VAISNAVA ICONOLOGY IN NEPAL

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1, PARK STREET,
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Iconography is the constant essence and style
the variable accident of art.

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TO THE MEMORY OF

ANANDA K. COOMARASWAMY

AND

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CONTENTS

	Preface	
	Acknowledgements	
	Prologue	
Chapter One	Viṣṇuism in Nepal	1
Chapter Two	Vibhava Images	21
Chapter Three	Para and Vyūha Aspects	62
Chapter Four	The Cult of Kṛṣṇa	87
Chapter Five	Tāntric Icons and Temple Forms	108
Chapter Six	Composite Icons	125
	Epilogue	147
	List of Abbreviations	151
	Notes	153
	Errata	185
	Appendix	i
	Bibliography	vii
	List of Illustrations	xi
	Index	xvii

PREFACE

It is generally held that Śivaism and Buddhism are the two major religious systems prevailing in Nepal. In the course of our study of Nepali culture enough evidence was found to believe that Viṣṇuism too enjoys considerable popularity in the country. It was also felt that Viṣṇuism in Nepal not only has a distinctive character but also preserves traditions and concepts that are no longer familiar in India ; hence the justification of the present work.

This book was written while I was a research associate at the American Academy of Benares in 1966. I am grateful to the Academy and its staff for the many facilities for research extended to me ungrudgingly. In particular, I wish to thank Mr. K. Bharatha Iyer who has given me constant encouragement and has kindly read through the manuscript of the present work. It is also my pleasant duty to thank my friends Messrs Mihir Mohan Mukhopadhyay, Dipak Chandra Bhattacharyya and Prangopal Paul who have rendered valuable assistance in various ways and discussions with whom have often helped to clarify many a knotty problem. I wish also to record my gratitude to the JDR IIIrd Fund, New York, and in particular to Mr. Porter McCray, for providing me with a grant to undertake a field trip to Nepal in the spring of 1966. Mr. V. K. Venkatavaradhan has taken great care in typing the manuscript for which I am thankful. Finally. it remains for me to thank Dr. Bratindra Nath Mukherjee and Mr. Dipak Sen for seeing the book through the press. Without their help the book may still have remained unpublished.

Los Angeles,
March, 1970

PRATAPADITYA PAL

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to the following individuals and institutions for kindly supplying some of the photographs for illustrations. The remaining photographs were taken by me during several field trips to Nepal.

The American Academy of Benares : Figs, 23, 24, 29, 32, 35, 38, 41, 43, 52, 67-70, 74-75, 79-80, 82-85, 109.

Archaeological Survey of India : Figs. 11, 12, 21

Ashmolean Museum, Oxford : Fig. 78

Mr. A. Lippe : Fig. 6 (Reproduced from *Oriental Art*, n.s. vol. VIII, no. 3, p. 117f.)

Mr. D. Barrett : Figs. 7, 8, 30, 31

The Denver Art Museum, Denver ; Fig. 17

Mrs. Alice Heeramaneck : Figs. 20, 34, 50, 89, 106

M. H. De Young Memorial Museum, San Francisco : Fig. 81

Museum fur Volkenkunde, Basel : Fig. 107

Musee Guimet, Paris : Figs. 71-72

Prince of Wales Museum of Western India, Bombay : Figs. 16, 26, 55, 58, 59.

University Library, Cambridge : Figs. 1-3, 13-15, 33,53, 60-66.

Mr. Meruharsha Vajracharyya : Fig. 91.

PROLOGUE

This is a study of both Vaiṣṇava religion and art in Nepal in a historical perspective. Our primary source consists of images or icons portraying Vaiṣṇava themes, but both epigraphical and literary materials have been used to reconstruct the history of the religion as well as to interpret the icons discussed.

Erwin Panofsky introduces his *Studies in Iconology* (New York, 1962) by stating that 'iconography is that branch of the history of art which concerns itself with the subject matter or meaning of works of art, as opposed to their form'. He then goes on to distinguish between 'conventional subject matter' and 'intrinsic meaning or content.'

Conventional subject matter is that which helps the immediate perception of the identity of a subject. A figure with the attributes conch, mace, discus and lotus represents Viṣṇu, and thus is established the perceptual identity of an icon of Viṣṇu as different from that of some other god. This identification, however, is only the first step to our understanding of the theme represented by the artist.

Panofsky's definition of the 'intrinsic meaning or content' of art is more complex. In his words 'it is apprehended by ascertaining those underlying principles which reveal the basic attitude of a nation, a period, a class, a religious or philosophical persuasion— unconsciously qualified by one personality and condensed into one work'. As a pre-requisite for such interpretation the 'diagnostician' must be equipped with 'synthetic intuition, conditioned by personal psychology and "*Weltanschauung*". In other words, the frontiers of iconology are hereby significantly extended to include the history of ideas and tradition, whose cultural symptoms are perceptible in the icons.

It will be our endeavour in the following chapters not only to explain the immediate meaning of an image but also to interpret the symbology inherent in it. This will no doubt presuppose a knowledge of the religious and historical contexts in which these icons were producd, but, to add even a further dimension to iconology, we will attempt to reconstruct the history of the religion itself, primarily with the help of the icons. It will also be demonstrated that iconography not only determined the form of art, but often 'formal' demands conditioned changes in the content.

To illustrate how a work of art can become an important source for the study of religion, we may cite the example of some Vaiṣṇava icons (Figs. 25, 47) where a distinctive sect mark on the forehead of Viṣṇu may be noticed. This mark is not an essential trait of his iconography but for us it is important because it provides us with the information that the devotee responsible for worshipping such images belonged to the Vaḍakalai branch of the Śrī Vaiṣṇava sect of south India. Thus, we may conclude that there were—and perhaps still are—followers of this important sect even in Nepal. In the course of our investigation we will repeatedly encounter iconic types that were borrowed from the Buddhist pantheon to represent an unusual concept in Vaiṣṇava art. Apart from illustrating that the same artist often executed a Buddhist or a Brāhmaṇical subject, irrespective of sectarian bias, this fact clearly demonstrates how such mutual borrowings contributed in inducing an atmosphere of syncretism that led to a catholic exchange of ideas. Icons, therefore, are not only mere reflections of human consciousness, but were often responsible in formulating and conditioning ideas—a thesis convincingly expounded by Herbert Read in his *Icon and Idea* (New York, 1965).

Vaiṣṇava art may be divided broadly into two classes according to their function : icons consecrated strictly for ritualistic purposes and reliefs or paintings illustrating stories and myths for general edification. Ritualistic icons were rendered principally in stone, wood and metal, and were also painted. The most common type of painted image is known in Nepal as a *paṭa* or a *paubhā* and was, as a rule, more moveable in contrast to the permanently enshrined images in temples or private chapels. Two other types of painting

are relevant to our study : those that illuminate manuscripts and a type of long scrolls, painted on cloth, which illustrate didactic literature. The manuscript illuminations, it must be remembered, had a two-fold function : magical as well as decorative. Apart from beautifying the manuscripts, the illuminations, consisting mostly of hieratic images, are said to have prophylactic properties against evil influences. On the whole the artists here were less stringently bound by canonical laws of proportions since the average size of such illuminations seldom exceeded three inches.

For the identification of the Vaiṣṇava images and themes discussed in the following pages, we have resorted to both literary and oral traditions. With rare exceptions, almost all such representations are based on literature that was written in India but copiously copied in Nepal. However, as we shall notice, known literature often proves to be inadequate because the Nepali theologians and artists created iconic forms of their own. This is especially true of images of tāntric persuasion for which the relevant literature, because of its esoteric nature, is not readily available to the layman. In such instances, a general acquaintance with tāntric literature and rituals as well as what Panofsky labels 'synthetic intuition' becomes necessary in order to understand not only the intrinsic significance but also the immediate iconography of a work of art.

Epigraphy is another important source for reconstructing the history of the religion as well as for understanding many of the iconic concepts. From the fifth century Nepal is fairly well documented with inscriptions, which usually record donations made to existing shrines or of new images. As we shall see later these inscriptions at times help in resolving knotty art-historical problems, particularly relating to chronology. At other times they tell us why a patron commissioned a particular image or what were the sectarian rites followed by the donor in consecrating an icon. Thus, epigraphy rather than literature, provides us with a better idea of the 'artistic climate' in which the images were created and appreciated.

A few words here may be relevant to apprehend the attitude of a Nepali towards an image. Today when we stand before an image in a museum, we respond to its 'aesthetic' quality as a work of art. We are either moved or repelled by it, but our reaction generally is

an emotional one guided by our aesthetic criteria. To the devotee, whether he is a Nepali or an Indian, the image is not primarily an object of aesthetic delectation, but a tangible symbol of the deity it represents. He is not interested in 'connoisseurship' in the sense we understand the term, and the relation between him and the image may best be characterized as one of 'empathy'. As a matter of fact, the image is not considered to be 'alive' until it is ceremonially infused with life *(prāṇapratiṣṭhā)*. In this sense the relationship is a 'real' one and the devotee not only worships the image, but bathes, feeds and clothes it in a humane fashion.

This, however, does not imply that no standards of beauty were involved in a work of art. On the contrary, aesthetic considerations were equally important at the creative stage, when it was imperative that an image should not only conform to the prescribed liturgical specifications, but also be made beautiful. A patron who commissioned an icon was primarily a devotee but he would probably have rejected the finished product if it did not meet his aesthetic norms. Beauty here was inseparable from Truth. In the last analysis the function of an image was to bring to the donor both temporal and spiritual benefits. And so, in the *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa,* the sage Mārkaṇḍeya, in answer to Vajra's question as to what yields happiness, unambiguously declares : 'He who wishes to attain the best of the two worlds must worship the gods' *(devatāpūjanaṁ kāryaṁ lokadvayamabhīpsatā)*.

CHAPTER ONE

VISNUISM IN NEPAL

(i)

Vaiṣṇava tradition in Nepal associates the creation of the valley of the Bagmati with Viṣṇu. The Vaiṣṇavas believe that the gorge at Chauvar in the south of the valley, through which the river Bagmati rushes out and which according to the Buddhists was cleft by the sword of Mañjuśrī, was created by Viṣṇu's discus. According to a medieval inscription, the country of Nepal is situated in vāsukikṣetra (Vāsuki being closely associated with Viṣṇu) in the Himavatkhaṇḍa of Bhāratavarṣa.[1] Curiously also the names of the two principal rivers of the valley, Bagmati (Vāgmatī) and Viṣṇumati are associated with Viṣṇuism.

Archæologically, the history of the religion goes back to the fifth century. The two earliest dated icons, portraying Vaiṣṇava themes–and, indeed, these remain the earliest known dated sculptures in the country—are the Viṣṇu vikrānta reliefs consecrated by king Mānadeva in honour of his mother. Both images are inscribed with identical inscriptions, which state that king Mānadeva established in a temple an image of Viṣṇu vikrānta, who is admired by the suras and the munis and who is the lord of all the worlds, for the incessant increase of the piety of his mother [2]. Both the inscriptions are dated in 389 corresponding to A.D. 467 [3].

Earlier, in the year 386/A.D. 464, a long panegyric was caused to be inscribed by Mānadeva on a stone pillar in front of the temple of Chaṅgu Nārāyaṇa. The opening verses of the inscription invoke Hari who resided in Dolādri and was constantly worshipped [4]. In subsequent verses of the inscription the parents of Mānadeva, Śrī

Dharmmadeva, who is described as *dhārmmika* and a *dharmmātmā*, and Rājyavatī, are compared with Hari and Lakṣmī. There seems little doubt that Mānadeva as well as his parents were Vaiṣṇavas, although there is no explicit declaration of this. We also have in this inscription the earliest allusion to a Vaiṣṇava temple in Nepal, that of Hari in Dolādri, which is the name of the hill on which the present temple of Chaṅgu Nārāyaṇa is situated. Mānadeva may have been responsible for erecting the inscribed pillar, but the temple was most likely already an existing shrine. The fact that he chose a pillar in a Vaiṣṇava temple to record his achivements would probably indicate his Vaiṣṇava inclinations as well as the popularity of the shrine. It would thus seem that the shrine of Chaṅgu Nārāyaṇa was older than A. D. 464, although the present structure is comparatively of a more recent origin. Three years later Mānadeva built another temple and consecrated therein an image of Viṣṇu vikrānta.

Apart from Mānadeva's inscriptions those of his successors until the usurpation of Aṁśuvarman at the beginning of the seventh century reveal nothing of their religious faith. However, there are reasons to believe that they too were inclined towards Viṣṇuism, although Jayadeva II claims that his predecessors were Śaivas. But we know that at least two other monarchs of the Licchavi dynasty were Vaiṣṇavas. An edict of Dhruvadeva, who belonged to the Licchavi dynasty and appears to have reigned as a nominee of the powerful Jiṣṇugupta who became the de facto ruler after Aṁśuvarman, begins with verses that are now fragmentary but which seem to invoke Viṣṇu [5]. His Vaiṣṇava affiliation is also tacitly suggested by another inscription where is recorded a grant made to Bhagavān Nārāyaṇa-svāmī in the village of Nuppunna [6]. His successor Bhīmārjunadeva was definitely a Vaiṣṇava for one of his inscriptions begins with an invocation to the Jalaśayana form of Viṣṇu and he was probably the donor of the image now lying at Buḍhā Nīlkaṇṭha [7].

It seems significant that Aṁśuvarman on assuming power almost blatantly declares his affiliation to the god Paśupatinātha *(bhagavat Paśupatibhaṭṭāraka pādānudhyāto...)* [8]. Yet, in all the inscriptions, where he is mentioned together with the Licchavi monarch Śivadeva, he is less assertive of his Śaiva leanings. Only once before, in an

inscription of 520/A. D. 598, while he was still a mahāsāmanta under Śivadeva but had already extinguished all his foes by his own might *(svabhūjayugabalotkhāta(khi)lavairivarggena)*, do we find him guardedly admitting his Śaiva faith *(bhagavad Bhavapadapaṅkajapraṇāma*[9]. Bhava is a well-known name of Śiva. It is not impossible that the early Licchavis were Vaiṣṇavas, which may have resulted in their unpopularity with the Śaivas, and, in his struggle for power, Aṁśuvarman may have been aided by the priests of the temple of Paśupatinātha, which was already a rich and powerful Śaiva shrine. It must be remembered that the Śaivas in Nepal belonged to the Pāśupata sect and friction between the Pāśupatas and the Pāñcarātrins may not have been unknown[10]. Interference in court politics by powerful religious establishments is nothing surprising, and this may have been the reason why, centuries later, Jayayakṣamalla entrusted the functions of the temple of Paśupatinātha to Brahmins from South India, who were not allowed to marry into local Brahmin families[11].

In this atmosphere of sectarian strife it was, perhaps, in an attempt to achieve syncretism that a noble named Svàmivārtta consecrated an icon of Śaṅkara Nārāyaṇasvāmī in the year 489/A. D. 567[12]. Similarly, although Aṁśuvarman was an avowed Śaiva, soon after assuming power, he astutely made grants to religious establishments of all the principal sects. In his inscription of the year 30/530/A. D. 608 his first donation is to the temple of Śrī-devī, which is natural since she is the goddess of fortune[13]. In the inscription issued two years later, presumably after his coronation, among the various temples and monasteries to which he made donations, for us the following are relevant: Dolāśikharasvāmin, Narasiṁhadeva and Jalaśayana of Bhumbhukkika[14].

Thus, by the seventh century, the important Vaiṣṇava shrines in Nepal, according to existing epigraphic records, were the temples of Dolāśikharasvāmī at Dolādri, the present Chaṅgu Nārāyaṇa, of Viṣṇu vikrānta, founded by Mānadeva, of Narasiṁha, of Jalaśayana at Bhumbhukkika and of Nārāyaṇasvāmī at Nuppunna. In a later inscription we have another allusion to a shrine of Jalaśayana Viṣṇu. This is the shrine referred to in Bhīmārjunadeva's inscription of

the year A. D. 642 situated in the village of Dakṣin-Koli, perhaps the present Buḍhā Nīlkaṇṭha[15]. It appears that this is a different shrine from that mentioned in Aṁśuvarman's inscription and thus there must have been two such Jalaśayana temples in Nepal, only one of which is now known to us. The remaining shrine at Bālāju came into existence only in the seventeenth century.

The temple of Satya Nārāyaṇa at Harigāon must also have been founded at this period for an early Licchavi inscription is carved on a pillar standing within the present temple precinct. The very name of this village attests its Vaiṣṇava association and it must have been an important town in the Licchavi times. Many of the fragmentary sculptures lying in the temple area today (Fig. 96), some of which are of considerable antiquity, stand testimony to both its Vaiṣṇava affiliation and its past glory.

(ii)

Outside the valley of the river Bagmati, the most famous spot of Vaiṣṇava pilgrimage in the kingdom of Nepal, is Varāhachatra (Varāhakṣetra) at the confluence of the rivers Kośi and Kokā; the spot still draws many pilgrims from India. The god *par excellence* of this place, known as Kokāmukhasvāmin, was already renowned in the Gupta period as he is alluded to in the Damodarpur inscription of the time of Budha-Gupta[16] (c. 475-495). The word *kokā* actually means a 'wolf' but is given as a name of Viṣṇu by the ancient lexicographers[17]. The name of the river Koḳā and that of the god are here obviously inter- related.

The Damodarpur inscription relates that two shrines dedicated to Śvetavarāhasvāmin and Kokāmukhasvāmin were located in the Himalayas *(himavacchikhare)*. As has been suggested, the shrine of Kokāmukhasvāmin refers to the well-known and ancient Varāhakṣetra or Varāhachatra, as it is locally known, on the bank of the river Sun-Kosi at the confluence of that river and Kokā[18]. The earliest allusion to the shrine of Kokāmukhasvāmin is found in the *Mahābhārata*, and according to the *Brahmapurāṇa* it is situated on the bank of the river Kokā[19]. The *purāṇa* also states that the

image there is of Varāha and describes it as follows : *Varāhadaṁṣṭrasaṁlagnaḥ pitaraḥ kaṅokojjvalaḥ, Kokāmukhe gatabhayaḥ Kṛta devena Viṣṇuna* (118, 38).

A more elaborate description is given in the *Vaṛāhapurāṇa*, where a whole chapter entitled *Kokāmukhamāhātmyavarṇanā* is devoted to the shrine[20]. It locates the *tīrtha* at the confluence of the rivers Kauśikī and Kokā and the extent of the sacred area is given as five *Yojanas (pañcayojanavistāraṁ kṣetraṁ kokāmukhaṁ mama...)*[21]. It also gives a description of the god, who is seen in human form with his head turned high to his left and displaying prominent fangs *(Varāharūpamadaya tiṣṭhami puruṣākṛtiḥ, vāmomnatamukhaṁ kṛtvā vāmadaṁṣṭrasamunnatam)*.

The sanctuary of Śvetavarāhasvāmin may also have been situated in this holy area, although the *Varāhapurāṇa*, which mentions other shrines on the spot, does not describe that of Śvetavarāhasvāmin. On the other hand, it may have been located elsewhere in Nepal. As we shall see later, there is a neglected shrine in the Bagmati valley known as Dhum-Vārāḥī, obviously a corruption of Dhumra Varāha, where an imposing sculpture of Varāha of the early period (Fig. 5) and executed in a light coloured stone still stands within a dilapidated structure. This god may have been known in the later Gupta period as Śvetavarāhasvāmin.

Art-historically what is of interest to us is that the Damodarpur inscription also states that an inhabitant of northern Bengal, a merchant named Ṛbhu-pāla, went on a pilgrimage to the shrines of Śvetavarāhasvāmin and Kokāmukhasvāmin in the Himalayas and on his return established two temples in his native district, installing therein two images of Varāha that were copies of the originals. In fact, the Himalayan Śvetavarāhasvāmin and Kokāmukhasvāmin are specifically referred to as *ādya* (original). This is a lucid commentary on how an iconic type, and with it stylistic features, travelled from one place to another. It is also generally assumed that Nepal has always been at the receiving end of the flow of art, but the Damodarpur inscription clearly indicates that famous Nepali images were also copied in India.

(iii)

Two factors appear to have contributed largely to the phenomenal growth and popularity of Viṣṇuism in India by the Gupta period. One was the rise of *bhaktivāda* or the cult of personal devotion as outlined in the *Mahābhārata*, including the *Bhagavadgīta*, and the *Rāmāyaṇa*. This doctrine that salvation was within the reach of all if only one could be exclusively devoted to a god must have had considerable effect on the masses. The other factor was the heroic character of Viṣṇu and the myths that evolved around him which appealed particularly to ambitious monarchs such as the Guptas and inspired in them a new zeal for the religion. This resulted in remarkable wide-spread activities of temple building and consecration of images, particularly of the heroic aspects of the god. We may also add to this the eclectic character of Viṣṇuism, its more liberal outlook within the limits of orthodoxy, which allowed it to incorporate within its folds a wide variety of prevailing cults and widened its door for even foreigners such as the Greeks and others[22].

The spread of Viṣṇuism during the Licchavi period in Nepal must be accounted for as much by the royal patronage extended to the sect, perhaps in emulation of the imperial Guptas, as by the swelling popular tide of the cult of bhakti. The religious history of Nepal throughout the centuries constantly echoes, at times belatedly, the sounds of changes that were frequently being perpetrated by important religious movements in the plains. The bhakti cult in India was primarily responsible for moulding the Pāñcarātra ideology with its doctrinaire concepts of vibhava and vyūha. Already by the Gupta period the Pāñcarātra cult gained wide popularity and in systematisation of its beliefs and ideology displayed a remarkable catholic spirit by enfolding many other prevailing ideas and concepts.

It is generally admitted that the Bhāgavata-Pāñcarātra cult, in its complete form, is a synthesis of three older and major conceptions, those of Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa, Nārāyaṇa and the vedic Āditya Viṣṇu[23]. Although the cult is commonly known as Vaiṣṇavadharma,

derived from Viṣṇu, the principal deity of Bhāgavata-Pāñcarātra theosophy is Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa, the deified hero of the race of the Sāttvatas or the Vṛṣṇis. In the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* he is mentioned as Devakīputra and is said to have learnt some precepts from Ghora Aṅgirasa, which became basic to the ideology of the Bhāgavatas as expounded in the *Bhagavadgītā*[24]. The antiquity of the cult of hero-worship, which included both Vāsudeva and Arjuna, was already attested by Pāṇini[25]. Both the other concepts that merged in the developed Bhāgavata-Pāñcarātra cult are of vedic origin, one of them being the vedic solar divinity of Āditya Viṣṇu and the other Nārāyaṇa. As a cosmic deity Nārāyaṇa is frequently alluded to in later vedic texts and in the epics.

Scholars are also inclined to identify the primordial Puruṣa, eloquently described in the *Puruṣasūkta* of the tenth *maṇḍala* of the *Ṛgveda*, as Nārāyaṇa. As a matter of fact, the *Uttaranārāyaṇa* portion of the *Śukla Yajurveda*, to be read immediately after the *Puruṣasūkta*, mentions both Śrī and Lakṣmī as the two wives of Puruṣa and this may have facilitated the later theologians to identify Viṣṇu and Puruṣa[26]. A still later concept, probably of non-Aryan origin, to be absorbed in the Vāsudeva-Viṣṇū-Nārāyaṇa cult is that of the child Kṛṣṇa, the boy-hero of the cowherds, a cult that was particularly popular in Mathurā, where it may have ousted and/or incorporated the existing and earlier beliefs associated with the nāgas. Thus, the nucleus was formed with the cult of Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa, the hero-cum-teacher of the Sāttvatas as his character is delineated in the *Mahābhārata*. To this was grafted in due course (a) the concept of the solar divinity, Āditya-Vīṣṇu, of the vedic literature, (b) Nārāyaṇa or Puruṣa, the cosmic deity, also of vedic origin, and finally (c) Kṛṣṇa, the cow-herd boy of Mathurā, made easier perhaps due to the identity of the names.

It is significant that in the inscription, dedicating an icon of ŚaṅkaraNārāyaṇasvāmī of the year A. D. 567, we find the assimilation of both the concepts of Āditya Viṣṇu and Nārāyaṇa. In invoking the composite god, at the beginning of the inscription, the composer has used the epithet *Arddhaśaurīśvara*[27]. We know of no other such early epigraphic document, even from India, where Viṣṇu has

been so unambiguously addressed as Śaura or Saura, the Sun[28]. This is obviously a blatant assertion of his solar character which is really a legacy of the vedic Āditya Viṣṇu. Apart from Saura and Nārāyaṇa, three other names of Viṣṇu have been employed at several places in the text by the composer of the inscription, who was quite familiar with his subject. These are Śārṅgapāṇī, Keśava and Murārī, the last being repeated in Bhīmārjunadeva's inscription[29]. The name Nārāyaṇa also occurs in Dhruvadeva's inscription, mentioned above, and, in another fragmentary epigraph, Vāsudeva has been addressed as *guru*[30]. We have already seen that the name Hari was employed by the eulogist over a hundred years ago in Mānadeva's Chaṅgu Nārāyaṇa pillar *praśasti*, while Aṁśuvarman made donations to a temple of Narasiṁha. The name Viṣṇu occurs for the first time in Bhīmārjunadeva's inscription, while in Jayadeva's Paśupatinātha inscription of the year 159/A. D. 737 we find both Viṣṇu and Padmanābha[31].

Of these names, Hari, Keśava, Narasiṁha, Nārāyaṇa, Vāsudeva, Viṣṇu and Padmanābha are seen in the list of names of Viṣṇu's caturviṁśatimūrtis, but the names here have not been employed to denote any one of his emanatory aspects, as will be discussed later. Both Murārī and Śārṅgapāṇī as names of Viṣṇu appear only in kāvya literture, although the story of Kṛṣṇa destroying the dānava Mura is recounted in the *Mahābhārata*, where the word *śārṅga* is mentioned as the name of Viṣṇu's bow. The knowledge of so many synonyms, however, reveal the familiarity of the composers of these inscriptions with Vaisnava literature in the Licchavi period. That both the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata* were well-known is evident from many contemporary inscriptions[32].

Even if the early Licchavis were not all Vaiṣṇavas, almost certainly Mānadeva, his parents, Dhruvadeva and Bhīmārjunadeva were subscribers to that faith. That they issued epigraphs in emulation of the imperial Guptas is also evident, but, curiously, nowhere in their inscriptions do we find the use of the titles *bhāgavata* or *paramabhāgavata*, terms of frequent occurence in epigraphs of Vaiṣṇava monarchs in contemporary India. In the Chaṅgu Nārāyaṇa pillar *praśasti* of Mānadeva, where his parents are compared with

Hari and Lakṣmī, Dharmadeva is styled a *dhārmmika* and a *dharmmātmā* (religiously inclined), whereas Rājyavatī is said to have been a devotee of Śrī (*Śrīr evānugatā*) and a *bhaktā*[33]. Once or twice only the epithet *bhagavān* has been prefixed to Viṣṇu's name[34]. Still there can be little doubt that the prolific output of Vaiṣṇava images in this period attests the impact on the country of the growing Bhāgavata cult that was sweeping across India during the early centuries of the Christian era and particularly during the Gupta period.

The vibhava and the vyūha doctrines are the two pillars, so to say, upon which the entire edifice of the Pāñcarātra ideology stands. These two aspects will be dealt with at length in subsequent chapters. Suffice it here to say that the vyūha or emanatory aspect explains the cosmic nature of Vāsudeva, while vibhava emphasizes his incarnatory aspect. Naturally, the vyūha aspect is concerned with more peaceful emanations, while the vibhava aspect, by the very nature of the concept, reveals his heroic qualities in his role of a saviour. The Pāñcarātra cosmogony states that the god in his 'para' aspect is responsible for all creation although the actual creation is done by his Śakti, an obvious influence of the dualism of the Sāṁkhya ideology. The Pāñcarātrins then divide this para Vāsudeva in a hierarchical fashion into four vyūhas and then further into twenty-four emanations.

The development of the vibhava or the incarnatory idea, the most succinct expression of which is found in the *Bhagavadgītā*—where it is stated that the god will appear from time to time to deliver the good from the evil—is an inevitable corollary of the cult of bhakti. The idea of a saviour was also to influence the cult of Avalokiteśvara in Buddhist theosophy around the beginning of the Christian era. In India, the vibhava aspect of Viṣṇu, as manifested in the avatāras, became extremely popular in the Gupta period[35]. The heroic feats of Varāha, Narasiṁha or Trivikrama appealed to the imagination of the imperial monarchs, who must have compared their own prowess and achievements with those of the divine saviour and hero. The same spirit may have inspired Mānadeva to

consecrate icons of Viṣṇū vikrānta, as we shall discuss later, and it can hardly be an accident that all the Vaiṣṇava sculptures of the period portray the heroic character of the god.

(iv)

By about the tenth century we find that the icons of Viṣṇu have become stereotyped and conform to the more conventional forms found in northern India. It is possible that by this time the descriptions of the caturviṁśatimūrtis, as given in the Pāñcarātra, purāṇic and āgama texts, were also in vogue in Nepal and led to their plastic visualisation. But even here, as we shall see, the Nepali artists maintained certain distinctive traditions of their own and *tāntric* ideologies played a considerable role in giving a pronounced esoteric flavour to the cult.

The Ṭhākuris and the Malla kings were for the most part Hindus and quite liberally worshipped various divinities. At the same time, their Śaiva leanings are apparent from the *virudas* prefixed to their names in inscriptions and manuscript colophons. The story of religion in Nepal after the tenth century can be described as one of continuous and growing ascendancy of Śivaism, centering around the temple of Paśupati, the god *par excellence*. There is thus nothing surprising in the fact that in a manuscript of *Mahīrāvaṇavadha Nāṭaka*, copied in the year 457/A. D. 1337, the reigning monarch, Jayārimalla, is described as *paramavaiṣṇava, paramadevatādhideva* and *paramamāheśvara*[86]. Later still, the great Jayasthitimalla, whose devotion to Viṣṇu is indicated by the use of such *virudas* as *Daityanārāyaṇa, Asuranārāyaṇa* and *Daityanārāyaṇāvatāra*, was also a worshipper of Śiva and Māneśvarī[87]. This is perhaps the first instance in Nepal where a king categorically claims himself to be an incarnation of Viṣṇu, a claim that was also adopted by the Gurkhā kings, the present monarch being still considered an *avatāra* of Viṣṇu. His sons Dharmamalla and Jyotirmalla adopted the *virudas* Vīranārāyaṇa and Daityanārāyaṇa respectively, while his equally illustrious grandson Jayayakṣamalla describes himself as Śrī Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa-avatāra[88]. In another manuscript written in NS 640/1520 A. D. the king Jayaratnamalla is styled *Kaṁśanārayaṇa'vatāra*[89].

There is a large number of Vaiṣṇava temples and images of the god, some still in worship, whose history can be traced back to the period of the Ṭhākuris and the early Mallas and these testify to the growing popularity of the cult. Among these may be mentioned the temple of ŚikharaNārāyaṇa at Pharphing, ĀdiNārāyaṇa at Thankote, Tilamādhava and Garuḍa Nārāyaṇa at Bhatgaon, and of Nārāyaṇa at Icaṅgu. In a later inscription of the year NS. 527/A.D. 1407, Śikharapurī or Śikharapattana, ancient names of Pharphing, is considered to be a famous place of pilgrimage for Vaiṣṇavas[40]. Śikhara Nārāyāṇa along with Chaṅgu Nārāyaṇa, Iśāna Nārāyaṇa (modern Icaṅgu Nārāyaṇa) and Viṣana Nārāyaṇa are the four protector divinities of the valley. An inscription on a pillar in front of the Tilamādhava temple at Bhatgaon tells us that the temple was already in existence in the year NS. 283/A. D. 1163[41]. The temple of Nārāyaṇa at Icaṅgu was consecrated during the reign of Vijayakāmadeva in the year NS. 320/A. D. 1230[42].

The importance and antiquity of the temple of Tilamādhava is also vouchsafed by its inclusion as a sacred shrine for pilgrimage in the *Nepālamāhātmya* section of the *Skandapurāṇa*[43]. The story narrated there about its origin is as follows. A merchant named Dharmadatta used to trade in *tila (sesumum indicum)* and was a devout Vaiṣṇava. On the day of Uttarāyaṇasaṁkrānti he went to the shrine of Maṅgaleśvara and opened a shop in front of the temple. Just as the people approached to buy *tila* from him, Viṣṇu wearing a yellow garment and holding the conch, the discus, the mace and the lotus, emerged from the pile of *tila (tilarāśau samudbhūtastavaddevo Janārdanaḥ, śaṅkhacakra gadāpadmadhāriṇaṁ pītavāsasam)*. The merchant and the people rejoiced and thus was established the shrine of Tilamādhava. It may be mentioned here that *tila* is supposed to have originated from Viṣṇu's sweat-drops, as mentioned by Bāṇabhaṭṭa in his *Harṣacarita*[44]. Thus the association of *tila* with Viṣṇu appears to have been quite old and this must have formed the basis for the later fabrication of the myth in Nepal.

Of the Malla rulers both Jayasthitimalla and his grandson Jayayakṣamalla were avowed devotees of Viṣṇu. Jayayakṣamalla built many Vaiṣṇava temples, including that of Dattātreya at

Bhatgaon (Fig. 97), and others must have emulated their king, for a large number of the epigraphs of his reign records consecration of images and temples of Viṣṇu[45]. Among these a great many were images of the conjoint form of Lakṣmi-Nārāyaṇa, which may be seen at Deo Patan, Kathmandu, Patan and Bhatgaon. Of the later Mallas, the two kings who particularly patronised Viṣṇuism were Pratāpamalla of Kathmandu and Siddhinarasiṁhamalla of Patan. Pratāpamalla not only dedicated a Vaikuṇṭha image in the palace and built at least two Vaiṣṇava temples, but also recovered a very important Vaiṣṇava sculpture and installed it in the palace, as we shall see later[46]. His equally enlightened contemporary, Siddhinarasiṁhamalla of Patan, built the magnificent Kṛṣṇa temple (Fig. 101), which is today one of the chief attractions of the Darbar Square in that city. There is little doubt that the temples were built out of pure devotion, at the same time it also seems as if these two kings vied with one another in beautifying their Darbar Squares with lofty edifices.

(v)

Manuscripts of many important Vaiṣṇava texts were copied in this period, some of which are illustrated[46a]. The *Mahābhārata*, the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Harivaṁśa* were already popular texts, but so was the *Viṣṇudharma*, of which a large number of copies of different times has come down to us. The earliest known dated manuscript of the *Viṣṇudharma* appears to be that copied in NS. 167/A. D. 1047 now in the Bir Library at Kathmandu. The wooden covers of this manuscript are profusely illuminated with unusual representations of Vaiṣṇava themes, as we shall discuss later. Another manuscript of *Viṣṇudharma* was copied during the reign of Abhayamalla in NS. 320/A. D. 1220, which too has illustrated covers[47]. It is curious, however, that on one of the covers of a *Śivadharma* manuscript, probably of the same date and copied by the same scribe, we have representations of the twelve sub-vyūhas of Viṣṇu. This clearly demonstrates the spirit of tolerance and syncretism that characterized the religious history of Nepal, a point that will receive repeated emphasis in this book. Thus, *Viṣṇudharma* appears to have been a particularly popular purāṇa with the Nepali Vaiṣṇavas.

This is of course different from the *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa*, which also was a well-known text in the country[48].

Many dramas were written during the medieval period, based chiefly on the stories of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, such as *Mahīrāvaṇavadha Nāṭaka*, the *Hanumān Nāṭaka*,[49] etc. Apart from the fact that these manuscripts were often richly illuminated, the dramas were frequently performed and must have contributed considerably in popularising the myths and legends connected with Viṣṇuism. In the Malla and the Shāh periods particularly, lesser Vaiṣṇava works, concerned with various rites and rituals as well as the stories of the life of Kṛṣṇa, were translated into Newari. We do not only have manuscripts of such works but in several scrolls the stories are inscribed in the Newari language. The practice of translating into Newari tales and scriptural materials of a more popular character seems to have been prevalent especially after the growing patronage of the native language since the time of Jayasthitimalla. The literary value of such works, however, is yet to be assessed.

A rite or *vrata* that was particularly popular in Nepal during the last few centuries is known as *anantavrata*. Many of the Vaiṣṇava paintings were dedicated by common persons as well as kings to commemorate the successful performance of this rite. The *anantavrata* is a popular Vaiṣṇava ceremony and is of considerable antiquity as it is mentioned in purāṇic literature[50]. The rite is to be performed on the fourteenth day of the bright fortnight of the month of Bhādra and the day is called *anantacaturdaśi*. As a matter of fact all the paintings commemorating the performance of this *vrata* were consecrated on that day. During the performance of the *vrata* Ananta is to be worshipped and an important part of it is the ceremony of wearing a sanctified strap of thread of cotton or silk dyed with saffron on the right hand of a man and the left one of a woman. The strap has to be twisted and tied into fourteen knots. According to the *Agnipurāṇa* an image of Hari as Ananta is to be made of *darbha* grass, placed in a vessel for water and worshipped. A graphic representation of the performance of the rite may be seen in a scroll (Figs. 74-75), which illustrates a story extolling the merits of performing this rite as recounted by Hemādri[51]. The *purāṇa*

adds that during the performance of the *vrata* beside a river one should listen to edificatory tales about Hari and then a prayer is given in which the identity of Ananta and Vāsudeva is emphasized.

(vi)

Kṛṣṇa is represented in art in Nepal as early as, perhaps, the sixth century, but it is only during the medieval period, particularly under the later Mallas, that his cult appears to have become more popular. In medieval India a new factor considerably reoriented Viṣṇuism and this was the Sahajiyā ideology of later Buddhism[52]. Although the adherents of the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā cult did not represent Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa in actual physical union *(sa-mithuna)* in their art as the Buddhists did with their divinities, and, although the Sahajiyā doctrine of the Vaiṣṇavas evolved around the theory of *parakiyā* love of Rādha and Kṛṣṇa, the essence of the conception, that of *Sahaja-prema*, spontaneous love, was already rooted in the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* and other early texts[53]. The idea that Lakṣmī is the śakti of Viṣṇu is already an integral part of the Pāñcarātra doctrine and was no doubt inspired by the Sāṁkhya ideology of Puruṣa and Prakṛti. At the same time the theologians took particular care to declare the identity of the two, thereby revealing their monistic attitude, probably as a result of Saṇkarāchārya's exposition of advaita. This monistic ideology resulted in the conception of composite images of Arddhanārīśvara in Śivaism and Vāsudeva-Kamalajā in Viṣṇuism. We will later see how the Nepali artists gave form to this idea and have thus preserved for us an iconic type as well as the ostensible embodiment of a concept that is known only from texts in India.

The cult of Rāma does not seem to have enjoyed a great deal of popularity, certainly nowhere near the extent to which it is popular in northern India. Images of Hanumān, however, exist and he is generally considered a protective deity as he is seen guarding the entrance to the old palace at Kathmandu, the gate being known as the Hanumān-ḍhoka[54]. Bhīmasena, the second of the Pāṇḍavas, also enjoys considerable popularity in the country and there are several temples dedicated to his worship. He is usually portrayed

as a warrior, wearing a coat of mail, and holding a sword and a shield, as he stands in *pratyālīḍha*. This may be taken as the only remnant today of the ancient cult of the heroes, which must have included the Pāṇḍavas. Needless to say the cult of Hanumān is also a form of hero-worship. It may be of interest here to mention that the cult of Bhūmasena was also popular at this period in Java.

Of the other minor Vaiṣṇava cults, Śrī-Lakṣmī, of course, is worshipped domestically, but it appears that there were independent shrines dedicated to her. We have already referred to Mānadeva's mother being considered a devotee of Śrī, and the temple to which Aṁśuvarman first made his grant was of Śrī. A commemorative image of Lakṣmī was dedicated in the year NS. 625/A. D. 1505, which must then have been enshrined[55]. To the north of the village of Balambu lie the ruins of a sanctuary that is known as Mahālakṣmī pīṭha, but this may of course have been a shrine of Mahālakṣmī as a form of Devī. Bhūdevī or Vasudhā, who, in her quintessence, may also be identified with Lakṣmī, was nevertheless, a separate entity, and in medieval Indian icons of Viṣṇu, along with Śrī-Lakṣmī, she often is seen to accompany the god. In Nepal, however, she is seen seldom with Viṣṇu, but a fifteenth century copper plate inscription throws considerable light on her conception. Significantly, the copper-plate is attached to the front wall of the palace at Bhatgaon to the right of the well-known golden gate[56]. The inscription records the occasion of the completion of the town's fortification by Jayayakṣamalla in the year A. D. 1453. In the introductory verses of the inscription the goddess Vasundharā is invoked. She is considered as the goddess Earth, who was lifted by Viṣṇu's arms, is said to conceal within her many objects and is implored to protect the enclosing rampart *(varaṇaśāla)*.

Another consort of Viṣṇu, Sarasvatī, was of course worshipped separately as the goddess of learning. She is known popularly in the country as Śāradā and many medieval inscriptions record consecration of her images or shrines. A large number of her sanctuaries is still under worship, but she was not commonly associated with Viṣṇu in Nepal. A fourteenth century inscription calls her the mother of the world and describes her image as

Kāmamūrti[57]. In a fifteenth century inscription her association with Viṣṇu is unambiguously declared and she is considered to be the śakti of Madhuripu, a name of Viṣṇu[58]. She is also described as holding the rosary and the manuscript, while the two other hands display the *varada* and the *abhaya-mudrā*. As a matter of fact this is how she is commonly portrayed in Nepal (Fig. 88) [59].

(vii)

There can be little doubt that after the tenth century the growing popularity of tāntrism in the country had a significant effect on all the major sects, particularly Śivaism and Buddhism. Tāntric rituals were freely adopted by the Śaivas and the Buddhists alike and, as we shall see, equally zealously by the Vaiṣṇavas. Numerous sculptures and paintings of this period, particulary after the fifteenth century, reveal curious forms that cannot be explained with the existing and known Vaiṣṇava literature. In painting particularly we find the depiction of elaborate Vaiṣṇava maṇḍalas which indicate their tāntric character. It must be remembered that tāntric rites and maṇḍalas had a deep esoteric significance and often their symbology or meaning was not committed to writing. Of course, the Pāñcarātra texts, which do provide clues to the understanding of these maṇḍalas, had already been permeated by tāntric ideologies. But whether we can properly decipher these maṇḍalas or not, it is undeniably true that during the medieval period Viṣṇuism in Nepal had come to be deeply influenced by tāntrism, even to a greater degree than in India.

Tāntric rites and rituals are very similar no matter whether they are associated with Buddhism, Śivaism or Viṣṇuism. A graphic testimony of this is the representation of the scene of performance of *homa*, including the figure of a dancer and musicians, below Vaiṣṇava paintings (Fig. 16) exactly as we find in Buddhist paubhās. This similarity may have contributed considerably to the closer assimilation of the principal cults in Nepal, and, hence the belief that the four faces adorning the liṅga of the temple of Paśupatinātha represent Śiva, Sūrya, Viṣṇu and the Buddha. In fact, it is this spirit that is behind the unqualified reverence that a Buddhist

displays towards a Hinḍu temple or a Hindu towards a Buddhist shrine. Although there are several iconic types that manifest a gross sectarian bias, such as Hari-hari-hari-vāhana Avalokiteśvara, this is only academic, and in point of fact, whether the image is actually of Viṣṇu astride his Garuḍa or Avalokiteśvara astride Viṣṇu, the often illiterate devotee fails to distinguish the two and sees in the image the tangible manifestation of 'a god' and as such worthy of reverence. So the Buddhists claim that the god who resides in the ancient shrine of Chaṅgu Nārāyaṇa is really Avalokiteśvara and give their version of a story as to how this image originated[60]. Again they believe that the Jalaśayana Viṣṇu at Buḍhā Nīlkaṇṭha is really Nīlakaṇṭha Lokeśvara, which is incidentally a transfer in the Vajrayāna pantheon of Nīlakaṇṭha Mahādeva, and, hence, the origin of the name Buḍhā (Buddha) Nīlakaṇṭha.

This spirit of assimilation is also evident in the *Nepālamāhātmya* section of the *Skandapurāṇa*, where it is stated that Janārdana in the form of Buddha came to Nepal from Saurāṣṭra and established a liṅga known as Kāruṇikeśvara[61]. There is of course nothing surprising in the fact that the Buddha is identified with Janārdana or Viṣṇu, for the former is an accepted avatāra of the latter. But here we meet something that can be said to be a typically Nepali contribution to the religious thought of the period—the identification of the Buddha, Viṣṇu and Śiva. The *Nepālamāhātmya* is replete with references to liṅgas being established by Viṣṇu, which reveal both a sectarian bias as well as a spirit of syncretism. This Śaiva bias is not at all unusual in Nepal where all the major divinities have been indentified with Śiva at some time or other. So we are told that Govinda founded a liṅga named Gopāleśvara, which is also referred to as Śivanārāyaṇa[62]. Curiously, here Viṣṇu not only establishes the liṅga but it represents both him and Śiva. Obviously at the popular level there was no distinction between the two divinities. We will subsequently observe how the urge to synthesize, but usually with a Śaiva bias, is reflected in the art of Nepal.

A few words here about Viṣṇu's association with Buddhism will not be out of place. In the representation of the miracle of the Descent from the Tuṣita heaven, where the Buddha had gone to

preach to his parents, Viṣṇu, along with Brahmā and Indra, is occasionally seen to accompany the Buddha [63]. This is not textually prescribed and is probably an innovation on the part of the artist. In these instances, Viṣṇu is, of course, shown as an attendant. In the *Dharmadhātuvagīśvara maṇḍala* of the *Niṣpannayogāvali* he has been included among other Brāhmaṇical divinities [64]. But, at the same time, we must remember that he is considered as a māra, and is often seen being trampled below the foot of a Vajrayāna deity [65]. In the *Nārāyaṇaparipṛcchā,* however, a text of the dhāraṇī class, he is described as a Bodhisattva of the Sambara group and reference is made to his having taken three steps [66]. Thus, it is interesting, that while some theologians were busy denouncing the Brāhmaṇical gods, others were occupied in incorporating them in the Buddhist pantheon.

A still more interesting example of how there were mutual borrowings from one tradition to another in the medieval period is furnished by two *ślokas* in the *Ekallavīra Caṇḍa Mahāroṣaṇa Tantra,* a Vajrayāna text [67]. In both instances the Buddha declares that in whichever form people worship, in that very form does he reside for the good of all sentient beings. One can have little doubt that the idea must have been borrowed from very similar passages in the *Bhagavadgītā* [68], where Kṛṣṇa says almost the same thing to Arjuna on several occasions.

(viii)

Among the donors of the images were kings, nobles and the ordinary people ; and the inscriptions provide us with much data as to the reasons why images were consecrated. In a twelfth century epigraph[69], issued during the reign of king Amṛtadeva, it is recorded that Śrī Viśākha and others, who were exclusive followers of Kṛṣṇa-rites *(Kṛṣṇasya-vidhivadbhaktyā),* at the command of their mother Madhukaśrī, *(Madhukaśrīyaḥ ājñāmsrajamivadhaya)* dedicated an image of Viṣṇu *(Viṣṇorarccā niveditā)* at the summit of Dolācala *(mūrdhnā dolācalasthiteḥ).* for the attainment of heaven *(svargga samprāpti hetave)* of Vijayadeva, their deceased brother *(bhrātur-Vijayadevasya).* The inscription clearly declares that the image was donated to commemorate the death of Vijayadeva so that he

may attain heaven. It is interesting that the aim is not for him to attain *'mokṣa'* (liberation) but 'heaven'. The inscription further states that the virtue attained by this deed should fall always on all beings *(puṇyenājenaloko'yaṁ sukhī bhavatu sarvvadā)* and that desire is great which inspires an act for the benefit of others *(parārtha karaṇīyaiva pravṛttirhi mahātmanāṁ)*. Thus, Madhukaśrī and her sons were dedicating this image for the benefit of the deceased and not for their own welfare. This is curiously the same idea implied in the Mahāyana Buddhist dedicatory formula, which is commonly found in inscriptions or manuscript colophons : *yadatra puṇyaṁ tad bhavatvācāryopādhyāyamātāptṛpurvaṅgamaṁ Kṛtvā sakalasattva* etc. Buddhist influence on Vaiṣṇava donors in the twelfth century is nothing surprising as this was particularly a glorious period of Mahāyāna Buddhism in Nepal.

In another epigraph[70], which is a royal edict issued by the reigning monarch Jayayakṣamalla, we are told that the king was pleased to dedicate a golden image of Hṛṣikeśa along with a golden toraṇa to commemorate his son Jayarājamalla who had died that year. It is of considerable interest also that the image was made according to the proportions of the body of the deceased prince *(Jayarājamalladeva kumārasya śarīra pramāṇa pratimā)*. The inscription further states that 'by this gift let the deceased son attain Śivaloka, Viṣṇuloka, and Brahmāloka' *(anena dānena divaṁgata putra Jayarājamalladevakumāraḥ Śivalokaṁ Viṣṇulokaṁ Brahmālokaṁ samprāpto bhavatu)*. At the same time a prayer is also appended for the increasing life, health, wealth, prosperity and good fortune of the family and kingdom of Jayayakṣamalla *(ŚrīśrīJayayakṣamalladevānāṁ putrapoutra āyurārogya eśvarya janadhana mahārājya lakṣmīvṛddhirastu)*.

Thus, one of the purposes for which an image was donated was to commemorate the death of someone as well as for the good of his soul after death. At the same time prayer was made for the attainment of temporal benefits for the survivors and for the donor's family or for every living being. A similar wish is also expressed at the end of another inscription at Bhatgaon carved on the pedestal of an image of Mādhava[71]. Such instances could be multiplied

but it is evident that the desire for earthly gains was the most potent factor that led a devotee to consecrate an icon. According to the Pāñcarātra classification such images would be considered to belong to the *bhoga* variety. We also have in Jayayakṣamalla's inscription a definite assertion that images were made according to the physical proportions of a person. This has important art-historical bearings and presumably many of the images in India as well may have simulated the proportions of particular persons and may even have been portraitures. A typical instance of syncretism is found in the fact that although the image donated is that of Viṣṇu, Jayayakṣamalla hopes that his son will attain the heavens of all the three divinities of the Trinity, Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva [72].

In the twelfth century inscription of Viśākha, already discussed, he declares himself as a *Kṛṣṇasya-vidhivad-bhakta.* Obviously this refers to his being a follower of the Kṛṣṇa rites and testifies to rather an early familiarity in Nepal with such rites. Elsewhere an image is said to have been consecrated according to the *trayavidhi,* which shows that vedic rites were known and performed. Even as late as the fifteenth century, when tāntric rituals must already have been predominantly prevalent, a donor claims that he is consecrating an image according to the vedic rites *(vedoktenavidhānena)* [73]. We shall subsequently see that several late images of Kṛṣṇa and Viṣṇu bear on the forehead the distinctive sect mark of the Vaḍakalai branch of the Śrī Vaiṣṇavas of South India. The sect is therefore well-known in Nepal and its rites are probably observed by a number of Vaiṣṇavas.

This brief survey of Viṣṇuism in Nepal only touches upon the many interesting facets of the history of the religion in that country. Many of these points will receive further emphasis in the following chapters. While this cursory sketch will help to provide a historical perspective for the discussion of the images, the images in their turn will reveal a wealth of material which will help to form a clearer picture of the peculiar character of Viṣṇuism in Nepal.

CHAPTER TWO

VIBHAVA IMAGES

The theory of *vibhava* or *avatāra,* embodying the incarnatory forms of Viṣṇu, is one of the principal tenets of the Pāñcarātra cult. It is certainly an older concept than that of the *vyūha* and is already foreshadowed in the later vedic texts. The essence of the concept, however, is most succinctly described in the following *śloka* of the *Bhagavadgītā* (IV, 7-8) :

Yadā yadā hi dharmasya glānirbhavati Bhārata
Abhyutthānamadharmasya tadātmānaṁ sṛjāmyaham /
Paritrāṇāyāsādhūnāṁ vināśāya ca duṣkṛtām
Dharmasaṁsthāpanārthāya saṁbhavāmi yuge yuge /

'Whenever *dharma* or righteousness declines and *adharma* or evil prevails, I become manifest or assume visible form, from age to age, to save the good, destroy evil and to re-establish *dharma.*'

Neither the concept of multiplicity nor of the saviour is new and both are already found in the *Ṛgveda*[1]. More specifically in the brāhmana and the saṁhitā literature we are told that Prajāpati on different occasions assumed the form of a fish (matsya), a tortoise (kūrma) and a boar (varāha) 'for the furtherance of creation and the well-being of the created'[2]. There can be little doubt that some of these early ideas were merely transferred to Viṣṇu and synthesized in the later Bhāgavata-Pāñcarātra ideology.

In course of time this general concept was embodied in specific forms and the epic and purāṇic literatures furnish us with a number of lists of the svatāras. Both their number as well as their names vary considerably, but, in art, by the Gupta

period, the number came to be stereotyped into ten, known collectively as *daśāvatāra*. Ten incarnations already occur in the *Mahabhārata*, but there Buddha of the later stereotyped list is yet to appear[3]. The *Vāyupurāṇa* list of ten is also different and in the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* the number is twenty-two[4]. In the *Matsyapurāṇa* Viṣṇu is said to have been born only seven times and only in the *Agni*-and the *Varāha-purāṇa* are we provided with the names of the ten conventionally represented in art[5]. These are : Matsya, Kūrma, Varāha, Narasiṁha, Vāmana, Paraśurāma, Rāma, Balarāma, the Buddha and Kalkin. In the Pāñcarātra Saṁhitās[6] the list is further increased to thirty-nine, which include, among others, Vāgīśvara and Lokanātha, two principal divinities of the Mahāyāna pantheon, reflecting the continuous process of absorption and assimilation in the concepts and iconography of the principal sects in medieval India. A still further offshoot of the doctrine of vibhava or avatāra, as formulated by the Pāñcarātra theologians, is the theory of āveśas[7], but this need not concern us here.

In Nepal the three avatāras which appear to have been popular which are by definition 'classic' avatāras are those of the Vāmana, the Varāha, and the Narasiṁha. Their images seem to have been independently worshipped in the early Licchavi period from which we have no evidence of the representations of the ten stereotyped avatāras. However, in a number of paintings of the later period, they are all included, as we shall see subsequently.

I. KURMA AVATĀRA

The Kūrma avatāra of Viṣṇu is generally represented simply by a kūrma or a tortoise. No early representation of this avatāra is known. But in a sixteenth century manuscript, now preserved in the Cambridge University Library[8], the myth of the Kūrma avatāra or Samudramanthana (Churning of the Ocean) has been depicted in considerable detail. The story of the tortoise supporting the earth is intimately connected with Indian cosmogony and cosmography, both in tradition and literature, and in the *Śatapathabrāhmaṇa* it is associated with Varuṇa, the lord of the waters[9]. As in many other instances this too was transferred to Viṣṇu when he rose to eminence,

and in purāṇic mythology an elaborate story developed around this kernel.

In the manuscript illuminations (Fig. 1) we find first a two-armed figure, reclining on the branches of a tree, and being adored by an emaciated sage, who is shown again as jubilant in the water. The reclining figure is none other than Viṣṇu who is described in the *Mahābhārata* as floating on the Nyāgrodha (banyan) branch and in whose mouth the sage Mārkaṇḍeya discovered the universe[10]. One of the avatāras or vibhavas in the *AhirbudhnyaSaṁhitā* is therefore called Nyāgrodhaśāyin[11]. In the following composition a four-armed Viṣṇu with the four usual attributes is shown sleeping *(yoganidrā* or *śeṣaśayana)* on the serpent Śeṣa. From his navel emerges a full-blown lotus on which is seated Brahmā.

According to the story, the asuras once defeated the devas, who approached Brahmā for advice. The latter sent them to Viṣṇu who was then asleep and on being awakened was told of the predicament of the gods. Viṣṇu advised them to befriend the asuras and to persuade them to agree to churn the ocean which would yield *amṛta*, which would bestow immortality to the gods and hence they would be invincible. He also told them to make Mandara mountain the churning stick and to use the nāga Vāsuki as the rope, and further admonished them to agree to any requests made by the asuras. The devas followed the instructions, brought the mountain to the ocean, tied it with Vāsuki and so began the churning. But slowly the mountain started sinking and Viṣṇu, assuming the form of a tortoise and descending to the bottom of the ocean, supported it on his back.

In the illuminations (Fig. 2) the scene of the churning is represented on the upper folio. On the back of the turtle is the mount Mandara, rendered conceptually by jagged peaks of bright colours, on which sits Indra, the lord of the heavens. He can be identified because of his distinctive crown and the third eye marked horizontally across his forehead. The ocean below the tortoise is also delineated conceptually with fishes swimming about as in the previous illustrations (Fig. 1). The tail-end of the nāga, which

enforcles the mountain, is held by the gods Brahmā, Viṣṇu and, possibly, Bhairava or Śiva, while a few others idly watch from the top. The asuras hold the other end of the nāga as it is related in the text. According to the *Bhāgavatpurāṇa*[12] the asuras voluntarily chose the head of the nāga as they felt it was ignominous to hold the tail. Viṣṇu had anticipated this and knew that once the churning began fire would emerge from the serpent's mouth which would exhaust the asuras. It must be remembered that Vāsuki was not altogether impartial as he too was to get a share of the *amṛta*. The artist has indicated the triumph of the gods by making them stand firmly in the *ālīḍha* posture, whereas the asuras appear to be stumbling and falling as the nāga breaths fire. It is interesting that Viṣṇu should join the gods engaged in the churning when he is supposed to have assumed the form of the Kūrma to support the mountain.

The churning yielded many gems, chief among them being Dhanvantari with the pot of *amṛta* in hand, Śrī-Lakṣmī, the horse *(pāṇḍura-turaga)*, the elephant Airāvata, the jewel *kaustubha*, and *vāruṇī* (spirituous liquor). But first it yielded the fatal poison, *halāhala* or *kālakuṭa*. Everyone was frightened of the poison and Śiva, on the request of the gods and with the permission of Bhavānī, drank it, which turned his throat blue and hence he came to be known as Nīlakaṇṭha. Of the gems, Viṣṇu appropriated *kaustubha* and Śrī-Lakṣmī, Sūrya took the horse and Indra the elephant, while the asuras received *vāruṇī*.

All this is depicted in considerable detail by the Nepali artist (Fig. 2). Viṣṇu is seen taking Śrī-Lakṣmī, and both the horse and the elephant are shown, with Sūrya added in an inset. To the right we see Śiva taking the poison, which has turned his throat blue. The multi-armed Bhavānī is portrayed in the top centre and the other two gods of the Trinity, Brahmā and Viṣṇu, are seen kneeling and adoring Śiva.

The last to emerge from the ocean was Dhanvantari with the pot containing *amṛta* (Fig. 3), and one of the asuras, with a naked sword, is seen snatching it away. Viṣṇu then assuming the form of

a beautiful damsel (Mohinī) charmed the intoxicated asuras, who allowed her to distribute the *amṛta*. The devas and the asuras are shown seated in two registers, and Mohinī is busy distributing the nectar, all of which fell to the share of the devas. Among the devas we notice Chandra and Sūrya between them holding a fierce looking figure. This is no doubt Rāhu for it is narrated in the texts[13] that he was the only asura who managed to sit among the devas and almost received a share of the nectar. But Sūrya and Chandra discovered him and Viṣṇu severed his head. Because his head had touched the pot containing *amṛta*, it became immortal, and Brahmā made it a planet. This is why Rāhu has continued to pursue the sun and the moon ever since. The unfair distribution of nectar enraged the asuras who again began fighting with the devas, as shown on the lower folio. But this time, fortified with the *amṛta*, the gods overwhelmed their rivals. Among the gods can be recognized Viṣṇu, Indra, Varuṇa and even Brahmā with a sword.

The illuminations naturally reflect the prevailing style of the period, and although the miniaturist has adhered to the canons in the representation of the gods, in general, his rendering is considerably more free and vigorous. Certain conventions are always resorted to, particularly in the postures of the fighting gods and asuras, in the arrangement of the seated figures, in the fair and handsome disposition of the divine beings, while the asuras are shown as fearsome. This fierce appearance is not only indicated by painting their eyes in such a fashion that they appear to wear coloured glasses but also by the curious headgear, which seems to have been derived from a Greek helmet, and is probably a survival from the repertoire of the artists of an earlier period.

In some later Vaiṣṇava paintings, however, in representations of the stereotyped ten avatāras we often see a four-armed Viṣṇu in his anthropomorphic form emerging from the mouth of a tortoise (Figs. 16-17). He holds the four usual attributes, *padma, gadā, śaṅkha* and *cakra*. No textual description of this form is known to us, but images of such hybrid forms also occur in India, where, however, the upper portion shows Viṣṇu holding the four usual attributes, while the lower is that of a kūrma[14]. In the Nepali

paintings the form is not really hybrid for the god appears to emerge from the mouth of the tortoise.

II. VARĀHA AVATĀRA

The Varāha or the Boar incarnation is one of the most important of the vibhava forms. The theme proved to be very popular with Indian artists, especially from the Gupta period, and, as V. S. Agrawala has suggested, the concept was given a political twist and appealed to the imagination of such ambitious monarchs as Chandragupta II or Mihira-Bhoja[15]. Gonda[16] has ably discussed the universal popularity of the boar motif in the mythologies of several countries and it appears particularly to have had a fertility aspect in agrarian societies from very early times. Both in Indian folklore of the tribal people and in ancient Indian literature, the boar or the hog is implicitly or explicitly associated with the concept of fertility.

The earliest reference to the association of the boar and the earth is to be found in a passage in the *Atharvaveda :* 'Bearing the fool, bearer of what is heavy (or : important, wise, venerable ?), patiently enduring the settling down (?, or : destruction) of the excellent and of the evil (or, rather, of the prosperous and the unfortunate), the earth, in concord with the boar, opens itself to (or : becomes expended for) the wild pig (sukaraya)'[17]. Gonda correctly suggests that this passage from the hymn to Pṛthivī cannot be construed as to imply the existence of the Varāha-avatāra as early as the vedic period, but there can be little doubt that the myth must have germinated in some such early allusions. Certainly there are many other elements in the myth such as the primordial waters *(ekārṇava)* and the Golden Egg *(hiraṇyagarbha)* that are vedic in character, if not of vedic origin.

The nucleus of the myth, however, was already formed in the period of the brāhmaṇa literature[18]. Both in the *Śatapathabrāhmaṇa* and in the *Taittiriyasaṁhitā* it is related that Prajāpati went into the water as a boar and lifted the earth to the surface. Like many others, subsequently, this myth was also transferred to the repertoire of the Vaiṣṇava theologians and Viṣṇu was substituted for Prajāpati.

In the *Mahābhārata* this transference is already completed and we are told how Kṛṣṇa-Viṣṇu assuming the form of a roaring boar descended into the waters and rescued the earth oppressed by the asuras and the dānavas[19]. Further, in the purāṇas, this same primeval Varāha is referred to as Yajña-varāha and an elaborate explanation of the symbology of his form is given[20].

The sixth century sculpture from Nepal, standing in a shrine in Dhum Vārāhi outside Kathmandu (Figs. 4-5), is a magnificent rendering of the Boar incarnation. Except for the oval nimbus behind the head it is a sculpture carved fully in the round. There is tremendous power and determination in his posture, known technically as *ālīḍha* or *pratyālīḍha*, as he stands on the intertwined coils of the serpent. His right hand rests on his hip in a logical and natural attempt to balance his own vigorous movement, while the left holds a conch. The earth personified as a female appears to have been raised by his snout and is supported by his elbow.

The image conforms to the description of the god in the *Viṣṇu-dharmottarapurāṇā* in a number of aspects. The text states that the god should stand in the *ālīḍha* posture on the serpent Śeṣa *(ālīḍhas-thānasaṁsthānastatpṛṣṭhe Bhagavānbhavet)*, although Śeṣa is described as four-armed and gazing admiringly at Vasundharā[21]. Varāha also is given four arms but it is stated that he should lift the earth with the tip of his tusk *(daṁṣṭrāgrasamuddhṛtavasundharāḥ)* and the same arm that supports her should hold a conch *(yasmīnbhuje dharā devī tatra śaṅkhaḥ kare bhaved)*, as we find in the sculpture. The earth or Vasundharā is described as follows : *vāmāratnigatā tasya yoṣidrūpā Vasundharā / namaskāraparā tasya kartavyā dvibhujā śubhā.* Indeed in the representation Vasundharā is shown as a female with her two hands in *namaskāramudrā*. The text also describes many other forms of the avatāra and declares that he may be shown two-handed *(dvibhujastvatha vā kāryaḥ...)*, although there he is to hold the globe *(piṇḍa)* of the earth[22].

There is nothing known from India to which this Nepali version is comparable[23]. Although the massive proportions and the vast composition of the Udayagiri relief make it one of the most monu-

mental representations of the theme, the Nepali example is no less striking. In the Udayagiri relief, however, and indeed elsewhere in Indian art, the physique of Varāha is that of a deva of gigantic proportions. But in the Nepali sculpture in the bulky volumes of the swelling plane of the massive chest, the rotund belly and the thick and heavy thighs, the sculptor appears to have attempted to visualize the primeval boar itself. This indeed is the auspicious supporter of the world who ‹emitted a low murmuring sound, like the chanting of the Sāmaveda ; and the mighty boar, whose eyes were like the full blown lotus, and whose body, vast as the Nila mountain, was of the dark colour of the lotus leaves, uplifted upon his ample tusks the Earth from the lowest regions...'[24].

III. NARASIMHA AVATĀRA

We have already stated that in an inscription of Aṁśuvarman a temple of Narasiṁha is mentioned, thus testifying that this avatāra of Viṣṇu was familiar by the sixth century. Although there are no ways of knowing the form of the image installed in that temple, possibly the much later sculpture, now standing within the precincts of the Chaṅgu Nārāyaṇa temple, is modelled after it, for it appears to have been common practice in Nepal to make copies of ancient icons. This image (Fig. 6) cannot be placed earlier than the twelfth century[25], and remains one of the earliest representations of this manifestation.

The story of this vibhava as narrated in purāṇic literature is as follows. Hiraṇyakaśipu, the king of the asuras, was an avowed enemy of Viṣṇu, but of his sons, Prahlāda was a devotee of the god. On learning of this, Hiraṇyakaśipu chastised his son and asked him where Viṣṇu was. To this Prahlāda replied that he was everywhere and could even be in the pillar before them. Hiraṇyakaśipu struck the pillar, and with a deafening sound it fell to pieces and out came Viṣṇu in the form of half man and half lion. In the fight that ensued the god tore open the asura's belly with his nails.

The Nepali sculpture is interesting for more reasons than one. The base of the sculpture shows stylized rocks, which may indicate the locale, viz. a cave, although the action commonly takes place in

a palace, or it may have been a mannerism of the artist. It is interesting that the Viṣṇu vikrānta sculpture of Śikhara Nārāyaṇa (Fig. 10) which may have been the work of the same school, if not by the same artist, shows a similar predilection for rendering the base as a rocky surface, and yet there it can hardly be taken to indicate a cave. There is no allusion in the literary versions to nāgas being present on the occasion and yet we see a couple on the pedestal in a devotional attitude. Amongst others included in the stele are Garuḍa and Śrī-Lakṣmī to the right of Narasiṁha and Prahlāda to his left, while in the stylized clouds above Brahmā, Indra and Śiva are watching the miraculous event.

In contrast to the rigid and frontal representations of all the attendant figures, the main theme, the killing of Hiraṇyakaśipu, is depicted with considerable dramatic quality. Narasiṁha holds Hiraṇyakaśipu in a vicious grip from which the latter tries hopelessly to extricate himself. The interlocking of the arms and legs of the two figures and the limp left hand of the asura king emphasize his helplessness as the enraged god with his mane flying like flames mercilessly tears open his belly. It is interesting to recall that the *Matsyapurāṇa* states that 'the god and the demon should be shown fighting with their legs interlocked'[36].

In fact, the artist appears to have followed the description of the *Matsyapurāṇa* in fashioning this sculpture. The text further relates that 'the alter or seat should be made formidable, his face terrible, the eyes should be split, the mane should be raised, and the scene of ripping the breast of the demon Hiraṇyakaśipu with blood gushing from it, as well as the angry looks of the Lord should also be well depicted ... and the images of Indra and the other Devas in praying posture should be made near Nṛsiṁha'[37]. Perhaps, in an attempt to make the seat formidable the artist has employed the motif of rocks on the pedestal. Indra and others are delineated in the clouds as already mentioned. As a naturalistic touch the artist has added the asura's fallen crown and the broken bits of his club below the left foot of Narasiṁha[38]. Of the attributes in the two upper hands of the god, that in the left is undoubtedly a lotus, while the right hand seems to hold a stone-sling, marked on the

side with a *cakra*. This may have been a misinterpretation on the part of the artist of the attribute in the original image, which he has no doubt copied, or possibly, in the early icons of Narasiṁha, he was shown holding a sling, attesting the primitive character of the conception. It is not impossible that Narasiṁha originally was worshipped by some tribal people and was subsequently incorporated in the Vaiṣṇava pantheon and mythology.

S. Levi published another sculpture of Narasiṁha from Patan[29] which too belongs to the medieval period. Curiously, there the right leg of Hiraṇyakaśipu is raised as if he was attempting to kick Narasiṁha in the face. In it also the god is seated securely as he tears open the demon's belly, and Hiraṇyakaśipu's club lies next to the god's right foot. In a still later example in wood [30] we see Narasiṁha standing as he destroys the demon who falls helplessly on the ground. While the god is conceived almost completely as a lion, the demon is attired in the manner in which the asuras and dānavas are portrayed in paintings after the sixteenth century. The continued popularity of this avatāra is also attested by the *Vaṁśāvalis* [31] where we are told that in the seventeenth century Pratāpamalla consecrated an icon of Narasiṁha, which may still be seen in the old palace at Kathmandu.

IV. VIṢṆU VIKRĀNTA OR VĀMANA AVATĀRA

(i)

Four sculptures in Nepal, of different periods, depict the theme known commonly in Indian literature as Trivikrama (Figs. 7-10). The nucleus of the legend as well as the conception of the three strides are to be found in vedic literature. As a matter of fact, his taking the three strides is one of the most significant features of vedic Viṣṇu[32]. The more elaborate myth, which appears to have formed the basis for these visual representations, is found in the purāṇas.

Bali, the king of the asuras, became over-ambitious and began making preparations to gain overlordship of the heavens. This alarmed the gods who approached Brahmā for protection and he sent them to Viṣṇu. The ever agreeable Viṣṇu, in order to curb Bali's

ambition, incarnated himself on earth as the dwarf *(vāmana)* son of Kāśyapa and Aditi. On hearing that Bali was about to perform the horse sacrifice *(aśvamedha yajña)* the dwarf Brahmin went to attend it. Aware of Viṣṇu's guile, Śukrācārya, the high priest of the asuras, warned Bali to be careful. But the proud king, heedless of the wise counsel, offered the dwarf anything the latter wanted. Vāmana modestly asked for only that much land that he could cover with three steps. No sooner was his wish granted, to the amazement of the asuras, the dwarf was metamorphosed into a cosmic giant and only with two steps covered the three worlds. With the remaining step he despatched Bali, who was tied up with Varuṇa's rope by Garuḍa, to the nether world *(sutala* of *Pātālaloka)*.

Of the four sculptures portraying this myth, two bear on their pedestals identical inscriptions of Mānadeva with the same date. The date given is 389 which when referred to the Śaka era corresponds to A. D. 467. One of these now stands under an improvised shelter at the confluence of the rivers Tilganga and Bagmati, near Mṛgasthali (Fig. 7) and the other, from Lajimpat, is preserved in the Bir Library at Kathmandu (Fig. 8). A third example stands within the precincts of the temple of Chaṅgu Nārāyaṇa (Fig. 9), while the fourth is set up outside the shrine of Śikhara Nārāyaṇa at Pharphing (Fig. 10).

Although they differ stylistically, all four sculptures have the same compositional scheme and similar iconographical traits. The following incidents of the myth have been portrayed, with a varying degree of naturalism and dramatic intent, in all four reliefs : the scene of the performance of the *aśvamedha yajña* at the lower left corner of the stele, in the centre the ceremonial bestowing of the gift by Bali, in the company of his wife Vindhyāvalī and Śukrācārya, to Vāmana, to the right the worship of the foot of Viṣṇu by the nāga royal couple and the futile attempt by Namuci to dissuade the god. Higher up in the composition we see the adoration of the left foot of Viṣṇu by Rāhu and a curious acrobatic figure suspended in mid-air, the entire composition being dominated as well as unified by the striding figure of Viṣṇu. Both Garuḍa and Śrī-Lakṣmī are represented on Viṣṇu's right, and we can presume from the two undated steles that

the top of the Mānadeva reliefs was also adorned with clouds, the sun, the moon and *vidyādharas.*

Despite the damaged and effaced state of the two inscribed reliefs, we can distinguish some of the attributes held by Viṣṇu. In the Mṛgasthali relief (Fig. 7), his crown, although disfigured, appears to have three peaks, and among his ornaments are *śaṅkhapatras, karṇa-kuṇḍalas,* a broad *hāra,* equally broad *keyūras* and *valayas.* He wears a *dhoti,* which is marked by striations, with a broad embroidered border that spans the two thighs and gives the impression of a *vanamālā.* Of the four right hands of Viṣṇu, one has a clenched fist and may have held a round object, a curious trait of early Nepali icons, both Hindu and Buddhist, as we find in the corresponding right hand of the Śikhara Nārāyaṇa relief (Fig. 10). In this particular context it would represent the seed of the lotus, which is a distinctive attribute of Viṣṇu. Often in Indian art, instead of representing the flower, the artists have placed a seed in his lower right hand, or have merely delineated a lotus mark on the palm. The second outstretched right hand, which also has a clenched fist, probably held a mace *(gadā)* as we can reconstruct from the Lajimpat example (Fig. 8). The other two hands must have been similarly disposed and one of them most likely held the *cakra.* The remaining hand in all four examples is fully outstretched and probably signifies the *patāka* or *patākā-mudrā* [33]. On the other hand, the gesture may simply denote that he is the overlord of the universe. It is of interest to recall that in the Amaravati relief of the Chakravarti Rājā his right hand displays a similar gesture [34].

The uppermost left hand in all three early reliefs holds a shield, which is sufficiently well preserved in the Mṛgasthali stele (Fig. 7) to enable us to discern its form. The centre is decorated with a petal-like design encircled by a row of pearls, and along the outer circumference the artist has, by means of very fine incisions, indicated the flaming quality of the shield. But what is interesting is that while there is an attempt on his part to treat this quite naturalistically, the same idea has been transformed into a stylized design by the sculptor of the Chaṅgu Nārāyaṇa relief (Fig. 9). The next left hand

is too mutilated in both the inscribed images, but from the outline there can be little doubt that the attribute held was the conch. The third left hand displays the *tarjanimudrā*, a gesture of threat—no doubt here warning Bali specifically, and all evil-doers in general. The remaining fourth hand as we have already discussed must have held the bow.

A slightly different distribution of the attributes is seen in the relief from Chaṅgu Nārāyaṇa (Fig. 9). The two upper hands, in a symmetrical fashion, hold the discus and the shield. Similarly, another pair of hands with an equal stress on symmetry holds the sword in the right and the mace in the left. The third right hand is fully outstretched while the fourth is broken, and may have held the lotus seed, as we find in the Śikhara Nārāyaṇa relief (Fig. 10). One of the left hands is also broken and may have either displayed the *tarjanimudrā* or held a conch, while the hand raised to the shoulder probably held a bow. The *dhotī* that Viṣṇu wears in this sculpture is completely diaphanous and clings closely to the body. If it were not for the borders below the knee and the hanging pleats in the front it would be entirely indistinguishable. The sash or belt around the waist *(udarabandha)* hangs down on either side, as in the Lajimpat stele (Fig. 8), but has become far more stylized. His head is adorned with a pointed crown, and among his ornaments are the *kuṇḍala*, the *hāru*, the *keyūra* and simple *valayas*. The necklace consists of three strings of pearls and his *upavīta* is a string with gems at the lowest tip.

The attributes in the hands of Viṣṇu in the Śikhara Nārāyaṇa relief (Fig. 10) are as follows : the discus, the sword, the lotus seed, *patākāmudrā*, the mace, the conch, the thunder-bolt *(vajra)* and the *tarjanimudrā*. Thus the shield here is replaced with the thunder-bolt or the *vajra*, which is rather an unsual attribute of Viṣṇu. His *dhoti* is of some printed material, and both ends of the *udarabandha* or the sash flutter on the same side. His *hāra* or necklace is the *ekāvalī* or a single string of pearls, but his *upavīta* consists of double strings. The *keyūra* is also of pearl but emulates the form of the *sarpavalaya* seen on the arms of Bodhisattva figures. The *valaya*

is more elaborate than those in the earlier sculptures, but the *kuṇḍalas* are more simple, while the head is adorned with a three peaked crown.

Despite the fact that both the Chaṅgu Nārāyaṇa and the Śikhara Nārāyaṇa reliefs must have been eighth and fourteenth century copies respectively of the two inscribed steles of the fifth century[35], not only are there differences in the disposition of the attributes in the hands of the principal figure but at times the artist even selected different attributes. That they were modelled after the older icons, which probably had yet a still earlier prototype, possibly in India, is also evident not only from the fact that all four sculptures portray identical incidents of the myth but in general all follow the same compositional scheme. At the same time there are enormous differences as well.

(ii)

Iconographically, the same incidents are portrayed in all four examples with minor modifications. There are three separate groups of figures along the lower section of the reliefs. The group around the right foot of Viṣṇu includes the nāgarāja, very definitely indicated by his serpent canopy, and his wife, both adoring the foot. This adulation is more clearly expressed by the sculptor of the Chaṅgu Nārāyaṇa relief (Fig. 9), where the king holds the foot, while his queen is busy emptying a basket of flowers and fruits. They no doubt signify that the foot is resting in *pātāla*. The figure that clutches the right foot, as if in an attempt to dissuade him, presents us with greater difficulty. A similar figure also occurs in the Badami relief (Fig. 11), where he is stout, wears an elaborate crown and is seated on his haunches. J. N. Banerjea hesitantly suggested that it may be a second representation of Bali[36], while Alice Boner writes that 'this is supposed to be the guardian of the *pātālaloka* trying to stop Viṣṇu and cause him to fall[37] ! But it is difficult to accept both these suggestions. In none of the sculptures, whether from Nepal or India, has Bali ever been shown as a pot-bellied crowned figure. Moreover, the fact that in the Nepali examples the 'guardian of *pātālaloka*', who is none other than

nāgarāja, has been additionally represented precludes us from accepting Boner's suggestion. It is interesting to note that in all the Nepali sculptures the figure is delineated exactly like the other asuras below Viṣṇu's left leg and we may conclude that he represents an indignant asura. In the description of the theme in the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa*[38] it is stated that the asuras were annoyed at the treachery of the Dwarf and one of them, Numuci, a high ranking member, attempted to dissuade the god, but was hurled into the air. The other person who protested, at least verbally, was Bānāsura, the son of Bali[39], but the figure clutching Viṣṇu's leg in all five representations probably represents Namuci[40]. Immediately below the central figure of Viṣṇu is depicted the incident of Bali donating the gift to the Dwarf, rendered symbolically by the act of pouring water from an ewer. This is delineated very naturalistically in the two inscribed examples (Figs. 7-8), where we see Bali actually pouring the water into the hands of the Dwarf, the stream of water being represented as well, exactly as it is described in the *Vāmanapurāṇa*[41]. In the Chaṅgu Nārāyaṇa relief (Fig. 9), however, Bali holds the pitcher with his right hand and a basket in the left, from which the Dwarf is seen to accept the gift. This again is no doubt an innovation on the part of the sculptor. In the fourth relief (Fig. 10) there is no attempt at a naturalistic representation. Instead, both stand frontally, the Dwarf on a pedestal, holding a staff in his left hand and a rosary in the right, his divinity being asserted by the prabhā behind his head. According to the *Vāmanapurāṇa*, the staff was given to him on his birth by Mārīcī and the rosary by Vāruṇī[42]. A noteworthy feature is that in all these sculptures as also in the Badami relief (Fig. 11) Bali is represented as he is described in the *Vāmanapurāṇa* in the attire of one performing a sacrifice. He is said to have worn a white garment, a white garland, a deer skin and was annointed with white sandal-paste[43]. In three of the Nepali reliefs he is accompanied by his preceptor Śukrācārya, except in the Chaṅgu Nārāyaṇa Stele (Fig. 9) where the priest has been omitted.

Below Viṣṇu's left leg, in the bottom corner, is a group of demons and a horse, delineated partially in the two inscribed reliefs, but more fully in the other two. This is no doubt the

sacrificial horse as is clearly indicated in the Chaṅgu Nārāyaṇa example (Fig. 9) by the additional altar of bricks where an asura is engaged in making preparations, while another behind the horse has raised his sword to decapitate it. In both the Lajimpat (Fig. 8) and the Śikhara Nārāyaṇa steles (Fig. 10) the locale and the occasion are further indicated by a swaying pillar with a fluttering flag *(dhvajāstambha)*, which can only be faintly discerned in the Mṛgasthali relief (Fig. 7) but is omitted by the sculptor of the Chaṅgu Nārāyaṇa image.

Śri-Lakṣmī and Garuḍa have been included in all the sculptures to Viṣṇu's right. In the three earlier reliefs Garuḍa is seen to fly through the air, once again emphasizing the sense of movement in these sculptures, whereas in that from Śikhara Nārāyaṇa (Fig. 10), he stands rigidly on a rocky pedestal. To Viṣṇu's left the most arresting figure is that of the acrobat in all four sculptures. A similar figure also appears in the Badami relief, (Fig. 11) and it has been suggested that he represents king Triśaṅku[44] who, on a previous occasion, was cursed by Viṣṇu to hang in mid-air. It is difficult to see why Triśaṅku should be represented here, for nowhere in the purāṇas or the āgamas is he mentioned in this context. In the Mṛgasthali relief (Fig. 7) the figure performs only a summersault, and, if his hands held any attributes, they are no longer visible. In the Lajimpat stele (Fig. 8) he appears to hold some sort of a rattle—drum or a weapon. In the Chaṅgu Nārāyaṇa example (Fig. 9) his right hand is in *vismayamudrā* and he is accompanied by another similar figure displaying the *namaskāramudrā*. In the Śikhara Nārāyaṇa relief (Fig 10) the figure is seen completely upside down with arms uniformly outstretched and legs bent at the knee as if he is plunging down. But here too, along with the other suspended figure with palms enjoined, he and the asuras are identically attired. It appears as if the clue to our identification of the summersaulting figure lies in its disposition in the Chaṅgu Nārāyaṇa relief (Fig. 9), where the *vismayamudrā* can be interpreted as an expression of his amazement at the cosmic manifestation. This together with the fact that in all the sculptures he is portrayed just as the asuras are leads us to suggest that he is an asura, probably

Namuci, who was hurled into the atmosphere by the expanding god.

The ferocious head in the clouds, which also appears in the Badami relief (Fig. 11), is no doubt of Rāhu as suggested by R. D. Banerji[45]. In this context its presence could be interpreted as indicating that the left leg of Viṣṇu had reached the heavens *(svargaloka)* corresponding with the *pātālaloka* symbolized by the *nāga* couple below the right foot. In the case of the Badami sculpture, Boner suggests that the mask-like face represents Sūrya[46], but we clearly notice in both the Chaṅgu Nārāyaṇa and the Śikhara Nārāyaṇa reliefs that the sun and the moon are separately indicated by two discs on either side of the top of the stele, accompanied by vidyādharas bearing garlands and/or other divine beings. Thus the face in the Badami relief must also be of Rāhu.

The two fifth century images from Nepal are at least a century earlier than the Badami relief which embellishes a cave that was carved in A. D. 578. The incidents represented in all these sculptures indicate that the artists used the purāṇic versions of the myth as recounted in the *Vāmanapurāṇa* or the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa*. They also demonstrate that the story with all its elaborate ramifications had already become popular by the fifth century, and at least that section of the purāṇas that recounts this myth must have been already composed.

(iii)

By far the most vital and dynamic representations are the two inscribed steles, whereas the most rigid and formal from Śikhara Nārāyaṇa. The Chaṅgu Nārāyaṇa relief probably lies somewhere in between and although it exhibits a certain amount of formalism in the sculptor's obsession with symmetry and balance, at the cost of vitality, it is nonetheless imbued with a sense of drama that is altogether wanting in the example from Śikhara Nārāyaṇa. Considerable activity goes on in the two fifth century sculptures, and although this is less spirited in that from Chaṅgu Nārāyaṇa, in the Śikhara Nārāyaṇa example the figures merely stand rigid and erect as if by magic they were frozen in their present positions. Following Klaus

Bruhn's classification of Indian iconography we can say that while the three earlier sculptures manifest 'epic' qualities, that from Śikhara Nārāyaṇa would belong to the 'Non-epic' class[47].

The heroic quality of the two fifth century sculptures (Figs. 7-8) is easily perceptible. A tremendous sense of dynamism as well as physical strain is conveyed by the outstretched legs, particularly where they split, and incidentally divide the panel roughly into two triangular halves. The flow of movement from the strained right toes to the left foot is uninterrupted, and the same sense of vigour and movement is also conveyed by the outstretched arms, only two of which are orientated towards the body. Nothing or no one is static in these two sculptures and the involvement in the drama is total and complete. In contrast, the sculptor of the Chaṅgu Nārāyaṇa example (Fig. 9) displays a much greater predilection for symmetry and spatial organisation. His sense of composition is considerably more orderly, although the narrative intent and the dramatic quality are still in evidence. The figures are more gracefully proportioned and better disposed. The rather crude but more vital delineation of the right foot of Viṣṇu in the two earlier sculptures is here eschewed for a more comfortable and firm position. This is also true of the disposition of Śrī-Lakṣmī who stands more elegantly and comfortably on her lotus in the Chaṅgu Nārāyaṇa relief than in the other two, where she appears to be falling off the swaying lotus. In the Śikhara Nārāyaṇa relief, (Fig. 10) although the same incidents are portrayed, the rendering is altogether devoid of the narrative intent and a stereotyped mannerism pervades the entire composition.

(iv)

It may be pertinent at this stage to raise the question as to why Mānadeva chose this particular form of Viṣṇu's incarnatory aspects for the temple erected in honour of his mother. In the Chaṅgu Nārāyaṇa pillar inscription, where Mānadeva recalls his predecessors, he merely refers to them, including his father, as kings *(nṛpa)* and makes no mention either of the extent or the power of the kingdom[48]. On the other hand the inscription is replete with

allusions to his own conquests and certainly asserts his independent status. From Harişeṇa's *praśasti* on the Allahabad pillar we know that Nepal was a frontier state *(pratyantarājya)* of Samudragupta's empire[49]. It probably did not form an integral part of the Gupta empire, but certainly paid tribute to the emperor, and the Nepali king, along with many others, had to be present at important imperial ceremonies. Thus it is not impossible that Mānadeva was responsible for overthrowing this imperial yoke and celebrated both his independent status as well as his role of a conqueror by installing an image of Viṣṇu vikrānta.

It is interesting that instead of the later designation of Trivikrama the inscription uses the appellation Viṣṇu vikrānta. *Vikrānta–* is a word that was used along with other variations more commonly in vedic literature. In the *Vājasaneyisaṁhitā* we are told that with three steps he pervades the whole universe and in the *Taittiriyasaṁhitā* this is further elaborated as 'in that he strides the god's strides, the sacrificer becoming Viṣṇu wins *(abhi jayati)* these worlds'[50]. This all-pervading quality of Viṣṇu is probably signified by the outstretched right hand in the sculptures. In performing the three strides, the sacrificer is identified with Viṣṇu, whose functions he imbibes. As Gonda has pointed out, 'these strides are also conducive to the annihilation of evil influences ; they overcome hostility *(...viṣṇoḥ kramo 'sy abhimātihā)*, slay rivals *(sapatnahā)*, destroy enemies *(śatrūyato hantā)*, kill the malignant or envious one *(arātīyato hantā'*[51]. Further, in the *Atharvaveda*, many formulas stress the idea of conquest in association with Viṣṇu's three strides[52]. Elsewhere too we find the formulation of such ideas that the one who made Viṣṇu's strides was victorious against his enemies : 'Viṣṇu's stride art thou, rival slaying, earth—(atmosphere—etc.) sharpened, possessed of Agni's (Vāyu's etc.) bright energy *(agnitejāḥ)* ; along the earth (etc.) I stride out *(vi krame)* ; from earth (etc.) we exclude him who hates us, whom we hate ; let him not live, let breath go away from him'[53]. In view of this, not only does the use of the epithet *vikrānta* in the inscription gain added importance, but we are also told that he is *sarvvalokaikanātham*, the lord of all the worlds[54]. It is also significant that the rite of the strides,

performed on the tiger's skin, was an integral part of the ceremony of royal consecration 'the purport of which', as Gonda has suggested out, 'is the endowment of the sacrificer with the variety of powers and energies inherent in kingship'[55].

The heroic and protective qualities of Viṣṇu are already implicit in the *Ṛgveda* and both these traits are intimately connected with the three strides. 'I now would speak of the heroic deeds of Viṣṇu who traversed (or : measured) the spaces of the earth, who established the upper abode striding out triply, he the wide-going one'[56]. In another verse in the *Ṛgveda* this striding Viṣṇu is called *narya*—'manly, strong, heroic'[57]. There are several allusions in the *Ṛgveda* to his powers of protecting as has been collected by Gonda. Thus, it would appear that it was this heroic Viṣṇu that appealed to Mānadeva in his choice of an appropriate myth to be visually transformed into an image for his temple. He may here have been emulating his imperial predecessors of India, the Guptas, who also were inspired by the valour and heroism of Viṣṇu. Certainly, heroic themes of Viṣṇu predominate in the art of the Gupta period, particularly the Varāha aspect, which has a similar significance[58].

En passant it may be remarked that the myth of Trivikrama or Vāmana avatāra combines in it both the vibhava or avatāra (incarnatory) and the vibhuti (manifestational) aspects of the god as delineated in Pāñcarātra philosophy. As we shall see later (vide section VII of this chapter) the concept of vibhuti or manifestation is outlined in the *Bhagavadgītā*. To prevent Bali from gaining supremacy over Indra's dominion, Viṣṇu incarnated himself as the Dwarf but to frighten him into submission he manifested his cosmic form *(virāṭrūpa)*. Thus, in a single myth both the vibhuti and the vibhava aspects have been amalgamated in a very convincing manner.

It is also interesting that in contradistinction to the basic philosophy underlying the idea of avatāra—as stated in the *Bhagavadgītā* : that the god incarnates himself to rid the earth of evil and to re-establish *dharma*—he is in this instance really coming to the aid of

the gods. It is not Bali's domination over the earth that disturbs and alarms the gods, but his bid to usurp Indra's position and power. Had Bali remained content with his supremacy over the earth, the question of an incarnation would not have arisen. In the purāṇic versions Bali's integrity and character are of a *dharma*-abiding king and he is a devotee of Viṣṇu. Perhaps, this is why he was not totally destroyed by Viṣṇu—as he destroyed the evil and its embodiment in most of the other vibhavas—but was merely banished to *pātālaloka*. As a special concession, Bali was given the boon that he would become in his next birth the eighth Manu named Sāvarṇī[59]. In a previous incarnation as well, viz. the Kūrma avatāra, Viṣṇu assumed the form of the tortoise to save the gods.

(v)

It can be generally asserted that these sculptures from Nepal of the fifth century were modelled after some Indian prototypes, although no Indian sculpture portraying this theme can be definitely dated earlier than the Badami example[60]. It may be instructive, however, to compare these Nepali versions of the story with some of the early representations of the theme in India. Apart from the Badami sculpture (Fig. 11), two other equally well-known examples are that in Mamallapuram (c. 7th century) [A. Boner, *Principles of composition in Hindu Sculpture*, pl. IX] and another in the Daśāvatāra Cave at Ellora (c. 8th century) (Fig. 12). All these sculptures share with the Nepali representations the same heroic quality and narrative intent, rather than the later stereotyped manner of delineation of medieval icons.

In all three Indian reliefs the artist chose to represent Viṣṇu more or less in an erect posture, the right leg firmly planted in line with the rigid verticality of the body like a solid column. Some of the attributes in his hands are common with the Nepali examples, but a significant omission is the outstretched right hand. Of course, there are other differences in the ornamentations, the dress, and the composition, which are due to the prevailing style of the period and the region as well to the personal predilection of the artists. But we shall confine ourselves to discussing the differences only in their

choice of the particular incidents of the story.

Rāhu occurs only in the Badami relief (Fig. 11), while in that at Mamallapuram Brahmā is seen adoring the left foot of Viṣṇu, following the *Vaikhānasāgama*[61]. Śrī is not portrayed in any of the three and Garuḍa occurs only in the Ellora relief, where he is seen pulling Bali by the hair in an attempt to tie him up with Varuṇa's rope, following the purāṇic tradition. The acrobatic figure appears in both the Badami and the Mamallapuram reliefs, and his disposition in the Badami example is very similar to that seen in the early Nepali steles.

In the Badami relief (Fig. 11) the space below the raised left leg of Viṣṇu is devoted to the incident of Bali making the gift to the Dwarf, who holds an umbrella with the left hand, an attribute not seen in Nepali sculptures. This act is depicted in the Ellora example (Fig. 12) as well where also Vāmana holds the umbrella, which is described in the purāṇas, and appears to have been the most distinctive and popular of his attributes. The king is accompanied by his queen, his preceptor and a number of other attendants. The right leg of Viṣṇu is being pulled by a crowned, pot-bellied figure, while Rāhu is adoring his left foot. As in the two early Nepali icons an asura with a drawn sword and about to challenge Viṣṇu also occurs in Badami.

In the Mamallapuram relief neither Bali nor the act of bestowing the gift is shown. Instead, Viṣṇu stands triumphant like a gaint hero among a few scattered asuras overawed by the cosmic might. In contrast to the agitated movement of the asuras, the colossal Viṣṇu stands calm and unperturbed, and this was no doubt the psychology behind the artist's emphasis of this particular moment to the exclusion of other incidents—to show the constancy and the immoveability of the god in the midst of universal flux. The Ellora example (Fig. 12) is the least complex of the three but, despite its brevity, tells the story graphically. Only Bali's gift, the cosmic manifestation and Bali's punishment are considered sufficient to recall the myth.

It is evident that there is far greater detail in the Nepali examples,

which are the earliest, than in the Indian plastic representations of the theme. It also seems that as we move along the arrow of time fewer details are portrayed and the composition becomes brief and simple. Ultimately, in medieval icons, the theme is depicted with hieratic rigidity and without any dramatic intent. Purely in terms of iconography and narrative documentation the Badami relief is no doubt the closest of the three to the Nepali versions of the fifth century and possibly they had a common origin.

A significant conclusion that suggests itself from a comparison of all these versions of the same theme, both in Nepal and in India, is that the sculptors enjoyed considerably greater freedom in the execution of even a religious theme than is usually admitted. It was no doubt a limited freedom in the sense that he was given a particular story to tell and he had also to tell it within certain artistic conventions that he inherited traditionally. But how effectively he told that story or what details he emphasized seems to have been his prerogative. It also appears that at this early period there were different traditions current for the attributes of Viṣṇu, and even when the artist was making a copy, as in the Nepali versions, he not only changed their disposition but also the very attributes. Although our knowledge of the textual material is inadequate, there can be little doubt that, at least in the early period, the artists were relatively more free in the rendering of such dramatic themes. What Louis Reau said in the context of Christian iconography, and as emphasized by Klaus Bruhn, is equally pertinent to Indian iconography : '. . . .the texts do not provide the key for all the iconographic problems ; deviations are very common'[62]. Indeed, if all artists followed all texts faithfully, how dull that art would be, and these variations on the theme provide us with the clues to the understanding of the psychology of the style as well as the psychology of the artist.

A fairly elaborate painted version of the theme may be seen in one of the folios of the Cambridge kalāpustaka (Fig. 62). On the lower folio we first see the scene of the *yajña* with Bali sitting reverentially behind the emaciated Śukrācārya who is offering oblations to the fire as Vāmana approaches them. The next composition is naturally

dominated by the striding Viṣṇu whose complexion is white. His right foot rests on the hands of the nāgarāja, while the left stretches into the heavens, where are portrayed both Brahmā and Rāhu. Below the left leg Bali is seen pouring water into the hands of Vāmana and the composition is balanced by the flying figure of Garuḍa in the diagonally opposite corner. The eight-armed Viṣṇu displays with the right hands the sword, the discus, the mace and the *varadamudrā*, and with the left the shield, the conch and the noose, while the fourth is not recognisable. The attributes therefore are different from those seen in the stone sculptures. Interestingly, Vāmana is shown as a richly attired and ornamented person holding the umbrella. In the third composition a four-armed but three-headed Viṣṇu watches as Garuḍa ties Bali with Varuṇa's rope.

V. RĀMA AVATĀRA

The Rāma avatāra of Viṣṇu does not seem to have been as popular in Nepal as it was in northern India. We know of only one image in the country where he is represented by himself. The image discussed and illustrated by Goetz,[63] is fixed into a wall of one of the terraces leading down to the river at Mṛgasthali. Four figures ensconced in a cave, indicated by jutting, pointed rocks, are shown in the composition. The surface of the relief is much corroded but from what remains there seems little doubt that Goetz is partly correct in his identification.

The centre of the composition is dominated by a male figure standing in a slight *tribhaṅga*. Of his attire and ornaments only a pointed crown and the *dhoti* can be clearly discerned, although there appear to be ear-rings and an *udarabandha*. Of his two hands the left holds a giant bow, and the right appears to hang down, probably displaying the *varadamudrā*. The graceful female figure to his left holds a vessel in the left hand, while the object in her right hand is identified by Goetz as a fan, but may also be a *mirror*. This is probably Sītā and the male standardbearer to the right Lakṣmaṇa. The capital of the standard shows an animal, possibly Garuḍa, thus emphasizing that Rāma here is an avatāra of Viṣṇu. The female figure, kneeling at Rāma's feet, has been identified by Goetz as

Pṛithivī or the earth goddess whose presence has been explained by her 'relationship to Sītā and as representative of the earth ruled over by Rāma, symbol of royal power and justice'[64]. While such an identification is not impossible, it seems more probable that, considering the narrative intent of the sculpture and the fact that the figures are set against a cave background, the kneeling figure represents Ahalyā, who had been frozen into stone, centuries ago, by her husband's curse and was waiting for Rāma to break the spell and release her[65].

The stereotyped form of Rāma, included in the representations of daśāvatāra, will be discussed elsewhere (*vide* section VI of the same chapter), but here we may describe some illuminated folios depicting scenes from the *Rāmāyaṇa* from a sixteenth century manuscript. The manuscript is of the kind known as a kalāpustaka, where the illustrations are of primary importance, the brief textual portions being limited to the bottom of the folio functioning merely as labels. We will illustrate here only a few of the episodes painted on the folios.

The narration begins with Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa bidding farewell to Daśaratha and Kaikeyī and proceeding to the forest along with Sītā (Fig. 13). In the next folio we see Sītā pointing out the golden deer, which is given chase by Rāma, and the appearance of Rāvaṇa in the guise of an ascetic. The rest of the story then unfolds before us with all the dramatic intensity of the various episodes of the epic. The artist has naturally chosen only those episodes that appealed to his interest and seemed significant for following the story of the epic. Among these may be mentioned the abduction of Sītā by Rāvaṇa, the fight with Jaṭāyu, the duel between Bali and Sugrīva (Fig. 14), Hanumān's visit to Laṅkā with all its flaming consequences, the *setubandha*, the duel between Meghanāda and Lakṣmaṇa, the battle with Kumbhakarṇa, the final duel between Rāma and Rāvaṇa, Sītā's *agniparikṣā* (Fig. 15), Vibhīṣaṇa's coronation as the king of Laṅkā and ultimately the return to Ayodhyā.

The story unfolds before us in comic strip-like compositions, each being demarcated by trees and containing two or three figures.

Although the figures are portrayed following certain conventional schemata, there is nothing of the hieratic quality that is apparent in a religious work. The function of the illuminations was to tell a story graphically and the miniaturist has done this in a convincing fashion. The colours are employed with an expressionistic flair, and in deference to the accepted practice the artist has always shown Rāma as a dark figure. Both the linear quality of the style and the decorative character of the illuminations are enhanced by the use of the rich, ornamental background consisting of floral and scroll motifs. But in no way does this exuberant background impede the progress of the dramatic movement of the episodes, and it is obvious that, although the theme here is taken from a religious work, the artist's freedom is limited only by artistic conventions and not by theological injunctions.

VI. STEREOTYPED REPRESENTATIONS OF DAŚĀVATĀRA

No examples of the stereotyped representations of the daśāvatāras are known to us in Nepali sculpture, but several Vaiṣṇava paṭas portray them in their conventional forms[67]. In the seventeenth century paṭa illustrated here (Fig. 16), we find the ten avatāras depicted along the top of the painting. The first is the fish incaration, but rather unusually a dark four-armed Viṣṇu is emerging from the mouth of the fish. His hands hold the four usual attributes and it is not quite the hybrid form found in India. Similar is the representation of the Kūrma avatāra which has already been discussed. Then Varāha in his hybrid form is shown standing in *ālīḍha* and is four-armed, which hold the four distinctive attributes as is described in the texts. Although here Pṛthivī is not delineated it is interesting that the artist has retained the posture of Varāha and also the disposition of the upper left arm as if he was supporting the goddess. Narasiṁha, also of the hybrid form, is shown tearing open the asura Hiraṇyakaśipu in the conventional manner.

Next is Vāmana, the dwarf, with a beard, his hair tied in a bun and holding the umbrella. Curiously he is fully clothed in the contemporary style and quite unlike his common representations in earlier

Nepali or Indian Art, where he is invariably shown with a shaven head, wearing a simple *dhoti* and a deerskin as befitting a Brahmin. Paraśurāma is a dark figure holding a *paraśu* in his right hand. Rāma holds the bow but the attribute in Balarāma's hand is not discernible. Buddha, dressed as a monk, is seated in *paryaṅkāsana* with a pot in his hands which are in the *samādhimudrā* and Kalki, the last avatāra, stands before his horse with a sword in his hand.

A more spirited and varied representation of the daśāvatāras may be seen in a long scroll painted on cloth now in the Denver Art Museum (Fig. 17). The other paintings being maṇḍalas of Viṣṇu, the depiction is not unexpectedly more formal and rigid, but here the narrative intent becomes apparent. Displaying, however, typical Śaiva bias, the centre of the scroll portrays within an elaborate shrine a multi-headed and multi-armed Śiva seated with Pārvatī on his lap.

The slightly damaged condition of the scroll makes it difficult to recognize the forms of the first two avatāras on the left of the upper row, but both appear to have been shown in a hybrid form, the upper portion being a conventional four-armed representation of Viṣṇu. Varāha is shown as four-armed and standing in *ālīḍha*, his left foot resting on an asura attempting to escape. The lower left hand appears to hold the asura by the hair, whereas the upper left holding a conch is bent at the elbow. It is curious that here also Pṛthivī or Vasundharā is not portrayed as in the seventeenth century paṭa just discussed. A further deviation by the artist is that the god steps on a fleeing asura and pulls him by the hair who no doubt represents Hiraṇyākṣa, destroyed by Varāha to rescue the earth. Equally curious are the two fleeing asuras in the representations of the two previous avatāras. The two right hands of Varāha hold the conventional discus and the lotus.

The next avatāra is that of Narasiṁha who is four-armed and possesses the head of a lion. He has just emerged from the pillar which is shown behind him split into two halves. Had the artist painted a seat, the god's posture would have been that of *lalitāsana*, but as it is, he appears to be dancing in *ardhaparyaṅka*, as we find in

numerous representations of Vajrayāna divinities of the period. Of the four hands of Narasiṁha two are engaged in ripping open Hiraṇyakaśipu's belly, while the other two stretch out the entrails of the asura in garish display of savagery [60]. As a further realistic touch Hiraṇyakaśipu's helmet-like headgear is seen slipping off his head. In the representation of the Vāmana avatāra the expanded form of the god is portrayed but here too certain novel features are introduced. Although he is four-armed, he is given a third leg to emphasize the idea of his taking three strides. The right leg is firmly planted on the ground, while the second leg stretches towards the clouds where it is being adored by Brahmā. The third leg is despatching Bali, whose hands are in *namaskāramudrā,* to *sutala* of *pātālaloka.* The female confronting Viṣṇu with palms clasped is probably Śri Lakṣmī. His hands hold the four conventional attributes, *śaṅkha, cakra, gadā* and *padma.* The artist here obviously intended to show all three strides of the god and hence added a third leg. In the last composition of the upper row we see Paraśurāma, with a battle-axe in his right hand, about to destroy a multi-armed figure, who must represent one of the many *kṣatriya* princes he killed.

The second register begins with the representation of Rāma avatāra, where, accompanied by Hanumān, he is fighting Rāvaṇa, who has already fallen. A couple of other monkeys behind Rāma add to the narrative character of the representation. Rāma of course in the traditional manner fights with the bow and arrows. Next, Balarāma, with a *khaṭṭvāṅga* in his right hand, is about to destroy the fallen asura whose hair he holds with his left hand. He is wearing a *vanamālā* and his anger is very vividly expressed by the way the artist has delineated his eyes. The two remaining avatāras are separated from Balarāma by the shrine containing the seated figures of Hara-Pārvatī, flanked by Gaṇeśa to the right and Kārttikeya to the left. In keeping with the general temper of the vibhava scenes the artist has depicted both Gaṇeśa and Kārttikeya in a militant attitude. The ninth avatāra, the Buddha, is shown seated, and, although he is clad in monastic robes, he is crowned and wears a long garland. Three figures wearing the curious helmet-like-headgear and long skirt-like dresses are busy adoring him, reminiscent of the Magi arriving before

the new-born Christ. ' These three warrior-like persons probably represent kṣatriya kings, many of whom, along with the mercantile class, accepted the Buddha. The monk behind holding a sort of a staff and a bowl must represent one of the disciples, probably Ānanda[69]. Kalkī has been portrayed as a militant figure, as he is described in the texts *(dhanustūṇānvitaḥ Kalkī mlecchosādkaro dvijaḥ)*[70], riding a horse which tramples beneath its hoofs the evildoers of the Kali age.

The numerous deviations and innovations in this beautiful scroll testify to the imagination and inventiveness of the artist. The rich mountainous background with its snowy peaks and birds flying at regular intervals in no way interferes with the formal character of the representation but, in fact, enhances the picturesque quality of the painting, apart from giving continuity to the composition. At the same time he has infused his work with an expressive quality, often lacking in such paintings, by emphasizing the garish character of the Narasiṁha myth, where the god brings out the entrails of the asura, or by rolling the eyes of Balarāma or again by showing Kalkī's horse trampling mercilessly the *mlecchas* beneath its hoofs.

It is also of considerable iconological interest that despite the conventions of iconography, the artists of both the paintings have visualized the gods in terms of the prevailing styles of the period. In the seventeenth century paṭa (Fig. 16), Rāma, Balarāma and Kalkī are portrayed as young Rajput princes clad in the contemporary mode of attire. They all wear the long *jāmā,* held together by a belt or sash tied in front, and the *pājāma* ; only the turbans are replaced with crowns. In the seventeenth century, Nepali painting was considerably influenced by the Rajput-Mughal styles of India, and the artists unhesitatingly employed the figural types of the extraneous traditions even to represent the gods and goddesses.

We have already mentioned the peculiarity of Vāmana's dress and appearance. But the dress prescribed in the purāṇic texts was obviously a Brahmin's attire current at the time the texts were compiled. In seventeenth century Nepal the Brahmins too clothed themselves fully in the prevailing mode and this is evident if we look at

the priest depicted at the bottom of the paṭa (Fig. 16). Thus the artist here saw nothing amiss in clothing Vāmana as a well-dressed Brahmin of the contemporary period. If we then look at another painted folio, now in the Nepal museum at Kathmandu (Fig. 18), we will find the astonishing phenomenon of the two ṛṣis, Mārkaṇḍeya and Janamejaya, conversing clad in a *dhoti*, an *uttarīya*, even complete with the *rudrākṣamālā*, but wearing bowler hats. His dependence on the texts was therefore limited only to the attributes in the hands, particularly in such paintings, but for other traits he must have drawn from other visual sources as well as his imagination. This is also evident in the Denver Museum scroll (Fig. 17) where we have already seen how the artist employed the prevailing mode of delineating a mountainous landscape, which appears as an undulating back-drop, probably to relieve the monotony of a dull, plain background as well as to add to the pictorial quality of the painting. He was equally inventive in clothing his figures and has shown considerable variety using both the conventional as well as the current modes. It has been said that no artist is absolutely original, but it is equally true that no artist is a blind imitator. No matter how strong the chains of iconographical injunctions, art cannot remain in perpetual bondage.

VII. VIŚVARUPA FORMS OF VIṢṆU

(i)

Although a manifestation (vibhūti) is not an incarnation (vibhava) we have already seen that the two concepts are closely related and are synthesised in the story of the Vāmana avatāra. An entire chapter in the *Bhagavadgītā* (X), entitled *Vibhūti Yoga* is devoted to this them. There Kṛṣṇa declares how he is immanent in every being and object in the universe, how pervasive is his from, how diverse his nature and how varied his manifestations. In all humility Arjuna accepts this divine self declaration and says : 'What Thou hast said now know I to be truth, O Keśava ! that neither gods nor men nor demons comprehend Thy mystery made manifest !'[71]. He then requests the Lord to reveal to him the mystery of his manifestations and the Lord complies, and in the following chapter, entitled *Viśvarūpadarśanam* he reveals his universal form.

It is this vibhūti, this cosmic and universal manifestation, that forms the subject of a remarkable sculpture in Nepal now standing within the precincts of the Chaṅgu Nārāyaṇa temple (Fig. 19). But before we discuss this magnificent work of art, let us see how this manifestation is described in the *Bhagavadgītā*.

'Gaze, then, thou Son of Pritha !' declares Kṛṣṇa. 'I manifest for thee those hundred thousand thousand shapes that clothe my Mystery.' Then Sañjaya describes eloquently the cosmic manifestation beheld by Arjuna :

'Then, O King ! the God, so saying,
Stood, to Pritha's Son displaying
All the splendour, wonder dread
Of His vast Almighty-head.
Out of countless eyes beholding,
Out of countless mouths commanding,
Countless mystic forms enfolding
In one from : supremely standing
Countless radiant glories wearing,
Countless heavenly weapons bearing ...'

Beholding this manifestation the awestruck and bewildered Arjuna exclaimed :

'Yea ! I have seen ! I see !
Lord !. All is wrapped in Thee ! ...
I see
Thy Thousand thousand arms, and breasts, and faces,
And eyes, — on every side
Perfect, diversified ; ...
Thy central Self, all-wielding, and all-winning !
Infinite King ! I see
The anadem on Thee,
The club, the shell, the discus ;
O Mystic, Awful One !
At sight of Thee, made known,
The Three Worlds quake ; the lower gods draw
nigh Thee ;

They fold their palms, and bow
Body, and breast, and brow,
And, whispering worship, laud and magnify Thee !
Rudras, who ride the storms,
The Aditya's shining forms,
Vasus and Sadhyas, Visvas, Ushmapas ;
Maruts, and those great Twins
The heavenly fair, Aswins,
Gandharavas, Rakshasas, Siddhas, and Asuras—
These see Thee, and revere
In sudden-stricken fear ; ... '

In one of the boldest attempts made in sculpture, this is what the artist has attempted to portray in this unique stele (Fig. 19). The multi-armed and multi-headed from of Viṣṇu dominates the entire composition as he stands as firm as a pillar stretching from *pātāla* to *svargaloka*. Along the lower section of the stele is the supine figure of a four-armed male on a cushion of the intricately intertwined coils of a massive nāga whose hoods from a canopy behind the crowned head of the male. Except for the attributes he is identical to Viṣṇu, and, in fact, stretches, with his legs crossing, exactly as Viṣṇu does in his Jalaśayana images. The attributes in this hands, however, are not the four usual that Viṣṇu holds. The two right hands bear a flower and a *muṣala* or pestle, while the two left hands a conch and the plough or *lāṅgula*. This is exactly how Ananta is described in the *Viṣṇudharmottara*[73], with snake hoods, four hands, his hands carrying these same attributes, and richly ornamented. Ananta in this sculpture no doubt symbolizes the nether regions, for as the *Viṣṇudharmottara* states Ananta represents the celestial ocean[73]. But, at the same time, here he is identified with Viṣṇu and in the *Sātvatasamhitā* of the Pāñcarātrins, Ananta is considered to be an *avatāra*[74].

Three figures support Viṣṇu's feet, the female between which is no doubt the personification of the earth, for in the *Viṣṇudharmottara* we are told that 'the earth in the form of a woman should be shown in the middle of the space between his feet, which should be placed in her hands. She should be amazed with the sight of the

god and should look within'[75], as she is doing in the sculpture. The other two figures, with ferocious miens, are obviously two nāgas. They are flanked on either side by two pairs of elephants, the *diggajas*, who symbolize the four directions. In the next row the flying female to the right holding a stalk with a flower in her left hand and another flower in her right is probably Śrī-Lakṣmī, while to the left she is balanced by a flying apsaras. Behind Śrī-Lakṣmī the standing male, clad in armour, with a bow and a quiver of arrows, and his hands in *namaskāramudrā*, is Arjuna, overwhelmed with the divine manifestation. On the other side Garuḍa with his wings beautifully spread behind his head glides through the air with his hands displaying the gesture of adoration.

To the right of the god, in the first tier above Arjuna, is a pair of males with enjoined palms, depicted like the other divine figures above. These two may represent the two twins, Aśvinīkumāras, who were among those who witnessed the cosmic manifestation. It is interesting to note that groups of figures are arranged in parallel registers in four major areas, demarcated by a formal flame-shaped design that may stand for stylized clouds. In the next zone are four figures, the two in the upper register being crowned. That along the side carries a staff in his hand, while his companion holds a *vajra* or the thunderbolt in his left hand, the object in the right not being clearly recognizable. He must represent Indra in which case the staff-bearing figure is of Yama. Of the two figures below them that with a noose (*pāśa*) in the right hand is probably Varuṇa and the remaining character with a tassel flowing down from his hair and carrying a pot in the left hand is Kubera. Thus these four together would be the four Dikpālas or the guardians of the cardinal directions. In the next zone are eight identical figures, their hair done in a bun and with their hands in *namaskāramudrā*, and these may be the eight Vasus who also were watching the manifestation in amazement. Also displaying the *namaskāramudrā* are eleven identical figures, all with the same hair style, delineated in the next zone, and no doubt they represent the eleven Rudras. At the top of the stele is the disc of the sun and Śiva seated on a lotus, his upper hands holding the rosary and the trident, while the lower left holds a pot

and the right a *mātuluṅga,* which, according to the *Viṣṇudharmottara,* is a distinctive attribute of Śiva and symbolizes the seed of the world[76].

Unfortunately the left side of the stele is badly damaged, but we can presume that the top was adorned with the disc of the moon and the effigy of Bramhā, corresponding to that of the sun and the representation of Śiva to the right. From the portion that remains we see a number of emaciated and bearded figures with rather fierce miens, with the left arm folded to the shoulder and the right hand displaying the *vismayamudrā,* the gesture of amazement. We know from the description quoted above from the *Bhugavadgītā* that among others the nakṣatras, the śiddhas and the asuras also beheld the cosmic revelation and perhaps these emaciated figures represent the siddhas. The asuras and the rākṣasas may have been rendered in that portion which is now broken. It is interesting to note that in the Udayagiri relief of the Mahāvarāha avatāra we have the Vasus, Rudras et al. witnessing the vibhava of the god[77]. The Rudras, the Ādityas and the Bhairavas also occur in the Viśvarūpa relief from Kanauj, as we shall presently see.

The main god here is shown ten-armed and ten-headed, although the top-most head is damaged. All the heads are similarly crowned and the ears are adorned with *ratna kuṇḍalas,* and all the faces have a placid expression except that on the right in the lowest tier which is horrifying. This is of course following the description in the *Bhāgavadgītā,* 'faces both wrathful and tender', as exclaimed by Arjuna. It is also interesting that just below the two mouths of the side faces in the lowest tier are portrayed two tiny armoured figures with bows and arrows and in the next two tiers we see the mouths actually devouring other beings. This too is described in the *Bhagavadgītā* (XI, 27F) as follows : 'I see our noblest ones', says Arjuna,' the kings and chiefs drawn in' :

> That gaping gorge within ; ...
> Between Thy jaws they lie
> Mingled full bloodily,
> Ground into dust and death !
> Like moths which in the night

Flutter towards a light,
Drawn to their fiery doom, flying and dying.
So to their death still throng,
Blind, dazzled, borne along
Ceaselessly, all these multitudes, wild flying !

Indeed, the sculptor could not have chosen a more complex and difficult subject and could not have given a more convincing plastic representation of that theme. The entire composition has been rendered with a predilection for precise orderliness and harmonious proportions and yet with a vitality and dynamism that are essential to the subject. All is brought to order in the presence of the Lord, who is the very embodiment of pervasiveness and immoveability. The artist has visualized him as the cosmic pillar, supporting the sky, just as this pillar connects heaven and earth 'like an axle two wheels'[78]. He is the centre and represents 'the totality of the parts distributed over the four quarters'[79], here rendered symbolically by the four *diggajas*. Viṣṇu is the synthesis between the devas and the asuras, who stand each for one of the two moeities only, and hence everyone partakes of this cosmic manifestation. He is the *dhruva dik* and stands for the unity of both the upper and the nether world. He is the 'typical *madhyastaḥ*', the connecting link between the two cosmic moeities, bestriding both like a cosmic pillar *(skambha)*[80].

We have already remarked that this is a unique attempt, known to us, to render in plastic from the *Viśvarūpadarśana* theme of the *Bhagavadgītā*. An exquisite copy in metal of the main image, without however the multiple heads, is now preserved in a museum (Fig. 20). Both figures are similarly attired and ornamented except for the additional *sarpavalayas* on the arms of the metal example. An additional kīrtimukha adorns the crown in the metal version and one of the left hands bears an *aṅkuśa* instead of the *cāmara* held by the Chaṅgu Nārāyaṇa icon. The disposition of the mace is also different in the two images. Despite these differences, one may assert with reasonable certainty that the handsome gilt metal image is a close and perhaps a contemporary copy of the stone sculpture. The same proportions, similar stylistic features and the same sense of

symmetry and balance characterise both the images. At the same time, the differences must be attributed to the individuality of the artists.

A contemporary representation of the theme in India is the well-known sculpture from Kanauj (Fig. 21). But there we find the central figure of Viṣṇu represented as the conventional iconic type of Viśvarūpa as described in the purāṇas. Projecting from his neck are the heads of a fish, a tortoise, a boar and a lion, representing the four avatāras, Matsya, Kūrma, Varāha and Narasiṁha. The other avatāras are depicted separately above these heads. It must however be admitted that even this image does not quite follow the descriptions of Viśvarūpa as given in either the *Agnipurāṇa* or the *Viṣṇudharmottara*. Obviously there were many other literary descriptions, although it is not impossible that the artist was relatively free to use his own imagination.

The iconography of the Kanauj image only in a general way agrees with that from Nepal. Here too a nāga is represented below Viṣṇu's feet, symbolizing no doubt the nether world, while Brahmā is shown at the top of the stele indicating it to be the *brahmaloka*[81]. Among the other divinities watching the manifestation are the eleven Rudras, one of the Aśvinīkumāras, the twelve Ādityas, and the eight Bhairavas, represented along the edge of the aureole. Thus, the Nepali version is far more detailed and agrees more closely with the description as given in the *Bhagavadgītā*. It is also a more articulate version, one that reflects a greater narrative intent.

An artist of the Kangra valley also attempted to give expression to this idea and his treatment of the subject is again somewhat different. The sculpture (Fig. 22), now in two fragments, stands outside the temple of Bāsheśvar Mahādeo at Bajaura and is probably a work of the eighth century. Although Viṣṇu here is only four-armed, one of which is broken, the heads of the Matsya, the Kūrma and the Siṁha are added on either side of the elegantly crowned human head. He wears a long *vanamālā* and the hands, only one of which is raised, display with those on the right the lotus and the discus and with that on the left conch ; the remaining left hand,

which is lost, must have held the mace. From what remains on the pedestal it seems that the discus and the mace were personified into Cakrapuruṣa and Gadānārī. On the halo behind the head are carved, in very shallow relief, tiny figures of suras and asuras watching the manifestation, and curiously, along the edge of the halo, are a number of heads, probably twenty. Similar heads also appear on the halo of the Kanauj relief (Fig. 21), but there the number is eight, and indubitably they represent the eight Bhairavas. Here the heads are too effaced to be clearly recognizable. Possibly, however, both the Kanauj and the Kangra sculptures have a common origin, while the Nepali example may belong to an altogether different tradition.

This common source appears to have been Mathura. In the museum in that city is preserved a fragmentary sculpture in red sandstone (Fig. 23) discovered from Bhaukhari (Aligarh). It belongs to the Gupta period and depicts the theme in a manner similar to that in the Kanauj stele (Fig. 21). From what remains the Varāha and the Narasiṁha heads are clearly distinguishable. The suras display the *vismayamudrā* as they do also in the Nepali sculpture (Fig. 19). One of the figures with a halo behind the head, ornamented and displaying the *abhayamudrā* with the right hand, appears to be of the Buddha, judging especially by the hair-style (Fig. 24). In the Kanauj sculpture all the avatāras have been represented on the aureole, and so the presence of the Buddha here is not suprising. It is generally held that the Buddha came to be accepted as an avatāra by the fifth century[82]. The present sculpture certainly cannot be placed later than the fifth century. On the contrary, judging from the treatment of the lion, which has a remarkable affinity with lions in early Indian art, the delineation of the figure of the Buddha, the design of the crown of Viṣṇu and the curious head-dress of the uppermost head along the edge of the aureole, the fragment may possibly belong to the fourth century, in which case this will be the earliest document revealing the acceptance of the Buddha as an avatāra. Another feature that this sculpture shares in common with those from Kanauj and Kangra (Figs. 21-22) is the manner of representation of the heads along the edge of the aureole. Thus, it seems reasonable to suggest that these two eighth century reliefs

were modelled after such (Fig. 23) or similar Mathura prototypes. Although the crown of the Nepali Viśvarūpa Viṣṇu (Fig. 19) is derived from that of the Mathura image and the suras in both display the *vismayamudrā* in a similar fashion, it appears to portray a different conception.

It is clear that the known texts are not quite in agreement in their descriptions of the Viśvarūpa form. The *Viṣṇudharmottara-purāṇa*[83] states that the four basic faces should be Vaiṣṇava, but does not indicate what specific forms. Above these should be the faces of Maheśvara, excepting that of Iśāṇa, and above them those of Brahmā. It further prescribes that one can include faces of animals as well as those of other gods sideways and upwards. This vagueness is also evident in the description of the hands, where the number and attributes are left to the artist, although he is enjoined to have a knowledge of the *nṛttaśāstra* for the various poses, and it is suggested that the hands may carry such weapons as, *yajñadaṇḍas, śilpabhāṇḍas, kalābhāṇḍas,* even *vādyabhāṇḍas* ; the underlying idea being that his activities are all extensive. Interestingly, however, the *purāṇa* adds, following undoubtedly the *Bhagavadgītā,* that he should be swallowing all sentient beings in the company of all terrifying creatures[84]. The *Agnipurāṇa* states that he should have four heads and twenty arms, although it specifies the attributes to be held by the hands[85]. Both the *Rūpamaṇḍana* and the *Aparājitapṛcchā* give similar descriptions[86].

The *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa*[87] alternatively suggests that Viśvarūpa may be represented in his Vaikuṇṭha form. Vaikuṇṭha is described as having four faces, the placid central face is that of a human, the southern face of a lion, the western face should be terrifying, but nothing is said about the northern face. Elsewhere we are told that the northern face should be of a boar. It is possible that the sculptor of the Kanauj relief combined both the Viśvarūpa and the Vaikuṇṭha forms, and added others viz. those of a fish and a tortoise, which are important Vaiṣṇava faces. It may also be pointed out that the prescribed hands for Vaikuṇṭha, both in the *Rūpamaṇḍana* and the *Aparājitapṛcchā,* are eight, as has been depicted in the Kanauj sculpture, although the attributes are slightly different[88].

While discussing the Kanauj stele, Maheshwari Prasad[88] has suggested that such images must have been affiliated to the Tantrāntara sub-sect of Viṣṇuism. Yet, there seems little doubt that the Kanauj sculpture, like the Nepali version, was inspired by the *Viṣṇudharmottara* description of Viśvarūpa Viṣṇu as well as by the Viśvarūpadarśana chapter of the *Bhagavadgītā*. The presence of Arjuna is indubitable in the Nepali image (Fig. 19), and he seems also to be present in the Kanauj relief. Maheshwari Prasad has offered no suggestion for the identification of a seated figure, holding what looks like a bow, at the lower right of the stele (Fig. 21). Moreover, the fact that he looks up at the cosmic manifestation, as if amazed, would tempt us to identify him as Arjuna. We may further note the standing figure, parallel to the left leg of the god ; the tilt of his head and the gesture of his right hand are certainly expressive of his amazement at beholding the universal manifestation. It is possibly true that the principal image worshipped by the followers of Tantrāntara Viṣṇuism was of multiheaded forms of Viṣṇu, but neither the Nepali image nor, perhaps, the Kanauj icon, can be considered to be affiliated to that cult. The Mathura fragment (Fig. 23) is a still earlier example, and it is doubtful if the Tantrāntara sect had been formed by the Gupta period[89]. This, however, is not to deny the importance of Prasad's surmise about the Tantrāntara sampradāya, which will be taken up later.

Two other representations of the *Bhagavadgītā* theme occur in Nepal. One of these is an illumination (Fig. 65) and has been discussed later with other scenes of the *Mahābhārata*[91]. The other is a much later but complex wooden image in a private collection in England and on loan to the Ashmolean Museum at Oxford (Fig. 25). Here the god has seven heads which are arranged in a pyramidal formation of two rows of three with the seventh at the summit. The number of hands, however, is thirty-two which is not a multiple of seven. The heads are all crowned, and the expression on each face is benign with the faintest trace of a smile, particularly on the principal face. The god is rather sparsely ornamented, is given a *vanamālā*, but curiously wears an animal skin, which is most unusual for Viṣṇu. As he stands in *pratyālīḍha*, hi

right foot rests on the tails of Garuḍa and the left on a nāga, representing probably Śeṣa. The attributes in the hands are so summarily delineated that it is almost impossible to recognise all of them.

The two principal hands are poised in the position of holding a *veṇu*, and, among the other attributes, the following can be recognised : lotus. discus, mace, conch, thunderbolt, noose, goad, bow, vase and manuscript. Two other hands hold the discs of the sun and the moon, and eight of the hands carry tiny effigies of eight figures, all of whom appear to be two-armed humans. It is significant that very similar is the from of Mahāsambara in Vajrayāna iconography, and there too the deity holds a large number of figures in his hands. Some sort of transference seems obvious here, also indicated by the large flaming aureole behind, which often forms a common background for terrifying tāntric divinities of the Buddhist pantheon.

The sect mark on the forehead of each face is especially noteworthy, and once again reveals the association with the Śrī-Vaiṣṇavas of south India. The two principal hands, disposed as if holding the *veṇu* or the flute, unquestionably indicate that the basic figure is that of veṇudhara Kṛṣṇa. The additional arms would signify once more that the form represents the universal manifestation. The nāga below the left foot in that case would symbolize the *pātālaloka*, and the eight figures in the eight hands may represent the *aṣṭadikpālas*, thus emphasizing the all-pervasive character of the god. This would also explain the sun and the moon in his hands, signifying that the firmament is pervaded by the divine manifestation. Of course, multiple heads and arms are essential elements of the universal manifestation. The universe in that case is symbolized by the flaming prabhā as we find in images of Naṭarāja. A curious iconographic feature is the little kūrma or tortoise delineated at the base of the pedestal. This probably follows such precepts as laid down in the *Agnipurāṇa* with regard to images of Puruṣottama, a form of Viṣṇu, that 'on a pedestal composed of the tortoise, etc., is a lotus on which is the Garuḍa.....' *(kūrmādikalpite pīṭhe padmastham garuḍopari*[92]*)*. Here both the

tortoise and Garuḍa are present, but the image does not agree with the description of Puruṣottama. Another tiny figure, with a human body but the head of a bird, is seated on the pedestal with his hands in the *namaskārmudrā*, where usually we may expect an effigy of the donor. Here it may be another representation of Garuḍa.

Of the four representations of the Viśvarūpadarśana theme in Nepal, the first two (Figs. 19-20), which are contemporaneous, belong to the same tradition and probably to the same workshop. But the sixteenth century illumination (Fig. 65) and the eighteenth century wooden image (Fig. 25) are of altogether different styles and iconographic traditions. It is amazing how differently the artists have visualized the theme. While the artist of the Chaṅgu Nārāyaṇa stele (Fig. 19) has remained more faithful to the *Bhagavadgītā* description and has displayed a remarkable narrative intent, the sixteenth century illuminator has emphasized the terrifying aspect of the manifestation. The carver of the wooden image (Fig. 25), on the other hand, has chosen to portray the supremacy of Kṛṣṇa, and, despite the many arms and heads, has given us a placid version. It is doubtful if there ever were texts describing these different images exactly as they are delineated here. In all probability the artists were left to themselves to give form to this cosmic manifestation. Certainly, this is implied by the *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa*, as well as the two later representations, where the artists seem to have borrowed ideas from more common icons of terrifying and multi-limbed Vajrayāna deities to represent such images of Viṣṇu.

CHAPTER THREE

PARA AND VYŪHA ASPECTS

(i)

CATURVIṂŚATIMŪRTIS

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 saṁhitāṣ, 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, Saṁkarṣaṇa, 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 caturviṁśatimūrtis of Viṣṇu. The process by which this was achieved was as follows : from each of the four vyūhas appeared first three subvyūhas 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 saṁhitās, are as follows : Keśava, Nārā-

yaṇa, Mādhava, Goṿinda, Viṣṇu, Madhusūdana, Trivikrama, Vāmana, Śrīdhara, Hṛṣikeśa, Padmanābha. Dāmodara, Puruṣottama, Adhokṣaja, Narasiṁha, Acyuta, Janārdana, Upendra, Hari and Kṛṣṇa. Iconographically, in all these forms, Viṣṇu holds the four usual attributes, *śaṅkha, cakra, gadā* 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 *Rūpamaṇḍana*[3], the *Agnipurāṇa*[4], the *Padmapurāṇa*[5], the *Tantrasāra* (see Appendix), and in the Pāñçarātra saṁhitās.

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 consecrated[6]. 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 śayana (recumbent), and this is by far the most convenient classification for the description of Viṣṇu images.

We have already mentioned that, of the caturviṁśatimūrtis, the names Viṣṇu, Vāsudeva, Keśava, Hari, Narasiṁha, Nārāyaṇa and Padmanābha occur in Licchavi inscriptions, but very likely they were just prevalent names and not taken from the Pāñcarātra 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 caturviṁśatimūrti list of the *Rūpamaṇḍana*[7]. But

we cannot indubitably assert that these relatively early iconoic types followed such a list. On the contrary, the Jalaśayana image is invoked as Murāri in Bhimārjuṇadeva's inscription[8], 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 Gaṇeśa 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 Lakṣmī 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 caturviṁśatimūrtayaḥ. In the same row as the principal divinities but outside the temple are Jayā and Gaṇeśa 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-ṛṣis, Vaśiṣṭha, Mārkaṇḍeya, 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 paṭa, in little vignettes, are the nakṣatras, such as Pūrvā, Svāti, Rohiṇī, 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 yakṣiṇīs, each carrying a bag of jewels. The second row along the top of the paṭa 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 *Śivadharmapurāna* 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 *Rūpamaṇḍana* and the *Agnipurāṇa*[9]. 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[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[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 *samapadasthānaka* 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 *kirīṭa, śaṅkha-patras, karṇakuṇḍalas, hāra,* 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[12]. 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[13]. 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 Viṣṇu standing in *samapadasthānaka* and accompanied by Śrī-Lakṣmī and Garuḍa. In each case Viṣṇu 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 Viṣṇu, 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 Smārta Pañcopāsakas[14]. And now Nepal provides us with an example of a caturmukha Vaiṣṇava icon. It is also equally significant that behind all these caturmuka 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 Pāñcarātrins (para+caturvyūhas)[15].

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 a 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[16]. 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 fair idea of the content can be gleaned from the following passage :

(śrī) vatsāṅkitadīptacāruvipu (la) prodvṛttavakṣasthalaḥ
(śrī) vakṣaḥstanapadmabāhu (vima) laḥ samyakpravṛddhotsavaḥ

(trai) lokyabhramayantravartti.....(do) lādrau nivasañ
jayaty ani (mi) ṣair abhyarccyamāno Hariḥ ||[17]

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 Aṁśuvaraman's inscription as well as in the *Nepālamāhātmya* section of the *Skanda-purāṇa*[18]. 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 *Nepālamāhātmya*[19] 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 severe 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 humilate 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 s how the Buddhist image of Hari-hari-hari-vāhana Avalokiteśvara is explained[20]. 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 *kirīṭamukuṭa*, although not very tall, is decorated with a *kīrttimukha*, 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 viśvarūpadarśaṇa 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'[21]. 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 (*[trai]lokyabhramayantravartti*).

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 Mṛgasthali Viṣṇu vikrānta (Fig. 7) or in that of the so-called royal portrait[22]. 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 *kirīṭas* 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 Garuḍa 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[23]. 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*[14] 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 *karṇa-kuṇḍalas*. 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 *kīrttimukha* 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 Devī and appropriately she holds the vessel laden with fruits and flowers[25]. 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 Pāñcarātra 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 caturviṁśati 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[26]. Many other *āsanamūrtis* 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 *Viṣṇu-dharma* 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 Dikpālas, 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 *samādhimudrā*, 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 ųe is either light green or light yellow.

Once again we find that except for the multi-armed representation, all the others conform to the description of Śrīdhara in the list of caturviṁśatimūrtis. But it is doubtful if this was what the artist had in mind ; rather it appears that he has attempted to portray different *līlās* or playfull manifestations of the god, in his para aspect. The presence of the four Dikpālas 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 *Ahirbudhnyasaṁhitā* 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[27], and, at times, as a yogī, particularly where the left hand rests on the lap and is in *samādhi-*

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 langiudly 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 Uṣṇīṣavijayā 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, Bhṛkuṭī, 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 Nīlkaṇṭha 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 Aṁśuvarman's inscription of the year 32/A.D.610 among the shrines to which he makes grants is that of Jalaśayana of Bhumbhukkikā[28]. This place cannot be identified today but it is obvious that there was already extant a well-known shrine of Jalaśayana Viṣṇu. But in a later inscription of the year 64/A.D.642, issued when Bhīmārjunadeva was the king, Viṣṇugupta, the de facto ruler, claims to have made a grant of a piece of land in Dakṣiṇakoligrāma for 'the satisfaction in the affair of *karṣaṇa* of a huge stone suitable for executing an image of Jalaśayana of bhagavata Viṣṇu.' *(bhagavato Viṣṇor jalaśayanarūpaniṣpādanayogyabṛhacchilākarṣaṇavyāpāraparituṣṭair.....)*[29]. The conjoint expression *śilākarṣaṇa* may be broken up as *śilā+karṣaṇa* or *śilā+ākarṣaṇa*. 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 *(bṛhat)* and that Viṣṇugupta 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 Nīlkaṇṭha, 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 Viṣṇugupta was an avowed Śaiva. Moreover, the inscription begins with an invocation to the Jalaśayanarūpa of Viṣṇu 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 Jalaśayana Viṣṇu in the village of Bhumbhukkikā to which Aṁśuvarman made his grant. The fact that Bhīmārjunadeva's image was made only thirty-two years after Aṁśuvarman'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 Rāmānujapanthi 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 Kālīyadamana (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 Kālīyadamana, 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[30]. 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 Nīlkaṇṭha 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 Buḍhā Nīlkaṇṭha 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 Jalaśayana form Viṣṇu is said to be in *yoganidrā* 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 *tripuṇḍraka* 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-MAṆḌALAS

It remains for us to discuss two Vaiṣṇava paintings of unusual interest. The earliest of these is now in a private collection in New York[31] 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 *darpaṇa*[32]. 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 *samapadasthānaka*, 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 saṁhitās, from each vyūha emanates or descends *(avatīrṇaḥ)* three sub-vyūhas, or vyūhāntaras[33]. These are : (i) from Vāsudeva : Keśava, Nārāyaṇa and Mādhava ; (ii) from Saṁkarṣaṇa : Govinda, Viṣṇu and Madhusūdaṇa ; (iii) from Pradyumna : Trivikrama, Vāmana and Śrīdhara ; 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[34]. The females obviously are their Śaktis and the *Sātvatasaṁhitā* enumerates twelve of them, although there they are connected with the avatāras[35]. The *Tantrasāra*, however, names twenty-four Śaktis of the emanations (see Appendix) and they are all given the same form. Obviously, the twelve corresponding to the sub-vyūhas are represented here, and, needless to say, they are all emanations of Lakṣmī. 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 Dikpālas. 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[36]. 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 attributes and, as a general rule, it is prescribed that they should be dwarfish in appearance *(vāmanākārarūpaste)*. 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-Lakṣmī

and Kārttikeya. Along the bottom are represented scenes of *abhiṣekha* 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, Mahākāla 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 apear to be ṛṣis and yogīs. Among the other eleven figures seated along the edge of the square are the Navagrahas, Brahmā 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 saṁhitās 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 saṁhitās this para form of the god is four armed, while according to others he is two armed[37]. At times he is described as dark-blue, but usually as having the colour of pure crystal[38]. The *Ahirbudhnyasaṁhitā* states that this para form has originated from 'that which has all forms and no form', who is the Sudarśana Puruṣa : 'ever to be remembered by yogins as seated in the lotus of the heart[39]', 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 them[40]. This para form resides in Vaikuṇṭha and is ever accompanied by Śrī 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 *pārṣadas* or companions are Ananta, Garuḍa and Viṣvaksena. There are two other classes of *jivas* that inhabit this highest heaven known as the *nityas* and the *suris,* 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[41].

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 aṣṭanāgas 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*[42]. It is further stated that the *kuṭastha puruṣa* is the 'Puruṣa of four pairs' or the eight Manus[43]. 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 Padmanābha, who, according to the *Padmatantra,* is a portion of Viṣṇu[44]; thus the fourteen planes are segments of the lord. It may also be pointed out that the number of *nāḍīs* in the *Ahirbudhnya* is given as fourteen[45]. 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 *nityas* and *suris,* 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 saṁhitās and texts of a more esoteric character emphasising upon tāntric rituals must have been well known in Nepal, along with the purāṇic 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*[46] is most likely of his para aspect, judging from the elaborate explanation of the symbology of this form. The *Agnipurāṇa*[47] also describes the form of para Vāsudeva where he is said to be accompanied by Śrī and Bhūmi. The *Vaikhānasāgama*[48] 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*[49].

At the same time the inscriptions below the paintings declare that they were consecrated on the occasions of performing the

anantavrata. We have already seen that the *Agnipurāṇa*[6.0] 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 KRSNA

A. ICONS OF KṚṢṆA

(i)

One solitary sculpture in Nepal attests the fact that the hero-god Kṛṣṇa 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 Yudhiṣṭhira in inscriptions[1] indicate that the *Mahābhārata* was already well-known and naturally Kṛṣṇa was also familiar. But no cult of Kṛṣṇa, 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 Kṛṣṇa[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 Vaiṣṇava 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 Siddhinarasiṁhamalla were devout patrons of Viṣṇuism and the temples of Mīna Nārāyaṇa in the Darbar square at Kathmandu or that of Kṛṣṇa 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[3] 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 Pṛthivī 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 Kālīya. The story, recounted in the purāṇas, runs that the waters of the river Yamunā became contaminated by the poisonous breath of Kālīya, 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. Kālīya 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 *Vaṁśāvalis*[4] it is narrated that king Pratāpamalla, in the seventeenth century, recovered a large sculpture of Kālīyadamana, 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 Kālīyadamana 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 Kālīyadamana 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 Kālīya. 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 Kālīya, the manner in which the hood spreads and the delineation of the curls of Kālīya'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[8]. Kālīya 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 Kālīya 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 Mahiṣāsuramarddinī 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 *śaṅkha-patras* 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[6]. 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 Kālīya. 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 *dehanchement* of the posture. His hands are raised near his breast and obviously held a flute or a *veṇu*. His dress and ornaments of course reflect the prevailing style of the period. While the posture is ultimately derived from the classic motif of *śālabhañjikā* it came to be invariably associated with Kṛṣṇa, the flute-player.

Kṛṣṇa is one of the most important of the *dramatis personnae* in the *Mahābhārata*, but his character there is quite different from that of Kṛṣṇa, the cowherd boy as described in the *Harivaṁśa*. 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 originally it was a text of the Smārta Pāñcarātrins but was taken over by the Bhāgavatas and given a Kṛṣṇa-Vāsudeva colouring[7]. Several other purāṇas were also redacted by the Smārta Bhāgavatas, which give prominence to the personality of the juvenile Kṛṣṇa of Vrindavana. 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 *Gītagovinda*, 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 ecstacy 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 Rukmiṇī and Satyabhāmā as it is related in the texts[8]. 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 seated[9]. 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 image[10]. 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[11], 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 gopas. 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 gopas is said to have named him Kṛṣṇa.

In the following folio is represented the heroic feat of Kāliya-damana which has already been described. Then follows the amusing but mischievous story of vastraharana (Fig. 53). Kṛṣṇa's friendliness and amorous relationship with the gopis 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 *nīpa* 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 Kārttika, known commonly as the rāsapūrṇimā, 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 Kuvalaypīḍa 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 *añjalimudrā* 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 viśvarūpadarśana. 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*[15] 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 terrifying 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[16].

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[17] 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 Vaiṣṇava 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) Kaṁsa 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 Yaśodā holding the child and requesting Garga to perform the *śānti*. 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 Tṛṇāvartta, 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 *pauganḍa-līlā* (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 Kaṁsa that Kṛṣṇa was the eighth son of Devakī. The alarmed Kaṁsa 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. Akrura 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 Muṣee 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 Gaṇeśa 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 Gaṇeśa. But the consort of Gaṇeśa 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 Kailāśa, 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), Uṣā'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 Uṣā 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[18].

The prolific output of Vaiṣṇava mythological paintings is also attested by numerous other documents painted in the eighteenth and the nineteenth century. The *Hanumānnāṭaka* 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*[19]. 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[20]. Briefly, the story relates the marriage of a Brahmin named Kauṇḍinya with a girl who is called Śīlā, Kauṇḍinya'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 Kauṇḍinya and Śīlā. In the next section (Fig. 74), after the performance of the *anantavrata*, Śīlā is seen handing over the consecrated string to Kauṇḍinya to be tied around his right wrist. Then within the building we see the rash and proud Kauṇḍinya 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 Kauṇḍinya 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 [21] 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 Panjab 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 Kaṁsa, are, nonetheless, seen to persist through the ages. Both in the 1692 scroll and in the late sixteenth century kalāpustaka 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 Pāṇḍava Bhīma is also similarly attired, especially with the helmet, as we find in the kalāpustaka 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 kalāpustaka 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, Jayanarasiṁhavaidya and others, while among the women (Fig. 75) are Saubhāgyalakṣmī, Godāvarīdevī, Dharmalakṣmī, et. al. Despite their schematic representation, hewever, 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 kalāpustakas were no doubt visual aids in acquiring religious or moral instruction and were therefore valuable family posessions. 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 Vaiṣṇava themes were in great demand. In contemporary sculpture as well we find expressive depictions of the *Rāmāyaṇa* 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 Prasad[1] has drawn our attention to some of the prevailing sub-sects of Viṣṇuism in medieval India. According to the Pāñcarātra saṁhitās 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 saṁhitās mention this class of multi-headed *(bhūyiṣṭhavaktra)* 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)

VAIKUṆṬHA

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, Siṁha, etc[2]. The *Jayākhyasaṁhitā* specifies four faces, those of Vaikuṇṭha, Varāha, Kapila and Narasiṁha[3]. 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*[4] 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), Saṁkarṣaṇa (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[5].

The cult of Vaikuṇṭha was particularly popular in Kashmir, Rajasthan and Gujarat[6]. The famous shrine in Khajuraho is also

well-known. Although the *Agnipurāna*[7] 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 *vyākhyāna-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), reprsents 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 thc 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. Vaikuṇtha, 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 *kuṇḍikā* is an attribute of Trailokyamohana Viṣṇu, who is described in the *Rūpamaṇḍana*[8]. 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 tāntric 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 saṁhitās[9] mention a form of image with five heads, which are of Narasiṁha, Kapila, Kroḍa, Haṁsa and Vāgīśvara. 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-sect of Viṣṇuism.

(ii)

VAIṢṆAVIŚAKTI

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. Śrī also had a tāntric character in which her aspect as the 'śakti' of Viṣṇu is emphasized. This is already outlined in the Pāñcarātra saṁhitās and reflects the pronounced influence of the Sāṁkhya 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 *Ṛgveda*, 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 saṁhitās, however, both the antiquity and the indigenous character of the cult become quite apparent. Archæology has certainly established the primeval character of the cult of the mother-goddess in India from prehistoric 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 extermely popular in the form of tāntric Śaktism.

Specifically, the Devī has been associated with Viṣṇu since a considerably early period. As early as in the *Mahābhārata* and the *Harivaṁśa* the story of her birth in the womb of Yaśodā is narrated[10]. 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 *Nārāyaṇīstūti*, and in the *Devīmāhātmya* she is often addressed as Nārāyaṇī. Further, in one of the verses of the *Nārāyaṇīstūti*, she is mentioned as 'the infinitely powerful Vaiṣṇavī-śakti'[11]. As a matter of fact, the Vaiṣṇava bias of the *Devīmāhātmya* is implicit throughout that work. In the very first chapter Mārkaṇḍeya declares : 'Mahāmāyā is the same as Yoganidrā of Viṣṇu who is the Lord of the world'[12]. Then the story is related how the two demons Madhu and Kaiṭabha emerged from Viṣṇu's ears, while he was asleep, and terrorised the universe. Mahāmāyā 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 Vaiṣṇavīśakti, commonly known as Vaiṣṇavī in purāṇic and tāntric 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 Jayaprakāśamalla 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 *vyākhyānamudrā*. These two emblems are common to all Mātṛkās 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 *vyākhyānamudrā*. 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 *muṇḍamālā* make her tāntric character quite explicit.

In tāntric theology each Mātṛkā or Śakti is associated with a Bhairava. In another folio of the Bharat Kala Bhavan manuscript (Fig. 82) we find Vaiṣṇavīśakti with her Bhairava, who is here named as Krodha-Bhairava or the Bhairava who is angry[13]. The inscription states *Śrī Krodha-Bhairava-Vaiṣṇavīśakti*. 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-śakti, he also has Garuḍa as his mount and carries at least the conch. This is what the *Bṛhatsaṁhitā*[14] enjoins that each Mātṛkā 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 Devī 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 Arddhanārīśvara, Hari-Hara or Vāsudeva-Kamalajā. In the same manuscript occurs the representation of a goddess standing in *pratyālīḍha*, 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 (*ḍamaru*), 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 *nīlotpala*. The inscription calls this conjoint goddess Harīśaṅkarī. 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 tāntric 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 Lakṣmaṇa 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 tāntric 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 tāntric 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.

(iii)

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 immensenly 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.[15]. 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 Mañjuśrī behind the temple of Svayambhūnāth is considered by the Buddhists as belonging to Mañjuśrī, while the Hindus offer worship there on Vasanta-pañchamī 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[16], 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 *vījapuraka* and the vase with the two lower hands. In the *Tantrasāra*[17] a *dhyāna* 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 *vīṇā*, 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)

GARUDA

No image of Viṣṇu in Nepal is found without a representation of Garuḍa, 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 Garuḍa 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*[16]. 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 Kālīyadamana (Fig. 51). There is also a striking similarity between the formal properties of this sculpture and those of the Jalaśayana Viṣṇu at Buḍhā Nilkaṇṭha (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 Vaiṣṇava[10]. 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 Mīna 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 Pharphing (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 *Rūpamaṇḍana*[21]. 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 same 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 texts [22], while the inclusion of the lotus or the discus is nothing unusual as these are Vaiṣṇava emblems.

(v)

VAIṢṆAVA TEMPLES

A study of Viṣṇuism and its art would remain incomplete without a brief allusion to the actual Vaiṣṇava 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 Kālīyadamana image (Fig. 51) formed any part of a structure, it must indeed have been of imposing proportions; the shrine of Budhā Nīlkaṇṭha 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 Vaiṣṇava 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 *(mukhamaṇḍapa)* 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 appartenances (Figs. 99, 100), the function of the brick walls seems merely to hold together these wooden portions. In an important shrine like the Chaṅgu 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 pratihāras, who are generally portrayed along the base (Fig. 100). More pratihāras 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 Narasiṁha, 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 Siddhinarasiṁhamalla 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.

CHAPTER SIX

COMPOSITE ICONS

There are two types of composite icons in Nepal, those of Hari-Hara and of Vāsudeva-Kamalajā. The images of Hari-Hara may be said to reflect a syncretic intention, but it is doubtful if the same idea inspired those of Vāsudeva-Kamalajā. On the other hand, they were probably created to emphasize the non-duality of the two divinities. We may thus begin with an explanation of what is precisely implied by the term 'syncretism'.

The principal sects in India emerged with their distinctive forms by the beginning of the Christian Era, and before the Gupta period the theologians were already busy in attempting to achieve some sort of syncretism between them. The purāṇas and the āgamas are curious admixtures of blatant sectarianism as well as lofty synthesis[1]. There are also specific purāṇas such as the *Bhaviṣyottara* and the *Bṛhaddharma* which are decidedly of a non-sectarian character[2]. Ultimately, in the doctrine of the smārta Pañcopāsakas, a total syncretic ideology combines the five principal sects, Gāṇapatya, Saura, Śaiva, Śākta and Vaiṣṇava[3]. Even more than literature the plastic arts afford us with the most tangible evidence for understanding both the sectarian bias and the spirit of fusion that simultaneously prevailed in India throughout her history. While there was constant borrowing and assimilation from one pantheon into another and frequent, if not futile, attempts were made to dislodge the gods of one and replace them with those of another, certain iconographic types were especially created that manifestly display a syncretic intention.

Strictly speaking, by 'syncretism' is meant the urge or inclination to combine the ideologies and concepts of the different sects.

Thus, the concept of Hari-Hara is an example of syncretism since Hari and Hara are the principal divinities of two important sects. Further, the concepts of Dattātreya or of Pañcopāsanā are illustrative of multiple syncretism, and were embodied in specific image types. Such images can be said to reflect a conscious effort on the part of some liberal theologians to gloss over the underlying sectarian differences and animosity. In iconographic texts these images, where two or more deities of different sects are portrayed conjointly or with equal emphasis, are classified under such heads as *saṅghāṭa* or *miśra-mūrtis*[4].

The *miśramūrti* section of the *Śilparatna* describes among others forms of both Arddhanārīśvara and Lakṣmī-Nārāyāṇa. In stating that a syncretic spirit is reflected by the concept of Arddhanārīśvara, J. N. Banerjea no doubt assumed that the female half represents the principal goddess of the Śākta sect[5]. It may be pointed out, however, that in the Brāhmaṇical pantheon almost every god is given a female partner, and, Pārvatī or Umā, with whom Śiva is combined to form the image type of Arddhanārīśvara, is really the *śakti* of Śiva. A parallel example is the composite image of Vāsudeva-Kamalajā, where Kamalajā or Lakṣmī is the consort of Vāsudeva. No doubt, Lakṣmi in her quintessence, as we have discussed in the preceeding chapter, is an important aspect of the Devī or Śakti, although it must be stressed that no exclusive sect evolved around her despite the universal popularity of her cult. If one accepts that the concept of Arddhanārīśvara indicates syncretism between Śaiva and Śākta sects, then the concept of Vāsudeva-Kamalajā should also be illustrative of syncretism between Vaiṣṇava and Śākta sects. But it is doubtful whether such was the intention behind the creation of these composite images. Rather they probably suggest the idea of *arddhāṅginī*, of an ideal conjugal relationship, or, metaphysically, they may illustrate the belief that the male and the female are but two aspects of the One Principle[6].

In Nepal, particularly, the spirit of *rapprochement* and tolerance among the principal sects has been a major factor contributing towards the religious integrity of the people. We have already

mentioned how one of the faces of the liṅga in the temple of Paśupathināṭha is considered to be of the Buddha. The Buddhists are permitted to worship the liṅga once a year, and by placing the crown of Akṣobhya at the top of the liṅga, they consider the four faces to belong to the four Tathāgatas[7]. Moreover, the Buddhists worship the Jalaśayana form of Viṣṇu at Buḍhā Nīlkaṇṭha as Lokeśvara. Mahākāla is venerated by both Hindus and Buddhists, while Hārītī is considered to be Śitalā by the Hindus. In such instances we are not witnessing 'syncretism' in the strictest sense of the term, but a spirit of expansive catholicism illustrative of the Ṛgvedic aphorism that the sages call the One Principle by many names *(ekam sat viprā bahudhā vadanti)*[8].

There can be little doubt, however, that to a Hindu in Nepal, when all is said and done, Śiva remains on the loftiest pedestal as the supreme divinity. Thus, in a kalāpustaka that has nothing to do with Śiva but, on the contrary, illustrates Vaiṣṇava and Buddhist myths, the deity painted on the first folio, as an invocation, is Śiva. Or in a painting representing a Vaiṣṇava maṇḍala the top is decorated with a Śiva-liṅga (Fig. 109), or again a liṅga is seen at the apex of the aureole in an image of Viṣṇu (Fig. 102). This same Śaiva inclination probably influenced the form of the curious sculpture in Patan (Fig. 36), where on the four sides of an obelisk, reminiscent vaguely of a liṅga, four identical images of Viṣṇu with Śri-Lakṣmī and his mount Garuḍa are portrayed. Such instances can be multiplied and they must not be misconstrued as necessarily demonstrating a conscious attempt to belittle Viṣṇuism. On the other hand, one also finds that Śiva is portrayed as an accessory figure in a Viṣṇu maṇḍala (Fig. 16), or the covers of a *Śivadharma* manuscript show on one side Śaiva themes and Vaiṣṇava on the other (Figs. 27-28).

This curious alternation between bias and fusion also characterizes the *Nepālamāhātmya* section of the *Skandapurāṇa*, which at times glorifies Śiva and at others Viṣṇu. Many stories in it reveal a definite bias for one or the other divinity while others clearly reflect a syncretic intention. The *māhātmya* is replete with legends relating the consecration of liṅgas by Viṣṇu, but, curiously, it also declares

that those who see the liṅga established by Kṛṣṇa will attain Viṣṇu's heaven[9]. The same spirit is behind the following declaration by Nemi. 'Who sees Hari without the form of Hara, and Hara without the form of Hari? He is Vaiṣṇava and He is Śaiva. He who distinguishes between Hari and Hara is a miserable miscreant and a heretic ; hell is his destination'. These words of Nemi were heartily approved by Paśupati himself[10]. A similar idea was expressed much earlier in the *Skandopaniṣad,* where Śiva and Viṣṇu are considered to be each other's soul[11]. And so a fifteenth century Nepali inscription begins with the following joint invocation : *devadevaṁ Maheśānaṁ Viśveśvaraṁ... deva Govindaṁ namāmi Mādhamādhavaṁ ..*[12].

I ŚAṄKARA-NĀRĀYAṆA

The cult of Hari-Hara appears to have been quite popular in Nepal judging both from extant images and epigraphs. The earliest instance of the dedication of a Hari-Hara icon is recorded in an inscription of the Licchavi period as we have already mentioned. The inscription states that the image was consecrated by one Svāmīvārtta and the principal name of the composite divinity is given as Śaṅkara-Nārāyaṇasvāmī[13]. The image was donated in the year 489 corresponding to 567 A. D., and is as early an instance of the consecration of such an icon as we know in India. Some of the passages in the inscription throw considerable new light on the iconic concept and the underlying symbology.

The fifth line of the inscription states that Svāmīvārtta establishes this image of Bhagavān Śaṅkara-Nārāyaṇasvāmī, who is responsible for the creation, preservation and destruction of all this world and who is without beginning and indestructible (*Svāmivārttaḥ sakala-bhuvana-sambhavasthiti-pralaya-kāraṇaṁ anādinidhanam bhagavantam Śaṅkara-Nārāyaṇasvāminaṁ pratiṣṭhāpitavān|).* In the Brāhmaṇical conception the responsibility of creation, preservation and destruction rests on the three godheads of the Trinity, Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva, respectively. This division of labour is made very definite in the purāṇic literature, while in the epics there seems to have been

some confusion regarding the distribution. Moreover, in the purāṇas, depending upon the bias of the particular purāṇa, often one of the three is said to perform all three functions. A new interpretation evident in this Nepali inscription is that the composite god Śaṅkara-Nārāyaṇasvāmī is said to be responsible for the three functions. The same idea is also explicitly stated in another inscription of the sixteenth century. The relevant portion is as follows : *oṁ namo Hariharābhyāṁ...devouyoukaruṇākarau Hari-Harau dharmārtha-kāma-pradau viśveśou pralayodbhava sthitikarau...*[14]. Not only is Hari-Hara being regarded as responsible for destruction *(pralaya)*, creation *(udbhava)* and preservation *(sthiti)*, but the divinity is also invoked for *dharma, artha* and *kāma*, the three basic pre-requisites for a full life. Here then is a clear enunciation of the monotheistic philosophy of one supreme godhead who performs all the functions of the phenomenal world. The Licchavi inscription continues to describe this composite divinity as the Guru of all the worlds *(api ca yo sau sarvvatribhuvanaguruḥ...)*, as one who upholds the endless universe of many forms *(nānārūpaṁ bhuvanam akhilaṁ dhāryyate yena)*, and declares that if he is worshipped with a pure mind that veneration cannot be in vain (*cedam tasmin bhaktir na bhavati vṛthā śuddhacittāśanām|)*.

The actual iconographic form of the composite god is also vividly described in the inscription. It begins with an invocation to Arddhasaurīśvara whose image is styled as being conjoint *(ekatra pṛktau)* like that of Madanaripu (a name of Śiva) and Bhavānī, and states that the representation should include both their consorts *(Śrīryyugalam)* but not in physical union *(amithunam)*. The invocation runs as follows : *oṁ patyor nnau paśya he śrīr yyugalam amithunaṁ śulabhṛcchārṅgapāṇyor ekaikasyātra kin tan na su-karam anayos tau yad ekatra pṛktau|mūrtti (ṁ) tya (ktveva) nūnaṁ sakhi Madanaripor evam uktvā bhavānyā yo dṛṣṭo jātu tasmai satatam iha namo stv arddhaśaurīśvarāya|)*. We will presently discuss whether this description agrees with the image now standing above this inscribed block of stone.

A further iconographic description of the composite form is given

in another passage in the inscription. It is stated that the two halves of Murārīśvara should be distinctly shown, that of Murāri as dark as the autumn clouds and that of Īśvara as white (*ity arddhābyāṁ samuparacitaṁ yan Murārīśvarabhyām ekaṁ rūpaṁ śaradijaghana-śyāmagauram tad avyāt)*. In regular iconographic description Śiva is of course described as fair-complexioned, but it is interesting that in the *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa*[15] Viṣṇu's complexion is compared, as in the epigraph, with clouds bearing water: *(sajalāmbudaśacchāyāṁ pītadivyāmbaraṁ tathā)*.

In the invocatory passage the composite form of Śaṅkara-Nārāyaṇasvāmī is likened to that of Śiva and Bhavānī. It follows obviously that the Arddhanārīśvara images were already well-known in Nepal by the sixth century, although there is no early icon depicting the theme. We have already stated that in the appellation *Arddhaśauriśvara* the composer of the passage was probably referring to the vedic Āditya-Viṣṇu, as is evident from the explicit use of the term *śaura* (or *saura*). The other designation employed in the passage is *Śūlabhṛcchārṅgapāṇi*, where Śiva is being addressed as Śūlabhṛt and Viṣṇu as Śārṅgapāṇi. It has also been pointed out that *śārṅga* is the name of the bow with which Viṣṇu destroyed the demon Mura, as it is recounted in the *Mahābhārata*, which incident no doubt led to the usage of the name Śārṅgapāni. The name Śūlabhṛt for Śiva is of epic origin as well; and in the *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa* he is referred to as Śūlin[16]. Thus, the composer of the inscription has employed a wide variety of synonyms to designate the composite god. Mention has already been made of four such names, viz. Śulabhṛcchārṅgapāṇi, Ardhaśaurīśvara, Śaṅkara-Nārāyaṇasvāmī, and Murārīśvara. Finally, in the last line of the inscription the name employed is Keśava-Śaṅkara *(...mūrttiṁ Keśava-Śaṅkarārddharacitām asthāpeyad bhaktitaḥ)*.

Another epigraphic record standing next to the image, probably of the sixteenth century, describes it as follows[17]: *om namo bhagavate śriŚaṅkara-Nārāyaṇāya|| Yataśaṅkho-kapāla bhūṣaṇa karau mālākṣimāladharau devvou-dvāravati śmaśānanilayau nāga (gā) rigauvāhanou | dvitryakṣau vali dakṣau yajña mathanau śriŚailajāvalla-*

bhau pāpaṁ meharatāṁ sadā Hari-Harau Śrivatsa-Gaṅgādharau || svasti ||

The attributes held by Śaṅkara-Nārāyaṇa are *kapāla, akṣamālā,* and *śaṅkha.* The scull-cup *(kapāla)* and the rosary *(akṣamālā)* no doubt belong to Śiva, while only the conch *(śaṅkha)* is mentioned as Viṣṇu's attribute. Perhaps, the first *mālā* of the expression *mālākṣimālādharau* has been used in a synonymous sense to denote *cakra.* The two *vāhanas* are here curiously referred to as *nāga (gā) rī,* the enemy of the serpents (*nāga* + *ari*), who is no other than Garuḍa and the other as *go.* Śiva's *vāhana* is the bull Nandi, and the term *go* normally signifies a cow, but here it has apparently been used as a generic term implying the species 'cattle'. The same word has again been used in another inscription[18]. Śiva is described as the destroyer of the sacrifice of Dakṣa and is called Śailajāvallabha, the beloved of the daughter of Śaila. The composer has used. apart from Śaṅkara-Nārāyaṇa, two other appellations for the composite god, the common Hari-Hara and the less usual Śrīvatsa-Gaṅgādhara.

The image that now stands on the inscribed pedestal in the courtyard of a house in Deo Patan (Fig, 103) can by no means be the same as that consecrated in the sixth century by Svāmīvārtta. We know, however, that the shrine must still have been in *situ,* probably with the original image, in the sixteenth century. Stylistically as well the present image cannot be placed earlier than the sixteenth, and hence this is possibly a replacement, when the original was destroyed, perhaps due to some natural calamity, in more recent times. This also becomes evident if we compare the extant image with the descriptions of the original given in the two inscriptions.

In the sculpture now seen (Fig. 103) the composite god stands in *samapadasthānaka* on a pedestal decorated with an ornate floral scroll. The only means of distinguishing the two halves are the attributes in the hands and the head-dress. That the right half represents Śiva is evident from the trident and the rosary, held by the two right hands, and the *jaṭāmukuṭa* on the right side of the head. There also appears to be a *sarpakuṇḍala* in the right ear, while the left ear is adorned with the *śaṅkhapatra* and the *ratnakuṇḍala.* The

left half of the head wears an elaborate *kīriṭamukuṭa*, as befitting Viṣṇu, and the two left arms hold the discus and the conch. Otherwise the figure is clad and ornamented exactly as any other conventional icon of Viṣṇu, such as that now in Deo Patan (Fig. 30). The entire figure is carved fully in the round except for the *prabhā* behind the head. A larger aureole, as ornately decorated as the smaller *prabhā* with flamboyant arabesques and flame designs, imbues the sculpture with a decidedly 'rococo' flavour. The composite god is flanked on either side by their respective consorts, as it is described in the text of the dedicatory inscription. The female on the right, the half that belongs to Śiva, is naturally Pārvatī. She holds in her left hand a mirror and the right displays the *varada-mudrā* while holding a *vījapuraka*. She stands on a pedestal which is decorated with geometric shapes, no doubt a stylization of the rock forms of earlier sculptures, indicating her association with the mountains. The female on the left, the half that represents Viṣṇu, bears in her left hand a lotus, while the right displays the *abhaya-mudrā* as it holds the *śrīphala*. She is naturally Śri-Lakṣmī and appropriately she stands on a double lotus pedestal[19].

According to Svāmivārtta's inscription the image should be conjoint and should also show the two consorts separately. A more detailed description occurs in the sixteenth century epigraph, presuming, of course, that the reference is to Svāmīvārtta's image. Here we are told that the two halves should carry in the hands the scull-cup, the rosary, the conch and the discus (?). In the present image, however, instead of the scull-cup we see a trident as is found in another icon in Patan (Fig. 105). The inscription further implies that the two mounts were present but these do not occur in the sculpture now standing at the site. Nevertheless, true to the sixth century inscription, the two consorts have been included. It would thus appear that the present icon is a fairly close imitation of the original ; at the same time, the copyist has changed not only a few iconographic features, but has also added certain stylistic elements that must have been prevalent during the period. Even so the sculpture remains a good example for demonstrating how an iconic type can persist in Nepal for centuries and carry with it stylistic traits in a

copy that may be removed from the original by at least a millennium. This tenacity often creates almost insoluble art-historical problems, particularly in any attempt to establish a firm chronology of Nepali sculpture.

A somewhat different and an earlier icon of Hari-Hara may be seen outside the temple of Kumbheśvara at Patan (Fig. 104). Despite its effaced and white-washed condition, it remains a fine example of medieval Nepali sculpture and has more figures than the Deo-Patan image. In the centre is the composite figure of Hari-Hara, the right half being of Hara and the left of Hari. As in the other image the two right hands hold the *triśula* and the *akṣamālā,* while the two left hands bear the *cakra* and the *śaṅkha.* It is noteworthy that the design of the *triśūla* is identical in both stele. Because of the unfortunate lime-wash the difference in the crown is not noticeable, but the rest of the body appears to have been treated in a similar fashion in both halves. The two females immediately flanking Hari-Hara are Pārvatī to his right, the attributes in her hands not being clearly discernible (that on the right appearing to be in *varadamudrā),* and Lakṣmī beside the Viṣṇu-half, her left hand carrying a lotus and the right displaying the *varadamudrā.* The male figure showing the *namaskāramudrā* and with his wings falling from his shoulders like a cape is no doubt Garuḍa. On Pārvatī's left, however, is a female figure holding a bowl in her left hand behind whom is the faint outline of the bull. She is probably a companion of the goddess, while the bull obviously is Śiva's mount, Nandi.

A cursory comparison between these two steles and that of Viṣṇu from Deo-Patan (Fig. 30) reveals emphatically how a stock iconographic and compositional arrangement was applied with equal facility for the portrayal of divinities belonging to different sects. The same artist was often called upon to delineate an icon of Śiva or of Viṣṇu or of a Buddhist divinity, and it was inevitable that the same stylistic elements and similar canons of proportions would be employed without any reservation. In Svāmīvārtta's inscription the artist is explicitly instructed that the composite form of Hari-Hara should be like that of Arddhanārīśvara images. We will see in the

following section how the artist also utilized this type of image to portray the composite form of Vāsudeva and Lakṣmī. This fluid character of the style as well as of iconic types was in itself an important factor in achieving a semblance of uniformity in the diverse manifestation of the divinities and was conducive to fostering a spirit of tolerance among the devotees. It is indeed very likely, as Herbert Read has boldly asserted, that the idea does not always precede the icon, but often the icon contributes significantly towards the formulation of an idea[20].

Another image (Fig. 106), now in a private collection in New York, shows the composite god standing without the consorts or the mounts. Its ornateness, with its richly carved aureole, is comparable with the Deo Patan icon (Fig. 103). The attributes are the same as those in the two images already discussed. The two halves, however, are more clearly distinguished ; the chignon, the *sarpakuṇḍala* and the animal skin adorning Śiva, while Viṣṇu is given the *kīriṭa,* the *ratnakuṇḍala* and a printed *dhoti.* Curiously, the *sarpahāra* and the *vanamālā* are common to both halves. It seems clear that the same prototype, probably Svāmivārtta's original image, continued to be employed at different periods with minor modifications.

A substantially different form of Hari-Hara may be seen in another sculpture fixed in a niche on a temple wall in Kathmandu (Fig. 105). The principal divinity stands in *samapadasthānaka* on a lotus and is eight-armed. The left half, that of Hari, is distinguished by half a *kīriṭamukuṭa,* and a circular *kuṇḍala* in the ear. While the *vanamālā* on this half is composed of overlapping flowers, on the other half it consists of a broad pearl string interspersed with pearl-lined discs. The right half, that of Hara, is distinguished by the *jaṭāmukuṭa* and *sarpakuṇḍala.* Otherwise the garment and ornamentation are same in both halves. The four left hands carry the four usual Vaiṣṇava attributes : mace, conch, discus and lotus. The four right hands display the trident, the rosary, the rattle-drum *(ḍamaru)* and, curiously, the bow and arrow in the lowest hand. Although the bow and arrow are not commonly found in Śiva's hand, in certain forms such as that of Śrīkaṇṭha, Trambyaka or

Bahurūpa-Sadāśiva he is said to carry them [21]. Two females, representing no doubt the two consorts, Pārvatī and Śrī-Lakṣmī, stand at a lower level on either side. They bear no ostensible symbols, but their hands display the *varada* and the *abhaya* gestures. What really reflects the ingenuity of the artist is the manner of depicting the mount on whose back the composite god stands. Once more the artist has emphasized the 'syncretic' character by combining the bull and Garuḍa in one hybrid form. The left half is of Garuḍa, who is crowned and whose human arm stretches in alignment with the sweeping wing. The right half is of the bull, indicated by his horns and the foreleg with the hoof outstretched along the other wing of Garuḍa. It is this composite animal that flies through the air as it bears on its back the conjoint divinity Hari-Hara. Here again is a feature that is not only peculiar to Nepal, since we know of no similar examples in India, but which also reflects the individual idiosyncrasy of the artist. Nor are we informed of any representation in India, where Hari-Hara is accompanied by Pārvatī and Śrī-Lakṣmī, although the form is described in the *Agnipurāṇa*. This is yet another instance of an iconic type that is no longer known in India and the idea of combining the forms of the mounts to emphasize further the syncretic spirit may have been due entirely to the ingenuity of the Nepali artist.

II VĀSUDEVA - KAMALAJĀ

(i)

We have seen that from the very beginning of Vaiṣṇava art in Nepal, viz. the two inscribed images of Viṣṇu vikrānta consecrated by Mānadeva, Śri Lakṣmī is almost an invariable and inseperable companion of Viṣṇu. It has also been mentioned that in Mānadeva's Chaṅgu Nārāyaṇa pillar inscription his mother Rājyavatī is once compared with Lakṣmī and again she is described as an ardent devotee of Śrī. Of course, by this time, i.e. the fifth century of the Christian Era, the concepts of Śri and Lakṣmī had already merged, and Śrī-Lakṣmī was generally personified as a beautiful female holding a lotus. This is how she is portrayed in the two fifth century reliefs of Viṣṇu vikrānta (Figs. 7–8).

Both the concepts of Śrī and Lakṣmī are embedded in the *śrīsukta* of the *Ṛgveda* [22], but generally they remain separate entities in vedic literature. Although in the upaniṣads the two concepts appear to merge together [23], a vagueness is still apparent in the *Mahābhārata* where the fortunes of Śri-Lakṣmī seem to vacillate[24]. While in the story of the Churning of the Ocean, which is also recounted at greater length in the purāṇas, she emerges from the ocean and is taken by Viṣṇu, in other passages, not inappropriately, Lakṣmī is associated with Kubera, the god of riches. Yet, in another section of the great epic, we are informed that Lakṣmī came to the gods and Alakṣmī fell to the share of the asuras[25]. In the *Rāmāyaṇa*[26] as well the two concepts are not quite completely fused, for Śrī is styled as *aiśvaryapradhānā* and Lakṣmī as *saubhāgyapradhānā*. It is, however, not difficult to see that at some stage the distinction should disappear inevitably, for 'wealth and prosperity' *(śri)* cannot be achieved without 'fortune' *(lakṣmī)*.

No commentary is necessary to explain why this goddess should enjoy universal popularity or for the pervasiveness of her cult. At the same time, no major sect, in the same sense that Viṣṇuism and Śivaism are sects, evolved around Śrī-Lakṣmī. No temple was essential for her worship for she was primarily a domestic deity, her function assuring her of a permanent place in the home. This is why, among all the major cult divinities, the concept of Śrī-Lakṣmī accumulated maximum appendages from various folk lores and beliefs and from rites and rituals that are essentially of a bucolic and agrarian character. In Nepal also she is worshipped as a household deity and, as we have seen, as a constant companion of Viṣṇu. It is not insignificant that, on assuming power, the first temple to which Aṁśuvarman made a donation was to that of Śrīdevī[27]. There must therefore have been a separate temple of Śrīdevī as early as the seventh century. It may be pointed out here that there is a large number of images, both in stone and in metal, of a female bearing a lotus in her left hand and the right hand displaying the *varadamudrā* as well as holding a round object. This is also the iconography of the simplest form of Tārā, the consort of Avalokiteśvara, which makes it difficult to distinguish the two in such icons, unless they are

portrayed in specific contexts.

Notwithstanding the fact that she is always seen accompanying Viṣṇu, a type of image is found where the two divinities are delineated in a composite manner. A large number of such images, both in sculpture and in painting, are known, and here we shall illustrate and discuss only three of them. This proliferation of such icons attests the popularity of the concept, and, although the type is described in Indian liturgical texts, no plastic representation there has yet come to light. Once again this demonstrates how the study of Nepali iconography helps to illuminate many religious ideas that are no longer familiar in India.

(ii)

The earliest known example, where the conjoint form is depicted, is a thirteenth century sculpture in Kathmandu[28]. The form of the principal image in that stele is identical to the metal icon, illustrated here (Fig. 107), and now in the Museum fur Volkerkunde in Basel, or to another stone sculpture standing in a niche in the Darbar square at Kathmandu (Fig. 108). The thirteenth century sculpture, in addition to the figure of Vāsudeva-Kamalajā, shows on its aureole twelve of the twenty-four emanatory forms of Viṣṇu. The following description of the metal icon will apply generally to the two lithic representations.

On a double lotus pedestal the deity stands in *samapada* posture. The right half of the figure is male and the left female as found in the images of Arddhanārīśvara. Except for the prominent breast on the left of the naked torso, there is no other significant difference in the modelling of either half. In contrast to the plain diaphanous garment clinging to the right leg, the left is draped in one with a floral design. Parts of the garment overhang in stylized folds on either side and between the legs. Of the ornaments, the diadem, the necklace and the waist-band are common to both halves, and both feet bear anklets of similar design. The right ear is adorned with a *kuṇḍala* and each of the arms bears an *aṅgada* ; the left ear has a large ring, and the arms display ornaments different from those on

the right. The ornaments must once have been set with semi-precious stones which no longer exist.

Of the eight hands, three on the right carry a *cakra* (discus), *gadā* (mace) and *śaṅkha* (conch), while the palm of the fourth bears a lotusmark. One of the four left hands is broken, but the remaining three bear a *pustaka* (manuscript), a *darpaṇa* (mirror) and a *kalaśa* (pot). The damaged hand obviously held a lotus as we see in the examples in stone or in the painted version (Fig. 109). The attributes in the four right hands of the male half of the figure make his identity with Viṣṇu quite certain. Naturally, the left half represents his consort Lakṣmī.

An admirable representation of such a composite conception of Lakṣmī-Vāsudeva occurs also in a paṭa (Fig. 109), now in the collection of the Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Calcutta. The painting has an inscription which reveals the date 383 (?), presumably of the Newari era, corresponding to A.D. 1263. Here the composite deity presides over an elaborate maṇḍala of several divinities.

The central figure of the maṇḍala is white and stands in *samapada* posture on a double lotus pedestal within an elaborate shrine. The arch or *toraṇa* of the shrine presents a beautiful design of stylized *makaras*, ornate floral and scroll motif, geese and a gaping *kīrttimukha* dominating the apex. As in the metal image, the right half is male and the left female, the feminine breast being indicated by a large circle. Likewise only ornaments decorate the otherwise naked upper portion of the body. The right leg is draped only to the knee, while the left is covered down to the ankle. The garment is brightly painted in vivid red, blue and green, and the folds overhang on either side and between the legs, as in the metal image. Near the right foot is Garuḍa and next to the left a kūrma or a tortoise. The attributes in the eight hands are quite clearly discernible. Those in the four right hands are the discus, the conch, the mace and the lotus ; and in the left hands are the manuscript, the lotus, the mirror and the water-pot.

Apart from the two attendant figures on either side of the principal divinity, forty-eight others constitute the maṇḍala. Among these are the dvādaśarāśis or the twelve signs of the zodiac, the aṣṭadikpālas or the guardians of the eight quarters, the navagrahas or the nine planets, twelve different emanations of the vyūha aspect of Viṣṇu and seven other miscellaneous Brāhmaṇical divinities. Of these seven, Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Gaṇeśa and Kārttikeya are easily recognized. Besides, there are representations of a liṅga, of Umā-Maheśvara and of Bhairava[29].

At the bottom of the painting, just above the inscription, is a panel divided into five sections. In the section on the extreme left, a priest with his assistant is seen offering libations in the fire, and in the next a man is being annointed with water. In the centre a woman dances with what appears to be a sword in her right hand, and in the next section two seated women are engaged in conversation. To the far right are two couples with enjoined palms, evidently representing the donors. Similar scenes of homa are also commonly depicted in Buddhist paintings; the person who is being annointed in the ritual of initiation (*dikṣā*) is no doubt the donor himself.

A slightly different form of this composite divinity is described in a dedicatory inscription of a mutilated image in Bhatgaon[30]. It invokes the deity as follows : *Om namo Vāsudevāya // cakra-śaṅkha-gadā-maṇiṁ ... (a)bjavarada-darpaṇomṛtaghaṭa ... kara* (?) *... Lakṣmī-Keśava sarvvaloka namitā dhārmārthakāmaprado bhaktā-nāṁ vaṛadayakaḥ murārī...ntakaḥ pātuvaḥ // svasti //* Regmi identifies the image as Vāsudeva[31], but it is clear from the invocation that the deity is composite in character, not only because it is stated that Lakṣmī-Keśava is worshipped by all the world or people (*sarvvaloka namitā*), but also because of the eight arms, four of which display the attributes of Lakṣmī, viz. the lotus, the mirror, the pot of nectar and the *varadamudrā*. The mirror is essentially a feminine attribute, and the only deviation from the other images discussed, as far as Lakṣmī is concerned, appears to be in the substitution of the *varadamudrā* for the manuscript. Vāsudeva has the three usual

attributes, the conch, the discus and the mace, while the round object, usually signifying the seed of the lotus (*padmavīja*), is probably described here as a jewel (*maṇi*). Both the jewel and the *varadamudrā* are quite in keeping with the invocation, where Lakṣmī-Keśava is said to grant (*varadayakaḥ*) to the devotee (*bhaktānāṁ*) *dharma*, *artha* and *kāma*.

Although no such image has yet come to light in India, there are many literary descriptions of the form attesting the popularity of the concept. Descriptions of this form occur in the *Sāradātilaka*, the *Tantrasāra*, and in the *Śilparatna* of Śrī Kumāra. As these descriptions are more of less all alike only the *dhyāna* in the *Tantrasāra*[22] will be given here as a typical example. The *mantra* is devoted to Lakṣmī-Vāsudeva, and it begins : *māyādvayaṁ ramādvyaṁ Lakṣmī-Vāsudevāya namaḥ*. The *dhyāna* is as follows :

vidyuccandranibhaṁ vapuḥ Kamalajāvaikuṇṭhayor-ekatāṁ
prāptam sneharasena ratnavilasadbhūṣābharālaṅkṛtam |
vidyāpaṅkajadarpaṇān maṇimayaṁ kumbhaṁ sarojaṁ gadāṁ,
śaṅkhaṁ cakramamūni vibhrad-amitāṁ diśyācchi yaṁ vaḥ sadā ||

'The body of Kamalajā, bright as the lightning, and that of Vaikuṇṭha. bright as the moon, have been united in love ; it is ornamented with various jewels. The goddess carries *vidyā* (knowledge), *paṅkaja* (lotus), *darpaṇa* (mirror) and *kumbha* (vase) filled with jewels, while the god has *saroja* (lotus), *gadā* (mace), *śaṅkha* (conch) and *cakra* (discus) in his hands. Let this deity grant you infinite wealth and well-being'.

It is obvious from the first line of the *dhyāna* that in this particular conception the two bodies of Vāsudeva and Lakṣmī become one in their mutual love for each other. In transforming this concept into tangible form, the artist had little difficulty in devising the composite image, the well-known icons of Arddhanārīśvara providing ready models. It may be recalled that in the inscription describing the form of Śaṅkara-Nārāyaṇasvāmī it is explicitly stated that the image should be visualized as that seen in Śiva-Bhavānī icons of a composite character. The same injunction

is given to the artist by the commentator of the *Śāradātilaka*[23] : *vidyud iti|ekatām iti dehārdhavibhāgena |*

A similar *dhyāna* is also included in the inscription below the painting : *Oṁ namo bhagavate Vāsudevāya || himakaṇḍendusadṛśam padmakaumodakipunaḥ | śaṅkhacakradharaṁ daṇḍa (dakṣe) vāmeca kalasaṁ tathā || darpaṇaṁ utpalaṁ vidyā Vaiṣṇavam Kamalānvitam || pātu daitya nirākāra trāhiṇāṁ Puruṣottomaḥ ||*

This *dhyāna* is substantially the same as that quoted from the *Tantrasāra*. The expression *Vaiṣṇavam Kamalānvitam* clearly indicates the composite form of Viṣṇu and Kamalā, which is another name of Lakṣmī. We also learn that in this particular form Lakṣmī is known as Kamalajā or Kamalā.

(iii)

The concept of dualism (Puruṣa and Prakṛti) originated in the Sāṁkhya system and profoundly influenced the later Buddhist notion of Upāya and Prajñā. This led to the universal belief that each divinity has a female companion, known as Śakti in the Brāhmaṇical and as Prajñā in the Buddhist traditions. Then, as a monistic gloss, these dual principles were expressed in such composite forms as Arddhanārīśvara, or in those images in Buddhism, where we find divine couples in sexual embrace. In Viṣṇuism the basic idea is already elaborated in the Pāñcarātra saṁhitās. In describing the higher or 'pure' creation the *Ahirbudhnyasaṁhitā* states that in the eighth part of the cosmic night (*pauruṣi rātri*), the Śakti of Viṣṇu, awakened by His command, 'opens her eyes' (*unmeṣa*)[24]. The *saṁhitā* further explains this phenomenon : Śakti, which was so far indistinguishable from the "windless atmosphere", or "motionless ocean" of the Absolute, existing only as it were in a form of "darkness" or "emptiness", suddenly, "by some independent resolve" (*kasmaccit svatantrayat*), flashes up, with an infinitely small part of herself, in her dual aspect of *kriyā* (acting) and *bhūti* (becoming), that is Force and Matter[25].

As Schrader has averred the dualism implied in the *Ahirbudhnya-*

saṁhitā is merely a temporary arrangement to emphasize the transcendent character of Viṣṇu[36]. Although Lakṣmī acts alone, all her actions are according to her Lord's desire. As a matter of fact, despite the assertions of the identity of Lakṣmī and Viṣṇu, 'they do not completely coalesce but become only "as it were" a single principle'[37]. What is of even greater interest to us is that, in the *Lakṣmītantra,* the mutual relation of the two is said to be one of 'inseparable connection or inherence' *(avinābhāva, samanvaya),* and, as an analogy, is suggested the relation between moonshine and moon or sunshine and sun or *dharma* and *dharmin*[38]. The concept of *samanvaya,* inherence or synthesis, is also implicit in the expression *vaiṣṇava kamalānvitam* of the inscription on the paṭa. It is further stated in the *Ahirbudhnyasaṁhitā* that the six Guṇas in their totality constitute the body of Vāsudeva (*ṣāḍguṇya-vigrahaṁ devam*) and also that of Lakṣmī, 'in the same way that these two are constantly seen by the free souls inhabiting the Highest Space'[39].

Thus, there can be little doubt that the ideological basis for the composite divinity Lakṣmī-Vāsudeva is already inherent in the Pāñcarātra literature, of which the *Ahirbudhnyasaṁhitā* almost certainly goes back to the ninth century. That the conception had an esoteric flavour is evident from the *dhyānas* included in tāntric texts, and the Pāñcarātra saṁhitās are themselves permeated with tāntric elements. Of particular interest are the expressions *vidyuccandranibhaṁ vapuḥ Kamalajā-Vaikuṇṭhayorekatāṁ prāptam sneharasena* of the *Tantrasāra.* The allusion to lightning *(vidyut)* reminds us of the passage in the *Ahirbudhnyasaṁhitā* where the opening of the eyes of Viṣṇu's Śakti is compared with the flash of lightning[40]. But of greater significance is the use of the term *sneharasena,* which seems to reflect the basic tenet of the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā cult. Affection *(sneha)* or love is the fundamental factor that has brought about the unity of the two bodies of Viṣṇu and Lakṣmī. This appears to be quite different from the cosmic unity or non-duality of Puruṣa and Śakti as declared by the Pāñcarātrins. It is not known when exactly the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā cult originated, but we do know that it was consi-

derably influenced by the Buddhist Sahajiyā ideology and was already familiar by the twelfth century[41]. The central figures of the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā cult are Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā, and the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa*, a work of the ninth or tenth century, makes no mention of Rādhā[42]. The earliest text to emphasize the amorous nature of the relationship between Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, who are only the manifestations of Lakṣmī and Viṣṇu, is the *Gītagovinda* of Jayadeva, who flourished in the twelfth century. It is, perhaps, not fortuitous that all composite icons of Vāsudeva-Kamalajā in Nepal seem to be posterior to this date.

As we have already suggested the iconic type may have been influenced by the better-known and older representations of Arddhanārīśvara. As a matter of fact, in the *Sāradātilaka* the form is labelled 'Arddhalakṣmīhari', and it is further stated that the image should be made like that of Arddhanārīśvara[43]. Thus, like the Arddhanārīśvara images, those of Lakṣmī-Vāsudeva or Vāsudeva-Kamalajā may also be said to reflect the idea of non-duality. At the same time, it must be remembered that in the two inscriptions quoted above only Vāsudeva has been invoked at the very beginning, thus emphasizing the Pāñcarātra standpoint that Lakṣmī is only a part of Vāsudeva, although the active part, While she comes forth following his wishes, ultimately she is dissolved in him[44].

(iv)

Certain other traits appear to be peculiar to this conception of Lakṣmī. Of her attributes the lotus is of course well-known. The *kalaśa* or the pot is also a familiar symbol, and once, very appropriately, it has been described as the pot containing jewels, and again, in the Bhatgaon inscription, as the pot containing nectar *(amṛta-ghaṭa)*. She is of course the dispenser of both wealth and health. The mirror and the manuscript are apparently uncommon, although the mirror is not an altogether unusual or inapposite attribute. We have already seen that in a fifteenth century painting (Fig. 50) she carries the mirror on a lotus. It is frequently associated with many a form of Devī, and, in her quintessence, Lakṣmī is after

all a manifestation of Devī. This is already suggested by the use of the same appellation *śrī* to denote the consorts of both Śiva and Viṣṇu in the sixth century dedicatory inscription of Svāmīvārtta[45]; and in the image itself we notice that Pārvatī holds the mirror with her left hand (Fig. 103).

The manuscript no doubt symbolizes her *jñāna* aspect and signifies the expansion of her conception as gnosis. Although in an image of Lakṣmī, now in the Bangiya Sahitya Parishad, Calcutta, we find the manuscript as one of her attributes it is not a commonly seen emblem of the goddess. In the Brāhmaṇical pantheon Sarasvatī is the specific goddess of knowledge, but, in course of time, all the major divinities, including Śiva, Viṣṇu, Devī[47] and others, came to be associated with knowledge or intellect. A parallel development was taking place in the Mahāyāna pantheon as well. Similarly, in the case of Lakṣmī over the basic concepts of fertility, abundance and wealth, that of gnosis was finally superimposed.

In the *Ahirbudhnyasaṁhitā* we are told that at the command of Viṣṇu his Śakti or Lakṣmī manifests herself in dual aspects, *kriyā* and *bhūti*. The first phase of these manifestational aspects is known as *śuddhasṛṣṭi* or pure creation, and in it 'through the three pairs of what are called the Six Gunas *(ṣāḍguṇya)*, to wit : knowledge, Lordship, Power, etc. does the Pure Creation of (His) becoming take place'[48]. The principal *guṇa* or quality is *jñāna* or knowledge, and the remaining *guṇas* flow out of *jñāna (jñānasyasṛtayaḥ)*. Moreover, in the *Lakṣmī-tantra*, this *jñāna* is considered to be the very essence of Lakṣmī[49].

Again, in a passage in the *Viṣṇupurāṇa*, Lakṣmī is characterized as 'intellect'[50], and the *Tantrasāra*[51], once more, sheds further light on this aspect. In connection with a charm—*Lakṣmī-kavacam*—it is quite explicitly stated that those who use this *kavaca* or charm, after observing proper rites, will attain proficiency in all branches of knowledge *(sarvvaśāstra)*. We are further told that students always worship the beloved of Viṣṇu, who is none other than Lakṣmī, and

the charm is particularly recommended to those who desire to be good poets *(sukavitva)* and pundits *(supāṇḍitya)*.

At any rate, by the thirteenth century Lakṣmī had come to be associated with knowledge. Curiously, in the Buddhist pantheon, Vasudhārā, who is primarily the goddess of wealth and prosperity like her Brahmaṇical counterpart, also came to be connected with *vidyā* or *jñāna* in medieval times, and, in most six-armed images of the goddess, especially from Nepal, the manuscript is an invariable attribute[52]. While one cannot definitely assert that this concept of Vasudhārā had anything to do with that of Lakṣmī's association with knowledge, tāntrism once again appears to have been the common ground where such intermingling was possible.

One other iconographic peculiarity in the painting (Fig. 109) is the presence of the *kūrma* or a tortoise indicating that it is a *vāhana* or mount of Lakṣmī. Generally, in Indian iconography, the tortoise is the mount of either Yamunā or Dharma and its association with Lakṣmī is not known either textually or in actual representations. The common mount of Lakṣmī is an owl *(pecaka)*. The tortoise is, of course, associated with Viṣṇu and Vaiṣṇava mythology in more ways than one. In the *Agnipurāṇa*[53] it is prescribed that the pedestal in the images of Puruṣottama should be composed, among other things, of a tortoise and this is what the artist has attempted in the multi-armed image of Viṣṇu in the Ashmolean (Fig. 25). In describing the form of Hayagrīva, a form of Viṣṇu, the same *purāṇa* enjoins that the left foot of the god should be placed on a tortoise[54]. It is not impossible that there were other images where the god was accompanied by Śrī-Lakṣmī on a pedestal composed of a tortoise and a later artist mistakenly associated it with the goddess. Perhaps, this is why the magnificent image of Yamunā[55], standing on a tortoise below the temple of Paśupatinātha, is identified by the common people as Lakṣmī. Of course, it is always possible that Nepal has a separate tradition which associates the tortoise with Lakṣmī.

On the other hand there is a particular *āsana* that is described in literature as *kūrmāsana*. An *āsana* in Indian iconographic

terminology may have two implications. It may denote the posture in which a divinity is seated or it may refer to the seat itself, as, for example, *padmāsana, makarāsana,* etc. In the *Ahirbudhnyasaṁhitā*[56] *kūrmāsana* is described as a particular posture. In a Tamil work called *Śaivasamaya-neri*[57] we are given a description of *kūrmāsana* as a seat. It is said that it should be of an oval shape like a mirror and should be provided with the face and feet of a tortoise. Gopinath Rao illustrates such a seat from Ellora[58]. It is thus possible that there are textual descriptions of Lakṣmī seated or standing on such a *kūrmāsana* and such images were known in Nepal. In course of time the *āsana* became the *vāhana* of the goddess.

EPILOGUE

The principal point that emerges from the foregoing investigation is that Viṣṇuism, although not as widely prevalent as Śivaism or Buddhism, was of considerable antiquity and popularity in Nepal. Patronised especially by kings in the early period, it appealed, particularly with its wealth of heroic myths, to the imagination of powerful monarchs like Mānadeva ; and this heroic quality of its mythology is reflected in the early Vaiṣṇava art in the country. Continued political and social relations with India resulted in the importation into the country of prevalent styles of art, particularly from the Gangetic plains, but the Nepali artists were more concerned with the assimilation of such styles rather than imitation.

The sources of Nepali art in the Indian styles are yet to be definitely determined but at least as far as Vaiṣṇava art is concerned the schools that exerted the strongest influences were Mathura and other centres of Viṣṇuism in the north and the west. Certainly the Mathura region must have been palpably the richest source with its early Vaiṣṇava associations. Many of the iconic types that we have examined so far clearly reveal the intimate knowledge of the Nepali artists of the art of Mathura and of the contiguous regions. One of these must have been Kanauj, particularly during its days of glory under the Maukharis with whom the Licchavi king Jayadeva II had marital relations.

From the Gupta period, especially due to the patronage extended by the Gupta emperors as well as Prabhāvatīgupta's marriage into the Vākāṭaka family, Viṣṇuism spread extensively in central and western India, judging if only by artistic remains. Some relation between these areas and Nepal is attested by certain iconic types that appear to have been particularly popular in Nepal and may have been borrowed from important Vaiṣṇava shrines of the

west. In this light the expression in the *Nepālamāhātmya* section of the *Skandapurāṇa* that Janārdana as Buddha came to Nepal from Saurashtra may gain some significance. It is generally claimed that during the Pāla period the art of Nepal was influenced particularly by the styles that were developed in the ateliers of Bihar and Bengal, but it is surprising that not one stele is found in the valley which is modelled after a typical eastern Indian image of Viṣṇu (Fig. 110). The sculpture, now in the Nepal museum, was recovered from Simraongarh in the Nepali terai. It is of course a fairly good example of Sena art, and one may presume that other such sculptures must have found their way into the valley. Yet it is strange, that except for a solitary example in Deo Patan (Fig. 30), nowhere in the valley is there an icon in any way similar to that from Simraongarh. As a matter of fact the Deo Patan example is really of a different tradition despite the presence of Śri and Bhūdevī. The only possible explanation seems that during this period also the Nepali Vaiṣṇavas continued to turn to the west, perhaps Rajasthan and Gujarat, rather than to the east for their spiritual sustenance.

After the twelfth century, under the Mallas and the Shāhs, there was a closer relationship with the south and with eastern India. Jayadeva's *Gītagovinda* and later Caitanya's reorientation of the cult of bhakti gave a fresh impetus to Viṣṇuism in the east, while Śrī Rāmānuja and his successors played a considerable role in popularising the sect in the south. We have seen that both literature and art attest the renewed popularity of the cult in Nepal, and it was now that the didactic literature of the Vaiṣṇavas began to be translated into Newari. While this literature still awaits a scholarly investigation, there can be little doubt that it helped considerably in popularising the myths and stories, particularly related to Kṛṣṇa, with the masses. Then, with the arrival of paintings from India of the Rajput style, there also grew a demand for similar paintings in Napal. It was now easier for the Newari artist, who probably knew no Sanskrit, to illustrate these themes either as illuminations of manuscripts or on scrolls, aided by the visual models provided by miniatures and illuminated manuscripts from India.

A significant factor for the proliferation of the cult was the

growth of tāntrism and the reorientation of Viṣṇuism due to the Sahajiyā ideology of the Buddhists. Later Viṣṇuism is permeated by tāntrism to a much greater degree than is commonly admitted, and many of the concepts and iconic types that are no longer known in India are fortunately preserved in Nepal. This tāntric basis also contributed considerably in bringing together the various cults, both orthodox and heterodox, and so the religious history of Nepal is characterized by the remarkable phenomenon of spontaneous syncretism. The similarity in tāntric rituals and rites must have aided this attitude to a great extent. The most tangible evidence of this may be seen in the scenes of *homa* painted below the paintings (Fig. 16). Identical scenes are also rendered below Buddhist paintings and the priest in the one case represents a purohita and in the other a vajrācārya. But the functions they perform are essentially similar which is also evident if one compares the rituals prescribed in a Buddhist priest's manual and those in that of Hindu priest. So in Nepal we find that the Bauddhas, the Śaivas or the Vaiṣṇavas quite liberally frequent one another's shrines and offer worship. This attitude is also reflected in the art in the sense that the artists often employed motifs and types to portray different divinities or mythologies without any sectarian reservation.

This investigation of Vaiṣṇava art and religion is by no means exhaustive and it is hoped that further research will bring to light many new iconic types as well as throw more light on many of the images discussed here. Although both for their religion and their art the Nepalis were always dependent on India, it would be a mistake to presume that they were mere imitators. Rather the study of Nepali art is important to the art-historian precisely because it demonstrates the remarkable capacity of the artists for assimilation. Exposed constantly to influences from India, the Nepali artist has displayed his truly artistic aptitude and inventive genius in absorbing what was essential and then giving form to his ideas following his own aesthetic intent. We have time and again seen how a Vaiṣṇava icon or a particular motif was modified by him according to his needs and norms. This is why despite the origin

of the styles in India we cannot cite any examples from India where forms such as those seen in the Varāha image (Fig. 5) or the stupendous sculpture of Kāliyadamana (Fig. 51) could have originated. Isolated though they were in their mountain-girt valley, the artists of Nepal must have realized fully that artistic creativity is an experience where complete isolation leads to the inevitable stagnation of art. Their southern windows were therefore always open.

List of Abbreviations

DHI	*The Development of Hindu Iconography* by J. N. Banerjea (2nd ed., Calcutta, 1956.)
Gnoli	*Nepalese Inscriptions in Gupta Character* by R. Gnoli (2 vols., Rome, 1956)
Gonda	*Aspect of Early Viṣṇuism* by J. Gonda (Utrecht, 1954)
Mbh	*Mahābhārata.*
Schrader	*Introduction to the Pāñcarātra and the Ahirbudhnyasaṁitā* by F. O. Schrader (Madras, 1916)
Shah	*The Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa,* Third Khaṇḍā, edited by P. Shah (vol. II Baroda, 1961)
VDP	*The Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa,* Third Khaṇḍa, edited by P. Shah (vol. I, Baroda, 1961)

NOTES

CHAPTER ONE

1 Regmi, *Medieval Nepal,* pt. III, p. 85.

2 Gnoli, p. 6. *mātuḥ Śrī Rājyavatyā hitakṛtamanasaḥ sarvvadā puṇyavṛddhyai rājā śrī Mānadevaḥ śubhavimalamatiḥ pātradānāmbuvarṣī (/) lakṣmīvat kārayitvā bhavanam iha śubhaṁ sthāpayāmāsa samyak Viṣṇum vikrāntamūrttiṁ suramunimahitaṁ sarvvalokaikanātham (/ /) saṁvat* 300 80 9 *vaiśākhaśukladiva* 2.

3 Although a number of Licchavi inscriptions give dates, no era has been specified. R. C. Majumdar ['The Eras in Nepal', *JAS* Vol. I., 1 (1959) pp. 47ff] has convincingly argued that they must be referred to the Śaka era of 78 A. D. which has been confirmed by L. Petech ('The Chronology of the Early Inscriptions of Nepal', *East and West,* new series, vol. 12, no. 4, pp. 227ff).

4 Gnoli, pp. 1-2. Also see Chapter Three of the present work.

5 *ibid,* p. 68.

6 *ibid,* p. 71.

7 *ibid,* p. 81 ; see also Chapter Three.

8 *ibid,* p. 48.

9 *ibid,* p. 41.

10 Many of the Licchavi inscriptions mention Pāśupata ācāryas by name ; e. g. ācārya Pranarddana, *ibid.* p. 79.

11 L. Petech, *Medieval History of Nepal,* p. 167.
P. Pal, 'Notes on the Temple of Pasupatinath, Nepal'. *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress,* Delhi, 1961.
Indian historians in general have ignored the sectarian rivalries that must have characterized the history of religions in India. For instance even today the orthodox Śrī Vaiṣṇavas of south

India refuse to enter a Śaiva shrine (cf. A. Beteille, *Caste, Class and Power,* Bombay, 1966, pp. 39ff).

12 Gnoli, p. 28 ; see also Chapter Six.

13 *ibid,* p. 48.

14 *ibid,* p. 50.

15 see note 6.

16 D. C. Sircar, 'Kokāmukha-tīrtha', *The Indian Historical Quarterly,* vol. XXI, no. 1, pp. 56ff. See also Kunja Govinda Goswami, 'Vaiṣṇavism', *The Indian Historical Quarterly,* vol. XXXI, no. 2, p. 109. Goswamy seems to have been unware of Sircar's article and mistakenly suggested the identification of Kokāmukhasvāmī with Śiva.

17 Monier-Williams, *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary,* (2nd ed.) Oxford, 1963, p. 312.

18 D. C. Sircar, *op. cit.,* pp. 58-59.

19 *Brahmapurāṇa,* 118, 106.

20 *Varāhapurāṇa,* chapter 140 ; see Sircar, *op. cit.*

21 This and the following lines are from the *Varāhapurāṇa* as quoted by Sircar, *ibid,* p. 58.

22 *DHI,* pp. 108ff ; p. 393. R. G. Bhandarkar, *Vaiṣṇavism Śaivism and Minor Religious Systems,* p. 3.

23 *DHI,* pp. 386ff.

24 *ibid,* p. 389. Also his Radhakumud Mukherjee Lectures delivered in the University of Lucknow some years ago (in press).

25 J. N. Banerjea, *Paurāṇic and Tāntric Religion,* pp. 40-41.

26 31, 17-22. *śrīśca te lakṣmīśca patnyāvahorātre*
pārśve nakṣatrāṇi rūpamaśvinou vyāttam /
iṣṇannniṣāṇāmuṁ ma iṣāṇa sarvalokaṁ ma iṣāṇa / / 22

27 Gnoli, 28.

28 In a later inscription of Aparājita found at Udaypur in India, dated A. D. 661, Viṣṇu is addressed as Sauri. cf. Goswamy, *op. cit.,* pp. 128-29.

29 Gnoli, 81.

30 *ibid*, p. 64.

31 *ibid*, p. 117.

32 *ibid*, pp. 101, 103, 108, 115ff.

33 *ibid*, p. 2.

34 *ibid*, p. 71. *'nuppunne bhag ınārāyaṇasvāmino'*. The term 'bhagavat' in these inscriptions is quite freely employed for both Śaivas and Buddhists. e. g. *ācāryabhagavat Pranarddana* (p. 79) or *ratnatrayam bhagavad āryyam*...(p. 85).

35 See Goswami, *op. cit.*, passim ; also Chapter Two.

36 Petech, *op. cit.*, p. 109.

37 *ibid*, pp. 156-57.

38 *ibid*, p. 164.

39 H. P. Sastri, *A Descriptive Catalogue of Sanskrit Manuscripts in the Government Collection*, vol. 1, Calcutta, 1917, p. 118.

40 D. R. Regmi, *Medieval Nepal*, pt. III p. 42.
svasti Nepāla bhūkhaṇḍe khyātā śrīśikharāpurī /
Gopāla sopiyatrā ste Viṣṇutīrtheśa Mādhavaḥ //

41 *ibid*, p. 6.

kṣīrodāmbu nidhou vidhāyarabhasāt girim mandaram /
saṁbhūtā kamalālayā pramathite devāsurairviśvataḥ
saṁvi kṣyasvadhiyā vicintya cumuhu rdeveṣu
sarvātmanā śreṣṭosā dhitiyaṁ gatā sujagatāṁ
kuryāechriyaṁMādhavaḥ / yaḥ pārijātadrumānayatisma
bhartulakṣmipate rasurakānana dhūmaketoḥ kartuṁ
pramodamavamanyasamastadevāndeyāccabhaṁ sajagatā
vigatātanujaḥ // ...arccā śrīpatiMādhavasya
...samprāptumuccaiḥ padaṁ bhaktyā śrīgaruḍasya śaṅkara
iti khyātena bhūmaṇḍale / patyā sahānindya ca citra-
vatyākalaṁ kahino ḍupa vimbakāntaṁ / vakraṁ dadhatyā
hṛdayaṁ kṣipantyā niruttare śreyasitejalakṣmyāḥ /

42 Regmi, *Medieval Nepal*, pt. I, p. 595.

43 *Skandapurāṇa, Nepālamahātmya*, 7, 3-18

44 i, 6, 137-42

45 Regmi, *op. cit.*, pt. III, pp. 58ff.

46 See Chapter Four ; see also below note 54.

46a See H. P. Sastri, *A Catalogue of Palm-leaf & Selected Paper Mss.*, Calcutta, 1905.

47 This too is in the Bir Library, Kathmandu. For an illustration of one of the covers, showing the ten avatāras, see *Nepalese Art*, pl. XXXV B.

48 Priyabala Shah, *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa*, III, pp. XV & 397

49 A beautifully illustrated copy of the *Hanumānnaṭaka* is preserved in the Bir Library, Kathmandu.

50 P.V. Kane, *History of Dharmaśāstras*, vol. V, pt. 1, pp. 151ff, 251.

51 *ibid ;* Hemadri, *Vratakhaṇḍa*, vol II, pp. 26-36.

52 S. B. Dasgupta, *Obscure Religious Cults*, pp. 113ff.

53 Although Rādhā is not mentioned in the *Bhāgavatpurāṇa*, the relation between the gopīs, especially those who were married, and Kṛṣṇa certainly shows *parakiyā* bias. Mr. Sinha finds in the word *ārādhanā* the root of the concept of Rādhā *(A Study of the Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, p. 419).

54 The image and the gate were commissioned by king Pratāpamalla (cf. Wright, *History of Nepal*, p. 145). In fact this and the following pages describe at length Pratāpamalla's achievements and he is also credited with having donated an image of Narasiṁha in the palace and built the Jagannāth-deval in front of the Kathmandu darbar, probably the octagonal shrine (see Chapter Five). He is also credited with having composed hymns in honour of Kṛṣṇa and Vāsuki Nārāyaṇa (cf. Regmi, *op. cit.*, pt. II, p. 70).

55 Regmi, *ibid*, pt. III, pp. 94-95.

56 *ibid*, p. 73.

om namo Vasundharāyai /. Viṣṇorvvāhulatākaphoṇī śikharaṇoddhāratā medinī gaṅgādyā saritāmbaraiva ruciralaṅkāritā sthāvaṇi | nānādravyamayapragupta-

karaṇāmanyāsalagnāhiṭā tvāṁ naumī ha Vasundhare
varaṇaśālaṁ rakṣataṁ sarvvadā //

57 *ibid*, p. 17....*Sāradā jagataḥ mātṛpathite.....kāmamūrtti.*

58 *ibid*, p. 67.
om namoḥ śrī Sāradāyai // Ya śaktiḥ paramẽṣṭino
Madhuripoḥ śaktistrisandhyāsu ca syādvālāyuvatojarātriguṇagā
padmāsanasthā yayā // sajjāpyāvali pustakābhayavarador-
bhiśvatubhirdhṛtā prasurayedbhuvaḥ śrī Sāradā nisyaśaḥ //

59 *Nepalese Art*, pl. XII B.

60 See Chapter Three.

61 1, 57-65. *Saurāṣṭradeśādāgatya Buddharūpī Janārddanaḥ /*
maṇidhātau girivare tapasyāmakarodvaśī //

... ...

Śrutvā girisutavākyaṁ Buddhaḥ kāruṇikastadā /
saṅgame sthāpayāmāsa liṅgaṁ kāruṇikeśvaram /

62 *Skandapurāṇa, Nepālamāhātmya*, 12, 1-5.

tato'tituṣṭo Govindaḥ saputro munisaṁyutaḥ /
liṅgaṁ saṁsthāpayāmāsa Gopāleśvaranuttamam //
Pradyumnaścāpi santuṣṭaḥ pitṛbhaktisamānvitaḥ /
Śivanārāyaṇanāmnā sthāpayāmāsa yatnataḥ /
Kṛṣṇena sthāpitaṁ liṅgaṁ Gopāleśvaramuttamam /
Ye drakṣyanti narā bhāgyāste kṛtārthā na saṁśayaḥ //
pradyumnasthāpitāṁ Viṣṇumūrti drakṣyanti ye narāḥ /
iha loke sukhaṁ sthitvā yānti te paramā gatim //
Nepāle durlabhe kṣetre Kṛṣṇena sthāpitaṁ svayam /
Gopāleśvaranāmānam ye drakṣyanti kalau yuge //
teṣāṁ tuṣṭo muraripurviṣṇorlokaṁ prayacchati /

Curiously, here it is stated that those who see the liṅga Gopāleśvara, established by Kṛṣṇa, will attain Viṣṇuloka.

63 *The Art of India and Nepal*, pp. 106, 108.

Also in fifteenth century Buddhist paintings from India, Kṛṣṇa accompanies Brahmā and Indra at the Nativity of the Buddha to adore him. (cf. P. Pal, 'A New Document of Indian Pain-

ting', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society,* Parts 3 & 4, 1965, p. 105. pl. I).

64 B. Bhattacharyya, *The Indian Buddhist Iconography,* p. 363. The *dhyāna* quoted for Viṣṇu here is quite interesting. *Garuḍe Viṣṇus-caturbhujaḥ cakraśaṅkhabhṛtsavyavāmābhyāṁ mūrdhni kṛtāñjalir-gadāśārṅgadharaḥ* / It is curious that here Viṣṇu's principal hands holding the *cakra* and the *śaṅkha* should display the *añjalimudrā* above his head. As a matter of fact, the majority of the Brāhmaṇical divinities included in this maṇḍala are said to display this *mudrā,* no doubt indicating their submissiveness to Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara, the principal deity of of the maṇḍala. The other two hands of Viṣṇu hold the mace and the bow, instead of the usual lotus.

65 *ibid,* pp. 159, 195.

66 Sastri, *A Descriptive Catalogue* ... p. 16. The manuscript was copied in Nepal in N. S. 481/A. D. 1361. The relevant portion is as follows : *bodhisattvasambarīya Nārāyaṇo aho āśrayamiti kṛtvā śaṅkha-cakra-gadāvanamālyayuktaḥ mayanīya bhagavanta tripradakṣiṇīkṛtya praṇamya prahasitavadano bhūtvā bhagavanta gāthayā stauti sma* /

67 *ibid.* pp. 134, 136.

yena yenaiva rūpeṇa sattvā yānti vineyatāṁ /
tena tenaiva rūpeṇa sthito'haṁ lokahetave //
yena yenaiva te lokā yānti Buddha vineyatām /
tena tenaiva rūpeṇa Māyādevīsuto jinaḥ //

68 *ye yathā māṁ prapadyante tāṁstathaiva bhajāmyaham* /
mama vartamā'nuvartante manuṣyāḥ Pārtha sarvaśaḥ // (IV 11)
ye'pyanyadevatābhaktā yajante śraddhayānvitāḥ /
te'pi māmeva kaunteya yajantyavidhipūrvakam // (IX, 23)

69 Regmi, *op. cit.,* pt. III, p. 9.
om svasti / *kratu graha samāyukte samvatsare śatadvaye* / *jyeṣṭhamāsā sitāṣṭamyāṁ rājeśryamṛtabhūpateḥ* / *bhrāturvijayadevasya svargga samprāpti hetave* / *śrī Viśākhādidevena jananyā Madhukaśriyaḥ* // *ājñāṁsrajamivādhāya mūrdhnā dolācalasthiteḥ* / *Kṛṣṇasyavidhibadbhaktyā Viṣṇorarccā niveditā* // *puṇyenājena-*

loko'yaṁ sukhī bhavatu, sarvvadā / parārtha karaṇiyaiva pravṛtti rhi mahātmanāṁ //

70 *ibid,* pp. 8ff.

71 *ibid,* pp. 89-90..
anena puṇyena bhavantu lakṣmīḥ putrāyurārogyasabhṛtyavarggāḥ / vardhantu sarve dhanadhānya vaṁśāḥ saubhāgyalābhāḥ sakalā bhavantu //

72 *ibid,* p. 81. In an earlier Newari inscription of N. S. 454/A.D. 1334, Śrī Viriñci-Nārāyaṇa is addressed as a witness *(sākṣi),* and a prayer is made for the expiation of all sins and for the attainment of Brahmaloka, Rudraloka and Viṣṇuloka as well as for temporal benefits. (pp. 18-19).

73 *ibid,* p. 89. *vedoktena vidhānena Mādhava pratiṣṭhitaḥ /*

CHAPTER TWO

1 *Ṛgveda,* 1, 9, 4 ; 1, 55, 4 ; 6, 47, 18.

2 *DHI,* p. 389.

3 *MBH,* XII, 349, 37 ; 389, 77-90 and 140.

4 *Vāyupurāṇa,* 98, 71f. *Bhāgavatapurāṇa,* I, 3, 6-22 see also *DHI,* pp. 390ff.

5 *DHI,* p. 391

6 Schrader, pp. 43-46. It is interesting that in the *Ahirbudhnyasaṁhitā* list Trivikrama and Vāmana are cited as different emanations and so also Kroḍātman and Varāha. J. N. Banerjea has conclusively shown that Śāntātman of the Pāñcarātra list is really the Buddha *(DHI,* pp. 389, 392). We also know that the Buddha came to be regarded as an avatāra sometime around the fifth century (see R. C. Hazra, *Studies in the Puranic Records on Hindu Rites and Customs,* Dacca, 1940, pp. 41-42 and also the same author's *Studies in the Upapurāṇas,* vol. I, Calcutta, 1958, passim), and the fact that he has been included in the *Ahirbudhnyasaṁhitā* has an important bearing on the question of the age of that text. Certainly Schrader's contention that the *Ahirbudhnya* list of the avatāras is earlier than that of the *Mahābhārata* is untenable if only because the *MBH* does not include the Buddha (Schrader, p. 47). Schrader suggested the eighth century as the *terminus ad quem* for the composition of that work, but, as he points out, if the story of Muktāpīḍa is of Kashmiri origin, it is possible that the story was inspired by Kalhana's *Rājataraṅgini.* Moreover, Lalitāditya Muktāpīḍa, as we know, ruled into the second half of the eighth century. Thus the eighth century for the *terminus ad quem* does not seem probable.

7 Schrader, p. 47.

8 University Library Cambridge No. Add 864. The manuscript has been more fully discussed in a paper contributed to the *Bulletin of the American Academy of Benares*, vol. I,1967, pp. 23-33.

9 Gonda, p. 127 and references cited therein.

10 Schrader, p. 43 ; *MBH*, vanaparvan, 188f, *Matsyapurāṇa*, ch. 167.

11 Schrader, p. 42.

12 P. N. Sinha, *A Study of the Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, p. 262.

13 *ibid*, p. 264. The story of the Kūrmāvatāra in the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa* is recounted in sk. VIII, chs. 5-12.

14 *DHI*, p. 413.

15 V. S. Agrawala, *Mastya Purāṇa—A Study*, pp. 333ff.

16 Gonda, pp. 129ff.

17 *Atharvaveda*, 12, 1, 48 ; Gonda, p. 137.

18 Gonda, pp. 137-39.

19 *ibid*, pp. 139-40.

20 Agrawala, *op. cit.*, pp. 313ff.

21 *VDP*, III, 79, 2-4.

22 *VDP*, III, 79, 9. It may be relevant here to examine the following verse in this chapter. *samagra kroḍarūpo vā bāhudāna-vamadhyagaḥ / nṛvarāho varāho vā kartavyaḥ kṣmāvīdhāraṇe* //10 Dr. Priyabala Shah, however, accepts the alternative reading, found in another manuscript of the text, *samagrakrodharūpo*, and translates the line as follows : 'Or he may be represented as the personification of full anger in the midst of many dānavas' *(Viṣṇudharmottara-Purāṇa*, Third Khaṇḍa, vol. II, p. 158 and n. 1). It is our contention that the correct reading is *samagra kroḍarūpo*. *Kroḍa*, meaning a 'hog' is obviously here used as a synonym for 'varāha', thus implying that his form should be completely that of a boar, as we indeed find frequently in Indian sculpture (e. g. Khajuraho Boar). Only

in this sense would this line be meaningful in relation to the previous *śloka* and the second line of this *śloka*. In the previous *śloka* we are told that Nṛvarāha (half human and half boar) may be represented with two arms holding the *piṇḍa* of the earth. The first line of verse 10 would then have relevance as follows : 'Or he may be represented completely as a boar *(kroḍa)* in the midst of many dānavas'. And then the following line : 'But whether he is represented as Nṛvarāha (half man and half boar) or as Varāha (fully a boar) the earth should always be held by him'.

For the meaning of the word *kroḍa* as hog see, Gonda, p. 126 and references cited therein ; M. Monier-Williams, *A Sanskrit English Dictionary*, Oxford, 1963, p. 323. In one context, however, even Monier-Williams seems to have been confused. He translates the word kroḍakāntā as 'dear to Saturn (?)' *(ibid)*. The question mark is his. At the same time he notes that it is a name of the 'earth'. In view of this it is difficult to see why he takes *kroḍa* here to signify 'Saturn', when he admits that *Kroḍakāntā* refers to the earth. Literally *kroḍakāntā* means 'dear to a hog' and obviously it follows that in the particular context Pṛthivī or Earth, whom the Boar rescues, is dear to him *(kroḍakāntā)* and this is why he saved her. Moreover, in the *Kālikāpurāṇa* he is said to have co-habited with her (Gonda, p. 141) Further, in the Pāñcarātra list of avatāras one of the names is Kroḍātman, and, as pointed out by Schrader, this can only refer to Yajñavarāha (Schrader, p. 45).

23 The Deogarh Varāha is comparable, but the treatment of the form there is quite different from the Nepali version (Cf. N. R. Banerjee, 'New Light on the Gupta Temples at Deogarh', *Journal of the Asiatic Society*, V, 1-2 [1963], Pl. V8). Another sculpture of about the seventh century showing the same bulky solidity as the Nepali sculpture is that from Kadvar and now in the Junagadh Museum (Cf. M. A. Dhaky, 'Some unpublished Images of Varāha and Kuvera from Gujarat', *Śatābda Kaumudī*, Nagpur, 1964, Pl. VII, 11).

24 Quoted from Wilson's *Viṣṇu Purana* by A. Boner, *Principles of Composition in Hindu Sculpture,* p 107.

25 A. Lippe, who first published the sculpture, suggests that it belongs to the eighth century A. D. ('Viṣṇu's Conch in Nepal', *Oriental Art,* n. s. vol. VIII, no. 3, p. 119), but stylistically it must belong to the same period as the Śikhara Nārāyaṇa Viṣṇu Vikrānta image (Fig. 10), which cannot be carlier than the twelfth century.

26 *Matsya Purāṇa,* (trs. a Taluqdar of Oudh), Allahabad, 1917. pp. 308-09.

27 *ibid.*

28 Lippe mistakenly identified the broken club as a fragment of the pillar from which Narasiṁha is said to have emerged. But the correct identification was suggested by Prof. J. E. Van Lohuizen-de Leeuw *(Oriental Art,* n. s. vol. IX, no. 1 p. 47.*)*

29 S. Levi, *Le Nepal* vol. II, p. 245.

30 *Nepalese Art,* pl. XXVB.

31 See Chapter One, n. 54.

32 Ṛgveda, I, 32, 16-21.
ate devā avantu no yato Viṣṇurvicakrame/
pṛthivyāḥ tapta dhāmaviḥ //
idam Viṣṇurvicakrame tredhā ni dadhe padaṁ /
samuḍhamasya pāṁsure /
triṇi padā vicakrame Viṣṇurgopā adābhyaḥ /
ato dharmāṇi dhārayan //

See Gonda, pp. 55ff. for a detailed discussion of the three strides and also F. B. J. Kuiper, 'The Three Strides of Viṣṇu',

Indological Studies in Honor of W. Norman Brown New Haven (Connecticut), 1962.

33 Gopinath Rao, *Elements of Hindu Iconography,* vol. I, pt. I, p. 213, f. n , 258.

34 B. Rowland, *The Art and Architecture of India,* Harmondsworth, (2nd ed.) 1956, pl. 16 (A).

35 The chronological position of these sculptures has been discussed fully in the present writer's forthcoming book on Nepali sculpture and painting.

36 *DHI*, p. 419.

37 Boner, *op. cit*, p. 39.

38 *Bhāgavatapurāṇa*, VIII, 15, 23

39 *Vāmanapurāṇa*, 92, 36f.

40 According to the *Vaikhānaṣāgama* Namuci should be shown as adoring the right foot of Viṣṇu, Rao, *op. cit.*, p. 166.

41 *Vāmanapurāṇa*, 92, 16. *Valirbhṛṅgāramadaya dadau Viṣṇoḥ kramatrayam //*

42 *ibid*, 89, 46 *pālāśamadadāddaṇḍaṁ Marīcirbrahmaṇaḥ sutaḥ / akṣasūtraṁ Vāruṇistu ... ... //*

43 *ibid*, 89, 29. *svetāmbaradharo daityaḥ śvetamālyānulepanaḥ / mṛgajināstṛtapṛṣṭho vārhapatravicitrakaḥ //*

44 Boner, *op. cit.*, p. 89.

45 *DHI* p 419.

46 See note 44.

47 Klaus Bruhn, 'Distinction in Indian Iconography', *Bulletin of the Deccan College Research Institute*. vol. 20, pts. 1-4, pp. 164ff.

48 Gnoli, p. 2.

49 R. C. Majumdar (ed.) *History and Culture of the Indian people*. vol. III, Bombay, 1962 (2nd imp.), p. 8.

50 Gonda, p. 55. In this and following pages Prof. Gonda has given a very erudite explanation of Viṣṇu's three strides and much of the discussion that follows is based on his chapter.

51 Gonda, p 57.

52 *Atharvaveda*, 10, 5, 25-35.

53 Gonda, p. 58. The three-strides are symbolic of kingship and connected with the Rājasūya-Yajña.

54 Gnoli, p. 6.

55 Gonda, pp. 58-9 and 62-3. Further in the *MBH* (17, 6, 16) we are told that a kṣatriya acquires *śrī* by *vikrama*.

56 Gonda, pp. 118ff.

57 *ibid*, p. 119.

58 See note 15.

59 Sinha, *op, cit.*, p. 281. In the *Vāmanapurāṇa* (92, 56) the god tells him that during the ceremony of *Indrotsava*, a special rite called *dīpadāna* will be performed in honour of Bali.

60 Possibly earlier sculptures are too fragmentary to merit a discussion of their iconography.

61 *DHI*, pp. 418-19.

62 Quoted by Klaus Bruhn, *op. cit.*, p. 169, n. 2.

63 H. Goetz, 'Early Indian Sculptures from Nepal', *Artibus Asiae*, 18 (1955), Fig. 1, p. 66.

64 *ibid.*

65 Comparable is the similarly kneeling figure of Ahalayā in a *Rāmāyaṇa* relief on the Daśāvatāra temple at Deogarh [cf. M. S. Vats, *The Gupta Temple at Deogarh*, New Delhi, 1952, pl. XV, (a).]

66 See note 8.

67 The earliest stereotyped representations occur on a cover of a thirteenth century *Viṣṇudharma* manuscript. cf. *Nepalese Art*, pl. XXXV B.

68 In a south Indian bronze also we find Narasiṁha pulling out and eating the entrails of Hiraṇyakaśipu (Rao, *op. cit.*, pl. XLVII).

69 Usually in late Nepali and Tibetan paintings of the Buddha and his paradise we often find him flanked by two monks carrying a staff and a bowl, representing Mahāmaudgyalāyana and Sāriputra. Ānanda here is given an identical iconography.

70 *Agnipurāṇa*, 49, 9.

71 *Bhagavadgītā,* X, 14 V. S. Agrawala's translation, Varanasi, 1963, p. 127. All the translations of the verses that follow are taken from V. S. Agrawala's translation.

72 III, 65.

kuryācchaśāṅkasaṅkāśaṁ ratnojjvalaphaṇānvitam /
nīlavastraṁ caturbāhuṁ sarvābharaṇadhāriṇam //2
padmaṁ samusalaṁ kāryaṁ devadakṣiṇahastayoḥ /
vāmayossīr śaṁkhou ca kare (? kāryaḥ) tasya surāmbudhiḥ //4

73 Dr. P. Shah is certainly correct in emending the word *kare* in the verses quoted in the previous note to *kāryaḥ* and then taking *tasya surāmbudhiḥ* to signify that Ananta represents the celestial ocean *(op. cit.,* p. 152*)*, rather than Dr. Kramrisch's translation.

It may be mentioned here that Klaus Bruhn (*op. cit.,* pp. 194-96), in discussing the nāga motif, found particularly in the context of representations of Varāha, Trivikrama and Gajendramokṣa in India, suggests that 'the nāgas are most probably in all these cases an artistic innovation'. He further states in connection with Sivaramamurti's explanation of the nāga below a Rajim Trivikrama as representing the *pātāla* that 'that would practically mean that any nāga (and any lotus) can be taken as an indication of the chthonic (or aquatic) association of a myth. But unless it is quite clear that nāgas and lotuses are only indications of the scenery (as in the case of the lotuses on the Gajendramokṣa panel at Deogarh), it is safer to explain lotuses and nāgas which are not referred to in the myth by transfer'.

It appears that Mr. Bruhn has posed a problem that does not really exist and then has given a laboured explanation. In our discussion of the Viṣṇu Vikrānta reliefs we have shown that the artist, whether in India or in Nepal, has constantly symbolised the *pātālaloka,* which is intimately connected with the *Vāmanāvatāra* myth in all the versions, with a nāga figure or couple. Similarly, in the Viśvarūpadarśana sculpture from Nepal there can be little doubt that Ananta represents *pātāla,* and the *Viṣṇudharmottara* passage, quoted above, certainly associates Ananta with water. Mr. Sivaramamurti is therefore perfectly

ustified in his interpretation. In the case of the Varāhāvatāra as well we are told *(VDP,* III, 79, 2f; III, 106, 48 and not 46 as given by Mr. Bruhn) that the God should stand on the serpent Śeṣa. Here too the context is perfectly justified since the boar rescued the earth from the bottom of the ocean and clearly the nāga in this case signifies the ocean. As a matter of fact, the nāga and water are so intimately connected in Indian literature and the association is so much of a common place that no iconographer or compiler of a myth deemed it necessary to state the obvious on each occasion.

In the case of Gajendramokṣa obviously the presence of a nāga is to indicate water. Landscape, both in Indian sculpture and painting, right down to the period of the Rajput style, has always been rendered conceptually. Once again the *Viṣṇudharmottara* enlightens us on this. In chapter 42 of the third khaṇḍa in declaring how water is to be represented the author writes: *toyaṁ ca darśayedvidvānanantairmatya kacchapaiḥ //63 padmākṣaiśca matvārājā tālhānyairjalajairguṇai //* Clearly here the artist is being enjoined to depict water as containing serpents, fishes, tortoises and other beings that live in the waters. It is thus not difficult to see why the Deograh artist represented the 'setting' for Gajendramokṣa as he did.

74 *DHI,* p. 391; Ananta is also included in the Pāñcarātra saṁhitās as an avatāra (Schrader, p. 42). The *VDP* description of Ananta or Śeṣa ends as follows (III, 65, 8): *etaddhi rūpaṁ parameśvarasya Viṣṇorcintyasya mayeritaṁ te //.*

75 *VDP,* III, 85, 6-7; Shah, p. 142.

76 Shah, p. 145.

77 D. Mitra, 'Varāha- Cave of Udayagiri—An Iconographic Study', *Journal of the Asiatic Society,* V 3-4 (1963), p. 99f.

78 Kuiper, *op. cit.,* p. 150.

79 *ibid,* p. 144.

80 *ibid,* p. 145.

81 For a discussion of the iconography of this sculpture see C. Sivaramamurti, *Indian Sculpture*, pp. 98-99.

82 See note 6, citations of R. C. Hazra's works.

83 *VDP*, III, 83 ; Shah, p. 162.

84 *VDP*, III, 83, 7. *grasamānaḥ sa kartavyaḥ sarvvaiḥ sattvabhayaṁkaraiḥ /*

85. 49, 21f.

86 *Rūpamaṇḍana*, 3, 53f ; *Aparājitapṛccā*, 219, 28-32.

87 Shah, 162 ; *VDP*, III, 83, 11.

88 *Rūpamaṇḍana*, 3, 52-55 ; *Aparājitāpṛcchā*, 219, 25.

89 'Two Viṣṇu Images and their cult Affiliation', *Bhāratī* (Bulletin of the college of Indology). No. 4 (1960-61), pp. 137ff.

90 For some early Mathura reliefs depicting the Virāṭa-rūpa of Viṣṇu, cf. K. D. Bajpai, 'Two Rare Images of Viṣṇu from Mathura', *The journal of the U. P. Historical Society*, vol. II (n) pt. II. (1954), pp. 17ff.

91 See Chapter Four.

92 M. T. de Mallmann, *Les enseignments iconographiques de L'Agni-Purana*, p. 43.

CHAPTER THREE

1 *DHI*, p. 387.

2 *ibid*, p. 388 and f. n. 1.

3 *Rūpamaṇḍana*, III, 9-23.

4 *Agnipurāṇa*, chapter 49 ; see also M. T. de Mallmann, *Les enseignements iconographiques de l'Agni-Purana*, pp. 22-3.

5 *DHI*, p. 388 ; Gopinath Rao, *Elements of Hindu Iconography*, vol. I, pt. I, pp, 231-32.

6 Rao, *op. cit.*, pp. 79ff.

7 *Rūpamaṇḍana*, III, 17.

8 Gnoli, p. 81. The invocation is as follows :
oṁ anantanāgādhipabhogabhāsure jalāśaye śāntatamam manoharam (I)
Murārirūpaṁ yad aśeta dehināṁ śivāya tad vo vidadhātu maṅgalam (II)

9 According to the *Rūpamaṇḍana*, Trivikrama's attributes are to be disposed as follows : mace, lower right ; discus, upper right ; conch, upper left ; lotus (?) lower left. But in the *Agnipurāṇa*, the corresponding hands hold the lotus, mace, discus and the conch. As Dr. Srivastava has pointed out there are also other differences between the two lists (B. Srivastava, *Rūpamaṇḍana*, p. 51). Dr. M. T. de Mallmann appears to be mistaken when she claims that the *Agnipurāṇa* list as published and tabulated by her (*op. cit.*, p. 23) corresponds 'exactement a cette du Rupam'.

10 Regmi, *Medieval Nepal*, part II, plate (the plates are not numbered).

11 For their detailed identification see P. Pal, 'Composite Form of

Vāsudeva and Lakṣmī', *Journal of the Asiatic Society*, vol. V. Nos. 3 & 4, 1963, pp. 78-9.

12 Miss Kalpana Desai of the Prince of Wales Museum, Bombay who is working on Vaiṣṇava Iconography of northern India, kindly showed me a number of photographs of quite a few images with such a composition from Rajasthan and Gujarat.

13 There is a dated bronze sculpture in a private collection in Bombay, a slide of which was shown by Dr. Pramod Chandra, where the trio is portrayed exactly as in the stone versions.

14 For a discussion of such images as well as the concept of *pañcopāsanā*, see J. N. Banerjea, *Pañcopāsanā* (In Bengali).

15 Although the Jaina caumukha does not quite signify five Jinas, the symbology of five is not unknown in Jainism as e. g. pañcamaṇḍalas, pañcameru, pañca-Parameṣṭhikalpa, etc. (cf. U. P. Shah, *Studies in Jaina Art*, Banaras, 1955, pp. 99, 103, 117, 123).

16 Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Haridas Swali of Bombay.

17 Gnoli, pp. 1-2.

18 *ibid*, p. 50. *Skandapurāṇa, Nepālamāhātmya*, ch. 2.

19 *Skandapurāṇa, Nepālamāhātmya*, ch. 2.

20 Levi, *Le Nepal*, vol. I, p. 367.

21 A. Lippe, 'Viṣṇu's Conch in Nepal', *Oriental Art*, n. s. vol. VIII, No. 3, p. 118.

22 Kramrisch, *The Art of Nepal*, p. 54.

23 *The Art of India and Nepal : The Nasli and Alice Heeramaneck Collection* (catalogue of exhibition held in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, November, 1966). There the sculpture has been mistakenly dated as seventh century and ascribed to central India. There is no doubt that it is from Nepal.

24 The āsana here is slightly different from the usual delineation of this posture in art.

25 In early Indian iconography, in Sanchi, or in a beautiful terra-cotta piece recently acquired by the Bharat Kala Bhavan, we

find two females, side by side, one carrying a flower and a jar of water and the other a *thāli* with foodstuff. Such images must have been prototypes of the later conventional iconography of Śrī and Bhūmi as we find in this Nepali example.

26 Schrader, p. 53. Here, however, Viṣṇu is also being represented as Ananta.

27 *ibid,* pp. 50-51, 53-54.

28 Gnoli, p. 50.

29 *ibid,* p. 81. The same event seems to have been referred to in another inscription of the following year (*ibid,* p. 83).

30 According to Wright's *Vaṁśāvalīs,* however, the image was not commissioned by Pratāpamalla, but an old image recovered and placed in the tank. If this were true, the image at Balaju may claim a date older than the seventeenth century. 'He (Pratāpamalla) went to consult Jalasayana Narayana and was told not to make an image for this tank, so he brought an old image, which was lying in a pond near Gyaneswara, and placed it in the tank. Being desirous of supplying water to the tank from Nilakaṇṭha, he got permission from the deity, and brought the water in a narrow channel. When it reached Raniban, it stopped, and the Raja made a vow that he would not go to the durbar till he went along with the water'. Ultimately after a year of propitiation the water reached the tank and the king worshipped Nārāyaṇa. 'On the same night the Raja had a dream, in which he was told by Buddha-nilakantha that he or any of his descendents or successors who went to visit Nilakantha would die.' (Wright, *History of Nepal,* pp. 145-46). This appears to be the reason why ever since no Nepali king has visited this shrine, but instead pay their respects at Balaju.

31 Collection of Alice and Nasli Heeramaneck, New York.

32 For a discussion re : *darpaṇa* as an attribute of Śrī-Lakṣmī see Chapter Six.

33 Schrader, p. 41.

34 See note 11.

35 Schrader, p. 55. See also Appendix at the end of this book.

36 *Rūpamaṇḍana,* III, 67-71 ; *Aparājitapṛcchā,* 218, 50-52.

37 Schrader, p. 52, n. 3.

38 *ibid,* p. 53.

39 See note 37.

40 *Viṣṇutilaka,* II, 11-16 ; Schrader, p. 53.

41 Schrader, p. 56.

42 *ibid,* p. 122.

43 *ibid,* p. 61.

44 *ibid,* pp. 55, 84.

45 *Ahirbudhnyaṣaṁhitā,* XXXII, 18.

46 *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa,* III, 85, 1-14.

47 Mallmann, *op. cit.,* pp. 16ff.

48 Gopinath Rao, *op. cit.,* vol. I, pt. 1, p. 240 & pt. II. Appendix A, p. 65.

49 *DHI,* p. 396.

50 See Chapter One, n. 50.

CHAPTER FOUR

1 See Chapter One.

2 The *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* appears to have gained exceptional popularity, particularly in the sixteenth century, all over India and was translated into the regional languages. cf. B. B. Majumdar 'The Bhāgavata Purāṇa and Its Influence in the Sixteenth century' *The Journal of the Bihar Research Society,* Vol. XLVII, Parts I-IV, 1961, pp. 380ff.

3 Regmi, *Medieval Nepal,* part II, pp. 89-90.

4 Wright, *History of Nepal,* p. 146. According to Wright's *Vaṁśāvalis,* Pratāpamalla had also brought an image of Garuḍa along with that of Viṣṇu destroying Kālīya. Both these images had been found in a place called Sakonha in the Saṅkasya-nagari. 'This Garuḍa gave much annoyance to the Rājā, who in consequence removed him to a spot near the Nārāyaṇa of Nārāyaṇa Hiti'.

5 *Bhāgavatapurāṇa,* X, 16-17.

6 M. S. Vats, 'The Gupta Temple at Deogarh', *Memoirs of the Archaeological Survey of India* No. 70, pl. XV (a).

7 Hazra, *Studies in the Upapurāṇas,* vol. I, p. 139.

8 This is the concept underlying the following *dhyāna* of Kṛṣṇa from the *Bṛhat-tantrasāra* (p. 178) :

dvārāvatyāṁ sahasrārkabhāsurairbhavanottamaiḥ /
analpaiḥ kalpavṛkṣaiśca parīte maṇimaṇḍape /
jvaladratnamayastambhadvāratoraṇakuḍyake /
phullasragullasaccitravitānālamvimouktike /
padmarāgasthalīrājadratnanadyośca madhyataḥ /
anāratagaladratnadhāraṣya svastaroradhaḥ /

ratnadīpāvalībhiśca pradīpitadigantare /
udyadādityasaṅkāśamaṇisiṁhāsanāmbuje /
samāsīno' cyuto dhyeyo drutahāṭakasannibhaḥ /
samānodita-candrārka-taḍit-koṭi-samadyutiḥ /
sarvvāṅgasundaraḥ saumyaḥ sarvvābharaṇabhuṣitaḥ /
pītavāsāścakraśaṅkhagadāpadmojjvaladbhujaḥ /
anāratacchaladratnadhāraughakalasaṁ spṛśan /
vāmapādāmbujāgreṇa muṣṇatā pallavacchavim /
rukmiṇīsatyabhāme 'sya murddhni ratnaughadhārayā /
siñcantyou dakṣavāmasthe svadohsthakalasotthayā /
nāgnajitīsunandā ca diśantyou kalasau tayoḥ /
tābhyāñca dakṣavāmasthe mitravindāsulakṣaṇe /
ratnanadyoḥ samuddhṛtya ratnapurṇour ghaṭau tayoḥ /
jāmbavatī suśīlā ca diśantyou dakṣavāmake /
vahiḥṣoḍaśa sāhasryasaṁkhyātāḥ paritaḥ priyāḥ /
dhyeyāḥ kanakaratnoughadhārāmbukalasojjvalāḥ /
tadvahiścāṣṭanidhayaḥ pūraranto dhanairdharām /
tadvahivvṛṣṇayaḥ sarvve purovacca surādayaḥ /
evaṁ dhyātvā.....

Here not only is Kṛṣṇa conceived as being under a *kalpavṛkṣa,* but he is to be accompanied by Rukmiṇī and Satyabhāmā and is clearly identified with Viṣṇu. In the majority of the dhyānas of Kṛṣṇa, quoted in the *Bṛhat-tantrasāra,* he is to be represented under a *kalpavṛkṣa.*

9 Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Haridas Swali of Bombay. It may be mentioned that the āsana here is not quite of the same variety that we usually find represented in art.

10 Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Haridas Swali of Bombay.

11 When Kṛṣṇa was born he was taken to Vrindavana to the house of Yaśodā and Nanda, and their daughter, born at about the same time, was substituted in the prison of Kaṁsa. This girl was an incarnation of Devī.

12 Sinha, *A Study of the Bhāgavata Purāṇa,* p. 405.

13 *Bhāgavatapurāṇa,* X, 29-33.

14 Sinha, *op. cit.,* p. 422.

15 See Chapter Two.

16 *The Art of India and Nepal : The Nasli and Alice Heeramaneck Collection,* (Catalogue of an exhibition held in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 1966). p. 106. C. Sivaramamurti, *Royal Conquests and Cultural Migrations in South India and the Deccan,* Calcutta, 1955, p. 2.

17 Discussed at length in a paper entitled, 'Paintings from Nepal in the Prince of Wales Museum' *Prince of Wales Museum Bulletin,* No. 10 (1967), pp. 1-26.

18 It may be of interest here to mention that the story of Bānāsura was also a popular theme with artists of the Panjab hills. Although the National Museum miniatures depicting this theme [cf. 'An Aniruddha-Ushā series from Chambā and the Painter Rām Lāl' *Lalit Kalā,* 1-2, (1955-56), pp. 37ff.] were probably painted a few years earlier than the Nepali scroll, stylistically they differ considerably. Even if the Nepali painter was aware of similar paintings either from the Panjab or from elsewhere in India, he chose to render the theme in what was already a developed indigenous idiom.

19 Kramrisch, *The Art of Nepal,* pp. 122-123.

20 See Chapter One.

21 See n. 17.

CHAPTER FIVE

1 'Two Visnu Images and their Cult Affiliation', *Bhāratī* (Bulletin of the College of Indology), No. 4 (1960-61), pp. 137ff.

2 *saumyasiṁhādibhūyiṣṭhavaktrabhedaiścaturmukha /*
dvitryādimukhabhedā vā mūrtirekaiva pūjyate //
saṁvṛtā parivāraiḥ svairvinā vā sarvakāmadā /
yatra tantrāntaraṁ tatsyāccaturtha caturānana //
Pādmasaṁhitā, quoted by Prasad, *ibid.*, p. 144.

mukhyānuvṛttibhedena yatra siṁhādayastu vai /
catustridvayādikenaiva yogenābhyarcite tu vai (natu) /
saṁvṛtāh parivāreṇa sveṇa svenonvi (sthi) tāstu vā //
yacchaktyārādhitaṁ sarvaṁ viddhi tantrāntaraṁ tu tat /
Pauṣkarasaṁhitā, 38, 300-02 ; *ibid*, p. 145.

3 *anādinidhanaṁ devaṁ jagatsraṣṭāramīśvaram /*
dhyoccaturbhūjaṁ vipra śaṅkhacakragadādharam //
caturvaktraṁ sunayanaṁ sukāntaṁ padmapāṇinam /
Vaikuṇṭhaṁ narasiṁhāsyaṁ vārāhaṁ kapilānanam //
Jayākhyasaṁhita, VI, 73-74.

4 *VDP*, III, 83, 14.

5 *DHI*, p. 409.

6 Apart from Maheshwari Prasad's article cited above, cf. also V. S. Pathak, 'Vaikuṇṭha at Khajuraho and Kasmiragama School'. *Journal of the Madhya Predesh Ithihasa Parishad*, No. 2 (1960), pp. 19ff.

7 *Agnipurāṇa*, 305, 12.

8 *Rūpamaṇḍana*, 52, 60-62.

9 *Pārameśvarasaṁhitā*, 19, 541-43 ; *Iśvarasaṁhitā*, 21, 579-81 ; Maheshwari Prasad, *op. cit.*, p. 145, f. n. 3.

10 *DHI*, p. 502 ; *MBH*, IV, 6 & VI, 23 ; *Harivaṁśa*, III, 3.

11 *DHI*, p. 502.

12 *Mārkaṇḍeyapurāṇa*, 81, 41.

tannātra vismayaḥ kāryo yoganidrā jagatpateḥ |
Mahāmāyā Hareścaiṣā tayā saṁmohyate jagat ||

also

tuṣṭāva yoganidrāṁ tamekāgrahṛdayasthitaḥ |
vibodhanārthāya harerharinetrakṛtālyām || 52
viśveśvarīṁ jagaddhātrīṁ sthitisaṁhārakāriṇīṁ |
nidrāṁ bhagavatīṁ Viṣṇoratulāṁ tejasaḥ prabhuḥ || 53

13 Krodha Bhairava is one of the eight Bhairavas who are supposed to preside over the eight *śmaśānas* or cemeteries. According to a painting published by Levi, however, Krodha Bhairava presides over the Gahvara-śmaśāna and his Śakti is Kaumārī (cf. Levi, *Le Nepal*, vol. III, pp. 175ff ; P. H. Pott, *Yoga and Yantra*, p. 82). Obviously, there were more than one tradition as to which Bhairava presided over which *śmaśāna* and consorted with which Mātṛkā.

14 *Bṛhatsaṁhitā*, 57, 56.

15 But once in an inscription her association with Viṣṇu is explicitly declared (cf. Chapter One.)

16 See Chapter One, n. 58.

17 *Bṛhat-Tantrasāra*, p. 127.

śubhrāṁ svacchavilepamālyavasanāṁ śītāṁśukhaṇḍojjvalāṁ,
vyākhyāmakṣaguṇaṁ sudhāḍhyakalasaṁ vidyāñca hastāmbujaiḥ |
vibhrāṇāṁ kamalāsanāṁ kucalatāṁ vāgdevatāṁ sasmitāṁ vande
vāgvibhavapradāṁ trinayanāṁ saubhāgyasampatkarīm |

It is interesting that she is invoked here for granting good fortune and wealth.

18 *Rūpamaṇḍana*, III, 51.
vāmāgre (vāmo'gre) kuñcitaḥ paścādanyapādastu jānunā /
pṛthivīṁ saṁsthito yatra gāruḍaṁ syāttadāsanam //

19 Stella Kramrisch, *The Art of Nepal*, p. 54.

20 See Chapters One and Three.

21 III, 50.
Kiñcillambodaraḥ kāryaḥ sarvābharaṇabhūṣitaḥ //

22 *ibid. Yaduśca bhagavān prṣṭhe chatrakumbhadharau karau /*

CHAPTER SIX

1 The names of the purāṇas are usually indicative of their particular bias. Thus Śiva is extolled in the *Śivapurāṇa* and Viṣṇu in the *Viṣṇupurāṇa*. At the same time they also stress the essential 'oneness' of the various divinities. Apart from theological treatises, contemporary literature also, as for example Kālidāsa's works (see note 8), help us in gleaning a fair idea of the prevailing religious climate of the period.

2 R. C. Hazra, *Studies in the Upapurāṇas*, vol. II, pp. 362ff.

3 J. N. Banerjea, *Pañcopāsanā* (in Bengali) for an elaborate discussion.

4 The term *saṅghāṭa* designating composite images occurs in the *Vāstuvidyā* being edited by M. A. Dhaky, to whom I am grateful for the information. I am also indebted to Dipak Chandra Bhattacharyya for drawing my attention to the *miśra-mūrti* section of the *Śilparatna* (pt. II, ch. 25, v, 75).

5 *DHI.* p. 552.

6 For instance Kālidāsa in his *Kumārasambhavam* (I,50) writes : *tāṁ nāradaḥ kāmacaraḥ kadācit kanyāṁ kila prekṣya pituḥ samīpe | samādideśaikavadhūṁ bhavitrīṁ premṇā śarīrārddhaharāṁ harasya ||*

In the following *sarga* (v.7) the Gods address Brahmā as follows :

strī-puṁsāvātmabhāgou te bhinnamūrtteḥ sisṛkṣayā | prasūtibhājaḥ sargasya tāveva pitarou smṛtou ||

7 P. Pal, 'Notes on the Temple of Pasupatinath, Nepal', *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, Delhi, 1961.

8 Although Kālidāsa was an avowed Śaiva, he too repeats the vedic precept quite unambiguously ; for example, cf. *Kumārasambhavam :*

(II,4) *namastrimūrttaye tubhyaṁ prāk sṛṣṭeḥ kevalātmane /*
guṇatra'avibhāgāya paścādbhedamupeyuṣe //

(VII,44) *ekaiva mūrttirvibhide tridhā sā sāmānyameṣāṁ*
prathamāvaratvam /
viṣṇorharastasya hariḥ kadācidvedhāstayostāvapi dhāturādyou //

9 *Skandapurāṇa, Himavatkhaṇḍa, Nepālamāhātmya,* 11, 1 ; 12, 1-6.

10 S. Levi, *Le Nepal,* vol. I., p. 370.

11 *Śivāya Viṣṇurūpāya śivarūpāya Viṣṇave /*
Śivasya hṛdayam Viṣṇurviṣṇośca hṛdayam Śivaḥ //

... ...

yatha'ntaram na bhedāḥ syuḥ Śivakeśavayostathā //

Quoted in *Stavakusumāñjali,* (ed.) Swami Gambhirānanda, Calcutta, 1363 (B. E.) pp. 114-15.

12 Regmi, *Medieval Nepal,* III, p. 63.

13 Gnoli, p. 28.

14 Regmi, *op. cit.*, p. 93.

15 *VDP,* III, 85 ; in another *śloka* (85, 55) Trivikrama is also described as *sajalāmbudasaṅkāśasthā.*

16 *VDP* III, 44, 19.

17 Regmi, *op. cit* , 36.

18 *ibid,* 93.

19 The present image agrees closely with the description of Hari-Hara in the *Agnipurāṇa* (49, 24-25).

... ... *Hariśaṅkarako hariḥ //* 24

Śularṣṭidhārī dakṣe ca gadācakradharo pare /
rudrakeśavalakṣmāṅgo gaurī lakṣmī samanvitaḥ // 25.

Although instead of the *aṣṭi*, the seed of a fruit or *vījapuraka*, and the *gadā*, the attributes in the image are a rosary and a conch, it is interesting that both Gaurī and Lakṣmī are said to accompany the two gods. It may be mentioned here that the word *aṣṭi* means the stone or seed of a fruit (cf. Monier Williams, *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, p. 117) and thus both the Bengali translator of the text as well as M. T. de Mallmann, who translates it tentatively as a javelin (*op. cit.* p. 46), appear to be mistaken.

20 This is the basic theme of his book, *Icon and Idea*.

21 *Rupamaṇḍana*, IV, 17, 23-24, 25-26.

22 *DHI*, p. 134. J. N. Banerjea (p. 370), however, thinks that the goddess *Śrī* is really not alluded to in the *Ṛgveda*. The *śrīsūkta* (II, 6), it must be remembered, is believed to be a late supplement *(khila)*.

23 Gonda, p. 214. In chapter II of his book he has discussed at length the concept of Srī-Lakṣmī and has utilized much material from Gerda Hartmann's work, which is otherwise inaccessible to us *(Beiträge zur Gecshichte der Göttin Lakṣmī*, Thesis Kiel, 1933). cf. also A. K. Coomaraswamy, 'Early Indian Iconography', II, Śrī-Lakṣmī, *Eastern Art*, I. pp. 174-189, Moti Chandra, 'Our Lady of Beauty and Abundance : Padmaśrī,' *Journal of the U. P. Historical Society*, 21 (1948), pp. 15-42.

I agree with Prof. Gonda that the later concept of Srī and Bhūmī as the two consorts of Viṣṇu has little to do with the vedic dual personality of Śrī and Lakṣmī as suggested by Gerda Hartmann.

24 *MBH*, II, 10, 19 and III, 168, 3.

25 *DHI*, p. 372.

26 *Rāmāyaṇa*, 3, 46, 17 ; Gonda, p. 215 and references cited therein.

27 Gnoli, p. 48.

28 D. R. Regmi, *Medieval Nepal*, part II, plate (no number).

29 For a detailed discussion of the maṇḍala in this painting see P. Pal, 'Composite Form of Vāsudeva and Lakṣmī', *Journal of the Asiatic Society*, vol. V. Nos. 3 and 4, 1963, pp. 73ff. The reading of the date in the inscription may not be absolutely correct.

30 Regmi, *Medieval Nepal*, III, p. p. 92-93.

31 *ibid.*

32 *Bṛhat-Tantrasāra*, pp. 191-92.

33 A. Avalon (ed) *The Shāradātilakatantram*, 'Tantrik Texts', vol. XVII, Calcutta, 1933, p. 619.

34 Schrader ; p. 29.

35 *ibid.*

36 *ibid*, p. 30.

37 *ibid.*

38 *ibid* ; *Lakṣmītantra*, II, 17.

39 ibid, p. 34. In chapter 4 of the *Saṁhitā* it is further stated that Nārāyaṇa and his śakti due to 'over-embrace' *(ati-saṁśleṣāt)* have become a single principle *(ekaṁ tattvam iva)*.

40 Schrader, p. 29.

41 S. B. Dasgupta, *Obscure Religious cults*, p. 118.

42 Although Rādhā is not mentioned in the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* there can be little doubt that the gopīs are attracted to Kṛṣṇa through love which forms the bond between their relationship. This love is also *sahaja* in the sense that it is spontaneous although, perhaps, not the *parakiyā* love of the later Sahajiyās.

43 *Śāradatilakā*, VI, 45.

44 Schrader, p. 103.

45 See note 27.

46 R. D. Banerji, *Eastern Indian School of Medieval Sculpture*, p. 121, pl. LXIIa. Miss Alice Boner has kindly informed me that the *jñāna* aspect of Lakṣmī is also to be seen in Cave No. XIV at Ellora.

47 As we shall see in the following paragraph one of the *guṇas* of Viṣṇu, according to the Pāñcarātrins, is *jñāna* : knowledge. In the *Viṣṇupurāṇa* also Viṣṇu as the Brahmabhūta is equated with *jñāna* and *vijñāna* (I, 22), or *jñānasvarūpo bhagavān yato' sau aśeṣa mūrttirna ca vastubhūtaḥ* / (II, 12, 38).

It is interesting that while explaining the symbology of Viṣṇu's attributes, the *Viṣṇupurāṇa* states that the sword of Acyuta (a form of Viṣṇu) symbolises *jñāna* and the sheath ignorance *(avidyā) (vibhartti yaccāsiratnamacyuto' tyantanirmalam* / *vidyāmayantu taj-jñānamavidyākośasaṁsthitham* // I, 22, 72). The *Ahirbudhnyasaṁhitā* also explains the sword as signifying *jñāna* and the sheath as *avidyā*. Curiously, in the Buddhist pantheon the sword is one of the principal attributes of Mañjuśrī and there too the sword represents knowledge. (see P. Pal, 'Two syncretistic Icons', *J. N. Banerjea Volume*, Calcutta, 1960, pp. 326ff).

48 Schrader, p. 32.

49 *Lakṣmītantra*, II. 25.

50 H. H. Wilson, *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, London, 1840, p. 60.

51 *Bṛhat Tantrasāra*, p. 487.

52 B. N. Mukherjee, 'Vausdhārā' in *Basudhārā* (Bengali Journal), 4th year, vol. I, No. 1, pp. 21ff. The *Vasundharoddeśa*, a text describing the rituals of Vasundharā, begins as follows :

om namo bhagavati Vasudhārāyai / *samanvaharantu māṁ Buddhā aśe (ṣa) dikṣu saṁsthitā* // *bhagavatī Vasudhāre jñāna-mūrttiṁ namāmihaṁ* /.

H. P. Sastri, *A Descriptive catalogue of Sanskrit Manuscripts in the Government Collection*, vol. I, p. 129.

53 M. T. de Mallmann, *Les enseignements iconographiques l'Agni-Purana*, pp. 43ff.

54 *Agnipurāṇa*, 49, 26.
śaṅkha cakra gadā vedapāṇiścāśvaśirā hariḥ /
vāmapādo dhṛtaḥ śeṣe dakṣiṇaḥ kūrmapṛṣṭhagaḥ //

55 H. Goetz. 'Early Indian Sculptures from Nepal', *Artibus Asiae*, 18, 1955, p. 72, fig. 6.

56. *cakraṁ padmāṣanaṁ kūrmaṁ māyūraṁ*
kaukkuṭaṁ tathā / ... ... etātkūrmāsanaṁ
proktaṁ yogasiddhikaraṁ param /

quoted by Gopinath Rao, *Elements of Hindu Iconography*, vol. 1, pt. I, Description of Terms, p. 18.

57 *ibid*, pp. 20-21.

58 *ibid*, pl. VI, Figs. 3 & 4.

ERRATA

Page	Line	For	Read
5	26	Ṣvetavarāhasvāmin	Śvetavarāhasvāmin
7	20	Viṣṇū	Viṣṇu
14	20	Saṇkarāchārya's	Śaṅkarācārya's
17	14	Nīlakaṇṭha	Nīlkaṇṭha
19	11	Kṛtvā	kṛtvā
21	16	brāhmana	brāhmaṇa
21	24	svatāras	avatāras
24	1	eniorcles	encircles
35	34	Stele	stele
44	30	*mirror*	mirror
50	25	them	theme
52	18	from	form
52	30	*Sātvataśamhitā*	*Sātvatasaṁhitā*
54	5	Bramhā	Bramhā
57	4	every	very
58	27	sothern	southern
62	23	vidyesvaras	vidyeśvaras
63	1	Gobinda	Govinda
63	28	that the	that of the
63	35	Caturviṁṣatimūrti	caturviṁśatimūrti
64	1	iconoic	iconic
64	2	contary	contrary
64	3	Bhimārjuṇadeva	Bhīmārjunadeva
64	21	after right	right, and Garuḍa to the left
65	1	Vaśisṭha	Vaśiṣṭha
65	9	days	nights
67	3	*ghāra*	*hāra*
67	11	from	form
67	30	iconoic	iconic
68	1	IV	iv
68	23	iconoic	iconic
68	27	iconoic	iconic
71	22	sence	sense
71	27	from	form

71	29	from	form
73	8	*sarpa-keyyras*	*sarpa-keyūras*
78	14	as a huge	as huge
94	1	in	on
99	28	Nanda and has	Nanda has
100	6	Yośodā	Yaśodā
101	14	Trivakarā	Trivakrā
102	18	Muṣee	Muse´e

APPENDIX

VISNUISM AND LATER TĀNTRIC LITERATURE

In the compendium of tāntric literature known as *Tantrasāra* or *Bṛhat-Tantrasāra,* many mantras and rituals are given which throw further light on tāntric Viṣṇuism. The material there has been culled from various tāntric works, many of which are no longer known. All quotations in this appendix are from the *Bṛhat-Tantrasāra* (in Bengali), 10 ed. Calcutta, no date.

The text quotes a passage from the *Gautamītantra,* where the twentyfour vyūhas are named according to the more well-known lists of the purāṇas or the *Rūpamaṇḍana,* discussed above.

tadyathā Gautamīye
Keśavādayastu keśava-nārāyaṇa-mādhava-govinda-viṣṇu-madhusūdana-trivikrama-vāmana-śrīdhara-hṛṣikeśa-padmanābha-dāmodara-saṁkarśaṇa-vāsudeva-pradyumnāniruddha-puruṣottama-adhokṣaja-nṛsiṁha-acyuta-janārddana-upendra-hari-viṣṇavaḥ |

In a passage quoted from the *Sāradātilaka* sixteen of these, viz. Keśava, Nārāyaṇa, Mādhava, Govinda, Viṣṇu, Madhusūdana, Trivikrama, Vāmana, Śrīdhara, Hṛṣikeśa, Padmanābha, Dāmodara, Vāsudeva, Saṁkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna and Aniruddha are considered to be *svararṇamūrtis.* The commentator has emended this to *svarṇa-murtis,* but probably what is meant is *svara-mūrtis.* To these sixteen, whose names are lifted from the list of the vyūhas, are added thirty-five others (see Table A), who are said to be *halamūrtis.* They are all described as dark-complexioned and holding the *śaṅkha* and the *cakra* only, thus implying that they are all two-armed *(Keśavādya ime śyāmaḥ śaṅkhacakrasalaṁkarāḥ).*

Similarly, fiftyone Śaktis are also enumerated in the passage, sixteen of whom are said to be *svara-śaktis* and thirtyfive *vyānjana-śaktis.* Thus, altogether there are fiftyone forms of Viṣṇu and an

equal number of Śaktis. The Śaktis are all described as bright as the lightning, with smiling countenances adoring their lords, and two-armed, the hands displaying the lotus and the *varadamudrā (etaḥ priyatamāṅgeṣu nimaganaḥ sasmitānanaḥ / vidyuddāmasamābhāḥ syuḥ paṅkajābhayavāhavaḥ ||)*. It may be mentioned here that in the *Nārada-Pāñcarātrāgama*, only fourteen Śaktis have been enumerated. (cf. Gopinath Rao, *Elements of Hindu Iconography*, vol. 1, pt. I, p. 233).

The fiftyone names of Viṣṇu include not only the twentyfour names of the vyūhas, but also of his attributes and qualities, and are no doubt derived from his *sahasranāma*. One of the names is Śūlin, which is more commonly a name of Śiva. Of the names of Śaktis several are of the Devī, such as Durgā, Jayā, Vijayā, Caṇḍā, Ramā, Umā. Obviously all such names belonged to a common stock and were borrowed as and when the need arose by theologians of all the sects. It is curious that there should be a vedic flavour in this tantric ideology, for the fiftyone letters, the sixteen vowels and the thirtyfive consonants, are of vedic orgin. In another passage, quoted below, these fiftyone letters are associated with each divine pair.

Keśavādimāhasāradāyām—
Keśavanārāyaṇamādhavagovindaviṣṇavaḥ /
Madhusūdanasaṁjno'nyaḥ syātrivikramavāmano ||
Śrīdharaśca hṛṣikeśaḥ padmanābhastataḥ paraḥ /
Dāmodaraḥ vasudevaḥ saṁkarṣaṇa itīritaḥ ||
Pradyumnaścāniruddhaśca svarārṇamūrttayaḥ smṛtāḥ /
paścāccakri gadī śārṅgi khaḍgī śaṅkhī halī punaḥ ||
mūṣalī śūlisaṁjno'nyaḥ pāśi syādaṅkuśī punaḥ /
Mukundo nandajo nandī naro narakajiddhariḥ ||
Kṛṣṇahsatyahsāttvataḥ syāt śauriḥ sūro janārddanaḥ /
bhūdharo viśvamūrttiśca vaikuṇṭhaḥ puruṣottamaḥ ||
valī valānujo valo vṛṣaghnaśca vṛṣaḥ punaḥ /
Haṁso varāho vimalo nṛsiṁho mūrttayo halām ||
Keśavādyā ime śyāmāḥ śaṅkhacakrasalaṁkarāḥ /
kirttiḥ kāntistuṣṭipuṣṭi dhṛtiḥ śāntiḥ kriyā dayā /

Medhā śaharṣā śraddhā syallajjā lakṣmīḥ sarasvatī |
Prīti ratirimāḥ proktāḥ krameṇa svaraśaktayaḥ ||
Jayā durgā prabhā satyā caṇḍā vāṇī vilāsinī |
Vijayā virajā viśvā vinadā sunadā smṛtiḥ ||
ṛddhiḥ samṛddhiḥ śuddhiḥ syadbhuktirvvūddhirmmati kṣamā |
Ramomā kledini klinnā vasudā vasudhā parā ||
tathā parayaṇā sukṣmā sandhyā prajñā prabhā niśā |
Amoghā vidyutā ceti kīrttyadyāḥ sarvvakāmadāḥ ||
etaḥ priyatamāṅgeṣu nimagnāḥ sasmitānanāḥ |

tatha ca kramadīpikāyām—

aṁ keśavāya kīrttyai namo lalāṭe | āṁ nārāyaṇāya kāntyai namo mukhe | iṁ mādhavāya tuṣṭyai namo dakṣanetre | īṁ govindāya puṣṭyai namo vāmanetre | sarvvatra evaṁ | uṁ viṣṇave dhṛtyai dakṣakarṇe | ūṁ madhusūdanāya śāntyai vāmakarṇe | ṛṁ trivikramāya kriyāyai dakṣanāsapuṭe | ṝṁ vāmanāya dayayai vāmanāsapuṭe | ḷṁ śrīdharāya medhāyai dakṣagaṇḍe | ḹṁ hṛṣīkeśāya harṣāyai vāmagaṇḍe | eṁ padmanābhāya śraddhāyai oṣṭhe | aiṁ dāmodarāya lajjāyai adhare | oṁ vāsudevāya lakṣmyai ūrddhadantapaṁktau | oum saṁkarṣaṇāya sarasvatyai adhodantapaṁktau | aṁ pradyumnāya prītyai mastake | aḥ aniruddhāya ratyai mukhe | kaṁ cakriṇe jayāyai, khaṁ gadine durgāyai, gaṁ śārṅgiṇe prabhāyai, ghaṁ khaḍgine satyāyai, ṅm śaṅkhine caṇḍāyai, iti dakṣakaramūlasandhyagrakeṣu | caṁ haline vāṇyai, chaṁ mūṣaline vilāsinyai, jaṁ śūline vijayāyai, jhaṁ pāśine virajāyai, ñ aṅkuśine viśvāyai, iti vāmakaramūlasandhyagrakeṣu | ṭaṁ mukundāya vinadāyai, ṭhaṁ nandajāya sunadāyai, ḍaṁ nandine smṛtyai, ḍhaṁ narāya ṛddhyai, ṇaṁ narakajite samṛddhyai, iti dakṣapādamūlasandhyagrakeṣu | taṁ haraye, śuddhyai, thaṁ kṛṣṇāya buddhyai, daṁ satyāya bhaktyai, dhaṁ sāttvataya matyai, naṁ śauraye kṣamāyai, iti vāmapadamūlasandhyagrakeṣu paṁ śūrāya ramāyai dakṣapārśve | phaṁ janārddanāya umāyai vāmapārśve | baṁ bhūdharāya kledinyaipṛṣṭhe | bhaṁ viśvamūrttaye klināyai nābhaou | maṁ vaikuṇṭhāya vasudāyai udare | yam tvagātmane puruṣottamāya vasudhāyai hṛdi | raṁ asṛgātmane valine parāyai dakṣāṁse | laṁ māṁsātmane valānujāya parāyaṇāyai kakudi | vaṁ medātmane vālāya sūkṣmāyai vāmāṁse | śaṁ asthyatmane vṛṣaghnāya sandhyāyai hṛdādi-

dakṣakare | yaṁ majjātmane vṛṣāya prajñāyai hṛdādivāmakare | saṁ śukrātmane haṁsāya prabhāyai hṛdādidakṣapade | haṁ prānātmane varāhāya niśāyai hṛdādivāmapāde | l aṁ jīvātmane vimalāya amoghāyai hṛdādyudare | kṣaṁ krodhātmane nṛsimhāya vidyutāyai hṛdadimukhe iti |

In another passage quoted in the *Bṛhat-Tantrasāra,*—the source, however, is not given,—the twelve Ādityas are associated or identified with twelve sub-vyūhas (see Table B) in a mantra meant for *nyāsa.* In this list of the twelve Ādityas, Sūrya or Ravi has not been included. (Those interested may compare this list with the names of Āditya as tabulated by M. T. de Mallmann, *Les enseignements de l'Agni-purana,* pp. 78-9, Table au D). The passage is as follows.

lalāṭe oṁ aṁ keśavāya dhātre namaḥ | kukṣou naṁ āṁ nārāyaṇāya aryyamne namaḥ || hṛdi ṣoṁ iṁ mādhavāya mitrāya namḥ | galakūpe bhaṁ īṁ govindāya varuṇāya namaḥ || dakṣapārśve gaṁ uṁ viṣṇave aṁśave namaḥ | dakṣiṇāṁse vaṁ ūṁ madhūsūdhanāya bhagāya namaḥ || galadakṣiṇabhāge teṁ eṁ trivikramāya vivasvate namaḥ | vāmapārśve vaṁ aiṁ vāmanāya indrāya namaḥ || vāmāṁse suṁ oṁ śrīdharāya puṣṇe namaḥ | galavāmabhāge deṁ ouṁ hṛṣikeśāya parjjanyāya namaḥ || pṛṣṭhe vaṁ aṁ padmanābhāya tvaṣṭre namaḥ | kukudi yaṁ aḥ dāmodarāya viṣṇave namaḥ ||

Table—A

Forms of Viṣṇu	*Śakti*	*Letter*
Keśava	Kīrtti	a
Nārāyaṇa	Kānti	ā
Mādhava	Tuṣṭi	i
Govinda	Puṣṭi	ī
Viṣṇu	Dhṛti	u
Madhusūdana	Śānti	ū
Trivikrama	Kriyā	ṛ
Vāmana	Dayā	ṝ
Śrīdhara	Medhā	ḷ

Forms of Viṣṇu	*Śakti*	*Letter*
Hṛṣikeśa	Harṣa	ḷḷ
Padmanābha	Śraddhā	e
Dāmodara	Lajjā	ai
Vāsudeva	Lakṣmī	o
Saṁkarṣaṇa	Sarasvatī	ou
Pradyumna	Prīti	aṁ
Aniruddha	Rati	aḥ
Cakrin	Jayā	ka
Gadin	Durgā	kha
Śārṅgin	Prabhā	ga
Khaḍgin	Satyā	gha
Śaṅkhin	Caṇḍā	ṅ
Halin	Vāṇī	ca
Mūṣalin	Vilāsinī	cha
Śūlin	Vijayā	ja
Pāśin	Virajā	jha
Aṅkuśin	Viśvā	ña
Mukunda	Vinadā	ṭa
Nandaja	Sunadā	ṭha
Nandin	Smṛti	ḍa
Nara	Ṛddhi	ḍha
Narakajit	Samṛddhi	ṇa
Hari	Śuddhi	ta
Kṛṣṇa	Buddhi	tha
Satya	Bhakti	da
Sāttvata	Mati	dha
Śaura	Kṣamā	na
Sura	Ramā	pa
Janārddana	Umā	pha
Bhūdhara	Kledinī	ba
Viśvamūrtti	Klinnā	bha
Vaikuṇṭha	Vasudā	ma
Puruṣottama	Vasudhā	Ya
Valin	Parā	ra
Valānuja	Parāyaṇā	la

Forms of Viṣṇu	*Śakti*	*Lett*
Bala	Sukṣmā	va
Vṛṣaghna	Sandhyā	śa
Vṛṣa	Prajñā	ṣa
Haṁsa	Prabhā	sa
Varāha	Niśā	ha
Vimala	Amoghā	la
Nṛsiṁha	Vidyutā	kṣa

Table B

Name of Viṣṇu	*Name of Āditya*	*Part of body*
Keśava	Dhātā	lalāṭa
Nārāyaṇa	Aryyaman	kukṣi
Mādhava	Mitra	hṛdaya
Govinda	Varuṇa	kaṇṭha
Viṣṇu	Aṁśu	dakṣiṇapārśva
Madhusūdana	Bhagā	dakṣiṇaskandha
Trivikrama	Vivasvan	galadakṣiṇa
Vāmana	Indra	vāmapārśve
Śrīdhara	Puṣan	vāmaskandha
Hṛṣikeśa	Parjjanya	vāmagala
Padmanābha	Tvaṣṭā	pṛṣṭha
Dāmodara	Viṣṇu*	grīvā

*It is curious that Āditya Viṣṇu here is not identified with Viṣṇu of the other list.

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Harivaṁśa
Lakṣmītantra
Mahābhārata
Mārkaṇḍeyapurāṇa
Matsyapurāṇa
Ṛāmāyaṇa
Ṛgveda
Rūpamaṇḍana
Sāradātilaka
Śilparatna
Skandapurāṇa
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Fig. 40. Viṣṇu on Garuḍa, 6th century, eastern India, The Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland.

Fig. 41. Viṣṇu on Garuḍa, 16th century, Bharat Kala Bhavan, Varanasi.

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Fig. 48. Detail of Fig. 47.

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List of Illustrations

Fig. 1. Folio illustrating Brāhmaṇical divinities, Nyāgrodhśāyin Viṣṇu and Anantaśāyin Viṣṇu, Kalāpustaka. c. 1600, University Library, Cambridge.

Fig. 2. Churning of the Ocean, Kalāpustaka, c. 1600, University Library, Cambridge.

Fig. 3. Churning of the Ocean, Kalāpustaka, c. 1600, University Library, Cambridge.

Fig. 4. Shrine of Varāha, Dhum-Vārāhī.

Fig. 5. Varāha, 6th century, Dhum-Vārāhi.

Fig. 6. Narasiṁha, 13th century, Temple of Chaṅgu-Nārāyaṇa.

Fig. 7. Viṣṇu vikrānta, 467 A. D., Mṛgasthali.

Fig. 8. Viṣṇu vikrānta, 467 A. D., from Lajimpat, now in the Bir Library, Kathmandu.

Fig. 9. Viṣṇu vikrānta, 8th century, Temple of Chaṅgu Nārāyaṇa.

Fig. 10. Viṣṇu vikrānta, 14th century, Pharphing.

Fig. 11. Viṣṇu Trivikrama, 578 A. D., Badami, India.

Fig. 12. Viṣṇu Trivikrama, 8th century, Ellora, India.

Fig. 13. Scenes from the *Rāmāyaṇa,* Kalāpustaka, c. 1600, University Library, Cambridge.

Fig. 14. Scenes from the *Rāmāyaṇa,* Kalāpustaka, c. 1600 University Library, Cambridge.

Fig. 15. Scenes from the *Rāmāyaṇa,* Kalāpustaka, c. 1600, University Library Cambridge.

Fig. 16. Viṣṇu maṇḍala, Paṭa, 1686 A. D., Prince of Wales Museum of Western India, Bombay.

Fig. 17. Scroll showing Daśāvatāras, Late 18th century, The Denver Art Museum, Denver.

Fig. 18. A folio from an illustrated *Mahābhārata,* showing the Pañcapaṇḍavas, Jaimini and Mārkaṇḍeya, Early 19th century, The Nepal Museum, Kathmandu.

Fig. 19. Viśvarūpa Viṣṇu, 8th century, Temple of Chaṅgu Nārāyaṇa.

Fig. 20. Viśvarūpa Viṣṇu, 8th-9th century, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Keith McLeod Fund.

Fig. 21. Viśvarūpa Viṣṇu, 8th-9th century, Kanauj, India.

Fig. 22. Viśvarūpa Viṣṇu, 7th-8th century, Bāshesvar Mahādeo Temple, Kangra, India.

Fig. 23. Viśvarūpa-Viṣṇu, 5th century, Mathura, India, Mathura Museum.

Fig. 24. Detail of Fig. 23.

Fig. 25. Viśvarūpa Kṛṣṇa, 18th century, Collection of Mr. E. M. Scratton on loan to the Ashmolean Museum.

Fig. 26. Viṣṇu maṇḍala, Paṭa, 1681 A. D., Prince of Wales Museum of Western India, Bombay.

Fig. 27. Wooden cover of a *Śivadharma* manuscript showing vyūha aspects of Viṣṇu, 13th century, Bir Library, Kathmandu.

Fig. 28. Wooden cover of a *Śivadharma* manuscript showing vyūha aspects of Viṣṇu, 13th century, Bir Library, Kathmandu.

Fig. 29. Viṣṇu maṇḍala, Pata, 1772, A. D., Bharat Kala Bhavan, Varanasi.

Fig. 30. Viṣṇu with Lakṣmī and Garuḍa, 12th century, Deo Patan.

Fig. 31. Viṣṇu with Lakṣmī and Garuḍa, 12th century, Kathmandu.

Fig. 32. Viṣṇu, 4th-5th century, Jhusi, India, Allahabad, Museum.

Fig. 33. Viṣṇu with Laksmī and Garuḍa, Wooden cover of a manuscript of *Śivadharma,* 1139 A. D., University Library, Cambridge.

Fig. 34. Viṣṇu, 15th century, Nasli and Alice Heeramaneck collection, New York.

Fig. 35. Nārāyaṇa, 18th century, Bharat Kala Bhavan, Varanasi.

INDEX

Abhayamalla, 12
Acyūta, 63, 74
Adhokṣaja, 63
ĀdiNārāyaṇa, 11
Ādipurāṇa, 92
Aditi, 91
Āditya, 52, 54, 56
— Viṣṇu, 6-8, 130
advaita, 14
Āgama, 10, 108
Agni, 39
Āgnipurāṇa, 13, 22, 56, 58, 60, 63, 65, 85-6, 110-11, 135, 145
Agrawala, V. S., 26
Ahalyā, 45
Airāvata, 24
Ahirbudhnyasaṁhitā, 23, 76, 83-5, 141-42, 144, 146
Akrura, 100-01
Akṣobhya, 127
Alakṣmī, 136
Allahabad, 39, 69
Amaravati, 32
Amāvasyā, 65
Amoghapāśa, 77
Amṛtadeva, 18
Aṁśuvarman, 2-4, 8, 15, 28, 70, 77, 136
Ānanda, 49
Anant, (sage) 104-5 ; (serpent) 13, 52, 65, 82, 84, 86
Ananta-Nārāyaṇa, 74
Anantavrata, 13-4, 82, 86, 104-5
Ananṭa-Yajña-Viṣṇu, 82
Aniruddha, 62, 81-2, 103-04, 109

Antaryāmin (aspect of Viṣṇu), 62, 83
Aparājitapṛccha, 58, 111
Arccā, 62
Arddhalakṣmīhari, 143
Arddhanāriśvara, 115, 126, 130, 133, 137, 140, 143
Arddhasaurīśvara, 7, 14, 128, 130
Arjuna, 7, 18, 50-1, 53-4, 59, 87, 97-8
āsana, 63, 66, 69, 77
—mūrti, 69, 74, 75
Atharvaveda, 26, 39, 112
Avalokiteśvara, 9, 17, 70, 119, 136 ; Hari-hari-hari-vāhana, 71
avatāra, 9-10, 17, 21-3, 25-8, 30, 40-1, 44, 46-8, 50, 52, 54, 56-7, 65, 81, 85, 87, 96-7, 116
āveśa, 22
Ayodhya, 45

Badami, 34-7, 41-3
Bagmati, 1, 4, 5, 31
Bahurūpa-Sadāśiva, 135
Bajaura, 56
Balaju, 4, 77, 79
Balambu, 15
Balarāma, 22, 47-9, 90-1, 100
Bali, 30-1, 33-5, 40-1, 43-5, 48, 102
Bāṇabhaṭṭa, 11
Bāṇāsura, 35, 102-03
Banerjea, J. N., 34, 85, 109, 126
Banerji, R. D,, 37
Bengal, 5, 72, 88, 92, 118, 124, 148
Bhagavadgitā, 6-7, 9, 18, 21, 40, 50-1, 54-6, 58-9, 61, 98
Bhāgavata, 7, 9, 92
Bhāgavata-Pāñcarātra, 6-7, 21
Bhagavatapurāṇa, 14, 22, 24, 35, 37, 92, 95, 100, 104, 143
Bhairava, 24, 54, 56-7, 83, 114, 116, 139
Bhadra, 81
bhakti, 6, 9,

bhaktivāda, 6
Bharadvāja, 65
Bhāratavarsa, 1
Bhatgaon, 11-2, 15, 19, 113, 139
Bhava, 3
Bhavānī, 24, 129-30
Bhavisvottarapurāṇa, 125
Bhīmārjunadeva, 2-3, 8, 64, 78, 120
Bhīmasena, 14-5, 98, 105
Bhīṣma, 97
Bhṛkuṭī, 77
Bhumbhukkikā, 3, 78
Bhūmi, 15, 67, 74, 85, 117, 148
Bihar, 148
Boar (see also Varāha), 26-7
Bombay, 64, 91
Boner, 34-5, 37, 41
Bodhisattva, 18, 33, 119
Brahmā, 18, 20, 23-5, 29-30, 42, 44, 48, 54, 56, 58, 81, 83, 116, 128, 139
Brahmaloka, 19, 56
Brahmapurāṇa, 4
Bṛhaddharmapurāṇa, 125
Bṛhatsaṁhitā, 114
Bruhn, Klaus, 37-8, 43
Buddha, 16-8, 22, 47-9, 57, 70, 77, 127, 148
Buddhism, 14, 16, 141, 147
Buddhist, 1, 9, 16-9, 68, 71, 77, 85, 98-9, 108, 117, 123, 127, 133, 139, 141, 143, 145, 149
Budha-Gupta, 4
Buḍhā-Nīlakaṇṭha, 2, 4, 17, 77-80, 120, 127

Caitanya, 87, 148
Calcutta, 138, 144
Cambridge, 22, 43, 90, 94
Candra, 4, 81
Candragupta II, 26

caturmukha (caumukha), 68
caturviṁśatimūrti, 8, 10, 62-4, 74, 76
caturvyūha, 60
chakrapuruṣa, 57
Chāndogya Upaniṣad, 7
Chaṅgu Nārāyaṇa, 1-3, 8, 11, 17, 28, 31-8, 51, 55, 61, 69, 71-3, 110, 112, 119-20, 122-23, 135
Chauvar, 1
Christ, 49
Cleveland, 72
Cooch Behar, 88

Dakṣa, 131
Dakṣin-koli (grāma), 4, 78
Dāmodara, 63, 81
Damodarpur, 4-5
Daṇda, 81
Daśaratha, 45
daśāvatāra, 45-7
Dattatreya, 11, 122, 126
Denver, 47, 50
Deo Patan, 12, 66-7, 73, 93, 120, 131-33, 148
Devakī, 92, 94, 100, 113
Devakīputra, 7
Devī, 15, 83, 99, 103, 111-15, 118, 126, 144
Devīmāhātmya, 113
Dharmadatta, 11
Dharmamalla, 10
Dharmmadeva, 2
Dhanvantari, 24
Dhātā, 81
dhruvabera, 63, 66, 68, 85
Dhruvadeva, 2, 8
Dhum-Vārāhī, 5, 27, 120, 122
Dhumra-Varāha, 5
Dikpāla, 53, 75-6, 81, 83-4

Dolācala, 18
Dolādri, 1-3, 70
Dolāgiri, 70
Dolāśikhara, 70
Dolāśikharasvāmin, 3, 70
Durgā, 115
Duryodhana, 98
Dvārakā, 10

Earth (goddess), 15, 28
Ekallavira Caṇḍa Maharoṣaṇa tantic, 18
Ellora, 41, 146

Gadānārī, 57
Gajendramokṣa, 96
Gaṅapati, 104 ; Gāṇapatya, 125
Gaṇeśa, 48, 64, 81, 83, 103, 139
Garga, 99, 100
Garhwal, 88
Garuḍa, 17, 29, 31, 36, 39, 42, 44, 53, 60-1, 66-73, 75-6, 80-5, 96, 103, 110, 113-16, 118, 120-22, 127, 131, 133, 135, 138
Garuḍa Narāyaṇa, 11, Garudopari Nārāyaṇa, 120
Gautama, 98
Ghora Angirasa, 7
Gitagovinda, 92, 143, 148
Goetz, H., 44
Gokula, 89, 94, 99-100
Gonda, 26, 39-40
Gopāleśvara, 17
Govardhana, 91
Govinda, 17, 63, 81
Greek, 6, 25, 105
Gujarat, 109, 148
Gupta, 4-6, 8-9, 26, 40, 57, 59, 62, 91, 125, 147
Gurkha, 10

Haṁsa, 112
Hanu-Bhairava, 116
Hanuman. 14-5, 45, 48, 98, 116
Hanuman-dhoka, 14
Nāṭaka, 13, 104
Hara, 48, 126, 128, 133-34
Hari, 1-2, 8, 9, 13-4, 63, 70, 126, 128, 133
Harigaon, 4, 120, 122
Hari Hara, 115, 125-26, 128-29, 131, 133-35
Hari-Lakṣmī, 116
Harihara-Lakṣmī. 116
Hariśaṅkari, 115
Hariṣeṇa, 39
Harivaṁśa, 12, 92, 113
Hārīti, 127
Harṣacarita, 11
Hazra, R. C., 92
Hayagrīva, 145
Hazra, R. C., 92
Hemādri, 13
Hindu, 10, 17, 99, 117, 127
Hiraṇyakaśipu, 29-30, 46, 48, 124
Hiraṇyākṣa, 47
Hṛṣikeśa, 19, 63, 81

Icaṅgu, 11
India, 5-9, 14, 16, 20, 22, 34, 43, 44, 49, 60, 66, 68-9, 87-8, 90-1, 93, 101-02, 109, 118, 121, 123-25, 128, 135, 137, 147-50
Indra, 18, 23-4, 29, 40-1, 53, 75
Indrānī, 111
Iśāna, 58
Iśāna Nārāyaṇa, 11
Iśvara, 130

Jaina, 68, 117
Jalaśayana, 2-4, 17, 52, 64, 78, 80, 120, 122, 127
Janamejaya, 50
Janārdana, 17, 63, 148
Jatāyu, 45
Java, 15
Jaya, 64, 81
Jayadeva (poet), 92, 143, 148
Jayadeva II, 2, 8, 147
Jayajitāmitramalla, 83
Jāyākhyakhyasaṁhitā, 109
Jayarājamalla, 19
Jayaratnamalla, 10
Jayārimalla, 10
Jayasthitimalla, 10-1, 13
Jayayakṣamalla, 3, 11, 15, 19-20, 113, 122
Jina, 68
Jiṣnugupta, 2
Jyotirmalla 10

Kaikeyī, 45
Kaiṭabha, 113
Kālīya, 88-90
Kālīyadamana, 79, 89-90, 95, 101, 120, 122
Kalkin, 22, 47, 49
Kamalā, 41 ; Kamalajā, 126, 140
Kaṁsa, 94, 96, 99-101, 105, 113
Kanauj, 54, 56-9, 147
Kangra, 56-7
Kapila, 70, 109, 112
Kārttikeya (or Kumāra), 48, 64, 82, 139
Kāruṇikeśvara, 17
Kashmir, 109
Kāśyapa, 31
Kathmandu, 12, 14, 27, 30-1, 50, 75, 77, 87-8, 91, 104, 110, 118, 120, 134, 137

Kauṇḍinya, 104-05
Kaurava, 97
Kauśiki (Kosi), 4-5
Keśava, 8, 50, 62, 74, 81
Keśava-Śaṅkara, 130
Khajuraho, 109
Kokā, 4-5
Kokāmukhasvāmin, 4, 5
Kosi (Kauśikā), 4, 5
Kroḍa 112
Krodha-Bhairava, 114
Kṛṣṇa, 7, 12-4, 18, 20, 27, 50-1, 60, 63-4, 87-103, 107, 124, 128,143,148
Kubera, 53, 75, 136
kumāra, see Kārttikeya
Kumbhakarṇa, 45
Kumuda, 84 ; Kumudākṣa 84
Kūrma, 22, 24, 41, 46, 56
Kuvalayapīḍa, 96

Lajimpat, 31-3, 36
Lakṣmaṇa, 44-5, 65, 116
Lakṣmaṇasena, 92
Lakṣmī (see also Śrī), 7-8, 14-5, 81-2, 84, 110, 116, 118, 126, 134-36, 138-46
Lakṣmī-Keśava, 139-40
Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa, 11, 126
Lakṣmī-Vāsudeva, 135, 138, 140, 142-43
Lakṣmītantra, 142, 144
Laṇkā, 45
Levi, S., 30
Licchavi, 2-4, 6, 8, 22, 63, 87, 89, 120, 128-29, 147
Lippe, A., 71
Lokanātha, 22
Lokeśvara (see also Avalokiteśvara), 123, 127
Lucknow, 69, 90

Madanaripu, 129
Mādhava, 19, 63, 81
Madhu, 113
Madhukaśrī, 18-9
Madhuripu, 16
Madhusūdhana, 63, 81
Magadha, 110
Magi, 48
Mahābhārata, 4, 6, 8, 12, 22-3, 27, 59, 87, 92, 97, 107, 113, 130, 136
Mahābhāṣya, 62
Mahākāla, 83, 98, 118, 127
Mahālakṣmī, 15
Mahāmāyā, 113
Mahāvarāha, 54
Mahāyāna, 19, 22, 144
Maheśvara, 58
Maheśvarī, 115
Mahirāvanavadha Nāṭaka, 10, 13
Malla, 10-4, 70, 87-8, 148
Mamallapuram, 41-2
Mānadeva, 1-3, 8-9, 15, 31-2, 38-40, 69, 71-2, 75, 119, 135, 147
maṇḍala, 16, 47, 66, 68, 75, 81-6
Maṅgaleśvara, 11
Māneśvarī, 10
Mañjuśrī, 1, 117
Manu, 41, 84
Māra, 18, 98
Mārīci, 35
Mārkaṇḍeya, 23, 50, 65, 113
Mārkaṇḍeyapurāṇa, 113
Mathura, 7, 57-8, 69, 90, 96, 100-01, 147
Matsya, 22, 56
Matsyapurāṇa, 22, 29
Maukhari, 147
Mātṛka, 112-15
Māyā, 94
Meghanāda, 45

Mewar, 105
Mihira-Bhoja, 26
Mīna Nārāyaṇa, 87, 120
Mohini, 25
Mṛgasthali, 31-2, 36, 44, 72, 93
Mughal, 49, 105
Mura, 8, 130
Murari, 8, 64, 130
Murariśvara, 130

Nāga, 23-4, 29, 31, 37, 52-3, 56, 60, 64, 67, 70, 78-9, 82, 84, 88-90, 103, 119
Nāgarāja, 34-5, 44
Namuci, 31, 35, 37
Nanda, 92, 94, 99
Nandi, 131, 133
Nārada, 100
Narasiṁha (deva), 3, 8-9, 22, 28-30, 46-9, 56-7, 63, 109, 123
Nārāyaṇa, 6-8, 11, 62, 67, 74-5, 81, 83, 86
—Garuḍopari, 70, 74, 76
Nārāyaṇaswami, 2-3
Nārāyaṇaparipṛcchā, 18
Nārāyaṇi, 113 ; *Nārāyaṇī-stūti*, 113
Navagraha, 83-4
Nemi, 128
Nepal, 1-6, 10-2, 14-7, 19-20, 22, 27, 30, 34, 37, 39, 41, 43-4, 49-50, 56, 59-61, 66-9, 85, 87-8, 92, 99, 101, 104-05, 108-12, 117-19, 121, 123, 126, 128, 130, 135-36, 145-49
Nepālamāhātmya, 11, 17, 70, 127, 148
Newari, 13, 97, 148
Nīlakaṇṭha Lokeśvara, 17
Nīlakaṇṭha Mahādeva, 17, 24
Niṣpānnayogāvalī, 18
Nṛsiṁha [see also Narasiṁha (deva)], 112
Nuppunna, 2, 3
Nyāgrodhaśāyin, 23

Oxford, 59

Padmanābha, 8, 63, 81, 84
Pādmapurāṇa, 63
Pādmasaṁhitā, 109
Padmatantra, 84
Pāla, 74, 148
Pañcopāsanā, 68, 126
Pañcarātra, 6, 9-10, 14, 16, 20-2, 40, 62-3, 67, 74, 81, 83, 85, 108-09, 112, 141, 143
Pāñcarātrin, 3, 9, 52, 62, 69, 92, 142
Pāṇḍava, 14-5, 98, 104-05
Panjab, 88, 105
Pāṇiṇi, 7
para (aspect of Viṣṇu), 9, 62, 68-9, 74, 76, 82-6, 111
Paraśurāma, 22, 47-8
Pārvatī, 47-8, 77, 103, 111, 126, 132-33, 135, 144
Pāśupata (sect), 3
Paśupati, Paśupatināth, 2, 3, 8, 10, 16, 127-28, 145
Patan, 12, 30, 64, 68, 37, 107, 117, 120, 124, 127, 132-33
Patañjali, 62
Pharphing, 11, 31, 121
Pauṣkavasaṁhitā, 109
Prabhāvatīguptā, 147
Pracaṇḍa, 81
Pradyumna, 62, 81-2, 109
Prahlāda, 28-9
Prajāpati, 21, 26
Pralambavadha, 100
Prakṛti, 14, 141
Pratāpamalla, 12, 30, 87-9, 110
Prasad, Maheswari, 59, 108
Pṛthivi, 26, 45-7
Pṛthivī Nārāyaṇa Shah, 88
Pūjāpaddhati, 109
Puṇḍarika, 84
Puruṣa, 7, 14, 83-5, 141-42

Pūruṣasūkta, 7
Puruṣottama, 60, 63, 145
Puṣṭi, 117
Putanā, 94, 100
Putanāvadha, 94

Rādhā, 14, 92, 143
Rāhu, 25, 31, 37, 42, 44
Rajasthan, 109, 148
Rajput, 49, 87, 99, 102, 105-07
Rājyavatī, 2, 8, 135
Rāma, 14, 22, 44-5, 47-9, 65, 97, 116
Rāmāyaṇa, 6, 8, 12, 13, 45, 97, 107, 136
Rao, Gopinath, 146
rasalilā, 95
Rāvaṇa, 45, 48
Ravi, 65
Ṛbhu-pāla, 5
Read, Herbert, 134
Reau, Louis, 43
Rgveda, 7, 21, 40, 112, 136
Rudra, 52-4, 56
Rukminī, 93
Rūpamaṇḍana, 58, 63, 65, 74, 81, 83, 111, 121

Saila (Śailajāvallabha), 131
Śaiva, 2-3, 10, 16-7, 47, 68, 78, 80, 108, 115-16, 123, 125-28
Śaivasamaya-neri,
Sahaja (Sahajiyā), 14, 87, 142-43, 149
Sakaṭāsura, 100
Śakta, 112, 116, 125-26
Śakti, 9, 14, 16, 81, 103, 110, 112, 114-15, 126, 141-42, 144
Śaktism, 113
Sāmaveda, 28
Sambara (or Mahāsambara), 18, 60
Saṁkarṣana, 62, 81-2, 109

Sāṇkhya, 9, 14, 112, 141
Samudragupta, 39
Samudramanthana, 22
Sañjaya, 51
Śaṅkarācārya, 14
Śaṅkara-Nārāyaṇa, 128, 131
Śaṅkara-Nārāyaṇasvāmi, 3, 7, 128-30, 140
Sāradā, 15, 117 ; see also Sarasvatī
Sāradātilaka, 140-41
Sarasvati, 15, 64, 67, 116
Śārṅgapāṇi, 8, 130
Satapathabrāhmaṇa, 22, 26
Sāttvaki, 7, 104
Sāttvatasaṁhitā, 52, 81
Satyabhāmā, 93
Satyanārāyaṇa, 4, 122
Saura (Śaura), 7, 125
Saurastra, 7, 148
Sāvarṇī, 41
śayana (-mūrti), 63, 77
Schrader, 141
Śeṣa, 23, 27, 60, 84
Shah (dynasty), 15, 87, 88, 148
Siddhinarasiṁhamalla, 12, 87, 124
Śikhara Nārāyaṇa, 11, 29, 31-4, 36-7
Śikharapattana, Śikharapuri, 11
Śilā, 104
Śisupāla, 97
Sītā, 44-5
Sitalā, 127
Śiva, 3, 10, 16-7, 20, 24, 29, 47, 53-4, 68, 77, 102, 114, 119, 123, 129-34, 139, 144
Śivadeva (monarch), 2-3
Śivadharmapurāṇa, 12, 65-6, 127
Śivaism, 10, 14, 16, 136, 147
Sivaloka, 19

Śivanārāyaṇa, 17
Skandhapurāṇa, 11, 17, 70, 127, 148
Skandopaniṣad, 128
Smārta Pañcopāsaka, 68
Śrī (devī), 3, 7, 9, 15, 42, 67, 74, 85, 112, 135-36, 148
Śrī-Lakṣmī, 15, 24, 29, 31, 36, 38, 48, 53, 64, 67-8, 74, 80, 83, 110, 116, 127, 132, 135, 136
Śrīdhara, 63-4, 67-8, 74, 76, 81
Śrīkaṇṭha, 134
Śrī Kumāra, 140
Śrī Rāmanuja, 148
Śrī-Vaiṣṇava, 20, 60, 79, 93
Śrīvatsagaṅgādhara, 131
Śṛī Viśākha, 18, 20
sthānaka (type of Viṣṇu image), 63, 65-8, 77
Subhadra, 81
Sugrīva, 45
Śukla Yajurveda, 7
Śukra, 70
Śukrācāryā, 31, 35, 43
Śulabhṛcchārṅgapāṇi, 130
Śulin, 130
Sun (see also Śūrya), 7
Sun-kosi (river), 4
Sūrya, 16, 24-5, 37, 81
Svāmivārtta, 3, 128, 131-33, 144
Śvetavarāhasvāmin, 4-5

Taittiriyasaṁhitā, 26, 39
Takṣaka, 70
Tantra, 108
Tantrāntara, 59, 108-09, 112
Tantrasāra, 63, 81, 109, 117, 140-42
Tārā, 111-12, 136
Tathāgata, 68, 77, 111, 127

Ṭhākuri, 10-11
Thankote, 11
Tilamādhava, 11
Tilgaṇgā, 31
Trailokyamohana Viṣṇu, 111
Trambyaka, 134
Triśaṅku, 36
Trivikrama, 9, 30, 39, 40, 63, 65, 81
Tṛṇāvartta, 100

Udayagiri, 27-8, 54
Umā, 126, 139
Umā-Maheśvara, 81
Upendra, 63
Uṣā, 102-03

Vaḍakalai (see also Śrī Vaiṣṇava), 20, 79
Vāgīśvara, 22, 112
Vāgīśvarī, 117-18
Vaikhānasāgama, 42, 63, 85
Vaikuṇṭha (form of Viṣṇu), 12, 58, 62, 76, 83-4, 109-10, 112, 140
Vaiṣṇava, 1-4, 8-16, 18, 20, 25-6, 30, 46, 58, 68-9, 75, 78-80, 85, 87, 91-2, 99, 104, 107-08, 111, 114-16, 119-22, 125-28, 134-35, 142-43, 145, 147-48 ; -dharma, 6
Vaiṣṇavī, 113-15
Vaiṣṇaviśakti, 112-14
Vājasaneyīsaṁhitā, 39
Vajrayāna, 17-8, 48, 60-1, 98, 110-11
Vākāṭaka, 147
Vāmana (see also Viṣṇu vikrānta), 22, 30-1, 35, 40, 43-4, 46, 48-50, 63, 81, 84, 96
Vāmanapurāṇa, 35, 37
Vaṁśāvalī, 30, 89

Varāha, 5, 9, 22, 26-8, 40, 46-7, 56-7, 79, 89, 109, 120, 122 ; Mahāvarāha, 54 ; Yajña-Varāha, 27
Varāhachatra (ksetra), 4
Varāhpurāṇa, 5, 22
Varuṇa, 22, 25, 31, 42. 44, 53, 75
Vāruṇī, 35
Vaśiṣṭha, 65
Vasu, 52-4, 65
Vasudeva, (Kṛṣṇa's father), 92, 94, 113
Vāsudeva, 6-9, 14, 62, 76, 81-5, 92, 109, 126, 134, 139, 142-43 ; Ananta-Vāsudeva, 84, 86
Vāsudeva-Kamalajā, 14, 66, 81, 115, 125-26, 137, 143
Vāsudeva-Lakṣmī, 137
Vasudhā, 15
Vasudhārā, 77, 145
Vāsuki, 1, 23-4, 64-5, 74
Vasundharā, 15, 27, 47
Vāyu, 39
Vāyupurāṇa, 22
Vedavyāsa, 83
Vibhava, 6, 9, 21-3, 25, 28, 40-1, 48, 50, 54, 62
Vibhīṣaṇa, 45
vibhuti, 40, 50-1, 76, 85
Vidhāta, 81
Vidyeśvara, 62, 66, 84
Vighnāntaka, 98
Vijaya, 64, 81
Vijayadeva, 18
Vijayakāmadeva, 11
Vindhyāvalī, 31
Viṣṇu, 1, 2, 6-12, 15-18, 20-42, 44, 47-8, 50, 52, 55-64, 66, 70-87, 93, 96, 108-113, 116-18, 120, 122-23, 127-28, 130-33, 135-39, 141-45, 148 ;
-vikrānta. 1-3, 10, 29-30, 39, 69, 72-3, 135
Viṣṇudharmapurāṇa, 12, 75, 92, 120
Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa, 13, 27, 52, 54, 56, 58-9, 61, 85, 92, 109, 130
Viṣṇugupta, 78

Viṣṇuism, 2, 6, 13-4, 16, 20, 59, 85, 87-8, 108-09, 116, 121, 127 136, 147-49
Viṣṇuloka, 19
Viṣṇumati, 1
Viṣṇupurāṇa, 144
Viṣṇutilaka, 83
Viṣvaksena, 84
Viśvarūpa, 50, 54, 56. 58, 59, 62, 97-8, 111
Vraja, 95
Vrindavana, 91-2, 96
Vṛṣṇi, 7
vyūha, 6, 9, 21, 62, 81-3, 109, 111, 139

Yajña-varāha, 27
Yama, 53, 75
Yamunā, 88, 90, 96, 145
Yaśodhā, 92, 94, 99-101, 113
Yudhisthīra, 87, 97











Fig. 5. Varāha, 6th Century, Dhum-Vārāhi.





Fig. 7. Viṣṇu Vikrānta, 467 A. D., Mṛgasthali.



Fig. 8. Viṣṇu Vikrānta, 467 A. D., from Lajimpat, now in the Bir Library, Kathmandu.



Fig. 9 Viṣṇu vikrānta, 8th century, Temple of Chaṅgu Nārāyaṇa



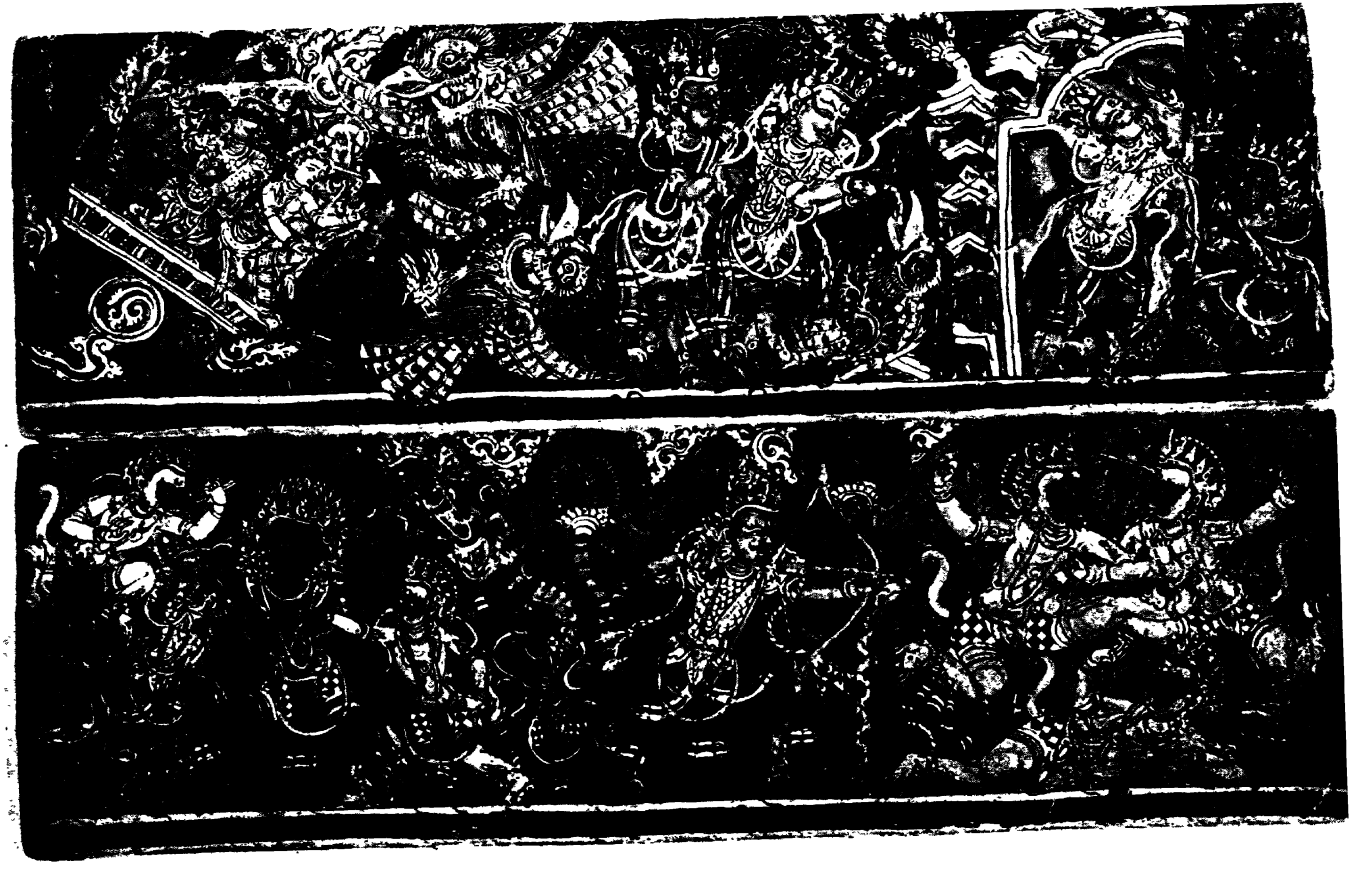
Fig. 10. Viṣṇu Vikrānta, 14th century, Pharphing.

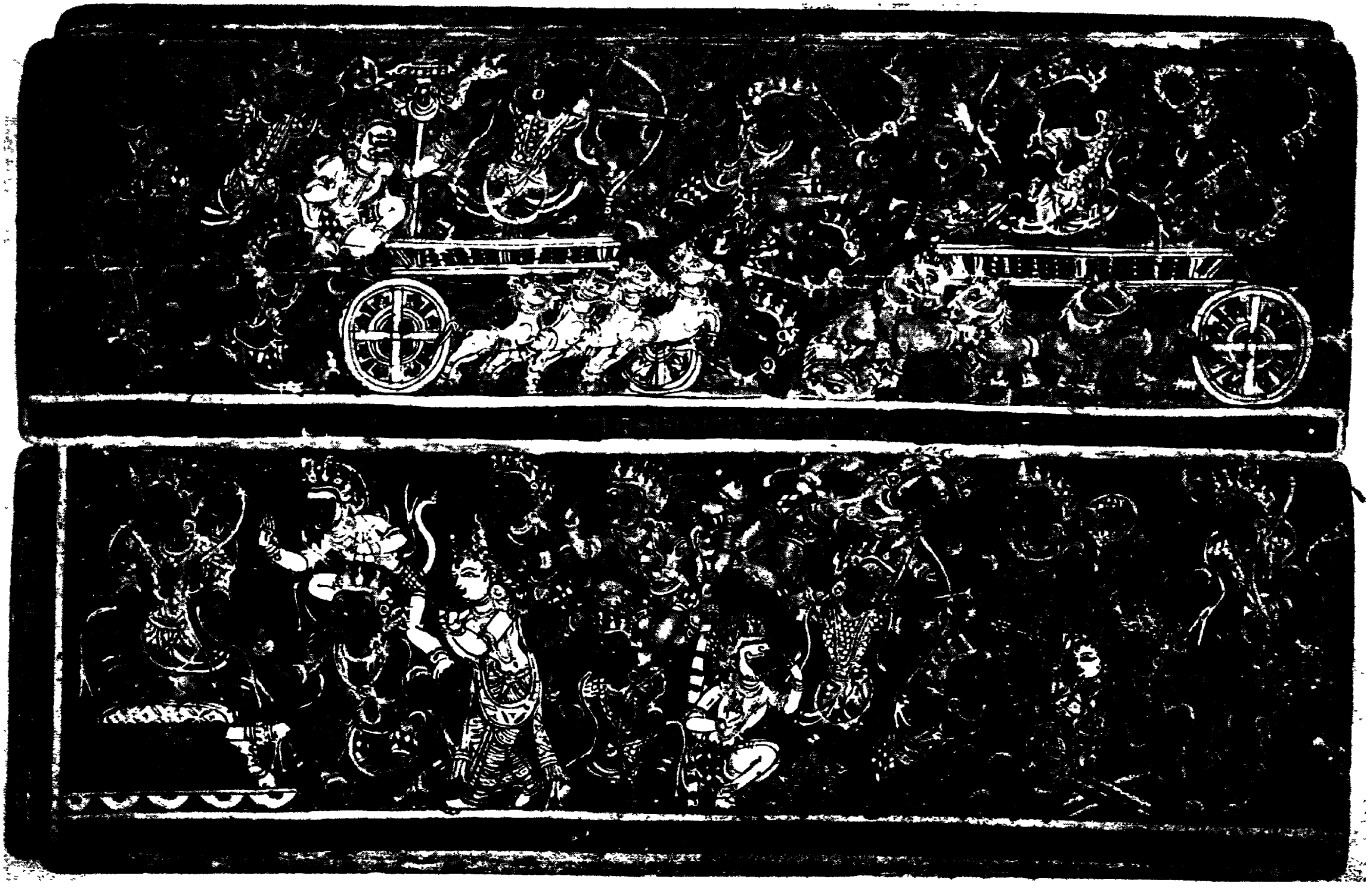




Fig. 12. Viṣṇu Trivikrama, 8th century, Ellora, India.







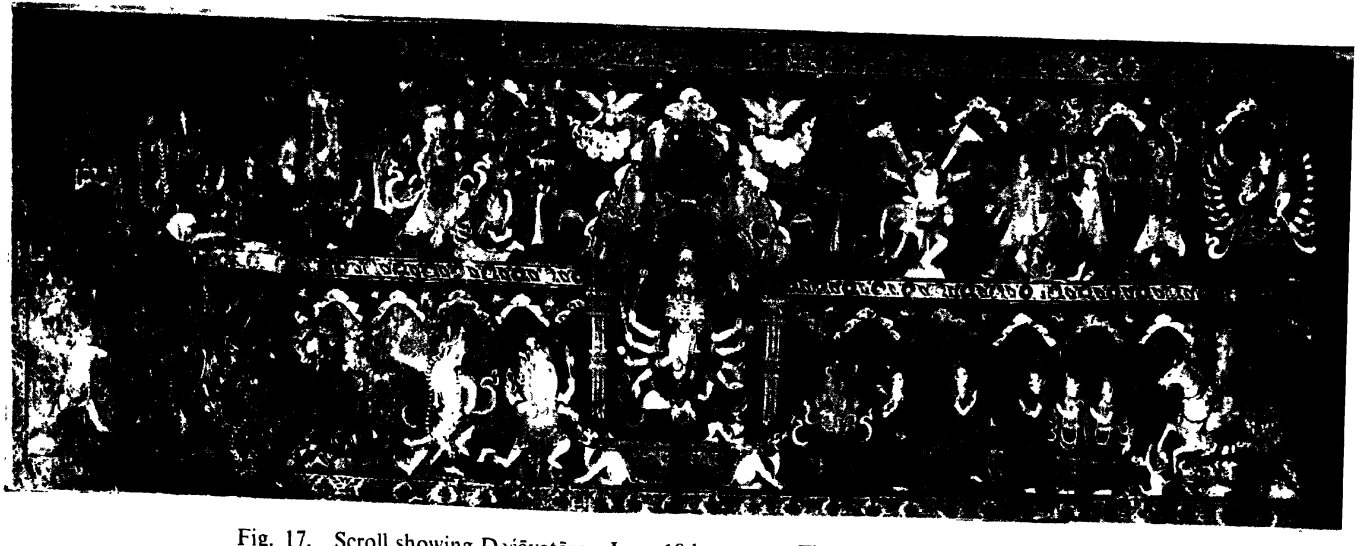


Fig. 17. Scroll showing Daśāvatāras, Late 18th century, The Denver Art Museum, Denver.



Fig. 18 A folio from an illustrated *Mahābhārata*, showing the Pañcapaṇḍavas, Jaimini and Mārkaṇḍeya. Early 19th century, The Nepal Museum, Kathmandu.



Fig. 19. Viśvarūpa Viṣṇu, 8th century, Temple of Chaṅgu Nārāyaṇa.

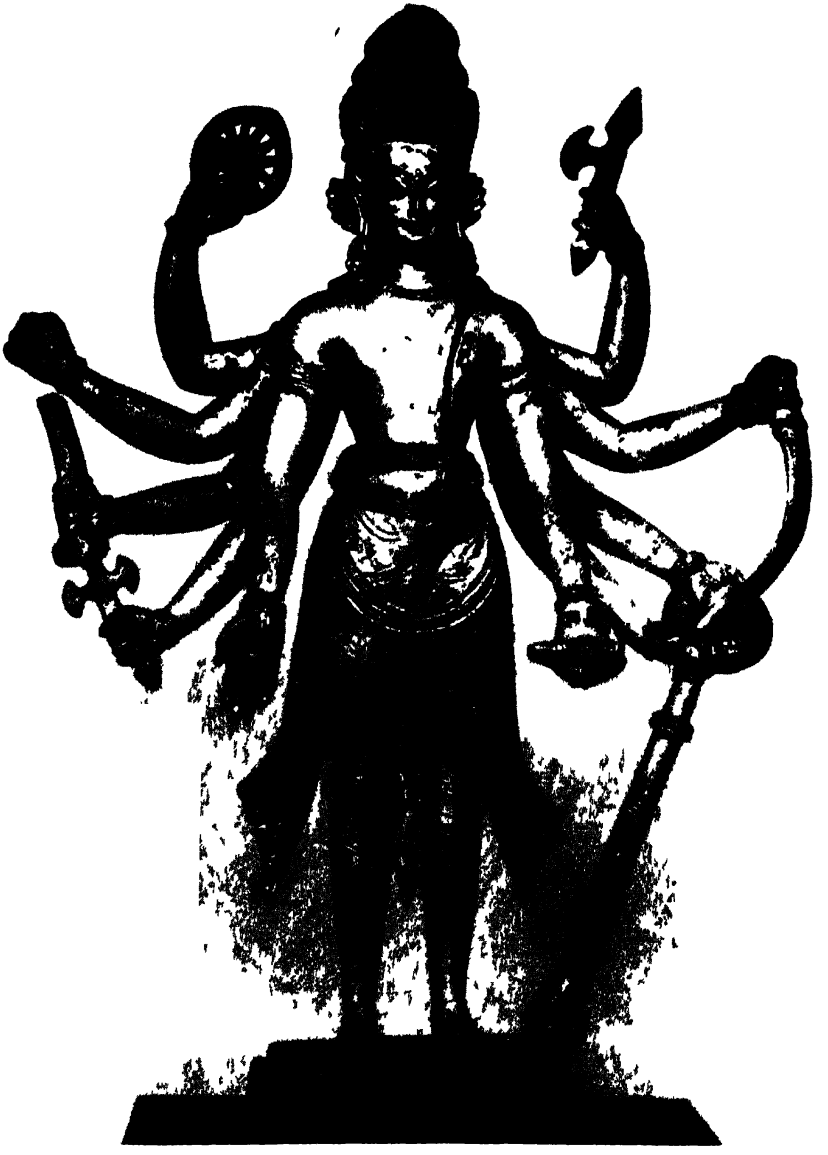


Fig 20
Visvarupa Visnu 8th century Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Keith McLeod Fund



Fig. 21. Viśvarūpa Viṣṇu, 8th-9th century, Kanauj, India.



Fig. 22. Viśvarūpa Viṣṇu, 7th-8th century, Bāshesvar Mahādeo Temple, Kangra, Ind

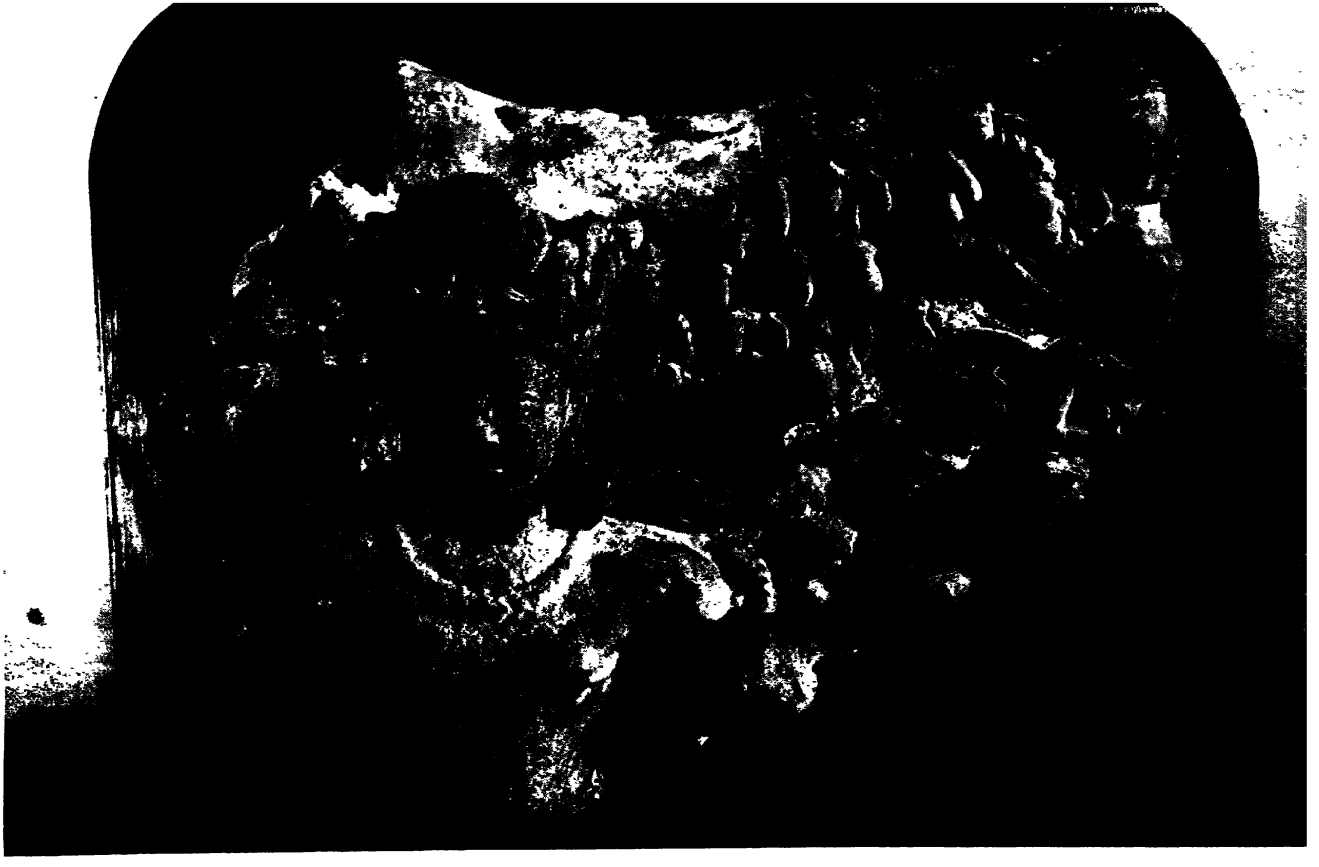




Fig. 24. Detail of Fig. 23.



Fig. 25. Viśvarūpa Kṛṣṇa, 18th century, Collection of Mr. E. M. Scratton on loan to the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford

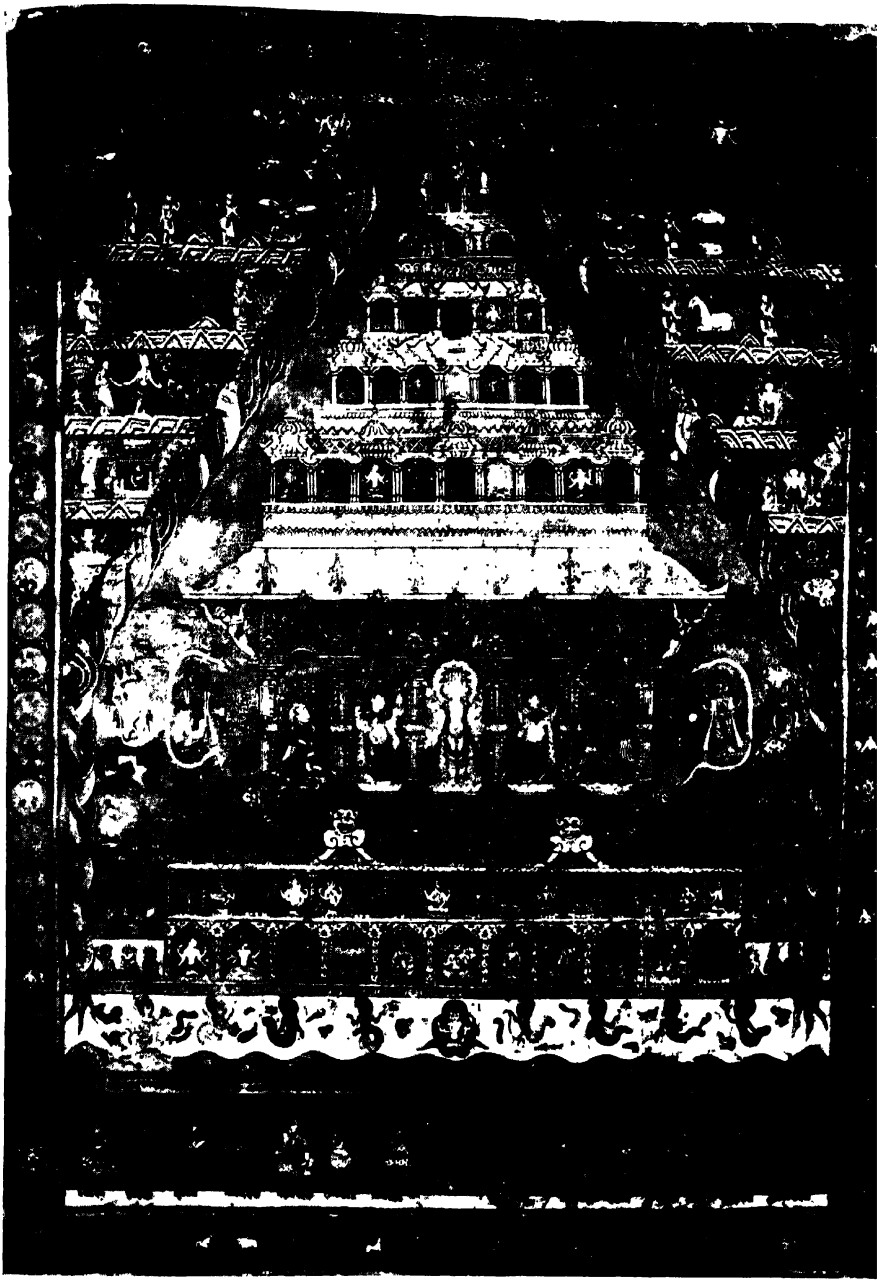


Fig. 26. Viṣṇu maṇḍala, Paṭa, 1681 A. D., Prince of Wales Museum of Western India, Bombay.

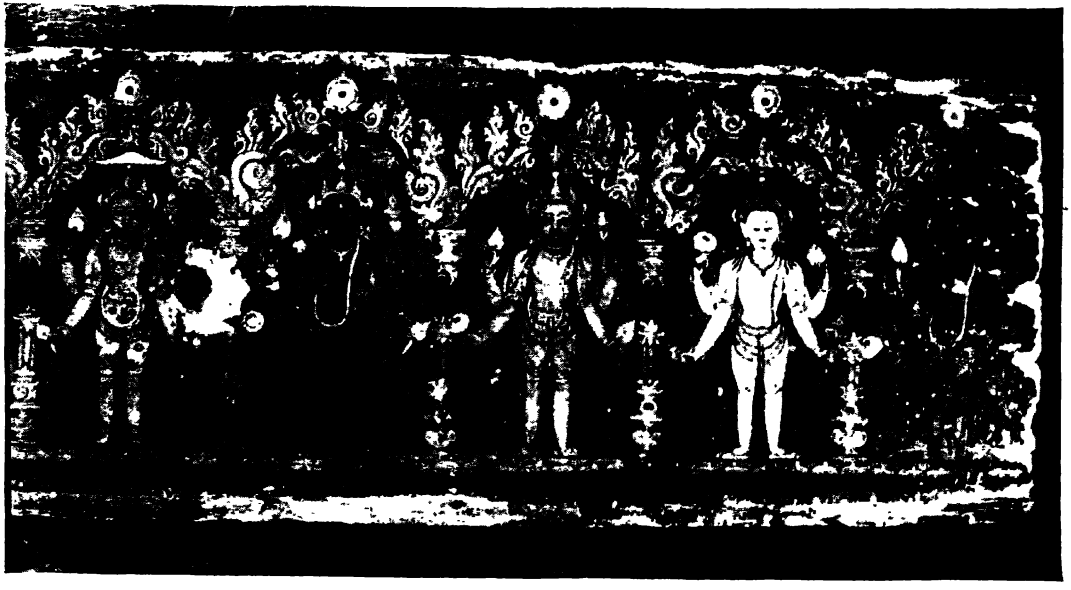


Fig. 27. Wooden cover of a *Śivadharma* manuscript showing vyūha aspects of Viṣṇu, 13th century, Bir Library, Kathmandu.

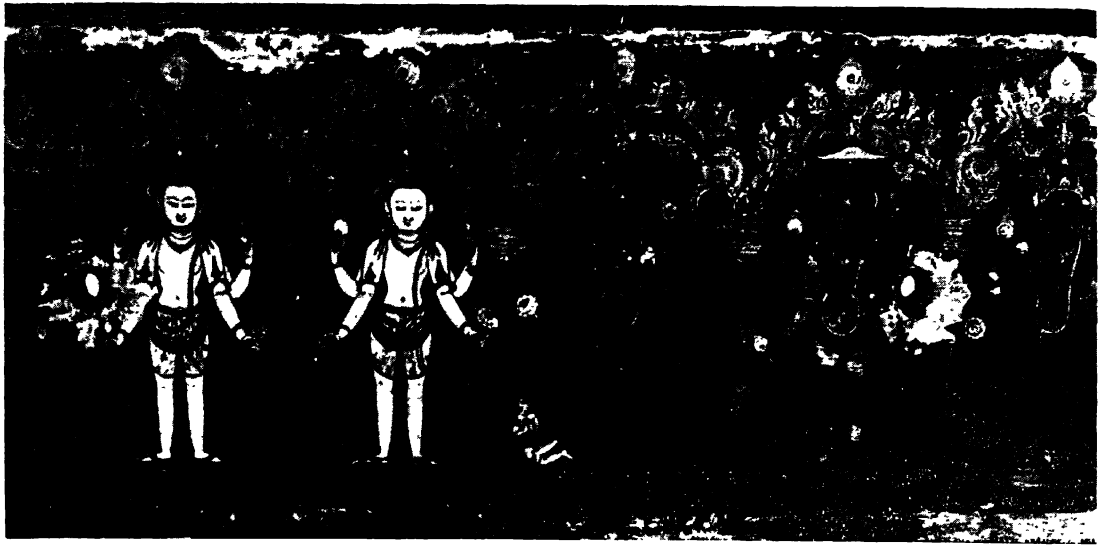


Fig. 28. Wooden cover of a *Śivadharma* manuscript showing vyūha aspects of Viṣṇu, 13th century, Bir Library, Kathmandu.

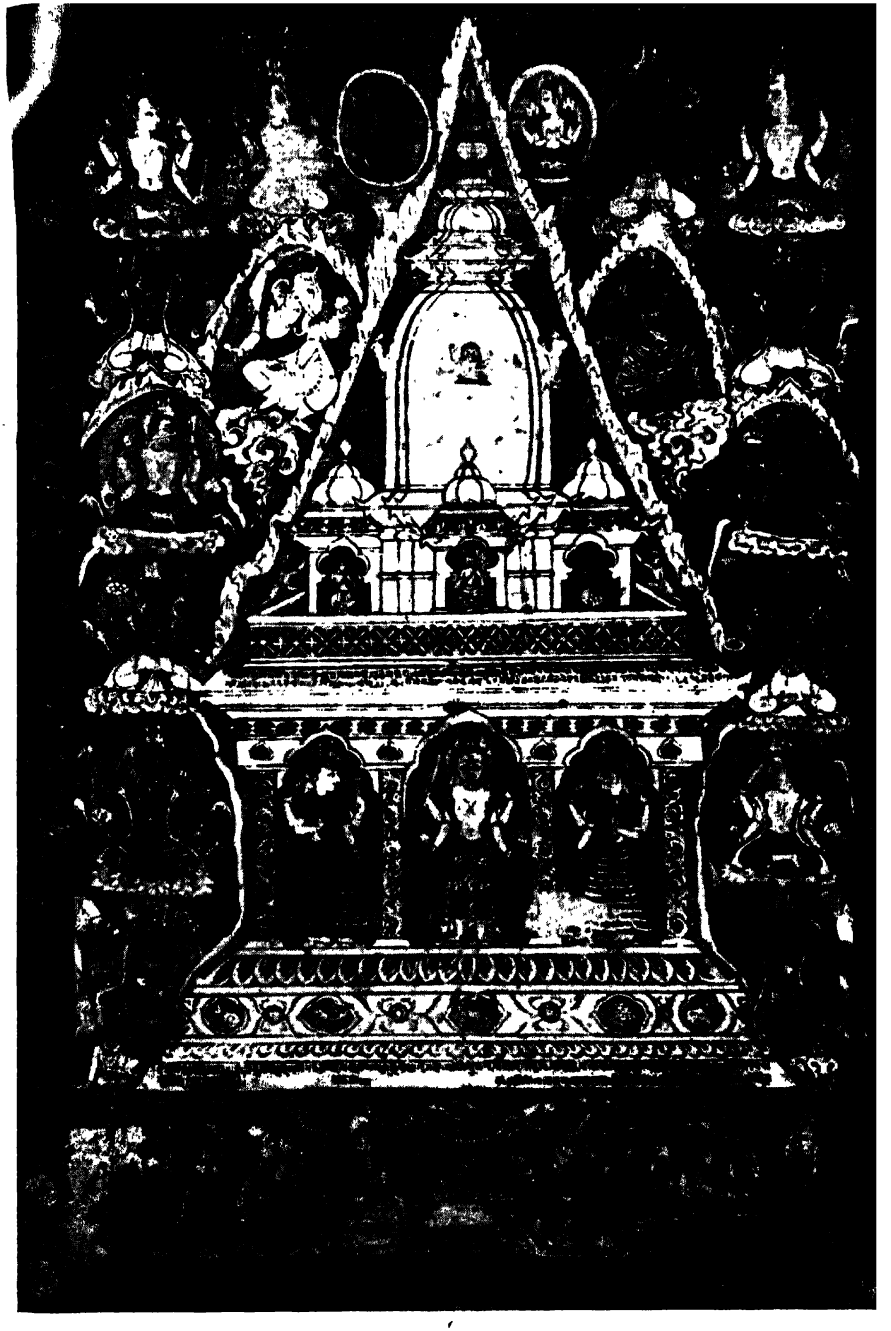


Fig. 29. Viṣṇu maṇḍala, Pata, 1772 A. D., Bharat Kala Bhavan, Varanasi.



Fig. 30. Viṣṇu with Lakṣmī and Garuḍa, 12th century, Deo Patan.



Fig. 31. Viṣṇu with Lakṣmī and Garuḍa, 12th century, Kathmandu.



Fig. 32. Viṣṇu, 4th-5th century, Jhusi, India, Allahabad, Museum.

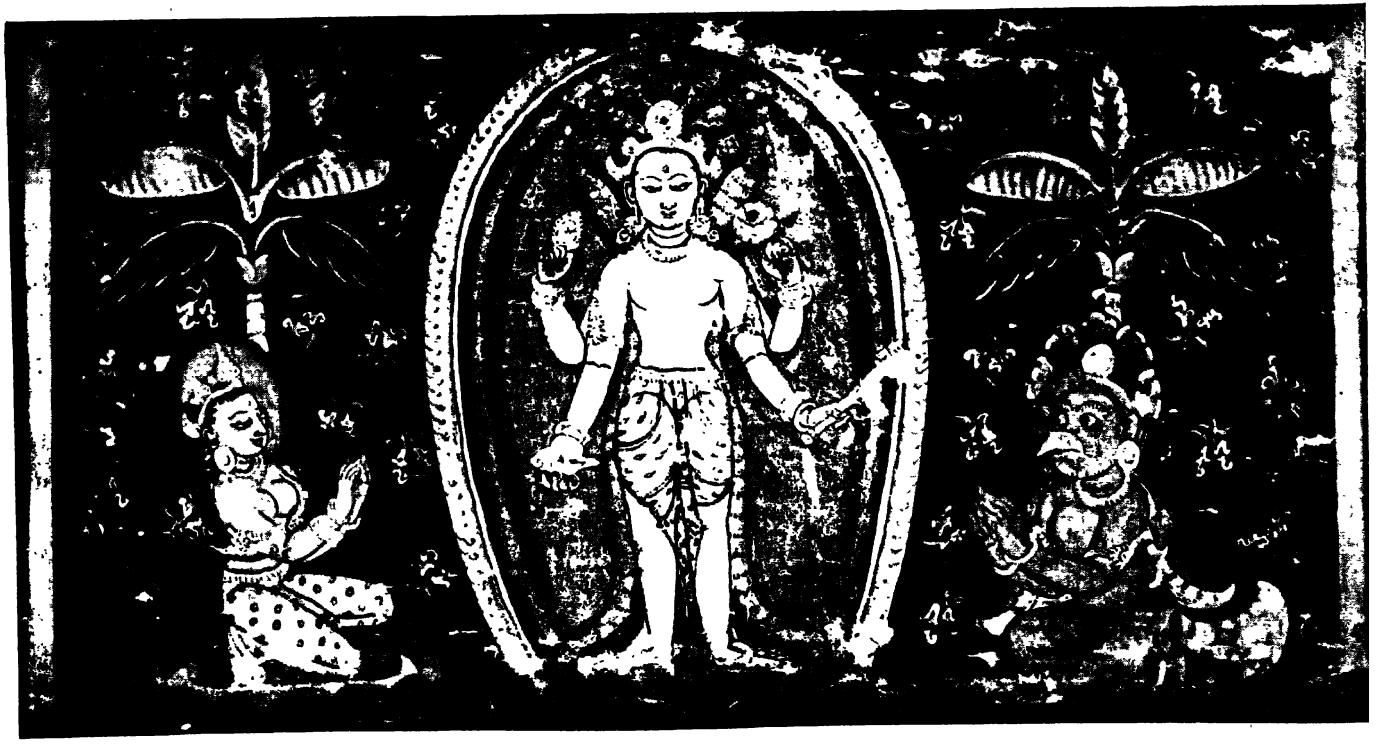


Fig. 33. Viṣṇu with Lakṣmī and Garuḍa, Wooden cover of a manuscript of *Śivadharma*, 1139 A. D., University Library, Cambridge.



Fig. 34. Viṣṇu, 15th century, Nasli and Alice Heeramaneck Collection, New York.



Fig. 35. Nārāvana. 18th century. Bharat Kala Bhavan, Varanasi.





Fig. 37. Detail of Fig. 36.

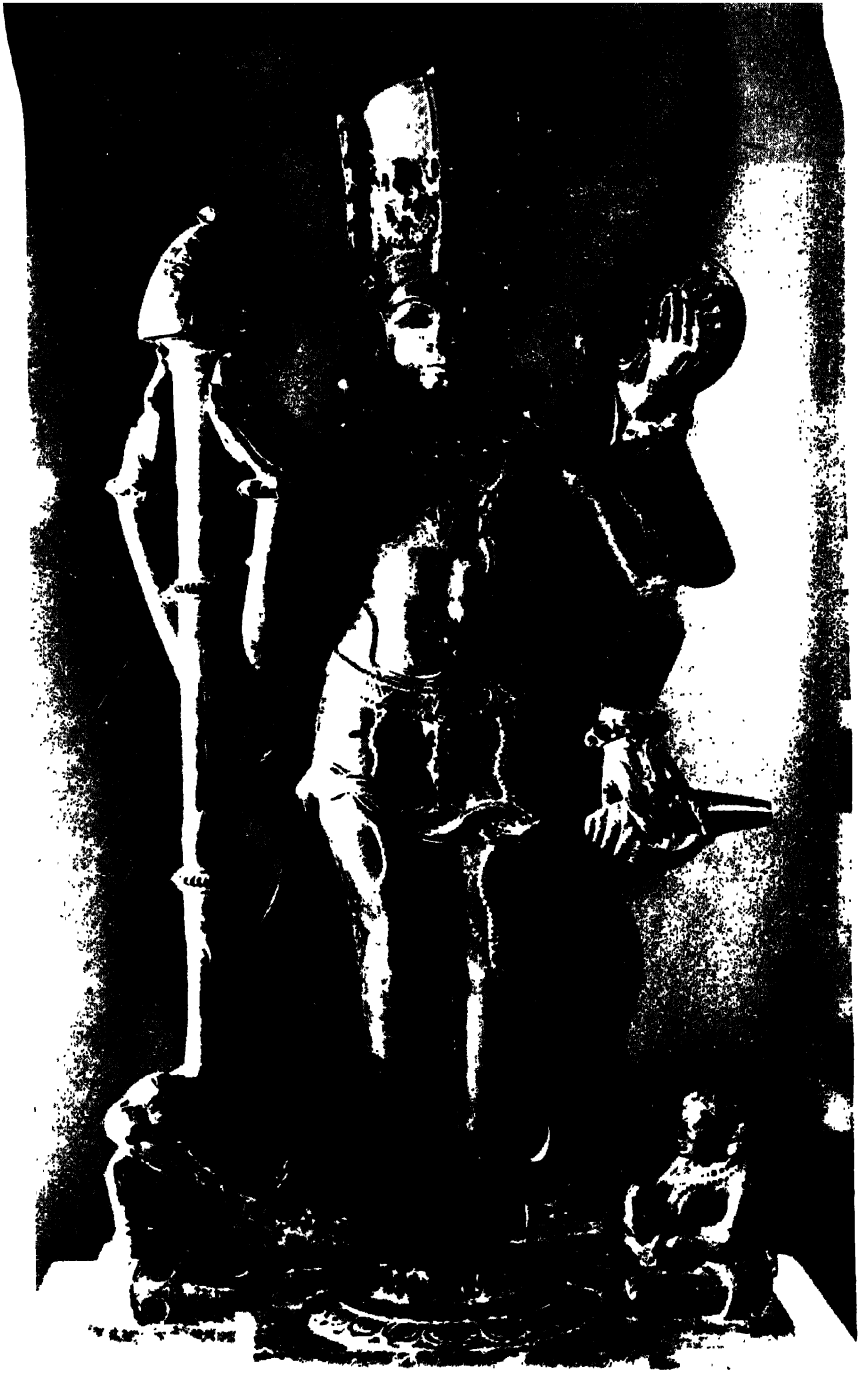




Fig. 39. Viṣṇu on Garuḍa, 8th century, Temple of Chaṅgu Nārāyaṇa.



Fig. 40. Viṣṇu on Garuḍa, 6th century, Eastern India, The Cleveland Museum of





Fig. 42. Viṣṇu on Garuḍa, 11th century, Deo Patan.



Fig. 43. Viṣṇu on Garuḍa, Paṭa, 1766 A. D., Bharat Kala Bhavan, Varanasi.



Fig. 44. Wooden cover of a manuscript of *Viṣṇudharma*, 1047 A.D., Bir Library, Kathmandu.



g. 45. Wooden cover of a manuscript of *Viṣṇudharma*, 1047 A. D., Bir Library, Kathmanc



ig. 46. Wooden cover of a manuscript of *Viṣṇudharma*, 1047 A.D., Bir Library, Kathmand



Fig. 48. Detail of Fig. 47.

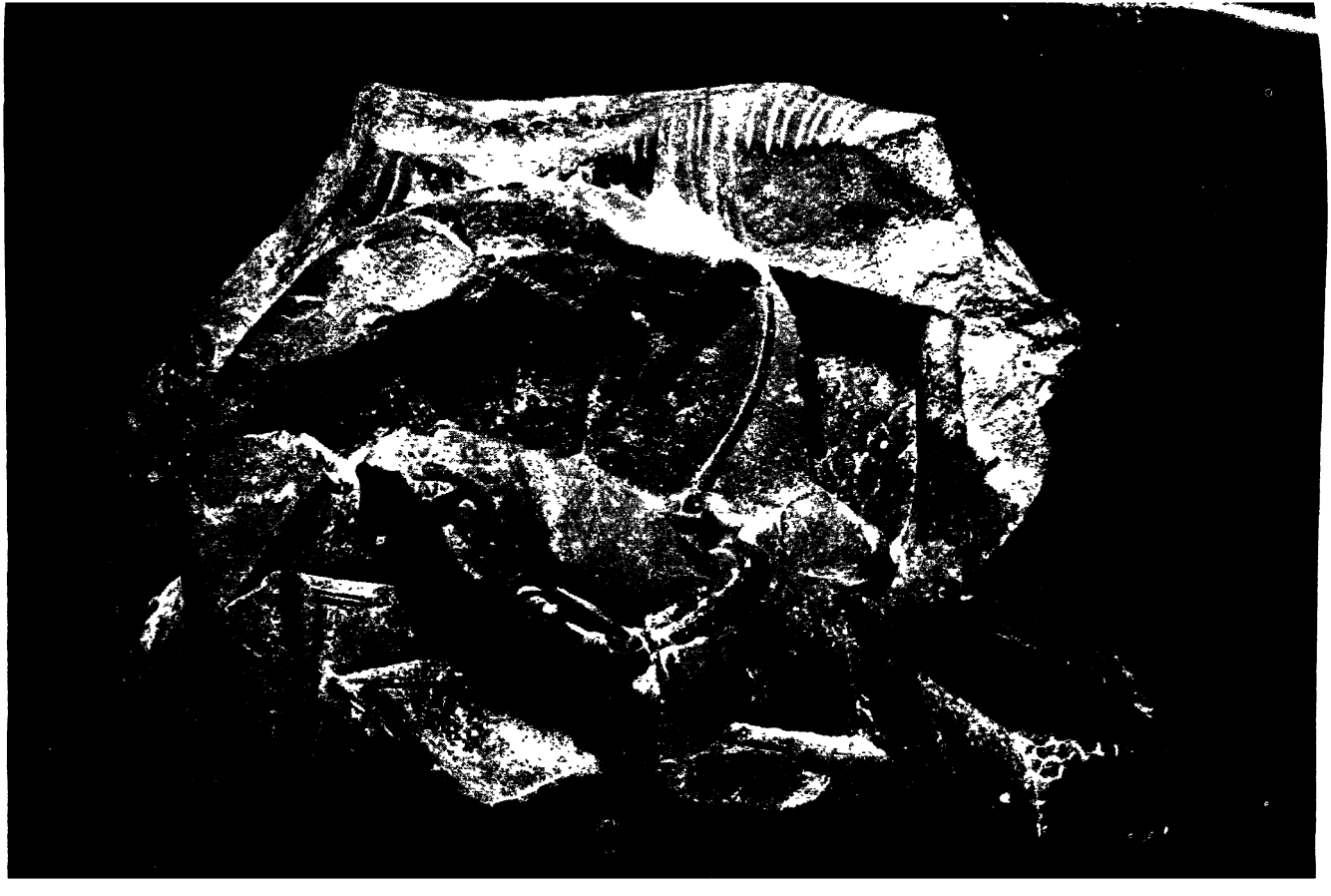


Fig. 49. Jalaśayana Viṣṇu, 17th century (?), Balaiu.





Fig. 51. Kālīyadamana, 6th century, Basantapur Palace, Kathmandu.



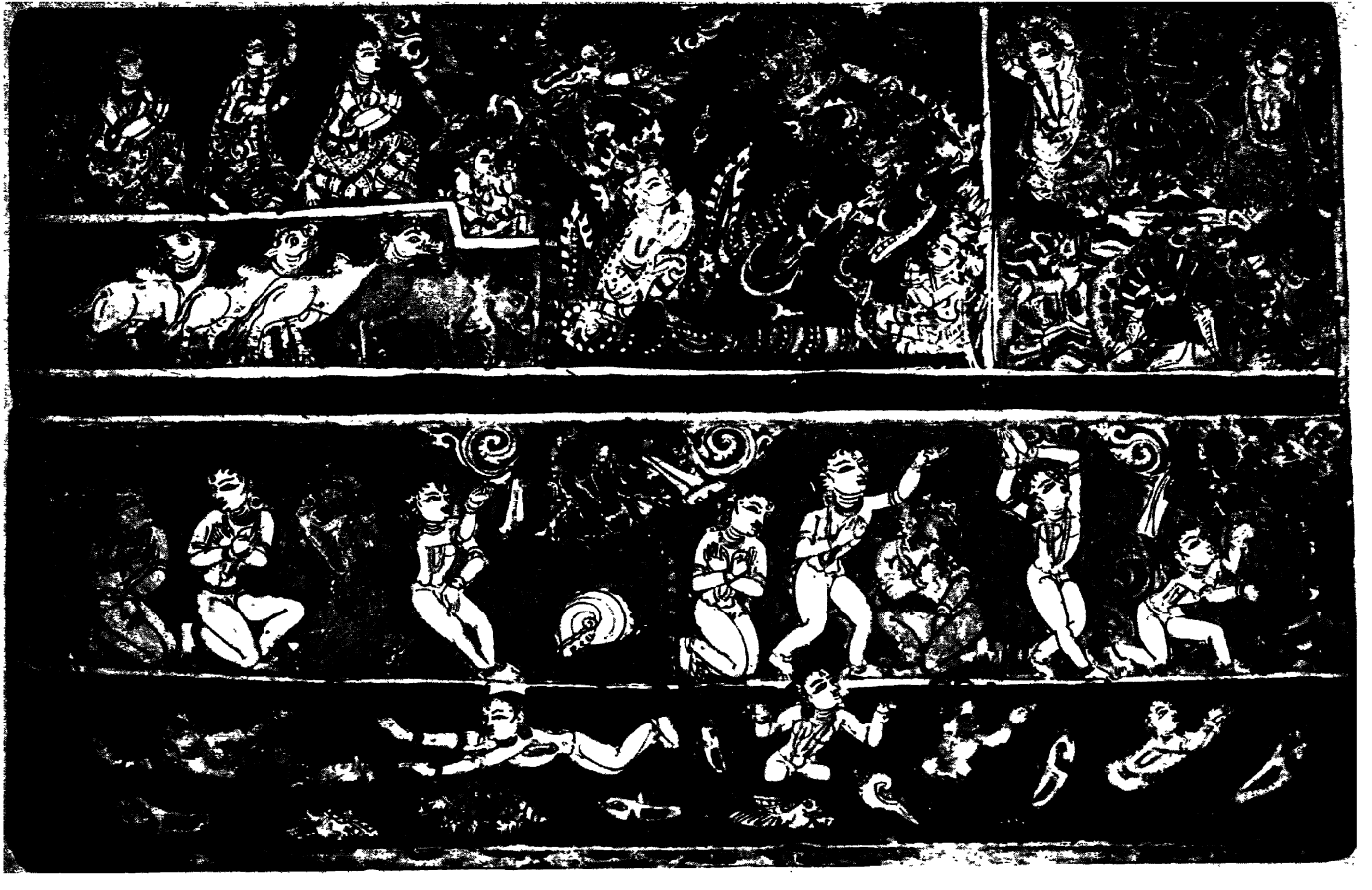




Fig. 54. Kṛṣṇa or Balarāma, 8th-9th century, Kathmandu.



Fig. 55. Veṇudhara Kṛṣṇa, 17th century, collection of Mr. & Mrs. H. K. Swali of Bombay



Fig. 56. Veṇudhara Kṛṣṇa, 17th century, Deo Patan.



Fig. 57. Veṇudhara Kṛṣṇa with Rukmiṇī and Satyabhāmā, 19th century, Kṛṣṇa Temple, Mṛgasthali.



Fig. 58. Veṇudhara Kṛṣṇa, 17th century, Collection of Mr. & Mrs. H. K. Swali, Bombay

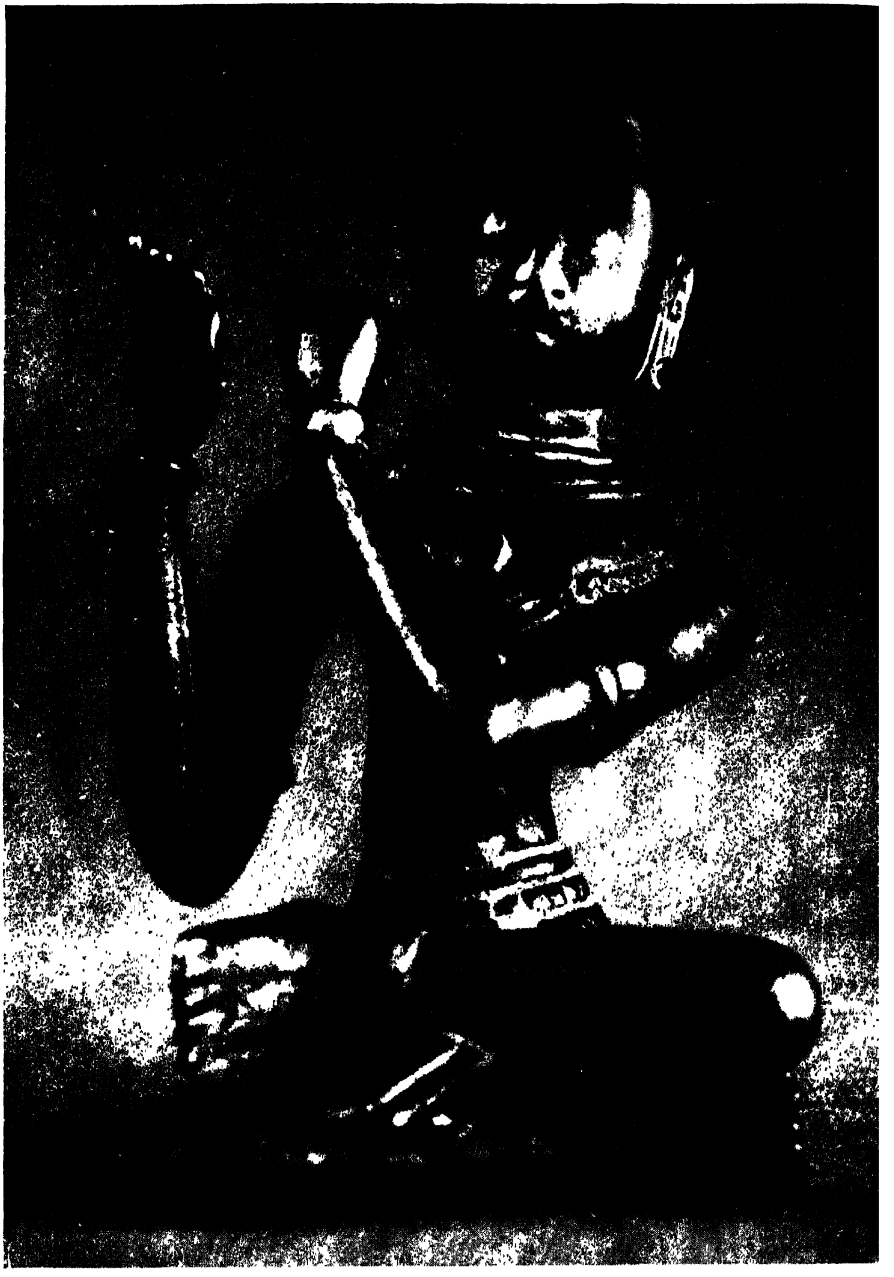
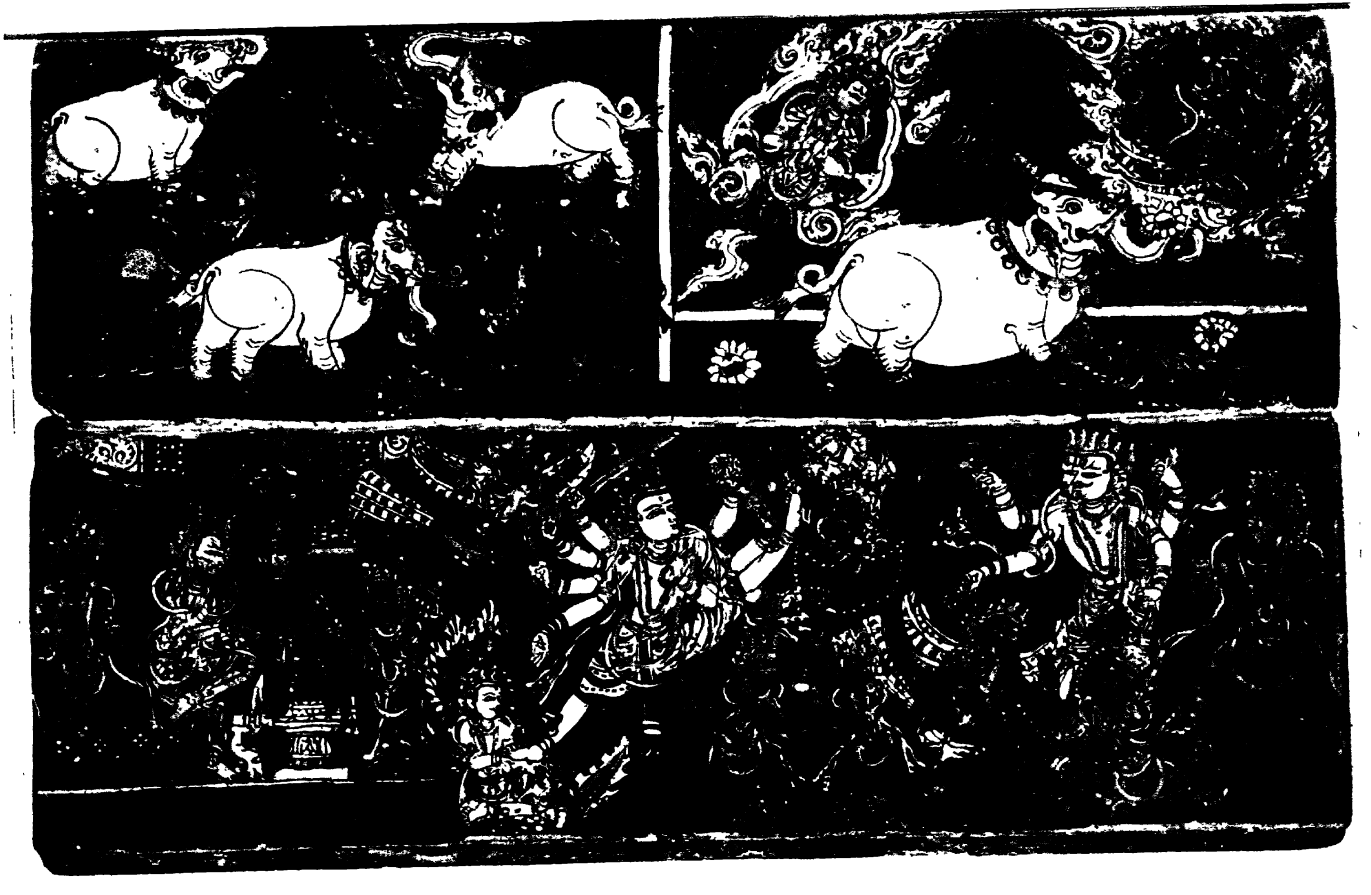


Fig. 59. Veṇudhara Kṛṣṇa, 17th century, western India, Collection of Mr. & Mrs. H. K. Swali, Bombay.





Fig. 61. Scenes from the life of Kṛṣṇa. Kalāpustaka, c. 1600, University Library, Cambridge.



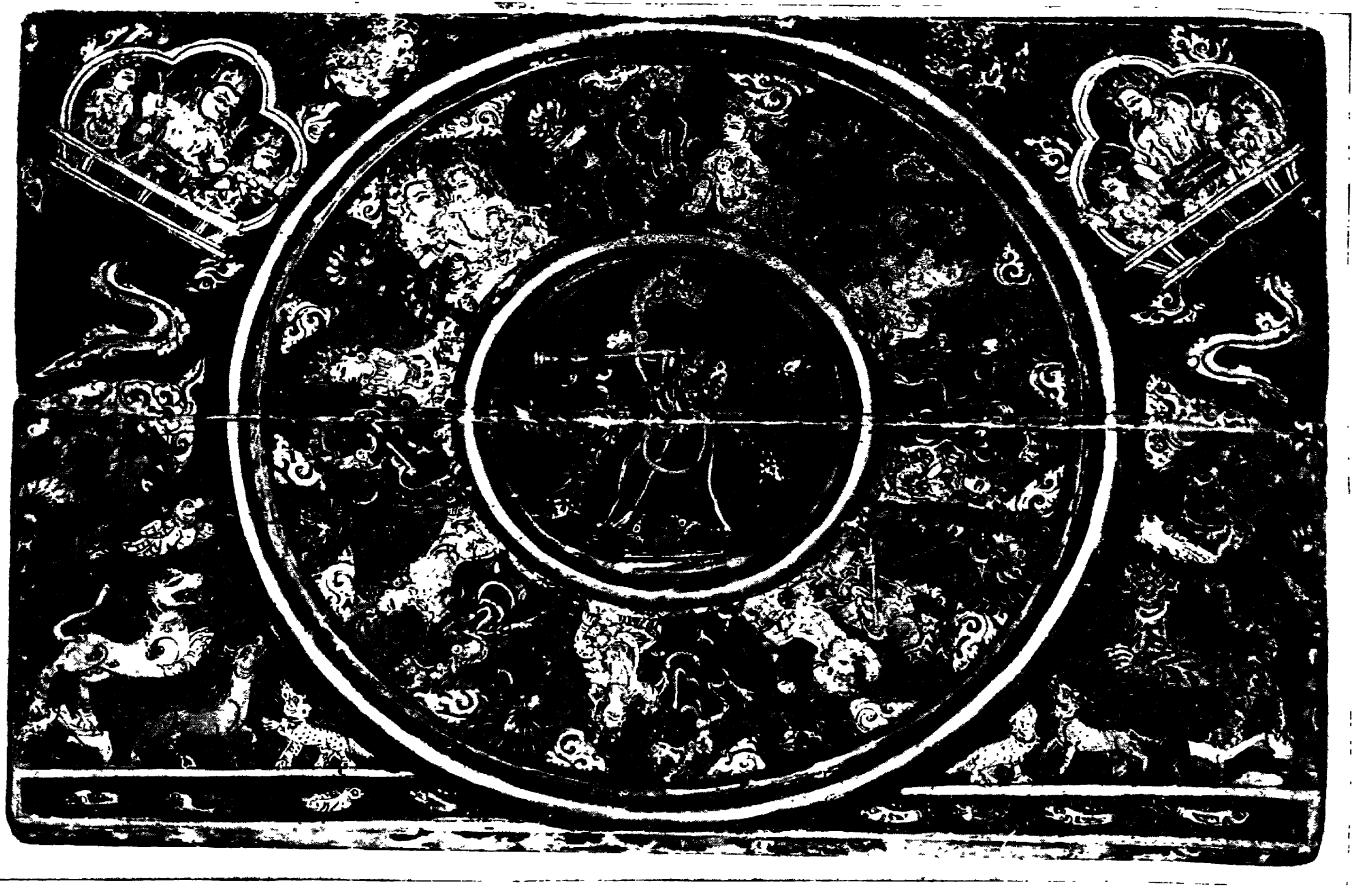
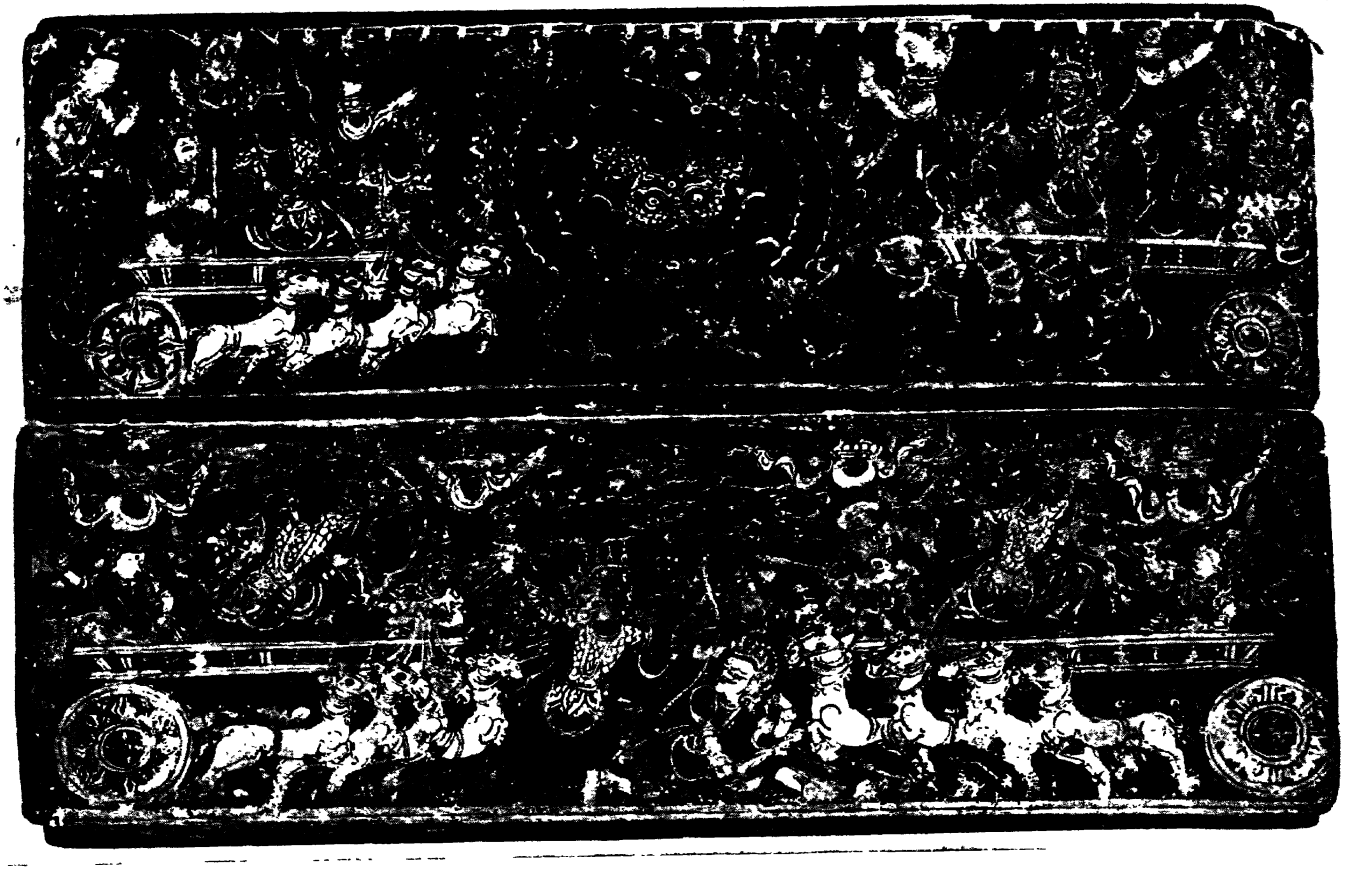
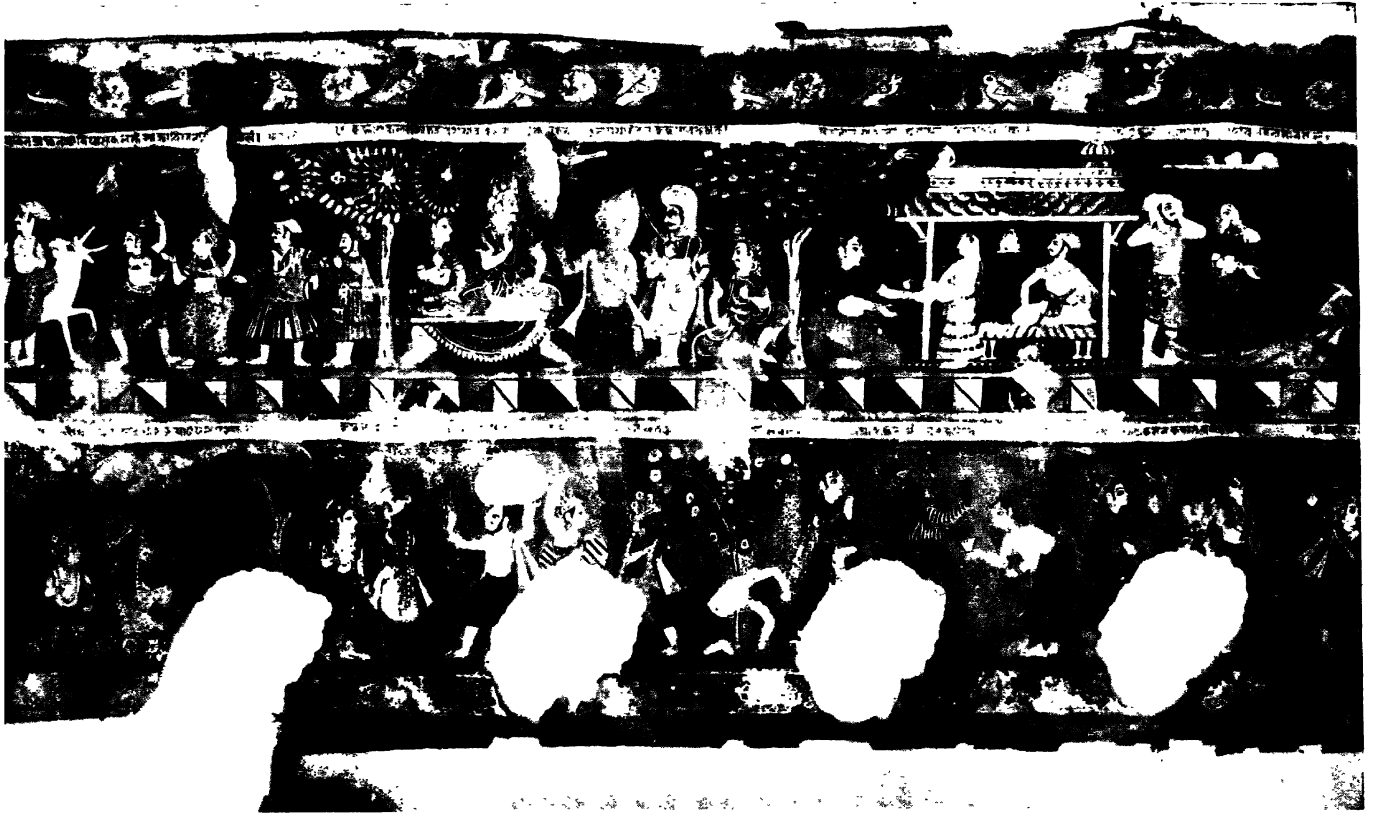


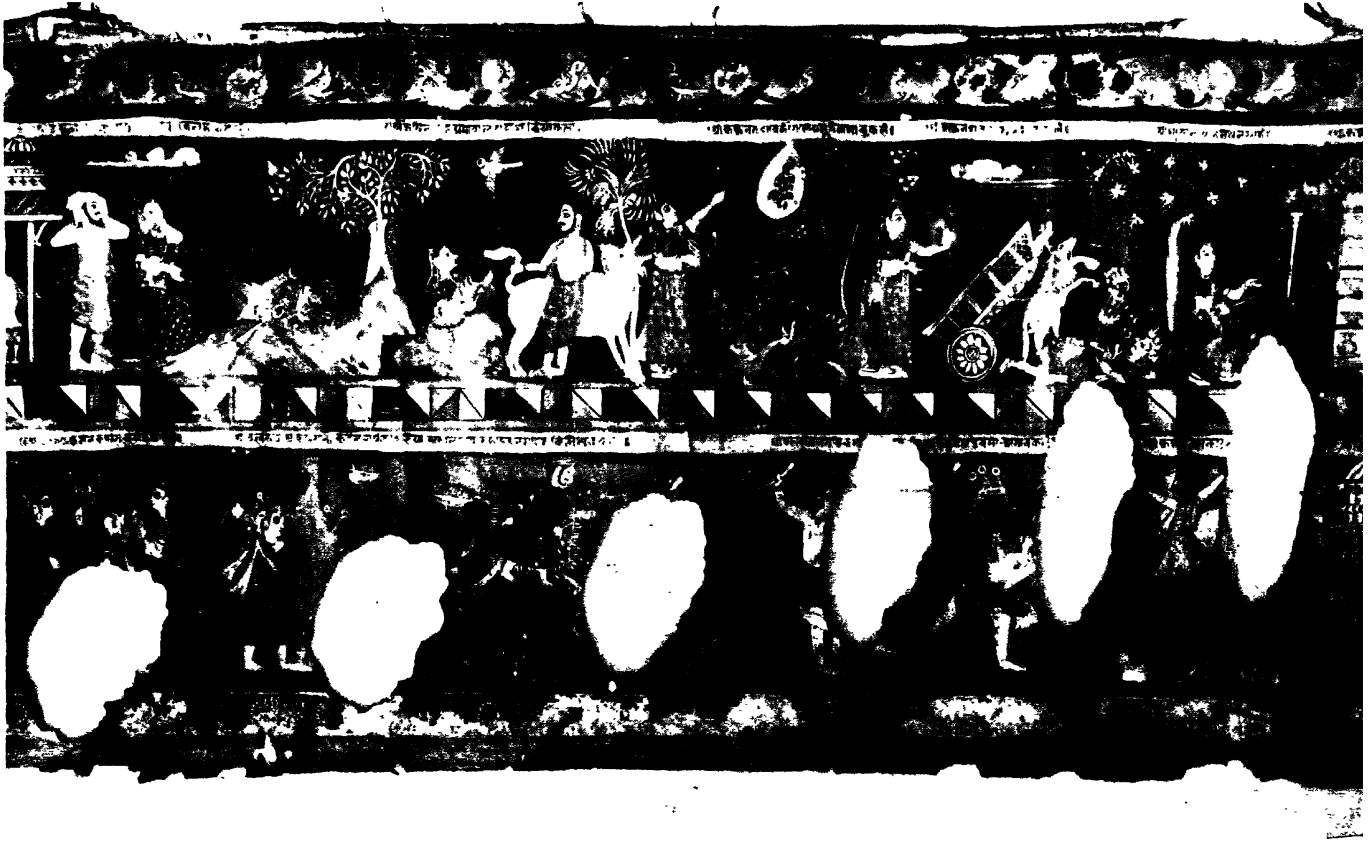


Fig. 64. Scene from the *Mahābhārata*. Kalāpustaka. c. 1600. University Library, Cambridge.









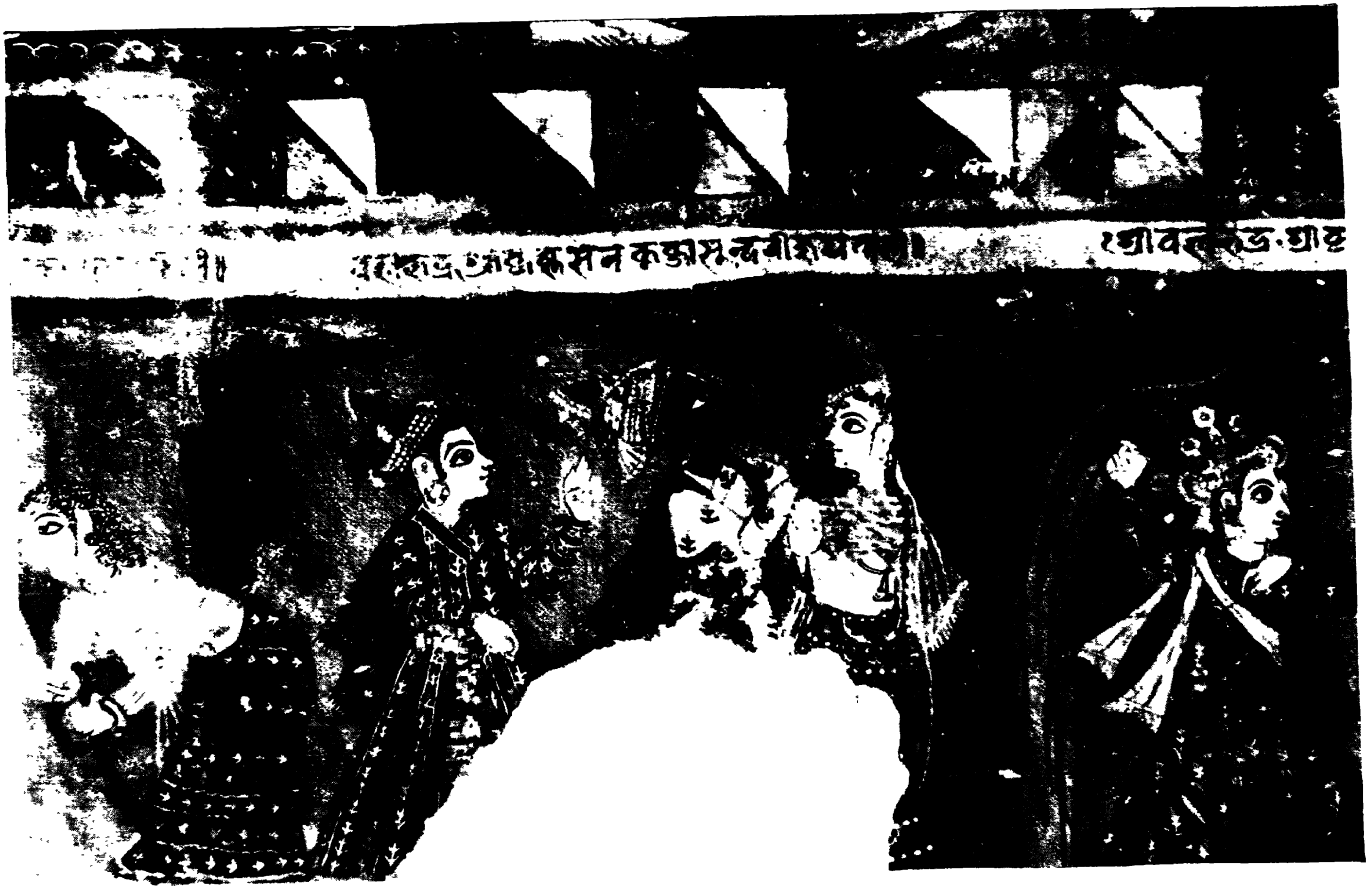






Fig. 71. Scroll depicting the story of Bānāsura. 1795 A. D., Musee Guimet, Paris.



Fig. 72. Fight between the monkeys and Kumbhakarṇa. *Hanumānnāṭaka*. 19th century. Bir Library, Kathmandu.

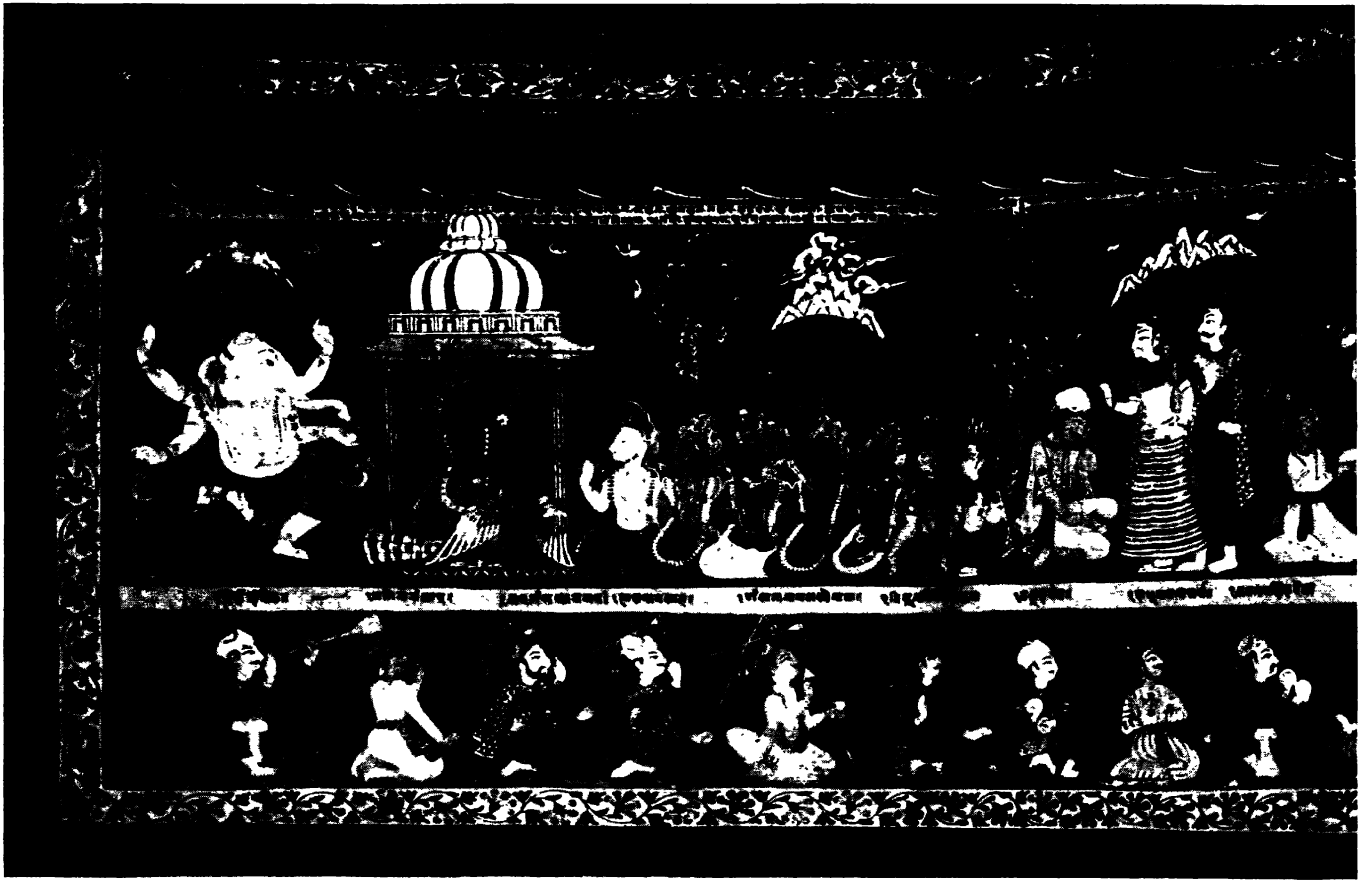




Fig. 74. Scroll depicting the Anantavrata, c. 1600, Bharat Kala Bhavan, Varanasi.

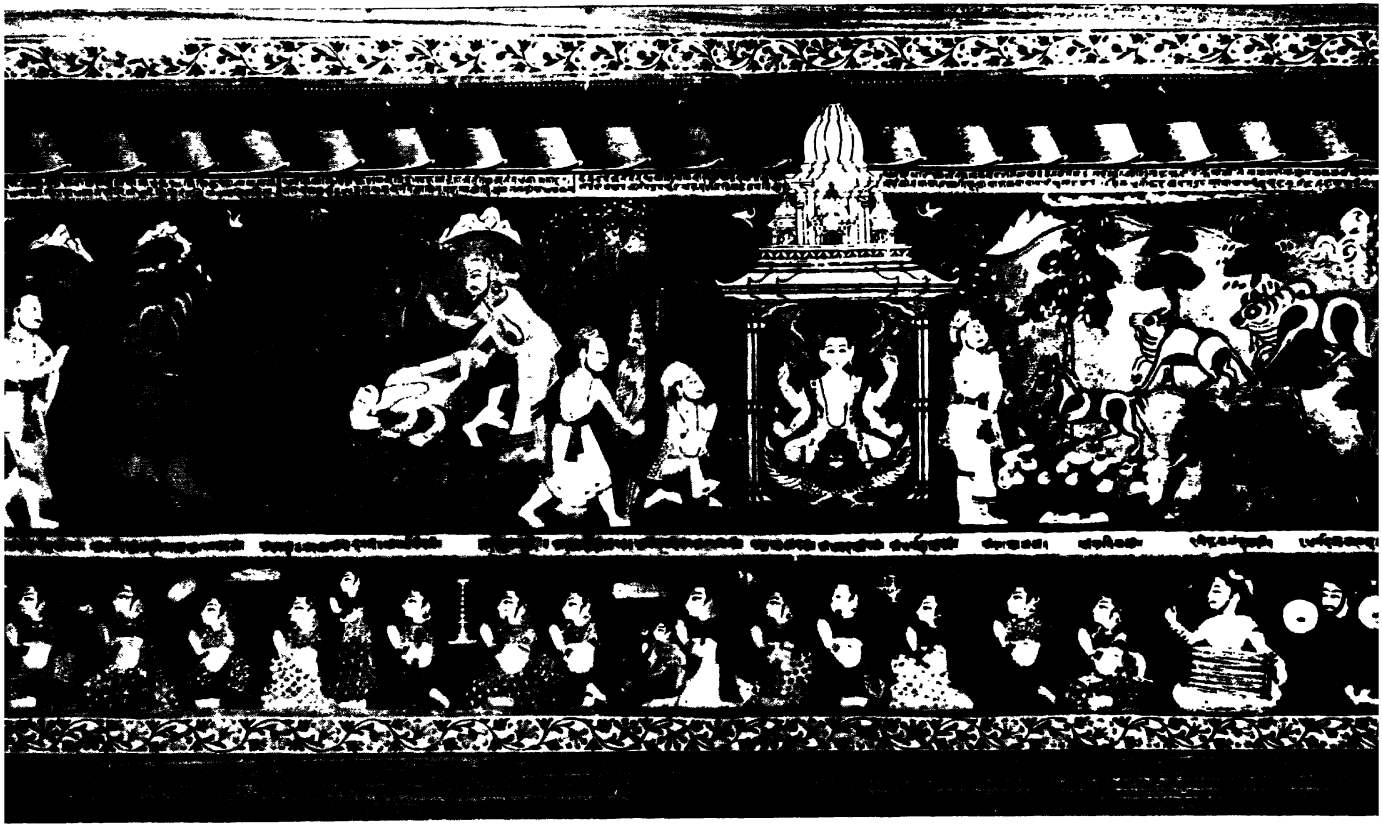


Fig. 75 Scroll depicting the Anantavrata, c. 1600, Bharat Kala Bhavan, Varanasi



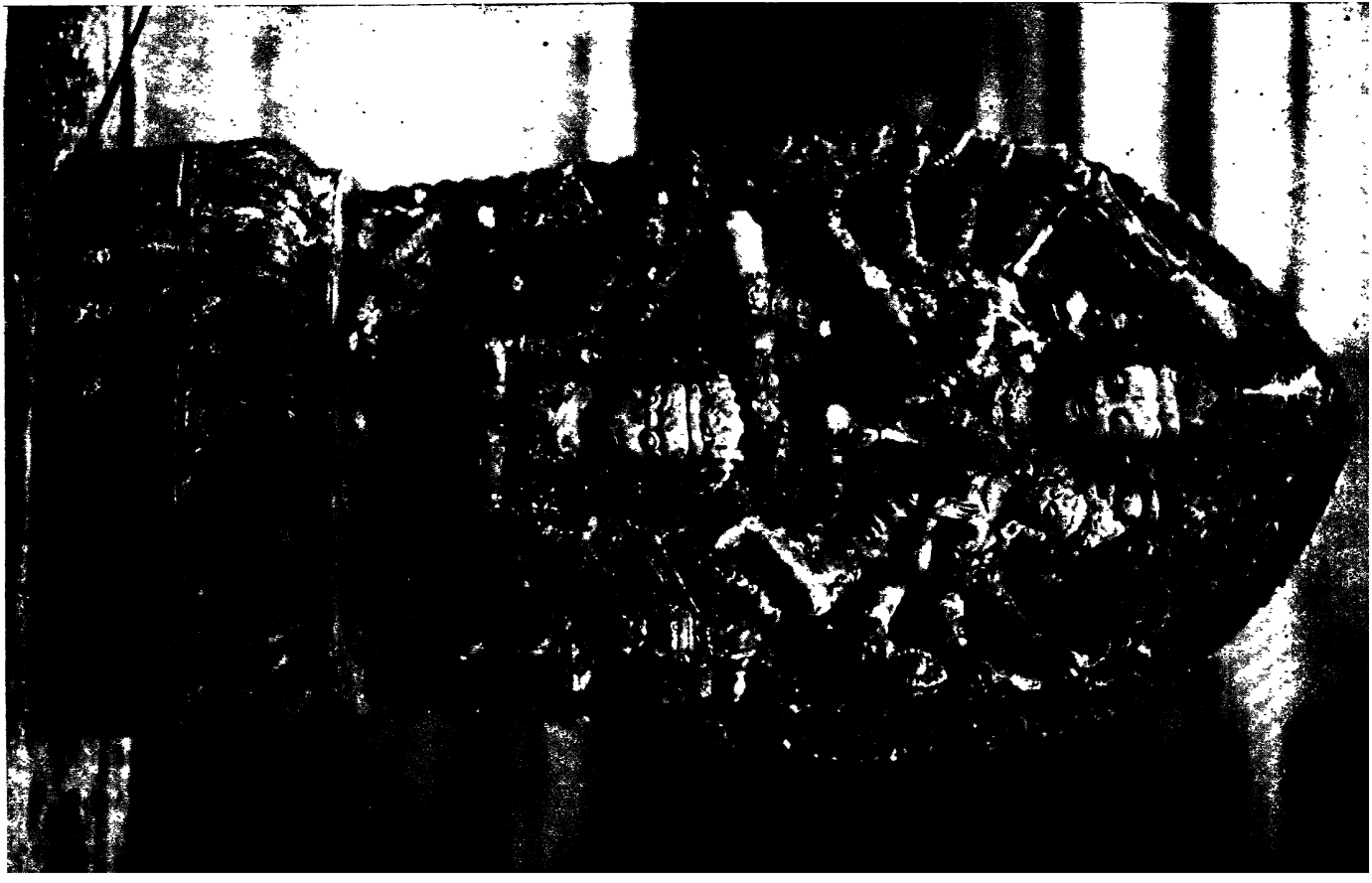




Fig. 78. Vaikuṇṭha with Lakṣmi, 17th century, Basantapur Palace, Kathmandu.



Fig. 79. Viṣṇu killing Maḍhu and Kaiṭabha, *Devīmāhatmya* manuscript, 13th century, Bharat Kala Bhavan, Varanasi.







Fig. 82. Krodhabhairava with Vaiṣṇavīśakti, Kalāpustaka, 1795 A. D., Bharat Kala Bhavan, Varanasi.



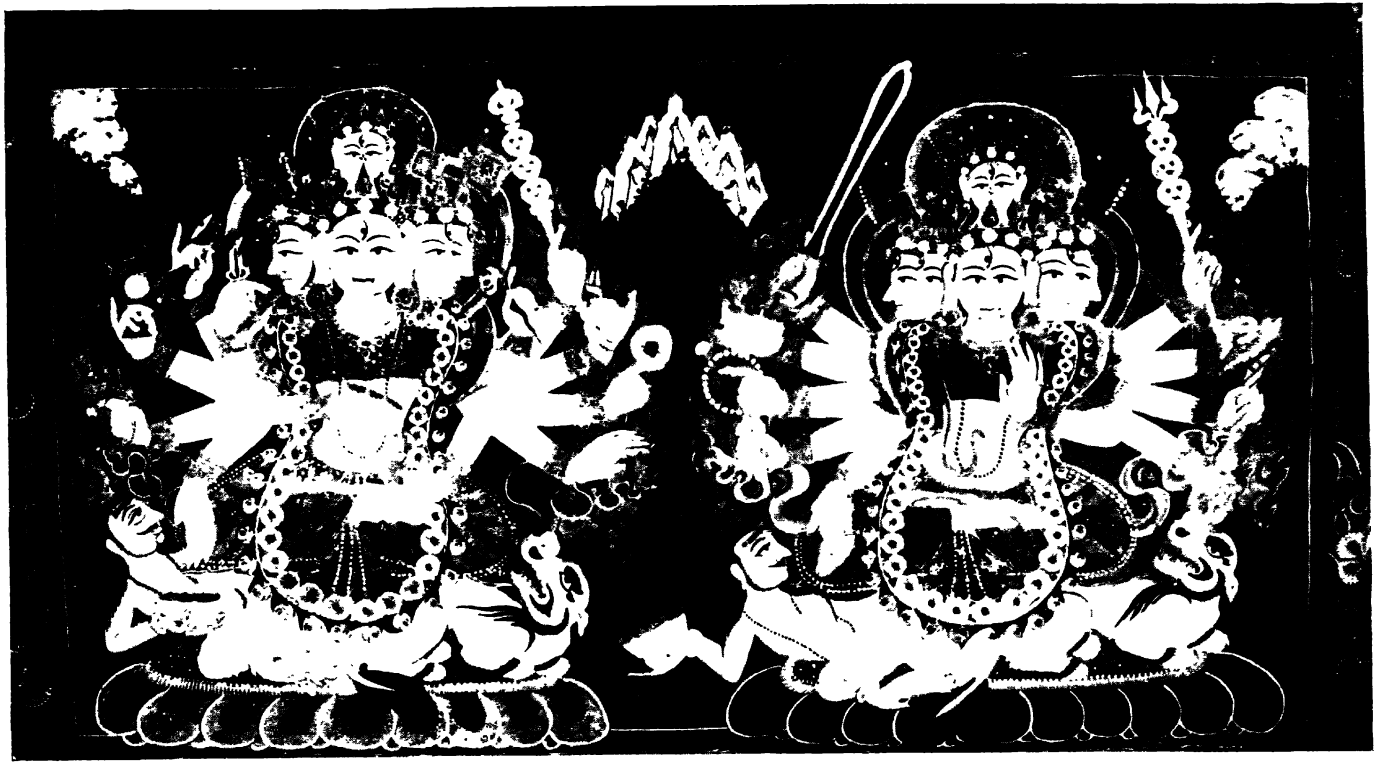


Fig. 84. Hari-Lakṣmī and Hari-Hara-Lakṣmī, Kalāpustaka, 1795 A. D., Bharat Kala Bhavan, Varanasi.





Fig. 85. Sarasvatī, 13th century, Temple of Mahākāla, Kathmandu.



Fig. 87. Vāgiśvarī, 14th century, Kathmandu.



Fig. 88. Sāradā, 17th century, Private Collection, Kathmandu.



Fig 89. Garuḍa, 9th century, Nasli and Alice Heeramaneck Collection, New York.





Fig. 91. Garuḍa, 7th century, Temple of Chaṅgu Nārāyaṇa.



Fig. 92. Garuḍa on a pillar, 8th century (?), Harigaon.





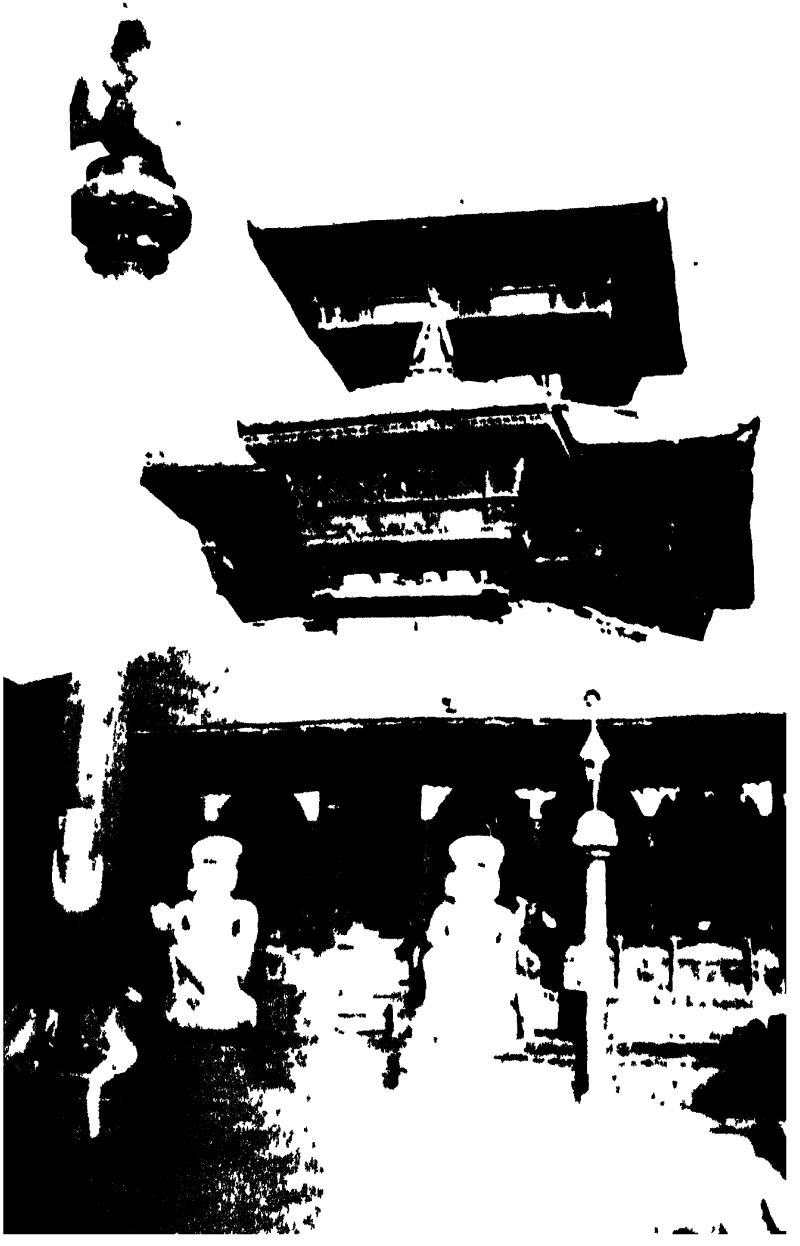
Fig. 94. Garuḍa, 16th century, Basantapur, Kathmandu.



Fig. 95. Garuḍa, 16th century, Pharphing.



Fig. 96. Fragments lying in the Temple of Satyanārāyaṇa, Harigaon.



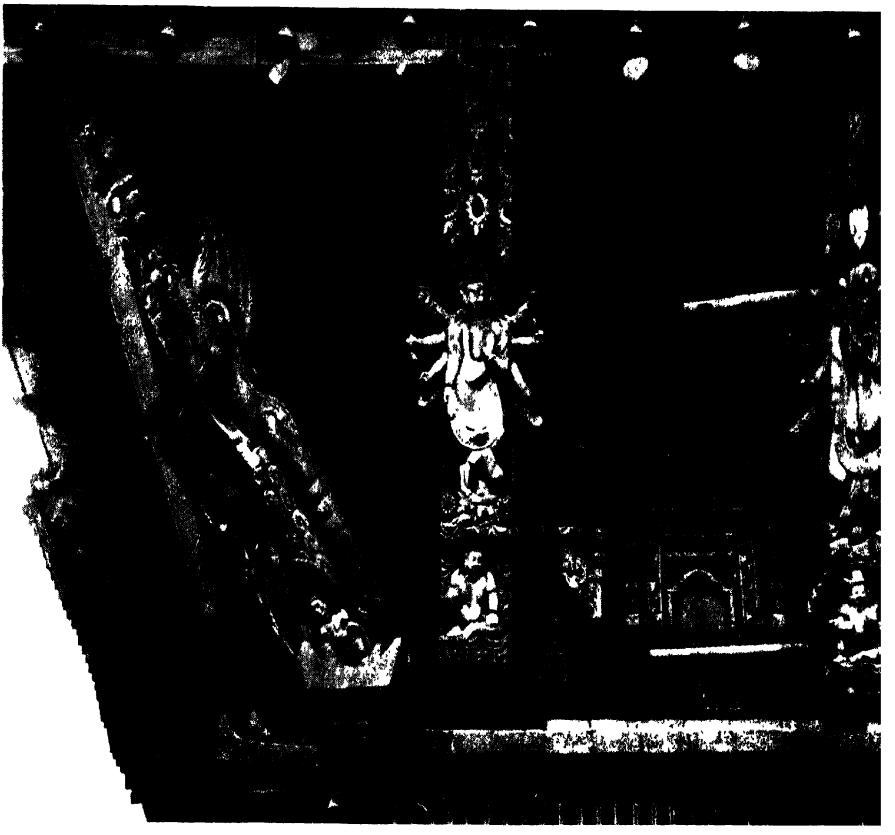


Fig. 98. Temple of Chaṅgu Nārāyaṇa—detail.



Fig. 99. Temple of Chaṅgu Nārāyaṇa—detail.



Fig. 100. Temple of Chaṅgu Nārāyaṇa—detail.



Fig. 101. Kṛṣṇa Temple, 17th century, Patan.



Fig. 102. Viṣṇu, 17th century, Kathmandu.



Fig. 103. Hari-Hara, 17th century (?). Deo Patan.



Hari Hara, 14th century, Patan.

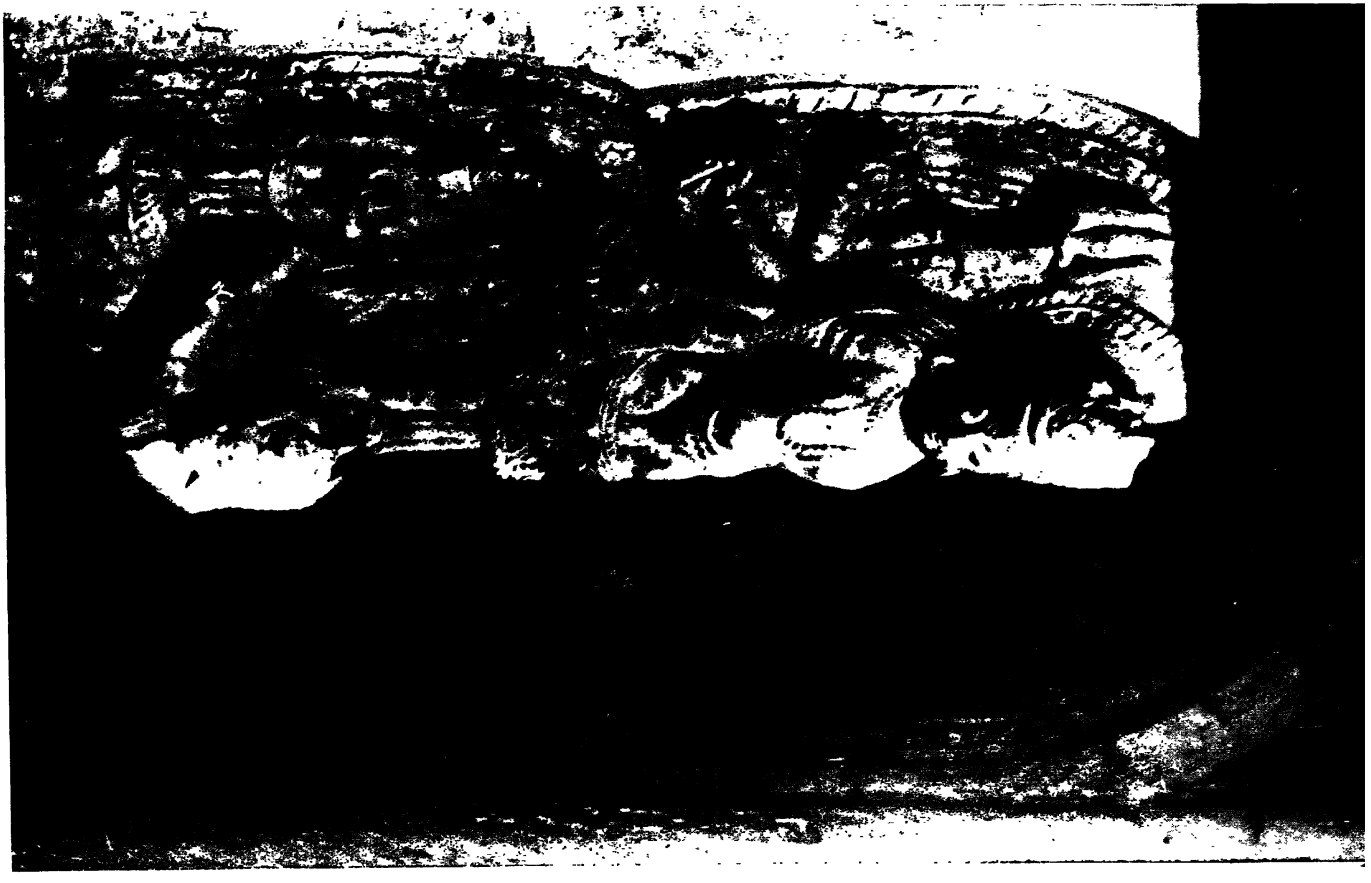






Fig. 107. Vāsudeva-Kamalajā, 15th century, Museum fur Volkerkunde, Basel.



Fig. 109. Vāsudeva-Kamalajā. Maṇḍala, Paṭa, 1263 (?) A. D., The Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Calcutta.