CHAPTER THREE

PARA AND VYŪHA ASPECTS

(i)

CATURVIMŚATIMŪRTIS

The Pāñcarātra ideology\(^1\) declares that the composite god Vāsudeva-Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa, commonly known as Vāsudeva, has five broad aspects: para (highest), vyūha (emanatory), vibhava (incarnatory), antaryāmin (the aspect that dwells inside all beings) and arccā (images or embodiment). Of these the antaryāmin aspect, as the term implies, is formless, for ‘the god resides in the hearts of all’. The arccā or the visible embodiment incorporates all the other aspects, and the images of Viṣṇu can be classified accordingly. Para, according to the saṃhitās, as we shall see later, is an aspect of antaryāmin but not a formless one. We have already dealt with the vibhava forms in the previous chapter, and our concern here is with the vyūha aspect.

The Pāñcarātrins believe that there are four vyūhas of Viṣṇu, known collectively as caturvyūha, and the embodiments are manifest in Vāsudeva, Saṃkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna and Aniruddha. These four vyūhas were combined into one iconic type known as Viśvarūpa or Vaikuṇṭha. The concept of the vyūha was already formulated by the second century B. C., as is evident from Patanjali’s Mahābhāṣya\(^2\), and sometime by the Gupta period the Pāñcarātra theologians increased the number of vyūhas to twenty-four, giving rise to the caturvimśatimūrtis of Viṣṇu. The process by which this was achieved was as follows: from each of the four vyūhas appeared first three sub-vyūhas and again a set of twelve vidyeśvaras. Four of them were given the names of the principal vyūhas.

Apart from the four vyūhas, the names of the other twenty, as given in the purāṇas and the saṃhitās, are as follows: Keśava, Nārā-
yaṇa, Mādhava, Govinda, Viṣṇu, Madhusūdana, Trivikrama, Vāmana, Śrīdhara, Hṛṣikeśa, Padmanābha. Dāmodara, Puruṣottama, Adhokṣaja, Narasimha, Acyuta, Janārdana, Upendra, Hari and Kṛṣṇa. Iconographically, in all these forms, Viṣṇu holds the four usual attributes, śaṅkha, cakra, gada and padma, the difference being only in their different disposition. As has been pointed out by Gopinath Rao, only twenty-four permutations of the four attributes are mathematically possible, and hence, perhaps, the number of emanations was limited to twenty-four. It may be mentioned here that these twenty-four are described in the Rūpamāṇḍana⁸, the Agnipurāṇa⁴, the Padmapurāṇa⁵, the Tantrasāra (see Appendix), and in the Pāṇcarātra samhitās.

According to the Vaikhānasāgama, the Dhruvaberas of Viṣṇu, images that are immoveable or permanently enshrined, may be classified as yoga, bhoga, vīra and abhicārika, depending on the purpose for which an image is consecrated⁶. Needless to say the majority of the Viṣṇu images in medieval Nepal can be considered to belong to the bhoga variety, for this is why a common man generally dedicates an image or a temple. As we have already discussed this is particularly evident from the dedicatory inscriptions on images both in sculpture and painting. Although the paintings were hung up and worshipped, they cannot really be described as Dhruvaberas as they were certainly movable. Strictly speaking no examples of yoga, vīra and abhicārika images are known. All these four varieties, however, are further sub-divided into, sthānaka (standing), āsana (seated) and šayana (recumbent), and this is by far the most convenient classification for the description of Viṣṇu images.

We have already mentioned that, of the caturvimśatimūrtis, the names Viṣṇu, Vāsudeva, Keśava, Hari, Narasimha, Nārāyaṇa and Padmanābha occur in Licchavi inscriptions, but very likely they were just prevalent names and not taken from the Pāṇcarātra list. It is curious that in the majority of the early icons of Viṣṇu, where he is shown as a conventional four-armed deity, (Figs. 30, 31, 47), the arrangement of the attributes in the hands agrees with that prescribed for Śrīdhara of the caturvimśatimūrti list of the Rūpamāṇḍana⁷. But
we cannot indubitably assert that these relatively early iconic types followed such a list. On the contrary, the Jalāśayana image is invoked as Murāri in Bhimārjuṇadeva’s inscription, a name that does not occur in the list, and yet the disposition of the attributes is that prescribed for Śrīdhara. Thus, there must be another explanation for this phenomenon and this will be taken up at a later stage.

All the twenty-four emanatory forms are known to have been represented together in one painting from Nepal. This is a paṭa now in the collection of the Prince of Wales Museum, Bombay, and was dedicated in the year NS 701/A.D. 1681. In this paṭa (Fig. 26) the composition is dominated by the sectional representation of a temple placed on a lotus that appears to be floating in the waters. The shrine is of the same design as the Kṛṣṇa temple in Patan (Fig. 101) and shows a curious admixture of local and Indian architectural elements. It is separated from the rest of the painting by an exquisite design of intertwined, multicoloured nāgas which rise from the waters below. An interesting element is the representation of the lizards along the projecting cave above the first storey. Within the temple the main shrine is occupied by Viṣṇu standing against a canopy of nāgas flanked by two identical females. At the two extremities are Ganeśa Bāhādur to the left, and Garuḍa, to the right. Ganeśa Bāhādur is the principal donor of the paṭa and his inclusion within the shrine itself is rather unusual. The two females with their different colours, represent Lākṣmī and Sarasvatī, the two wives of Viṣṇu. In the little shrines in the upper storeys are depicted twenty three different forms of Viṣṇu, and, together with the central image of Śrīdhara, they comprise the group known as the caturviṃśatimūrtayaḥ. In the same row as the principal divinities but outside the temple are Jayā and Ganeśa to the left and Vijayā and Kumāra to the right. Jayā and Vijayā are framed by two serpents and are, no doubt, dvārapālas or pratihāras guarding the shrine.

The basement of the temple rests on a gigantic lotus the floats in the water with several other figures. The hieratic central figure is that of Vāsuki, and the eight nāgas on either side represent the eight Vasus. In the first tier of the basement of the
temple, each within a niche, are the gotra-śis, Vaśisṭha, Mārkandeyea, Bharadvāja, et al. On either side of this tier, at the two extremities, are the six personifications of the six days of the week except Ravi. Above these six are the two kneeling figures of Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa. In the next tier are fifteen figures, the fourteen from the left representing the fourteen days of the lunar fortnight (śuklapakṣa) beginning with Pratipad, while the last figure is of Amāvasyā or the dark fortnight. Amāvasyā is shown as half white and half green, signifying the seven brighter and the seven darker days. Along the sides and the top of the pata, in little vignettes, are the nakṣatras, such as Purvā, Svāti, Rohini, Anurādhā, Dhruvā, and others, although some of them appear to be repeated. Along the bottom are the twelve signs of the zodiac (dvādaśarāśi), flanked by yakṣas and yakṣinīs, each carrying a bag of jewels. The second row along the top of the pata is occupied by the ten avatāras. Immediately below, on either side of the intertwined snake motif, the story of Ko Muni, unfolds in four registers. In his wanderings through the forests, Komuni meets a bull, an elephant called Kisi, a horse known as Sunapa, the nāga Ananta, then Vāsuki and ultimately finds his way to Viṣṇu.

The common practice in Nepal was to represent, only twelve of the twenty-four emanatory forms. Among the earliest are those occurring on the covers of a Śivadharmapurāṇa manuscript of the thirteenth century, two sections of which are illustrated here (Figs. 27-28). According to the wider classification of Viṣṇu images, all these representations are of the sthānaka variety, as the god stands in samapadasthānaka, although Trivikrama is depicted as making the strides (Fig. 28).

This is an unusual deviation, for commonly (Figs. 16, 50), Trivikrama is shown in one of the static emanatory forms rather than as an active incarnation. The description of Trivikrama as an emanation differs slightly in the Rūpamandana and the Agnipurāṇa. The image here agrees with the Agnipurāṇa injunction and so indeed do the other eleven. It seems possible that the artist here was following the Agnipurāṇa description, and at least, by the thirteenth
century, the text may have been familiar in Nepal as an iconographic source. The same twelve are again portrayed in an image of Vāsudeva-Kamalajā also belonging to the thirteenth century\textsuperscript{10}.

Twelve sthānaka images of the twenty-four emanatory forms are represented in a number of other paṭas, wherever a maṇḍala has been depicted. In the beautiful paṭa showing the composite form of Vāsudeva-Kamalajā (Fig. 108) the twelve painted along the sides are the same as those on the Śivadharma manuscript covers\textsuperscript{11}. The same twelve sub-vyūhas are included in another maṇḍala in a seventeenth century painting (Fig. 16), where they are portrayed in the second register from the top on either side of the multi-armed form of Viṣṇu standing on Garuḍa. They occur again in another painting (Fig. 29) but this time in seated postures, and hence could be classified as belonging to the āsana variety. Thus it appears that the twelve sub-vyūhas, rather than the twelve vidyeśvaras, were more commonly employed to constitute such maṇḍalas.

( ii )

STHĀNAKAMŪRTIS

As in India by far the largest number of independent icons of Viṣṇu in medieval Nepal belongs to the sthānaka variety. The majority of the painted figures described in the foregoing section are of this type. We will now discuss only a few such images of stone and bronze belonging to different periods. These are found either enshrined in little temples, no longer in worship, or standing in the open, and except for those executed in metal, they can all be considered as dhruvaberas of the bhoga class.

The stele in a little shrine in Deo Patan (Fig. 30) is a good example of a type of Viṣṇu icons that was considerably popular and was repeatedly copied. In the centre stands a four armed Viṣṇu in samapada sthānaka on a high pedestal which is decorated with a luxuriant floral motif. The god wears a dhoti held together by an ornate belt, the folds of the dhoti falling between his legs in a stylized manner. Part of the udarabandha, tied around the waist,
forms a loop across the thighs, while the remaining portions fall along both legs. His ornaments include an elaborate kiriña, śaṅkhapatras, karṇakunḍalas, hūra, and plain valayas. The keyūras are formed with nāgas and he is also given an upavīta. His left hands hold the mace and the conch; the upper right holds the cakra and the lower right in varada supports a vīja with the thumb. On his right stands Śrī-Lakṣmī on a double-petalled lotus in a gentle tribhaṅga. Her right hand displaying the varadamudrā holds a vīja and the left the stem of a lotus. Balancing the composition on the other side is Garuḍa, standing on a rocky base, his hands in the namaskāramudrā. He is shown fully as a human being except for the wings which form an elegant cape, as is the practice in early Nepali art.

As we have remarked this was considered a classic composition in Nepal, and the same trio are repeated frequently in sculpture as well as in painting (Figs. 31, 33). This iconography, viz. Viṣṇu flanked by Śrī-Lakṣmī and Garuḍa, is not known from eastern India, where he is always accompanied by Śrī-Lakṣmī and Bhūmi or Sarasvatī. But there are a few medieval images in western India, where Viṣṇu is flanked by his mount and his principal consort. Thus, it seems possible that the Nepali iconic type was borrowed from the west rather than from the east.

In bronze images of the sthānaka variety (Fig. 34) he is usually portrayed independently, but the disposition of the attributes is the same as in the Deo Patan icon. There are of course stylistic differences as reflected by the treatment of the garments, the ornaments, the crowns etc. An image in the Bharat Kala Bhavan (Fig. 35), however, shows a slightly different disposition of the attributes, which help us to identify him as Nārāyaṇa, whereas, as we have said, the others appear to be of the Śrīdhara variety. Apart from this there is no difference in the iconic type.

In the majority of such stereotyped images one finds that Viṣṇu invariably holds the attributes in the manner prescribed for Śrīdhara of the Pāñcarātra list of the twenty-four emanatory forms. We shall presently see that this was the standard and accepted arrangement of emblems for those images that distinctly,
represent the para aspect of the god (vide section V of this chapter). In these later maṇḍalas (Figs. 16, 50) the god in his para aspect is invariably accompanied by Śrī-Lakṣmī and Garuḍa. In all the stone images as well the same combination occurs. Thus, with a reasonable amount of certainty, we may suggest that in all such cases, which really may be classified as dhruvaberas as they must once have been immovably enshrined, the god is represented in his para aspect. The coincidence in the disposition of the emblems with that prescribed for Śrīdhara is only incidental.

A curious image of the sthānaka variety is that standing in the middle of a water conduit outside the temple of Kumbheśvara in Patan (Figs. 36, 37). Here, on the four sides of a slightly tapering block of stone, are carved in moderately high relief four groups of images. Each group consists of a central figure of Viṇḍu standing in samapadasthānaka and accompanied by Śrī-Lakṣmī and Garuḍa. In each case Viṇḍu holds the attributes in identical fashion, and the arrangement is that of the common dhruvaberas in Nepal. It is no doubt tempting to identify these four as representing the four vyūha aspects of Viṇḍu, although the emblems are not distributed in different ways. If these were so the centre would then represent the para aspect, which in this case may be considered to be formless. Probably the caturvyūha ideology was behind such an iconic conception, although we cannot fail to perceive here influences from either the caturmukha liṅga or the caturmukha caityas of the Buddhists, which are a common sight in the valley. Notwithstanding the fact that influences must have been mutual, it is interesting to note how one iconic type had been adopted without any reservation by all the major sects in the medieval period. In India, we know of the caumukha shrines of the Jainas, the caturmukha caityas of the Buddhists, the caturmukha lingas of the Śaivas, and, finally, the caturmukha images of the Smārtas Pañcopāsakas. And now Nepal provides us with an example of a caturmukha Vaiṣṇava icon. It is also equally significant that behind all these caturmukha shrines is the concept of the five-fold division: the five Jinas, the five Tathāgatas, the five forms of Śiva, the Pañcopāsanā or the cult of the five and
the fivefold division of the Pāṇcarātrins (para-caturvyūhas).

A curious feature of Vaiṣṇava iconography in Nepal, invariably noticed in the earlier period and also seen to persist in later images, is the manner in which the god holds the conch. This is held horizontally no matter whether the god is standing, seated or recumbent. At times the spiral top of the emblem points inwards, at others outwards, and on a few occasions the fingers are inserted within the slit, but more generally the palm holding the object is disposed outwards. This is a feature that is found as early as in the fifth century icons of Viṣṇu vikrānta. This manner of holding the conch is unknown in eastern India as well as in the south. But we have images both from the Uttar Pradesh and western India where the god holds the conch in the horizontal fashion. The two images illustrated here are in the Allahabad and the Lucknow museums, (Figs. 32, 38) while in a private collection in Bombay is an icon from Bhilsa where the emblem is also likewise held. It would thus appear that there must have been a common source of diffusion for so distinctive and unusual a motif, found as far apart as western India, Bhilsa, Uttar Pradesh and Nepal. Considering that the feature is found earliest in Nepal, the most likely source is Mathura, which in the early stage must have been the greatest single centre of Vaiṣṇava religion and art.

( iii )

ĀSANAMŪRTIS

One of the most popular types of āsana images in the country is that where the god is seated on his mount Garuḍa. This is the form of the image in the celebrated Chaṅgu Nārāyaṇa temple, in the courtyard of which stands a later but excellent copy. Fortunately, in Mānadeva’s inscription of A. D. 464 carved on a pillar at the site, we find a contemporary description of the image within the temple. A few words in this portion of the inscription are illegible, but a fair idea of the content can be gleaned from the following passage:

(śrī) vatsāṅkitādiptācāruvipu (Ia) prodyāttavakṣasthalāḥ
(śrī) vakṣāhstanapadmbāhu (vima) laḥ samyakpravṛddhotsavaḥ
The hill on which the temple is situated is called Dolādri and the name is at least as old as the fifth century. Later alternatives appear to be Dolāgiri or Dolāśikhara. The god was known as Hari, as we find in this inscription, or as Dolāśikharasvāmī, which appears to have been the more common name as it occurs in Amśuvaraman’s inscription as well as in the Nepālamahātmya section of the Skanda-purāṇa. A still later appellation found in records of the Malla period, is Garuḍopari Nārāyaṇa. The original image within the temple was a headless one, and the story how Viṣṇu came to lose his head is narrated in the Nepālamahātmya as follows.

A sage who used to reside in the forest on Dolāgiri had a cow named Kapila. One day, while the cow was grazing in the forest, a handsome young man appeared and drank all her milk. As this happened everyday, after some time, the sage lost his patience and swore to sever the head of the milk thief. One morning he accompanied the cow into the forest and, camouflaging himself in a bush, awaited the arrival of the thief. As before, the handsome man reappeared and no sooner had he begun drinking the milk the angry sage cut off his head. At once Viṣṇu, riding on Garuḍa and holding the conch, discus, mace and the lotus, emerged from the body of the handsome milk-thief. The sage was disconsolate at what he had done but was reassured by Viṣṇu, who told him that this was inevitable due to a previous curse of Śukra. Thus it was that the headless image of Viṣṇu came to be worshipped in the forest of Dolāgiri.

The Buddhists, who claim that the image in the shrine represents Avalokiteśvara, tell a different tale. According to their version, one day Garuḍa and the nāga Takṣaka were engaged in a duel. Aided by the grace of Viṣṇu, Garuḍa was about to defeat the nāga when Avalokiteśvara took pity and intervened. Mediating between the two adversaries he saved the serpent from the beak of the celestial bird. Then, to humiliate Viṣṇu, Avalokiteśvara sat on the former’s back, while he was astride his mount. Suddenly a griffin appeared on the scene and carried the trio to the top of the hill, Dolāgiri.
The sectarian flavour of this story is evident and this shows the Buddhist image of Hari-hari-hari-vāhana Avalokiteśvara is explained. Both stories are incredibly naive, and it is not impossible that the Brahmanical version was contrived at some point to explain an image, whose head may have been damaged; while the Buddhists may have later made a claim to the shrine in support of which invented their myth.

The image standing in the precinct of the temple, however, is not a headless one (Fig. 39). The four-armed god, of heroic proportions, is seated regally in pralambapāda on the back of Garuḍa, his feet resting on the mount’s shoulders. He is wearing a dhoti and an udarabandha and his ornaments include karṇa kuṇḍalas, a hāra and plain valayas. The crown or kīrtamukța, although not very tall, is decorated with a kīrtimukha, a motif also adorning the crown of the ten armed Viṣṇu (Fig. 20). The hybrid Garuḍa, whose head, torso and arms are of a human being, gracefully spreads out his wings, following the alignment of his outstretched arms. His tailfeathers spread out behind the flaming halo like that of a dancing peacock.

Stylistically this eighth century sculpture from Chaṅgu Nārāyaṇa remains one of the masterpieces of Nepali art. The artist has admirably contrasted the sense of immanent dignity and poise in the figure of Viṣṇu with sweeping movement and symmetry, which also characterize the sculpture depicting Arjuna’s viśvarūpadaṛśaṇa from the same site (Fig. 19). As Aschwin Lippe has said ‘the splendid sweep of Garuḍa’s outstretched arms seem to spread his wings like those of Icarus; his tail-feathers form a hood behind the flaming halo of Viṣṇu’. Indeed, the sweeping lines of the arms, the outline of the wings and the curls of the feathers together form an impressive design in linear arrangement. The bird with his divine rider seems to be readily poised for a take off. The composition reflects the idea of motion very effectively, for according to Mānadeva’s inscription the god is constantly roaming the three worlds ([trait]lokābhramayanatravartti).

As an iconic type, it was derived no doubt from such early Indian
Viṣṇu images as that now in the Cleveland museum (Fig. 40). The Cleveland sculpture is said to be from Bengal but is certainly a sculpture of the pre-Pāla phase, and very likely belongs to the sixth century. There is a remarkable similarity between this sculpture and the early Nepali images of Viṣṇu. The torso of Viṣṇu is modelled with the same bulky and heavy sense of physical volume as we see in the Mrgasthali Viṣṇu vikrānta (Fig. 7) or in that of the so-called royal portrait***. The disposition of the right hand holding a round object, here no doubt representing the seed of the lotus, is particularly noteworthy, as they appear to be very similar in all three examples, especially the treatment of the fingers. The crown of Viṣṇu is quite unlike the tall kīrṇas that Viṣṇu normally wears in northern Indian images and is adorned with the motif of the kīrttimukha, a feature also found in Nepali images. Although the Nepali Gruḍa is a more human and graceful creature, the face of the mount in the Cleveland icon is certainly more like that of a child and has the same ‘strange, sphinxlike’ quality that is invariably found in Nepali examples (Fig. 39). The fan-like spread of the tail-feathers is also a feature that the Cleveland Viṣṇu shares in common with the Chaṅgu Nārāyaṇa example, although they are rendered in different styles. The way the other attributes are held however is quite different, particularly the manner of holding the conch, which is always held horizontally in all early Nepali steles. It is of further interest that Mānadeva’s description of the Chaṅgu Nārāyaṇa image, particularly where the broad chest of the god marked with the śrīvatsa is described, admirably suits the Cleveland example. All these similarities seem to indicate that this sixth century Viṣṇu image from Bengal (Fig. 40) and the Chaṅgu Nārāyaṇa sculpture (Fig. 39) have a common origin, which, most likely, is Mathura.

We have already stated that this iconic type proved to be particularly popular in Nepal, and there are many other copies and variations***. The beautiful gilt metal example now in the Bharat Kala Bhavan (Fig. 41) is a sixteenth century copy but reveals the remarkable tenacity of the form. Of course, there are many stylistic differences, evident in the treatment of the details of garments, ornaments, attributes as well as in the modelling, but the basic iconography and the
compositional scheme have remained unchanged. This is especially true of the delineation of the Garuḍa, which remains strikingly close to that in the Chaṅgu Nārāyaṇa sculpture.

Another remarkable version of the same theme can be seen in a sculpture standing within a little shrine in Deo Patan (Fig. 42). Here, however, the god is seated in a sort of a padmāsana on a cushion supported by some of the feathers of Garuḍa. He is clad in a dhoti, has an udarabandha, valayas, a hāra, sarpa-keyūras, and karna-kundalas. His crown is of the same pointed variety as we have seen in some of the Viṣṇu-vikrānta sculptures (Figs. 8-9), ornamented with three pearl-bordered rings. It is not clear whether the central ring had a kṛṣṭimukha design. His attributes are distributed in the same manner as in the Chaṅgu Nārāyaṇa image (Fig. 39), the discus being held in exactly the same fashion with its upper section flametipped. The lower right hand displays the varadamudrā, while holding the lotus-seed between the thumb and the index finger. The Garuḍa is seated on its haunches on a pedestal adorned with a beautiful floral scroll. His upper part is human and his arms and wings spread out with a sweep as in the earlier example at Chaṅgu Nārāyaṇa. His physiognomy, however, is different and the head seems rather disproportionately large when compared to the rest of his body. One of his ears has a pearl-bordered ornament while the other a simple gypsy ear-ring. He is given an upavīta and a snake forms a necklace. In this sculpture also his tail-feathers of exquisite curls rise behind the flaming halo of Viṣṇu to form a larger aureole. But the flame-bordered edge of the stele has robbed it of its articulate character as we find in the Chaṅgu Nārāyaṇa sculpture and instead it appears here more as an ornamental design. In fact, the entire sculpture creates a more formal and rigid impression and lacks the spontaneous sense of movement that characterises the Chaṅgu Nārāyaṇa relief.

The principal composition of Viṣṇu riding his mount is framed on either side by two graceful female figures. That on the right has her right hand lightly touching her body just below the breasts while the left holds the swaying stalk of a lotus. There can be little doubt
that she is Śrī-Lakṣmī, the principal consort of Viṣṇu. The female on the left holds with her two hands an object that at first sight appears to be a shield. But it is really a flat vessel (a thāli) containing fruits and flowers which are impressionistically delineated. Obviously, she represents Viṣṇu’s other consort Bhū Devi and appropriately she holds the vessel laden with fruits and flowers\textsuperscript{85}. This is the only instance in Nepal where we find Viṣṇu accompanied both by Śrī Devī and Bhū Devī as is so commonly seen in eastern Indian icons of Viṣṇu of the medieval period. It must be pointed out that we know of no example from eastern India where Bhū Devī is represented in a similar fashion, and, moreover, stylistically, the Nepali sculpture has little in common with the Pāla style, apart from a few details.

The same Garuḍopari Nārāyaṇa is also depicted in a painting dedicated in the year N.S. 888/A.D. 1766 now in the Bharat Kala Bhavan (Fig. 43). Here, however, there are a number of differences in the iconography, apart from the differences of style. Along with Viṣṇu is seated Śrī-Lakṣmī on his lap and the many-hooded Vāsuki forms the halo behind his head. Viṣṇu’s forehead and so also Śrī-Lakṣmī’s is marked with a broad band like the sectarian sign made with sandal-paste by devotees. His hands hold the same attributes as the other representations discussed but here the disposition is different. All the others have the attributes arranged in the manner in which it is prescribed for Śrīdhara in the Rūpamaṇḍana list of the twenty-four emanatory forms although in all these sculptures probably the para aspect of the god has been represented. But here the arrangement corresponds to that given for Acyūta in the texts.

In yet another painted version of the iconic type represented in a long scroll, also in the Bharat Kala Bhavan (Fig. 75), we find the Keśava form of the Pāṇcarātra list, although in the inscription above he is described as Ananta-Nārāyaṇa. Thus here also it would appear that the form does not belong to that of Keśava of the caturvimśati list and the similarity in the disposition of the attributes is incidental. On the other hand, Nārāyaṇa is also the name of the para aspect\textsuperscript{86}. Many other asanamūrtis of Viṣṇu are represented in
paṭas depicting Vaiṣṇava maṇḍalas (Fig. 29) and in every case the god is seated in padmāsana.

Some remarkably beautiful illuminations portraying āsanamūrtis have been delineated on the covers of an eleventh century Viṣṇudharma manuscript in the Bir Library, Kathmandu. In one of the illuminations (Fig. 44) he is represented again as riding on his mount. Here the god sits on the mount’s neck and the artist has portrayed Garuḍa’s face with an amusing expression. He also wears earrings and his hair is arranged in a bun held by a filet. His tail feathers spread out once again but with a greater sense of exuberance, almost in a ‘baroque’ manner, which, however, imparts a greater sense of movement to the composition and the illusion of flight is more apparent. This illusion is also enhanced by the two female figures perched on the outstretched arms of Garuḍa as if they are enjoying the joy-ride. They no doubt represent the two consorts of the god.

A comparison of these many representations of Nārāyaṇa riding on the Garuḍa reveals how differently the artists have treated the same iconic concept in different periods. In each case, although he has retained the basic compositional scheme, he has shown his inventiveness by varying the posture of the god or by depicting Garuḍa in a different fashion or by varying the attributes of the hands or by adding one or more figures, who also are differently disposed. While some have emphasized the mobile character of the theme as expressed in Mānadeva’s inscription, others have treated the subject with a formal quality as befitting a stereotyped iconic type. At the same time there are also differences that are due to the prevailing styles of the period evident in the clothes and the ornaments. This once again emphasizes the relative freedom of the artist even while representing a purely religious theme.

The covers of the Viṣṇudharma manuscript just alluded to has many other interesting representations of āsanamūrtis. They contain altogether ten representations of Viṣṇu and of the four principal Dīkṣṭhas, Yama, Indra, Varuṇa and Kubera. In all the representations except one Viṣṇu is seated in padmāsana (Figs. 45-46). Also only in
one illumination is he shown multi-armed, the number of arms being
twelve, but because of the very effaced condition of that part of the
cover it is difficult to determine all the attributes. In the others he
is invariably four-armed and holds the same attributes in the same
hands. The disposition of the upper hands is identical in all the
illuminations, holding upright the cakra and the gadā. But the two
lower hands are somewhat differently disposed. In three of the
representations his lower right hand holds the seed of the lotus,
while displaying the vyākhyānamudrā. In two others it still holds
the lotus seed but exhibits the varadamudrā. The lower left hand
always holds the śaṅkha, four times vertically and at least three times
horizontally; on two occasions this hand is placed on the lap in the
samādhipradrā, the conch resting lightly on the palm (Fig. 45).
Nowhere is Viṣṇu depicted alone. Either he is flanked by two
adoring females (Fig. 44), their right hand clearly displaying the
vandanāmudrā, or by others, who are either young men (Figs. 45-46)
or sages. On two occasions Viṣṇu is portrayed with a female on his
lap, and once, carousing with two females, his hands encircling their
waists. Only in three instances is his colour dark and in the others
he is either light green or light yellow.

Once again we find that except for the multi-armed representa-
tion, all the others conform to the description of Śrīdhara in the list
of caturvirmāMatimūrtis. But it is doubtful if this was what the
artist had in mind; rather it appears that he has attempted to
portray different lilās or playfull manifestations of the god, in his
para aspect. The presence of the four Dīkpālas no doubt is symbolic
of his overlordship of all the worlds and of the fact that he pervades
all the directions. This he does by riding his Garuḍa and
so the inclusion of the motif of Garuḍopari Nārāyaṇa becomes
particularly relevant. The multi-armed representation is perhaps
symbolic of his manifestational (vibhūti) aspect. According to the
Ahirbudhnyasyaṁhitā the para Vāsudeva may manifest himself as two-,
four-, eight-, sixteen- or sixty-four-armed. Of the others, we see him
at times as a bhogī, sporting with his consorts as para Vāsudeva does
in Vaikuṇṭha with two or more wives[*], and, at times, as a yogī,
particularly where the left hand rests on the lap and is in sāmādhi-
mudrā (Fig. 45). Yet in another representation he is shown seated in the yogāsana with both hands resting on the knees and being adored by two munis. Here his yogic aspect seems beyond any doubt.

Compositionally, the scene where his consorts sitting on his lap recline on him languidly while his left arm presses her towards him, is, no doubt, modelled after similar representations of Śiva and Pārvatī, so common in both Nepali painting and sculpture. In other instances, however, we find influences of the Buddhist iconic type, particularly where the seated figure is flanked by two attendants either female or male. As a matter of fact the vandanāmudrā or the gesture of adoration expressed by the right hand, open palm upwards, is especially in common usage in Buddhist representations, as, for example, in the forms of Uṣṇīṣavijaya or Vasudhārā, where we often find the uppermost right hand displaying this same mudrā, sometimes with an image of a Tathāgata resting on the palm, or in the case of the representations of Amoghapāśa where one of the acolytes, Bhṛkuṭi, confronting the god, exhibits the same gesture with her upper right hand. In Buddhist terminology this mudrā is known specifically as Tathāgatavandanāmudrā. In some instances, particularly where Viṣṇu is flanked by the two females (Fig. 44), the entire composition reminds us at once of the scenes of Māradarśana of the Buddha in contemporary Buddhist manuscript illuminations. Such similarities and borrowings must indicate that the same artists were employed to illuminate Buddhist manuscripts as well as Brāhmaṇical ones.

(iv)

ŚAYANAMŪRTIS

By comparison with the other two varieties, sthānaka and āsana, the śayana type of images, where the god is shown as recumbent, is extremely rare. There are only four such representations known to us, two in painting which have already been discussed and two in sculpture. Of the two sculptural representations that at Buḍhā Nīlkanṭha is a monumental example (Fig. 47), of a considerably early date, while the other, at Balaju near Kathmandu, is a seventeenth century copy (Fig. 49).
In Amșuvarman's inscription of the year 32/A.D.610 among the shrines to which he makes grants is that of Jalașayana of Bhumbhukkikă. This place cannot be identified today but it is obvious that there was already extant a well-known shrine of Jalașayana Vișṇu. But in a later inscription of the year 64/A.D.642, issued when Bhīmārjunadeva was the king, Vișṇugupta, the de facto ruler, claims to have made a grant of a piece of land in Dakṣiṇakoligrāma for 'the satisfaction in the affair of karṣana of a huge stone suitable for executing an image of Jalașayana of bhagavata Viṣṇu.' (bhagavato Viṣṇor jalașayaranarūpanīsādanayogyabṛhacchhilākarṣanaavyāpāraparipārussaitair......). The conjoint expression šilākarṣana may be broken up as šilā+karṣana or šilā+ākarṣana. In either case the verb may have two alternative meanings—that of 'dragging' or that of 'scratching.' Considering that the stone is described as a huge (brhat) and that Vișṇugupta was pleased in the matter, the likely meaning here is that the stone was dragged. But we cannot today identify the village called Dakṣiṇakoli. The early image at Buḍhā Nilkaṇṭha, however, was evidently carved from a huge rock and, as far as we could examine, the rock does not appear to belong to the place. It is a dark stone of the basalt variety and this type of stone is not found in the valley, but a few miles outside. Possibly this tremendous feat of dragging the rock is being alluded to in the inscription. In that case the present image is very likely the one that was carved during the time of Bhīmārjunadeva, probably at the instance of the king, as Vișṇugupta was an avowed Śaiva. Moreover, the inscription begins with an invocation to the Jalașayanaṛupa of Vișṇu and being a royal edict is likely to demonstrate the king's Vaiṣṇava leanings. This, however, means that there was already an older shrine of Jalașayana Vișṇu in the village of Bhumbhukkikă to which Amșuvarman made his grant. The fact that Bhīmārjunadeva's image was made only thirty-two years after Amșuvarman's donation and yet two different names are used for the villages would indicate their separate entity. Thus, possibly, the earlier image, perhaps a less ambitious one, is now lost.

Bhīmārjunadeva's Viṣṇu lies on a huge nāga whose eleven hoods form a canopy of oval shape (Fig. 47). The shrine is open to the
sky and so also are the eyes of Viṣṇu. His legs cross each other at the ankles and he is clad in a dhoti with an udarabandha and a scarf that falls across the thighs in a loop. His hands are adorned with valayas and sarpa-keyūras; the form of the kuṇḍalas and the crown cannot be discerned. His forehead is marked with the symbol of Rāmānujapathī Śrī Vaiṣṇavas, probably of the Vaḍakalai branch. His four hands carry the four usual attributes, the discus in the upper right and the mace in the upper left, while the lower left holds the conch and the lower right displays the lotus seed in varadamudrā.

The sculpture shares with other early Vaiṣṇava images, such as the magnificent Varāha (Fig. 5) and the Kāliyadamana (Fig. 51) the same monumental quality and heroic proportions. In keeping with the spirit of the theme, however, it is a more placid expression without the dramatic impact of the other sculptures. It is noteworthy that the treatment of the nāga, particularly in the powerful convolutions of the form as well as the details of the scale, is almost identical with that of the Kāliyadamana, which would indicate that both belong to the same school of art.

In contrast to this seventh century sculpture, the seventeenth century Balaju copy is less impressive both in size and expression, although the amazing closeness in styles demonstrates once again the difficulty of dating Nepali sculptures with any absoluteness. The dress and ornaments are identical and here the crown appears to be of the same variety as that seen in the viśvarūpadarśana image (Fig. 19). We can perhaps deduce that similar is also the form of the crown in the Buḍhā Nīlkanṭha image. The two lower hands carry the same attributes as in the older image, but the symbols in the upper hands appear to be different. Curiously the upper right hand holds a rosary while the attribute in the corresponding left hand appears to be a flask. It is difficult to determine its form as it is almost wholly immersed in the water, but we are reasonably certain that it is not a mace. The common practice, both in Nepal and in India, is to depict it as being held vertically with the knob either pointing upwards or downwards but nowhere do we find it being carried horizontally.
Despite the fact that this image is declared to be a copy of that at Būḍhā Nirkaṇṭha we thus find that two of the attributes have been changed. This alteration must be meaningful and cannot be ascribed to the fancy or whim of the artist. In his Jalāsayana form Viṣṇu is said to be in yoganīḍrā and perhaps the rosary and the vase have been included to emphasize his character as yogī. At the same time, it is curious that his forehead is marked with the triputṇāḍaka symbol, three horizontal stripes, associated commonly with the Śaiva sect. This is probably because the image is now under worship by Śaiva Brahmins, or, possibly, the image itself with the two unusual attributes, reflects a syncretic intention, which had become a commonplace in the country by the seventeenth century.

(V)

VIṢṆU-MĀNDALAS

It remains for us to discuss two Viṣṇava paintings of unusual interest. The earliest of these is now in a private collection in New York and, according to the inscription below, was painted in the year N.S.540/A.D.1420 (Fig. 50). It shows at the centre of the maṇḍala a four-armed Viṣṇu, seated in yogāsana on the coils of a nāga, whose seven hoods provide the god with a halo. His form is heavily encrusted with jewelleries and a tilak is marked on the forehead. The hands hold the four usual attributes. To his right Lakṣmī, seated, holds two lotuses by their stalks; the lotus on her right carries a kalaśa and that on her left a darpana. To the god’s left is the kneeling Garuḍa with his arms in the namaskāramudrā.

This central trio is surrounded by twelve couples, each couple being represented within a lotus petal. The male figures stand in samapadasthaṇaka, each is given the four emblems but in varying combinations and a different colour, although only four colours are used — yellow, blue, green and white. The female companion is identically delineated in all the twelve instances except for their complexion. Curiously, the colour of each differs from that of the male she accompanies. The right hand of each hangs down loosely while the left displays the vyākhyānamudrā. There can be no doubt
that the males represent the twelve sub-vyūhas of Viṣṇu. According
to the Pāñcarātra saṃhitās, from each vyūha emanates or descends
(avaṭāraḥ) three sub-vyūhas, or vyūhāntaraś. These are: (i) from
Vāsudeva: Keśava, Nārāyaṇa and Mādhava; (ii) from Saṃkarṣaṇa:
Govinda, Viṣṇu and Madhusūdana; (iii) from Pradyumna: Trivik\
rama, Vāmana and Śrīdharā; and (iv) from Aniruddha: Hṛṣikeśa,
Padmanābha and Dāmodara. In fact, these are the twelve that are
represented in the maṇḍala, and in the Vāsudeva-Kamalajā paṭa
(Fig. 84) also the same twelve are depicted in separate groups of
three as described in the text. The females obviously are their
Śaktis and the Sātvatasariṅhitā enumerates twelve of them, although
there they are connected with the avatāraś. The Tantrasāra,
however, names twenty-four Śaktis of the emanations (see Appendix)
and they are all given the same form. Obviously, the twelve corre-
spending to the sub-vyūhas are represented here, and, needless to say,
they are all emanations of Lākṣmī. The tāntric character of the
maṇḍala is therefore quite apparent.

Among the remaining figures of the maṇḍala, the eight portrayed
in pairs in the four corners along the edge of the circle and seated on
their respective mounts are the Dīkapālas. Two other figures are
added in two of the corners, that on the upper left corner being
Brahmā and that on the lower right another form of Viṣṇu judging
by the mount, which is Garuḍa. The four gates of the maṇḍala
prākāra are guarded by four pairs of pratihāras or dvārapālas. In
the Rūpamaṇḍana eight pratihāras of Viṣṇu are described. They
should be represented as pairs, the two in the east being Daṇḍa and
Pracaṇḍa, the two in the west (? ) Dhātā and Vidhātā, the two in the
south Jaya and Vijaya and the remaining pair, guarding the northern
gate, are Bhadra and Subhadra. They are given different attri-
butes and, as a general rule, it is prescribed that they should be
dwarfish in appearance (vāmanākārārūpate). As a matter of fact
in the maṇḍala we find them short and pot-bellied and they stand in
pratyālīḍha posture as befitting their role. Outside the maṇḍala
proper along the top there are five representations flanked by Sūrya
and Candra. Unfortunately the middle figure is damaged but the
others from the left are Gaṇeśa, Umā-Maheśvara, Vāsudeva-Lākṣmī
and Kārttikeya. Along the bottom are represented scenes of abhisekha and homa, as well as portraits of the donor and his family.

According to the inscription the paṭa was donated on the completion of the anantavrata and the god is referred to as Ananta-yajña-Viṣṇu. No doubt this is why we find that Viṣṇu is seated on the nāga Ananta, as is also found in the Anantavrata scroll. The colour of Viṣṇu is white and there can be little doubt that here he represents the para aspect, as we shall soon discuss. Fortuitously a segment of the colour on the chest and left arm of Viṣṇu in the painting has peeled off, revealing part of the underlying compositional diagram. The centre of the maṇḍala coincides with the centre of Viṣṇu’s chest, where in fact he normally bears the śrīvatsa symbol.

The second maṇḍala in the Prince of Wales Museum painting (Fig. 16), dated in the year N.S. 806/A.D. 1686, is even more elaborate than the early fifteenth century paṭa. According to the inscription this painting too was donated on the successful completion of the anantavrata. In the centre of the maṇḍala the white Vāsudeva stands in samapadasthānaka flanked by Lakṣmī on the right and Garuḍa on the left. Lakṣmī here is four-armed, while Garuḍa is six-armed. Of her four hands, the upper two hold the vase on the left and a manuscript on the right; the lower right hand shows the vyākhyānamudrā and the lower left holds the slender stem of a lotus. In the second circle of the lotus maṇḍala are four seated figures of Viṣṇu of different colours, green, blue, yellow and white. These no doubt represent the four vyūha aspects, Vāsudeva, Saṁkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna and Aniruddha. In the next circle are eight male figures of different complexions, each seated in yogāsana on a nāga whose hoods form a canopy above each one’s head. The right hand of each rests on the right knee as it displays the varadamudrā, while the left hand, holding a lotus, is either raised to the chest or rests on the left knee. In the last circle are fourteen seated figures of Viṣṇu, each with a different colour and holding the four common attributes in different combinations.

Outside this circle but within the square, four divinities, flanked by two attendants, are represented within arched shrines. These
four are Gaṇeśa, Devī, Māhākāla and probably Viṣṇu. The bearded attendant to Gaṇeśa’s right holding a manuscript in his left hand is very likely Vedavyāsa. At the four gateways of the maṇḍala are the four principal Dikpālas, while the four others are portrayed in their respective corners. Each gateway is guarded by a pair of males standing in pratyālīḍha representing the aṣṭa-pratihāras enumerated above. The gateways are also flanked by four other pairs of seated figures, some of whom appear to be rśis and yogīs. Among the other eleven figures seated along the edge of the square are the Navagrahās, Brahmadeva and Bhairava. In two registers along the top are depicted the twelve conventional avatāras and the twelve subvyūhas.

These twelve sub-vyūhas stand in rows of six on either side of an eight-armed Viṣṇu standing in pratyālīḍha on an outstretched Garuḍa, who looks up at his lord. Along the base of the painting are the scenes of homa, a Bhairava dancing amidst musicians and portraits of the donor with members of his family behind the officiating priest, while on the other side is portrayed king Sumati Jayajitāmitramalla with other princes.

The fact that in the second circle of this maṇḍala are represented the four principal vyūhas makes it certain that Viṣṇu in the centre symbolises his para aspect. In the Pāñcarātra samhitās the para aspect of the god is on occasions identified with the vyūha Vāsudeva and at others the two are distinguished. As a matter of fact it is from para Vāsudeva that vyūha Vāsudeva springs. According to some of the samhitās this para form of the god is four armed, while according to others he is two armed⁴⁷. At times he is described as dark-blue, but usually as having the colour of pure crystal⁴⁸. The Ahirbudhnyasamhitā states that this para form has originated from ‘that which has all forms and no form’, who is the Sudarsana Puruṣa: ‘ever to be remembered by yogins as seated in the lotus of the heart⁴⁹’, and this no doubt is the antaryāmin aspect of the god. While some of the texts distinguish this para form from that of Puruṣa or Nārāyaṇa, the Viṣṇutilaka identifies them⁵⁰. This para form resides in Vaikuṇṭha and is ever accompanied by Śri Lakṣmī or by more than one of his wives. The lord is always
said to be seated in Vaikuṇṭha on Śeṣa or Ananta nāga and among his important pārśadas or companions are Ananta, Garuḍa and Viṣṇuṣakṣa. There are two other classes of jīvas that inhabit this highest heaven known as the nītās and the surīs, all of whom perform their specific duties. There are also door-keepers and ‘town-watchmen’ of the holy city of Vaikuṇṭha. The eight pratihāras have already been named as they are also enumerated in the Rūpamaṇḍana. Among the town watchmen are Kumuda, Kumudākṣa, Puṇḍarīka, Vāmana, et.al.

There can thus be little difficulty in following how the two maṇḍalas in our paintings were constituted. In both cases the maṇḍala no doubt represents the highest heaven of Vaikuṇṭha. In the centre of this heaven resides para Vāsudeva, who is also the same as Ananta Vāsudeva, with Lakṣmī and Garuḍa. In the fifteenth century paṭa the city is guarded by the eight Viṣṇu pratihāras and the eight conventional Dikpālas. But the maṇḍala in the seventeenth century paṭa (Fig. 16) is far more elaborate. Apart from the central complement of figures, in the second row are the four vyūhas. The eight figures in the third row, each seated on a nāga, probably represent the aśṭaṇāgas as we have already stated. On the other hand these eight figures may also symbolise the eight fold subtle body of the god, the puryaṣṭaka. It is further stated that the kuṭastha puruṣa is the ‘Puruṣa of four pairs’ or the eight Manus. In the last circle the fourteen different forms of Viṣṇu present us with a greater problem. Had the number been twelve, we could have identified them as twelve of the twenty-four emanatory forms, the vidyeśvaras, the twelve sub-vyūhas being represented above. We, however, propose to equate these fourteen figures with the fourteen planes of the Egg, which was produced from the navel of Padmaṇābha, who, according to the Padmatantra, is a portion of Viṣṇu; thus the fourteen planes are segments of the lord. It may also be pointed out that the number of nādīs in the ‘Ahirbudhnya is given as fourteen. Others inhabiting the ‘city of Vaikuṇṭha’ in this painting are the Navagrahas, the aṣṭadikpālas, the eight pratihāras, several other divinities and sages; representing no doubt the nītās and surīs, and perhaps the eight town
watchmen, who are seated in pairs on either side of the four gateways of the city. The avatāras and the sub-vyūhas are of course there in their own right, and the eight-armed Viṣṇu standing on a Garuḍa in the centre of the second row probably represents his vibhuti aspect, the Sudarśana Puruṣa, who is described in the *Ahirbudhnya* as being eight-armed.

Although we do not know of any specific texts that describe at great length such elaborate maṇḍalas of Viṣṇu, depicted in these paintings, there seems little doubt that the underlying symbology inspiring the construction of the maṇḍalas is drawn from such and other Pāñcarātra texts as mentioned above. The Pāñcarātra samhitās and texts of a more esoteric character emphasising upon tāntric rituals must have been well known in Nepal, along with the purānic traditions. We have already pointed out that tāntric Buddhist rites must also have played a considerable role in devising the construction of such maṇḍalas. We know of no such elaborate Vaiṣṇava maṇḍalas from India, but they must have once been familiar there.

Apart from the fact that these maṇḍalas ostensibly attest how deeply Viṣṇuism was permeated by tāntric esoterism, an important point that emerges is that the para aspect of Viṣṇu was also a representational one. The description of Vāsudeva in the *Viṣṇudharmottara*\(^4\)\(^6\) is most likely of his para aspect, judging from the elaborate explanation of the symbology of this form. The *Agnipurāṇa*\(^4\)\(^7\) also describes the form of para Vāsudeva where he is said to be accompanied by Śrī and Bhūmi. The *Vaikhānasāgama*\(^4\)\(^8\) description of para Vāsudeva is by far the most elaborate. In all these descriptions he is four-armed, although the texts are not unanimous as to the disposition of the attributes. Thus, judging both from the texts and from the plastic representations in Nepal, there can be no doubt that J. N. Banerjea was in a sense correct in assuming that the para aspect of the god is represented in the dhruvaberas described in the *Vaikhānasāgama*\(^4\)\(^9\).

At the same time the inscriptions below the paintings declare that they were consecrated on the occasions of performing the
We have already seen that the Agnipurāṇa prescribes that during this vrata Ananta is worshipped as Nārāyaṇa, which is but an alternate name of the para aspect of the god. Thus there is no inconsistency in suggesting that the central figure of the maṇḍalas symbolise, as Ananta-Vāsudeva (which explains the serpent), the para or the highest form of Viṣṇu.
CHAPTER FOUR

THE CULT OF KRŚNA

A. ICONS OF KRŚNA

(i)

One solitary sculpture in Nepal attests the fact that the hero-god Krśna and his legendary exploits were familiar in that country during the period of the Licchavis. Of course, the sculpture of viśvarūpadarśana of Arjuna as well as the mention of Yudhiśthira in inscriptions\(^1\) indicate that the Mahābhārata was already well-known and naturally Krśna was also familiar. But no cult of Krśna, at least as far as plastic documents are concerned, appears to have been popular at the time. Only from about the fifteenth century do we begin to get profuse material in sculpture as well as painting that demonstrates the increasing popularity of the cult of Krśna\(^2\). This may have been motivated by the revival of Viṣṇuism, particularly in eastern India during the medieval period following the Sahajiyā movements, inspired by Chaitanya and his followers. An additional impetus was perhaps provided, especially subsequent to the Muslim invasions and conquest of India, by the Rajput emigrants from India as well as Vaiśṇava Brahmins who found patronage in the courts during the later Malla and the Shāh periods.

Certainly the monarchs of these two dynasties played a significant role in giving fresh inspiration to the Vaiṣṇava movement in Nepal. We have already alluded to some of them considering themselves as avatāras of Viṣṇu and consecrating many temples and images. Both Pratāpamalla and Siddhinarasimhamalla were devout patrons of Viṣṇuism and the temples of Mīna Nārāyaṇa in the Darbar square at Kathmandu or that of Krśna at the Patan Darbar stand testimony to their devotion and benefactions. That the ins-
piration came from eastern India, probably Bengal, is evident from the architectural style, employed in the Kṛṣṇa temple (Fig. 101), which was very likely inspired by the Bengali ratna-deuls. The use of bricks and terracotta became common at about this period, which also indicates an eastern Indian influence. Moreover, we know that one of Pratāpamalla’s queens was a princess of Cooch Behar and that many of the ācāryas employed at the Malla and the Shāh courts were from Bengal. The survival of Bengali literature in the country also can be adduced as demonstrating the possible source of influence.

This is, however, not to deny the influences, particularly Kṛṣṇaite, that seeped through from the hills of Panjab and Garhwal, where the cult of Kṛṣṇa gained ascendancy from the sixteenth century onwards, and those riding on the waves of cultural and ethnic migrations from, as well as due to matrimonial relations with, Rajput courts of India. From the late seventeenth century the Rajput style of painting, depicting particularly Kṛṣṇaite legends, becomes especially popular in Nepal and from the large number of such paintings surviving they seem to have been in great demand. Some of the paintings so closely imitate Rajput styles that it seems quite likely that Indian artists, as always, found benevolent patrons in the Nepali monarchs and nobles. After the conquest of the valley by Prthivī Nārāyaṇa Shāh in the middle of the eighteenth century, and with his successors claiming to be incarnations of Viṣṇu as well as marrying into Indian royal families, it was only natural that Viṣṇuism should become a flourishing cult.

(ii)

In the old palace at Kathmandu stands an immense sculpture (Fig. 51) depicting the occasion of the boy Kṛṣṇa slaying the aquatic demon Kāliya. The story, recounted in the purāṇas, runs that the waters of the river Yamunā became contaminated by the poisonous breath of Kāliya, the nāga, who had earlier defeated Garuḍa. To rid the river of this vicious serpent Kṛṣṇa fought with him, and, by dancing on his hoods, overcame him to finally banish
him to the sea. The sculpture shows the mighty coils of a giant nāga rising from below in fantastic convolutions and spreading his hoods to form a canopy above the head of the personified demon. The wife of the nāga, the female displaying the namaskāramudrā, is shown pleading for mercy as narrated in the texts. The other is very likely one of the gopas entangled by the nāga’s coils from which he appears to be attempting to extricate himself. Kāliya holds another serpent with his two hands as he looks up at the boy Kṛṣṇa, who has placed one foot on his shoulder and the other on his crown. The boy wears a loin-cloth and a metal crown that has been separately attached. His hair is actually tied in a bun and the halo symbolises his divinity.

In the Varāha-vātaitsṛ there is narrated that king Pratāpamalla, in the seventeenth century, recovered a large sculpture of Kāliyadamana, which was lying neglected, and installed it in the palace. There can be little doubt that the reference is to the sculpture under discussion. Stylistically, this image belongs to the sixth century and must be a product of the same school that was responsible for the magnificent sculpture of Varāha-avatāra (Fig. 5). Both share a similar monumentality of form and possess the same heroic quality that appear to be general characteristics of early Licchavi art.

The artist has graphically conveyed the dynamism of the theme and has expressively portrayed the heroism involved in the dramatic myth. His perception of the psychology of the incident is masterly and this remains one of the most powerful representations of Kāliyadamana known to us. When Kṛṣṇa slew the demon he was only a boy of about six or seven and this is how he has been portrayed: not as a giant boy but as a normal child, his belly bloated with the milk and butter he constantly devoured at Gokula. At the same time the artist has expressed the boy’s cosmic powers by showing him, armed only with a whip, probably the sash tied around his waist, effortlessly striking the titanic monster. As he strikes his mouth displays the faint but disdainful smile of a boy who is confident of his strength. From the way the monster looks up at the boy-hero it is evident that he is surprised at the precocity of
the child and therefore does not even care to strike him. Indeed, so sensitive rendering of a theme, taking into account the emotional factors of the conflict, is rare even in the much larger field of Indian art.

There is nothing known from India with which this sculpture, carved fully in the round, is comparable. The only early representation of Kāliyadāmana is found in a fragment now lying in the Lucknow Museum (Fig. 52). There we see two large feet, no doubt of a giant boy, on either side of the personified Kāliya. The fragment is in red sandstone and probably is a work of the Mathura school of about the fifth century. But there we notice that, proportionately, the boy appears to have been larger than the demon, while the Nepali version is certainly a much more subtle representation of the conflict between a child and a giant. However, if we compare the treatment of the scales of the nāga coils, the modelling of the physique of the personified Kāliya, the manner in which the hood spreads and the delineation of the curls of Kāliya’s hair, there seems little doubt that some such Mathura sculpture must have been the inspiration behind the Nepali work.

There are one or two copies of this sculpture, on a very miniature scale, fixed to the walls of water conduits in Patan. But these are mere mechanical copies and are distinguished neither by any sense of vitality nor by novel iconographic features. In the Cambridge kalāpustaka, however, there is a pretty illumination depicting the same theme on a tiny scale but in a vigorous fashion (Fig. 53). The narrative intent here is more obvious for we see on the left the gopis and the cows beholding the conflict taking place in the centre of the folio. The cows, of course, have come to drink the water of the river Yamunā which has been polluted by the poisonous serpent. In the tree is Kṛṣṇa’s elder brother Balarāma, while the boy Kṛṣṇa, who has just jumped from the tree, is dancing on the flaming hoods of the nāga, exactly as it is narrated in the texts. Kāliya once again holds a snake as his only weapon with both his hands and two other personified serpents are worshipping the Lord, also described in the texts. The stereotyped and conceptual character of the art becomes evident from the fact that Kāliya in the sixteenth
century illumination is portrayed in the same fashion as he was shown by the sculptor in the sixth century (Fig. 51). This in fact is one of the classic postures employed by the artists to depict a fallen fighter, particularly a demon, as we find elsewhere for fallen asuras (Fig. 3), or in Mahiṣāsuramardini images. In the next scene the boy plays on his flute at the summit of mount Govardhana in Vrindavana, while a peacock and the gopis dance, no doubt in celebration of the occasion.

Another early but curious sculpture, probably representing the child Kṛṣṇa or perhaps Balarāma is partly embedded in the ground beside a wayside shrine in Kathmandu (Fig. 54). That the figure is of a boy about to destroy someone with the circular weapon in his raised right hand is evident. He may have been flying through the air, as may be surmised from his posture, or standing on the shoulders of the person he is destroying. His hair is arranged into an elaborate bun, tied with a fillet, that is somewhat reminiscent of styles of coiffure seen in south Indian bronzes. Prominent sankhapatrás above his ears and a hāra are his only ornaments. A scarf like a cross-belt binds the torso, and is tied in the middle in a beautiful knot; otherwise the figure appears to be naked. This cross-belt is reminiscent of those found in early Indian sculpture and also in Gupta art. The torso with the slightly bulging belly is very smoothly modelled and the artist displays a fine sense of volume. In fact, the slightly sardonic smile on his lips and the treatment of the torso are quite similar to the boy Kṛṣṇa slaying the demon Kāliya. Although we cannot definitely identify the figure, it seems very likely that he represents a particular form of the child-hero, Kṛṣṇa, or his brother Balarāma.

(iii)

One of the most common forms of Kṛṣṇa images that was particularly popular after the seventeenth century is that of veṇudhara Kṛṣṇa. The form is classic and is very common in Vaiṣṇava iconography throughout India. In a metal example in a private collection in Bombay (Fig. 55) the god stands with his right leg bent and
placed across the left thus gracefully balancing the natural dehanche-
ment of the posture. His hands are raised near his breast and
obviously held a flute or a vēṇu. His dress and ornaments of course
reflect the prevailing style of the period. While the posture is
ultimately derived from the classic motif of śālabhaṅgikā it came
to be invariably associated with Kṛṣṇa, the flute-player.

Kṛṣṇa is one of the most important of the dramatis personae
in the Mahābhārata, but his character there is quite different from
that of Kṛṣṇa, the cowherd boy as described in the Harivamśa.
Kṛṣṇa, the son of Vasudeva and Devakī, and brought up by Nanda
and Yaśodā, is the central figure of the Bhāgavata cult as delineated
in purāṇic mythology. The Viṣṇudharma, as different from the
Viṣṇudharmottara, is one of the earliest Vaiṣṇava śāstras to extol the
supremacy of the worship of Kṛṣṇa-Vāsudeva as advocated by the
Smārta Bhāgavatas. Hazra has very competently shown that origi-
nally it was a text of the Smārta Pāñcarātrins but was taken over by
the Bhāgavatas and given a Kṛṣṇa-Vāsudeva colouring. Several
other purāṇas were also redacted by the Smārta Bhāgavatas, which
give prominence to the personality of the juvenile Kṛṣṇa of Vrindava-
na. We have already mentioned that one of the earliest known
manuscripts of the Viṣṇudharma was copied in Nepal in the year
1047 A.D. Later purāṇas such as the Ādipurāṇa, the Bhāgavatapurāṇa,
etc. give a detailed description of the exploits and loves of Kṛṣṇa.
But it is only in Jayadeva’s Gitagovinda, written at the court of
Lakṣmanasena of Bengal in the twelfth century, that we find the
eloquent and ecstatic exposition of the amorous nature of the
relationship between Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa.

It was around this period that the concept of the cowherd
Kṛṣṇa enchanting the gopis with the rapturous music of his flute
began increasingly to capture the minds of the Bhāgavatas and both
in the north and in the south we find numerous images depicting
him as the flute-playing god, either in the company of one or more
wives and other gopis or of the cows that adored him. This wave
of renewed devotion to the divine and archetypal lover must also
have reached Nepal and hence the proliferation of this specific
iconic type in the late medieval period.

In another image of the seventeenth century from Deo Patan (Fig. 56) a four-handed Kṛṣṇa stands in his characteristic pose below a kalpavṛkṣa (wish-fulfilling tree). He stands on the back of two cows whose heads are turned towards him in an expression of ecstasy as he plays upon the flute. The other two hands hold the cakra and the gadā and here, no doubt, his indentification with Viṣṇu is being emphasized. He is flanked by two equally enraptured dancing females, who probably represent his two wives Rukmini and Satyabhāmā as it is related in the texts⁶. A similar group in metal may also be seen in a temple in Mṛgasthali built in the late nineteenth century (Fig. 57). There, however, he is two-armed but flanked by the two wives, one of whom holds a fan and the other a fly-whisk. At the base of the branches of the wish-fulfilling tree, which forms an elegant arch above the images, are two garuḍas bearing lamps.

A less common type of veṇudhara Kṛṣṇa is that in a private collection (Fig. 58) where the god is seen seated⁸. With wonderfully bulging eyes the head is almost definitely but elegantly tilted to the right. The crown and ornaments as well as the vanamālā are very similar to those seen in the standing figure but the design of the dress appears to be different in the two. Here again, we notice the quite prominent sect mark of the Śrī Vaiṣṇavas on the forehead. A glance at another seated Kṛṣṇa from western India (Fig. 59) leaves little room for doubting the source of the Nepali image¹⁰. However, although the iconic type is the same, stylistically the two sculptures are far apart, and, once again, demonstrates that the Nepali artist usually borrowed only the skeleton but clothed it with flesh and blood according to his own tradition and predilection.

B. KṚṢṆAITE LEGENDS.

(iv)

If these icons display a stereotyped form and a consequent rigidity in expression, more remarkable are the cycles of painting,
executed in long cotton scrolls, illustrating the life of Kṛṣṇa. A large number of such scrolls exists but only one manuscript is so far known to portray a few incidents from his life. This is the Cambridge kalāpustaka which has already been referred to and which illustrates scenes from the two great epics as well.

In one of the folios (Fig. 60) we see Kaṁsa with a raised sword about to decapitate his sister Devakī, who is seated in a chariot along with her husband Vasudeva. Evidently this represents the occasion when Devakī and Vasudeva were going home after their marriage and Kaṁsa having dreamt of his impending doom—that their eighth son would destroy him—wanted to slay her, but was implored by Vasudeva, who is shown with folded hands, to desist on the promise that all the children will be handed over to him. In the next scene Kaṁsa is seen taking the eighth child, the substituted girl, and in the following composition just as he is about to smash the baby on a stone altar the goddess Māyā, in the upper right corner, appears and warns Kaṁsa that the real child is growing up elsewhere.

In the next folio (Fig. 60) we first see Kṛṣṇa with his foster mother Yaśodā in Gokul and then the incident of the Putanāvadha. Putanā an ogress had been sent by Kaṁsa to destroy the child. She appeared before him as an enchanting female and taking the child in her arms gave him her poisoned breasts to suckle. The child however, aware of her insidious intent and instead of sucking her breasts, pulled them until the real form of the enchantress was revealed and she died. In the larger section of this folio the boy Kṛṣṇa is seen jumping out of Yośodā’s arms and sucking one of the breasts of the rākṣasī who falls in pain and anguish on the bearded Nanda, the foster-father, and two other gopās. The artist in this case has not been quite true to the literary accounts and instead of the child pulling the breasts of the ogress he is sucking one of them. Another curious feature is that the boy Kṛṣṇa has not been portrayed as a dark figure but of a fair complexion, again quite contrary to any known description of the colour of the child’s skin. As a matter of fact, because of his colour, the preceptor of the gopās is said to have named him Kṛṣṇa.
In the following folio is represented the heroic feat of Kāliyadāmana which has already been described. Then follows the amusing but mischievous story of vastraharana (Fig. 53). Kṛṣṇa's friendliness and amorous relationship with the gopīs is the dominant strain that runs through his entire biography. One afternoon while the gopīs were bathing in the river the boy, in a playful mood, took all their clothes and climbed up the nipa tree. In the graphic illuminations of the incident some of the gopīs are seen swimming in the river, which is rendered conceptually, while others on the bank make futile attempts to hide their nakedness and are imploring the boy to return their clothes. Here, however, the boy is of a dark complexion. According to the Bhāgavatapurāṇa on returning their clothes Kṛṣṇa promised the gopīs that on nights to come they shall find enjoyment with him\(^{13}\).

The night of the full moon in the month of Kṛttika, known commonly as the rāsapūrimā, was the promised night of fulfilment. Five chapters are devoted in the Bhāgavatapurāṇa to Kṛṣṇa's rāsalīlā with the gopīs\(^{13}\). The next two folios of the kalāpustaka (Fig. 63) are covered with very picturesque delineations of this theme. The purāṇa gives us a most eloquent description of the rāsa. On that intoxicating autumnal night the moon had appeared on the horizon. Gazing at it as it glowed like the face of Lakṣmī and seeing its soft beams caress the forest, Kṛṣṇa began playing his flute. Enchanted by the lilting music, the women of Vraja left their homes and forgetful of their appearance or decorum rushed to find the flute-player. Kṛṣṇa first refused to oblige them and asked them to return to their homes and then disappeared. There follows a vivid description of the gopīs' frustrating search for him through the forests and their ultimate discovery. Satisfied with their devotion Kṛṣṇa then indulged in the rāsa with them. 'The gopīs formed a circle, and Kṛṣṇa, the Lord of Yoga was between every two of them and he pressed them all unto his shoulders, and each of them thought that Kṛṣṇa was near to her... The sky became filled with hundreds of chariots of Devas and Deva girls, eager to witness the scene. Drums beat and flowers rained. The Gandharva kings with their wives sang the pure glory of Kṛṣṇa\(^{14}\).
The Nepali artist (Fig. 63) has shown the god in the centre of the circle playing upon the flute and producing the music that enchanted all the gopīs. In the next circle Kṛṣṇa is seen seated and carousing with eight gopīs simultaneously as a manifestation of his yogic powers. It is interesting that the artist has not emphasized the dance part of the rāsa. Outside the circle the devas and gandharvas are playing upon the drums in the heavens, while below all the animals and birds of Vrindavana forest are spellbound with the music of the flute. Along the bottom the narrow strip of water helps to fix the locale of the incident on the bank of the river Yamunā. Characteristic of the style the exuberant floral background and the brightly painted trees and animals add to the decorativeness of the painting as well as aid considerably in capturing the joyous mood of the occasion. These illuminations were most likely painted in the last decade of the sixteenth century and the style here is altogether Nepali.

The illuminator then skips many of the incidents and illustrates Kṛṣṇa’s destruction of Kaṁsa at Mathura. In the first composition (Fig. 61) Kṛṣṇa is seen destroying the elephant Kuvalayārika at the entrance of the wrestling arena. As a matter of fact both the brothers are engaged in killing the elephant. In the following composition we first see a number of wrestlers, who appear to be summersaulting through the air and then Kṛṣṇa dancing on the fallen Kaṁsa, while the other asuras just sit and watch. The female displaying the aṇḍā mudrā is perhaps Kaṁsa’s wife pleading with Kṛṣṇa to have mercy on her husband.

In two more folios the illuminator has painted two other legends relating to the god Viṣṇu rather than to the boy hero. One of these (Fig. 62) is the Vāmana avatāra theme which has already been discussed; the other is the miracle of Gajendramokṣa. We first see Gajendra along with several other elephants sporting on the river bank, while an alligator approaches below. In the next composition, Viṣṇu riding on the Garuḍa appears to save the devoted animal while the alligator has caught its foot. The drawing of the alligator is interesting and it really appears as a lion. Obviously
the artist had no idea how an alligator looked and probably had not even seen a picture of one.

We have already referred to the illuminations of the Rāmāyaṇa in connection with Rāma-avatāra. We will now discuss and illustrate a few scenes from the Mahābhārata in which Kṛṣṇa has been included. Needless to say, throughout the great epic Kṛṣṇa remains the dominant personality whether behind the scenes or on the stage. He is, of course, always present on the battle-field as Arjuna’s charioteer; thus whenever the artist has portrayed a battle scene with Arjuna, Kṛṣṇa is invariably included. In the Mahābhārata the versatility of Kṛṣṇa is evident in the many roles he plays, those of the saviour, the diplomat, the politician and the teacher. Considering the size of the epic, there is nothing surprising in the rather perfunctory choice of episodes or their summary delineation in the kalāpustaka. Still, in the scenes depicted, a considerable amount of detail has been shown, and the accompanying inscriptions in mixed Sanskrit and Newari simplify the identifications.

One of the most dramatic episodes in the Mahābhārata is the killing of Śiśupāla by Kṛṣṇa. In the illumination (Fig. 64) we find Yudhiṣṭhira washing Kṛṣṇa’s feet, when the latter attended the Rājasūya sacrifice performed by the king. Śiśupāla, a cousin of Kṛṣṇa, who also was a guest, began insulting both Bhīṣma and Kṛṣṇa, and instigated by others, ultimately challenged Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa then decapitated him with his discus. In the illumination the princes and sages sit together in two registers, while in the middle Yudhiṣṭhira is busy washing Kṛṣṇa’s feet. Kṛṣṇa’s right hand holds the discus, which has returned after cutting off Śiśupāla’s head, and the artist even shows us the path followed by the weapon.

In another folio (Fig. 65) occurs an interesting portrayal of Arjuna’s viśvarūpAdaśana. The battlefield is indicated by the confronted chariots of Arjuna and Kṛṣṇa on the one side and of the Kauravas on the other. The dark central figure with many arms
and legs, multiple heads and faces, some of them awesome and painted even on his belly and chest, represents the universal manifestation. On the chariot to the left, the bewildered and frightened Arjuna shrinks away from the manifestation with enjoined palms. The human Kṛṣṇa is seated in front of the chariot, assuring Arjuna with his right hand, and holding the reins of the horses with the left. The insignia on the Pāṇḍava standard behind Kṛṣṇa is a monkey in a flying posture. This is no doubt Hanumān who, on an earlier occasion, had told Bhīma that he would be present at the battle of Kurukṣetra. On the other side of the manifestation are the Kauravas, led by Duryodhana, and they also seem wonder-struck, although only Arjuna was supposed to have beheld the manifestation. The insignia on their standard appears to be a lion. As we have already mentioned, the Bhagavadgītā explicitly states that, seeing the terrible faces and form of Viśvarūpa, Arjuna was frightened and requested Kṛṣṇa to return to his normal self. This is the impression the artist has attempted to convey in an even more gruesome and convincing manner than in the earlier representation (Fig. 19). What is still more exciting is that in conceiving this form, the artist, who must have been familiar with Buddhist iconography, has used two models. One is of a terrify ing Vajrayāna divinity, such as Mahākāla or Vighnāntaka, with four sets of legs, two sets in pratyālīḍha posture and the other two in steps of the dance. The other model is of demons with awesome faces on the bellies and known as udaremukhas. They are described in the epics and used frequently in art by the Buddhists to depict Māra’s companions in the scene of Gautama’s temptation.

In the two following battle scenes Kṛṣṇa is shown twice as Arjuna’s charioteer, although his colour is lighter in both instances than in the Viśvarūpadarśana scene.

It is interesting to note that while the chariots of both parties are being pulled by horses, a makara adorns the front of the vehicle. Evidently the makara is a decorative device as well as, perhaps, an auspicious symbol, and the chariots may have been of the makara-ratha.
variety, just as there were boats in the shapes of animals or of birds. In other Nepali paintings in which historical kings are shown riding a chariot, a makara is also represented along with horses. Such makara-rathas were probably a familiar sight in the valley in the medieval period.

These illumination are rendered with a great flair for ornateness and vivacity. The kalāpustaka was most likely illuminated around 1600 A.D. There are also a number of scrolls depicting Buddhist subjects done in an identical style and employing the same figural types. There seems little doubt that the same artists painted manuscripts or paṭas both for the Buddhists and the Hindus, and that iconographic types and motifs were often transferred from one to the other.

One of the earliest documents from Nepal to show pronounced influences of the Rajput style of painting is a long scroll portraying incidents of Kṛṣṇa-līlā and painted in the year 1692. Unfortunately, much of the scroll is damaged but from what remains the incidents can be recognized without any difficulty. Inscriptions along the top of the two rows of paintings also help us considerably in identifying the scenes. The inscriptions are in Newari which once more indicates that there must have been, and perhaps still is, some Vaishnava literature in the vernacular that awaits an investigation and literary evaluation.

In the portions illustrated here (Fig. 66) we first see along the top Kaṁsa killing the substituted girl against a stone altar and the Devī in a cloud, who is shown eight armed as described in the text. Then within the pavilion are Nanda and Yaśodā with an attendant. Nanda and has brought the boy, still wrapped in its swaddling clothes, from the prison of Kaṁsa and is handing him over to his wife. Outside the pavilion are two priests, probably discussing the child’s future, and one of them is Garga, the preceptor of the gopas of Gokula. He is shown again engaged in conversation with Nanda, who is holding the tail of a cow to emphasise that he is a gopa. This is the occasion of naming the child and is being celebrated with music and dancing.
In the following scene (Fig 67) Kamsa is seen to despatch Putanā, who is given an awesome appearance, to Gokula, and the ogress, as a beautiful damsel, is taking the child in her arms from Yaśodā. In the next composition the child pulls both breasts of the ogress until she is dead, as it is related in the texts. Alarmed at the child’s behaviour Yośodā immediately arranged for the performance of a propitious rite, which is called in the inscription vālagrahaśānti. In the painting (Fig. 68) we see Yośodā holding the child and requesting Garga to perform the sānti. Then to reassure his foster mother the child leaves her arms and reveals his divine form. In the two following scenes the boy first destroys the demon Trāvartta, or whirlwind, and then upsets the cart; according to the inscription he is here killing Śakaṭāsura. In the subsequent scenes several other incidents of the wondrous child that are related in the kumarālilā section of the Bhāgavatapurāṇa are portrayed.

Along the bottom are illustrated some of the incidents during the pauganda-lilā (adolescence). In Fig. 66 on the extreme left is the story of Pralambavadha. Balabhadra or Balarāma, the elder brother of Kṛṣṇa, is seen riding on Pralamba and then killing him. Pralamba, an asura, had joined the gopas disguised as one of them. Kṛṣṇa, of course, recognized him, and invented a game, in which the boys were divided into two sections, and the group that lost would have to carry the winners on their backs. Kṛṣṇa was the leader of one of the parties, which included Pralamba, and Balarāma of the other. Naturally Kṛṣṇa’s group lost and Pralamba was told to carry Balarāma on his shoulders.

While Kṛṣṇa was performing such heroic deeds Nārada had informed Kamsa that Kṛṣṇa was the eighth son of Devakī. The alarmed Kamsa then hatched a plot to get rid of the boy. A wrestling match to which the two boys were invited was arranged at Mathura. An elephant at the entrance was to kill them but if the boys escaped they would be slain by the wrestlers. Akṛura was sent in a chariot to bring the boys, but being a devotee of Kṛṣṇa, he revealed the plot. Undaunted the boys proceeded towards Mathura, and so in the painting (Fig. 67) we see them riding the chariot and reaching the
bank of the river Yamunā, Mathura being on the other side. The
figure carrying pots is probably a gopa, forbidding the brothers to
go to Mathura. The bather in the river is most likely Akrura, who
is performing the japa, while the multi-headed seated god on the
crest of the waves may represent one of Kṛṣṇa's manifestations
that he witnessed.

In Mathura (Fig. 67), while wandering through the streets, the
boys met a washerman and Kṛṣṇa asked him for some clothes. The
washerman, however, was in Kaṁsa's employ and rudely refused. The
infuriated Kṛṣṇa decapitated him. The artist has represented this
exactly as it is described in the text. Further down the street
(Fig. 67) the two brothers met a beautiful but hunchbacked young
girl, carrying fragrant paste. Admiring the girl Kṛṣṇa asked for
some of the paste. The girl introduced herself as Trivakarā, said
she was a servant of Kaṁsa, and offered the paste to Kṛṣṇa. This
pleased Kṛṣṇa who touched her feet with his own and held up her
chin with his hand; at once she stood firm and erect. In the
painting we first see Kṛṣṇa accepting the paste from a cup held up
to him by the hunch-backed girl, and then, with remarkable candour
(Fig. 69), the artist depicts him lifting her chin, which turns her into a
beautiful woman. Although the scroll is increasingly damaged from
here on, to the extreme right we can recognise Kṛṣṇa destroying
Kuvalayapīḍa and then leaping onto the dais (Fig 68) to kill Kaṁsa
at the wrestling match.

The narration in these paintings is continuous, and one scene
is distinguished from another by the subtle but decorative device of
the tree. The figures are portrayed with expression and clarity, and
the artist has dispensed with all unnecessary details. He has, of
course, followed certain accepted conventions but nowhere is he tied
down by iconographic injunctions. Despite the sacred nature
of the theme and the fact that these scrolls were treated reverentially,
they were also used as wall decorations. In India as well as in
Nepal it is often difficult to distinguish between the religious and
secular function of an object of art. Scrolls such as these
had a didactic value and were also enjoyed aesthetically. They served the same function as the miniatures did in a Rajput Court or household in India, and hence, perhaps, imitated their style.

What is remarkable about these paintings is the free and easy manner in which the artist has given us convincing portrayals of the heroic feats. The style is refreshing and vigorous, and the figures are given prominent relief against the uniformly red or green background. But the movement is restrained and not convulsive as in the kalāpustaka paintings. As an example of the artist’s inventiveness, we may point out that no two trees are painted alike. Each tree is given a different form and shape, different leaves and flowers, and, although they are not naturalistic and the colours applied with an expressionistic flair, nonetheless, they reveal the artists’ intimate familiarity with nature. According to accepted convention Kṛṣṇa is always shown as a dark figure and his brother as white, but otherwise almost in every scene, the artist has clothed them with different garments or adorned their heads with different hats and coronets.

Another such interesting scroll, now in the Musée Guimet, illustrates the charming story of Aniruddha’s marriage to Uṣā, the daughter of Bānāsura. The story goes that, Bānāsura, the son of Bali, whom we have already encountered, was a devotee of Śiva and had a thousand arms. He, however, became arrogant and complained to Śiva that he did not find use for all his ten arms in the great wars he had fought. Śiva reassured him that he would soon meet his equal. His daughter, Uṣā, and Kṛṣṇa’s grandson, Aniruddha, were having a clandestine affair, and the lover used to be borne miraculously into Uṣā’s apartment by the maid. One day Bāna discovered them and imprisoned Aniruddha. Kṛṣṇa, riding his mount, intervened and there ensued a battle between the two in which Bānāsura lost all his arms but two. Then Śiva pleaded for his devotee and the asura was spared by Kṛṣṇa. Aniruddha was released and the two lovers united in marriage.

In the sections illustrated here (Figs. 70, 71) we find a crisp and clear style narrating the story in a brisk but sensitive manner. At
the beginning of the scroll (Fig. 70) the figure of Gañesa is painted as an auspicious sign. It is curious that his Śakti holds the bowl of sweets from which the jubilant god eats and her mount is the lion. The lion is the exclusive mount of Devī, who in the form of Pārvatī, is the mother of Gañesa. But the consort of Gañesa is also a manifestation of Śakti or Devī, and hence her mount here is the lion. In the remaining portion of the upper register we see Bānāsura, looking up at Śiva and Pārvatī on the summit of Kailāsa, which no doubt is meant to indicate his devotion for the god. He is next shown in his palace and then riding out upon a horse.

In the second section illustrated here (Fig. 71), Uśā's maid is seen carrying the drugged Aniruddha miraculously through the air from Kṛṣṇa's palace at Dvārakā to Bānāsura's palace across a river. In Bānāsura's palace, the lovers meet in the pavilion on the terrace, while the girl's father looks up suspiciously from below. In the following scene the lovers are caught on the terrace and Aniruddha, tied up with a nāga, is thrown into a dungeon. In the lower register of the first section (Fig. 71) is depicted the fight between Bānāsura and Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa stands astride Garuḍa and fights with eight arms, while the multi-armed and headed Bānāsura stands on a chariot. In the next section is represented the aftermath of the fight. Before the symbolic fire the marriage ceremony of Aniruddha and Uśā is being performed. The humiliated two-armed asura is seen giving his daughter away. Then, while Śiva rides with his devotee on a sort of a magic carpet poised on the clouds, the wedding party returns to Dvārakā and is once again seen to cross the river. The bride and her maid, travel in the covered chariot and Kṛṣṇa with Aniruddha and Sāttvaki in the open one. The next scene is Kṛṣṇa's palace in Dvārakā with the ladies on the terrace and the court below.

Once more we notice the imaginative and yet conventional manner of representation. Kṛṣṇa here is naturally shown as a dignified elderly prince as befits a grandfather. A rich mountainous background provides the continuity in the compositions, which are
separated from one another by means of rivers or architectural devices. It is interesting that while an illusion of depth is created for the buildings, in other respects perspective has been totally ignored. At times, in a remarkably realistic touch, the artist has shown the two attendants on the terrace at the top left watching what is going on below, or, while the woman flies through the air with the recumbent Aniruddha on a couch, a dog on the river bank looks up in astonishment. All the Sāttvata princes are distinguished by their similar crowns. According to an inscription the scroll was painted in the year N. S. 915 or A. D. 1795. 

The prolific output of Vaiṣṇava mythological paintings is also attested by numerous other documents painted in the eighteenth and the nineteenth century. The Harumānnāṭaka in the Bir Library at Kathmandu is profusely illustrated (Fig. 72) as are several others in the museum in that city (Fig. 18). In a private collection in the United States is a richly illuminated manuscript of the Bhāgavatapurāṇa. And in the Bharat Kala Bhavan at Banaras is another magnificent scroll (Figs. 73-75) illustrating a Vaiṣṇava legend that is very popular in Nepal. The story eulogises the merits of performing the anantavrata, which was a popular rite in Nepal as we have already mentioned. Briefly, the story relates the marriage of a Brahmin named Kauḍīnīya with a girl who is called Śilā, Kauḍīnīya's mistake in cutting the ananta thread tied around his wife's hand, the subsequent disasters that befall him as a consequence, such as his house being burnt down, his destitution, etc., then his wanderings through the forests, his meeting with a sage named Ananta, who advises him to perform the anantavrata, and his ultimate recovery. In the first section (Fig. 73) illustrated here we see a dancing Gaṇapati, included as an auspicious symbol, Viṣṇu narrating the story to the five Paṇḍava brothers accompanied by Kunti and Draupadi, and then the marriage of Kauḍīnīya and Śilā. In the next section (Fig. 74), after the performance of the anantavrata, Śilā is seen handing over the consecrated string to Kauḍīnīya to be tied around his right wrist. Then within the building we see the rash and proud Kauḍīnīya tearing off the string tied on his wife's arm. Her resistance is made quite clear by means of the
gesture of her left hand. In the third portion (Fig. 75) the wandering Kaundinya meets the sage Ananta and finally performs the anantavrata.

In general all these paintings are executed in the contemporary Rajput style, but they also display an awareness of the Mughal tradition. We have discussed elsewhere that this style appears in Nepal in dated documents as early as 1681 A.D. This rules out the possibility of influences seeping through from the Panjub hills until we find paintings from that area which were definitely painted before this date. However, the influences of the Mewar and other early Rajasthani schools are quite apparent in these Nepali works.

Once again these paintings clearly demonstrate how contemporary fashion, particularly in dress, enters into the artist's repertoire. Certain conventions, as for example, the attire of Kamsa, are, nonetheless, seen to persist through the ages. Both in the 1692 scroll and in the late sixteenth century kalapustaka illuminations he is portrayed as wearing a coat of mail and the curious Greek helmet. Such headgear and attire appear to have been used commonly for asuras and other evil-doers in Nepali painting from about the sixteenth century onwards. The only exception is that the good Pandava Bhima is also similarly attired, especially with the helmet, as we find in the kalapustaka representations and in the anantavrata scroll (Fig. 73).

A persistent stylistic convention was the generally accepted manner of profile representation of the figures. If in the kalapustaka illuminations they are portrayed in three-quarter profile, in the scrolls they are almost invariably rendered in profile. The Gods, when enshrined, are shown en face, but with other figures, even when the body is shown frontally, the head is depicted in complete profile. It is not that the artist was less competent—a profile view of the face is generally considered easier to paint than a full face—for in Fig. 75, the sage within the cave in the upper row is shown almost frontally as is the cymbal-player in the lower right corner: in both instances the artist has drawn considerably expressive faces.
Evidently, the Nepali artists were here continuing a tradition of profile portraiture that had already been conventionalized and perfected in India.

The inventive quality and the expressionistic flair of the style become evident in the representation of the animals, the trees and the mountainous landscape with its craggy white peaks. This manner of painting mountains is entirely Nepali, while the treatment of trees was probably inspired immediately by the imported Rajput paintings, but ultimately goes back to manuscript illuminations of an earlier period. The physiognomy as well as the dress of the figures, whether male or female, is certainly imitative of Rajput traditions and is quite different from those seen in the kalāpustaka. The same stereotyped schema has been employed to delineate the figures in the myths as well as the portraits along the bottom of the scroll (Fig. 75). All the portraits are identifiable, thanks to the inscription above each figure. Among the musicians (Fig. 73) are Vallabhavaidya, Sādhurām Ācārya, Jayanarasimhavaidya and others, while among the women (Fig. 75) are Saubhāgyalakṣmī, Godāvarīdevī, Dharmalakṣmī, et. al. Despite their schematic representation, however, we do find subtle differences in the physiognomy, such as the shape of the forehead and the nose, variations in the distance or size of the bridge of the nose, the shape of the chin. etc. Evidently, within the given schema, the artist has attempted to portray the different persons with some degree of variation, if not realism.

Thus, along with the tradition of painting paṭas or paubhās, where the artists were expected to adhere rigorously to iconographical injunctions, the practice of illuminating texts of an edificatory nature and painting scrolls, depicting mythological themes, were also common. Even where the paṭas were of a strictly ritualistic character, the artists often introduced elements from their contemporary every-day experiences which enriched these liturgical paintings immensely. In painting the scrolls they were relatively more free and employed rich landscapes to add to the picturesque quality of the illustrations. To make the incidents more appealing to contemporary
taste, the gods were freely clothed in contemporary attire. Such scrolls and kalāpusṭakas were no doubt visual aids in acquiring religious or moral instruction and were therefore valuable family possessions. At the same time they also provided aesthetic pleasure and, hence, they were painted with gay and vivid colours with a direct visual appeal.

With the introduction of the Rajput style, probably sometime in the sixteenth or early seventeenth century, painting in Nepal received a fresh impetus; brightly coloured scrolls depicting Vaiśṇava themes were in great demand. In contemporary sculpture as well we find expressive depictions of the Rāmāyana or the Māhābhārata as in the reliefs embellishing the Kṛṣṇa temple at Patan. Others, graphically portraying incidents from the life of Kṛṣṇa, adorn the tank within the Patan Palace (Fig. 76). Thus, while these plastic representations testify to the remarkable popularity of the cult of Kṛṣṇa during this period, the cult itself, with its innumerable myths and legends, ushered in a new phase in the history of Nepali art.
CHAPTER FIVE

TĀNTRIC ICONS AND TEMPLE FORMS

Tāntric influence on Viṣṇuism has already been touched upon at various places in the foregoing chapters. We will now discuss some icons that are typically tāntric, and will ossess how extensive tāntric influence was on the Vaiṣṇava cult in Nepal. For many of these we have not succeeded in finding any textual corroboration; it is possible that they were conceived exclusively in Nepal and that further researches in tāntric literature will yield results. Certainly these forms do not occur in known Vaiṣṇava tāntric texts in India, but not much is really known about purely tāntric literature of the Vaiṣṇavas. As we shall also see these iconic types are frequently influenced by Śaiva and Buddhist tāntrism, a phenomenon not at all unusual in Nepal.

In an informative article Maheshwari Prasad¹ has drawn our attention to some of the prevailing sub-sects of Viṣṇuism in medieval India. According to the Pāñcarātra samhitās four such sub-sects were Mantra, Āgama, Tantra and Tantrāntara. The author has also shown that the fundamental difference between the Tantra and the Tantrāntara sub-sects was that the followers of the former worshipped the principal divinity accompanied by subsidiary deities (aṅgas), while the main object of veneration of the latter was one icon bodily combining various forms and emanations. Certainly the samhitās mention this class of multi-headed (bhūyīśṭhavaktra) images of Viṣṇu as the central objects of worship by the followers of the Tantrāntara sub-sect.

There can thus be little doubt about the tāntric character of
later Viṣṇuism. A large number of tāntric texts include rituals and descriptions of Viṣṇu, some of which will be mentioned in this chapter. A comparison, for example, of the rituals prescribed for Śiva worship with those for Viṣṇu in later tāntric literature, such as the Pūjāpaddhati and the Tantrasāra, reveals the extent of the esoteric character of Viṣṇuism in the medieval period. Tāntrism therefore appears to have been a pervasive and persuasive system, which, at one time or another, came to replace earlier systems of ritualistic worship among all the major sects in India. It certainly became the system par excellence in Nepal.

(i)

VAIKUNṬHA

According to the Pādma and the Pauṣkara-saṁhitās Viṣṇu, as the chief deity of the Tantrāntara sub-sect, should have many faces, such as those of Saumya, Šīṁha, etc. The Jayākhyasaṁhitā specifies four faces, those of Vaikuṇṭha, Varāha, Kapila and Nara-śīṁha. Images with three and four faces are called Vaikuṇṭha, although according to the above saṁhitā, one of the four faces is said to be of Vaikuṇṭha.

The earliest description of Vaikuṇṭha occurs in the Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa, as we have already seen, and there he is four faced. Such images of Vaikuṇṭha are often described in iconographic texts and are usually given four or eight arms. The Vaikuṇṭha form of Viṣṇu is also one of his manifestations, for it is stated in the Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa that 'with such a body, the god, the greatest in the universe, sustains the whole world'. His four heads are further said to represent Vāsudeva (human), Saṁkaraśaṇa (lion), Pradyumna (boar) and Aniruddha (the terrifying face). In explaining the esoteric significance of the faces it is said that they are symbolic of bala, jñāna, aiśvarya and śakti, and J. N. Banerjea has explained their association with the Pāñcarātra vyūhas.

The cult of Vaikuṇṭha was particularly popular in Kashmir, Rajasthan and Gujarat. The famous shrine in Khajuraho is also
well-known. Although the *Agnipurāṇa* mentions that Magadha is the abode of Vaikuṇṭha, artistic remains do not attest the popularity of the cult in that area. No representation of Vaikuṇṭha is found in the early art of Nepal, but we know that king Pratāpamalla consecrated such an icon in the old palace at Kathmandu in the seventeenth century. A handsome gilt image may still be seen on a balcony within the palace (Fig. 78). In this sculpture the god is four-faced, the front face being placid (saumya), that on his right of a boar, on his left of a lion and the face behind is terrifying (kapila). Seated in *padmāsana*, he carries Śri-Lakṣmī on his lap. Of his twelve hands those on the right display the discus, rosary, mace, lotus, *varada*-and *vyākhyaṇa-mudrās*, while five of the left hands bear a lotus-bud, a manuscript, a conch, a vase and an umbrella; the sixth hand lies idle. None of the familiar texts describes a twelve-handed form of Vaikuṇṭha, and it is evident that the artist has used a text not known to us.

An image, standing in the courtyard of the Chaṅgu Nārāyaṇa temple (Fig. 77), represents a five-headed and ten-armed Viṣṇu, with Lakṣmī on his lap, seated in *padmāsana* on his mount Garuḍa. Both the figures are elaborately ornamented and crowned, and Viṣṇu has the additional *vanamālā*. Four of the five faces are arranged in a row and the fifth on top as we commonly find in multi-headed Vajrayāna images. The normal face is a placid human one while that on the right is of a boar. Of the two faces on the left one is of the lion and the other an awesome human face. The face on top is once again human and benign. With his five right hands he holds a sword, arrows, a discus, a slightly mutilated staff-like object and a conch against his chest. Four of the left hands bear a shield, a bow, a manuscript and a lotus, while the remaining hand encircles his Śakti's waist and carries a vase. His Śakti, Lakṣmī, sits on his lap in *lalitāsana*, her right hand displaying the *varadamudrā* and the left the *abhayamudrā*.

It seems quite reasonable that, because of the animal heads, this may be considered to be an image of Vaikuṇṭha with yet further elaborations. Vaikuṇṭha, as we have seen, should have four heads,
one for each of the four vyūhas. These four faces are of a placid human, a boar, a lion and an awesome human, and indeed these are the four faces that we find in one row. The fifth head, however, has perhaps been added to conform to the ten hands, although in none of the known textual forms is Viṣṇu given five heads and ten arms. We would suggest that in this particular case the four heads in a row represent the four vyūhas, while the fifth on top symbolizes the para aspect, of which the vyūhas are emanations. Visually, the composition of the five heads has no doubt been influenced by Vajrayāna icons so common in Nepal, where a single head, signifying usually the parental Tathāgata, is frequently added at the top of a pyramidal aggregation. The two armed Devī, the right hand displaying the varadamudrā and the left the abhayamudrā, is also a type commonly employed by artists to portray Pārvatī, Indrāṇī or Tārā whenever they are shown similarly seated with their consorts.

Of the attributes in the hands, the discus, the lotus and the conch are familiar Vaiṣṇava emblems. It has already been mentioned that the sword and the shield are found from rather early times in Viṣṇu’s hands as are the bow and arrows. These too are prescribed weapons and their symbology is well-known. The mace appears to have been omitted here, unless it is the somewhat bent, staff-like object in one of the right hands. The two unusual attributes are the vase and the manuscript in the left hands. A waterpot or kundikā is an attribute of Trailokyamohana Viṣṇu, who is described in the Rūpamaṇḍana. As a matter of fact, although this image agrees partly with Viśvarūpa or Trailokyamohana images as described in the Rūpamaṇḍana, the Aparājitapṛcchā or the Agnipurāṇa, there are sufficient differences to suggest that this is yet another cosmic form for which we have no textual evidence. The manuscript in both the images undoubtedly symbolizes his jñāna aspect, particularly in association with the sword which represents knowledge. The manuscript signifying gnosis became a very common emblem in the hands of the majority of the important cult icons, particularly in the tántric phase. This is probably due to a renewed emphasis upon the Jñānamārga as a way of liberation.
Neither of the two Vaikuṇṭha images from Nepal agrees with any known literary description. Some of the saṃhitās mention a form of image with five heads, which are of Narasimha, Kapila, Kraṣa, Haṃsa and Vāgaśvara. Although the Chaṅgu Nārāyaṇa sculpture (Fig. 77) does show five heads of the god, they cannot be identified with those named: The tāntric character of these images seems to be in no doubt, however, and one can suggest with reasonable certainty that they belong to the Tantrāntara sub-sector of Viṣṇuism.

(ii)

VAIṢṆAVIṢAKTI

The principal consort of Viṣṇu is Śri, and we have already discussed her normal form when represented along with Viṣṇu. She was also depicted independently, but, as we have stated, in such cases, unless the context is unmistakable, she may be confused with Tārā since both have the same iconographical form. Śri also had a tāntric character in which her aspect as the ‘śakti’ of Viṣṇu is emphasized. This is already outlined in the Pāṇcarātra saṃhitās and reflects the pronounced influence of the Sāmkhya ideology of dualism. Despite her separate entity she was ultimately identified with the broader concept of Devī or the Great Mother, and so she is included as one of the principal Mātṛkās.

Although various female divinities are described in the Rgveda, it is generally admitted that the vedic pantheon is a male-dominated one. The beginnings of the Śākta ideology can be traced back to the tenth maṇḍala, but the cult could not have originated in vedic theology. From the Atharvaveda and the later saṃhitās, however, both the antiquity and the indigenous character of the cult become quite apparent. Archaeology has certainly established the primeval character of the cult of the mother-goddess in India from pre-historic times. Although the ‘Aryans’ would not admit its existence in their earliest literature, it seems clear that this indigenous cult was of pervasive character, and, with the gradual loosening of the threads of orthodoxy and the consequent process of
acculturation, ultimately it proliferated and became extremely popular in the form of tántric Saktism.

Specifically, the Devī has been associated with Viṣṇu since a considerably early period. As early as in the Mahābhārata and the Harivamśa the story of her birth in the womb of Yaśodā is narrated. It may be remembered that she was the girl who was substituted for the eighth son of Devakī and Vasudeva, and, when Kaṁsa killed her, she appeared in the sky (Fig. 73) and warned him of his impending doom. In the Mārkaṇḍeyapurāṇa one of the stūtis is called Nārāyanistūti, and in the Devīmāhāṭmya she is often addressed as Nārāyaṇī. Further, in one of the verses of the Nārāyanistūti, she is mentioned as "the infinitely powerful Vaiṣṇavī-saktī." As a matter of fact, the Vaiṣṇava bias of the Devīmāhāṭmya is implicit throughout that work. In the very first chapter Mārkaṇḍeya declares: "Mahāmāya is the same as Yoganidrā of Viṣṇu who is the Lord of the world." Then the story is related how the two demons Madhu and Kaṭabha emerged from Viṣṇu's ears, while he was asleep, and terrorised the universe. Mahāmāya as Yoganidrā or Tāmasī had to awaken Viṣṇu who then slew the demons in a protracted battle. In a thirteenth century manuscript of the text, now in the Bharat Kala Bhavan, a Nepali artist has illuminated this incident with considerable vigour and charm (Fig. 79). This Vaiṣṇaviśakti, commonly known as Vaiṣṇavī in purāṇic and tántric literature, becomes one of the principal forms in the concept of the Mātṛkās.

In a unique document of iconography, now in the Bharat Kala Bhavan at Banaras, among the Mātṛkās represented is Vaiṣṇavī. The document was painted in the year 1795 A.D. at the instance of king Jayaparakāśamalla of Bhatgaon. The inscription below the image of the goddess (Fig. 80), to the extreme left of the folio, reads Śrī 3 Viṣṇuśakti. She is seated, like the others, in padmāsana on Garuḍa. Her complexion is dark and she has the third-eye marked on the forehead. Like the others she is also dressed in a sārī and a choli or blouse and profusely ornamented. From her head sticks out two little flags, and a flame-tipped aureole forms the background.
She is twelve-armed, the two principal hands holding a skull-cup and displaying the vṛākhyānamudrā. These two emblems are common to all Māṭrkās and many other forms of the Devī in Nepal as well as Vajrayāna divinities. The ten other hands hold the following attributes: sword, discus, arrow, conch, goad, shield, club, bow, lotus and a stick. It is evident that the four principal Vaiṣṇava attributes have all been included.

A similar but less complex icon in metal is represented in the Brundage collection at San Francisco (Fig. 81). In this version the goddess, looking slightly more ferocious than the painted image, stands in pratyālīḍha, her right foot resting on Garuḍa. Obviously this is a terrifying manifestation while the other is more placid. Here too she has the third eye and her awesome character is emphasized by the garland of skulls. Otherwise she is equally richly ornamented and one little flag sticks out of her head. The number of her arms is eight, and, once again, with the two principal hands she bears the skull cup and displays the vṛākhyānamudrā. The six other arms hold the discus, the goad, the lotus, the mace, the noose and the conch. The facts that in both these representations she carries the skull-cup and that the metal image is adorned with mundamālā make her tāntric character quite explicit.

In tāntric theology each Māṭrkā or Śakti is associated with a Bhairava. In another folio of the Bharat Kala Bhavan manuscript (Fig. 82) we find Vaiṣṇavīṣakti with her Bhairava, who is here named as Krodha-Bhairava or the Bhairava who is angry13. The inscription states Śrī Krodha-Bhairava-Vaiṣṇavīṣakti. Bhairava is of course a form of Śiva, and he is therefore depicted here with the principal attributes of Śiva, including the third eye. But what is interesting is that just as Viṣṇu’s attributes have merely been transferred to Vaiṣṇavī, similarly, because Krodha-Bhairava is the Bhairava of Vaiṣṇavī-ṣakti, he also has Garuḍa as his mount and carries at least the conch. This is what the Brhatatsarṇhitā14 enjoins that each Māṭrkā should be given the emblems of the corresponding male divinity and so we see her carrying Viṣṇu’s attributes and riding his mount Garuḍa. Vaiṣṇavī here has eight arms, the
principal pair displaying the skull-cup and the vyākhyānamudrā, while
the others hold the sword, the discus, the arrow, the shield, the conch
and the noose.

Although Vaiṣṇavī as a Mātṛkā is one of the forms of the 
Devi and so merely another emanation of Durgā, curiously, the
Nepali tāntrics conceived of another form, where the two are shown
conjointly as in syncretic images of Ardhanārīśvara, Hari-Hara or
Vāsudeva-Kamalajā. In the same manuscript occurs the representa-
tion of a goddess standing in pratyāliḍha, her right half white and
the left half green (Fig. 83). Her right foot rests on the back of the
bull while the left on Garuḍa. The left half of the two central
faces, one above the other, is painted green, while the other half is
white. Two more faces are added on each side of the principal
face. Each head has the third eye, and the ornaments and garments
are identical on either half, except for the long garlands. The
composite goddess is given two such garlands, one of flowers,
representing, perhaps, the vanamālā of Vaiṣṇavī, and the other of
skulls as befitting Devī. The six right hands display exclusively Śaiva
emblems, such as the trident, the skull-cup, the drum (damaru), the
chopper, the severed head, no doubt of an asura, and the varada-
mudrā. Of the six left hands one is held near the breast in abhaya-
mudrā, while the others carry the conch, the mace, the discus, the
lotus, all typically Vaiṣṇava attributes, and a nilotpala. The inscrip-
tion calls this conjoint goddess Hariśaṅkarī. Thus, just as we have
syncretic icons of Hari-Hara, here their female partners are also
given a syncretic form, although this is quite unnecessary since both
are after all manifestations of the Devī. This attempted synthesis is
further evident from the fact that the right half has the bull as the
mount, which is associated with Māheśvarī of the Mātṛkās. Thus,
the idea of syncretism expressed in the concept of Hari-Hara is really
being extended to their Śaktis.

We may include here two more curious illustrations from this
important manuscript (Fig. 84) where we see two goddessess, whose
tantric character is beyond doubt, and both of whom are emanations of Devī. Both have the double mounts of a man (nara) and
a lion and the emblems are mostly Śaiva or Śākta. Among these, however, the figure on the right holds the discus, the lotus and the manuscript, while the other bears a conch, the manuscript and possibly a lotus. That they do have some sort of Vaiṣṇava association is apparent from the inscribed names: that on the left of the folio being known as Hari-Lakṣmī and that on the right as Hari-Hara-Lakṣmī. Once more syncretic ideas are seen to prevail, and the importance of the concept of Lakṣmī in the Śākta cult becomes apparent.

We may digress here to discuss another peculiar image illustrated in this kalāpustaka and described as Hanu-Bhairava (Fig. 85). Here Bhairava has been conceived as Hanumān and that he is the devotee of Rāma and not any monkey is evident from the fact that one of his right hands upholds the mountain, representing no doubt the Gandhamādana, which he once lifted to save Lakṣman and which became one of his typical emblems. His body is that of a human or rather of a super-human but his feet are those of a monkey. Apart from his principal face which, also is of a monkey, he is given four others, those of Garuḍa, a boar and a horse on top, while the fourth animal-head is not easily recognizable. Here too the same tendency to synthesize is manifest. Hanumān is an exclusive devotee of Rāma, an avatāra of Viṣṇu, while Bhairava is a tántric form of Śiva. This unique iconic form seems to have been evolved in an attempt to combine the Śiva-Rāma concepts.

These bright illuminations not only testify to the extent of tántric influence on Nepali Viṣṇuism, particularly in the late period, but also display how iconographic forms were transferred from one sect to another. Moreover, they reveal graphically the inventiveness of both the theologian and the artist and afford us an insight into their complex conceptual process. Of course, it was always much easier for a theologian to conjure up iconographic forms than for an artist to represent them ostensibly. Within his limitations, therefore, the remarkable ingenuity of the unknown Nepali artist responsible for this kalāpustaka is all the more admirable.
SARASVATĪ

Beside Śrī-Lakṣmī and Bhūmi the other important consort of Viṣṇu is Sarasvatī, the goddess of learning. In Brāhmaṇical mythology Sarasvatī enjoys rather an ambiguous social position; she is at times the daughter or the wife of Brahmā, and, at others, as Puṣṭi, the wife of Viṣṇu. But her independent status as the goddess of learning made her immensely popular, and she is one of the few divinities who is worshipped by the Hindus, the Jainas as well as the Buddhists. A large number of her independent images are seen in Nepal, and she is found principally in two iconographic forms. It is interesting that no sculpture has so far been discovered where she accompanies Viṣṇu. Only in one instance in a painting she is represented with him (Fig. 26). En passant it may be mentioned that the famous shrine on the hill of Maṇjuśrī behind the temple of Svayambhūnāth is considered by the Buddhists as belonging to Maṇjuśrī, while the Hindus offer worship there on Vasanta-pañchami day to Sarasvatī, another curious instance of the religious synthesis that characterizes Nepali life.

A popular name by which Sarasvatī is known in the country is Sāradā. A medieval inscription, in describing her form as Sāradā, gives the following attributes; varada-and abhaya-mudrā, manuscript and a vase. A number of images conforming to this description may be seen in the valley and we illustrate here a wooden example (Fig. 88).

A slight variation may be noticed in another image in Patan (Fig. 87). Seated in lalitāsana on a double lotus pedestal she holds the manuscript and the rosary with the two upper hands, and displays the varadamudrā with the vijapuraka and the vase with the two lower hands. In the Tantrasāra a Jhāna is dedicated to Vāgīśvarī which agrees in most essentials with the image just described. According to the text she is of white complexion, wears a white garment and a garland of white flowers, and is anointed with white sandal-wood paste. With three of her hands she holds a rosary, a manuscript and a pot filled with nectar, while the fourth displays
the vyākhyānamudrā. Adorned with the crescent moon on her temple and the third eye, she sits with a smiling countenance on a lotus and grants knowledge and prosperity to her worshippers. Like Lakṣmī she also is an emanation of the Devī, and, hence, the third eye. In the painting (Fig. 26) where she accompanies Viṣṇu she appears as Vāgīśvarī.

There is still a third variety of her images where her role as the goddess of music is emphasized. In the example illustrated here (Fig. 86) she is seated in lalitāsana on a double lotus pedestal and is richly ornamented. Two of her hands are engaged in playing upon the vina, while the other two hold the manuscript in the left and the rosary in the right. This is her common iconographic form that was and still is popular in eastern India, particularly in Bengal, and stylistically too this sculpture, within a niche outside the temple of Mahākāla in Kathmandu, betrays its Indian affinity.

(iv)

GARUDĀ

No image of Viṣṇu in Nepal is found without a representation of Garuḍā, the god’s devoted mount. The artists took particular delight in giving form to this celestial bird, and both in stone and in metal he has been rendered with great affection and dignity. Although originally he was a celestial bird, he is almost never represented as such in Nepal. The two common types portray him either anthropomorphically or in therianthropic forms; and in the later period his images also reflect pronounced tāntric influence.

In the early sculptures (Figs. 7, 8) he is shown almost invariably as a human figure, flying through the air with his hands in the gesture of adoration. Only the wings, either spread out behind him like a halo or attached to his shoulders like a cape, indicate his avian character. Almost in all these sculptures he is portrayed as a boy like the devaputras that hover in the clouds (Fig. 9). This boyish and somewhat cherubic appearance of Garuḍā is best expressed in an exquisite bronze now in a private collection (Fig. 89). His position emphasizes his role of a devotee and with Nepali
artists this remained a favourite manner of representing him. This posture of genuflection is prescribed in the texts and is known technically as garuḍāsana\(^8\). As a two-armed human figure he is also often shown standing (Fig. 90), but, whether seated, flying or standing, in all these early instances, the artists have repeatedly endeavoured to give a pleasant and innocent expression to his face. In most of these representations his hair is pulled back and tied in a bun. Occasionally, he is given curly hair (Fig. 91), and, if he is ornamented, he wears invariably the sarpa-hāra and sarpa-keyūra. Usually he is clad in a dhoti, and a sash, loosely tied around the thighs, hangs on the left (Fig. 90). Except for the hair style and the gestures of the hands there is indeed little to distinguish between this figure and the numerous images of Bodhisattvas that we find in Nepal. The same basic schema has once been used to portray Avalokiteśvara, once for Śiva and again for Garuḍa.

An exceptionally impressive sculpture of Garuḍa is that facing the temple of Chaṅgu Nārāyaṇa (Fig. 91). The powerful figure kneels on his right knee, is clad in a dhoti, and has nāgas for his arm bands. A large nāga around his neck accentuates the sense of movement as well as adds to the vigorous quality of the form. His right ear is adorned with a ring and the left with a cylindrical ornament. Here, although he is anthropomorphically shown, his face is not that of the cherubic boy which is characteristic of other early sculptures. Instead, the expressive face, framed by the flowing locks, the firm lips, the moustache, the sensitive nose and the open eyes strongly suggest that it is a portraiture. Except for the capelike wings this may well have been the portrait of a royal donor in a reverential attitude before the temple of the god. As a matter of fact, the physiognomy is remarkably similar to that of the so-called statue of a king\(^17\), and it is not impossible that here the sculptor has perpetuated the likeness of some powerful king like Mānadeva or some other devout Vaiṣṇava monarch. The fifth century would probably be rather an early date for this sculpture, but there can be little doubt that, in the monumentality of its
form and vitality of the modelling as well as heroic proportions, it is closely related to the magnificent Varāha at Dhum Vārāhi (Fig. 5) or the Kālīyadamanā (Fig. 51). There is also a striking similarity between the formal properties of this sculpture and those of the Jalāśayana Viṣṇu at Būḍhā Nilkanṭha (Fig. 47), probably donated by the Licchavi monarch, Bhīmārjunadeva. It may in that case well be a portrait of this king who was a devout Vaiśṇava. A similar regal and portrait-like character is again apparent on the face of the image at the summit of a pillar at Harigaon (Fig. 92). It is more than likely that persons donating such temples may have wished not only to perpetuate themselves but also to identify themselves with the god’s mount, if not with the divine being.

Another equally powerful representation, although much damaged, is now preserved in the gardens of the Patan Palace (Fig. 93). Undoubtedly this is a copy of the Chaṅgu Nārāyaṇa example, and both share the same predilection for bulky volume and simple grandeur. In both these Garuḍas the sculptors have obviously taken care to retain the solidity of the stone itself and have visualised the form from within. A much later and more gentle example stands facing the temple of Miśa Nārāyaṇa (Fig. 94) in the Darbar square at Kathmandu. The face here betrays nothing of the expressive, portrait-like quality of the Chaṅgu Nārāyaṇa or Harigaon images, but is more stereotyped and softer. In addition to the serpent, strings of pearls adorn the neck. The right ear has a pearl-studded ear-ornament but the left ear is given a circular ring. His elaborate coiffure, however, has been rendered with great care and delicacy.

The earliest representation of his hybrid form is perhaps to be seen in the eighth century image of Garuḍopari Nārāyaṇa at Dolāgiri (Fig. 39). Both there and in the subsequent Deo Patan stele (Fig. 42) the torso, the arms and the head are anthropomorphic but the legs, the outstretched wings and the bellowing tail-feathers are of a bird. The same hybrid form is repeated in the Viṣṇudharma manuscript cover (Fig. 44), but there the face is given an amusing expression, as if he is clowning, revealing the delight the artist took
in delineating this figure. In the Bharat Kala Bhavan bronze (Fig. 41), however, although the form is basically similar, the tail-feathers have not been spread out and the torso is clad in a coat of mail, while the ornamentation has also increased. But here again the boyish face persists and shows how until even the late period the artists continued to render him with great charm and sympathy.

In none of the early representations known so far is Garuḍa portrayed with the face of a bird revealing the prominent beak, so characteristic of his images in India and in other countries of south Asia. The earliest known example, where his face is that of a bird, occurs in the fifteenth century paṭa (Fig 34) now in a private collection. Except for his feet, face and the cape-like wings, his human form is retained. This form was also quite popular, and we find him represented as such both in painting (Fig. 33) and sculpture (Fig. 77) of the subsequent period. A particularly impressive image is that standing in a temple at Pharping (Fig 95). The figure in the Prince of Wales Museum painting (Fig. 16) is given a rotund torso, and this is how Garuḍa is described in the Rūpamaṇḍana²¹. We know of no examples in Nepal where he is shown in a completely avian form, although this is how he should naturally be represented. The closest to a bird, but really hybrid, is that seen in some later paintings (Figs. 70, 87), where his figure appears to be stretched with an inordinately long tail.

In all the above images he is invariably portrayed with two hands, which display the namaskāramudrā, but, following the multiplication of the arms of his Lord, he also was appended with additional arms. In this multi-armed form he is usually given six arms (Fig 108). Two of the hands are always shown in the namaskāra or añjali-mudrā, while the rosary, the parasol and the pot are among commonly seen attributes. The remaining hand holds either a discus (Fig. 108) or a lotus (Fig. 16). The parasol and the pot are his prescribed attributes according to the texts²², while the inclusion of the lotus or the discus is nothing unusual as these are Vaiṣṇava emblems.
VAIŚṆAVA TEMPLES

A study of Viṣṇuism and its art would remain incomplete without a brief allusion to the actual Vaiśṇava shrines and their architectural forms. But no structure of any respectable antiquity is still extant. The majority of the sculptures discussed here stand in little unostentatious shrines or in improvised structures and niches on the way side. The illustration (Fig. 4) of the temple of Varāha at Dhum Vārāhi makes a striking picture but does little justice to the magnificent image enshrined, and is no indication of edifices that were once raised to house such images in the early period. If the Kāllyadamana image (Fig. 51) formed any part of a structure, it must indeed have been of imposing proportions; the shrine of Budhā Nīlkanṭha is of course hypæthral. The present temple of Satyanārāyaṇa at Harigaon is not an old structure but its compound, littered with fragments (Fig. 96), and the pillar with the impressive Garuḍa (Fig. 92) attest the antiquity of the site.

The earliest and continuously worshipped Vaiśṇava shrine is that of Chaṅgu Nārāyaṇa, but the oldest existing temple, retaining its original architectural form, is, perhaps, the temple of Dattātreya at Bhatgaon built by Yakṣamalla in the fifteenth century (Fig. 97). It is an unpretentious structure of wood and bricks, conforming to the traditional wooden architectural style prevalent in the country. The only difference is that, while the others are single structures, this is probably the one exception where two buildings are axially placed, one behind the other, corresponding to the sanctum chamber (garbhagṛha) and the ancillary hall (mukhamanḍapa) of the Indian temples. Both buildings are storeyed and covered with pent roofs, the various storeys being distinguished by overhanging eaves.

The temple of Chaṅgu Nārāyaṇa is of the same basic style but consists of a single building within an enclosed courtyard. The temple rises in three storeys and the present structure was built in the seventeenth century with many subsequent renovations. The
eaves and roofs are supported by wooden struts, each carved into the figure of a god (Fig. 98), associated with Vaiṣṇava mythology. These figures are iconographically important as they reveal many forms of a tāntric character that are not known in India. The only way to identify them is by means of texts preserved in the temple, but these were not made available to us. They invariably show a multi-armed and multi-headed god, standing with the feet crossed, usually under a tree, and are brightly painted. A different figure is represented at the base of each strut and appear to be portraits, probably of yogins and saints. It may be pointed out that similar figures adorn the struts of Buddhist and Śaiva shrines as well, and it becomes impossible at times to distinguish who is Viṣṇu, who is Śiva and who is Lokeśvara.

In groundplan the temple is a simple square, the walls being made of bricks. But, as much of each wall consists of elaborate doorways and other wooden appartences (Figs. 99, 100), the function of the brick walls seems merely to hold together these wooden portions. In an important shrine like the Chaṅgū Nārāyaṇa these wooden doors and frameworks (especially in the front) together with the roofs are totally covered in gilt metal sheets, which simulate the figural and geometrical designs carved on the wood below. The decorative scheme of these facades appears to be the same in Buddhist and Śaiva temples, and this similarity was no doubt responsible for infusing the religious climate of Nepal with the warmth of a spirit of tolerance.

In contrast to the simplicity of the door the framework is richly and elaborately carved. Apart from geometrical and floral ornamentations, the figures represented in vignettes are usually different forms of Viṣṇu, astral deities and pratiḥāras, who are generally portrayed along the base (Fig. 100). More pratiḥāras are carved at the two ends of the elaborate framework, while a pair in stone also guards each entrance. The makara frequently adorns the beautiful voluted bracket that is an essential part of the decoration of the facade. In the portion illustrated here (Fig. 100), beside the makara, we find the representation of Narasimha, dancing with his leg raised as he tears
open the belly of Hiraṇyakaśipu. Each temple is therefore immensely rich in iconography and patient research will yield rich dividends.

A different style altogether distinguishes the well-known temple of Kṛṣṇa in the Darbar Square at Patan (Fig. 101). This seventeenth century structure standing as testimony to the devotional zeal of Siddhinarasimhamalla is built entirely in stone. While the basic idea may have been inspired by the ratna-deuls of Bengal, so popular in the medieval period, the form of the structure is a combination of the indigenous wooden style and the imported rekha style from India. With its little pavilions clustering around the base of the tall tapering tower, it merges wonderfully well with the predominantly wooden structures of the imposing square. The walls of the sanctum are embellished with low reliefs depicting the stories of the two epics in considerable detail. On the whole, however, no single architectural style was exclusively associated with Viṣṇuism.