116 etc.; VIII, 128a-c, 129, 130 etc.
¹² CCBM (GSK) pl. XXVI, 8.
of deities. Some very finely executed seals from Basarh of the Gupta period bear on them the figure of Gaja-Lakṣmī and a few of its variants. A seal from Bhita has symbols of wheel and conch and also a sign which, according to Coomaraswamy, is the śrīvatsa mark, evidently a Vaishnava symbol. Another seal from Basarh bears a finely executed figure of a boar evidently representing Varāha-avatāra of Viṣṇu. Numerous coins and seals would therefore testify to the existence of the practice of worshipping deities in concrete forms.

As regards monumental evidence, mention may be made of the figures of Yaksha and Yakṣinī, both in relief and in the round. Some of them, labelled with identificatory inscriptions, may be regarded as deities worshipped by tribal and semi-tribal peoples of ancient India. Similar remark may be made of the figures of Nāgas, Kuberas, Vidyādras etc. The discovery of a few capitals of columns such as tāla (fan-palm), Garuḍa and Makara, etc., goes to prove the symbolical worship of either the first three of the four Vyuhas—Samkarshaṇa, Vāsudeva and Pradyumna. The Buddhist monuments of Sanchi, Bharhut and other places of the second-first century B.C. presenting the Master and his predecessors with the help of symbols, such as the Bodhi tree with the Vajrāsana (diamond-seat) beneath it, as well as the anthropomorphic figures of Buddha produced in the Gandhāra and Mathurā ateliers in the first century A.D. may also be noted in this connection. Like the Buddhists, the Jainas also practised icon worship from early times. They even claim that Mahāvīra was worshipped in iconic form in his life time. The Lohanipur image or the bronze figure of Pārśvanātha in the Prince of Wales Museum datable between the second and the first century B.C. may be among the earliest available Jaina images. In this way with the help of monumental remains the existence of the practice of the icon worship in ancient India can be proved.

The above survey thus pushes back the antiquity of image worship to the days of the Indus civilization (c. 2,500 B.C.-1,500 B.C.) or

13 ASI, AR. 1903-04, pp. 107 ff., pl. XL-XLI.
14 Ibid., 1913-14, Seal no 54.
16 ASI, AR, 1911-12, p. 53, pl. XIX.
17 For the discovery of tāla and makara capitals at Besnagar, see ASI, AR 1913-14, pp. 188-91, pl. LI and LIV. For another tāladhvaja of the first B.C., discovered at Pawaya in the old Gwalior State, see ASI, AR, 1914-15, Pt. I, p. 21; pl. XVI c. The garaṇadhvaja on which the famous record is inscribed has already been mentioned.
18 See SJA, p. 4.
19 Ibid., p. 5, fig. 2.
20 Ibid., p. 8, fig. 3.
perhaps even earlier to the period of the village cultures of Beluchistan (c. 3,500 B.C.—2,500 B.C.) and this practice of worshipping deities in concrete forms has been continuing down to the present day across several centuries.

From about second century B.C. image worship began to be popular and became the most prominent feature of the religious life of the people in the early mediaeval period. Among the factors that led to the popularity of image worship, the chief was perhaps religious sectarianism which necessitated the making of varied type of images. Icono-plastic art also seems to have received an impetus from foreigners particularly the Greeks who were famous for the images of their divinities. In the early mediaeval period grew up the Tantric literature embodying concepts of some deities in different forms as well as canons for their iconic representation. The last, though not the least, important factor is to be found in the regular and systematic patronage of the ruling powers like the Guptas, the Chalukyas, the Palaś, the Senas and a host of others. How much emphasis was, indeed, laid upon the icono-plastic art in the mediaeval period becomes apparent in the statement: ‘Gods and goddesses become fit to be worshipped only when they are set up with correct proportions.’ A number of texts containing rules and prescriptions of iconometry were prepared for the guidance of artists.

Image worship in India, though very old, extant specimens useful for the study of the historical evolution of icons corresponding to available texts hardly go beyond two or three centuries prior to the Christian era. The paucity of old images may be accounted for by the practice of using perishable materials like wood, clay etc. in image making, not to speak of the havoc done by iconoclasts. Besides wood and clay were stone, metal and ivory. Delineation of figures of divinities was also made in colour or canvases made of wood or similar perishable materials. The Haribhaktivilāsa contains two lists of images of the deities. While the first mentions four varieties, viz. chitraja (painted on canvas, wall or cloth), lepa (made of clay), pākā (made of molten metal) and śaśrotkīra (carved by metal instruments), the second refers to seven kinds of images in relation to the characteristic materials of which they are made, such as, mṛnmayā (made of clay) dārughātā (made of wood), loha (made of iron), ratnajā (made of precious stone), śailajā (made of stone), gandhajā (probably made of fragrant materials such as sandalwood) and kausumī (made of flower). In case of the absence of stone or metal a canvas, even a jar symbolising the deity, could have

21 See DHI, p. 208.
22 Ibid., pp. 206-9.
been worshipped and that this practice seems to be in vogue even now is testified to by deities being either painted on a canvas or represented by a jar. The popularity of this practice is also reflected in the well-known saying ghūte paṭe pūjā (worship by jar or canvas).

With the growth of the popularity of anthropomorphic representation of gods and goddesses, necessity was felt to lay down rules relating to the proportions of height, length, breadth, girth etc. of the image to be made from head to foot. A regular literature containing such rules of proportion thus came into existence in the course of time. Human beings were divided by ancient śāstrakāras into Hamsa, Śaśa, Ruchaka, Bhadra and Mālavya, and since images of divinities conforming to the Harīsa and the Mālavya in respect of proportions of height are not uncommon, it may be reasonably inferred that divine images were modelled on human figures. Without referring to details regarding the inconometrical measurements, as found in a number of texts, due to the lack of space, it may be concluded that many a well-preserved image has shown a fair correspondence between the actual practice and the ideal theory.23 This phenomenon perhaps proves that the age-old dictum ‘beautiful is that image which is made according to the canons detailed in the śāstras,—no other is so’ was sought to be closely followed by the artists. A modern professional artist like Hadaway,24 after studying ancient Indian images, comes to the same conclusion: ‘The Hindu image maker or sculptor... has, in place of the living model, a most elaborated and beautiful system of proportions, which he uses constantly, combining these with close observation and study of natural detail’.

In conclusion, a point of importance may be taken note of. Time and space leave their impress on the idea and the corresponding icon despite the tendency towards rigid canonisation of icon-making. This is amply borne out by changes—changes in poses and postures, dresses and ornaments, attributes and delineation of limbs—in the images of deities of different pantheons produced in different epochs. These changes were due not only to chronological reasons, but also to a great extent to the geographical factors. Thus ‘the same image-concept may have different manifestations in the same period in different parts of India’. In other words, in spite of a fundamental affinity

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23 For details regarding canons of iconometry, see Rao, Tālāmāna, Banerjea, DHI, Ch. VIII. The remark of Rao that ‘these canons ‘injuriously affected Indian iconoplastic art’ (EHJ, I, p. 31) is unjust. Does the canonisation of the rules of speech and writing adversely affect the language of a people? In fact, Rao seems to contradict himself when he observes: ‘if in Indian sculpture the results are not good in some instances it is the fault of the artists and not attributable to the guide books’ (Ibid., App. B, p. 8).

24 Ostasiatische Zeitschrift, 1914, p. 84.
underlying practically identical icons fashioned in different historical periods and in different areas, characteristic distinguishing features registering the differences of distance in time and place are also recognizable in Indian images.

The five principal deities worshipped by the Śmārtas Hindus are Viśnu, Śiva, Śūrya, Devī (i.e., the goddess representing Śakti or Female Energy) and Ganaṇapati. Worship of these five deities, known as Paṁchāyatana or Paṁchopāsanā, gave an impetus to the development of Brahmanical iconography. Among these five deities Viśnu, Śiva and Śakti receive greater attention. Iconic types of these five deities and their varieties are briefly described below.

VIŚNU

Viśnu is an important member of the traditional Brahmanical triad, the other two being Brahmā and Śiva. Brahmā is the creator, Viśnu the preserver and Śiva the destroyer. The present Viśnu grew out of the fusion of three god-concepts: Viśnu of the Vedic Saṁhitās, Nārāyaṇa of the Brāhmaṇas and Vāsudeva-Kṛishna of the Epics and the Purāṇas.

Viśnu as the central deity of a specific cult does not seem to have come into prominence much before the second century B.C. while the Besnagar inscription of the second century B.C. refers to a god named Vāsudeva as devadeva (god of gods), and the Ghosundi inscription of the first century B.C. alludes to the construction of shrines in honour of Vāsudeva and Saṁkarṣana.25 But in what iconic form Vāsudeva was represented at Besnagar or Ghosundi cannot be determined at present. It appears that the process of fusion of the three god-concepts was not yet complete though Vāsudeva of the Viśnus in association with Saṁkarṣana (i.e., Balarāma, his elder brother) was already deified. This has been interestingly confirmed by the recent discovery of a few bronze coins of the Indo-Greek King Agathocles (second century B.C.) at Ai-Khanum (Northern Afghanistan) which bear on their obverse the figure of Vāsudeva with a śāṅkha (?) and a chakra held in his hands and the effigy of Saṁkarṣana carrying a hala and a musūla on their reverse.26 Besides Vāsudeva and Saṁkarṣana, Samba (Vāsudeva-Kṛishna's son by Jāmvavatī), Pradyumna (another son of Vāsudeva-Kṛishna by Rukmini) and Aniruddha (grandson of the same), mentioned in the Epics and the Purāṇas were also deified and images of some of them have been dis-

25 For Ghosundi inscription, see fn. 8. A Nanaghat epigraph of the first century B.C. (SI, pp. 192 ff.) invoking Vāsudeva and Saṁkarṣana may also be recalled here.

26 INSI, XXXV, pp. 73-77, pl. VII.
covered at Mathurā along with some architectural reliefs of the second or third century A.D. illustrating the scene of Kṛiṣṇa-janmāṣṭamī and other episodes connected with the mythology of Vāsudeva-Kṛiṣṇa who soon became identical with Vishnu, the central deity of the Vaishnava cult.27

Besides the iconic representations of Paurāṇik Vishnu, to be detailed below, the god is also aniconically worshipped through the medium of a piece of stone to which is given the name ‘śālagrāma’ or ‘śāligrāma’! These śālagrāmas are generally picked up from the bed of the Gaṇḍakī in North Bihar. A variety of these is found at Dvārakā, a well-known Vaishnava tīrtha in Western India. It may be noted that the śālagrāma stone is never fixed on a pedestal like the liṅga stone of Śiva.

The concept of the full-fledged Paurāṇik Vishnu seems to have received its iconic expression in the third-fourth century A.D. and from the period of the paramabhāgavata Gupta monarchs onwards images of this god grew in number and variety. These images are in the main divided into three classes, viz., the ‘Dhruvaberas’ or the immovable images, ‘Vyūhas’ or the emanatory forms, and ‘Vibhavas’ or the incarnatory forms. The first of these, viz., the Dhruvaberas of Vishnu find detailed mention in the Vaikhānasāgama.28 According to this South Indian text, the different Dhruva types of images are divided into four broad divisions yoga, bhoga, vīra and abhichārika by name on the basis of the particular result to be attained by the devotee through the worship; each of these groups again is subdivided into three classes according to the ‘attitude’ in which the image is shown, viz., standing (sthānaka), seated (āsana) and recumbent (śayana); lastly, each one of these twelve (subgroups is divided into three classes as uttama, madhyama and adhama according to the number of accessory figures gathering round the central deity.29 Thus there are as many as 36 varieties of Dhruvaberas.

27 Kṛiṣṇa-janmāṣṭamī relief (Mathura Museum, exhibit no. 1344), ASI, AR 1925-26, pp. 183-84, and pl. LXVII; for other Kṛiṣṇāyana scenes, see ASI, AR, 1905-06, pp. 135-40 and figures, MASI, 70, pp. 18 ff. 33 and plates; Goetz, Art and Archaeology of Bikaner State, fig. 5. Also see IISOA, XIV, pp. 18-20.

28 The Vaikhānasāgama is found both in the prose and metrical recensions; the metrical version, being perhaps slightly later than the prose recension, was composed in about the ninth century A.D. For the relevant text, see EII, I, pt. 2, Appendix C, vv, 17-28.

29 The accessory figures are the deities like Brahmā and Śiva and the Pūjakāmunīa, viz., Bhṛgu and Mārkandeya (also known as Pūya, Purāṇa and Amitā). The absence of Brahmā and Śiva in the group makes the central image of Vishnu one of the madhyama class and if the Pūjakāmunīs are also omitted, the example is held to belong to the adhama class.
The Vaikhānasāgama mode of grouping the main images of Vishnu as sthānaka, āsana and sayana is basically applicable to all cases of his representation. Prescriptions regarding the other basis of classification into yoga, bhoga. vīra and abhīchārika groups, however, were not invariably followed. For instance, according to the text in question the yoga form of Vishnu should be practically devoid of ornaments, but a number of yogasana-Vishnu icons are found lavishly ornamented. Consequently such images fall under both the classes, yoga and bhoga. Vīra and abhīchārika forms represent respectively the heroic and malevolent aspects of the god; Vishnu icons in the latter form were to be enshrined outside the locality, meant to cause harm to the enemies. Though these two forms, like the other two, have been described in detail in the Vaikhānasāgama, they have been rarely represented. Rao regards the seated Vishnu from Aihole as Adhamavirāsana-mūrti which is actually an image of the bhoga variety. So far only one image of the abhīchārika variety has been discovered. Hailing from Chaitanpur (Burdwan district, West Bengal) this shows the god with his right and left hands placed on the heads of Cādādevī and Chakrapurusha, and his front right and left hands carrying a lotus-bud and a conch-shell respectively; its head and shoulder are encircled by a halo and it has a curious string of amulets instead of the usual hāra and vanamālā.

Indeed, among the early yoga icons, mention may be made of the yogasthānākamūrti holding the chakra and śaṅkha in back hands, normal hands in the abhayamudrā and in the katya-valamba pose found at Mahabalipuram;30 the yogāsanamūrti (also known as yogesamūrti) carrying the gada and chakra in the back hands, normal hands in the yogamudrā placed on the lap discovered at Mathurā; and the yogasayamanamūrti31 showing the god reclining on Ādīśa with the right arm near the head and the left arm bent at the elbow with the hand held in the kaṭaka pose sculptured on the Mahabalipuram cave wall.

Bhoga-mūrtis of Vishnu are abundant. Among such icons of the sthānaka variety, two- four- and eight- handed forms are available. An image found at Rupavas32 near Fatehpur Sikri, U.P., is endowed with two hands holding a śaṅkha and a chakra. One of the earliest extant four-armed images of the God, now in the Mathurā Museum, holds a gada and a chakra in the back right and left hands, the two normal hands being in abhayamudrā (right)33 and the hold-

30 EHI, I, pp. 97-98, pl. XVII.
31 Ibid., pp. 109-10, pl. XXXI; HIA, pl. LXI, fig. 209.
32 CASR, VI, p. 20
33 JISOA, V, p. 124, pl. XIV, fig. 2.
ing a monk's bottle of long neck and conical bottom (left). The 
Udayagiri relief\textsuperscript{34} figure has its back hands placed on the heads 
of Chakrapurusha and Gadādevī and the front left holding a conch-
shell; its broken right hand was probably in the abhayamudrā; the 
mark on its breast is one of the early varieties of śrivatsa. The eight-
handed form of Vishṇu is found at Badami; in the four right hands 
of the figure are found chakra, śara, gadā and khadga and in the 
three left hands are śāṅkha, khetaka and dhana and the front left is 
in the katihasta pose; the curious bust on the top of the kirīta of the 
figure appears to the Narasimha

A relief shown in the centre of the principal architrave in the 
main sanctum of the Daśāvatāra temple at Deogarh (U.P.)\textsuperscript{35} repre-
sents the bhogāsana form of Vishṇu. In it the god, seated in the 
ardhaparyāṅka on the coils of Adiśesha, is flanked by two consorts, 
one shampooing his leg. Vishṇu in his bhoga form is also found to be seated on his mount Garuḍa. One of the earliest such images 
hailing from Lakshmankati, Backergunge district (Bangladesh), inter-
estingly depicts Chakrapurusha and Gadādevī in the normal hands of 
the god (the miniature figure of the former in the centre of the chak-
tra and that of the latter in the palm) and tiny effigies of Sri and 
Pushṭi on the stalks of lotuses held in the back hands.\textsuperscript{36} As regards 
Vishṇu’s śayanamūrti of the bhoga variety (this type known in the 
South as Raṅgānātha, Raṅgasvāmī etc.), the well-known Daśāvatara 
temple relief shows the four-armed god reclining on the coils of the 
Seshaṇāga. Lakshmi shampooing his legs, two Āyudha-purushas (pro-
bably Gadādevī and Chakrapurusha) standing behind her; Brahmā 
is seated on a lotus issuing from the navel of the God, and he is 
flanked on the right by Indra and Kārttikeya on their respective 
mounts and on the left by Hara-Pārvatī on a bull; the figure on the 
extreme right corner is of Vidyādhara; the bottom register contains 
six figures, the two from the left being of Madhu and Kaitabha.

The mode in which the Vaikhānasāgama classifies the Dhrupu-
beras, however, is not generally met with in other relevant texts. 
And this detailed classification is not clearly applicable to the Vish-
ṇu images of the Gupta culture-epoch, though some of these image-
groups were produced by the end of the later Gupta period. Men-
tion may be made of some Vishṇu temples, such as the Vaikuṇṭhap-
perumāl, at Kanchipuram and Kūḍal-alagar at Madurai; the central 
shrines of these have three storeys, each storey being occupied by

\textsuperscript{34} DHI, p. 400. 
\textsuperscript{35} CASR, X, pl. XXXVI. 
\textsuperscript{36} IBBSDM, pp. 86-87, pl. XXXII.
an image of Vishnu, the standing, sitting and recumbent images being placed in the lowermost, middle and uppermost storeys in order.

A few words need be said about the Pancharatra philosophy which was responsible for the creation of the iconic types of Vishnu classified as those of the vyūha (emanation) and the vibhava (incarnation). According to this philosophy, Vishnu expresses Himself in five ways, viz., para, vyūha, vibhava, antaryāmi and archha. Among these para or the highest aspect of the God is represented by Vasudeva who being devoid of form is hardly apprehensible but who for the sake of his devotees eventually through his own will endows himself with a form symbolical of the universe. The antaryāmi aspect is concerned with the mind of the devotee where he is believed to reside. The archha aspect relates to the concrete representations of Vishnu most of which illustrate the vyūha and vibhava aspects of the lord. J. N. Banerjea suggests that the Dhruvaberas described above symbolize in a way the para aspect of Vishnu. Thus the archha aspect covers the para, vyūha and vibhava aspects of the god.

As regards the vyūha concept, the Pancharatra philosophy enjoins that the Supreme lord is to be shown with four faces and with four or more hands, the faces being Vaikuntha (Vasudeva), Nṛsima, Varāha and Kapila and the cognisances being śaṅkha, chakra, gadā and paśima. The earliest Pancharātra text referring to Him as Vaikuntha is the Jayākhyā Samhitā (LIV) of the Gupta period. According to it, the God is to be shown with four faces and with four hands, the faces being Vaikuntha (Vasudeva), Nṛsiṁha, Varāha and Kapila and with the cognisances śaṅkha, chakra, gadā and padma. There seems to be little doubt that the one-time Viras (heroes) belonging to the Vishnu clan were deified in course of time, very probably in the Gupta period and it was Samba who was ultimately, for reasons unknown, dropped from the list. Again, as the bhakti cult centering round Vasudeva was essentially monotheistic (cf. devadeva of the Besnagar inscription), the emergent vyūha doctrine embodied the concept of one in four, that is, the entities of Saṅkarshana, Pradyumna and Aniruddha were merged into Vasudeva, the god par excellence. And thus the vyūhas are combined into one iconic type. The earliest illustration of the Chaturvyūha concept is of about the third century A.D. and now an exhibit in the Mathura Museum; it shows the god with three busts, one on the top and the two near the shoulders, attached to the main figure; the gadā and the serpenthood behind the bust to the right seem to symbolize his Vasudeva

37 DHI, p. 400.
38 The Vishnudharmottaram (III.65) refers to His eight hands.
and the Saṅkarashaṇa aspects respectively. The full-fledged type is, however, represented by the early medieval image, most of which hail from Kashmir, notably from Mārtanda and Avantipur. While the Mārtanda temple specimens being reliefs are three-faced, images from Avantipur which are in the round are four-faced. Of the four faces, the central one is human, side faces on the right and left are of a lion and a boar respectively, and the back face is of an ugly demon.39 Generally, Viṣṇu-Chaturmūrti holds a lotus and a conch-shell in the front hands while the back hands rest on Chakrapurusha and Gadādevī.40

From these four vyūhas emerge the twenty-four forms of Viṣṇu, generally known as Keśavādi-chaturviṃśatimūrtayah. This group of icons is pretty well-known in literature as well as in art. According to the idea underlying this group, Vāsudeva is the primeval god: he creates Saṅkarashaṇa, Saṅkarashaṇa in his turn Pradyumna and Pradyumna in his turn Aniruddha. From each of these vyūhas descend three sub-vyūhas (vyūhāntaras). To the twelve sub-vyūhas another set of twelve is added and are called together with the latter, the twenty-four forms (chaturviṃśatimūrtayah) of Viṣṇu. There are reasons to believe that the original number of sub-vyūhas was twelve.45a However, as in the case of Chaturmūrti, so also in the case of the Chaturviṃśatimūrti the principle of monothelism was never lost sight of by the expounders of the Pāñcharātra system. Iconically, all these twenty-four varieties are identical, the difference between each of these forms lying only in the order of the attributes—saṅkha, chakra, gada and padma—held by the four hands of the deity.41 All these twenty-four forms are not found together forming a single group in early Indian repertory. Stray images of one or other forms have been discovered throughout the country and are preserved in different museums (see Vol. IV). Iconically, Saṅkarashaṇa and Nṛśimha of the vyūha group are different from their namesakes of the vibhava class.

39 Exceptions to this type are encountered in some specimens. Thus an image, now in the National Museum, shows both the side faces as that of a lion (JASB, XVII, 1951, pp. 251-53, Pl. III). Another example, exhibited in the Srinagar Museum; substitutes the face of the lion by that of a horse (JOI, XXV, 1976, nos. 3-4, p. 338).

40 For Mārtanda temple specimens, see ASI, AR, 1915-16, pp. 62-63 For Avantipur images, see R. C. Kak, Handbook of Archaeological and Numismatic Sections of Pratap Singh Museum, pp. 49-51; also ASI, AR, 1913-14, pl. XXVIII, figs. b-e.

40a See my article 'Pāyaśtrha Pāñcharātra and the Chaturviṃśati vyūha of Viṣṇu' in JAIH, X, 1976-77, pp. 176 ff.

41 The order according to some texts (e.g., Āgniḥpurīna, Chaturvastra-Chintāmani Rūpasamandana) is from the lower right hand, that is, from the lower right, upper right, upper left, lower left; according to others (e.g., Padmapurīna) it is from the upper right hand, that is, upper right, upper left, lower left, lower right.
The comparative abundance of images falling under the vibhava class indicates the wide popularity of the vibhava aspect of Vishnu. The antiquity of the idea of incarnation can be pushed back to the days of the Satapatha Brāhmaṇa and the Taittiriya Saṁhitā. Both these works state that Prajāpati, the creator, assumed the forms of Fish (Matsya), Tortoise (Kūrma) and Boar (Varāha) on different occasions for the continuance of the creation and the welfare of the created. The earliest version of this doctrine of incarnation is found in the Bhagavad-gītā (IV. 7-8) wherein Krishṇa or Krishṇa-Vishnu is represented as the ever-active godhead incarnate. That the Vaishnava-as adopted this doctrine in a special manner will be evident from the conspicuous presence of the Matsya, Kūrma and Varāha forms of Vishnu in the lists of Avatāras, i.e., incarnations of the god. The word avatāra literally means ‘the act of coming down’ and the Vaishnavas believe that their lord ‘creates himself age after age as the conditions in the universe demand’. Thus according to their belief Vishnu had come down to earth on several occasions for the furtherance of the creation. It is supposed that not only Vishnu himself, but even his pārshadas (associates) and his weapons as well incarnated themselves when necessity arose.

Incarnations, literally ‘divine descents’, are innumerable (avatāraḥ hyasainkhyeẏāh, prādurbhācā sahasrāṇi), but in course of time the number came to be stereotyped as ten (daśāvatāraḥ). These ten Avatāras of Vishnu are: Matsya (fish), Kūrma (Tortoise), Varāha (Boar), Narasiṁha (Man-lion), Vāmana (Dwarf), Paraśurāma, Dāsarathi Rāma, Krishṇa, Buddha and Kalki. Some authorities do not consider Buddha to be an Avatāra of Vishnu and replace him by Krishṇa. Depiction of these ten Avatāras together in a row on stone slabs usually placed in different parts of the Vaishnava shrines as decorative reliefs is a common sight in North India. Their representation on one side of the small stone or metal plaques known as Vishnupāṭṭas have been met with in Bengal. In the Chālukyan sculpture the ten Avatāras were carved in a foliage canopy, providing the background of Vishnu icons. Many of the Avatāras were also separately represented, and of them Varāha, Narasiṁha and Vāmana-Trivikrama were more popular than the others. Separate or group representations, however, rarely go back to a period prior to the Kushan age.

The Matsya and Kūrma incarnations may be represented either

42 The number of Avatāras varies in different texts. As for instance, the Matsya-purāṇa, (Ch. 47, V. 6) enumerates seven Avatāras. The Bhājavatapurāṇa has three lists of Avatāras, the number in the first (1.36 ff.) is 22, in the second (11.71 ff.) 33 and in the third (XI. 4.3 ff.) 16. The Sātvata Saṁhitā and the Aḥirbudhnya Saṁhitā raise this number to 39,
theiromorphically or in hybrid form; in the latter the upper half is human and the lower animal. In the hybrid form the human part holds śaṅkha, chakra, gadā and padma in the four hands. Separate representations of these two Avatāras though rare, are not altogether unknown. The sculptures from Garhwa (U. P.) portray the lord in his zoomorphic forms; in his Kūrma representation from this place some human figures are seen churning a rod, presumably the Man-
dāra mountain, on its back. Examples showing the hybrid form of the god are relatively late (see Vol. IV). The next incarnation is also zoomorphic or therianthropic in form; the first type is illustrated by the famous colossal boar at Eran (M.P.) of the Gupta period; it bears tiny human figures on it and holds the Earth-goddess by one of its tusks. The second type is exemplified by a large number of images hailing from different parts of India. One of the earliest representations of Varāhāvatāra is carved on a part of the outer fa-
cade of a fifth-century shrine at Udayagiri near Bhilsa (M.P.); the dynamic figure of the god is sculptured with rows of several tiny figures; some of them have been recognised as 11 Rudras, 12 Ādi-
tyas and 8 Vasus. Of the other specimens those of Mahabalipuram and Badami deserve mention; the latter depicts the god as holding the Earth-goddess on his palm instead of his elbow, a feature not following the usual iconographic prescription. Textually, Narasim-
ha has got as many as five forms: Yoga-Narasimha, Kevala-Nara-
simha, Sthuana-Narasimha, Lakshmi-Narasimha and Yānaka-Narasimha. In art all of them, except the last, are represented, and of them the Sthuana form seems to have been popular. The earliest Narasimha figure is perhaps the one borne by a seal of the Gupta period unearthed at Basarh (North Bihar); the god is portrayed here as seated facing in the lalitāsana pose with his right hand raised and the left resting on hip; this exemplifies the Kevala Narasimha type. Of a later date is a Badami relief which depicts Kevala Narasimha as standing and not seated as required by the texts, and more interestingly, with the Ayudhapurushas. While instances of Lakshmi-Narasimha datable to our period are rare, Sthuana figures are comparatively prolific; in most of them the god is seen as killing the demon Hiranāyaśātipu by felling him on his knees, but in some the actual combat between them has been depicted. The Vāmana (dwarf) and Virāṭa (colossal) aspects of the fifth incarnatory form

43 For Garhwa figures of Mālsya and Kūrma, see Bhattacharya, II, 1, pl. XIII, figs. 1-2.
45 EHI, I, pt. 1, pl. XXXVI; AIA, pl. 282.
46 ASI, AR, 1913-14, pl. XLVI, no. 191.
of the lord are illustrated separately or collectively, Vāmana being two-armed and Virāṭa, designated as Trivikrama, being four- or eight- handed; when both Vāmana and Trivikrama are figured together, the former appears as a young Brahmachāri, holding an umbrella and a staff, and the latter carrying different emblems in his hands, with his right or left foot firmly planted, the other leg thrown upwards as if to attack the heavens; the Mahabalipuram, the Badami and the Ellora reliefs are among the early celebrated illustrations. The next three incarnations, viz., Parasurāma, Dāsarathi Rāma and Balarāma, are fully human and their images, so far found, are seldom endowed with more than two hands, and their varieties are also limited; though they are usually carved in the Daśāvatāra slabs, separate representations of them, particularly of Balarāma, are also known. The characteristic emblem of Parasurāma is paraśu and the attributes of Dāsarathi Rāma are dhanu and bāna. The typical cognisances of Balarāma are hala and mushala, which are met with in his earliest representation on a few bronze coins of Agathocles, unearthed at Ai-Khanum in Northern Afghanistan (p. 862). Another image of Balarāma (now in the Lucknow Museum), more or less of the same period, shows the deity as standing under a canopy of serpenthoods and carrying his characteristic emblems in his two hands.\(^{47}\) In course of time the four-armed variety of the god became popular and is illustrated by a relief of the Paharpur monument (eighth century A.D.), and two ninth-century bronze images, now exhibits in the Patna Museum; in all of them the deity carries a pānapatra (wine-cup) in addition to his usual emblems.\(^{48}\) The next Avatāra is Kṛishṇa, the earliest plastic representation of whom is met with on the other side of the above-noted coins of Agathocles; in it the lord holds a chakra, presumably his cognisance Sudarśana-chakra. In the Daśāvatāra reliefs of subsequent days, however, Kṛishṇa's place was taken by Buddha, evidently because Kṛishṇa was then looked upon as the God himself, in other words, the ever-active god-head (Kṛishṇa-stu Bhagavān svayam). But in the contemporary South Indian repertoire Kṛishṇa was still appearing as an Avatāra. While Buddha is figured in the Daśāvatāra reliefs as standing, with his right hand disposed in the abhayamudrā, independent sculptures illustrating the myths and legends of Kṛishṇa are abundant and have been discovered from different parts of India; one of the earliest such examples has been found at Mathura, belonging to the third century A.D., which depicts the Kṛishṇa-janmāśṭamī scene;

\(^{47}\) DHI, pl. XXII, fig. 4.

\(^{48}\) For the Paharpur specimen, see MASJ, 55, pl. XXVII, fig. b. For the Patna Museum examples, see JISOA, II, pl. XXVIII, 1; EISMŚ, pl. 1b.
another noteworthy piece is a terracotta, which hailing from Rangmahal (Rajasthan), and datable to the fifth century A.D., portrays Krīṣṇa as uplifting the mountain called Govardhana.49 Kalki, the future Avatāra, depicted as an angry man riding on horseback with a sword raised in his hand, is recognisable in the last figure of the Daśāvatāra slabs; normally two-handed, he is described in some texts as also four-handed.50

Images of a few other manifestations and incarnatory forms of Viṣṇu, found in the longer lists of the Avatāras, have also come to light. Thus in one of the niches of the Deogarh temple is seen an elegant relief of Nara-Narāyana (the deified forms of Arjuna and Viṣṇudeva-Krīṣṇa); while the four-armed figure in it stands for Narāyana, that of two-armed one is of Nara, and the faces of both of them beam with tranquillity.51 Similarly, a relief from Amarnath portraits Māndhātā, an Avatāra of Viṣṇu according to some lists (e.g., of the Matsya-purāṇa); in it Māndhātā, also the first paramount sovereign, is seen with his right hand upraised symbolizing, as it were, his assurance to his countless subjects and holding in his left hand the jewel (mani); six other jewels such as chakra, strī, aśva, hasti etc. clustering round him make the total number of jewels seven (saptaratnāni), traditionally associated with him.52 An eighth-ninth century image of a five-faced sthānaka Viṣṇu hailing from Kanauj shows on the top of the central deity a small horse-faced figure carrying a beaded rosary in its right hand and an indistinct object in its left; this figure evidently represents the Hayagrīva incarnation of Viṣṇu.53 Besides such incarnatory forms, different aspects of Viṣṇu are also found to have been occasionally represented. Thus the Deogarh relief illustrates his Gajendra-moksha or Kāra-varada aspect which is connected with the deliverance of Gajendra (the king of elephants) from the clutches of an aquatic monster by him; the relief portrays Viṣṇu with four hands (one hand

49 For details about such Narāyana scenes, JISOA, XIV, pp. 18-20. The Rangmahal terracotta has been illustrated in Goetz, Art and Architecture of Bikaner State, fig. 5.

50 The myth of Kalki seems to have derived an inspiration from the Buddhist lore, according to which Maitreya would come down to earth for the welfare of the sentient beings. The description of Kalki as a horseman is also reminiscent of horseman of the Book of Revelation of the Christians. The belief of many Christians in the second coming of Christ in future may also be noted in this connection.

51 ITS, pl. 9. An example in terracotta, found at Abichhhatra, is now on display in the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Archive of Asian Art, XXIV, 1970-71, pp. 78-79, fig. 3.

52 AIA, pl. 86a; also DHI, pl. VIII, fig. 8.

53 ITS, pl. 16. The sculpture showing Hayagrīva is that of Viśvarūpa Viṣṇu (infra, p. 872).
carrying gada, another on thigh, others broken) and as seated on Garuḍa lying in the air; Gajendra with his legs encircled by serpentine coils of the monster (seemingly a snake), offers flowers in adoration with his upraised trunk. Another image of Vishnu with several accessory figures lying in the courtyard of the Changu temple in Nepal illustrates his Viśvarūpa aspect, so impressively described in the eleventh canto of the Bhagavad-gītā; in this sculpture the god, shown with twelve heads and ten hands (mostly broken), seems to have illustrated his all-embracing and all-pervasive power, the underlying idea of the Viśvarūpa form; while the heaven, earth and nether regions are respectively represented by the Vidyādhāras and Kinnarīs, four couchant elephants and the Nāgas, the figure among others, with folded hands and with a bow hanging from his right shoulder on the right side of Vishnu, stands for Arjuna, to whom the lord revealed his Viśvarūpa form.

Vaishnava theologians and artists also conceived the weapons of Vishnu in human form. Designated as the Ayudhapurushas, they are found in sculptures of the Gupta period generally with Vishnu. In later sculptures their independent representations came in vogue. Thus we get representations of Śankhapurusha, Chakrapurusha, Padmapurusha and Gadādevi, the first three appearing as male and the last one appearing as female figures. Among them chakra and gada in human form are found as early as the Gupta period, while the anthropomorphic representations of śankha and padma (rarely found) are of a relatively late period. Lastly, we find a number of independent illustrations of Garuḍa, in which the mount of Vishnu is shown as a well-built man with two wings and bird-like features such as an aquiline nose and round eyes.

Equally important a member like Vishnu of the Brahmanical triad is Siva and though he is specially connected with the act of destruction (śainhāra) or absorption (pralaya), his devotees associate him with the other two acts, viz., those of creation (śriśhti) and preservation (sthiti), attributed to Brahmā and Vishnu. Siva is also looked

54 AIA, pl. 110.
55 VIN, fig. 19.
56 As for example, in the Abhichāraka-sthānākamūrti (ante, p. 864) and Garuḍāsana mūrti (ante, p. 865). Chakrapurusha and Gadādevi make their appearance.
57 In the earlier phase of his iconography Garuḍa appears as a bird, one of the oldest examples belonging to the art of Sanchi (first century B.C.). His subsequent icons exhibit his hybrid form viz., the body of a man and the face, nose and wings of a bird. In the Mathura Yogāsana Vishnu image (ante, p. 864) he appears as a human being with just a suggestion of tiny wings behind his back.
upon as the performer of the acts of anugraha or prasāda i.e., ‘con-
terment of grace’ and tirobhāva i.e., ‘power of concealment’ or ‘obs-
curation’. All these acts are collectively known as pāñchakṛityyas or
the five-fold activities of the god. Siva is also conceived as a great
yogī, a great exponent of various sāstras, and an adept in dance and
music. As Vishnu is the greatest of all gods (devadeva) to a Vaish-
nava, so to a Śaiva Śiva appears as great lord (Maheśvara) or greatest
of the gods (Mahādeva) and hence the lord of all created beings
(Bhūtapati, Bhūtanātha, Paśupati). Siva, like Vishnu, is known under
several names and as many as one hundred names of the god are
found in the Satarudriya text of the Śukla Yajurveda of the Vājasa-
neyī school of the later Vedic period.

The evolution of the concept of Siva may be traced to the period
of the Indus civilisation and, as has already been noted, the horned
deity of Mahenjo-daro, surrounded by animals, may well be the pro-
totype of Śiva-Paśupati of later days. If so, Siva or proto-Siva was
worshipped by the Indus peoples in the third-second millennium B.C.,
if not earlier. In the Rigveda mention is made of Rudra, a god of
thunder and lightning. Terrific in nature, this Rudra appears also
as a pacific god in later Vedic literature. The word ‘Siva’ is used
as a proper name in the Svetāśvatara Upanishad and not in the Sa-
ṁhitās or in the Brahmanical texts where the word in question
appears as an attributive epithet of several gods with the etymolo-
gical meaning ‘good’ or ‘auspicious’. The appearance of ‘Rudra’ as
one of the several names of Śiva in the Ṛgvedas and the Pūrāṇas as
well as in the Satarudriya text tends to show that Rudra of the Vedic
literature merged with Śiva of the Ṛgvedas and the Pūrāṇas on the one
hand and the proto-Siva of Mohenjo-daro on the other, though the
name of the Indus deity is not known. In other words, the concept
of Pauranic Siva is the outcome of the fusion of a pre-Vedic deity
like Śiva-Paśupati, Vedic Rudra and post-Vedic Śiva. In this respect
Siva is anterior to Vishnu and in his concept one may recognise the
fusion of Aryan and pre-Aryan, in other words Vedic and pre-Vedic,
strains.

When exactly a regular cult round Rudra-Siva did emerge is at
present difficult to determine. On the strength of the literary data
it may, however, be surmised that the cult appeared certainly in the
pre-Christian centuries. Patañjalī’s allusions to Śiva (V. 3. 99), Śiva-
bhāgavatas (V. 2. 36) and a village named ‘Sivapura’ in the Udichya
country read in conjunction with a reference to the skin-clad tribe,
the Siboi or Sibae mentioned by the Classical writers, would show
that the cult of Śiva emerged in all likelihood much before the be-
ginning of the Christian era, probably in the third-second century
b.c. This view seems to be supported by the well-known Śaiva sculpture discovered at Gudimallam (Andhra). Assignable to the first century b.c., this sculpture is a big realistic phallic emblem of Śiva on which is depicted a human figure of the god holding a ram in his right hand and a water-vessel and a battle-axe in his left one; the god stands on a malformed dwarf (apasmārapurursha) and bears the usual characteristics like jatābhāra (matted hair), prominent sex-mark etc. The Gudimallam sculpture depicting Śiva both in his human and phallic forms in one piece indicates the simultaneous currency of aniconism and iconism in India from early times. That the practice of aniconic-iconic mode of representing Śiva continued in later days is testified to by the Mukhaliṅgas and the Liṅgodbhavamūrtis.

Before we describe the Mukhaliṅgas and the Liṅgodbhavamūrtis, we may say a few words about the liṅga or phallic emblem in general. It is in this form of liṅga that Śiva was and still is usually worshipped and in all the Śiva temples, both old and new, the principal object of worship in the sanctum is invariably the phallic emblem of the god. The human figures of Śiva, if any, are found as accessories in different parts of the temple. The phallic emblem is fixed in a circular or a quadrangular receptacle on a monolithic pedestal known as yoni (in South India pānivatam or ēvädaiyār), representing the Female Energy. The Śaiva Āgamas and similar other texts speak of the several varieties of the emblem of which the chief is the Mānushaliṅga (i.e., liṅga made by human hand out of stone). The Mānushaliṅga consists of three parts: Brahmacāra, i.e., the quadrangular bottom of the shaft, Vishnuśālaṇa i.e., the octagonal middle portion and Rudrabhāga (also known as Pūjābhāga since on its top offerings of milk, water, flower etc. are placed), i.e., the circular or cylindrical upper portion. The first two sections are inserted inside the pedestal (piṭhikā) and the ground. Sometimes the Rudrabhāga is marked by certain lines, technically known as brahmaṇaṣṭras. Another kind of liṅga is known as Bāṇalilīṅga which is but a natural stone procured from the bed of the Narmada. It may be noted here that a section of the Śaivas in the South carry these Bāṇalingas on their bodies and daily worship them.

Originally, the aniconic emblem of Śiva might have likened to the shape of a liṅga or phallus, but the gradual change in the taste and outlook of the votaries oriented its shape to such a degree that

58 Another illustration approximating to the Gudimallam sculpture was found at Mathura. It is datable to the close of the second of the beginning of the third century A.D. See HIIA, pl. XVIII, fig. 68.
59 For details see EII, II, pp. 75-99.
a Western scholar went to the extent of tracing its origin in the Buddhist stūpa model. Thus while the Gudimallam Sivalinga and the ‘liṅga with a broadened top’ in the collection of the Lucknow Museum are examples of the realistic emblem, the Sivalinga in the Mathura Museum or the Karamdanda inscribed Sivalinga of the time of Kumāragupta I (Gupta year 117) are much removed from the earlier realism and they assume a conventional character.

The Mukhaliṅgas, later than the types of the realistic lingas like the Gudimallam, depict one or more human faces on them, the faces evidently representing one or more aspects of Śiva. The extant specimens of Mukhaliṅgas usually show one, three and four faces carved on the Rudrabhāga. The earliest of these specimens belongs to the Gupta period and is now in the Lucknow Museum. It is of the Ekamukha type, i.e., it bears one face. Specimens of Trimukha and Čaturmukha types, particularly of the latter, are quite common. As to the Dvimukha type, no specimen has been found as yet, but one sculpture in the Mathura Museum may be interpreted as such.

Līṅgodbhava form or ‘the liṅga manifestation’, as the name implies, usually depicts Śiva within a huge liṅga, the portion of the feet below the ankles being hidden in the liṅga. On occasions Śiva is represented aniconically and in some specimens the liṅga is shown as a blazing column of fire with flames. In such representation Brahmā is shown either in human form or in the form of his swanmount soaring up on the left side of Śiva and Viṣṇu either in human form or in his incarnatory form of the boar delving below into the depths of the earth on his right. The figure emanating from the middle has four hands like Chandraśekhara (see below) and holds in its back arms the axe and the antelope and exhibits the abhaya- and the varada- mudrās in the front hands. In such representation of Śiva a sectarian bias is clear in its attempt to show the greatness of the god at the cost of Brahmā and Viṣṇu, two other members of the triad. Līṅgodbhava form came to be popular in mediaeval times. Among the early representations, the carvings of Mahabalipuram, Ellora, and Mogalrajapuram (near Vijayawada, Andhra) deserve mention, the last one is perhaps the earliest, datable to the sixth century A.D.

61 JISOA, III, pl. VII, fig. 2. An early Ekamukha liṅga (allegedly of the Śuṅga period) is now on display in the Bharāpur Museum.
62 Ibid., fig. 3; for the interpretation, see DHI, p. 461.
63 The relevant examples are furnished, later alia, by a sculpture at Daśavatāra cave at Ellora (see EHI, II, pl. XIV, fig. 17) and a mutilated piece now on display at the Bharat Kala Bhavan, Benaras, (see Chhaw, fig. 344).
Though most of the specimens come from the South, a few have been recovered from the North.  

Human figures of Śiva, though show a multiple variety, can be divided into two broad classes according to their expressions. Thus we have his benign (saumya) and terrific (ugra) figures. These saumya and ugra types are sometimes connected with stories. The non-mythological Śaiva icons of the saumya types are known under various names such as Chandraśekhara or Saśānikaśekhara (when a crescent moon is found on the jatā of the god), Vṛishavāhana (when the god leans against the bull), Vṛishārūḍha (when he is seated on his bull-mount), Umā-Maheśvara or Hara-Gaurī (when he is accompanied by Gaurī or Umā), Somā-Skanda (when he is found with Umā and Skanda) etc. While Umā-Maheśvara was popular in North India, Somā-Skanda was favourite with South Indian artists and devotees. Further, as regards cognisances, trident, rosary and snake are found in North Indian figures, while axe and deer are ubiquitous in South Indian images.

Images designated as Dakshināmurtis and Nṛtyamūrtis can also be included in the class of non-mythological saumya images. In the form of Dakshināmūrti (south-facing) Śiva is the universal teacher; a teacher of yoga and jñāna, a player on vīṇā and an expounder of other śāstras, and thus the corresponding appellations are yoga-Dakshināmūrti, jñāna-Dhakshināmūrti, viṇādhara-Dakshināmūrti and vyākhyāna-Dakshināmūrti. Most of these images are comparatively late in date and hail from South India, though examples from North India and also of an earlier period are not unknown. A reposeful ascetic form of Śiva carved on a terracotta plaque of the late Gupta period discovered at Ahichchhatra, if interpreted as jñāna- or vyākhyāna- Dakshināmūrti, will be the earliest specimen of the class.

Nṛtyamūrtis of Śiva may be included in the category of Dakshināmūrtis, since they demonstrate the skill of the god in the art of dancing, as the viṇādhara-Dakshināmūrtis show him as an adept

64 The above-noted Liṅgodbhavamūrti of the Bharat Kala Bhavan, Varanasi, comes from Etah U.P. It belongs to the ninth century A.D.
65 Some of the early representations of these placid forms include Chandraśekhara of Paharpur (MASI, 55, pl. 30b), Vṛishavāhana of Mahabalipuram (EHI, pl. CXI), Vṛishārūḍha of an unknown findspot (depicted on an intaglio, now in the Indian Museum, DHI, pl. XXXIV, fig. 1), Umā-Maheśvara of Kosam (ibid., pl. XXVIII; fig. 2); Somā-Skanda of Nellore (EHI, II, pl. XXII, fig. 2). It may be noted here that vajra and aikūśa, the characteristic emblems of Indra, sometimes appear in the hands of Śiva on the coins of Kushan rulers; such representations of the god are placid in appearance.
66 DHI, p. 461.
instrumentalist. A marvel of Indian art, the Nrityamurti of Siva symbolizes the philosophy of universal flux. Better known as Nataraja murtis, such icons hail from all parts of India, though South India has yielded the most outstanding type in bronze, earliest such specimens being datable to the Chola regime (ninth century). Regarded as a master-dancer ('nataraja'), Siva is depicted in South Indian bronzes as dancing with the left leg raised, the right resting on the back of the malformed demon Apasmara-purusha (in Tamil Muyalaka); his front left hand is in the dola- or gaja- hasta pose pointing to the raised foot, the front right hand in the abhayamudra, the back right hand holding a kettle-drum or damaru (uduikkai in Tamil) and the back left a ball of fire; the entire composition is placed on a pedestal where the ends of a flamboyant circular or elliptical aureola or prabhav (in Tamil tiruvasi) meet. The symbolism underlying these South Indian Nataraja figures has been explained in Unmai Vilakkom, a Tamil text of the later days thus: 'Creation arises from the drum; protection proceeds from the hand of hope; from fire proceeds destruction; the foot held aloft gives mukti.' Here mukti or release is suggestive of anugraha, and if the prabhavali round him is considered symbolical of the act of obscuration, these bronze Natarajas may be said to symbolize all the five-fold activities (panchakriyatas) of the great god. Though the Nataraja bronzes portray Siva with four hands, more hands are also known. In fact, earlier instances in stone are mostly multihanded. One such specimen of the early sixth century, found at Asanapata (Orissa) and perhaps the earliest of the class, depicts him as urdhvalinga, third-eyed and eight-armed; he carries, among other things, a vina in the main pair of his hands and thus illustrates the combination of his Vindhahara and Natasha concepts. Examples of the ten-, twelve- and even sixteen-handed varieties are also not unknown. It is to be noted that the North Indian and the Deccanese (e.g., the Badami and Ellora reliefs of the seventh and eighth centuries respectively) instances do not show the Apasmara-purusha beneath the legs of the divine dancer, while some of the North Indian figures (e.g., the above-mentioned one from Asanapata) are characterised by the urdhvalinga feature.

Before passing on to the saumya images connected with some sort of story, mention may be made of a few varieties of Saiva icons, which do not fall in either the saumya or the ngra classes of the

67 A. K. Coomaraswamy, Dance of Siva, pp. 87 ff.
68 See my article, 'Iconographical Notes', JAIH, XII, 1978-79, p. 115.
68a For a comprehensive account of Siva-Nataraja, see C. Sivaramamurti, Nataraja, New Delhi, 1974.
present discussion. These consist of composite or syncretistic images like Ardhanārīśvara and Hari-Hara (infra, pp. 911 ff) and representations of Lakulīśa and Sadāśiva (other variety Mahāsadāśiva). Lakulīśa, a second-century Saiva teacher of Gujarat, was subsequently deified and came to be looked upon as an incarnation of Śiva. His earliest representation can be seen on the inscribed pilaster of the time of Chandragupta II; here he has been portrayed as a two-armed and three-eyed figure, holding a club (lakūṭa) in his right hand and an indistinct object, probably a kapāla in the left. Seated images of Lakulīśa with two or four hands holding a lakūṭa in one of them and the characteristic trait of ārdhavaretas (penis erect) are more common than the standing ones and they come mostly from Western and Eastern India. Some of the notable examples have been in different parts of Orissa, mainly at Bhuvaneswar and its neighbourhood.Śadāśiva-Mahāsadāśiva mūrtis of the god illustrate in an esoteric manner some of the principal tenets of Śuddha Śaivism. South Indian in character, they represent the god with multiple hands and with several heads and most of them belong to a late period (see Vol. IV).

Among the mythological placid figures of Śiva mention may be made of Gaṅgādhara- (also known as Gaṅgāvisarjana-), Kalvāna-sundara- or Vaivāhika-, Kīratajuna- or Paśupat-aśtradāna-, Vishnava-vānugraha-, Rāvanānugraha- and Chandesānugraha- mūrtis. Gaṅgādhara-Śiva, as the name implies, held Gaṅga on his head when the latter descended on the earth torrentially. In the centre of a panel at Elephanta\(^{70}\) can be seen Śiva and Umā standing side by side: the back right hand of the god is holding his jatā on which the figure of Gaṅgā is visible (though the figure is mutilated), while the front right is disposed in the abhayamudrā; both the left hands are broken, but the back left hand was apparently near the chin of Umā indicating Śiva’s attempt to appease his consort who felt jealous to Gaṅgā; on the right and near the foot of Śiva is seated Bhagiratha whose austere penances satisfied the god and made him to agree to hold Gaṅgā on his head. In a near-contemporary sculpture carved on the cave-wall at Tiruchchirappalli the same theme is depicted with equal competence, but here the figure of Umā is absent. Kalvāna-sundara or Śiva, the bride-groom, is portrayed in the posture of holding the hand of Pārvatī, the bride (pānigrahana); while in some sculptures (e.g., at Ellora\(^{71}\)) Vishnu has been shown as giving away Pārvatī to Śiva, in others (e.g., at Elephanta\(^{72}\)) Vishnu’s place is given

\(^{69}\) ARB, figs. 62 (Muktesvara temple), 124 (Parśurāmeśvara temple).
\(^{70}\) EHI, pl. XC.
\(^{71}\) Cave XXIX (Dhumar Lena), AIA, pl. 237.
\(^{72}\) EHI, II, pl. CIII.
to Himavān, the father of Pārvatī. The Kirāṭarjuna form, in which the god fought with Arjuna in the form of kirāṭa over a dead boar, has been depicted on the walls of the Svārṇajālēśvara and Śiśirēśvara temples at Bhuvaneswar. Vishnuvānugrahāmūrti is represented, among others, by the Kailāsanātha temple relief at Kanchipuram; Siva is seen here seated on an eminence with his consort and below his seat is Vishnu; the actual scene of presenting the chakra to Vishnu is absent (in later sculptures, however, the scene is depicted). A notable example of Rāvanānugraha-mūrti is furnished by some panels at Ellora. In one of them Rāvana, the demon-king of Lanka, is depicted as uplifting with much effort the mountain Kailāsa, on which are seated Siva and Pārvatī and their attendants. A notable Chaṇḍesānugraha image of our period has been encountered on the wall of the Kailāsanātha temple at Kanchipuram; though much damaged, the relief still enables us to recognise the four-armed Siva and his devotee Chaṇḍesvara with the axe by which he cut down the leg of his father out of unstinted devotion to his god.

The ugra or terrific icons of Siva, unconnected with any story, are known under several names, the generic name being 'Bhairava'. Siva protects the universe (bharana) and he is terrific (bhīshana) and hence his name 'Bhairava'. According to the general textual prescription of Bhairava he should have a fierce look, a yawning mouth, protruding fangs, sharp teeth, a tiger-skin, serpent-thread, a garland of skulls and attributes like triśūla, dhanu, kriyā, khaṭvanāga, pāśa, paraśu etc. We are also told of eight different forms of Bhairava, such as Asitāṅga, Ruru, Krodha, etc.; each one of them is sub-divided into eight different forms, thus making sixty-four in all. Icon-plastic representations of some of them include Vaṭuka-Bhairava and Atiriktaṅga Bhairava. Statues of the first, so far found, are comparatively late (see Vol. IV). The Ellora repertory possesses an image of Atiriktaṅga Bhairava who has been shown with a number of goblins surrounding him and the emaciated figure of Kāli seated near his foot. Besides such Bhairava icons, mention may be made of Kaṅkāla- and Bhikshātana- mūrtis, which are characteristically South Indian. Both these types are practically identical; in both the deity should have attributes like damaru, kapāla, kaṅkāla-danda etc and prominent jātās (in the case of the latter the jātās may also be dishevelled), but in the Bhikshātana-mūrti the person of the divinity should have no kind of clothing and instead there should be a snake tied round the waist. Kaṅkālamūrtis assignable to our

73 Ibid., pl. LI.
74 AIA, pl. 211.
76 For details, ibid., pp. 180 ff.
75 EHI, II, pl. XLIX, fig. 2.
77 Ibid., pl. XLII.
period are so far unknown, whereas the Kailāsanātha temple at Kanchipuram has yielded a good example of the two-armed form of Bhikshāṭanamūrti.\(^78\) In the Bhikshāṭanamūrti the god is said to have begged for food and received it on one occasion from his spouse (known as Annapūrṇā in Bengal).\(^79\) Two other forms of the ugra category are Ekapāda and Virabhadra. In his Ekapāda form the god stands on one leg and is usually ūrdhvalinga; he wears a sarpakunda-la in the right ear and is either two-handed or four-handed. Figures of Ekapāda are encountered on the walls of different Orissan temples (e.g., Siśireśvara at Bhubaneswar) as well as in the State Museum at Bhubaneswar. (see Vol. IV). One of the male companions of the Mātrikās, usually seven in number, \(\text{infra, pp. 895 ff}\) also bears the name Virabhadra and he is seen portrayed in the Mātrikā group of icons of our period \(\text{infra p. 896}\). It may be noted here that though Vātika Bhairava, Bhikshāṭana- and Virabhadra-mūrtis are associated with the terrific aspect of Śiva, icono-plastically they are not often placid in appearance.

Śiva is regarded as a great destroyer and several stories depicting him as such have been woven round him. His images illustrating these anecdotes are therefore not uncommon. The god is said to have killed not only various demons (asuras), but also punished many deities such as Yama, Narasiṃha, Kāmadeva etc. Some of these well-known Samhāramūrtis include, \textit{inter alia}, Andhakāṣuravadhamūrti, Gajāsuraśāṅhāra-mūrti, Tripurāntakamūrti, Kālantaka (Kālāri)-mūrti, Kāmadahana-mūrti and Śarabhesa-mūrti. The Andhakāṣuravadha-mūrti of Śiva is furnished by two examples of Ellora and Elephanta in which the god is represented with eight hands carrying emblems like \textit{trisūla, kapāla, damaru, khadga} etc.\(^80\) Of the Gajāsurasāṅhāra figures one at Vaital \textit{deul} at Bhubaneswar shows the god engaged in the act of slaying Gajāsura with a knife, whose elephant form is met with in the upper right corner of the panel; the human form of the demon lying prostrate serves as the seat of Śiva.\(^81\)

\(^78\) \textit{Ibid.}, pl. LXXXVI.

\(^79\) The illustrations of Annapūrṇā-Pārvatī's offering of alms to her consort, as met with in the panels of Paharpur and Parasurameśvara temples, are conceptually and iconically different from the Bhikshāṭanamūrtis of the South.

\(^80\) \textit{EHI}, II, pls: XLV, XLVII (Dasavatara and Kailasa, Ellora) and XLVI (Elephanta).

\(^81\) \textit{ARB}, pp. 80-81. This specimen does not exactly answer to the descriptions of Gajāsurasāṅhāra-mūrti's found in Rao's work, \textit{op. cit.}, II. pp. 378 ff. It also differs from the illustrations reproduced by Rao, \textit{ibid}. The four-armed figure of a male deity with an elephant behind him carved on the outer face of the low compound wall of the Mukteśvara temple \(\text{ARB, fig. 58}\) may provide another example of Gajāsurasāṅhāra-mūrti of Śiva,
subsequent sculptures the combined form of Andhakāsuravadha- and Gajāsurasamhāra-mūrtis is recognisable. The next form, Tripurāntaka, is represented by two Ellora specimens and a Kailāsanātha temple figure at Kanchipuram; in the one at Ellora82 the ten-handed god stands in his horse-drawn chariot, with face and arms turned towards the three castles (tripura) which he is about to destroy, while in the other83 Siva has only two arms, the right hand carrying the arrow and the left one the bow. In the Kanchipuram relief,84 however, the eight-handed god is seated in the ālīḍhāśana posture in the chariot. While in most such examples the actual castles are seldom or indistinctly shown, in a relief from Pattadakal (eight century, now in the National Museum) the brazen castles are clearly depicted. The two identical reliefs, now in the MGM Museum at Raipur (MP), the eight-armed Tripurāntaka Siva rides on a chariot drawn by bulls instead of horses and further he kills one of the three Asuras, and in these respects these specimens are interesting.85 The Kālāntaka-mūrti, signifying the punishment of Kāla (Yama) by our god for the attempt of the former to take away the life of Mārkaṇḍeya, an ardent devotee of Siva, has been illustrated by two sculptures at Ellora (in the Daśāvatāra and Kailāsa). In the Daśāvatāra cave panel86 Siva is seen issuing from the līṅga, in front of which Mārkaṇḍeya is kneeling with his hands folded; the right leg of the god is buried up to the knee in the līṅga and the left leg is represented as kicking Yama. The Kāmadahana and Sarabhesa images, belonging to a later period, have been described in the next volume.

SORYA

The Indus people, if not their predecessors, seem to have worshipped the Sun as most of other nations of the contemporary world did. At present we have, however, no means to determine the nature of Sun-worship in pre-Vedic India. In the Rigvedic period the Sun was worshipped in his various aspects under names like, Śūrya Savitā, Pūshā, Bhaga, Vivasvān, Mitra, Aryamā and Vishnu each of these names connoting his manifold aspects. Of these Bhaga, Mitra and Aryamā are the Indian equivalents of the Iranian Baga or Bagho, Mithra and Aryaman. An analytical study of the Vedic data would show that the Sun-god was originally an atmospheric deity par excellence and later on he was transformed into a divinity.

82 EHI, II. pl. XXXVII. It is at the Daśāvatāra cave.
83 AIA, pl. 226. It is at the Kailāsa temple.
84 EHI, II. pl. XXXIX.
86 EHI, II. pl. XXXIV. The Kailāsa panel is practically similar to it.
of light known under the principal name Sūrya covering all the Vedic aspects of the Sun.

In connection with the different names of the Sun occurring in the Rigveda and later Vedic texts another designation is met with: Aditya. The word in plural ‘Adityas’ originally meant ‘sons of Aditi’ and according to the derivative meaning it is applicable to all the gods. In a narrower sense, the term Aditya was principally associated with the solar cult, meant to represent the different aspects of Sūrya. The number of Adityas, mentioned as six in the Rigveda (II. 27), increased in the course of time to twelve (Dvādaśāditya). These twelve Adityas, supposed to preside over twelve months of the year, are Dhātā, Mitra, Aryanī, Rudra, Varuṇa, Sūrya, Bhaga, Vivasvān, Pūṣā, Savitā, Tvashṭā and Vishnū (infra, p. 907). Besides the Adityas, there is another group of deities designated as Navagrahas (nine planets) whose names are Ravi, Soma, Maṅgala, Budha, Brihaspati, Sukra, Sani, Rāhu and Ketu (infra, pp. 905-6).

Another deity associated with the solar cult is Revanta, who along with Adityas and Navagrahas are described in the section of minor deities (infra, p. 907).

Like other principal gods Sūrya had also exclusive worshippers of his own who used to look on him as ‘lord of gods’ (cf. deveśvara in the Mahābhārata, II. 46.16). And in the Gupta and the mediaeval times many shrines in his honour were erected by them, especially in Kashmir-Punjab area and Western India. A few South Indian inscriptions of the ninth century also refer to Aditya- griha (Sun-shrines), though extant remains of a separate Sun-temple in South India do not go beyond the twelfth century.

There are reasons to believe that the Magas or the Mitra-worshipping priests of ancient Iran, some of whom had settled in India in pre-Christian centuries, contributed much towards the origin and development of the cult and iconography of the god. Thus Varaṁamihira, the author of the Brihatsaṁhitā (LIX 19), observes that the Magas are the proper persons to install an image of Sūrya in temples. Alberuni also seems to be aware of this fact since he records that the ancient Persian priests who had settled in India during his time were known by the name of Maga. Indeed, there seems to be little doubt that this band of Iranians was responsible to a great extent in popularising and spreading the cult of Sūrya in India.

The actual mode of worship of Sūrya, as in the case of other gods, is two-fold: aniconic and iconic. Originally, Sūrya as an atmospheric deity was worshipped by means of symbols. The Vedic people represented Sūrya in the form of a wheel or disc. This aniconic mode lingered on in later days. The Sāmbapurāṇa, a work of about the
eight century, says (XXIX. 2-6): 'In ancient times there was no image (of the Sun); the Sun was worshipped in a circle. The Sun, worshipped by his devotees in early days, was circular, just as there is the disc (of the Sun) in the sky.' Motif of a wheel, a disc, or a lotus flower on some of the earliest punch-marked and cast coins of India usually taken by scholars as standing for Sun. The coins of the Uddehikas and the Mitra chiefs of Pañchâla like Sûryamitra and Bhûnumitra bear on their reverse a disc on a pedestal, the disc presumably representing the Sun.\textsuperscript{87}

The practice of worshipping the Sun in anthropomorphic form also emerged in pre-Christian centuries. On a railing at Bodhgaya\textsuperscript{88} he rides on a one-wheeled chariot drawn by four horses; his female attendants shown as shooting arrows are Ushâ and Pratyushâ respectively, personifying the different aspects of 'Dawn' dispelling darkness. Incidentally, this Bodhgaya Sûrya bears a resemblance with Helios (the Greek Sun-god) riding on a four-horsed chariot as figured on the coins of the Bactrian Greek king Plato (probably of the line of Eukratides).\textsuperscript{88a} It cannot be suggested, however, that the Bodhgaya sculpture was modelled on the coin-device of Plato. The Bhaja relief\textsuperscript{89} depicts a figure, perhaps the Sun-god, as riding in the company of two ladies in a chariot, the wheels of the car passing over malformed nude demons, personifying darkness. These two reliefs of the first century B.C. discovered from widely separated regions are the earliest human representations of Sûrya. They have some striking affinity with a relief of the second century discovered at Lala Bhagat near Kanpur (U.P.) in which the god is shown as riding on a chariot drawn by four horses; and as in earlier instances, here also he is shown in the company of two women, one holding an umbrella on his head, the other probably carrying a fly-whisk.\textsuperscript{90}

Coming to other images of the early Christian centuries, our attention is drawn to the repertories of Gandhâra and Mathurâ. While the Bhaja and Bodhgaya reliefs show the god barebodied with his legs invisible, hidden under the chariot, the Gandhâra and Mathurâ figures have heavy tunics and boots, both alien in character, like those of Kushâna monarchs as portrayed on their coins and in sculp-

\textsuperscript{87} THAI, pl. IV, 60, IX, 140, 141 etc.; CCBM (AI), pp. 193 ff., 195 ff.
\textsuperscript{88} HIIA, pl. XVII, fig. 61.
\textsuperscript{88a} CCBM (GSK), pl. VI, fig. 11.
\textsuperscript{89} AIA, pls. 40-41, E. H. Johnston recognises in this composition the depiction of the story of the war between Sakra and the Asuras as narrated in the Samyutta Nikâya, JOSOA, VII, pp. 1-7.
\textsuperscript{90} DHI, pl. XXIX, fig. 1,
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A few Mathurā specimens have an additional feature, probably alien in character, consisting of the Sun-disc or nimbus behind the head of the deity and a pair of short wings attached to his shoulders (are these wings the traces of the early Vedic mythology of the Sun as a bird?). These non-Indian iconographic features of Gandhāra and Mathurā images of Śūrya may be due to the influence of the Sun-cult of the Iranian Magi priests. The probability is enhanced by Varāhamihira’s prescription that in his image the Sun-god should be shown not only in the dress of the ‘Northerners’ (udichyavesha), but also as wearing a viyaṅga (the Indianised form of the Persian waist-girdle Aiwiyaonghen). The udichyavesha, as apparent from extant specimens, consisted of the long coat and boots, though textual evidence expressly referring to boots, is unavailable.

Though a few representations of Śūrya of the Gupta period, like the standing examples discovered at Niyamatpur and Kumarpur (Rajshahi, Bangladesh) and Bhumara (M.P.), seem to have still conformed to the injunctions as laid down in the Brīhatsaṁhitā, the Matysapurāṇa and the Vishnudharmottara (cf. the features like long tunic, viyaṅga etc.), there are images of the same epoch which demonstrate an attempt on the part of Indian artists to represent the god divested of foreign elements (e.g., the Deora sculpture, see below). Thus sometime after the sixth century, the period of Varāhamihira and the Bhumara and allied reliefs, the long coat disappeared leaving the upper part of the body of the god bare, the boots only surviving. A rare exception has, however, been found in two identical sculptures, now in the Museum at Maldah, West Bengal; in them the god, as in South Indian instances (see below), is without boots. With the passage of time the boots also seem to have received scant attention and what appear to be boots in them are ‘nothing but the finished outlines of Śūrya’s uncarved legs’.93

Śūrya had already become marked by his characteristic cognisances, viz., two full- or half-blown lotuses held in two hands, as evidenced by statuaries of Niyamatpur, Kumarpur and Bhumara (the object held by the god in his right hand in an early Mathurā

91 For alien elements in such Śūrya icons, see Agrawala, V. S., Handbook of the Sculptures in the Curzon Museum of Archaeology, Muttra, p. 52.

92 For Niyamatpur and Kumarpur sculptures, see Majumdar, R. C., History of Ancient Bengal, p. 155. For Bhumara image, see Banerjee, R. D., Siva Temple of Bhumara, pl. XIV, a.

93 ESB, fig. 9. The Deora sculpture has an affinity with the contemporaneous image of the god found at Kashipur (24 Parganas, West Bengal), now in the Asutosh Museum, Calcutta (DHI, p. 498, pl. XXVIII, fig. 4). The way in which the horses are delineated and the two demons are depicted beneath the chariot in the latter specimen is reminiscent of the technique evidenced by the Bhaja and Lala Bhagat statuaries.
relief is also perhaps a lotus-bud while that in the left is a short sword) and Varāhamihira's prescription. In the images of the Gupta and the post-Gupta periods two more iconographic features come to the view, which became stereotyped in course of time; the number of horses of the chariot became seven, instead of the earlier four and the number of attendants of the god also increased. Besides Uṣā and Pratyushā, Daṇḍī (or Daṇḍa) and Piṅgala, scribe and aide-de-camp respectively, Chhāyā and Suvarchasā, his queens, and charioteer Aruṇa. For instance, Daṇḍī and Piṅgala are present in the Niyamatpur and Kumarpur reliefs, wearing alien dress and holding their respective attributes, a staff and a lotus, and a pen and an inkpot. In the Deora (Bogra, Bangladesh) image of the late Gupta period Śūrya is accompanied by his charioteer driving a seven-horsed car, besides Uṣā, Pratyushā, Daṇḍī and Piṅgala, the god is here clad in a dhoti tied round the waist by a girdle clasped in front, carrying in his two hands the usual emblems, lotus stalks with sprouting branches of flowers; a sword hanging on his left side and the boots on his legs are partially visible. Śūrya is generally shown as standing, but his seated images are also not rare. A metal image of the seventh or eighth century, discovered at Deulbadi (Comilla, Bangladesh), portrays the Sun-god as seated inside a one-wheeled chariot drawn by seven horses (the horses are shown on the pedestal); adorned with a prominent girdle round the abdomen, the deity carries the usual emblems and is accompanied by Daṇḍī and Piṅgala, and Uṣā and Pratyushā. A comparative study of the Kushāṇa and Gupta examples, some of which have been described above, will thus reveal the gradual Indianisation of the Śūrya icons.

Notice need also be taken of South Indian images for some of their distinctive features. Thus mention may be made of an image hailing from Gudimallam, assignable to the seventh century. It shows the god as standing bare-footed on a pedestal without Aruṇa or the seven horses; the upper part of the body is left bare and the hands of the god lifted, up to the level of the shoulders carry two lotus-buds. There are some South Indian examples (image from Melcheri in Madras, and the well-known Ellora relief), however, in which Aruṇa and seven horses have been shown.

To what an extent the geographical factor has been operative in Indian iconography is borne out by the differences in Śūrya icons of North and South India. In South India, precisely in the Tamil country, Śūrya is found with the following characteristics unknown to North Indian repertory: first, his legs and feet are always left bare; second, his hands are lifted up to the level of the shoulders and

94 IBBSDM, pl. LIX.
are made to carry half-blossomed lotuses; third, he is bedecked with an udarabandha (different from viyangā), fourth, he is almost always alone, bereft of his retinue; and lastly, the chariot or the horses drawn by Aruṇa are absent. Iconographic differences in the representation of the Sun-god may have been based on geographical and environmental factors. While the Iranian Magi cult exerted its influence on the iconic form of Sūrya in Northern India, it was hardly felt in the South, where indigenous tradition was more effective.

DEVI

Though the concept of a central goddess Devī as Sakti (Female Creative Principle) is of relatively late origin, the worship of a female divinity symbolising this Sakti in various aspects, especially in that of the Universal Mother, existed from a very early time. It was widespread from Greece to India and the modes of this worship were both iconic and aniconic. Thus while the female statuettes discovered at the pre-Harappan and Harappan sites, resembling those found in other parts of the contemporary world, stand for the concrete representation of this Mother-goddess, the ring-stones unearthed at the Indus sites may be regarded as her aniconic emblems (supra, p. 856). Apart from these female figurines and ringstones, a few Indus seals also deserve attention in this context. Thus the figure of a nude female shown upside down with legs wide apart, and a plant issuing from her womb carved on an oblong Harappan seal seemingly articulates the idea of a goddess as the main source of nourishment. A Mohenjodaro seal showing a deity between two trees may be regarded as a tree-goddess and a prototype of the figure of Lakshmi of the historic times depicted as standing on the pericarp of a lotus flower with a lotus and leaves on long stalks spreading on her sides. In the light of the evidence of such proto-historic relics it is reasonable to believe in the existence of the Sakti cult in the period of the Indus civilization, and also perhaps in the pre-Harappan epoch. In the following age, represented by the Vedic literature, the female deities seem to have occupied a

95. The genesis of the worship of a female divinity, presumably the Mother-Goddess, may be traced back to the Stone Age and Early Neolithic Group. Objects like the famous 'Venus of Willendorf' and the figure from Menton (AIA, I, pl. A 9 b and c; hailing from Europe datable to the Aurignacian period of the Stone Age (c. 40,000-20,000 B.C.) are perhaps the earliest human efforts to express the idea of universal motherhood, closely approximating to, if not coinciding with, the one of Hindu Jyotirmātā and auroaprāṇīchajānāni. Indeed, these pre-historic figurines are the predecessors of the proto-historic and historic statuettes of Mother-goddess of India.

96 Vats, M.S., Excavations at Harappa, II, pl. XCI, fig. 304; also MIC, pl XII, fig. 12.

97 MIC, pl. XII, fig. 18.
comparatively subordinate position in relation to the gods like Indra, Varuṇa, Rudra, Soma and others; and in fact the goddesses were outnumbered by the male divinities in the Vedic pantheon. Nevertheless, a few female deities like Aditi, Ushā, Sarasvati, Prithivi and Vāk, figuring in the earliest Vedic text, the Rgveda, appear to have been held in high esteem by the Vedic Aryans. The well-known Rigvedic hymn (X. 125), described as Devī-sūkta, in the post-Vedic texts, identifying Vāk (the Vedic counterpart of the Greek Logos) with the Primal Energy of life, 98 tends to show the prevalence of the cult of Sakti in the Vedic period. Indeed, the increasing importance of this cult will be borne out by the data contained in the late Vedic texts, such as the Vājasaneyi Saṁhitā of the Sukla Yajurveda, Taithtiriya Aranyakā, Kena- and Mundaka- Upanishads. The ‘mother’ (the most popular one), ‘daughter’ and ‘sister’ aspects of the great goddess, as delineated in these late Vedic texts, were elaborated in the Epics and Purāṇas. 99

The uninterrupted existence of the worship of a female divinity in one or various of her aspects is attested by the evidence of the archaeological relics of the historic period as well. The circular steatite and stone discs of the Maurya-Śuṅga period, discovered at Taxila, Patna, Benares and other places, bearing nude female figures and other vegetal and animal motifs on them, are illustrative in this context; with a hole at the centre, these discs may justifiably be regarded as the successors of the proto-historic ring-stones and fore-runners of yantras of the later Tantric Saktism. These nude female figures, identical inter alia with the one depicted on a gold leaf found at Lauriya-Nandangarh of the Maurya-Śuṅga age, may be taken as

98 The tenth maṇḍala of the Rgveda which contains this sūkta is, however, regarded as later than the other maṇḍalas. Nevertheless, many age-old elements of thought and beliefs seem to have been embedded in this sūkta. The occurrence of the very word sakti in the sense of the generative power in the Rgveda seems to be significant in this context.

99 Ambikā appears as the sister of Rudra in the Vājasaneyi Saṁhitā (III. 57) and as the wife of Rudra in the Taithtiriya Aranyakā (X.18) and the latter relationship came to stay in the subsequent period; incidentally, Śāyaṇa while commenting on this passage calls Ambikā as Pārvatī, the mother of the whole universe. Umā-Haimavatī is described as the daughter of the Himalaya mountain in the Kena Upanishad (III. 25). The goddess is figured in her Kanyā-Kumārī or virgin-daughter aspect in the Taithtiriya Aranyakā (X.1); incidentally, that a section of the Hindus in the extreme south reserved their veneration for the virgin-daughter aspect of the divinity, presumably from a time earlier than the beginnings of the Christian era, has been attested by the Periplus of the Erythrean Sea (Section 58) written by an anonymous Greek author of the first century A.D. See W. H. Schoff’s translation, p. 46.
representing the Mother-goddess. Collectively, these objects and the Yakshi images of the same epoch furnish the evidence of the prevalence of the cult of Sakti in the two or three centuries preceding the Christian era.

With the development of Pauranic religion in the Gupta period Devi in one or several of her forms and aspects came to be associated as consort with different male divinities. The underlying reason for the phenomenon is the concept of her being the Universal Mother (sarvpapāṇīchajananī, 'the creator of the world out of her womb'). Though she is usually looked on as the energy of Siva, she is also associated with Vishnu, the other major god of the Brahmanical pantheon; and also occasionally she appears as an embodiment of the combined energy of all the male divinities in order to deliver the latter from the jeopardy created by the demons. Apart from her association with her male consorts, Devi is independently represented in her diverse forms and her images are divisible into two classes according as they illustrate her saumya and ghora aspects.

As a consort of Siva, Devi in her placid form, is known under names like Durgā, Chaṇḍi, Gaurī, Parvati etc., and a lion invariably appears as her mount. One of the earliest representations of Durgā is figured on the obverse of a few copper coins of Azes of the first century B.C., clad in himation, the goddess holds in her upraised hand a lotus, the other hand being akimbo; the forepart of a lion beside her as well as the bull on the reverse makes her identification with Durgā-Sīmhashāni highly probable. On some coins of Huviśka (second century A.D.) the deity appears as Umā (Ommo written in Greek characters). Likewise she appears in her placid aspect on sculls recovered from different parts of India; thus the figure of a female deity carrying a wreath in her left hand and a four-pronged object in the right carved on a terracotta seal which has been found at Raighat (U.P.) may stand for Durgā; the accompanying legend Durggah in the Gupta script lends support to the contention. Same is the identification of the figure with a trident-axe in her right hand (the other hand is on the hip), standing by the side of a bull, the

100 For Laturia-Nandangarh relief, see AIA, I, B 3a; and HIA, pl. XXX, fig. 105. This relief, once assigned to the eighth or seventh century B.C., is now assigned to the Maurya-Sugra period.

For stone and steatite discs from Taxila see Marshall, Taxila, 2, pl. 147 b, c, d and g; from Rupar, see Lalit Kala, 1-2 (1955-56), pl. XLVI, no. 12; from Patna, see IBRS, XXXVII, 1951, pls. V-IX. etc. For Raigh (Rajasthan) finds of statuettes of nude and semi-nude goddess see Puri, K. N., Excavations at Raigh, pls. XII-XIII.

101 CCBM, GSK, pl. XIX, 5; CCPM, pl. XII, 906.

102 DHI, pl. XLIII, fig. 2.
mount of her consort, borne by a seal unearthed at Bhita (U. P.). A fine image of Devī in her saumya aspect of the Gupta period comes, however, from Nālandā, which has yielded some seals bearing the figure of Devī in her terrific aspect as well (see below); made of bronze, the statue shows the three-eyed goddess in the samapadasthānakā pose carrying in three of her hands a rosary, a hooked staff and a water-vessel, the other hand being broken; the interesting feature of this example lies in the depiction of a creeping godhā (iguana) near her right leg, which subsequently became a well-known cognisance in the Devī icons; on the lower section of the image her lion-mount and a bull(?) have been shown.103 Another near-contemporary bronze sculpture of this Nalanda statue has been discovered at Deulbadi (Bangladesh); it portrays an eight-armed deity in the samapadasthānakā on the back of a lion couchant on a double lotus and a triiratha pedestal in the company of two chowry-bearing female figures; described as 'Sarvānāi' in the inscription on the pedestal, the goddess carries in her hands śara, khadga, chakra, śaṅkha, triśūla, ghanṭā, kheṭaka and dhanu. Sarvānāi is same as Pārvatī and Gaurī, Sarva being one of the several names of her consort, Śiva. Though this image shows her with eight hands, she was usually portrayed with four hands and in the sthānakā pose in early mediaeval Bengal; in such specimens the deity is seen with a lingam-and-rosary, triśūla, paradamudrā or pomegranate and a vase in the hands and a godhā—usually on the pedestal of her image;104 and that this type migrated to the lands beyond the seas even has been attested by the discovery of similar statues from Java.105 It may be noted here that while in North India and the Deccan separate shrines were occasionally erected for Pārvatī, in the Far South she was normally worshipped in the company of Śiva and their son Śkanda (such iconic representations are known as Soma-Śkanda ante, p. 876).106 Similarly, the Annapūrṇa ('bestower of food') aspect of Pārvatī has been noticed in the art of North India and not in that of the South. A chaitya on the southern facade of the śikhara of Parasurāmēśvara temple at Bhuvaneswar contains a relief in which Śiva is seen with a chhātra in his right hand and a cup in his extended left in which Annapurṣā is giving alms. Another figure of Annapūrṇā is supplied by the Paharpur repertory.

Two other major placid forms of Devī are Lakṣmī and Sarasvatī, who may be termed vyantara devatās (intermediate divinities). In

103 JRAS, 1897, p. 324; DHI, pp. 126-27.
104 IBBSDM, pl. LXX.
106 Note, for example, the shrines of Pārvatī at Ellora and Elephanta and the Gaurī and Pārvatī temples at Bhuvaneswar.
other words, they were originally, like many others, folk deities and were subsequently absorbed in the Brahmanical pantheon. However, both Lakshmi and Sarasvatī (variantly, Śrī-Lakshmi and Puruṣottama-Sarasvatī) are usually portrayed as attendants of Viṣṇu, though their separate representations are not unknown. The goddess of wealth and prosperity and an ideal of feminine beauty, Lakshmi in earlier instances is seen as standing or seated on a lotus (padmāsthā) and holding a lotus in one of her hands (padmadharā), the other hand being in the kaṭihausta pose (rarely this hand carries a pādma); two elephants consecrate her by pouring waters from two pitchers. Iconographically, this type is known as Gaja-Lakshmi or Abhishekā-Lakshmi and some of its earliest representations are encountered in the art of Bharhut-Sanchi (second-first century B.C.) as well as on contemporary monetary issues. Of the effigies of the early centuries of the Christian era mention may be made of the Kailāsa (Ellora) example; in it the goddess is seated on a lotus in a lotus-pond in the company of some attendants and her lotus-seat is supported by two Nāgas. Images of Lakshmi without the attendant elephants are also not uncommon and apart from her prototype recognisable in the famous Śīramā devatā of the Bharhut art, she may be identified with some of the lotus-bearing female figures on early Indian coins. A series of the Kuṇinda coins (second or first century B.C.) bear on them a standing female figure with a lotus in her right hand (the other in the kaṭihausta pose) and a stag as her attendant, as it were; the stag here may stand for her theriomorphic representation; Alternatively, most probably as her vāhana the animal presents her in a composite form to be termed Durgā-Lakshmi and in support of this suggestion may be furnished the evidence of the relief of Gaja-Lakshmi riding on a lion (Durgā's

107 The appellation Vyāntara devatā, applied to Lakshmi, Sarasvatī, Gaṇeśa, Skanda, Yakshas, Gandharvas etc., occurs in the Jaina canonical literature.

108 In South India Puṣṭi-Sarasvatī is replaced by Bhūdevī in Vishnuite icons.

109 See, for the cc.in of Kausambi, CCBM, AI, pl. XX, 15; for coins of Viśākha-deva ibid., pl. XVI, 14; for coins of Siva-datta, ibid. pl. XLIII, 5; for coins of Azilises, CCFM, pl. XIII, 333; for coins of Rajuvula, CCBM, AI, pl. XXVI, 1; for coins of Suṣiṣa, ibid., pl. XXVI, 16. The device of Gaja-Lakshmi is seen not only on monetary issues of late rulers like Śaśāṅka and Jayanāga (CGE, pl. XIXA, 8-9, 11-13), but also on seals attached to land-grants of rulers of ancient and early mediaeval India. She is figured on numerous seals unearthed at places like Basarh, Nalanda, Bhitā etc; on them she usually exhibits a lotus in one hand and vāra in the other. For details regarding the representation of Gajalakshmi on seals, see K. K. Thapliyal, Studies in Ancient Indian Seals (Lucknow, 1972), pp. 179 ff and for Lakshmi, ibid., pp. 176-78.

110 In the Kalakāra Jātaka Śrī or Śirimā has been described as the goddess of luck and fortune.
mount) found at Bīlsad, U.P. (datable to the Gupta period) and the images of Durgā shown with both lion and stag (Tamil kalaiman) met with in Tamilnad.111 As regards Sarvaṭi, the Hindu goddess of learning,112 her prototype may be recognised in a female figure on a Bharhut railing; in it she is standing on a lotus-pedestal (it is indicative of her divine character) and is playing a harp or vīnā, a characteristic attribute of the goddess in later days. Apart from the well-known image from Mathurā, datable to the second century A.D., showing the deity with a pustaka, another distinctive emblem, which is actually affiliated with Jainism,113 an early representation of Brahmanical Sarvaṭi is found on the coinage of the Bengal king Samāchāradeva (sixth century A.D.); on the reverse of such coins the goddess stands on a lotus-bed with her left hand resting on a lotus and drawing up another lotus in front of her face in the posture of smelling it by her right hand; below her right hand is a goose, her characteristic vehicle, which is trying to snatch at a lotus-leaf in its front by its open beak.114 Examples of the seated variety are furnished, inter alia, by the icons from Bhubaneswar. One such instance is met with in a niche of the compound wall (on its outer face) of the Muktesvara temple (ninth century), shows the goddess as seated on a lotus carrying a vīnā with two hands and with two female attendants on both sides. A few significant and elegant images of Sarvaṭī (e.g., an image showing a ram in place of her swan-mound, now in the Rajshahi Museum) belong to a late period (see Volume IV).

Before we pass on to the well-known iconic type called Mahishamardini, which illustrates the ghora or terrific aspect of Devī, mention need be made of a few Śaktī deities, mostly of the folk affiliation and benign in form and character. Of them Ekānaṁśā is associated with Kṛishṇa and Balarāma as their sister and in plastic representations she appears in between them. In an Ellora panel she holds a lotus-bud in her upraised right hand and places the other hand on the waist; and as usual she is flanked by her brothers. In a relief (tenth century), now in the Lucknow Museum115, Ekānaṁśā car-

111 THAI, pp. 100-101. For relevant Kuninda coins, ibid., pp. 91-93, pls. II-III, nos. 42-51. Figures of the goddess, accompanied by both stag and lion, are encountered at Mahabalipuram and Kanchipuram.

112 The Vedic river Sarvaṭī, associated with the composition of many a hymn, was logically transformed into the goddess of learning in later days.

113 Smith, V. A., Jata Antiquities from Mathura, pl. XCIX.

114 CGE, pl. XIX A. 7. A sealing from Bhita shows a vase on a pedestal and the legend Sarvaṭī in Gupta characters.

115 Prayag Dayal, who first published this panel in JUPHS, VIII, 2, 1935, identified the male figures as Rāma and Lakṣmana and the central figure as Śiva. The
ries a full-blown lotus in her left hand and exhibits the vara-mudrā in the right in the company of Krishṇa and Balarāma. Another Sakti deity, who became popular in Tamilnadu during our period, was Jyesṭhā. She was known as Alakshmi and the elder sister of Lakshmī and was worshipped for warding off evil. One of her earliest representations has been noticed in the Kailāsānātha temple at Kanchipuram. In a statue at Mylapore near Madras the two-armed goddess, seated in bhadrāsana, exhibits abhaya in her right hand and places the left hand on her thigh; to her right is seated a bull-faced figure, supposedly her son and to her left is seated a young maiden, presumably her daughter. Representations of the river-goddesses, Gaṅgā and Yamunā, appeared in the Gupta period on either side of her door-jambs or of the doorway lintels of the temples like those at Ahichchhatra (U.P.), Tīgawa and Bhumara (M.P.) and Dah Parvatiya (Assam). In their life-size clay statues, recovered from Ahichchhatra, Gaṅgā and Yamunā have been shown on their respective mounts, makara and kūrma, and with a water-jar in the left hand of each of them; while both the deities are attended by dwarfish female figures holding parasols over their heads. Gaṅgā is significantly endowed with the third eye on her forehead (indicative of her śaivite association). The graceful river-goddesses of Dah Parvatiya are, however, holding pearl necklaces, in place of water-jars. It may be noted here that the prototype of Gaṅgā seems to have been furnished by a makaravāhinī female figure carved on a Bharhut railing. The snake-goddess, usually known as Manasā in Bengal, is represented among others, by a relief hailing from Birbhum; in it the deity is seated on a lotus placed over a jar from which two serpents are coming out and she is holding a hooded snake in her left composition, actually represents the Ekānaṁśā triad. It may be noted that this effigy at Ekānaṁśā does not conform to the usual textual description, according to which the deity when two-armed, should bear a lotus in her right hand (not in the left as in the present instance) and place the left on her hip. The Brhatsamhitā (LVII. 37-39) refers to the four- and eight-armed forms of the deity, but no images answering to them have yet come to light.

116 EHI, I, pl. CVXI. Jyesṭhā images appear for the first time at Kailāsanātha. The counterpart of Jyesṭhā in Bengal is Sītalā, who like the South Indian deity, rides on a donkey. She is worshipped even now as the goddess of small-pox.

117 For reproductions of the images of these river-goddesses from Ahichchhatra, now in the National Museum, see V. S. Agrawala, Studies in Indian Art (Varanasi, 1965), pls. V and VI.

118 ASI, AR, 1924-25, pl. XXXII a-b.

119 Barua, B. M., Bharat, III, pl. LXVI, 77. The deity is seen urging her mount to move fast with a goad which she carries in her right hand.
hand (the object in the other hand is indistinct); she is flanked by Jaratkāru and Āstika, her consort and son. Effigies of the goddess, known by the generic name of Nāgini, are prolific in other parts of India. To our period also belongs a group of images, usually encountered in Bengal and Bihar. A typical example of this group depicts a female deity lying on a bed with a male child lying by her side and attended by females; miniature figures of Siva-liṅga, Kārttikeya, Ganesa and the Navagrahas are seen near the top portion of the relief, the scene of Krishna’s nativity has, most probably been delineated in such compositions.

The ugra aspect of Devi is best known in her representation stylized Mahishāsuramardini (or simply Mahishamardini). The earliest image of Mahishamardini has been furnished by a first century terracotta plaque discovered at Nagar in Rajasthan; in it the four-armed goddess is seen lifting up the buffalo (the theriomorphic form of Mahishāsura) on to her knees, as it were, by her front right hand, and pulling out the tongue of the animal by the left and carrying a triśila and a rectangular khetaka in her rear right and left hands respectively; her leonine mount is visible in the lower right portion of the plaque. To the Kushāna period also belong a number of examples in some of which the goddess is six-armed. What deserves to be noted is that in most of them, as in the Nagar plaque, the right hand of the deity is on the back of the animal, while the left is pulling out its tongue, as it were. And that this type was popular in later days will be attested by a sandstone relief from Bhitā (U.P.)

120 DHI, p. 250.
121 See for instance, the statue found at Satna (M.P.; now in the Indian Museum) bearing the inscription Śrī Nāgini on the pedestal. Incidentally, the figure of a seven-hooded Nāgini playing on a vina discovered at Khisging and identified by Banerjea with Sarasvatī (DHI, p. 378, pl. XX, 2) seems to represent Manasā whose affinity with Sarasvatī is articulate in the dhyānas of the former (e.g., like Sarasvatī she rides on a swan and carries a pustaka).
122 Most of these Mother-and-child compositions belong to the eleventh-thirteenth centuries. Kārttikeya, Ganesa, Navagrahas and a Sīvaliṅga do not always simultaneously occur in these slabs. Bhattachari recognises in the relevant scene the representation of the Sadyojāta aspect of Siva, op. cit., pp. 134 ff. For reproductions of some specimens, see EISMS, pls. XLIX b, L, a-d, JBR5, XLV, p. 481, IBBSDM pl. LIII b. I have traced a good example in the collection of the Mohant of Bodhgaya.
123 Lālt Kala, 1-2, 1955-56, pp. 73-74 and pl. XVIII, 1. A few more examples of this type have been recovered from Nagar, the findspot thus presumably being an area of the cult of Mahishamardini. Similar representations of the divinity of the Kushāna age have been found at Mathura and Bēsmāgari (see JUPHS, XXII, 1949, pp. 152-59; PIHC, 1948, pp. 96-100). All these pre-Gupta icons therefore necessitate the modification of Banerjea’s remark that “extant Mahishamardini images... can hardly be dated before the Gupta period” (HCFF, IV, p. 442).
and a few terracotta figurines from Ahichchhatra, all datable to the Gupta period. Thematically, the large number of Mahishamardini icons found in different parts of India and belonging to different culture-epochs, are divisible into three types: in the first, the buffalo-demon is shown theriomorphically; in the second, in hybrid form; and in the last, in human form. In respect of the expression of the goddess too, such images may be divided into three groups: the first group consists of examples which show the goddess as killing the buffalo-demon either by uplifting him on to her knees and squeezing him by his throat (as in the case of the aforesaid Nagar plaque where the demon is represented in his zoomorphic form) or by thrusting her trident into the body of Mahishasura (usually in such cases the demon is seen coming out of the decapitated body of the animal); in the second group the deity is portrayed as vigorously fighting with Mahishasura; and the third group, which comprises sculptures hailing from Tamilnadu, depicts the goddess as standing on the severed head of the buffalo. The number of hands of Devi also vary from two to thirty-two, though images endowed with more than twelve hands are of a late period (see Vol. IV). The extension of the Nagar type is recognised, inter alia, in a panel of the Bhumara temple of the Gupta period: here the four-armed goddess has been shown as thrusting the trident into the body of the animal by her front right hand and lifting it by the hind leg with the left; she is carrying a sword and a shield in her rear right and left hands respectively.  

124 Banerjee, R. D., Siva Temple of Bhumara, pl. XIV b. This relief was once believed to be the oldest representation of Mahishamardini (IHQ, 1945, XXI, pp. 228-29; ibid., 1948, XXII, p 154).

125 CASR, X. The relief, though believed by most scholars as a work of the Gupta period on account of its occurrence in the cave of Chandragupta II (on its wall is inscribed his epigraph), we are inclined to place it in the early mediaeval period. Such multi-armed divine figures in the Gupta or pre-Gupta periods are unknown. The appearance of this sculpture also does not necessarily imply its synchronisation or proximity with the Chandragupta inscription in point of date.
tuft.\textsuperscript{126} In a relief of the eighth-century Vaital Deul at Bhuvaneswar the eight-armed Devī is seen chastising the demon by pressing his snout by one of her left hands; her right foot rests on the shoulder of the demon and her lion-mount is biting the right elbow of Mahishāsura.\textsuperscript{127} The actual fight between the great goddess and Mahishāsura has been depicted with a dynamic naturalism by an unknown master-sculptor of the Pallava age.\textsuperscript{128} The other iconic type showing the goddess as standing on the severed head of buffalo is illustrated by numerous sculptures of the Pallava period, mostly encountered at the rock-cut shrines of Mamallapuram, as for instance, at the Ādivarāha and Trimūrti caves.\textsuperscript{129} Significantly, in all these examples Devī holds the Vaishnava emblems like śaṅkha and chakra which is only reminiscent of the tradition of her being the younger sister of Vishṇu (Silappadikāram, VI. 59). And this is further corroborated, for instance, by her appearance with Anantaśayi Vishṇu in the Mahishamardini cave at Mahabalipuram and the Raṅganātha cave at Singavaram. Another interesting fact deserving notice in this connection is that though such images apparently originated in the South during the Pallava period and continued to be popular in the succeeding culture-epochs in Tamilnādu, they were perhaps initially modelled on similar examples, once popular but later disfavoured, in Āryāvarta. The suggestion is made on the basis of a colossal stone image found at Besnagar which shows the six-armed Devī as standing on the severed head of the animal, between two seated lions facing each other in the opposite directions; stylistically this statue belongs to the fifth-sixth century A.D.\textsuperscript{130} Another interesting specimen portraying the goddess as chastising the demon in his full human form hails from Jagat (Rajasthan) and has been noted in the next volume.

The present discussion on Devī would be incomplete without a reference to the deities styled Mātrikās, who happen to constitute a distinct group. Conventionally their number is seven.\textsuperscript{131} The Sap-

\textsuperscript{126} The sculptures are met with at the Kaiḷāsa and Laṅkēśvara cave.
\textsuperscript{127} ARB, fig. 112. Also HIIA, fig. 218
\textsuperscript{128} AIA, pl. 284; HIIA, fig. 208. A similar sculpture, with minor differences, is encountered at Kaiḷāsa at Ellora, see AIA, pl. 210.
\textsuperscript{129} For some such illustrations, see EHI, I, pls. XCIX, CX. There is a fine specimen in the collection of the Boston Museum, see AIA, pl. 288.
\textsuperscript{130} H. N. Dvedi, Cuvikā Rāja Me Mātrikā (in Hindi), p. 36, fig. 47. The assignment of this sculpture to the Kushāṇa period (PIHC, 1948, pp. 90-109) appears to be incorrect.
\textsuperscript{131} In the Kushāṇa or the early Gupta period the number of the Mātrikās was elastic, as Dvi- or Tri Mātrikā panels would show. It appears to have been stereotyped as seven in the sixth-seventh century A.D. The early Chāḷukya inscriptions of this period
tamātrikās are the saktis (consorts or energies) of different male deities (sometimes in their different forms as well) like Brahmapā, Indra, Skanda-Kumāra, Viṣṇu and Siva (in different aspects of the last two divinities as well). Accordingly they are recognisable by the attributes, mounts and other characteristics of their respective consorts. The full-fledged iconic type of the Saptamātrikā group shows the Mothers each with a baby in her lap (indicative of her Mother aspect), apart from her usual cognisances and vāhanas, and the entire group is flanked by Viṭrabhadra and Gaṇeṣa on either side. A typical Saptamātrikā panel consists of the effigies of Brahmapāṇi, Māheśvarī, Kaumārī, Viṣṇavī, Vārahi, Indrāṇi and Chāmunḍā, apart from the aforesaid figures of Viṭrabhadra and Gaṇeṣa. It is significant to note here that the earliest illustrations of Saptamātrikās are without their characteristic faces, attributes and vāhanas. This is attested by two panels of the early Kushāna period, now on display in the Mathurā Museum; one of them (F. 38) shows the Mothers standing side by side, each exhibiting the abhayamudrā and headed by a male attendant to the left, who may be identified with Skanda on account of his long spear (śakti); the other specimen (F. 39) portrays five instead of seven Mothers, all seated in bhadrāsana, with the right hand of each of them disposed in the abhayamudrā and an indistinct object in the left; in this instance also the Mātrikās are attended by the standing Skanda.132 Both these specimens thus omit the figure of a child in the lap of each of the Mātrikās which became a characteristic feature of the Mātrikā iconography in later days. The earliest illustration of Mātrikās each with a child is provided by a few fragmentary reliefs (e.g., F. 31 and 34) of the Kushāna culture-epoch, now preserved in the Mathurā Museum.133 A panel of the late Gupta period, also an exhibit (no. 552) of the same museum, depicts Saptamātrikās standing in a row with legs crossed (an unusual pose); each of them has a child in her left arm, cha-

132 For illustrations of the slabs (F. 38-39), see *East and West*, 1971, 21, nos. 1-2, figs. 1-2. F. 39 is a Pañchamātrikā panel.

133 F. 34 which shows the Mothers each with a child is a Trimātrikā specimen; for its reproduction, *ibid.*, fig. 6.
racterised by her distinctive face, emblems and mounts: Brahmāṇi with three heads (the panel being a relief, the fourth head is absent), a ladle in her right hand and the swan-mount; Māheśvarī with a trisūla and her bull-mount; Kaumārī with a śakti and her peacock-mount; Vaishnāvī with a mace and a kneeling Garuḍa as her vehicle. Vārāhī with a staff (broken) and a buffalo as her vāhana (the concept of Yāmī seemingly coalesced with that of this deity as indicated by the vāhana and emblem), Indrāṇī with her elephant-mount, the damaged object in her hand probably being a vajra, and lastly Chāmuṇḍā with the figure of a corpse below her seat, a garland of skulls, and emaciated body and sunken belly, Vīrabhadra and Gaṇapati are seen respectively on proper right and left of the Mothers as required by the texts; and thus this relief conforming to the textual prescriptions may be treated as one of the earliest specimens illustrating the full-fledged iconic type of Saptamātrikās. While in the earlier instances the Mātrikās appeared in the sthānaka or āśana poses, in the mediaeval repertoire they are sometimes portrayed as dancing. An eighth-century panel depicting the Mothers as dancing, now on display in the Jaipur Museum, is a relevant example. The earliest representation of the Mātrikās in the South is met with in the Kailāsanātha temple at Kanchipuram.

Independent dancing figures of the Mātrikās like Vārāhī (in the Udaipur Museum) and Kaumārī (in the Baroda Museum) are not unknown. Attention may also be drawn to a class of Vārāhī images of the early mediaeval period, encountered mostly in Eastern India and occasionally in Rajasthan and Madhyapradesh; in these examples the goddess is significantly characterised by a fish as one of her attributes, the fish being a manifestly Tantric trait (one of the paṁcha makāras i.e., ‘five ecstatic enjoyments’ of the Tantric cult, such as matsuYa, madya, mudrā etc.) The colossal image of the two-armed Vārāhī enshrined in the main sanctum of the temple named after her at Chaurasi (Orissa) shows the goddess as carrying in her right hand a fish and in her left hand a wine-cup or kapāla (indicative of another makāra, viz., madya) and as sitting on the back of a crouching buffalo; the image belongs to the tenth century. Similarly, reference may be made to an interesting statue of Indrāṇī, now in the Bharat Kālā Bhavan (Benares), which shows two rows of eyes above her prominent breast, and it thus answers to her description in texts

134 Ibid., fig. 16.
135 Ibid., fig. 18.
135a A separate shrine in honour of the Saptamātrikās was erected at Alambakkam, in the Tiruchirapalli district during the reign of the Pallava King Dantivarm (795-846), see Annual Report on South Indian Epigraphy. 1900. no. 705.
as several-eyed (bahulochanā) like her spouse. As regards Chāmuṇḍā, it may be mentioned that South Indian icons of the goddess are benign in expression and portray the deity with a well-proportioned body and a pretakumāla in her ear. Dancing images of Chāmuṇḍā, like those of Vārāhi and Kaumārī, are also not rare.

GĀNESĀ

Ganeśa, variantly, known as Gaṇapati and Vināyaka, is one of the five principal gods of the Hindu pantheon on account of his twofold aspect: Vighneśvara and Sīdeśhītā. In the first aspect he creates obstacles (vighna), if displeased; while in the second, he bestows success, if propitiated. Hence the Hindus irrespective of caste and creed, invoke him at the beginning of every religious ceremony and on auspicious occasions. The Buddhists and the Jainas also reserve their veneration for the god.

The career of Gaṇeśa seems to have had an humble beginning. The concept and iconic form of the pot-bellied (lamboḍara) and elephant-faced (gajāmana) Gaṇeśa seem to have grown out of the fusion of cults of an elephant-deity and the pot-bellied Yaksha, which were presumably current among the pre-Aryan and non-Aryan peoples. Incidentally, an old Buddhist text called Nīḍesa alludes to an elephant-deity and the Yakshas named Manibhadra, Punyabhaddha etc.136a

The earliest mention of the word Gaṇapati is found in the Rigveda (II. 23.1), but the word may have been then used in a different sense. The name Vināyaka used as a synonym of Gaṇeśa appears in the SāmaVIDHIŚāNA Brāhmaṇa (I. 4.18), a text of the sixth or fifth century B.C.; it refers to the propitiation of Vināyaka through the application of the Vaināyaki Samhitā. This Vināyaka was probably a deity and not an evil spirit, though his identification with Gaṇeśa of later times is not certain. The Vināyakas or Gaṇeśvaras, figured in the Mahābhārata (XIII. 150.25) and elsewhere, may signify malevolent deities, and the malignant aspects of Pauranic Gaṇeśa as a creator of obstacles appears to be a clear borrowing from the concept of such deities. The Pauranic mythology making Gaṇeśa as the son of Siva and Pārvatī must have drawn upon earlier sources like the ATharvaśĪRAS Upanis-

136 For Chāmuṇḍā and her different forms, see Volume IV.
136a. My contention about the connection of Gaṇeśa with the cult of Yaksha has recently received support from the findings of M. N. Deshpande. In an article in Marathi, published in Deepavali (Bombay), 1980. Sri Deshpande has shown that Gaṇapati took the place of Yaksha who was the god of the sūrthaśāstras (fraders) and assumed the protective role of the Yaksha and therefore came to be worshipped as riddhiśītā (bestower of riches) and sidhiśītā (bestower of success). I am thankful to him for supplying a summary in English of his paper,
had, the Mahābhārata, the Yājñavalkyasūtraī and others which associate Rudra with Vināyaka. The allusion to Rudra as Gaṇapati, that is pati or lord of the gaṇas or hordes of malignant deities called Maruts in the Vedic literature, may be recalled in this connection. Gaṇeśa-Gaṇapati is thus found to have represented a fusion of diverse elements, some of them being primitive, tribal and certainly age-old.

When exactly the idea of a single god called Gaṇeśa, Gaṇapati or Vināyaka emerged cannot be definitely said. It can be presumed, however, that Gaṇeśa in some form or other was known at least before the beginning of the Christian era. The prototype of Gaṇeśa, if not the representation of his full-blown form, is encountered in a frieze of Gaṇas on the Kantaka Chetinga Stūpa near Mihintale in Śrī-lanka of the first century A.D. One of these Gaṇas 'has the face of an elephant, complete with trunk and tusk'137. More complete in iconic form is a stone sculpture of the early Gupta period. Discovered at Mathurā, it shows the pot-bellied god as standing and as two-armed, the right hand probably grasping the tusk and the left one holding the bowl of cakes (modakabhāṇḍa).138 A Bhitargaon terracotta plaque of the sixth century A.D. depicts Gaṇeśa as a flying figure, holding modakabhāṇḍa in one of his hands and touching it with his trunk.139 The two Bhumara sculptures are of much iconographic interest. In one of them Gaṇeśa, seated, wears a chain of bells, besides other ornaments like armlets, bracelets and anklets, also made of bells; one of his hands is broken, the other seems to be in the attitude of holding the usual bowl, now lost.140 The other sculpture, presumably inspired by contemporary Umā-Mahaśvaram reliefs, depicts the god with his consort seated on his left lap; of his four hands the upper right carries an axe, the lower right grasps the tusk; the upper left holds a sceptre and the lower left is around the consort.141 This image is of about the sixth century and is the earliest representation of Gaṇeśa showing him in the company of his consort, probably betraying the influence of Saktism on it. Together, these two Bhumara sculptures offer a clear articulation of the iconography of the divinity more completely than most other earlier or contemporary images.

Early images of Gaṇeśa, except the Bhitargaon example, are divi-

137 Alice Getty, Gaṇeśa, pl. 22 c.
138 Another contemporary relief will be found in the Buddhist cave at Lonad near Kalyan (Maharashtra).
139 ASI, AR, 1908-09, pp. 10-11, fig. 2.
140 Banerjee, R. D., Śiva Temple of Bhumara, pl. XV a-b.
141 Getty, op. cit., pl. 3, fig. a.
ded into two classes: standing (sthānaka) and seated (āsana). Later on another class consisting of images depicted in dancing (nritya) pose, obviously inspired by dancing figures of Siva, emerged. A fine four-handed statue discovered at Khitching (Orissa) and a two-armed image at Udayagiri (Madhyapradesh) may be reckoned as notable specimens of the sthānaka and āsana types. The nritya variety is represented, among others, by an eight-handed image found at Khitching; the front right hand of this dancing image is in the gajahasta-mudrā, the other hands are carrying a tusk (a broken one), a rosary, an indistinct object and the modakabhānda, from which one modaka or laudāka is seen to be lifted by his trunk.

The usual iconographic traits of Ganesa, besides his elephant-face and pot-belly, are two (rarely three) eyes, snake-thread and snake-girdles and the attributes held in different hands, numbering normally four, such as bowl of sweetmeats, axe, rosary, radish, tusk, scepere, noose, goad, trident, serpent, lotus, bow and arrow. The usual mudrās displayed by him are tarjanī and gajahasta. Radish, tusk, noose, trident, serpent, lotus, bow and arrow are usually found in comparatively late images. To this list of attributes may be added manuscript, which appeared in a period even later, when there was a confusion of the Pauranic Ganesa with the Vedic Gana-pati-Brihas-pati. It is interesting to note here that the malevolent Maruts of the Vedic texts forming a gana have axe as a weapon which is also an attribute of Ganesa.

In a full-fledge[d iconic type, the rat is an almost invariable concomitant of Ganesa. But in all the early images, for instance the Bhumara and the Udayagiri examples, the rat is absent. The rat is a late feature, though here again the inspiration to associate the animal on account of its supposedly venerable character, which is indicated in a tradition recorded in the Arthaśāstra (IV. 3), may have been derived from a primitive source. The rat, evidently a totem, was thus adopted. Ganesa’s association with the rat, known for its mischievous character, was perhaps suitable to explain the epithet vighnarāja applied to the god. By the close of the tenth century the iconography of Ganesa became clear and systematic. In the late mediaeval period variations which occurred were mainly in respect of the number of hands or emblems, or features connected with Tantric ideology.

142 For the Khitching image, DIII. frontispiece, and for the Udayagiri specimen, ibid., pl. XV, 1.
143 Ibid., pl. XV
MINOR DEITIES

Brahmā: Brahmā, a Vedic god of great renown, lost his importance and popularity being relegated to the position of a minor deity. Some of the earliest representations of Brahma are found in the Buddhist reliefs of Gandhāra where he appears either in the Nativity scene of Buddha or independently as one with dishevelled hair, beard and moustache, dressed as a Brahman, carrying a water-vessel in one of his hands. In the Jaina iconography too Brahmā is present as a Dikpāla or as a Yaksha attendant of the Jina Śītālānātha.

As regards the representation of Brahmā of the Pauranic Brahmanism dating from the third-fourth centuries A.D., mention may be made of a few figures belonging to the Mathurā Museum. These have four- or three-bearded faces. There is, however, a stone image in the same museum which shows the faces without beard; of the faces, three are placed in one line, and the fourth over the central head. A standing image of the god belonging to the same museum shows the god with two hands and three faces, its middle face only being bearded; one of the hands exhibits the abhayamudrā.144 While the Ellora repertory supplies examples of the standing and seated types of the god,145 an image of the Chālukya period at Aihole shows him as seated astride on the back of a swan (an unusual sitting posture); in the latter he holds a rosary and a manuscript in his two hands (the objects held in the two remaining hands being indistinct) and he is attended by a number of bearded rishis, all in bowing and praising poses.146 A metal image of the sixth or seventh century A.D. from Mīrpur Khas in Sind (now in the Karachi Museum) shows all the four faces of the god as beardless; the right hand of the god is bent with the palm turned inwards as if holding a book, the left hand carrying probably a water-vessel as is suggested by a handle.147 Due to the decline in his position, as already mentioned, Brahmā began to be represented either as an Āvaraṇa-devatā or as an attendant in the shrines of Viṣṇu and Śiva. Thus figures of Brahmā are found in Vaishnavite and Saivite sculptures such as those illustrated by the Viṣṇu-Anantaśayana reliefs or the Līṅgodbhavamūrtis of Śiva.

Kārttikeya: Kārttikeya, also known as Skanda, Kumāra and Subrahmanya, could not attain wide popularity and have had a sect of his own. His earliest mention under the name ‘Skanda’ is perhaps

144 V. S. Agrawala, Indian Art (Varanasi, 1965), fig. 169.
145 Kailāsa temple, cave 16.
146 EHI, II, pl. CXLIV. Another good specimen of the seated variety showing the god with four heads and four arms hails from the Bhumara temple. Banerjee, op. cit., pl. XII b.
147 DHI, pl. XLV, 3.